

FROM VOLUNTEER VACATIONING TO SOLIDARITY TRAVEL IN
NICARAGUA: AN NGO MEDIATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

By

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by

Timothy G. Fogarty

This work is in honor and appreciation of the following persons.

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This dissertation analyzes the growing phenomenon of volunteer vacationing in which citizens of the “developed” world visit villages and urban neighborhoods of the “developing” world to do community development work. Cross-cultural, multi-sited ethnographic research spanning 5 years reveals that the conflated discourses that surround these encounters challenge participants from the United States and Nicaragua to forge bonds of solidarity while participating in charitable activities that often substitute for solidary relationships. Institutional agendas of the intermediary non-governmental organizations channel and often constrain citizen-to-citizen contact between visitors and community residents and thus condition the possibility of solidarity formation.

Multiple small dense networks of veteran volunteers continue to recruit first-time volunteers in growing numbers. As NGOs incorporate more volunteer groups into their schedule, the groups become increasingly important sources of institutional support, which can occasion a shift from community-driven programming to volunteer-

group-driven programming, creating challenges for participatory sustainable grass roots development.

NGO policies and practices are seldom coordinated with other NGOs operating in the same region or with national development strategies. Solidarity formation is impacted by the clarity of vision and development model that informs the NGO mission.

In a nation where two primary development models are contending for official and popular support, lack of specificity of models results in role confusion on the part of visiting volunteers and impedes the evolution of subject position from that of volunteer vacationer to one of solidarity traveler. As a result, many visitors leave with partial understandings of the social or political implications of their contribution and the connections that contribution has with their daily lives at home. Solidarity requires interpersonal interaction and social analysis that elucidates the need for structural change in the global political economy as it impinges on Nicaraguan *campesinos* and workers.

Cognitive and emotional dissonance among the visitors and increased global awareness among villagers (acquired in personal cross-cultural encounters) offers the possibility of individual and group transformation toward solidarity and challenges the internalized hegemony of global capitalist discourse. Such instances of consciencization signal the under-realized potential of this growing social movement.

CHAPTER 1
SOJOURNING TOWARD SOLIDARITY: A TRANSNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY
MODEL

Introduction

Most of the commercial airline flights from the United States that touch down at the international airport in Managua have on board one or more groups of volunteer vacationers.¹ These volunteers are largely middle-class North Americans who have decided to “pitch in” and participate in a community development project in some nearby or remote corner of Nicaragua (the largest, least populated, and poorest country in Central America). They are willing to spend a considerable sum for the privilege of working hard in the hot sun doing menial labor for a week or two among people whose language they do not speak and whose socio-economic status is as different from theirs as any in the Western hemisphere. These visitors are not paid, nor do they receive accolades or special status in their home culture. Yet they continue to come in ever greater numbers, and at least one in three will return: many will do so multiple times. One woman I met has been coming to Nicaragua at least annually for 17 years.

These volunteers don’t come at the invitation of their government or of Nicaragua. They don’t come as guests of transnational enterprises or as resort tourists. They don’t come as lone sojourners seeking the exotic. They are neither eco-tourists nor adventure tourists. Nor are they students attending classroom lectures or touring museums. They don’t come to collect ethnic art. They aren’t missionaries, trying to save souls. They are

¹ No Nicaraguan government ministries or US government agencies identify or keep statistics on such groups

not seeking exotic species, working on their tan, or coming to get away from it all. They don't hope to meet captains of industry, princes of the church, or dignitaries of state.

They aren't visiting family or (at least initially) loved ones, or even acquaintances.

They come from the cities, suburbs, and small towns of North America by the thousands, annually, to live and work briefly in rural villages and urban barrios among strangers: the poor of Nicaragua. They revel in digging ditches, wells, and latrines; in mixing concrete, tying steel, pulling teeth, dispensing medicines, distributing school supplies, organizing puppet shows, testing water purity, playing with children, listening to stories of war and songs of heroism and experiencing the laughter of joy and cries of pain.

They struggle to exist in and understand a part of the world radically different from their own: where drinking water comes out of an open hole in the ground or from a river a mile away; where toilets don't exist and electricity is intermittent or not available; where medical care is usually inaccessible or only used in times of crisis (and not always then). This is a world full of alien microbes, flora, and fauna ; a world in which sixth graders are considered well educated and high school is possible for only a tiny percentage of students; in which durable houses are a privilege of the few and many people have to survive on incomes of a dollar a day.

The Research Quest

Three types of research questions arise from observing this phenomenon repeatedly over 17 years. First, are the why questions. Why do the visitors come and why do the villagers welcome this incursion? What types of social logics are powerful enough to bring people out of their culture of origin (many for the first time) to live in adverse conditions in an alien culture? What motivates peasants, whose subsistence affords no

surplus, to welcome a group of foreigners (many of whom need to be cared for like young children)?

Second are the how questions. How is the cultural incommensurability (Schutte 1998) between such dissimilar peoples bridged? How is satisfactory communication possible? How is the phenomenon maintained and nurtured? How do people structure their lives to make this happen? How can people live in an unfamiliar culture and yet feel like they are “at home,” especially when some of their fellow visitors don’t share their comfort?

Finally, at each level of scale, are the significance questions. What does the experience mean for the individual visitor, for his/her group, for the mediating organizations, for the host village, for the local municipality, and for the nation of Nicaragua. Also what is the import for relations between the U.S. and Nicaragua, and, of course, the global import.

What meaning does this recent cultural practice have in an age of globalization? What is the historical significance for the two cultures involved - one characterized by privilege and material wealth, the other by marginality and deprivation; one standing at the center of world affairs, the other at the periphery? Is this a new initiative of globalization from below, the birth of a new movement for transcultural solidarity? Or is it rather a current permutation of the euro-centric explorer, missionary, colonizer, developer tradition of altruistic civilizers? An adequate ethnography of this phenomenon must identify the subjective and structural corollaries of this transnational practice from the subject positions of the various participants. For only by linking ethnography to

structural analysis can we understand the dialectic between contemporary capitalisms and cultures (Ong 1999).

Three Conversations on the Road to Solidarity

In the spring of 2004, as our work team entered the mountain village of Las Casitas² in central Nicaragua, the school emptied and all 50 children performed a welcoming song and dance for the group. After the excitement had died down, while the villagers were milling around the site where we would begin building an addition to the one-room school, 85-year-old Sinfioriano walked up to one of the visitors and asked “Roberto?” The tall volunteer, a man of 73 years himself, hesitantly acknowledged that his name was indeed Roberto. “I remember you,” said Sinfioriano. In his reflections on the experience days later, Robert (Roberto) reflected that he was deeply touched that the elder had remembered him from 10 years before when he had worked for a week in that same village building the original schoolhouse.

Sitting on a large flat boulder, watching my fellow volunteers dig a foundation, I was interviewing Donna, who had been to Nicaragua at least once a year over the past 17 years³. This was her 20th trip. Once officially declared “ambassador” by the mayor of a sizeable Nicaraguan city, she was now visiting Nicaraguan friends and would soon be leading a group that would build houses in a town south of Managua. I mentioned to her that I had noticed, the year before, that she had brought reams of literature (mostly newsletters from NGOs and solidarity organizations), as well as Eduardo Galleano’s

² Here, as in all subsequent references to villages, towns, and individuals I have used a pseudonym.

³ Coincidentally I had been Donna’s host in Nicaragua on that first trip, 17 years ago.

newest book on imperialism and Latin America, which she had displayed in a central location and tried to disseminate among her group members. I asked, “Are you trying to raise your groups’ consciousness about the issues affecting Nicaragua?” “That’s why I come,” she replied.

Five years earlier (July 1999) I sat on a pile of concrete blocks talking to Samantha, the leader of a church sponsored group volunteering in a remote mountain village called Tres Zapotes that had been washed away by Hurricane Mitch in October of 1998. Samantha’s group represented 100 churches in the Atlanta area who had an ongoing relationship with some of the Protestant churches of Estelí through a development NGO. The Atlanta group was staying in the village, sleeping on the floor of the school, and rebuilding houses for 21 families in a new location. This was Samantha’s 7th trip to Nicaragua, a country she has come to love deeply, while for most of her group, including some residents of poor neighborhoods, it was their first visit. At the end of our conversation Samantha heaved a sigh of resignation and stated matter-of-factly, “Short of giving them half of our money, I don’t understand how we can approach a relationship anything near equality for the next 15 years. It will take that long to build up the necessary trust.”

These three vignettes portray practices that build transnational solidarity. First, there is Robert’s bonding on a personal level with an individual and a community. That bonding enables mutual empathy even human tenderness to take place. It is predicated on physical proximity and interpersonal communication. It involves movement on a continuum from stranger, to acquaintance, to empathic friend.

Second there is Donna's lifelong mission to raise her own consciousness and that of her fellow North Americans through exposure to social analysis. Her newsletters and academic works present terms of reference much different than those which her group members are ordinarily exposed to in the mass media. Once empathy (like Sinforiano's and Robert's) has been established, and one can see people's obvious needs, then social analysis of their oppression is necessary. Lacking analysis, charity seems to be the natural, common sense, response to empathy with the subaltern. Not to engage in analysis after empathy results in charitable practices which perpetuate the elite/subaltern dyadic relationship supported by a "coloniality of power"⁴ (Quijano 2000).

It is essential for those seeking solidarity to understand how our social world has been organized in ways that create and sustain inequity. Donna's efforts to convert charity thinking to justice thinking requires the group participants to be self-critical concerning their own socialization, and eventually to see that the plight of Nicaraguan *campesinos*⁵ corellates in empirical ways with their own struggles against oppressive social forces.

Third, there is Samantha's religiously motivated quest for social justice. This movement toward solidarity addresses the causes of inequity over the long haul. It prompts the question "What is my personal subject position in the global political

⁴ Coloniality of Power refers to the subjective internalized effects of unequal power relations growing out of a colonial and colonized world system. It affects both colonizers and the colonized and is built fundamentally on racial difference.

⁵ One common translation for this word is "peasant," however I use the word in its more literal sense (one who dwells in the country) not only to denote the place of residence but also to connote the cultural attributes of rural lifestyle, but not to limit that lifestyle to subsistence agriculture because typical rural livelihood systems in Nicaragua are much more complex, often involving four different modes of production See Kearney (1996).

economy?” “What can I do to effect change toward equity for those who have suffered injustice? “How long am I committed to this struggle?” Those who commit to a lifelong struggle for justice, one that involves personal life style changes that marginalize them from a global culture of commodification, have transitioned definitively from development tourist to solidarity traveler.

Many people may ask themselves these questions, at some point in life, and then move on. However, people whose lifestyles and activities change because of their search for social justice do so because of intense personal conversion experiences, disciplined social analysis, and commitment to a life strategy that will further that goal. This subjective shift or identity reconfiguration destroys obstacles of xenophobia and ethnocentricity by broadening constructs of self to include the “other” in the individual’s circle of concern. This is the daily construction of transcultural solidarity, which often begins on a volunteer vacation.

This dissertation addresses the complex motivations of individuals and groups as they construct a new social movement that seeks to forge transcultural solidarity. In this story, that involves a cast of thousands, the intricate details of discourse and practice reveal a process that many experience as volunteer vacationers, a considerable number come to know from a position of development tourists, and a small minority finally see from the standpoint of solidarity travelers. There is a bias in this work that solidarity travel is more efficacious than the prior subjective states for constructing equitable global futures.

The narrative also reveals how consciousness on the part of the hosting NGOs concerning the need for visitor solidarity with rural Nicaraguans is a necessary but

insufficient condition for the growth of solidarity in volunteer vacationers. Evolution in consciousness and performance requires the presence of those material conditions mentioned above that are not always present in the volunteer experience: opportunities for interpersonal bonding to establish empathic relationships, tools of social analysis, and long-term, gradually intensifying series of options for social action.

The Existential Issue of Solidarity

The overarching existential issue of our day is global human solidarity. How can our species identification count for more than and even be in synergistic relationship with our intra-species differences in matters of individual, group and species survival? The “wars and rumors of wars” that afflict our common condition today are correlatives of an extreme and intensifying inequity in access to global resources, an inequity more acute than at any time in history. When coupled with rapid population growth, unsustainable levels of consumption and environmental degradation, the material conditions for genocide and even species extinction exist. Cultural constructions that identified clan survival with species survival, while functional for a portion of *homo sapiens* in the past, seem naïve in our interdependent world today.

We have arrived at a situation in which a permanent state of war (against terrorism) has been declared. The inherent dangers of permanent social mobilization against a quintessentially elusive enemy call for new anthropological responses to the xenophobia that fuels this initiative.

It is the forging of a global cultural logic that values difference over uniformity, and equity over concentration of wealth, that holds the key to our survival. Never has ethnocentricity been as dangerous as it is now. The salient questions framed by this phenomenon of volunteer vacationing are “What is transnational cross-cultural

citizen-to-citizen solidarity in our day and age? What are the conditions for its possibility? How might it be practiced?"

Some might consider these questions better addressed by the disciplines of political science, social psychology, economics, or cultural geography. But I believe that the inductive ethnographic method that anthropology offers is helpful. Its focus on emic cultural logic and structural ecological constraints offers a holistic gestalt, a more adequate perspective from which to understand contemporary social complexity

NGOs as Culture Brokers

The answers to these anthropological questions involve a third party in this transnational cross-cultural encounter; the institution which mediates this ongoing international interface, namely, the non-governmental development organizations of Nicaragua (many of them transnational entities themselves). They are the culture brokers that make the encounter possible. They are the sector of transnational civil society that engineers these numerous brief encounters. Small by transnational-organization standards and heterogeneous in development goals and practices, they tend to operate in relative isolation from other organizations of civil society or those of government and commerce.

NGOs have their own reasons for promoting these encounters. Their goals may be as universal and abstract as fostering international solidarity and as local and concrete as achieving their own program objectives with a specific population. But whatever their motives, they are what Callon (1999) calls the "obligatory passage points" that both visitors and villagers need to negotiate in order to participate in volunteer vacationing, development tourism, and, finally, solidarity travel. Any understanding of

citizen-to-citizen solidarity between North Americans and Nicaraguans must take into account these currently fashionable but under problematized agents in the international development arena. Their discourse and practice hold the key to understanding the power flows and the contradictions of transnational civil society, and give clues to deciphering the processes of globalization itself. The data show that not all grassroots development NGOs who host short-term volunteer groups provide the conditions necessary to foster solidarity. Nor do all consider it their role to do so.

First and foremost, for a variety of reasons, NGO practice often segregates the visitors from interaction with rural Nicaraguans. NGOs feel that as responsible guardians they must protect volunteers from physical and cultural risks. For one thing, concerns of health, particularly sanitation, and of safety, particularly from crime (in urban areas) or accidents (in rural areas), are constant. NGO staff and volunteer memories of “least favorite work team experiences” usually include sickness or injury. For another, concerns about money and personal possessions being stolen or solicited are a preoccupation for many NGOs and volunteers alike. For a third, NGOs are concerned about the damage of social *faux pax* in the sense that they want to protect Nicaraguans from culturally insensitive behaviors on the part of the visitors. Sometimes this is based on the NGOs awareness of the paternalism and racism inherent in some volunteer/villager interactions. Alcoholism is an obvious social problem in Nicaragua, and has a more public character than in the U.S. At times NGOs try to protect the respective parties from having to encounter such problems by restricting circulation of volunteers to certain areas or times of the day.

Another NGO motive for restricting interaction is to prevent diffusion of behaviors or commodities from the North Americans to the rural Nicaraguans in ways that create interest or desire in things that they may not need, or be able to afford. For instance, during my field work, MP3 players appeared in the Nicaraguan countryside via volunteer vacationers. One of the most intense interactions between adolescent males involved the sharing of their respective cultures' obscene gestures. But the types of institutional practices that are fostered by NGOs for the mutual protection of North Americans and Nicaraguans can unwittingly deprive them of opportunities to interact, thereby diminishing the chances of fostering solidary relationships.

Second, analysis of the political economy of rural Nicaragua that could contextualize the extreme poverty in which volunteers find themselves immersed is not a central emphasis of many rural-development NGOs. Their staff have a genuine commitment to ameliorating the effects of rural poverty. Some consider it their organization's role to foster systemic change by addressing its structural roots. Although horizons vary, some have 5 and 10 year plans that identify social ills and long-term strategies to address them. But these plans are not always based on social analysis that factors-in the politics of rural Nicaraguans as they confront globalization. NGOs rarely articulate to the volunteers the development model on which their plan is predicated. Often service is a more common theme than development. Perhaps it is inevitable that volunteers dwell for a time in the social-service stage of consciousness to understand its potentials and its limitations. The interconnectedness of development issues for North Americans and Central Americans is not a common theme.

NGOs can meet their immediate resource development goals more by focusing the volunteers' attention on the existence of poverty, rather than challenging them to think through the systemic power flows that produce it. Social analysis is a distinct process, requires different skills, summons different images, and results in different outcomes than service. It is also harder to raise money for. Volunteers and donors enjoy seeing tangible monuments to their generosity⁶ and being thanked for their charity. They usually don't like being challenged or challenging themselves to surrender resources because of distributive injustice. But as Paulo Friere (1999) stated, "True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity."

Finally, most NGOs which hosts groups treat all groups relatively similarly programmatically, (that is, they have basically one experiential design with several options within each of the components for variety.) NGOs may offer various options for the weekend tourist itineraries. They may have several choices of work projects during the week, depending on the size, donations and predilections of the visiting group, and may offer a variety of presentations about the Nicaraguan cultural context from which the group can pick.

NGO staff is also aware of the number of times a volunteer has been in Nicaragua. They know which veterans can knowledgeably discuss Nicaraguan history and which can safely wander in the village unaccompanied. Yet most NGOs don't provide multi-tiered programming that will challenge veteran visitors not only to serve as guides and culture

⁶ One NGO which constructs donated houses in Nicaragua solicits donations for the cost of the house (\$2000) and the presence of the (foreign) donor at the house dedication during which a metal plaque with his/her name on it is affixed to the front wall of the house. Other NGOs encourage individual donors to come help construct the house that their donation has financed and meet the beneficiary family. Many have policies that discourage identification of personal donors, although institutional or group donor identities are usually openly acknowledged and even ritualized.

brokers for neophyte group members, but to go deeper into their personal quests for transcultural solidarity. NGOs, perhaps due to the relative youth of the volunteer movement and its exponential growth, do not offer a second level of volunteer experience.

Challenges toward deeper solidarity happen individually and circumstantially. There is no planned intensification from year to year. Each trip itinerary assumes little understanding of (and little ongoing commitment to) Nicaragua on the part of group members. NGOs utilize the fact that there are knowledgeable, experienced, and committed people among the group members to provide veteran leadership and hence a lower anxiety level for the neophytes. This leadership can make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful trip, from an NGO staff's viewpoint. NGOs encourage individuals to deepen their involvement as they show an interest, and are offered opportunities for longer-term service or increased leadership, as the needs of the organization require. NGO programming of trips is complex because they are relating to three different entities (the individual volunteer, the current group, and the sending organization) simultaneously.

Among those NGOs that aspire to foster solidarity, it is often program objectives that are offered to the visitors as a proxy for solidarity with the rural Nicaraguans among whom they work.⁷ The collapsing of solidarity with rural Nicaraguans into solidarity with a development program is done pre-reflectively. Structurally it is based on fiscal, logistical, and political constraints under which small civil-society organizations operate. Conceptually it is based on a reduction of transcultural solidarity to material or

⁷ for instance, asserting that building a terrace for soil conservation is to be in solidarity with a rural village

organizational transactions. In other cases, NGOs specifically avoid claiming to foster solidarity between North Americans and Nicaraguans, because they consider it an unrealistic objective for short-term experiences.

The NGO staff support solidarity formation discursively when they construct their program activities as popular, consensual, and, in some cases, democratic. Many rural development NGOs, because of their presence in, and knowledge of, the communities where they work, believe that they are community-based organizations, in the sense that the community feels ownership of the NGO program activities. In some cases, data support that belief; in other cases not, depending on the mode of operation of the NGO. The limited cultural competency of the NGO staff themselves *vis a vis* the residents of their service area is sometimes a function of unreflective paternalism of expatriates or middle class professionals and is bolstered by donor-driven dynamics of non-profit corporate structures. The complexity of NGO corporate identities and roles in the Nicaraguan countryside is explored at length in Chapter 5.

Nicaragua as Site for Solidarity Travel

Nicaragua is a unique stage on which to see globalization performed. Since prehistory it has been a key link in global culture flows. For 20 millennia the flows were North/South, then just 500 years ago they turned East/West. Now the geo-political poles have spun; they are now North/South again and East/West. Nicaragua remains the bridge between the continents; the passage between oceans. Nicaragua is a post-modernity that elides the space/time continuum, it is a central periphery, between centers, yet not the center; accessible, yet remote.

Once the site of what Spanish chroniclers described as a Garden of Eden (Oviedo y Valdéz 1855/1547) Nicaragua has become now and again a Hades on earth for many of

its inhabitants. It is a country of serene tranquility that frequently suffers from major “natural” and social cataclysms. Once the hope of world socialism, Nicaragua is now the darling of late global capitalism. A territory where the people once wanted for nothing now finds itself listed at the bottom of the hemispheric prosperity charts, with most of its inhabitants indigent. Its people are renowned both for their hospitality and receptivity to others and for their visceral resistance and fierce opposition to those who would pose as their betters. They are the *Güegüense*, the wise and mischievous elder who understands full well when the coloniality of power is being wielded against him and uses his own relative weakness to ridicule that power to its face and to confound its intentions (Arellano 1993).

Nicaragua is a crucial laboratory in which to observe transnational civil society at work because of four important factors. First, it has a revolutionary history, one in which a mixed (socialist/capitalist) economy was practiced in a unique form for a brief span and imprinted itself in the consciousness of a significant portion of the population. This historical process, has colored everything from national politics to international tourism (Babb 2004). The Nicaraguan revolutionary movements of the 20th century were as much about nationalism, and freedom from “Yankee” hegemony, as they were about alternative economic systems (Paige 1997). This nationalist discourse exists currently in both a Sandinista and a Liberal form but is presently subjugated to the discourse of globalization.

Second, Nicaragua is one of two countries⁸ on the globe where such a plethora of NGOs have structural significance for the governability of the country (O’Neill 2004).

⁸ According to O’Neill (2004) Mozambique is the other.

With 4000 NGOs (Briones 2004) channeling 70% of the foreign aid (CAPRI 1996) or more than 20% of the GDP, Nicaragua is a study in NGO hyper concentration which affects other organs of civil society as well as state and market sectors.

Third, it is one of the countries where the U.S. and the corporate entities that shape its bilateral policy have managed, with a couple of brief hiatuses⁹, to exert dominance over Nicaraguan political life for 150 years.(LaFeber 1993). Consequently, Nicaragua's cash economy both from its colonial history under Spain and England and its neo-colonial history under the U.S. has been structured around mineral and forest product extraction and agro-industrial exports for foreign consumption. When this history is combined with the receptivity of present governmental and commercial leadership to corporate globalization, Nicaragua is notable for its foreign investment friendliness and the openness of its markets. Nicaragua's accession to a global division of labor and the maintenance of enclave economies on its territory is codified in the recent CAFTA free-investment agreement.

Fourth, due to several historical factors, including disasters of natural and human origin, ranging from earthquakes and hurricanes to colonization, plagues, wars, and economic ruin, Nicaragua has remained fragmented ethnically, culturally, politically, and economically. This fragmentation has militated against the "imagined community" (Anderson 1991/1983) on which strong nationhood is built. U.S. aggression against both Liberal and Sandinista visions of Nicaraguan nationhood prevented their long-term consolidation as dominant discourses. On the other, hand these same factors have played

⁹ The José Santos Zelaya administration (1893-1909) and the FSLN (Sandinista) administration (1979 – 1990) both, in their own ways, strove to maintain sovereignty from the United States.

a role in developing a counter discourse of rebelliousness and nationalism which fuels both counter hegemonic social movements and populist *caudillismo* today.

A Continuum of Short Term Volunteer Experience

Volunteer Vacationers

When individuals first set foot on Nicaraguan soil they are not a *tabla rasa*. Rather, they come with Nicaragua already imagined. From what they have heard and read, they have visions and of what it will be; they have generated expectations and hopes, premonitions and fears. For some, Nicaragua is a hostile badlands in which armed bands carrying automatic rifles, hijack busses of foreigners, and steal from and even rape them. (This has actually happened to short term volunteers in Central America but not in Nicaragua).¹⁰ For others, it is a paradise of lakes, volcanoes, rainforests, and beaches, a relatively undiscovered tourists' paradise. For still others, who are leaving their native soil for the first time, it is a cultural adventure into the unknown, a chance to wander among a people whose customs are mysterious. The images are more numerous than the travelers themselves, for each traveler brings a kaleidoscope of contrasting fantasies. For North Americans raised in certain religious and political circles during the last quarter of the 20th century imaginaries of Central America are filled with powerful images of heroes and martyrs that call forth dimensions of radical political and religious commitments.

Because the first time visitors usually know more about the geography and culture of Nicaragua than about the individuals or families who reside there, the types identification they have are often faceless and amorphous. It is the exotic, the different,

¹⁰ In July of 2004 a group of high school age volunteers and their chaperones for one of the NGOs researched here was hijacked while traveling between cities in Guatemala. All valuables were stolen but no one was harmed. Two years earlier, also in Guatemala, group of anthropology students from a college in the United States were hijacked and several students raped.

the mystifying that attracts. It is the challenge of testing oneself under adverse and unforeseen conditions and of helping “others.” I encountered no circumstance where any group prior to their departure met a villager. That is why veteran volunteers are crucially important; they supply the *testimonio*, the witness, to what is to come. They are guides through a maze of inoculations for tropical diseases, an orientation to a rural *mestizo* culture, and possess knowledge of how to speak and act. They help newcomers negotiate one of the most anxiety-ridden passages, the pre-departure preparations when little is known and much is feared. The veterans are the travelers’ security until they enter the embrace of those who will care for them while they are in Nicaragua.

The visitors rely on this eyewitness testimony, not only to understand what Nicaragua is like, but also what it is like to spend two weeks under the guardianship of the NGO whose representatives will be at the airport to greet them. They don’t have to worry about what to see, what to do, or whom to meet. The schedule has been taken care of. They don’t need to be concerned about sanitation issues. All food and water needs are provided for. Vaccinations and access to medical care has been pre-arranged. Translation, orientation and constant accompaniment help them bridge linguistic and cultural barriers. They don’t need to worry about the vulnerability of being alone, for they will always be with the group. They don’t need to learn the currency or prices to avoid being swindled, because others will do the purchasing or advise on transactions. Visitors don’t need to explain to the community residents their reason for being there, it has already been established that they are coming to help. They don’t need to decide how they will enter the community where they will work, since introductory rituals have been planned. They need not think about what tools or supplies or even skills they will need to

do their jobs. The Nicaraguan work team is accustomed to working with North Americans who lack the necessary linguistic and craft skills. In short, visitors are cared for almost as if they were children. But childhood is not a time of total tranquility. And as we shall see in chapter six, physical, mental, and emotional discomfort are part of the first volunteer experience. It cannot be otherwise.

Weekends usually involve touring. Sightseeing among the mountains, volcanoes, lakes, rainforests, and ocean beaches are common weekend activities, as is the obligatory afternoon at the artisans' market to shop for souvenirs. After a week of camping in the village, often it is the creature comforts of a tourist hotel that are more appreciated than the surrounding scenery.

The dimension of volunteering, of doing something, looms large with the volunteer vacationers, especially the neophytes, as their skills of relating cross-culturally are often rudimentary. Their self-justification for their trip is the quantity and quality of the work that they leave as their legacy. There is an unexamined belief in the efficacy of their work, due to their confidence in the NGO that sponsors the project and the presence of locals who will personally benefit from it.

So the first trip to Nicaragua is made by individuals for whom volunteering and vacationing take precedent over some of the preoccupations that concern their peers who have transitioned into development tourism or even solidarity travel.

Development Tourism

As with any taxonomy, the tripartite division of short term visitors into volunteer vacationers (VV), development tourists (DT), and solidarity travelers (ST) involves creating categories which don't capture the complexity of individual humans, so that any

given volunteer may exhibit attributes of all three.¹¹ Yet volunteers tend to favor one of the three categories. Since every volunteer comes to Nicaragua with their own experience base it is possible for them to have gone through some of these personal adjustments prior to arrival. Volunteers transition across these three subject positions with increased experience. As the median age for VVs becomes younger and such trips become institutionalized as adolescent educational experiences, the cultural dynamics of North American rites of passage into adulthood will influence the subjective significance of the phenomenon.

DTs retain interest in the exotic that is found in VVs, but with diminished fear of the unknown. Excitement, which begets adventure in a DT, displaces the anxiety the VV exhibits. DTs don't seek to go only where they have been advised to go, rather they seek out alternative destinations or sites, within group destinations, to explore on their own or with a friend. They look for contact with locals a higher percentage of their time than the VVs do, and they take greater risks communicating.

DTs' appreciation of the NGO's role is more nuanced than that of the VVs. They have been on more than one trip and often to more than one locale. So they are capable of comparing the adequacy of the logistic preparations made for them in the separate instances. Sometimes they have been in countries besides Nicaragua and so are capable of comparing what appear to be "national" differences between the NGOs and the cultures. DTs are often more concerned about the implicit agreement with the village about how much and what type of work their group should accomplish. They have a sense of responsibility for the group's performance, not just their own accomplishments.

¹¹ Refer to figure 7-1 -in Chapter seven.

They are much more appreciative of the mutual work arrangements between Nicaraguans and North Americans, and they consider it a problem if North Americans are working on their own, without the participation of Nicaraguans. They don't assume that the Nicaraguans need North Americans to complete the project at hand.

DTs are less likely than VVs to assume that the behavior of each group member will reflect badly on the entire group in the eyes of Nicaraguans. That is, their ability to perceive individuality in Nicaraguans allows them to assume that Nicaraguans are equally capable of such distinctions. Nonetheless, since they feel a greater responsibility, they are also more likely to confront what they consider inappropriate behavior by group members. DTs are less fascinated by some of the details of Nicaraguan cultural life, because they have come to take them for granted

DTs become much more aware of the boundary between the NGO and the community. They don't confuse NGO leadership with community leadership. They have more awareness of the role of the NGO in the community including its program limits and its centralized decision-making. DTs are more aware of internal NGO staff struggles and the complexity of the issues that lead to such tensions.

DTs are much more aware of how their visit impacts the NGO budget. Often it is the DT that is invited to and accepts membership on the NGO board of directors. DTs have the experiential base to challenge the NGO to address development needs that are not being met. When the NGO indicates a reluctance to diversify it is usually a DT who invests personal time and resources in trying to organize a development initiative to deal with that additional perceived need. Most of those who found new NGOs and begin

bringing groups to Nicaragua have moved into the category of Solidarity Traveler by that time.

Solidarity Travelers

STs visit new places and meet new people, but their itineraries take them to less visited communities, where foreigners are not common. The STs seek to meet Nicaraguans who are doing social analysis and community organizing on the local level. They may work through NGOs but social movements pique their interest more. STs enjoy learning local customs and have a closer identification with the local relations of production than those who assume a modernist stance from the beginning, as DTs might, or as VVs almost inevitably will. In other words, they can grasp the viability of the Nicaraguan family farm and some of the conditions which make farming feasible or not. The STs have a much more nuanced understanding of the role of the market and the effects of corporate capitalism on rural zones than either the VV or the DT.

Solidarity travelers sometimes invest themselves long term in one community, and invariably they rely on deepening their relationships with Nicaraguans as a way to be more effective as a solidarity worker. STs see their most important (if not their most enjoyable) role working not in Nicaragua but rather in the U. S. They know that teaching others about Nicaragua and the social analysis process may likely result in more U.S. citizens involving themselves with Nicaragua. It can also produce policy changes at various levels of government that the ST considers of greater importance than the material aid he/she might be able to send.

One sort of visitor that may be considered as a type of solidarity traveler are what Lawrence Ferlinghetti referred to as “tourists of revolution.”¹² These political travelers select their destinations based on political and economic self-determination and sovereignty that a popular movement exhibits *vis a vis* the global neo-liberal market system¹³. In some cases their solidarity could be to socialists or other movements that seek a more equitable economic system. Sometimes tourists of resistance may be visiting victims communities in areas of armed struggle. In my consideration of STs in Nicaragua I include those whose commitment is to the self-determination of the marginalized members of Nicaraguan society, regardless of what resistance or political system they might consider optimum.

DTs are more likely to return to familiar territory, seeing incremental and small-scale projects as important for sustainable development. STs are interested in the process of mutual liberation as well as the particular persons who are the occasion to spark that liberatory process. They may be susceptible to disillusionment when they meet individuals who are not as pure in motive or practice as their resistance rhetoric pretends. It is easier to be in solidarity with heroes and martyrs than people. It was the heroic examples of ordinary Nicaraguans that inspired the first solidarity movement in the 1970s and 80s.

Development of a Research Topic

Any research program is the dynamic product of the confluence of an ethnographer, the ethnographer’s subjects and the historical juncture that provides the context and

¹² Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. 1984 *Seven Days in Nicaragua Libre*. San Francisco:City Lights Books, cited in Babb 2001:249

¹³ There is evidence that solidarity volunteers and organizations shifted interest from Nicaragua to Columbia, Cuba and Chiapas after the eclipse of the Sandinista revolutionary government.

motive for the study. The self of the ethnographer include markers of gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, class, social network, professional formation, ideological development, theoretical and emotional propensities, etc. Each of these can be viewed from the perspective ascribed by the ethnographer themselves, that is identity, or that assigned by someone else, the ethnographer's social location. This self provides what feminist theoreticians refer to as the "standpoint" of the researcher (Gubrium and Holstein 1997; Lincoln and Denzin 2003). This standpoint is an element of all academic work. Those who seek to be objective must factor in the standpoint of the researcher, the biases of the operative theory and the emic perspectives of the participants in the research project (Haraway 2003).

In this chapter I will speak briefly about the personal, professional and theoretical elements of my standpoint, in a narrative style to better communicate its dynamic ongoing construction¹⁴. In chapter three I deal in more detail with epistemology and methodological considerations that flow from this standpoint.

A Personal Narrative:

Aviation and Empire

I was born into aviation. I first flew in an airplane *in utero*. My father was towing signs behind his bi-plane on Miami Beach before I was born, and was crop dusting cotton in the Mississippi Delta during my first year. As a young child I remember the sensation of swinging in flight, supported on the fuselage of the bi-plane by my armpits with my

¹⁴ Experience, if it is to be meaningful, must be presented in a story that has a beginning, middle and an end. Significant experience, liminal moments and turning points embedded in narrative supply context. See Lincoln and Denzin, eds.(2003). Narratives of historical experience can destabilize received truths and locate debate in the complexities and contradictions of historical life Chandra Mohanty (2003).

feet dangling within the 200 gallon tank that on other occasions contained insecticide or fertilizer.

As a 10 year old I saw, heard and smelled the fauna of South America as cages of living and dying animals were unloaded at the Miami International Airport's cargo terminal in the dead of night. I was witnessing the open veins of Latin America that Eduardo Galleano would write of 15 years later.

My father became an airline pilot, a pilot for a tropical fish importing business, a flight instructor, and a test pilot. We used aircraft for family trips and to hunt treasure in the Caribbean. My father told stories of the beauty of Hawaii, the devastation of Hiroshima and the exoticism of Amazonia. His tales impressed on me that the globe is both circumnavigable and fragile.

But if I was born into aviation, I was born, as well, into the empire that it served. Airpower enabled the U.S. to emerge intact from a war that devastated the economies of most other developed nations. Aviation executed the immolations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: acts of total war that my father assured me made certain that he, an infantryman in the planned US invasion of Japan, would live and that I could be born. The annihilation of Japanese men, women, and children was justified by my birth.

It was a similar imperial logic that assured me as a young adult that my personal security was dependent on the napalming of villages and the carpet-bombing of cities and forests in Indochina. But already the contradictions were too evident and the globe had become too small to make such arguments credible. Even as technology was being employed for imperial purposes, faith was blowing winds of change across world.

The Church and Social Movements

When I reached the tender age of 13 I entered a seminary to study for the Roman Catholic priesthood. This was in 1964, the year in which Vatican II, convened by Pope John XXIII to “open up the windows of the church,” was ending. Over a period of four years 2500 bishops from around the world hammered out 13 documents, including a new constitution for the Church. Those documents, treating of a variety of theological themes turned the Church toward the world and away from the defensive social stance and conservative politics that it had held since the Counter Reformation.

The ecclesial ferment of the 60s and early 70s was global and it engendered a renaissance in the Church, which valued diversity and decentralization over the uniformity and centralized authority that had held sway for 500 years. This renovation also caused the Church’s missionary practice to be reexamined in light of a more ecumenical theology and the insights of anthropology and other social sciences (Evans, et al. 1993). The new missionaries were going to be converted as much as to convert.

The Church hierarchy, embedded in the colonial structures of the European nation-states as bearer of Christian civilization to the colonies, began to see that if it cared about the temporal welfare of the majority of its believers - peoples of Asia, Africa, and the Americas - then it could no longer side with the colonizers or their successors. The church needed to indigenize and to stand with the people in their suffering. In short, it needed to resist the post-WWII economic order that was being marshaled in by the U.S. and other developed nations of the North by means of their allies, the neo-colonial elites in the South.

Latin America was the continent on which this revolutionary Christian vision was most clearly articulated and put into pastoral practice. It was the Latin American

liberation theologians, resonating with dependency sociologists and economists, who stated the rationale, but the peasants and their priests and nuns provided the pastoral motivation and models that changed the Church and society from the grassroots up. It was finally in Medellin, Colombia, in 1968, that the Conference of Latin American Bishops articulated that the Catholic Church was being called to make a “fundamental option” for the poor (Hobgood 1991)¹⁵majority. All Christians were called to be in solidarity with the poor and to pursue lives that would lead to their liberation from suffering caused by the sinful structures of the world economy. This was a pastoral theology which had first been articulated in papal encyclicals supporting the organization of the working class in Europe in the latter 19th and early 20th centuries, A body of ecclesial literature which supported social justice caused rethinking of the role of the church and its alliances with oligarchies around the world¹⁶.

My decade in Catholic seminaries studying philosophy, theology and the social sciences gave me an inside view of liberation ecclesiology as practiced in Latin America.

I realized the systemic implications of the restructuring of the church around the people rather than the hierarchy and urged the North American Church to adapt pastoral models being developed in Latin America (Fogarty 1980). I understood that solidarity with the poor of Latin America was very much a two way street. We needed them, for the renewal of the Church and North American society, as much as they needed support

¹⁵ option for the poor is used in Catholic social teaching to mean an option for militant poor people who are opted for because, in their struggle against structures of exploitation and oppression, they exemplify human dignity at work.

¹⁶ Including papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum*, *Quadragesimo Anno*, *Mater et Magistra*, *Pacem in Terris*, and Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*.

with their struggles for social justice. Not all my time was spent in the classroom, as college students were the shock troops of the anti-Vietnam war protests and, to a lesser extent, the civil rights movements, which Dr. Martin Luther King brought together before his assassination.

As the war in Vietnam was winding down due to lack of popular support here and lack of military success there, the incipient conflicts in Central and South America were heating up. Cuba had become a socialist presence in the hemisphere. The cold war came to dominate the North/South axis discourse. Instead of Vietnamese peasants it was Latin American peasants who were labeled by the U.S. government as the vanguard of world communism (Grandin 2004).

Presbyterians provided leadership for the U.S. sanctuary and solidarity movements with Central America (PCUSA 1982)¹⁷ in the early '80s. But Catholics were active as well. They had been exposed to 100 years of social justice teachings, and most of those massacred or disappearing were Catholics. Being a catechist in Central America was a dangerous calling (Nepstad 1996:116-117).

The poverty of our Church was celebrated in the death of our priests, our catechists, and our peasants. Each day, for Monseñor (archbishop) Romero and for each one of us, it was clearer that our poor Church was condemned to be crucified and killed just as Christ had been.(Anonymous 1988:102)¹⁸

As class conflict heated up, tens of thousands of the poor were killed. Hundreds of thousands fled North. Each one had eyewitness accounts of the atrocities that their

¹⁷ By 1982 the PCUSA's 194th General Assembly had encouraged the illegal act of providing sanctuary to Central American refugees in their churches as increasing numbers were fleeing for their lives from US funded counterinsurgency initiatives of Central American militaries (PCUSA, 1983:18).

¹⁸ [my translation]

families and friends had suffered at the hands of the military or para-military forces of the oligarchies of Central America.

Throughout the '70s and '80s the escalating conflict in Central America waged by militaries supplied with munitions and training from the U. S., along with a nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union, led to the growth of what have been called peace movement organizations (PMOs).(Pagnucco 1996). Among these were several I belonged to, including the Catholic Worker Movement, Pax Christi USA, and the Catholic Peace Fellowship. As Panucco observes in his study of Pax Christi, the faith-based groups were much more likely to engage in what he terms “unruly activities,” or direct non-violent actions of various kinds, than were their secular counterparts who devoted themselves to more conventional political tactics. I believe that the religious organizations (although Panucco’s study failed to identify this) were more militant because of their spiritual solidarity with southern brothers and sisters who were risking their lives daily. The “Pledge of Resistance,” which originated with 30 national PMOs and numerous local and regional ones after the U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1984, sought to deter a similar invasion of Central America. It threatened massive non-violent direct action and occupation of federal buildings in many of the communities across the nation. The pledge was not hollow, as thousands of “affinity groups” planned and practiced direct action throughout 1985.

By 1986 Witness for Peace, another PMO, was bringing thousands of North Americans to Nicaragua to document the atrocities being committed against Nicaraguans by the U.S.-funded Contras and to stand in solidarity with *campesinos* in the war zones.

These short term (two week) delegations came from every state. My wife participated in the first one from Florida.

A Professional Narrative

Philosophy and Theology

One of the first influences on my ideas of solidarity and my later choices of affiliation with social movements for peace and justice was my training in philosophy and theology under the tutelage of the Church. My early education in religion in high school and junior college were pre-Vatican II in character, tending toward apologetics for the status quo of Church and society. My later training in upper division college and graduate school was largely a refutation of that security and a quest for understanding what Christianity could become in a more equitable 20th century. The stark contrast between the two *weltenshaungs* led to profound crises of identity for those of us studying for church careers at that time, as it did for many in the general church population during the 1970s. The end of the colonial period in history was ushering in new theological heuristics.

The philosophy that I internalized helped me to understand the inadequacy of the Cartesian subject/object duality underpinning the modern materialist/idealist debate¹⁹. It was difficult to see how such duality could lead us into a non-Eurocentric, post-colonial world. Instead, existential phenomenology pointed me toward a non-metaphysical ontology. By grasping reality as human experience, I could understand the contributions that both structuralism and post-structuralism brought to social analysis. Communal

¹⁹ My first professor of anthropological theory opened the semester with the claim that all anthropologists had to choose between materialism and idealism; a binary opposition that I had earlier synthesized under the category of human experience.

experience, or history, became for me the data, which when read critically, could provide a direction for the future. Postcolonial and , later, feminist critiques helped me to problematize western history and social science (among which I would include education and theology) (Chakrabarty 2000).

Religion and Education

My focus during college and graduate school, until entering anthropology, was on the interface between religion and education. I was fascinated by the idea of divine revelation, and how that could be shared among people by analysis of personal experience. Eventually this led me to the question of how human solidarity might be operationalized. During this time I left the seminary and sought a career in religious education as a professionally trained layman.

In the 70s I became aware of the work of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1999) and the influence of his method in incorporating social analysis in literacy training. Freire's method, developed to promote a liberatory education, could be adapted to education for justice in the U.S. because, as Friere recognized, both the middle class and the popular classes required liberation, though from different aspects of oppression.

During my career as a religious educator I became involved in the long tradition of social-justice activism that finds a scriptural basis in the Hebrew prophets and in the Christian Gospels, and affiliated with various religious movements for social-justice, as mentioned earlier. Exposure to liberation theology and testimonies of base Christian communities in Latin America revealed connections between religious solidarity and equitable political economies. I came to understand the underdevelopment of Latin American economies not as an unfortunate happenstance for the destitute majority, but as a foreseeable consequence of decisions by the wealthy minority.

Solidary Activism

As I became acquainted with people who reflected out of their lives of struggle against social injustice, I learned how to help people conscientize themselves in group settings. I was involved in nonviolent direct action and in educational events to deepen my own awareness and the awareness of others concerning the costs of social injustice and to develop alternatives to it.

After years of solidarity work with Central Americans in the U.S., my family moved to Nicaragua to do development work during the last three years under its revolutionary government. For me solidarity was never primarily about partisan politics or economic models. I was most preoccupied with the unity of human spirit or consciousness that religion spoke to. But organized religion had failed to follow through on the implications of that unity. It had largely missed its social mission to convince *homo sapiens* that the species was important to preserve in its diverse entirety. Rather, religion became, sociologically speaking, another particularity which reinforced ethnocentricity. Ecumenism has never become the dominant practice of world religions. Rather, once Christianity wedded Constantinian empire, political, and ecclesial power forged a theocratic ideology that remains one of the bulwarks of parochialism in a religiously diverse world. Religious differences, rather than coordinating in a planetary fellowship, seem as implicated as secular differences in the construction of global anti-solidarity or alienation.

Anthropology

I needed a standpoint outside the confines of confessionary religion which would allow me to examine human solidarity more wholistically. I decided anthropology might be the discipline from which to better understand both particularity and universals of

human culture. If religion was too fragmented to give rise to human solidarity then perhaps anthropology, which purports to study human culture *in se*, could offer the perspective from which to understand how human solidarity coheres. I made this choice even as I became aware of anthropology's colonial roots.

A Theoretical Narrative

My *entre* into anthropology began as a search for a perspective that might provide purchase for a critique of my own culture (Marcus and Fischer 1986). I was, and still am, trying to combine a global perspective and commitment to marginalized peoples that grew out of Catholic liberation ecclesiology (Boff 1985), a political economy that grew out of world systems theory (Wallerstein 1974; 1980) and a post-colonialist (Bhabha 1994; Said 1978) and post-structuralist cultural production theory (Armstrong 2001).

Post-Structuralism

Foucault (1972; 1978; 1980) convinced me that all discourse is both material and political. He also showed me that power is most evident in discourses at the periphery. It was this insight that led me to believe that Central America held academic as well as spiritual importance for North America.

It is in the constant mutual redefinition of each other that Central Americans and North Americans find their respective identities. Ethnography then becomes a method to discover if the subjectivities being constructed between members of each culture by means of direct interpersonal contact might be able to subvert the dominant discourses constructed at the level of nation states and congealed in international policy and stereotypical mass media images. Can counter-hegemonic discourses be constructed from small-scale cross-cultural shared experiences? If every day lifeways reflect global political economics as well as historical particularities, then cross-cultural interpersonal

communication creates conditions for the possibility of identity constructions that differ from the stereotypical ones employed to generate international policy. Particularly if the discourse framing the contact contains counter-hegemonic elements, then participants are forced to revisit their cultures of origin with a critical perspective. This concerns the politics of cultural struggle (Williams 1991), specifically the construction of what Gramsci called an alternative hegemony. Such counter-discourse can become an element of a war of position to effect a conquest of civil society (Gramsci, Prison Notebooks VI,7) in.(Forgacs 2000)

Post-structuralism, informed by semiotics and literary criticism, led to sophisticated forms of cultural production theory incorporating insights from media studies and symbolic anthropology. Post Structuralism's main weakness as exemplified in Foucault, is that even though resistance to discursive and institutional hegemony is affirmed²⁰, it is un-theorized and thus un-strategized except at the micro level of the person, not at the level of institutions (Hoy 1986). The specifics of discursive political resistance are not systematically analyzed before Foucault dives into his ethics of subjectivity. While this prevents the construction of resistance tactics based on pre-identified markers of difference and avoids the economic reductionism of orthodox Marxism, it can lead to disempowerment (Jameson 1984) and ultimately an almost Baudrillardian dystopianism as Geertz (1988) among others, has observed. Ortner (2005) raises a distinct but related point; that Foucault's stress on the contingency of historical conjunctures ends up de-

²⁰ "Where there is power there is resistance...It is coextensive with power and absolutely its contemporary. As soon as there is a power relationship there is the possibility of resistance. We can never be ensnared by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy (Foucault 1988:¹²³).

humanizing, or de-subjectifying, history. Little room is left for subject agency. In this regard, Foucault has not strayed far from his structuralist roots.

Post-structuralism provides the critical tools to see power at work and to suggest strategies to counter hegemony, but it does not articulate how power coalesces and flows in directional as well as disperse ways. Neo-marxism and political ecology identify the material resource flows that indicate power's directionality.

Neo-marxism (Forgacs 2000) supplies unique insights into the workings of late capitalism as it dominates other competing relations of production. Especially salient in Nicaragua is understanding how gender, race, and ethnic differences are utilized to regenerate socio-economic hierarchies after the dethroning of a kinship-based dynasty and a brief revolutionary redistribution of resources.

Nicaragua's current combination of contrasting revolutionary and neo-liberal political rhetoric mobilized by 2 *caudillo*-led political parties who openly share power, results in an oppositional political discourse accompanied by a unitary political practice. The two primary political parties seek to polarize the rhetoric and thereby ideologically consolidate their respective constituencies while controlling the state by balancing official appointments. Multi-lateral lending agency control of the domestic budget through structural adjustment and conditional financing, free both parties from accountability for their rhetoric. Combined discursive and material research strategies are required to sort out why and how contradictory political discourses lead to consolidation of power for each without breaching unitary institutions such as the state (Rocha 2004).

The political ecology approach also provides a clear understanding of our place as one species among thousands in our ecosystem. The unsustainability of the present rate of human consumption found in the North (with manufactured from raw materials extracted from the South utilizing southern labor) is transparent to political ecological analysis. The consequences of unsustainable consumption impact different populations differently depending on their vulnerability. Political ecology provides graduated scales of analysis that highlight the interrelatedness of global physical and economic phenomena. Useful political ecology is rooted not in an equilibrium seeking structural functionalism but rather in a historical, dynamic and ethnographically informed understanding of human political systems.

Situated Knowledges

Every ethnography is the product of an ethnographer who (in addition to studying a particular people locatable in time and space) brings his/her subject position to the research. From this unique configuration of factors arises the central ethnographic question.

Ethnographers who are convinced that the importance of their research is theoretical frame their research questions in abstract categories that might contribute cumulatively to science. Others (whose concerns tend more toward the pragmatic) phrase their questions in terms of solutions to practical problems. This theory/application tension in anthropology often devolves into a debate that distracts from praxis, the process of theoretically-informed-practice informing theory. This dialectic of reflection on empirically grasped data informs the way we construct and apply knowledge, and the way we ask subsequent questions.

If we lived in a perfect world, then we could justify unengaged anthropology, but until then ethical anthropology will be engaged²¹ with the existential issues of people at some level of intentionality on the part of the ethnographer.

In my search for a satisfactory resolution of the epistemological conundrum of the subjective and objective adequacy of human knowledge, I found Donna Haraway's feminist epistemology of strong objectivity and standpoint anthropology affirms each ethnographer's unique contribution while providing contextual standards. As she points out, both the epistemological relativism of radical social constructionism, which results in any ethnographic text having equal truth warrants, and the positivist claims for an immutable, ahistorical objective reality which can be described by assuming the objective standpoint, are what she calls "God tricks." In either case (though in diametrically opposed formulations) an ethnographer claims infallibility, and thus precludes scientific dialogue. True objectivity is that which not only acknowledges, but carefully elucidates, the standpoint of the ethnographer so that contextual validity of the ethnography can be judged from the standpoint of each of her/his peers.

This insight is crucial in my own work. I do not claim replicability or generalizability for it, but I do seek accuracy from my own standpoint, since "only partial perspective promises objective vision" (Haraway 2003). Partial perspective acquires validity not just epistemologically, but also ethically and politically. In standpoint epistemology, positioning is crucial to grounding knowledge. Taking a position from which to generate knowledge that challenges present forms of domination requires both

²¹ Heyman (2004) defines engaged anthropology as anthropology "involved in public issues" and a subset, action anthropology as that "in service of subordinate communities and populations". Accordingly this dissertation is both.

humility and community. One must acknowledge the partiality and situatedness of one's research findings. The limitations of my research will spur others on to investigate transcultural solidarity in new ways.

Habitus and Field

In my consternation at the present state of anthropology with its competing binaries of positivism and relativism, objectivity and subjectivity, materialism and idealism, structuralism and voluntarism, I sought a model that would offer synthetic concepts. It was with some enthusiasm that I discovered the work of Pierre Bourdieu. His attempts to describe social interaction and the institutions which arise from it as performance based resonated with my need to balance agency and structure in my own thought. The internalized rules of life that Bourdieu (1992) calls *habitus* provide a meaningful construct with which to understand discursive and corporeal practice of the participants in my study. What kind of social *field* is being constructed among the NGO, the visitors, and the villagers? What kind of *capital* is generated in this situation that can be used in each party's social transactions? What kinds of differentiation are creating *symbolic violence* of masked domination? Who are the beneficiaries and who the victims of those violent performances? Bourdieu continually cautions us to be skeptical of altruism. There is no such thing as disinterested behavior. Those of us who claim to be seeking equality for all can generate greater inequality. For instance, universal education is a powerful means to structuring inequality in society.

Bourdieu's concepts are useful because he presents social interaction as a contention for space, place and voice, a struggle for social survival. This is how I experienced the lives of the participants in my study. The *doxa*, or axiomatic beliefs, of neo-liberalism savages both the traditional values and the modern aspirations of rural

Nicaraguans, marginalizing them from political participation. As Roger Lancaster (1988) points out, the Nicaraguan revolution was based on a traditional religious sense of outrage against modern forms of oppression which broke all the rules of reciprocity. Class consciousness and solidarity could only be built when the symbolic violence of loyalty to the state became transparently suicidal or homicidal. The challenge of engaged anthropology in Nicaragua today is to provide a transparency that removes the legitimacy of practices that enable institutions to dispose of persons as objects, not subjects, of their own history. As citizens of the unsustainably consumptive one-third world we are part of the problem. Perhaps good ethnography can help us become more a part of the solution.

Overview of Dissertation

In this first chapter I have identified the issue of human solidarity formation as a crucial anthropological concern. I described the recent and growing phenomenon of volunteer vacationing and raised questions about its practice and potential. The data will show that the volunteer vacation has differential effects on the subjectivity of its participants. I introduced a taxonomy that included volunteer vacationers, development tourists and solidarity travelers. I also related my personal history to clarify my motivations, propensities, resources and limitations as an ethnographer.

Chapter two treats the theoretical focus of solidarity by tracing its genesis in various popular, institutional, and academic discourses from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and religion. This archeology of solidarity produces a working definition. Solidarity is analyzed as both a universal ideal and as a political technology. I distinguish between solidarity and altruism. In chapter two I also examine the literatures of development studies, tourism, peasant studies, development studies, and globalization for current issues impinging on transcultural solidarity. I examine identity and social

location as they are constructed from social markers of race, class, gender and nationality in the context of the volunteer encounter.

Chapter three presents my research design, operative epistemology, and corresponding methodologies. I describe the bi-cultural nature of the research team and participant population, and the complex issues of reflexivity that flow from our interaction within a multicultural phenomenon. The research sites are located, data-gathering methods described, and issues of confidentiality and collaboration are raised in this section. Adjustments to the research design required in field and final limitations of the study are also mentioned here.

Chapter four, considers the Nicaraguan historical context of my research through a chronologically organized political economy of the national project. The chapter analyzes the last 150 years of Nicaraguan experience, focusing first on the development of the elite owned and managed agro-export economy and then on the United States political hegemony that followed from international commercial alliances of the elite classes of the respective countries. The chapter ends with the consideration of the contemporary permutations of the two contrasting development models that have contended for support of the Nicaraguan populace since European contact.

Chapter five examines NGOs as key elements of the volunteer vacation phenomenon. I problematize the global role of NGOs as agents in transnational civil society, including their conservative and transformational functions in the present world order. Issues of scale and how NGOs function within the global networks by means of vertical and horizontal linkages is important to understanding both their potential and their structural constraints in constructing transcultural solidarity. The omnipresence of

NGOs in Nicaragua and the radical restriction of state prerogatives due to structural adjustment is an optimum context in which to re-imagine the NGO – nation/state articulation. Likewise NGO relationships with popular social movements reveal resistance and accommodation to neo-liberalism in the Nicaraguan countryside.

Chapter six focuses on the encounter itself. An introductory section narrates the birth and growth of the host NGO, analyzing the imaginaries that give rise to the most active solidarity travel organization operating between the United States and Nicaragua. Testimony of NGO leadership, volunteer vacationers, and Nicaraguan villagers provides multivocality to the study and illustrates the complexity of the subjectivities created by this practice.

Chapter seven offers a synthesis of the findings, showing how subjective and structural solidarity are differentially facilitated by symbolic and material conditions and practices of NGOs, visitors and villagers. I reassert the difference between altruistic service and transcultural solidarity, affirming a role for each. I distinguish between the realized and potential solidarity formation and note the implications of my research for current debates in studies of tourism, peasants, development and globalization. I conclude with recommendations for further research and practice.

CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOLIDARITY TRAVEL

A stalk of sage lights easily and burns quickly. Sage is about hot indignation and social protest. It is about the flash of special events that burn quickly and brightly and attract much attention and are quickly gone... 'And then we burn sweetgrass. Sweetgrass lights with difficulty, burns slowly and yields a long lingering smell. Sweetgrass is that other strength—the strength of patience, endurance, of consistent long-range planning and long hard work. ...Sweetgrass patience tells me to balance my indignation with the kind of work that will give us all something to celebrate the next time one of these [European 'discovery' of the Americas] celebrations comes along' ...²²

The sweetgrass solidarity that Robert Allen mentions above is not accomplished on a two-week volunteer vacation to a Nicaraguan village. But after the scent of sage has dispersed, if the institutional and personal circumstances are favorable, one can pick up the smell of sweetgrass with each inspiration that flows from an initial cross-cultural encounter.

Chapter Overview

I situate ethnography in the academy and within liberation anthropology, a particular type of applied advocacy anthropology. I define liberation anthropology as that which takes oppression as its ethnographic theme, marginalized peoples as its participants, history as its medium, periphery as its site, power analysis as its method and the forging of solidarity as its ethical charge.²³

²² Robert Allen, Warrior of the Osage Nation (1991)"The Sweetgrass Meaning of Solidarity: 500 Years of Resistance" *Sojourners*, January 1991:22-23.

²³ Ahmad judges that critical anthropology manages to create oppositions but without creating solidarities.

Ethnography is a reflexive process (both as an analysis of the ethnographer's subjectivity in relation to his participants, (Clifford 1988) and as an analysis of the academic sub-field of social science within which the anthropologist operates (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

"If we do as Clifford has suggested and investigate 'pervasive global processes unevenly at work' (Clifford 1988:17) we may be able to devise ethnographic techniques to probe the complex way in which people with very disparate images of reality find a way of acting collectively"(Nash 1992:291). As Tsing (2005:x) puts it, "where words mean something different across a divide, even as people agree to speak" and "where systematic misunderstanding, far from producing conflict, allows [people] to work together." I am attempting here to go a bit further and develop techniques that probe the complex solidarity of those with disparate cultural material conditions of life but who inter-relate their imaginaries (Appadurai 1991) and negotiate political alliances nonetheless. This process is material and structural as well as symbolic and subjective.

One of the global processes unevenly at work that Geertz alludes to is citizenship. We find in the practice of volunteer vacationing the ritual enactment of the encounter between two kinds of citizenship, the US version and the Nicaraguan version. Just as there is a division of labor in the productive activity of global manufacture, there is a division of political privilege in the performance of global mobility. While it might be tempting to bifurcate US citizenship as one which has the privilege of total mobility and Nicaraguan citizenship as one which keeps its members stationary, the ethnographic data lends important nuances to the inequality that exists between the two.

Even though Appadurai's (1991) ethnoscaples indicate global flows of people and ideas, boundaries nonetheless exist. But the boundaries which restrict and constrain global flows across regions impact different travelers differently. A US citizen's privilege to enter Nicaragua is never in actual question by either Nicaraguans or the United States.

In the following section entitled "problematizing solidarity," I offer a definition of solidarity and introduce an analysis of it as a philosophical concept, a social psychological affect, and a sociological and political consensus. Universal solidarity is the ultimate horizon of the affective and consensual types. The universal concept of solidarity includes elements of interdependence and reciprocity, which lead many to confuse it with altruism. At this point I suggest understanding the anthropological concept of solidarity as *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

"Bounded" solidarity (Portes 2000) refers to groups which possess solidarity among their members within a defined boundary. It is the politically operational form of solidarity. This bounded solidarity contains an affective emotional and/or a consensual, issue-oriented character. A four phase sequence in which solidarity is formed has emerged from the months of observations, interviews, focus groups, and surveys. I approach these four aspects first synchronically and then diachronically. I conclude this section by employing Bourdieu's concept of *mis-recognition*²⁴ to show how altruism is mistaken for solidarity.

²⁴ Misrecognition, according to Bourdieu, is the vulnerability to hegemony that members of a society suffer unless the hidden logics and effects which insure the maintenance of an unjust or symbolically violent social order are made transparent by social science. It is the proper vocation of the social scientist to open up political spaces of freedom by unmasking the social practices that enable mis-recognition. See Bourdieu & Waquant 1992: 198ff.

The third section deals with four cross-disciplinary sub-field literatures 1) tourism studies, 2) development studies, 3) peasant studies, and 4) globalization and transnational studies. Tourism can be understood as a search for self in light of the “other,” or the non-self. Subjectively, solidarity forms when technologies of tourism are used and then transcended in order to construct identities composed of transcultural identifications as well as distinctions. A subject position has been achieved in which we have met the native and they are us, and yet not us.

Development can be understood as the construction of modernities or possible futures in the present. Structurally, solidarity involves cooperating in the process of mutual empowerment towards new imagined futures that are culturally distinct but existentially interdependent. How can we construct respective alternative futures that value both diversity and human rights, thereby resisting global capitalism’s reduction of human subjectivity to that of consumer?

Peasant agriculture still constitutes one of the most common modes of livelihood. But that lifeway is rapidly changing in light of forces of global flows of resources, people, and technology. Solidarity with people who subsist in part from family horticulture and agriculture must take into account the forces that contend to support or eliminate current peasant lifestyles.

Solidarity travel can be theorized as a social phenomenon involving global flows of people, resources and ideas. The hegemony of late global capitalism necessitates analyzing transnational travel as a phenomenon of ‘globalization from above’ characterized by multi-lateral governance, corporate travel, and recreational tourism and simultaneously ‘globalization from below’ exemplified by forced migration, networks of

popular social movements, and human rights advocacy organizations. One involves a transnational capitalist class of the one-third world, and the other, the transnational popular classes of the two-thirds world.

Situating Solidarity within Liberation Anthropology

The justification for doing an ethnography that includes the interface between North Americans and Nicaraguans is to facilitate the solidarity that the subjects say they want. And to do it in such a way that power differentials are in some measure made more equitable. This is an awkward role for anthropologists. Often we are working for academic and applied agencies in ways that maintain power differentials are maintained by providing data for policy formulation and execution. And when, as in my case, the research is supported by agencies that imbricate in the power dynamics under analysis, the challenge of maintaining transparency and good faith with all parties becomes ethically and analytically challenging.

As Heyman (2004) claims, it is the possibility of articulating persuasive and practical counter-part ideals to the status quo that justifies anthropological analysis of power dynamics. Such ideals (always plural and flexible), when constructed from ethnographic sources from the community in question and other sources brought by the ethnographer, can provide powerful tools for constructing imaginaries that tend toward lessening symbolic and material oppression and creating space for political maneuver.

Tsing goes even further, asserting that

Universalism is implicated in both imperial schemes to control the world and liberatory mobilization for justice and empowerment. Universals beckon to elites and excluded alike (2005:9) But universals can never fulfill their promises of universality because engaged universals are affected by the conjunctural locality in which they must enlist their adherents (2005:8).

It is true that culture wars are not fought on a Plain of Armageddon in a titanic clash of civilizations resulting in a Hegelian end of history. On the other hand, it is disingenuous not to articulate multiple options for incremental change which distinguish practices of resistance from those of accommodation, and when, tactically, to engage in one rather than the other.

If one believes in subject agency, then the difference between resistance and accommodation is not just one of intentionality but has historical consequences. Such struggles may be characterized in cultural terms in any of their instantiations, but struggles for social justice are, as often as not, about personal and communal survival of society's most vulnerable (Nash 1992).

The Academy as Site of Liberation Anthropology

Thomas Jefferson saw the academy as an organization to critique church, state, and other institutions that come, through entropy, to represent only their own best interests; to "unmask their usurpations and monopolies of honors wealth and power." Admirable though that ideal might be, anthropologists have shown that academicians are both subject to the wiles of church and state and most obtuse to the institutional mis-recognition that the academy itself displays (Bourdieu 1984).

Some would draw clear distinctions between indoctrination and liberatory education.

There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Either it functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. - Richard Schull in Freire (2002:34)

My sense is that Schaul draws the conservative/liberatory binary too distinctly, yet his point echoes that of Foucault (1972:227): “Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the power it carries with it.” And later: “There is no knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations”(Foucault 1995/1975:27).

Coloniality of Power and the Representation of Modernity

Ethnographers are steeped in Eurocentricity. This coloniality of power which suffuses the academy creates a crisis of representation for its’ work. For, as Conquergood observes, critical theory seeks to uncover the politics of representations, and “Ethnographic authority is the empowering alignment between rhetorical strategy and political ideology (2003:371).” How ethnography gets its power, is key to the anthropological endeavor (Geertz 1988).

Messay Kebede (2004) describes the difficulties that development anthropology confronts when facing its own colonial past in Africa. Africans have been prevented by colonialism from being able to recuperate a pre-Eurocentric interpretation of Africa’s past and project a post-Eurocentric version of Africa’s future. An African paradigm of development is essential to enable Africa to do something other than replicate a European model of modernity. As the model of modernization used in global development is inherently Eurocentric, Africa will never be able to compare favorably with Europe in that type of development.

Some African scholars opt to overcome this conundrum by rediscovering an autochthonous African pre-colonial pre-history. Ethno-philosophers argue that Africa has its own cultural paradigms that can lead to a different modernity than the European one. Other, universalist, scholars maintain that Africa is now a post-colonial society that

has incorporated European values of modernity; and once the delay in development caused by colonialism is overcome, then Africa will be able to catch up with Europe and North America.

In regard to anthropology's role in the development regime, Kebede observes, "To say that anthropology is a product of Western rationality is to underline the goal of domination as the initial project of anthropology (Kebede 2004:121)." According to VJ. Mudimbe anthropology's works on Africa are not about Africa but about justifying the conquest/enslavement/colonization, and continued exploitation of the continent and its inhabitants. Anthropology does not describe difference so much as it constructs it (Mudimbe 1988:20). To de-colonize the mind of Africans, especially Western-educated ones, means transcending the stereotypes that Europeans have constructed in the consciousness of the Africans themselves. Mudimbe's solution is for African African scholars to read the "colonial library" from the point of view of an expatriate European, and to select from both sides of the Europe/Africa trait columns those elements from which they would choose to fashion a new pan-African mythology.

As Kebede notes, liberation of the African mind from Western paradigms of development are not even remotely possible without prior emancipation from categories of European thought. He states that deconstruction can unmask the cognitive politics of ethnocentricity, but only African freedom, subject agency, can offer an authentic African episteme. If development is built on freedom to choose then that future need be neither totally original (a binary opposition to eurocentric development) nor a reiteration (a not quite European modernity). Africa comes to freely choose another modernity that needs not be authenticated on the basis of its distance from or proximity to Europe.

Kebede, unfortunately, does not discuss Achille Mbembe's assertion that psychically unresolved historical experiences of slavery, colonialism and apartheid have yet to be worked into an interpretive schema for the construction of African selves both corporately and individually (Mbembe 2002). This unfinished psycho-historical task, according to Mbembe, prevents the consolidation of a pan-African myth of enough coherence to make a political difference. Kebede's opting for subject agency over structural constraints is reminiscent of A.K Appiah's "African identity in formation", without dominant tropes to constrict it (Appiah 1992).

Kebede's insights into how African development is represented is helpful in understanding the subjective dimensions of our conundrum in the North American/Central American interface. In the Nicaragua/U.S. interface specifically corporate globalization is being offered by the respective governments and multilateral finance agencies as the only modern model of development as opposed to the "traditional" ways; while failing to adequately address the ecological devastation that colonial and post-colonial export oriented regimes have wrought. Local models of development being offered from below, by popular social movements, are framed as obstructionist in part because they are not presented as a pan-American or global imaginary like that offered by corporations and nation-states.

For Central Americans to be free to choose an imagined future that is not dictated by the development-complex, they must have images of their own modernities. Anthropologists who value cultural relativism will assist in Mesoamerican constructions of modernity that preserve unique historical trajectories while engaging with other cultures. In a cross cultural encounter like volunteer vacationing anthropological insight

can assist in elucidating power dynamics. In this way cultural and human rights can better be protected by all parties.

A History of Engagement and Application

Two tasks must be accomplished to situate solidarity travel within an anthropology of liberation. The first is to review the historical trajectory of the applied orientation in anthropology. This task is only necessary because in the Anglo tradition of anthropology (in distinction with, for instance, the Mexican tradition) (Gonzalez 2004) there has been a tendency to separate theory from practice; a distinction that in many ways protects the political status quo in society. Anthropology is inevitably applied. Sometimes it is applied by anthropologists and sometimes by others. Because engagement and praxis have been a part of anthropological tradition since its colonial beginnings it follows that applied and academic anthropology have played a role in structuring racism, colonialism, and comparable forms of othering. Anthropology has enabled Eurocentric hegemony as well as specific forms of resistance to it.

Liberation anthropology is an epistemologically and politically critical applied anthropology, yet one that breaks from the tradition of creating difference in service to Eurocentric capitalism. Solidarity is a value and practice that must undergird it. When solidarity informs anthropology then its application, for instance in the field of development, looks significantly different than standard development anthropology. It is the ability to discern the value of solidarity in anthropology and the *habitus* of solidarity in development that gives force to the argument that, from an anthropological perspective, solidarity travel creates more political options than simple volunteer vacationing.

Let us consider two different reflections on the purpose of anthropology. For Edward Burnett Tylor, the first professor of anthropology at Oxford University, it is to reconstruct the evolution of culture, from primitive beginnings to the modern civilized state (Tylor 1996/1871). This is a unitary evolutionist view, one which epistemologically as well as programmatically serves the purpose of empire. The implicit Hegelianism which sees Europe as the end of history is contained within Tylor's unilinear model. This model is at the root of a modernization theory that sees cultural progress as convergent rather than divergent, as an over-determined modernity rather than a choice among optional modernities .

On the other hand, take Ruth Benedict's oft-quoted dictum that the purpose of anthropology is "to make the world safe for human difference", and one envisions a contrasting type of intellectual and practical enterprise. The purpose is not academic description, nor social engineering toward civilization, but doing what is necessary to ensure human diversity. Whereas Tylor's implicit *telos* was to create a world where primitives can be distinguished from and civilized by those who already were, Benedict's was to protect cultural diversity as it exists and evolves.

Anthropology, as applied over the last 150 years, shows that Tylor's vision has prevailed over Benedict's. Critiques of the discipline's colonialism are now numerous (Asad 1975; Bennett 1988; Conquergood 2003; Escobar 1991; Gerrit and Mannheim 1979; Gough 1968; Harrison 1997a; Hymes 1972; Lewis 1973). Differing cultural modernities are endangered by the imperial designs of colonizing nations and the ubiquitous presence of a Western post-colonial development industry. This homogenization occurs even as vertical differentiation into niche markets of production

and consumption construct new micro- levels of social strata. It is not the collapse of cultural diversity but the lack of critique and opposition to the meta-narrative of neo-liberalism that convicts anthropology of collusion with first colonialism and now globalization.

In describing different anthropological modes of advocacy, Sanjek stresses the primary goal of convincing others (presumably the public or policy makers) that other cultures have internally consistent rationales for their practices. They have a past that indicates their present behavior, and they have a future that will be different than the dominant modernity precisely because of cultural difference. Advocacy anthropologists concern themselves with practical outcomes of their research first by helping shape the way people see themselves in relation to the issues²⁵ (Van Esterik 1985) and, more actively, by strengthening marginalized and silenced groups.(Schensul 1978:122).

Sanjek contends that anthropologists first engage in advocacy during fieldwork. Unfortunately, he neglects the important predispositions of activist anthropologists. Advocacy during fieldwork is known as participatory action research (Whyte 1997), or simply advocacy anthropology (Jacobs 1974).

A second phase may be subsequent to or outside of the research, but it also aims to influence policy makers. Sanjek mentions another standing an anthropologist has which motivates advocacy, that of “citizen.” Citizenship motivates the research team in my research, as will be explained in the next chapter.

²⁵ "Oppositional consciousness depends on the ability to read the current situation of power and self-consciously choosing and adopting the ideological form best suited to push against its configurations, a survival skill well known to oppressed peoples." Chela Sandoval 1991:15 cited in Hale (1996). Oppositional consciousness is not the product of ,but can be facilitated by, applied anthropology.

Van Willigen (1986) notes that some research is intentionally policy relevant. Some policy oriented research is community-based. Community-based research expands as community members realize the benefits that accrue to them from having detailed information about their community. An anthropologist's advocacy is contingent on the degree of autonomy evidenced by the research participants and invitations by them to participate in an advocacy role. The anthropologist will likely not have the dominant role in discerning when the data generated should be channeled, packaged, or otherwise made negotiable in policy decisions.

If a document is the outcome of the research then the participants should have a role in its compilation, and editing. In this way the community exercises agency and voice and can better utilize the document or combat it. Sanjek stresses that just leaving research to be used by others, without engaging in active strategies of dissemination, may be relegating one's findings to insignificance. If an anthropologist finds the data ethically compelling, then there is follow-through required to satisfy one's ethical responsibilities to the host community and to the public at large. The forms these activities may take should be negotiated, and are thus not predictable.

The second historical task (the first was to review how advocacy has been integral to anthropological practice) is to recognize how Western anthropology has structured disciplinary discourse to support world capitalism. "As the conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors intensifies world-wide we are haunted by the recognition that we are participants in a discipline which chose the wrong side long ago" (Gordon 1997).

The task is to show how the cultural logic of colonial and imperial capitalism have always manufactured cultural difference on axes of race, gender, class, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, geography, age, education and commodity consumption. The differences are not random, though they may be historically contingent. They are determined only in the sense that creating difference is the *sine qua non* for constructing global hierarchies. Western anthropology had a narrative and discursive function in maintaining the colonial enterprise. As Foucault notes, “We must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or as a practice we impose upon them”(1972:229).

Since development’s goal is to address the debilitating inequities produced by dominant discourses and global economics, anthropologists have to place analysis of race, gender, class, nationalism, etc., at the center of social development or change. In such a context, Faye Harrison (1997b:10) says, “knowledge production and praxis are inseparable.” The dichotomy between political economy and cultural critique, between structure and subjectivity, are dualisms that serve the purposes of the academy and, ultimately, capital accumulation.

But cultural logics and economic systems are not monolithic, rather they are the product of agency and contingency as well as structural constraints. Deterministic theories, whether materialist or discursive, are not useful in anthropologies of liberation. They do not assist in the concientization project, instead they foster fatalism.

Historical materialism has been faulted for an economic reductionism that gives a one-dimensional view of cultural interaction and ignores the agentive function of symbol. Symbolic processes of meaning construction influence power configurations and social

formations. Conversely, discourse analysis and deconstruction have been faulted for identifying difference and domination without theorizing resistance and subject agency.

Is field work still determined by colonial geography? What does the field unconsciously allow ethnographers to think? If fieldwork is not about research in the two-thirds world by outsiders, what is it about now, and how is that different in both theory and practice? As Deborah D'Amico Samuels sees the liberatory reflexivity of ethnography

Our translation of the experiences of the world's exploited peoples into language understood by those with access to greater power than themselves is useful only insofar as it prompts us to ask questions about the nature of this power in our own lives and work and as it spurs our contribution to attempts to alter the global balance of power responsible for their poverty and oppression. (D'Amico-Samuels 1997:82)

D'Amico Samuels stresses that the exploitation that power enables is part of the subject location of the ethnographer as well as those she studies.

There is no corner of life so private and personal that issues of race, class, color and culture do not permeate it. A politically informed holism of this kind will not be party to separating our personal and cultural experiences from our positions in hierarchies of race, class, gender and nation but will rather recognize that as a locus for intellectual inquiry, ethical consideration, and political struggle, the field is everywhere (D'Amico-Samuels 1997:83).

Reflexivity adds the dimension of political situatedness of ethnographic knowledge, which finds expression not just in ethnographic texts, but more expansively in social scientific practice itself, in the "unthinkable unthought," the unconscious of the social scientist *qua* social scientist (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:213).

Harrison stresses that political solidarity with the exploited populations is a condition for the possibility of writing credible ethnography concerning them.

The anthropologist with *verstehen*, rooted in a relationship of "organic cohesion" (Gramsci 1971:418) with the studied population and in real political solidarity, is well equipped to establish more equal relations of ethnographic production as well

as to construct valid, reliable, and politically responsible representations of his/her host community's sociocultural life (Harrison 1997c:90).

Solidary insight separates a merely de-colonized anthropology from an anthropology of liberation.

A potentially liberating anthropological praxis must involve much more than a political economic analysis of the oppression of a people or an account of the constructed nature of the West's representation of them. If there is to be any hope that the analysis will be instrumentalized, the anthropologist must analyze and understand the internal logic of the hegemonic web lying within a people's world view and culture and its relationship to the persistence of oppression" (Gordon 1997:164)

Anthropologists and the folks they study are united in global webs of relationship which pre-date the fieldwork and continue after the ethnography is written. Our professional, political, and personal selves are intertwined. Fieldwork is most often, and is - in some ways in my case - a lighter one-third worlder studying darker, less text literate two-thirds worlders. This is a relationship of colonial origins that endures. Until such a time as the ethnographer and her/his participants can access similar technologies of power, the differentials must be balanced by ethnographic practices which give people voice and power over their own representation.

Charles Hale, also writing from Nicaragua, explains that, in the context of exploitation, the value of anthropological theory rests ultimately on its efficacy for the material and cultural benefit of sub-altern populations. Lather (2003) refers to this as "catalytic validity." Hale observes that the analysis that we offer as anthropologists ought to serve in the construction of powerful collective revolutionary voices (Hale 1996).

Problematizing Solidarity : Toward a Practical Definition

Solidarity as Antidote to Alienation

The case for solidarity should include an analysis of why it is not the “normal” state of social relations. One prominent explanation for the absence of solidarity in modern society is offered by Karl Marx, specifically his treatment of alienation. In theorizing how nature and culture interact Marx stressed that there is a tension between satisfying basic biological needs and actualizing one’s individual and social potential in society. He maintains that the root of contemporary human alienation is based on modern capitalism’s conflict with basic human nature.

In *Grundrisse* (1973) Marx identifies three factors that affect capitalist culture: 1) society has lost democratic control over the conditions of its productive activity; 2) the technology of production is object, not subject, oriented; and 3) capitalism replaces all social bonds with economic relations of exchange. In capitalism the harder and longer a worker works to increase his/her production, paradoxically, the less his/her labor is worth. This is a direct threat to the workers’ ability to provide adequate sustenance for self and family. The worker is alienated from his/her human potential by productive work instead of achieving self-actualization by means of it.

Marx showed that working for wages under capitalism alienates workers from their 1) labor, 2) individuality, 3) humanity, and 4) relationships. First, it alienates workers from what they have produced by their labor. The product never belongs to the workers, but to their employer. Hence workers are alienated as well from nature which supplies the raw materials for their products. Second, it alienates workers from their individuality since they value themselves as the employer does, for the exchange value of their production. The worker has no intrinsic worth apart from the market value of his or her

product. Third, they are alienated from humanity, since both the product of their labor and the human action of producing it are estranged from social values. Fourth, humans in capitalist society find themselves reducing all social relations to economic exchange thus alienating themselves from each other.

For Marx alienation is not a state of mind but an objective social condition produced by capitalism's relations of production coming in conflict with human nature. Because the worker now works not for self-actualization but only for basic sustenance, those who pay the wages determine the worker's identity. S/he does not produce for the common good, but rather only for family. S/he has become a commodity to self and others, and is alienated from humanity.

By developing a division of labor based not on the needs of the producers but on the principle of maximum productivity for the owner, capitalism alienates workers from the objects of their labor. That is to say, workers simultaneously create property for others and self-estrangement. All other human relations are subordinated to utility. The human enterprise becomes mutual exploitation, even when cloaked in altruistic discourse. The capitalist class is alienated as well, but the elites interpret their alienation, their self-estrangement, as evidence of their own power. The working class, in contrast, feels annihilated in its alienation; it experiences its own powerlessness as subhuman.

Alienation is the workers' loss of control over the means of production and the products of their work. Since the product of the workers' labors belong to others, then s/he must enter into relations of exchange to transform his/her labor into sustenance. First it is transformed into money and then exchanged for commodities. Thus money becomes the social glue of capitalist culture. Money subordinates all other social bonds

to those of economic exchange, thereby dissolving community. Money obscures personal relationships of interdependence, so individuals appear to be independent. Non-monetary relationships are dismantled so that surplus value is captured by the cash economy. Money becomes the symbol of alienation. Humans actualize themselves through economic activity, but the contradictions of capitalism separate what persons do from whom they are, how they act from how they would prefer to act. The laborer constantly produces capital, a social power that dominates and exploits. The fruits of his/her own labor becomes self-oppression.

Division of labor makes work more repetitive and dehumanizing. Alienation involves the objectification of personal labor power by commodification, and relations between commodities come to determine all other relations. Commodities become fetishes as does universal exchange value, or money. The capitalist comes to focus exclusively on the exchange value of each commodity.

The mind of a person immersed in commodity fetishism seeks sensational stimulation to compensate for personal isolation, for the indifference and *ennui* that make moral behavior ambiguous. The alienated individual socially disengages by observing rather than participating in reality. Alienation results in minimal involvement in the world, affecting socio-economic structures and subjective states of awareness. Alienation can only be detected when one conceives of human life as an active project within an intrinsically social world. One can understand and be reflexively aware of alienation only within a context of solidarity.

Alienation potentially explains several aspects of the volunteer vacation encounter. First, North Americans may engage in transcultural volunteering because they are

seeking an antidote to alienation. As one volunteer expressed it, “I am so glad to be here, it seems as if I am back inside my own skin!” When the rules of market exchange are de-centered by transcultural reciprocity, it allows the volunteer to experience human relationships on a social basis other than as a utilitarian transaction. Second, the volunteer experience may be heightened because many rural Nicaraguans are only partially integrated into capitalist relations of production and hence are engaged in less alienated social relationships. This could explain in part why Nicaraguans do not feel the same degree of social stigma from their poverty that their North American visitors anticipate, and why the social receptivity of Nicaraguans is so surprising to the North Americans. One solidarity worker quotes Clodovis Boff as saying “solidarity is the gift of the poor.”

Authentic social relationships can only be entered into with those from whom we expect little in the way of commodities. Rural Nicaraguans have much to offer North Americans, but little of it can be commodified. Social and spiritual gifts such as those offered by Nicaraguans are not easily “priced”. They can be reciprocated in kind, but their monetary equivalencies are unknowable, hence they are non-negotiable. They involve the participants in what James Scott (1976) would call a “moral economy.” NGOs can commodify the volunteer experience yet they risk much of potential value if they fail to provide openings for solidarity to heal alienation.

A Moral Universal Imaginary

Solidarity is a process of identification and differentiation whereby a subject actor champions what appears as a cause for an-other but actually, because of social, cultural, and economic interdependence, is a cause for both self, other and the common good. Etymologically, solidarity comes from the Old French *solide*, which connotes firmness,

steadfastness, and is related to the Latin verb *solidare*, to strengthen. When pertaining to a group it denotes unity of purpose or interest.²⁶

Human beings immediately apprehend the difference between fellow human beings and organisms of other species. Humans understand some ontological unity with peoples and individuals of a myriad of phenotypes and cultural attributes. Our encounters with other humans have an inter-subjective dimension as well as an objective dimension.

When interpersonal encounters emphasize the inter-subjective, people are apprehended in their personhood. This is what Martin Buber calls an I-Thou relationship.(Buber 1937) When our encounters are more instrumental in nature, and the objective dimension is stressed (an I-It relationship) then the inter-subjective dimension can be minimized or even ignored. Even when we objectify our fellow human beings we do not refer to them as pets or live stock, rather we consider them functionaries; servants, concubines, or slaves. That is, we give them designations that relate to their integral utilitarian function in human society. Even homicide, genocide or ethnocide requires acknowledging the specific identification of its victims with its perpetrators and then intentionally removing it.

The type of universal solidarity that would consider the human race as a metaphorical family in which we are all siblings is a philosophical projection of human kinship solidarity to its largest possible extension. It can also be a case of identifying species survival as a common cause for all its members. It is this universal notion of solidarity that philosophers, religious leaders, and ecologists appeal to when stressing global peace, harmony, and cooperation as the condition for the possibility of species

²⁶ Webster's New World Dictionary (1964) College Edition, The World Publishing Co. Cleveland. pg. 1388

(and planetary eco-system) prosperity and survival. It is a necessary horizon for the consideration of more limited, if more politically feasible, forms of solidarity.

Dean (1995) points to three types of “bounded” solidarity (Portes 2000), or solidarity which has boundaries that do not include all humans. She calls them affective, conventional, and reflective. Both universal and bounded solidarity are evident and operative in this study. But because my ultimate interest is in the political feasibility of transcultural solidarity, much of the analysis will focus on the bounded types of solidarity that can serve as catalysts for activism.

The boundaries of bounded solidarity can be defined by political, social, or cultural affinities (for instance; national, class, religious, ethnic or gender solidarity) and identified populations (such as family, friends, clan, workgroup). The point at which solidarity weakens and ceases, is its radius of association, or the horizon at which the collective “we” becomes “they.”

Each bounded solidarity, however, is philosophically undergirded by universal solidarity and, as Dean explains, cannot be considered in isolation from it. Any analysis of injustice will be able to identify privilege and need, that is, those who profit from oppression (the oppressors) and those who are exploited by it (the oppressed). Without a universal moral imaginary of human siblinghood, of species solidarity, justice would be unattainable, since oppressors and oppressed lack a conceptual framework within which to comprehend their interdependence.

To affirm that power struggles between groups are inevitable is not the same as to despair of achieving a more just situation for both the privileged and the dominated

simultaneously. A processural approach to social justice must rest on the axiom of the possibility of universal solidarity. As Rosemary Radford Ruether observes

The birth of a planetary humanity ...demands a stretching of the mind beyond the cultural frameworks of all previous human thinking to a new awareness of the universal *humanum* ...to create for the first time a sense of the human which is beginning to transcend the ideological imperialism of one center and one people's aspiration that totalizes its power and perspective toward the world. ...This utopian horizon is essential to the creativity and fertility of particular occasions of change...Without this transcendent horizon men [sic] lack the imagination and vital spirit to seek really new possibilities. (Ruether 1972:175 & 167)

The term solidarity indicates both an objective and subjective relationship.

Objectively, it points to relations between persons for the purpose of addressing a particular power imbalance. Subjectively, it identifies a subject position in alliance with other subject agents. There is an implicit recognition of mutual subject agency on the part of all participants in a solidary relationship. The inter-personal affinity or inter-subjectivity of the relationship presents identity/differences which have implications for identity formation for each of the actors. Since all parties participate in solidarity mutually, one cannot unilaterally declare solidarity without being invited into a reciprocal and dialogical relationship.

Solidarity manifests itself in material and behavioral ways. Materially, resources that are exchanged for their symbolic, labor, market, and use values. In the case of the volunteer vacation encounter, tools, raw materials, personal effects, and cash are exchanged for food, shelter, transportation, protection, knowledge, and entertainment. In practice, solidarity is performed through human inter-actions that embody the abstract value of unity of purpose. In volunteer vacationing these practices include giving and receiving hospitality, cooperating in physical labor, preparing and sharing food, binding wounds, laughing at the absurdities of cultural incommensurability, sharing knowledge;

participating in common rituals, meditation, journaling and prayer. Other solidary activities such as teaching, correspondence, fund raising, and political activism are performed after the visits conclude. Later, solidarity results in return encounters; sometimes with the same individuals and communities, but often with new ones.

Solidarity and interdependence

Material and spiritual resources can be exchanged in an encounter, and human activity can take place in close proximity, without an awareness of interdependence. Most often when there is mis-recognition of solidarity on the part of the North Americans and Nicaraguans involved in a volunteer vacation encounter it is based on one or both parties believing that a relationship of independence-to-dependence is being enacted in the exchanges. The perception is that the North Americans are party to the encounter out of choice, whereas conversely, the Nicaraguans are dependent and party to the encounter out of need.

Discourses which stress the differences in material assets are sometimes deployed to reinforce the framing of the encounter in terms of unilateral and unidirectional transfers of resources, knowledge, and skills. Other times they are seen as an invitation to involvement in a complex process of addressing social poverty. Those discourses which reinforce a neo-colonial interpretation of the encounter consist of formations of altruism which are internalized by North Americans and Nicaraguans, alike²⁷.

These discourses obscure the historical and corporate genesis of structural injustice by displacing it outside of history (poverty and lack of political voice are due to bad luck) or by positing it as self-generated (due to a lack of ambition, a culture of poverty, or

²⁷ Ver Beek (2004) found that even though North Americans felt they had learned a lot from Hondurans, the Hondurans did not realize the ways in which they were teaching.

endemic corruption). Subsequent redress of injustice then can be accomplished through the magnanimity of those who have acquired more than they feel they need, transferring resources to those who the givers feel have less than they need. By reduction of injustice to a synchronic case of mal-distribution, and justification to simple redistribution, subjectivity is conferred on those who have and denied those who have not.

Solidarity and reciprocity

Societies have progressed in the measure in which they, their sub-groups and their members, have been able to stabilize their contracts to give, receive and repay. In order to trade, man [sic] must first lay down his spear. When that is done he can succeed in exchanging goods and persons not only between clan and clan but between tribe and tribe and national and nation, and above all between individuals. It is in this way that the clan, the tribe and nation have learnt ...how to oppose one another without slaughter and to give without sacrificing themselves to others. That is one of the secrets of their wisdom and solidarity. [Mauss, 1996 #959:114]

Solidarity is a social compact or covenant, a relationship of mutual responsibility. Some reciprocity is general (expected to yield benefits which will help all those involved) other reciprocity is balanced (it expects a return gesture from a responsive counterpart).

The qualities of mutuality and reciprocity essential to solidarity preclude the possibility of altruism as an equivalent as it is often based on non-reciprocal relationships. As Marcel Mauss [, 1996 #959] revealed, "The elements of the gift are the obligation to receive and the obligation to make a return." Solidarity is reciprocal. Mauss maintains that gift exchange in certain cultural circumstances (such as the Kwakwiltl potlatch) can become a "war of wealth" and is about personal and corporate self-aggrandizement in ways that deflect the need for armed combat to establish social status and rank. How then are we to understand solidarity within the framework or through the lense of a relationship of exchange? Potlaches and Kula Rings are about status and class symbolized through trade and consumption. What is the symbolic and

material significance of financing and constructing family homes in rural Central America or of helping Nicaraguan farmers contact North Americans about their opposition to CAFTA? What is the significance for each party in a cross-cultural encounter where rules of reciprocity have not been negotiated beforehand?

A particularly challenging type of solidarity is between those most marginalized and those most privileged by the status quo, the rich and the poor relations of the human family, so to speak. In the past, rich and poor, powerful and powerless were separated not by geographical distance but by cultural markers and rituals that regulated the differing degrees of access to resources and the modes of production. Now transnational and cross-cultural travel allows those who have secured adequate sustenance from the global economy to visit those who have not, but with different sets of socio-cultural signifiers of rank operative for each of the parties. Transcultural signifiers of social class, ethnicity, and gender are being forged by both global media and interpersonal encounters such as those under consideration here.

For the most privileged to reach out to the most needy or vice versa requires crossing formidable class barriers, even when it is understood that the other society is not stratified in exactly the same ways as one's culture of origin. In some ways it is less threatening to the middle class North Americans to visit the poor in Nicaragua than it is to do so in the U.S., and particularly in their own hometowns.²⁸ Just as it maybe more acceptable for a Nicaraguan to access a wealthy North American from the group than to

²⁸ One NGO official that sends groups of Nicaraguans on visits to North American communities relates how resistant North Americans are to expose Nicaraguans to the required itinerary of a site of poverty and injustice in their community in the States. Often times these are locations which the North Americans themselves have never visited before.

approach one of their local elites. It is as if we are not implicated in the injustice of it all if the cultural distance is greater, and the technologies of oppression are remote.

Considerable trans-cultural skills are required to achieve genuine communication across social class and cultural heterogeneity (Hall 1959) and ultimately mutual understanding may not be completely attainable. (Schutte 1998) More often than would be hoped in the volunteer vacation experience, what is constructed as meeting someone of another culture is more like being able to gaze on them (Urry 1996). The dynamic sometimes never progresses beyond non-interactive observation (Salazar 2001; Salazar 2004).

A related consideration is the degree to which the individual members of the relationship are profiting from or are victimized by the present power dynamics between the two parties due to their respective subject positions in the world system. If the two parties were oblivious to the dynamics of resource transfer built into the global economy which doles out wealth for some and poverty for the majority then one could assume a lack of guilt feelings on the part of the North Americans and lack of resentment on the part of the Nicaraguans. But as numerous scholars (Anderson 1994; Babb 2001; Gould 1990; Hale 1994; LaFeber 1993; Lancaster 1988) have detailed, the constant interaction of both countries over the course of the last 150 years ensures that there are no pre-conception-less starting points for those of either nationality. The awareness of North American economic and political hegemony over Nicaragua (which has a negative valence in revolutionary rhetoric and a positive valence in neo-liberal discourse) is as ubiquitous in Nicaragua as ignorance of it is in the U.S. The perception of that relationship, and hence the imaginary that frames any “Yankee bearing gifts” image in

the mind of either member of the dyad are functions of two highly contingent, culturally complex, and historically evolving subject identities.

Radical inequities of access to power create the conditions for the possibility of mutually destructive social dynamics. Solidarity can be seen as a quest to achieve universal justice through unity of purpose - a quest that requires a universal horizon, the solidarity of the *humanum*, but also one that requires the praxis of solidarity among identifiable groups. These groups operate in localities, identifiable times and places, and bridge specific cultural chasms. It is to that second, more concrete, type of solidarity that we turn now.

Solidarity as identity and difference

The subjectivity of solidarity is built on the awareness that each individual is both alike and unlike every other individual. We are each unique. On the one hand, presupposition of ontological similitude operates even prior to inter-personal communication with others. On the other hand, each human being occupies a unique subject position. Solidarity utilizes identification to acknowledge difference.

Bounded solidarity emphasizes simultaneously inter-subjective difference and structural identity, within the boundary, and structural difference and inter-subjective identity, outside the boundary. For instance, the solidarity between a 23-year-old grade-school-educated single mother of three children who works in a clothing maquiladora and lives in a rural village in Nicaragua; and a 65 year-old grandfather and retired electrical engineer from Schenectady, New York, involves factors of inter-subjective differences. These two have dissimilar life experiences and coping skills. Yet they can share inter-subjectivities based on volunteer vacation experiences and social roles such as parenting or income generation for their families. It is these shared experiences as well as a shared

hermeneutic of the meaning of all experience that differentiate them from those that fall outside their solidary relationship. Persons from the U.S. who have been to rural Nicaragua on a volunteer vacation have had an experience which potentially enables them to build a solidary relationship that may not be available to those who have not.

The identity/difference tension in solidarity, if collapsed into identity without difference, cannot support the dynamic of solidarity because solidarity is built upon the inherent inter-subjectivity of two or more different persons and their respective locations in global society. Inter-subjectivity is more apparent at the level of individuals, and structural relationships become more transparent between groups or organizations.

Structural and subjective solidarity

Structural solidarity, that which pertains to material relationships, and subjective solidarity, that which pertains to symbolic relationships, are experienced differently. I use subjectivity here as Sherry Ortner defines it, as “specifically cultural and historical consciousness and agency.” but also as “complex individualized structures of thought, feeling, reflection and the like” (2005:32&34). And I am in sympathy with her call, on both scientific and political grounds, to reinstate subjectivity in anthropology which has for some time suffered from structural and discursive forms of determinism.

Another analytic distinction that helps delineate the structural and subjective is what Victor Turner calls structure and *communitas*. Structure is that type of social interaction that is based on differentiated individual roles, status, and political and economic subject positions. Whereas *communitas* is that interactive pattern whereby individuals come together as political equals in realization of a common humanity. The distinction is homologous to Durkheim’s organic and mechanical modes of solidarity except that

Durkheim was explicating generic social dynamics and Turner is individualizing and chronologizing the process. Turner believes that ritual is a means of moving from a structured everyday awareness of one's place in the world to a "liminal" time out of time, a place of radical *communitas*. This unstructuring, accomplished by rites of passage, enables one's transformation into a new social status, and participation in a new social structure.

The parallels to what I call subjective solidarity, which requires interpersonal empathy and social activism, are striking. Without *communitas*, without the tenderness, there will be no movement toward structural solidarity which must be based not only on the emotional bonding, but, in a subsequent stage, on social analysis. The intense emotional state aroused by first exposure to a radically different culture, if not channeled by intentional strategies of solidarity, can dissipate and devolve into non-solidary practices.

Structural solidarity, like that which brought political supporters to Nicaragua during the Sandinista '80s, allows for the clear delineation of us and them, as a North American expatriate solidarity worker observed.

In the 80s solidarity brigades were people who came wanting to embrace the political project. They came with an understanding of it to a certain extent and came wanting to support it. They came to pick coffee or cotton or do construction or probably even to fight, I would imagine some of them did.

His partner added, "During the 80s it [solidarity] meant that people came and walked with people in the process they were trying to build collectively for structural change in their country. Today it's a different walk." Or consider a Nicaraguan social activist's viewpoint

Nicaraguan people have been taught about solidarity. People who came to this country in the 80s to help pick coffee were people who knew what this country was facing, how we were facing the economic embargo and how the people were struggling to build their lives in a better way. But I have also seen people who use the word solidarity but they imply charity.

Those who think exclusively in structural terms often become discouraged that there is no overarching meta-location from which to organize solidarity among peoples in a post-modern society. They look for what Dean (1996) calls conventional solidarity and are discouraged by those who would challenge their “essentialist” politics. They decry identity politics’ inadequacies in confronting imperial capitalism. Whereas if they saw the intimate connections between subjective and structural solidarity they might realize what feminist theorists have articulated with clarity, (Haraway 2003; Stoler 2002) that the personal is political. Thus, the way to structural solidarity is, in many cases, through the portal of inter-subjectivity.

On the other hand, those who have experience of inter-subjective solidarity and focus on the interactive routine of everyday lives can fail to do the analysis necessary to understand or achieve structural solidarity. As long as they maintain interpersonal contact they will never lack a ground for subjective solidarity because its datum is shared person-hood itself. They may, however, devolve into relationships of charity, which do little to erode the inequitable power relationships that exist between most rural Nicaraguans and suburban North Americans.

Those persons who have contact with each other, who engage each other, who identify with each other on several sectoral identity markers and differ from each other on others, have the possibility of forging solidarity across social class differences and across cultural traditions. This possibility is based on recognition of human commonality which is situated in the matrix of identity/differences. But if the sectoral identity/difference

markers are not recognized between two individuals, then the possibility of seeing beyond the social class differences in the global system may not be possible. As Paulo Freire (2002:49) puts it, “Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture.”

The structural differences between the *campesinos* and their visitors are experienced dialogically because the power inequities are having to be constantly either acknowledged and negotiated, or intuited but denied. The power of the visitors confronting the relative powerlessness of the villagers is both a pre-consciously and consciously apprehended difference. But coinciding identity markers (such as motherhood, a farming profession, or evangelical Christianity) interrupt and equalize that flow for moments of equilibrium. Difference can reverse power flows, for instance when Nicaraguan small farmers host urban North Americans in the countryside. The immediate mutually perceived dependency of the North Americans is a local power dynamic which runs counter to the global power dynamic of which both are simultaneously aware.

That experience of dialogical flows of power breaks down the basic socio/cultural divide and creates the conditions for subjective solidarity - for instance, when the local people need to teach the visitors a survival skill, or when visitors become ill and need to be cared for by their hosts. Subjective solidarity breaks through in those moments of structural dependence and inter-subjectivity. Commitment to structural solidarity can come from the recognition of interpersonal subjectivity. That is to say, subjective solidarity becomes the condition for the possibility of constructing structural solidarity in the post-modern condition, when totalizing meta-causes no longer motivate.

It is at the transition point from subjective to structural solidarity that the role of the group becomes paramount in defining solidary practice. Solidarity must be built on dialogue with the rural community, the host NGO and popular social movements. Movements often provide forums for articulating popular sentiments. Yet these agents of Nicaraguan civil society are seldom accessible to visiting volunteers.

Popular social movements can provide avenues for structural solidarity for interested visitors more easily because they are aware of and participate in structural oppositions. NGOs are often not as clear in their political loyalties and their social stances. Their stakeholders are more heterogenous, which has advantages, but not in building social structural solidarity, unless it is first activated by subjective solidarity.

The *habitus* of solidarity

We have to be converted. We have to change our spiritual relationship with self, with neighbor, with even the remotest human communities, and with nature itself, in view of the common good of the whole individual and of all people. This felt interdependence is a new moral category, and the response to it is the "virtue" of solidarity. Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or a shallow sadness but a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good. It is in attitude squarely opposed to greed and the thirst for power. *Solicitududo Rei Socialis* (1987: #38)

In the preceding passage John Paul II pinpoints solidarity as the appropriate response to human interdependence. He implies that globalization now raises acknowledgement of this fundamental connection to a level of urgency. Furthermore he identifies solidarity as a form of resistance to avarice and the will to power, which he sees as rampant in the political economy of the planet.

The above quote illustrates John Paul's view that solidarity is a "habit of the heart," a firm continuing decision about one's relationship to creation, namely, a desire for its common good. When John Paul uses the word virtue he is returning to the Thomistic

tradition in which Aquinas defined a virtue in accordance with Aristotle's ethics as "a conscious voluntary act which flows from a durable disposition as when a man acts from a 'rooted' habit." And furthermore "a good habit of the mind always directed to good action"(Clark 1972).²⁹ These same elements are echoed in the quotation from his 1987 encyclical, which describes the virtue of solidarity as a habitual response to the interiorly perceived interdependence of creation. There are other conceptions of solidarity in the Catholic tradition (Bilgrien 1999), but virtue is predominant and, for our purposes, a useful metonym.³⁰

To deal with virtue in more familiar social science categories, I would like to translate it into a Bourdieuan *habitus* since there is a close affinity between the two concepts and more currency for our purposes with the latter than the former.³¹ Durkheim and Bourdieu were asking the same question: why does society cohere and not disperse into its individual parts? Durkheim's question was posed in a synchronic manner, and he posited an internal dynamic of collective conscience which could generate social facts that were accepted, in large part, by one and all (Durkheim 1996/1895). But as a proto-structural-functionalist he was not strong on the genesis of social change.

Bourdieu, on the other hand, claiming to have bridged the structural/agency binary which he found unhelpful, was asking why, if there is individual subject agency, society does not come apart over time. To what do we owe the observable continuity of culture

²⁹ Summa Theologica I-II, q. 55, a. 4, (c.1272) in Mary Clark (1972:379).

³⁰ Bilgrien (1999) identifies solidarity variously as an attitude of openness to mutual complementarity of the human race, a duty that forces us to accept human dignity and worth in ever widening circles, and the virtuous principle that provides the potential to change social structures.

³¹ There is danger in emphasizing one element of Bourdieus' interconnected system of *social praxeology* thus distorting the meaning that it derives from its interrelation within his analytic schema, which will be noted at more length in Chapter 3.

that is the stuff of which history is made? His question was diachronic. Part of Bourdieu's answer involves the dynamic of human behavior that he called *habitus*, a concept akin to Durkheim's *social fact*, which resides within the pre-consciousness of historical subjects yet is susceptible to individual agency.

Bourdieu's *habitus* is an internalization of external social structures which inhere in human action at a subconscious level. Society begets *habitus* which in turn, through human performance, begets society. *Habitus* is one movement of a semi-closed feedback loop. It is history transformed into nature. It is determined but not predictable, because actors do not follow conscious patterns or tend toward rational goals. It is a personal but, more importantly, a social style of behavior that includes a capacity to improvise within the rules of the social "game." *Habitus* is corporeal or somatic as well as cognitive and affective. It is not innate, but rather acquired through socialization. *Habitus* urges and empowers us to act in those areas where there is probability of success and not in those areas where failure is likely. *Habitus* is like the persona of an actor with an internalized script, which may be adlibbed when necessary but is not written by the actor him/herself nor understood in its implications for the plot development of the dramatic work we call life. *Habitus* is the way that human acts conform to a predisposition that the actors acquire from experiencing objective structures.

So human actions, though capable of being subject agents and changing history, much more regularly replicate or maintain the institutions that they have internalized. What determines the shape of society, then, comes not from external forces but from internally activated behaviors of agents who operate according to a norm they have learned. It is homologous to Marx's dictum that human beings are subjects of their own

history but the possibilities they choose from are limited by historical material conditions. Bourdieu, however, would tend to stress that these conditions are subjective and that the internalized social structures have more to do with the particulars of human behavior than does rational action.

Since behavior is subjectively but pre-consciously generated it is susceptible to *mis-recognition* as to why and to what ends it is performed. So *habitus* is both the inculcation of institutional values into the individual and the active appropriation of those values by the individual. It is the involvement of an individual with an institution that constitutes that institution socially.

Habitus is collective, not individual, in character. Bourdieu, again building on Durkheim and Marx, maintains that we are most “human” in our sociality, not in our individuality (as existentialists such as Sartre taught). Social institutions collaborate to construct *habitus* where none exists or where the *habitus* of the individual is at odds with that of his/her society. Changing the *habitus* is the only way to effect social change. Formal rules that remain external to the culture and hence outside of *habitus* will never be practiced. *Habitus* allows individuals to play the cultural games in different “social fields,” or networks of power relationships, well enough to accumulate social capital and thus play the game more adroitly yet. Under favorable circumstances capital in one field can be exchanged for capital from another .

Aspects of Bounded Solidarity

Since solidarity is relational, it requires thought, speech, and action within a spatio-temporal context. Since it is phenomenologically impossible to be dialogically “in relationship” with over 6 billion fellow humans, it is necessary to delimit the parameters of one’s solidarity in each instance.

Since its inception social science has attempted to wrestle with the concept of solidarity (Durkheim 1996/1895), particularly “bounded” solidarity. Human behavior is founded on the remarkable principle that optimally people can cooperate in such a way as to further the good of all. This condition of social solidarity should not be taken for granted since voluminous ethnographic data present evidence of alienated, anti-social, societies.(Bauman 1989; DesPres 1976; Marris 1974; Shkilnyk 1985; Turnbull 1972) The condition Turnbull calls “the end of goodness” overtook and destroyed the society of the Ik, a people “without love,” without human solidarity. This tragedy is so counter to our understanding of society that even the colonial officers in large part responsible for the Ik’s demise , refused to believe the anthropologist’s diagnosis.

Solidarity is an accomplishment, which Emile Durkheim took to be the most important question of his day, and a worthy topic with which to launch the new discipline of sociology. His *The Division of Labor* is devoted to explicating how the mechanical solidarity of segmentary societies, which rely on the predominance of a collective conscience and the subordination of individual conscience, can be superseded in stratified societies by an organic solidarity. Organic solidarity allows for more individual conscience, more individual freedom, but still holds together because of the interdependence of its members due to the distinctions of types of labor. Durkheim’s theory suffered from contradictions in maintaining that modern society optimized both the individual and the communal principle of consciousness and he eventually abandoned the thesis in his later work (Pope and Johnson 1983), but his conviction that solidarity is the primordial question for social science lends gravity to our present study.

Individuals have greater or less affinity with each other (an emic subjective measurement) and greater or less homogeneity (an etic measurement based on cultural markers). A solidarity which draws a “radius of association,” which encompasses some affine or homogenous groups, but excludes others, allows for engaging in solidary activities that redress specific instances of distributive injustice. Today such radii are potentially global in scope.

Just as the extension of solidarity in space or in regard to quantity of partners is elastic, so too consideration must be given to the longevity and periodicity of solidary relationships. Are they long-term like Richard Allen’s sweetgrass solidarity or ideal family solidarity? Are they sage – like, characterized by relationships that have discernable half-lives, such as age cohorts or civic affiliations? Can one be in solidarity, for instance, with the Nicaraguan people during a revolutionary epoch and not so during a neo-liberal era? Do the “us” and “them” of solidarity change over time? Can solidarity form and reform in response to information, awareness, and preparedness, according to contingencies as injustices ebb and flow through history? Only ethnographic data can answer these questions adequately.

Affectional and Consensual Solidarity

Jodi Dean (1996; 1995) notes that one type of bounded solidarity is based on interpersonal relationships of affinity, those of friendship and love which engender feelings of closeness. In these associations of emotional affirmation, the bond uniting each to the other is a feeling of mutual care. There are supportive behaviors which reinforce the affirmation of the other in all of his/her particularities. She calls this “affectional” solidarity.

Dean's second type of solidarity she calls "conventional." It assumes that the solidarity of a group's members is bounded not primarily by an emotion, but rather by social markers that identify common social location, such as nationality, ethnicity, and gender. Conversely, solidarity can be understood as resistance to particular historically contingent injustices. Conventional solidarity in the face of oppression can coalesce into movements seeking to protect human rights and de-institutionalize injustice .

Conventional solidarity has been problematic particularly for race, gender, and class based struggles. It assumes not only that there is a common cause of resistance against a commonly perceived oppression, but that the relative importance of the oppressions in individual lives is congruent. This has been shown to be empirically unsupportable and, more disturbingly, can be wielded as a powerful discursive tactic to maintain domination in the name of solidarity [Mohanty, 1991 #343; Mohanty, 2003 #826; Radcliffe, 2001 #735]. This is the crux of the issue in the contention of two-thirds world women that one-third world women, as feminists, claim sisterhood with women whose oppressions are experienced at least as acutely in terms of classism or racism as in terms of sexism.

Dean stresses that both affectional and conventional solidarities come up against limits that prevent their extension beyond a certain radius of association. A person can befriend or include into the circle of the "beloved" only a finite number of people among those encountered. Conventionally, each list of social markers has one category for inclusion in the solidary group and many more for those who fall outside. If the solidarity group were Romanians, then at least 150 categories of people, measured on a nationality axis, do not fall within it. Moreover, the solidarity group would include some

for whom Romanian nationality would be the principal marker of their subjectivity, the prime element of their identity. Practicing solidarity with such a group now becomes more complex, especially if the cause concerning political organizing has to do with another co-variant marker, for example, sexual orientation. Dean sees an anti-political infinite regress of identity politics here, so she seeks another way to forge solidarity. She calls her solution “reflective” solidarity.

Reflective solidarity is not exclusionary in character or construction. It results from dialogue and respectful active listening among members seeking unity of mind and action. Yet it is different from affectional and conventional in that set boundaries are not part of the concept. Reflective solidarity is open, in the sense that any and all who undergo the process may be included. It is a dialogical dynamic whereby conscious projection of the presence of a “hypothetical third party” within the midst of the group, enables discourse that is inclusive. This inclusivity forges a solidarity without designated boundaries. In this way the common interests that bring the group together are always confronting the issue of inclusion. While boundaries are tactical and logistical necessities even in reflective solidarity, they are, in principle, always permeable and elastic.

While I find Dean’s discussion and analysis of solidarity fascinating, there are several modifications of her taxonomy that I would offer. First, if we can state axiomatically that there is common meaning in the signifier “human”, even while acknowledging that some paleo-archeological and cyborg (Haraway 1991) research specifically focuses on defining that boundary, then we can posit a common moral

rationale for continued existence of the species, in its corporate components and its individual entities.

There is recent evidence from cognitive psychologists that our abilities of conspecific identification are “hard-wired” into our cerebrum and that “human” exists as a cognitive category from early infancy³²(Bonatti, et al. 2002) Evidence from a brief European pre-racialized “planetary consciousness” during the 15th and early 16th century indicated that the hierachicalization of humanity on the global scale was accomplished in an historically, culturally and scientifically contingent conjuncture when racial segregation served the purposes of colonialization.(Pratt 1992) It would be logically consistent to presume that linguistic categories that distinguished between the “human” us and the “in-human” everybody else in multiple small scale and large scale societies across the globe is a function similar to racialization.

We see with the demonizing of enemies in war propaganda, current wars not excepted, that humanity is rhetorically denied to adversaries. This discursive disavowal indicates that, at some primordial level, it is necessary to deny conspecificity prior to homicide. Maria Victoria Uribe documents that in the frequent rural massacres in the Columbian countryside, both those that occurred in “La Violencia” of the 1940s and 50s as well as those of the current epoch, “perpetrators carry out a series of semantic operations, permeated with enormous metaphorical force, that dehumanize the victims and their bodies.”(2004:80-81). She relates how the massacres are often executed in

³²“Is it by chance that infants identify and distinguish objects with a human face from other objects, or is it a feature of the architecture of the system? We favor the latter hypothesis. In our experiments, we have used objects with human faces, but the Human First Hypothesis is not just about face recognition. Face recognition systems are subordinate to a more general human identification system.”(Bonatti, et al.2005).

animal pens or in the village slaughterhouse. The victims are described by their assassins as poultry or other species of domestic animals. Their executions are described as the slaughter of animals, and their carcasses are often dismembered in similar ways.

My argument here is not that dehumanization is impossible, but that primordial human conspecificity underlies both the recognition and the intentional dehumanization of our fellow humans. This being the case, we can collectively, as a species, de-racialize the human species and re-humanize those populations of *homo sapiens* that we have dehumanized. A theory of global solidarity can find support in this pre-reflective conspecific recognition. Culturally specific forms of solidarity will function within this anthropological and philosophical horizon. It is not necessary to demonstrate the existence of an open-ended, boundary-less type of social solidarity in history or contemporary society. Rather what is important is to affirm conspecificity as a fundamental value that will allow for the construction of open-ended methodologies such as Dean's reflective solidarity in a new global context.

There is a rough correspondence of Dean's affectional solidarity with what I call subjective solidarity, both are constituted by inter-subjectivity, intimacy and empathy. Both enter into Turner's *communitas*. There is a correspondence of Dean's conventional solidarity with what I call structural solidarity in that both are built around social markers that have common significance. Whereas Dean has to posit a separate category, reflective solidarity, in order deal with the contradictions of identity politics, I locate the possibility of political solidarity within the dialectic between philosophical and cognitive conspecificity and subjective and structural forms of solidarity. Identity/differences are

constantly producing the conditions for the possibility of political alliances and hence fulfill a vital survival need.

This is a processual understanding of solidarity which utilizes all three levels; the philosophical/anthropological universal, the subjective awareness, and social structure to forge a *habitus* and a *field* of solidarity. This is not a chronologically sequential process, but rather one that involves all three elements in a historically variable and contingent context of domination, hegemony and resistance. The actual cultural logic of this process in our time can be framed as accommodation and resistance to the inequalities generated by late global capitalism and the quest for “revised futures.”

This process becomes more comprehensible if we now move to the more fine-grained analysis of solidarity that emerges from my research. While the bulk of the ethnographic data will be presented over the course of this document, it is helpful consider at this point how solidarity is operationalized.

Four Dimensions of Solidarity

The following quotations illustrate four salient dimensions of solidarity that become apparent in this study: “Solidarity is not some distant charity but an embrace, which means suffering some of the pain intended for the oppressed” (Chicago 1985:1). Solidarity then is a human relationship of intimacy and shared suffering with marginalized persons.

“Solidarity involves not mere subjective identification with the oppressed but concrete answerability to them” (Harrison 1985:245-246). Solidarity is a human relationship with subalterns that involves emotional empathy with active accountability to them. “What is essential in order to move in the direction of genuine solidarity is intellectual and political struggle fueled by our capacity to discern how the interests of

others are connected to our own” (Harrison 1985:246). Solidarity is an interdependent human relationship that requires cognitive social analyses of power imbalances, analyses that generate political struggles for justice.

Solidarity, then, is a disposition or orientation of the human subject that includes

- an awareness of interdependency with others
- an identification of and understanding of injustice in its specificities
- a commitment to redressing injustices in one’s personal life and institutional affiliations
- a cultivation of the “virtue” or *habitus* of solidarity through concerted human practice to redress power imbalances

The first dimension of solidarity, an awareness of interdependency, is best realized by meeting other people and achieving inter-subjective empathy and intimacy. This element is highly affective. Often times this dimension begins with aesthetically pleasing and politically unthreatening experiences such as interacting with children, which is invariably the single most emotionally rewarding interaction that volunteer vacationers have with rural Nicaraguans. Liisa Malkki (1997) cited in (Bornstein 2001) observes that children are “depoliticizing agents” and “tranquilizing conventions”, symbols of innocence, harmony and hope for the future in highly charged political contexts such as Nicaragua. But while the affect is present in adult/children interactions, the mutual inter-dependence is not and must be learned in another way. If the only Nicaraguans that North Americans relate to are children then there is a danger of sub-consciously generalizing (*habitus* is preconscious) Nicaraguan subjectivity as simpler, more childlike. Conversely Nicaraguans may surmise that North Americans are child-centered and prefer playing to adult activities or discussions, although the practices that might be considered childlike in one culture may not be entirely congruent in the other.

The second dimension, the awareness of injustice, is largely a sensate and an intellectual activity. It requires observation and analysis. The capacity for doing socio-cultural analysis of the rural Nicaraguan context is not a skill that most first time volunteer vacationers demonstrate. Interviews and reflection groups reveal that unless the NGO or the host community provide conceptual categories within which to make the necessary linkages and contemplative space in an activity filled agenda, that most North Americans are ill equipped to contextualize or comprehend the poverty that they are apprehending for the first time.

This is even more emphatically the case in that North Americans' international mobility is facilitated by those technologies of the state that serve to keep the Nicaraguans "in their place". There is no equivalency of documentary efficacy between the Nicaraguan passport and the North American.(Fikes 2002) One privileges its holder with access to travel in any direction, the other prevents the holder from accessing commercial technologies of international travel. In those cases where socially powerful individuals holding Nicaraguan passports lack due deference toward Washington's Nicaraguan designs then technologies of "anti-terrorism" are deployed to deny or revoke visas and prevent ingress regardless of the native stature of the individual.³³

The third dimension, a personal or group commitment to redress injustice, is a volitional activity. Many choose not to engage with the structural justice issues so

³³ In the spring of 2005 Dora Maria Tellez, national presidential candidate, and historian was denied entry by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, under an anti-terrorism clause. Soon thereafter the US embassy declared that "radical populism" was just as dangerous as terrorism, and a week later it was learned that 89 prominent Nicaraguan politicians who had not cooperated with Washington's confidant in Managua, President Enrique Bolaños, were having their visas to travel to the United States revoked (Nicaragua Network Hotline, May 10th and May 17th, 2005). For peasants however, legal travel to the United States is not an option as visas are almost never available to them.

readily apparent in rural Nicaragua and comparatively obscure in suburban North America. Some refrain from social analysis because of the discomfort that the personal de-centering process requires. The “demythologization” of the hegemonic constructions of reality involves cognitive and affective dissonance that evokes disorientation and intense feelings of guilt, anger, or just anguish within the typical North American who has not considered heterodox understandings of political economy until then. If an individual, or more commonly a group, has only a surface understanding of the issues then there is little likelihood of making a commitment to struggle for change. But the majority of those who do not commit themselves as change agents fail to do so because they have not been brought to a personal decision point by the experience of the trip. The overall design of the trip has not brought them to the brink of transformation as it potentially might have. Perhaps it has collapsed the emotional and intellectual tension by offering simplistic and palatable answers to the difficult questions of structural injustice and violence, or simply failed to address them altogether. Perhaps it has not facilitated the interpersonal interaction with marginalized persons whose personal narratives are both evocative and explicative. These programmatic deficiencies are not matters of ill will or negligence by volunteer vacationers or their hosts toward the marginalized persons with whom they are working. On the contrary it is often because they care so much that they involve themselves in a flurry of instrumental activities that do not permit the time needed for perspective taking. Their altruistic *habitus*, reinforced by the charitable objectives of the organization prevent them from taking advantage of the liminality of the moment to question the social formation of which they are a part. There is no

transformative efficacy on the personal level when one can attend to the task at hand rather than the people under one's gaze.

I asked one NGO coordinator if he was going to take a group of visiting volunteers to meet with some of the five thousand *campesinos* who had been camping for a month and occasionally blocking the Pan American highway only two kilometers from the dormitory where the volunteer group was staying. The protestors, expelled from coffee farms during the crisis of 2000, were petitioning the government for a small plot of land to farm and asking that the government not ratify CAFTA. "Maybe we will go talk with them," The NGO staffer responded. Not only did the volunteers not go visit the highway encampment, but the protestors' nearby presence went completely un-mentioned by the NGO and un-noticed by the group during their ten day visit.

In regards to the final dimension of solidarity, actually engaging in solidary behavior, in struggles for justice, is where the *habitus* becomes an orientation for individual and group behavior.

The oppressor is solidary with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor -- when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love (Freire 2002:50)

This is where resistance counters domination. In interviews and questionnaires most volunteer vacationers describe their visit as "life changing". To actually change behaviors, to shift *habitus* over the long term, in accord with commitments of solidarity is considerably more rare. Yet there are circumstances that have inspired groups who have

organized to enable thousands to engage in less exploitative cross-cultural relations who began their journey on just such a volunteer experience.³⁴

We shall see in coming chapters that solidarity does sometimes emerge during these brief volunteer vacation encounters in rural Nicaragua. Civil society, compromised as it is by neo-liberalism, nonetheless occasionally affords North Americans and Nicaraguans a political space within which to do the hard work that citizen-to-citizen solidarity requires.

Four Movements of Solidary Practice

Diachronically there are four movements to the formation of human solidarity as I consider it here. First, solidarity is only necessary and possible in situations of identified social injustice, where inequity exists and a human or non-human force is oppressing some group of human beings. This could be socially mediated vulnerability to a meteorological or geological catastrophe, such as a tsunami, earthquake, hurricane or drought, or it could be a human rights abuse committed directly by other humans through their institutions, such as armed forces, nation states or multi-lateral lending agencies. So solidarity is a form of common sensitivity to and orientation toward resistance to oppression. It is both material and political in the sense that addressing the injustice requires not just service to ameliorate consequences but systemic change to obviate structural conditions of oppression.

³⁴ The organization Witness for Peace which brought over 8000 North Americans to Nicaragua in the 1980s is a particularly prominent example, although volunteerism was a minor component of their visits compared to accompaniment, education and subsequently giving testimony on their return to the United States.

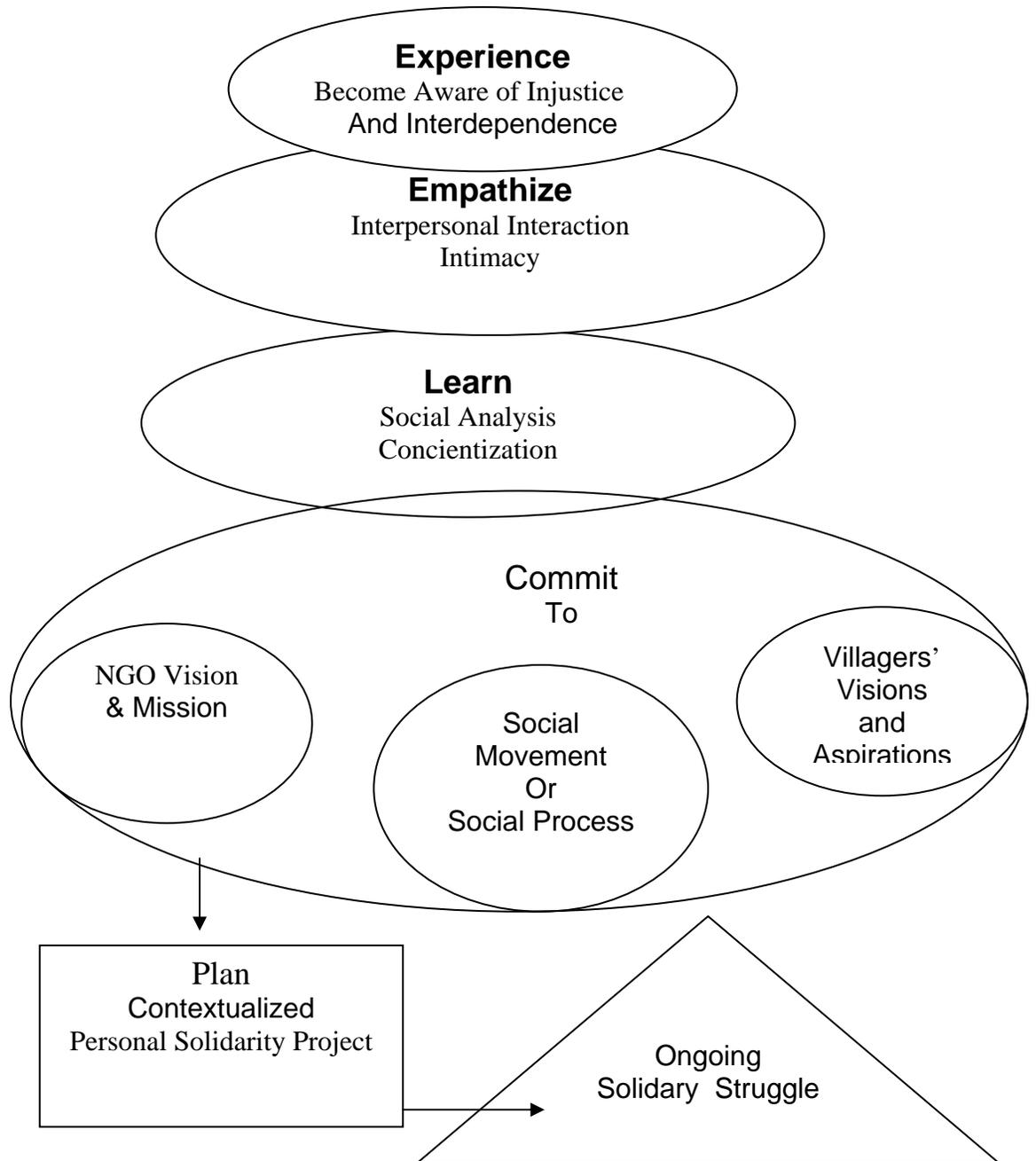


Figure 2-1 Developing a *Habitus* of Solidarity

Solidarity with disaster survivors, for instance, would motivate one toward reducing their vulnerability to future catastrophes. When outsiders arrive to “be in solidarity” with disaster victims Oliver-Smith cautions that interventions are not neutral,

some enhance long term development and others undermine it.(1999) In issues of development it is not the solidarity of the visitors as a group or even the solidarity of the visitors with the village that is paramount, but rather the solidarity of the villagers among themselves. To the extent that NGOs foster village solidarity they can welcome visitors in good faith. Where community development goals are not so clear, then visitors can compound an already serious problem.

Second, a condition of mutual empathy (affectional solidarity) must be achieved between two or more parties. These parties articulate through a condition of shared awareness of oppression. The oppression will be experienced differently by the parties but a mutual recognition of the linked nature of both manifestations of the oppression is necessary. “ Once a situation of violence and oppression has been established, it engenders an entire way of life and behavior for those caught up in it ---oppressors and oppressed alike. Both are submerged in this situation, and both bear the marks of oppression” (Freire 2002:58).

This mutual recognition of the oppression as well as mutual recognition of each party’s human rights are the basis for an empathy or bonding that must bring those suffering injustice together to resist it for the sake of all its victims. The empathy which partners share is not uni-directional sympathy, nor is it exclusively emotional, rather it is an apperception of a common though differently nuanced condition for both parties. On the reflective level it is an affirmation of human unity which transcends or subverts markers of social difference. It is a condition in which “self interest” is given a definition of wider extension than the individual, clan, or even nation-state.

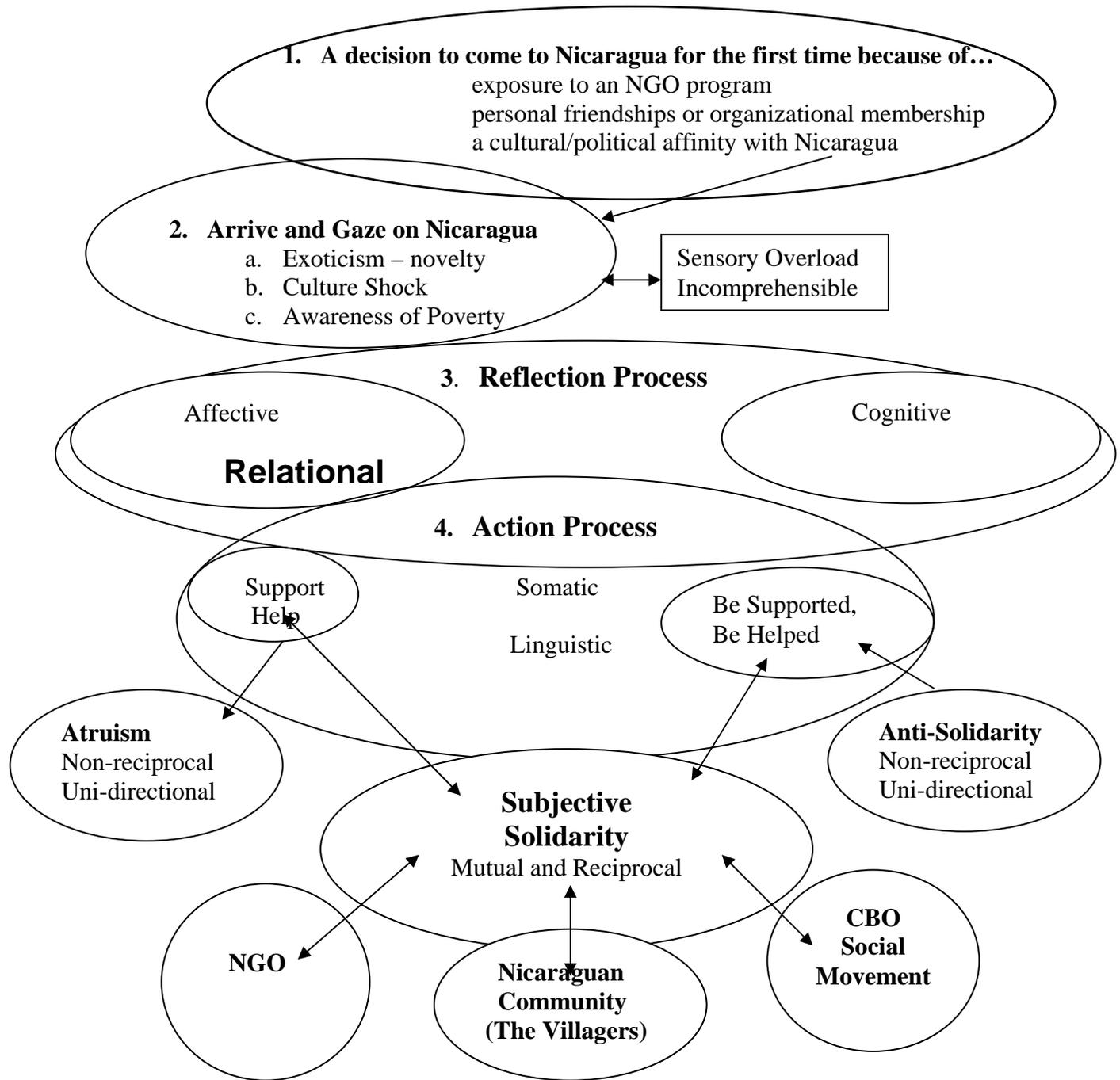
In revolutionary Nicaragua of the 1980s there was a slogan, “*Solidaridad es la ternura de los pueblos.*” (Solidarity is the tenderness of the peoples). One North American solidarity worker in Nicaragua expresses how this tenderness, which comes from personal contact between service-learning exchange students from the United States and Nicaraguans, is a pre-condition for her students to be emotionally open to the possibility of doing social analysis and, later, achieving a subject position of solidarity with Nicaraguans.

That’s where it happens, its about connecting at a very intimate level, its about some kind of tenderness, somehow being moved by each other.... its that tenderness, something touches them at a very deep emotional level. That then you can work with. ... You could see them [North American Students] changing. And it was that contact with people that started to work on them. Something started to happen. Many people like to work with it intellectually, but to me there is something that moves them inside at a very human emotional level, that tenderness, that solidarity.

Third, the aforementioned resistance to injustice must have conceptual coherence and operational efficacy. A cause must be formulated and articulated in such a way that it can enter the imagination of all those who would participate in its just resolution. Solidarity that is not operational is not meaningful. Allen (1999) stresses such a point when considering solidarity as promise. If it is promise it must be one which can be kept.³⁵

On the other hand, social analysis generates a variety of possible solidary activities that are politically feasible, support the group, and move toward a defined objective. Social analysis is not simply an exercise in social criticism but results in action plans.

³⁵ promises that assume a permanent, fixed unity for an indefinite amount of time cannot possibly be kept, and promises that cannot possibly be kept, of necessity, lose their binding force. Thus, the promises and shared commitments that bind us together as political actors have to be open to contestation, reinterpretation and revision, otherwise the promises will cease to bind and the power will disappear (Allen 1999:100).



**Construction of a new subjectivity through heightened identity difference awareness -
 The “life changing”, liminal quality of experience perceived as singular and temporal**

Figure 2 –2: Moving Toward Transcultural Solidarity

Fourth, solidarity involves a commitment to the cause evidenced by involvement in the struggle. Solidarity is not just a sentiment, nor a cognitive assertion, nor even a volitional commitment. Rather it must, finally, evidence itself in activism for justice.

True solidarity is found only in the plenitude of this act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis. To affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality is a farce (Freire 2002:50).

Hannah Arendt makes this point in her philosophy of solidarity and political power. For her power is cooperative human action. Solidarity is neither affective nor cognitive but rather performative (Allen 1999). Arendt sees solidarity as constituted in the very commission of a political act. One does not have to be a member of the group with whom one is in solidarity. The Danish population in the 1940s were not Jewish but their solidarity with the Jewish cause against Nazi attempts to isolate and capture Jewish refugees resulted in what Adolf Eichmann termed a Nazi “failure” to deal with the Jewish question in Denmark.

Since injustices occur with frequency and contemporaneously, a solidarity worker cannot be solidary in the performative sense in every issue of injustice. Solidarity partners evaluate the feasibility of a struggle or a tactic within a struggle based on the urgency of the cause, the limitations of their own lifestyles and other commitments.

Once a cause is identified, selected and personally committed to, then there are subsidiary questions of planning tactics and strategies, the *how* of being in solidarity. This may involve letter writing, fundraising, digging ditches, material aid, medical assistance to casualties, sit-ins, strikes, marches, boycotts or simple accompaniment, ... any tactics which assist in addressing the injustice in question. The understanding of, commitment to, and activism on behalf of, any chosen social justice struggle may not be

experienced in a fixed sequence and can involve recurring phases. The entire process is cyclic.

The Mis-recognition of Solidarity

Mis-recognition and symbolic violence in Bourdieu

Mis-recognition in the anthropology of Pierre Bourdieu (1977) is the inability, on the part of the mis-recognizer, to penetrate the hegemonic discursive constructions that serve to mask the stratification of society. *Mis-recognition* is naïve credence in dominant discursive regimes. It is an unwarranted belief that social institutions are following their overtly stated rationale, which is different than the actual (largely unconscious) logic that forms their *habitus* and corporate *social field*. One common justification for classificatory practices by institutions is to “help others.” The pretension is that the institution has no self-interest or ulterior motives in classifying its stakeholders or differential practices toward them. Totalizing discourses of economics, religion, science or politics are used to confer discursive immunity from self-interest on institutions which can be seen to historically benefit from such altruistic activities. For instance, I found that volunteers often described their motivation as one of service, which they defined as “selfless sacrifice that seeks no reward.” This mis-recognition is dissipated in the recognition by development tourists that they receive as much or more than they give by volunteering, and the solidarity travelers insight that by helping *campesinos* they are actually helping themselves simultaneously.

According to Bourdieu, *symbolic violence* pertains in society when hegemony prevails unchallenged and mis-recognition permits the naturalization of social injustice. Instead of offering a critique of injustice, symbolic violence constructs it as inevitable. A current example in Nicaragua would be the widespread campaign by those who control

the mass media that the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) is crucial for the prosperity of all Nicaraguans. This campaign, which is supported by the executive branches of all the governments that are party to the treaty, emphasizes the advantageous nature of the treaty for all Nicaraguans even though a nearly identical treaty between Mexico and the United States and Canada (NAFTA) has wreaked havoc with the Mexican economy and particularly the peasants. [Picard, 2003 #865; Moreno-Brid, 2001 #734; Edelman, 2001 #909].

Mis-recognition of dimensions and movements of solidarity

It is crucial to distinguish solidarity from altruism or charity, since in volunteer vacation practice it is possible to identify both altruistic and solidary subject positions. Some behaviors of the two may be congruent, their sources of authorization may be similar, but their imaginaries, when submitted to discourse analysis, show significant performative differences. To point out some of the more salient contrasts let us review the four previously identified attributes of solidarity, to show where they diverge from altruism.

Injustice: First, in the issue of identifying an injustice; altruism requires no injustice, only a lack, a deprivation, a power differential. Injustice, in its distributive form, connotes that society has removed the rightful entitlements or basic necessities of dignified human existence from a human being or group of humans. Injustice reveals an embedded power differential of domination and oppression.

Groups which are concerned with works of mercy such as feeding the hungry or sheltering the homeless may or may not be concerned with fixing a system which keeps a billion people hungry and homeless. The worker or group who feeds and shelters often finds sufficient meaning in those very acts. Providing surcease from hunger pangs or

inclement weather for one person or one family at a time, can be both reward and challenge enough for many who care. There is no need to organize politically in order to save an individual from starvation for a time, especially if one has personal access to enough resources to rescue several individuals sequentially. In this case philanthropy suffices in achieving the desired end, amelioration of suffering. As one *campesina* who worked for NGOs in Nicaragua shared concerning one organization's satisfaction with the charitable approach and her obvious dissatisfaction with it:

I could say that its very difficult just to be in solidarity because I am doing charity. The way I have seen many of those groups they are doing charity and they don't understand what the real problem is and really what poor people need in this country. I remember working for three years as an interpreter for one of the big transnational NGOs from the US, they brought medical teams to the country and they still do. The whole meaning was charity. They couldn't get it, understand anything about what poor people need nor what they were doing here in this situation of Nicaragua.

The limitation of the altruistic perspective is also aptly illustrated by the experience of Jessica, who was involved in teaching U. S. study abroad college students in Nicaragua.

“It's what you do with that, makes all the difference. Whether you leave it at the level of charity. Is it enough for them to go and sit, you know, and just hold orphans and teach them a little bit of English or something. Or are they going to start looking at why are all these kids abandoned? What's happening to their families, what's the economic structure that surrounds their families that's producing all these little kids on the street or all these people [that live] in the trash dumps? “

Mutual Empathy: In regard to the second criteria for solidarity, mutual empathy; charity requires sympathy, not empathy. Charity reinforces inequity, materially by hiding resource transfers from the poor to the rich and symbolically by objectification of the receiver in a non-reciprocal exchange. Altruism is concern for others, charity is concern on the part of the haves for the have-nots. The condition for the possibility of charity is

that there be some who have more than they feel they need and some who have less than the charitable party deems necessary. Altruism and charity seek out socio-economic inequality because, it facilitates a transfer of resources, but under different auspices than solidarity.

Altruism constructs the interchange transaction as one in which the magnanimous wealthy are transferring their resources to the poor, expecting gratitude in response. Altruism also places emphasis on the physicality and materiality of the exchange.

The gift is given, as Mauss (1996) has pointed out, without formal reciprocity demanded, yet it is this gift giving which cements the cultural logic that would obligate the poor to be grateful to the rich. The symbolic violence is the mis-recognition of who should be grateful, that the act of charity is done because the rich are grateful to the poor, for remaining poor. For by remaining poor, the poor enable the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the philanthropists, who recognize their obligation to share some portion of it. In Mauss' terminology the charitable gift is the prestation and the reciprocal gratitude is the counter prestation. It is precisely this moral economy of charity and reciprocal gratitude that Petras rails against when singling out NGOs as nefarious agents of imperialism (1997) Gratitude of the poor towards the wealthy can then be construed as their approval of (or at least acquiescence to) a system which provides surpluses and status to the wealthy and powerful at the expense of the poor. Ingratitude is breaking the reciprocal agreement, withholding the counterprestation. Or, better said,

If others do not have more it is because they are incompetent and lazy, and worst of all is their unjustifiable ingratitude toward the "generous gestures" of the dominant class. Precisely because they are "ungrateful" and "envious", the oppressed are regarded as potential enemies who must be watched. (Freire 2002:59)

Solidarity makes the claim that sufficient resources for human contentment and subsistence are basic human rights. Therefore any transfer of resources between those who have more than they need and those who have less than basic necessities is redressing a prior dynamic in which those who have more than enough received resources that rightfully belonged to those who have less than enough³⁶. In a solidary relationship there must be consensus of the parties as to what is “sufficient” and what is “need” rather than “want”. Otherwise solidarity would require equality rather than equity and cross-cultural standards of measurement and comparison would be required. In such a case plural modernities would have to be collapsed into one univocal modernity.

When worshipping with a Salvadoran base Christian community in exile in Costa Rica in 1989 I witnessed a startling act of international solidarity. A German Lutheran aid agency representative was presenting a substantial check to the Catholic pastor of the Salvadoran exile community in support of their development work. On receiving the check in a public ceremony the Central American priest said, “Thank you very much for finally returning that which you took from us in the past.” Such interactions deconstruct the symbolic violence of charity which fuels much international assistance.

An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this "generosity" of the oppressor.... True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. This lesson... must come from the oppressed themselves and from those who are solidary with them. (Freire 2002:45)

Solidarity acknowledges the resource transfers as bi-directional, whereas charity relegates the initial primitive accumulation to non-discourse and asks witnesses to judge the morality of the total interchange on the last half alone. Charity would lead one to

³⁶ If “enough” or “basic necessity” has become so slippery a concept as to need specification, then I would propose that we use the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights as a framework from which to argue.

believe that the wealthy give and the poor receive. This is why altruistic North Americans find it personally difficult to receive gifts from their Nicaraguan hosts, it is a counter hegemonic practice that directly confronts their coloniality of power. It allows the Nicaraguans to re-appropriate their subjectivity and agency in the solidary relationship, resisting the North Americans' subconscious need to objectify the other.

As one NGO solidarity worker articulated it ,

Part of being part of this delegation is coming and being gracious receivers, to allow the Nicaraguans to give to you. And that's not easy for US church people. These are economically wealthy church people... that if we're all wanting to give all the time ... then at some point someone doesn't get the chance to give. We're taking that opportunity away from someone. So I think as North Americans we need to learn to be receivers. That's part of breaking patterns. And Nicaraguans need to learn how much they have to give; their wisdom, their knowledge, their life experience, their humor, their food, their culture, their ability to work hard, their understanding of revolution, whatever.

Also in regard to the second quality of solidarity, there is the need for empathy to be linked to an issue of injustice that is mutually perceived as commonly debilitating. Altruism can operate without sensing or acknowledging the double acting nature of oppression and injustice; solidarity cannot. The dehumanization of the oppressor who is alienated from masses of his/her fellows is denied in the altruism of the privileged who cannot acknowledge that their social status, (for example, their need to live in gated communities), does not lead to liberation. "For them to *be* is to *have* and to be the class of the 'haves' ... The oppressors do not perceive their monopoly on having more as a privilege which dehumanizes others and themselves" [Freire, 2002 #376:59].

Almsgiving becomes a proxy for human dialogue and reciprocity. Charity fosters the mis-recognition among its practitioners that giving is not only superior to receiving, it is also superior to equity. If every one had enough the rich would not be able to demonstrate their virtue. In the consciousness of the altruist, equity itself, far from a

desired state of affairs, actually becomes a limit to his/her personal prerogatives to give without having to receive in return.

The resultant disregard for local needs or desires can be astounding. As one witness attests;

But I have also seen people who use the word solidarity but they imply charity. These implications of solidarity for the *campesino* family is really to be connected to their lives, to understand them. If not, sometimes these brigades come and they say, "Oh this community needs water pipes or this community needs a church." They didn't even ask. I have seen, in the area where I come from, the church was brought from the United States.

One of the perennial issues concerning international development is to what extent it partakes in the dynamic of altruism versus the dynamic of solidarity. Some, among the 'post-development and anti-development' theorists (Escobar 1995; Illich 1997; Petras 1997; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997) would hold that development as practiced is all about perpetuating present inequities, even if ameliorating some of the more egregious symptoms of global capitalism. Others (Arac 1988; Arce and Long 2000a; Arce and Long 2000b; Bennett 1988; Cernea 1995; Chambers 1983; Fogarty 1998; Lewellen 1997; Pieterse 2000) hold that blanket characterizations of such a complex social activity cannot convey some of the more solidary examples of development that illustrate its potential for social transformation.

The third requirement of solidarity, conceptual coherence and operational efficacy which can enlist the participation of the masses, has a homologous requirement in altruism. But the participation that is solicited in altruism is one which constructs itself as selfless. Solidarity recognizes the primordial unity of the struggle for all who would participate, even though what specifically individual participants stand to gain (and lose) from a more just situation will vary according to their social location.

The fourth characteristic of solidarity is commitment to the struggle. Altruism is an approach which can have variable terms of activity. One can act altruistically in a periodic or sporadic manner, engaging in charitable acts as opportunities arise. Solidarity is a more consistent and continuous obligation and opportunity, because one needs be in solidarity not only with a cause, but with a group of human beings who are engaged in a struggle. When the struggle ends the solidarity will no longer be actively pursued, although both causes and groups may be succeeded by new ones.

Mis-recognition as slippage from solidarity to altruism:

The following paragraph from an NGO web page illustrates the drive toward a cross-cultural solidarity, yet it also expects solidarity to transcend the very issues that give it political meaning. It portrays the type of conflation, slippage, and devolution experienced between concepts of structural solidarity ('commitment to a better future and justice'), to subjective solidarity ('community') in the discourse and practice of this organization. We will examine its practice in Chapter 6.

Global Partners, Inc. is about *building* - building a broader and deeper sense of community across cultural divides; building a spirit of friendship and solidarity that transcends politics, economics and religion; building buildings with materially poor communities that promise the beginnings of a better future; and in the end, building a community of global citizens who feel deeply connected to the world and who are committed to making it more just. ...We want our volunteers to be fully exposed to the realities of living in a materially poor country. For we believe that it is only through this level of engagement that we can learn from and be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters living in contexts that are radically different from our own.

³⁷

³⁷ From a volunteer vacation organization's website 6/25/05. It is particularly noteworthy that while the purported goal is to build a citizenry that are committed to justice, there is the contrasting phrase of "transcending politics, economics and religion" (the very foundations upon which transcultural structural solidarity might be forged), focusing instead on the sense of community, the materiality of the type of assistance and the personal immersion of the volunteers in a context of material poverty. It is possible to read this paragraph and imagine all the "builders" being from North America.

This study focuses on those whose sense of social solidarity transcends national and class boundaries and who seek to forge cross-cultural bonds that may help achieve greater equity and less tragedy. The disaster assistance, development and cultural interchange activities in which they participate are not only instances of altruism or moral compunction. Rather they are also discursive regimes and institutional arrangements which provide individual subjective moral and material satisfaction as well as social capital that can be exchanged for prestige of various kinds. There is an economy of desire in which the volunteers subjectively are engaged in the “anti-conquest” (Pratt 1992) or civilizing mission which seeks to inculcate a modernist subjectivity in the locals. It is the orientation which I heard in the discourse of undergraduate group leaders who proclaim to their peers that they are going to Nicaragua not to bring people fish, but to show them how to fish. Ironically, their destination was a fishing village on the coast of Nicaragua.

The dominant metaphor of the volunteer vacationer is a doer. Listening is mentioned, and experiencing as well. But the principle focus is on what is done actively and corporeally. As one volunteer vacationer said to me, as I observed him frenetically running in place in front of his hotel room at 7:30 AM on the first day of his trip, “Let’s get going, I came to do something!” Or again when I inquired about the lack of presentations to the group concerning local and national current events one NGO official responded, “Yeah, you can’t give them a lot of lectures, they came here to work, and they get anxious if they have to sit and listen too long.”

Inherent in these practices are elements of *mis-recognition*, which Bourdieu identifies as the root of *symbolic violence*³⁸ in society. These practices of transculturality and the dominant and counter-hegemonic discourses which they generate enable persons to seek identity in otherness. What is ideally sought by the participants is an identity/difference that is mutually recognizable by those involved in the encounter. What often flows from these encounters are identity/differences that are still not mutually recognizable cross-culturally and which revert back to stereotypes. These images, rooted in post-colonial North South racism, allow class differentiation of the global population according to the necessities of “the market.” Such distinctions are not consciously chosen and cause great discomfort when exposed for what they are and do. As one North American NGO functionary who was also a member of a minority ethnic group expressed it, “Sometimes I can see the racism [of the group members] toward the villagers so clearly. But when I mention it to my colleagues they tell me not to bring it up because our primary issue is one of socio-economic class.”

But not all discourses revert to symbolic violence. In the periphery of empire contradictions cohere in new and creative discursive formations that seek to resist what Foucault called “the ponderous awesome materiality” of discourse (Foucault 1972:216) and open horizons of possibility for those robbed not only of their history, but of their future as well. Discourses developed in “border thought”, (Anzaldúa 1987) in that space of “nepantlism”,³⁹ are generated from the contact of the coloniality of power with the

³⁸ *Symbolic violence* is violence exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity. See Bourdieu & Waquant 1992:166ff.

³⁹ Nepantla is the Nahuatl word signifying “torn between two ways”, the descriptor used by an Aztec spokesperson in characterizing their social situation subsequent to the Spanish conquest.

cultural difference of the colonialized (Quijano 2000). Border thinking generates new cultural differences and new imaginaries (Mignolo 2000). As Tsing observes “heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power.” (2005:5)

Perhaps our interim best hope as a species is to continue to generate alternative modernities or what Heyman calls “counterpart ideals” and what Scott (1999) refers to as “refashioned futures” in such multiplicity that capitalism’s attempts to stratify difference will be overwhelmed by the sheer rate of production of differences. We must be able to envision new world orders which are plural and diverse rather than homogenous, a globalization from below (Nouzeilles and Mignolo 2003) which will allow communities to exist in both community with and difference from their neighbors.

In the rural villages of Nicaragua, North Americans and *campesinos* interchange the raw material from which identity/differences are constructed. At times they assist each other across cultural borders to deconstruct stereotypes of self and others. At other times they contribute unintentionally to the strengthening of tropes which separate them as cultural groups from each other, while making them more malleable to hierachicalization. Imaginaries evolve with increased velocity in circumstances of interpersonal transcultural interaction, group reflexivity, and border thinking.

Solidarity Travel as Cross Cultural Development Tourism

To tighten our focus from a preliminary theory of solidarity situated in liberation anthropology, requires some contextualizing knowledges. I examine four academic sub-disciplines directly concerned with the formation of solidarity between North Americans and Nicaraguans by means of volunteer vacationing.

These four sub-disciplines, or inter-disciplines are:

- tourism studies
- development studies
- peasant studies
- transnationalism & globalization studies

The task here is not to survey these fields, but rather to point out the current academic debates in each field which impinge on or articulate most directly with the concerns of solidarity formation through volunteer vacationing in Central America.

Tourism Studies

What motivates a person to go or not go on a cross-cultural volunteer vacation? Does the novelty of this type of tourism signal the construction of a new “post-modern” subjectivity? How has the “civil society/NGO” medium served to create a tourism distinct from, but articulated with, commercial tourism? How does the contemporary practice of ‘alternative’ tourisms in general, and development tourism in particular, reinforce subjectivities and structures sought by a global capitalist economy? What are the micro-political particularities of the tourist vector from North America to Nicaragua? How do practices of tourism reflect the civil society institutions that administer it? What guest/host power dynamics are embedded in specific development and solidarity tourist encounters? In short, what is the cultural logic of solidarity tourism?

These questions shed light on the complex inter-relationship between travel and solidarity or its absence. I look first at concerns of tourism at the micro-level of individual subjectivities of tourists and hosts. Second I consider meso level issues involving institutionalization of cross-cultural tourism. Finally I consider macro issues of political economy and cultural production at the transnational level.

The Micro level: Travel as Construction of Identity/Difference

MacCannell (1976) says that traveler is a metonym for post-modern “man”. In a world of multiple, serial, and polysemic identities one must not only find one’s ‘self’ but, because, as Lyotard observes in *The Post Modern Condition*(1984), self is really just a ‘nodal point’ in a matrix of relationships, one must continually seek self through difference or simply lose one’s self. In this sense then the “other” (Bhabha 1994) is more immediately identifiable than the self and defines the self. Just as it took the reverse mirror image of the rest of the world , non-Europe, to define Europe through the process of exploration, conquest and colonization,(Chakrabarty 2000; Grewal 1996; Stoler 1995) so the post-modern condition impels those who can, those of the first third world, to sojourn in search of ego.

This quest has become a practical possibility for many only recently with the rise of the “leisure class.” The technological advances in communication and transportation, demographic changes to family structures and life courses, and a shift in the focus of identity from production to consumption (Baudrillard 1970) all promote global tourism. The drive to find one’s identity and/or status niche has caused the rapid diversification of the tourism experience into a variety of disparate practices, many of which fall under the rubric of “alternative” (Smith and R. 1995:3)⁴⁰ tourism . Such options as eco-tourism, adventure-tourism, edu-tourism, cultural tourism, heritage tourism, sex tourism, affinity tourism, volunteer tourism, mission tourism, pro-poor tourism, development tourism, and

⁴⁰ “Alternative forms of tourism are those consistent with natural social and community values and which allow hosts and guest to enjoy positive interaction and shared experiences.” Two constraints of conventional tourism, the alienating accomodation and the difficulty of interacting with destination communities, inspired the diversification

other hybrids share the impulse to find self in the other and so to one extent or another are “ego-tourisms” (Munt 1994). Ebron (2000) shows how even the desire to practice resistance and occupy oppositional social locations, can be appropriated, commodified, and sold back to non-conformists at a handsome profit. In this way “revolution” tourism with its iconographic Che T shirts and Zapatista dolls, can become big business (Babb 2004).

Mary Louise Pratt (1992) reminds us that this search for self in difference through travel, though formerly more restricted in the percentage of the population embarking on it, has been an important cultural practice for the construction of European identity ever since colonization needed a rationale. Stoler (1995; 2002) places its origins in the 14th century. The definition of European-ness and the cultural logic of a Euro-centric world view required the technology of racialization and its deployment to the rest of humanity. This was accomplished in part by the search for the exotic, disdain for the native and desire for pre-contact authenticity found in the practice of European travel (Grewal 1996). Disciplines of natural science and anthropology “recoded” the forms of racial and gendered authority embodied in the Grand Tour of masculine European aristocratic travel into new classifications and discursive formations. The coloniality of power which informs one-third world peoples’ subjectivities is a continuation of that original instantiation of racism that first powered European colonial expansion and which, according to Quijano (2000), has proven more durable than colonialism for stratifying global populations.

The desire to discover self through encountering the other fuels tourism, particularly alternative forms of tourism, or travel, as the anti-tourists like to call it

(MacCannell 1976). Such alternative tourism may still facilitate an encounter with the “other” where each may objectify the other under the tourist or native gaze.(Urry 1990) Conversely travelers may engage in an inter-subjective event that can challenge the coloniality within one or both of the parties. The travel broker often exercises more agency than either tourists or locals (Cheong and Miller 2000) who may be locked in mutual gazes.

Some scholars claim that there is significant “subject agency” in the decision to either reinforce one’s biases and stereotypes by objectification of the other or to grow beyond them by engaging in an inter-personal encounter (Wearing and Wearing 2001) . Other scholars are less sanguine. Edward Brunner (1991) for instance, believes that the very neo-colonial structure of the technology of tourism (who can travel and who can’t) prevents tourists but not hosts from being transformed by the encounter. Subjectively this is the “planetary consciousness” that is the *sine qua non* of European bourgeoisie authority (Pratt 1992).

For some travel is a liminal experience that is transformative but not in predictable ways. The affects that are aroused by the de-centering effects of travel are ineffable experiences. This subjective experience in its intensity defies both narrative and discourse (Fullagar 2002) and thus creates identity/difference in surprising ways. The opportunity that travel affords to transcend or elude gender constraints interests feminist theorists.

Travel is also a means of coming home to the feminine self; signaling the different inter-subjective relations inherent in the journey of identity that are not dependent upon masculine ways of knowing. It is a moment of experiencing the difference within and between the feminine self and the other as a paradoxical space of commonality and distinctness. (Fullagar 2002:74).

The alternative tourist desires to see the native enjoy the advantages of modernity that is an integral aspect of the tourists' own lifestyle (Ebron 2000). At the same time alternative tourists feel the conflicting impulse to try to preserve an imagined pristine tradition that they project upon their non-modern hosts. These are contradictory manifestations of the tourists' ethnocentricity.

Another contradiction is the desire to enjoy the privilege, comfort and security of the leisure tourist and yet the desire to gain social status and satisfy desire by forgoing those advantages in favor of adventure, discovery and spontaneity. There is the pull to construct a genuine interpersonal encounter with natives, and yet a countervailing desire for the type of convenience and comfort that requires relating to them instrumentally.

Tourism as a material practice

The preceding section focused on subjectivity, but cultural power also flows through material practices that lend themselves to analysis by political ecologists. Scholarship (Kottak 1999/1983 ,Cruz, 1996 #573 ,Stonich, 1998 #977) focuses on how policies, infrastructures and local economies built around international tourism impact stakeholders differentially. There is underlying concern for social sustainability as the scale or modality of local tourism enterprises confronts the limits of ecological carrying capacity.(Butler 1991; Stronza 2001) As conditions deteriorate it is the socially marginal that are impacted first, requiring transitioning from agricultural or natural resource based economies to service or informal petty commodity based economies(Stonich 1993). Structural adjustment of economies is a current issue in Central America as multilateral trade and infrastructure schemes are being imposed on agrarian societies to expand enclaves of production for world commerce(Nicaragua 2003).

It is important to attend to “the conditions that help finance and facilitate ” tourism (Ebron 2000:928). Tourism as a differentiated practice follows varying social and economic logics. Civil society institutions generally increasingly utilize the logic of the market, (MacDonald 1995a) but in particular historical and geographical circumstances they show evidence of counter-hegemonic practices that offer new possibilities (Edelman 2001). Our rural research sites in this study are undergoing rapid transition from an agrarian based subsistence plus and rural proletarian economy to one that is emerging from the struggle between various models vying for hegemony in Nicaragua (Ebron 2000), Central America and beyond.

Volunteer vacationing is a strategy which is open to North American participation by virtue of their citizenship in an imperial power which provides for their global mobility and levels of consumption that permit international travel for leisure. Nicaraguans travel to the U.S. but among the popular classes this must be done surreptitiously. Disciplinary technologies prevent their legal passage across national boundaries and global economic relations prevent their access to leisure travel. When Nicaraguans travel to the U.S., more often than not, it is for purposes of subsistence, to find a higher rung on the ladder of the global division of labor. Transnational mobility has become a source of social prestige for the North American middle class, and a source of survival for Nicaraguan popular classes.

The volunteer vacation encounter is transnational, transcultural and cuts across class lines. The cultural logic of solidarity here is not between two equal parties, but rather between a party whose transnational mobility is limited and one for whom it is assumed as a universal human right. Volunteer vacationers evidence surprise when

informed by Nicaraguans that the U.S. government does not permit poor Nicaraguans to enter the U.S.

North American volunteers come to Nicaragua via a network of transnational organizations that package, facilitate and coordinate their visit. Nicaraguans going North have no such institutional network and must rely on kinship and community ties to make the journey. Those that come to the U.S. as part of a reciprocal volunteer vacation visit, few as they are, are hosted by North American organizations who have sent groups to Nicaragua previously. Since Nicaraguans who come to the U.S. face the obstacles of scarcity of travel funds and U.S. government obstruction, it is only possible with active collaboration of U.S. institutions, or else clandestinely. U.S. authorities often prevent Nicaraguans in solidarity with North Americans from gaining access to the U.S.

Development tourism

While there is a growing academic interest in the intersection of tourism and development, there are very few empirical studies of development tourists themselves. There is, however, a growing body of promotional, practical and journalistic literature on the topic (Allaire 2002; Capell and Baig 1997a; Capell and Baig 1997b; Eaton and Hurst 1991; Eaton and Hurst 1993; Klein 2000). One study, which involved European tourists who traveled to NGO community development sites in the two thirds world, showed a disparity between what the host organization had hoped would happen on the trip, familiarization with international aid and an ongoing commitment to support it, and what the visitors themselves both sought and attained, a journey of self discovery. (Salazar 2004) While I think it unwarranted to draw equivalent binary oppositions between NGO objectives and individual objectives in a zero-sum kind of calculus, Salazar's research does point to the contending agendas of different parties in the encounters.

Another study carried out in Central America (El Salvador and Nicaragua) with North American college students involved documenting changes in “global awareness and concern” on standardized scales for those variables. The students were much more integrated into the host communities than Salazar’s subjects had been, staying in family homes and actually participating in community based development projects under the rubric of service-learning with a conceptual framework of working towards social justice. In other words, the goal here was solidarity travel. Significant changes in both scales, global awareness and concern, were documented by pre and post-trip administration of the instruments (Crabtree 1998).

A third study involved returning members, particularly leaders, of several different faith based non-proselytizing groups who went to Central America or the Caribbean to do community development projects. The primary finding in this study, which included some groups with continuing relationships to destination communities, was that the relationships with “locals” were the primary value affirmed by the majority of participants, as attested to by involved and affective narratives interjected within semi-structured interviews.(Adkins 2005)

The contrasting results between Salazar’s study which yielded a very self-focused characterization of the experiences and Adkins’ which stressed the cross-cultural relational aspect gives pause for analysis. The factors of gender (with Adkins’ being predominately female and Salazar’s half and half) and repeat destinations (with Salazar’s having little or no experience of or interest in repeat visits and Adkins’ subjects indicating strong desires to continue relationships at the inter-personal and community

levels) could be construed as giving some definition to gendered constructions of tourism.

If one expands the research focus to include the inherently ambiguous term, “short-term mission,” then a considerably greater literature is available from religious denominational sources. Some short-term mission may be practically indistinguishable from volunteer vacationing, or it may designate a transnational evangelistic proselytizing trip. Ver Beek (2004) reveals that many short-term missionaries who come to Central America to participate in reconstruction efforts consider “word” evangelization to be a more important trip component prior to departure and less important afterwards. Because of the potentially proselytizing purpose of short-term mission, I have excluded the bulk of that literature from my study, which nevertheless warrants a future collaborative research agenda with transcultural solidarity studies.

Feminist scholars (Fullagar 2002; Wearing and Wearing 1996) ask if tourism can be experienced in such a way that relational interaction with hosts, true inter-subjectivity, is the significant core of the tourism experience rather than the distant masculine “gaze” that objectifies and commodifies the hosts? Does the fact that the majority of volunteer vacationers and group leaders are women indicate that interactive modes of tourism are more in keeping with feminine and feminist constructs of leisure? Adkins’ groups included gays, lesbians and bi-sexuals among them whereas Salazar’s group was unmarked as far as sexual orientation, another area of potential research. Ver Beek’s respondents, perhaps because they involved construction brigades, were 70% male.

In terms of research design all but Ver Beek’s focused exclusively on group participant perceptions. In fact Crabtree is the only one that does participant observation

as a volunteer vacationer. The Salazar and Adkins studies consisted of post trip interviews with Europeans and North Americans. Crabtree calls for research among host community members to provide an idea of the individual and corporate reverberations of such visits. Ver Beek includes interviews with NGO functionaries of the executing agencies and their program beneficiaries in Honduras in order to determine impact of short-term mission. I include participant observation and interviews with NGO staff and community leaders and *campesinos* who are not programmatically associated with the volunteer vacationers.

Development Studies

“Progress is a comfortable disease” T.S. Eliot

Development anthropology is a field fraught with disciplinary danger. It is, as John Bennett (1988) has observed, an “ambiguous engagement”. There are academics who consider applied work as theoretically and ethically suspect with development anthropology representing, for some, the nadir of the sub-field. Reasons for its excoriation include its genesis as a colonial technology (as if this were distinctive within anthropology); its instrumental failures (economic results being its *raison d’etre*) and its predominately modernist/positivist theoretical base.

Prescinding from the opportunity to defend development anthropology from accusations of imperialism, ineptitude, and naïve realism, I believe it appropriate to note that there are development anthropologists who work against the World Bank as well as for it (some do both simultaneously). There are development initiatives designed with extensive anthropological input that have been instrumental in self-witnessed improvements in the quality of the participants’ lives (Doughty 2001), and disastrous

projects that included social science impact studies which were ignored or suppressed by the executing agencies (Winthrop 1997).

In recent decades development anthropology has been incorporating insights from feminism (Chowdry 1995; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Kabeer 1994; Marchand 1995; Parpart 1995), post-structuralism (Arce and Long 2000a; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Crush 1995; Escobar 1997; Everett 1997; Ferguson 1990; Gardner and Lewis 1996; Pigg 1992) and post-colonialism. (Mohanty 1991; Sen and Grown 1987) Development anthropology in response to this recent scholarship has moved through an epoch of anti-development, post-development and counter-development (Arce and Long 2000b; Pieterse 2000) to a humbler yet still resolute posture that gives more credence to the subjectivities and discourses generated by popular social movements, (Alvarez, et al. 1998a; Alvarez, et al. 1998b) accompanied by civil society organizations (Yúdice 1998) organized in rights based transnational networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Slater 1998) with much less faith in centrally planned mega projects (Scott 1998) as avenues to progress.

The question remains as to whether entering into the discursive domain of development, one densely linked with concepts such as progress, social evolution, and modernity, is possible without providing more coherence to what Vandana Shiva (2001) has objected to as the “second wave of globalization” after colonialism. Is it possible to identify or construct an alternative development that would not include the centrality of Euro-centric modernization and progress that has helped keep two thirds of the world economically and culturally mortgaged to the dominant one third?

Escobar (Escobar 1991; Escobar 1995; Escobar 1997) and Ferguson (Ferguson 1990) both tend to believe that development discourse and the industry that it has spawned since WWII is too dense to salvage. Others, such as Donald Moore (1999) critique such a monolithic understanding of development discourse as “discursive determinism.” Moore points out that the evidence Escobar cites is textual rather than ethnographic; that Escobar posits the beginning of the discursive practice as the end of WWII and does not try to historicize that “origin” in various evolutionary and differentiated forms of colonialism. Paradoxically, Escobar’s powerful but reductionistic analysis facilitates the very uniformity of development practice he abhors.

It is precisely the historical particularities, conjunctures, and contingencies that constitute development practice locally. Hegemonic discourses play significant roles in replicating themselves, but nowhere is that replication complete or exact; it is always contested and changed.⁴¹ Elsewhere (Fogarty 1998) I go into more detail on why, even though I believe it still has some positive value, I consider the term development pragmatically unsalvageable,

The efficacy of the practices of any organization or individual depends on their commitment to doing a alternative development or counter-development⁴² (Arce and Long 2000a) that conflicts with and compensates for the destructiveness of hegemonic development. Perhaps through work of many of the individuals and organizations I have

⁴¹ “Poststructural approaches need to confront both the heterogeneity of cultural practices that constitutes development as well as the historical agency of the social actors who shape and contest development’s effects.” (Moore:1999:657).

⁴² a term which indicates community organization from the base, projects of community initiative which according to its proponent strategically counter hegemonic development practices – B. Galjart (1981) Counter-development: A Position Paper .*Community Development Journal* 16(2):88-96, cited in Arce and Long (2000b).

researched here, who operate in unique circumstances and are exerting subject agency over their practices, the term development may eventually be redeemed. As Arce and Long observe (Arce and Long 2000b:8), "We should look to ethnography for the inspiration to realize a more grounded and reflexive anthropology of development." Meanwhile, both in theory and practice, development discourse is a highly contested domain.

The concept of counter-development is closely tied to the idea of modernities⁴³ (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993) in the plural. If there are different modernities (socio-cultural ideals of the present), then there can be different concepts of what constitutes progress. This relativizes the Western development paradigm of unending economic growth, of industrial capitalist (and formerly, socialist) relations of production, and radically differential hierarchies of consumption, status, and power. Counter-development is the art of fostering local modernities which offer advantages over a transplanted western modernity. The criteria for those modernities, by definition, could not be formulated in socio-cultural subject locations remote from their practice.

A related concern is how are modernities constructed? from what elements? What is the *bricolage* (a combination of previously unassociated elements) that constitutes a locally constructed modernity that does not possess the "planetary consciousness," or totalizing meta-narrative, of bourgeois modernism? Is it a case of hybridity (Garcia-Canclini 1993; Garcia-Canclini 1995) in which traditional and non-traditional elements

⁴³ modernities contrast with western modernity in as much as they are, in a sense, its antithesis. They are the result of a process which incorporates mental and material elements of western modernity and combine them with locally available "here and now" cultural components to generate a divergent or deviant morphology of modernity, which then continues to be utilized to generate further, less homologous iterations, resulting in cultural logics and social formations quite unlike western modernity which are sometimes then labeled as "traditional" by modernists.

are combined in unique ways? Or is it a post-colonial construction using pre or extra-colonial elements combined with colonial elements to create polysemic futures that defy unilinear schemas of evolution? (Mudimbe 1988) How do agency and structure interact in such a process?

Whose development are we talking about (Chambers 1983; Chambers 1997; Crewe and Harrison 1998)? Pigg (1992) shows that development-savvy locals understand that advantages of development accrue more to the developers than to the developees. Where people surrender crucial components of their culture (Kleymeyer 1994; Maybury-Lewis 1994) to participate in development, then self-esteem, socio-economic well being suffer. If criteria such as participation, empowerment and sustainability, which are touted as attributes of alternative development (Pieterse 1998), are given only nominal assent, then their effect in forging equitable development practices is negligible. If these terms are assigned a significance derived from the operational exigencies of the development organizations themselves, as is often the case (Atack 1999; Cleaver 1999; MacDonald 1995b; Wright 1997), then their counter-development benefits are lost.

Institutionalization of development

For international development to be practiced, a plethora of institutions has been invented. This complex transnational network of organizations - what Escobar (1997) calls "the development industry" - weaves a tapestry of interconnected policy, financing and program strategies ostensibly aimed at the betterment of zones with fewer resources. As globalization accelerates and nation-states lose saliency in world affairs in comparison with other types of polities (Robinson 2001), more financial aid is channeled through private non-profit channels.

This study is centered on the NGO sector, which serves as the primary conduit of foreign aid to Nicaragua (CAPRI 1996). The NGO community is characterized by extreme variety, from tiny organizations with a small number of volunteer staff and few funds to mega-NGOs like World Vision International, which is in nearly 100 countries around the world, employs 18,000 people, and has a budget in excess of one billion dollars (World Vision 2003), an amount equal to several times the 2002 budget of the government of Nicaragua.

Chapter five provides a broader context, ethnographic data, and a critique of current theory and practice of NGOs. Chapter six describes how they operate as culture brokers for volunteer vacationers, constructing logics of altruism and solidarity.

Peasant Studies

“The [anthropological] category *peasant* has come apart at the seams (Kearney 1996:30).”

Like development studies, the sub-discipline of peasant studies has its ambiguities for anthropologists. The principle issues being who are peasants? Do they still exist? By mid 20th century, all “primitives” had pretty much been discovered and most were then destroyed or subordinated by colonialism (Bodley 1990). Kearney (1996) makes the case that the term peasant (Wolf 1955)⁴⁴ was appropriated by anthropology to replace the lost category of primitives that stood for the “other” as its object of analysis.

During the 20th century another phenomenon pushed agrarian peoples onto center stage. Peasants were researched academically because of the West’s need to understand

⁴⁴ meaning a person who has a stable relationship with the land such that s/he produces primarily from agrarian activities and primarily for subsistence rather than reinvestment (Wolf, 1955:453-454).

revolutions led by agrarian peoples throughout the world. Instead of industrial proletarians becoming the vanguard of anti-bourgeoisie movements, it was agrarian peoples who threatened colonial capitalist order. Kearney credits Redfield (1964) with designating peasants as the post-primitive objects of anthropology and facilitating their status as targets of the development industry, which sought to modernize them. One of the political motivations for disciplining peasants with Western concepts of progress was to prevent the kinds of rebellions against capitalist order at which they were proving quite adept.

Alain De Janvry (1981) pointed out that subsistence agriculture had dual functionality, one for the peasant mode of production and another for the capitalist. In developed economies like the United States, there is a correspondence between production of capital goods and production of consumer goods for both domestic consumption and export. In dis-articulated economies, like Nicaragua's, what is produced is exported for consumption by others and the surplus is used to purchase capital goods for more production. Nicaraguan workers are not expected to be able to purchase the goods they produce. Rather they are expected to engage in subsistence agriculture enabling industry to pay them low wages to produce exports. This is efficiency.

The efficacy of subsistence agriculture for capitalism pertains only until carrying capacity of the land is exceeded or until more profitable uses of the countryside are devised. At that point (which is where Nicaragua is presently) the agrarian population is displaced into urban areas surrounding the zones of production. Where they must earn a living in informal commerce, service, and export manufacturing jobs. The manufacturing

jobs are available for only a small percentage of the workforce, providing a constant surplus labor pool and infra-subsistence wage rates. This is the implicit economic rationale behind the demographic displacement foreseen in the National Development Plan of Nicaragua, as the countryside is re-appropriated from the small cultivators and re-distributed to agro-industry, international tourism, and conservation interests. It is a modernization scheme in which local communities have little say.

Kearney, like others before him (Alcantara 1984), maintains that if there ever were peasants who were primarily subsistence farmers and traditional villagers, they no longer exist in great numbers and their survival, due to structural factors, is doubtful. He contends that most peasant social formations are deeply imbricated in global systems of various types and stresses that the urban/rural binary that supported the concept of peasant as country folk has broken down. Likewise, he sees the post-modern elision of the space-time continuum destroying spatial metaphors such as core/periphery, cosmopolitan/provincial, global/local, and subsistence economy zones/market economy zones. As these binaries collapse, the category “peasant” does not make sense. Nor does rural development.

Kearney sees the inadequacy of traditional anthropological categories for respecting the complexity of the structural and subjective realities of people like the Mixtecs and Zapotecs of Mexico. “We must see differentiation of individuals and households and communities as occurring within more complex multi-dimensional spaces” (Kearney 1996:91).

Kearney’s observations are important for research with agrarian peoples, especially his contention that the most fruitful avenues of research involve understanding the

subjectivities of the people in their variety, rather than developing new taxonomies that over simplify complex structural realities. I believe, as he states, that what is required to avoid the many dualisms of anthropology is a unified theory of economic and cultural value. Social relationships of materiality and symbolic meaning continue to be analyzed by theoretically distinct paradigms. Both frameworks deal with power but not homologously. In one, power is uni-directional and cumulative, in the other it is multi-directional and diffuse.

Kearney's ethnographic interest is the transnationalization of the Mixtec-Zapotec people, a process which has accelerated during the first decade of NAFTA.⁴⁵ Most of the village families have multiple migrants and produce only 20% of their food locally. Nicaragua is following a similar path to de-peasantization of the countryside (Núñez Soto 2003), something that has been accomplished at various times since the conquest (Burns 1991; McLeod 1973; Paige 1997), but never completely or finally. CAFTA has recently been ratified by the Nicaraguan National Assembly and the U.S. Congress and its effects are already being felt in the countryside.

Rural Nicaraguans over 20 years old have experienced armed revolution and counter-revolution. Their imaginaries of counter-development predictably involve militant manifestations qualitatively different than those of today's Mexican *campesinos*. The day that NAFTA was ratified, agrarian peoples of Chiapas emerged from the Lancondon jungle as Zapatistas, requesting the solidarity of those who would help them resist the "bleeding" of their land. The world has not heard the voices of the *campesinos* of Nicaragua for several decades, but they are speaking.

⁴⁵ North American Free Trade Agreement among Mexico, the United States and Canada, ratified in 1994.

Regarding the economic subjectivity of rural peoples I find two polar positions in peasant studies. Some scholars believe that agrarian peoples follow a moral economy with its own logic (Scott 1976). Others think that agrarian peoples employ a rational economic maximizer logic, making them more amenable to becoming modern capitalists (Popkin 1979).

According to Scott, peasants follow two related economic principles when relating to outside society. First, the norm of reciprocity requires those with surplus always to share with those in need, which has a leveling effect. A corollary is that those who manage to amass considerably more wealth than their peers have particular, more stringent, criteria for generosity applied to them, or they can be subjected to ostracizing.

The second principle is the inalienable right to subsistence. Peasants will suffer considerable inequity from an unjust landlord, but when the possibility of long-term subsistence is removed, when exploitation exceeds a sustainable level (as judged by the peasant), then they will rebel. Rebellion may be against an isolated elite or an oppressive legal authority. Neo-liberal capitalism ignores rural Nicaraguans right to subsistence.

Popkin's position is that peasants decide on courses of action based on maximum advantage for themselves under the circumstances. They will only engage in reciprocity or clientilistic relationships when it is to their clear advantage. Popkin and Scott may not disagree on what a given rural person might do in a given circumstance, but their rendering of the cultural logic involved is distinct.

Leslie Anderson tested these two hypotheses in Central American villages. Her conclusions, based on comparing and contrasting Nicaraguan and Costa Rican *campesinos*, were that both rational actor and moral economy theories are valid.

Campesinos from each country, even though contending with different types and degrees of oppression, were acutely aware of what the consequences of their actions would be and strove to continually to push those limits. They realized the difference between short term and long term gain for the survival of the community on which they were ultimately dependent. Thus they restrained themselves from engaging in activities would seem to further their self interests, in favor of maintaining good community relations (Anderson 1994).

These issues are important for volunteer vacationing because it is important to determine what type of moral calculus is at work in solidarity. In the behaviors of both Nicaraguans and North Americans, actions that seem opportunistically motivated and actions that seem altruistic may be following different cultural logics, and the possibility of long-term solidarity may depend on the congruency of the logics.

Globalization and Transnational Studies

Important issues of structure and subjectivity are found in scholarship on globalization and transnationalism. Globalization refers to the process whereby technological advances in communication, transportation, manufacture, finance, marketing, organization and education have made rapid real time global financing, production, distribution, and consumption of resources the dominant economic reality.

One type of globalization is controlled by and in the interest of the 53,000 transnational corporations that do the business of global commerce (Carnoy and Castells 2001). Among them are the media conglomerates whose product is representations of culture. Hence this type of globalization is about ideological as well as material hegemony over populations and their resources.

A second type of globalization, from below (Brecher, et al. 2000), is a network of resistance to the material and symbolic violence of corporate globalization. This oppositional stance does not find as much purchase in the commercial or government sectors as it does in civil society. Although it has some support among religious and philanthropic organizations (Biekart 1999; Smith, et al. 1997), its primary manifestation is among popular social movements which have ambiguous relations with NGOs. It gives rise to “innovative forms of human solidarity and citizenship” (Castells 2001:i). Ethnography which involves participant observation among popular classes enjoins anthropologists to analyze privilege and inequality that confers a “disciplinary disposition to dissent” (Lindisfarne 2002).

Transnationalism, like globalization, is both a subjective and a structural dynamic. Whereas globalization begins with the planet as the unit of analysis, transnationalism emerges from but transcends the nation-state. As the role of the nation-state evolves in relation to supra-national agencies that correspond more closely to global economic forces, the responsibilities of states for the care and stratification of its citizens change. As national borders become porous to movements of capital, capitalists, and commodities, corporations exert pressure on nation-states⁴⁶ to maintain the borders’ impermeability to the lower classes. This hierarchy allows them to profit from the differential created by the global division of labor and the depressed living conditions of the majority of humanity.

Transnationality - a lifeway that spans national boundaries - is a matter of course for much of the capitalist class and all of their major corporations. But it is a matter of

⁴⁶ Or regional blocks of trans-nation states like the European Union

necessity and an act of resistance or accommodation for working class people, as they seek work in those nations where employment still provides sufficient recompense for social reproduction. Grewal (1996) maintains that transnationalism is an important step beyond national comparativism, which is inevitably couched within a hegemonic universalist analytic.

A great deal of literature has been generated on the role of the nation-state in a globalizing world (Chalfin 2002; Hoogvelt 2001; Jameson and Miyoshi 1998; Mato 1997; Robinson 1998; Robinson 2001). In the 1990s there were predictions of the demise of the nation-state all together (Robinson 1996), either because it will be no longer functional for its citizens in a post-modern world and hence lack legitimacy, or because democracies have failed to become polyarchies⁴⁷ that meet the aspirations of their citizens for inclusion in the political process (Dahl 1971).

More recently in Latin America there has been wide spread with trying to make the democratic nation-state responsive to the needs of all its citizens, not least because of its fealty to the multi-lateral lending and regulatory institutions.⁴⁸ Formal democracy is a necessary but insufficient condition for popular self-governance (O'Donnell 1998).⁴⁹

As adumbrated as citizenship rights might be in some non-consolidated democracies, they do provide standing from which popular movements can engage in contestation. This is not the case with the supra-national multi-lateral agencies. As

⁴⁷ polyarchies are democracies that have been “substantively popularized and liberalized,” and have become “highly inclusive and extensively open to public contestation” (Dahl 1971:8)

⁴⁸ e.g. Nicaraguan teachers went on strike for a month in spring of 2005. After numerous acrimonious public confrontations and growing popular pressure the government signed a pay raise for the teachers, explaining that “of course” the raise was subject to approval by the IMF in Washington.

⁴⁹ as currently evidenced by the mass unarmed uprising of peasants and miners in Bolivia, resulting in four changes of national administration in less than 9 months

Picard points out in his scathing evaluation of NAFTA from a Mexican economist's point of view, a nation needs not just political but also economic viability to protect the livelihood of its citizens from the forces of globalization.(Picard 2003).

As the movement toward decentralization of national governments proceeds to devolve fiscal, legal, and political power to the local level, the nation-state is also being divested of its potency downward.

Over the past two decades, decentralization --the transfer of political, fiscal and administrative powers to subnational governments-- has emerged as one of the most important trends in development policy. Decentralization is a global and regional phenomenon, and most developing and transitional countries have experimented with it to varying degrees.⁵⁰

Analysis of the World Bank website, quoted above, promoting decentralization links to another called the Local Government Information Network Corporate Partnership Program, which enables transnational corporation executives to identify and contact local officials of "subnational" governments. There is no mention on the bank's Decentralization.Org site of private transnational corporation decentralization, just national government decentralization.

Decentralization is linked in the discourse of the mutli-lateral agencies to concepts of civil society and good governance. In Nicaragua it has resulted in many of the functions formerly administered by the national government being devolved to the local level and a small percentage of the national budgets being transferred to the *municipios*. I discuss how these neo-liberal realignments affect NGOs in Chapter 5.

With this chapter I have set the stage to consider the research design to discover characteristics of solidarity formation during volunteer vacationing. It is the work of the

⁵⁰www1.worldbank.org/wbiep/decentralization/

theorists cited here that enables the framing of questions, the answers to which elude those who confine their analysis of globalization to dynamics that take place within the conference rooms of corporations and states.

CHAPTER 3 SEEKING SOLIDARITY: A RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter opens by situating my reflexive research design in a standpoint epistemology that affirms partial and situated knowledges as most authoritative (Haraway 2003). In light of this, Nicaragua presents unique challenges for an ethnographer from the U.S., such as I. One of the most important features of this research is the dialectical interaction on our bi-cultural team that revealed cross-cultural communication patterns homologous to those discovered in the dynamics of the volunteer vacationing event. Because of the standpoint limitations of all ethnography, this transnational and transcultural event-centered research calls for triangulation of multiple data sources, methods, and interpretive frameworks. It also requires “member checking” analysis with research participants in order to ground both theory and analysis (Corbin and Strauss 1994).

The chapter concludes with a consideration of how early hypotheses yielded to empirical fieldwork data, allowing more focused questions to emerge. The limitations imposed on the research by contextual constraints ensure that the applicability of these findings is correlatively limited. Partial situated knowledge is, in the end, the most authoritative, because it always acknowledges the newly framed unanswered questions (Lincoln and Denzin 2003).

Standpoint Epistemology and Negotiated Ethnographic Authority

Situated Knowledges as Partial, Personal, and Political

Standpoint epistemology is the conviction (Haraway 2003) that only partial perspectives are objective and that all knowledge is generated from standpoints. To claim that one understanding of truth is authoritative beyond that of all others (positivism) or to claim, conversely, that everyone's understanding of any given subject is equally valid (relativism) are inadequate epistemological stances for the social sciences.

Haraway posits that claims of comprehensiveness are a "god-trick," an unwarranted and unsupportable claim to omniscience in content, perspective, or both. This god-trick is epistemological tyranny and the opposite of objectivity. Reflexive ethnography requires specificity about standpoint and humility regarding truth claims. The substance of ethnography is not an alien culture, but the inter-subjectivity between the ethnographer and the research participants. It documents interpersonal relationships, and should reveal the cultural logics not only of the participants, but also of the ethnographer. Usually the ethnographer assumes cultural identity with his/her readers, leaving implicit the cultural logic of the researcher in the field, marking only the logic of the "other". But an ethnographic document is more adequate if the logic of the ethnographer is marked as well. Such reflexivity is important in attempting to transcend the Western researcher/other binary.

Researchers are historically contingent subjects. Neither their subjectivity nor their existential conditions can be distilled out of their "discoveries;" for these discoveries are not so much an uncovering of some pre-existing reality as a complex, layered and historically contextualized "conversation" between the researcher and the subjects of the

research. Thus inter-subjectivity does not lend itself to statistical analysis as proposed by some (Aunger 2004).

Haraway argues

Subject positions are not self-evident. They are constructed from multiple partial perspectives and multiple subjugated (i.e. privileged) standpoints. It is this partiality, this incompleteness, that makes possible understanding among knowing subjects and hence communication and objectivity itself, partial connection (Haraway 2003:32).

Haraway does not see history as happenstance or ethically neutral. Rather, it is a chronicle of the construction of forms of subjugation and resistance to domination. Just as there is no non-subjective knowledge, there is no dis-interested knowledge; or as Foucault said, “Knowledge is not made for understanding, it is made for cutting” (Foucault 1984:88). Haraway and other feminist epistemologists seek a type of knowledge that is liberating, transforming, and challenging to the forms of oppression embedded in current scientific discourse.

“Subjugated” knowledges, or knowledges generated by subalterns who have less access to the global technologies of knowledge construction and dissemination, can now be linked with their counterparts trans-nationally or globally. In this way local knowledges become “glocal” knowledges with a community of peers. This process has enabled World Social Forums to grow even as they diversify. Their only common theme is that “another world is possible” and that they represent the disenfranchised, expropriated, and marginalized. However subjugated knowledges, though not seeking the uniformity of Western modernism, must be submitted to critical theory and reflexivity to warrant the claim of objectivity. Objectivity is not about removing subjectivity but about identifying and locating it.

I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives. I am arguing for a view from a body rather than from nowhere. Only the god trick is forbidden. (Haraway 2003:34)

In arguing just as adamantly against relativism as against positivism Haraway returns to solidarity. "The alternative to relativism is partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology" (Haraway 2003:30). The partiality, and therefore the objectivity, of the knowledge generated by this ethnography has everything to do with its privileged location in the ethnoscape of Nicaragua.

Standpoint epistemology reveals something that our consideration of solidarity in Chapter 2 overlooked. While I acknowledged that the horizon of universal human solidarity gives conceptual coherence to bounded solidarity, the obverse is also true. Only in conceptualizing historically contextual bounded solidarities does universal solidarity have significance. Only by recognizing the partial, non-universal nature of any instance of bounded solidarity, can we understand the power of the universal. Its power derives from its absence. In this sense then, only to the degree that North Americans and Nicaraguans can forge bonds of solidarity among themselves can we understand what universal human solidarity might look like.

One implication for my ethnography is to be cautious not to essentialize solidarity in any of its particular manifestations. Ethnographic data must always be considered from the point of view of distinguishing solidarity from its absence, of pointing out ways that any human practice participates in solidarity and non-solidarity on various levels. This is a project of mapping the boundaries of solidarity in time, space, and subjectivities.

Nicaraguan Ethnography and Representational Responsibility

C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (1958) describes three ways to avoid dealing with issues of social justice while engaged in social science research. First, narrow the topic so that almost no socio-cultural context is considered. Second, describe oppression in such dispassionate and objectified terminology that indignation seems inappropriate. Third, focus with such technical precision on one's methodology that the ethical injustice need not be considered. I would submit that none of these avoidance techniques would be convincing in Nicaragua.

Anthropologists from the U.S. trying to do ethnography in Nicaragua are involved in what Roger Lancaster (1988) calls "a particularly charged process." There are no neutral standpoints, especially not in complex, politically charged *milieus* such as Nicaragua. As one *campesina* from the particularly conflictual area of Mulukuku, once explained, "*Aqui no hay neutralidad.*" Here there is no neutrality. Higgins and Cohen, in explaining their open participation in the revolutionary practices of a Managua *barrio*, remark that during the late eighties in Nicaragua neutrality was understood as either complicity or cowardice. They go on to explain that what needs to be conveyed by ethnography is the people's own sense of their political context and agency (Higgins and Coen 1992). Or, as Kamala Visweswaran observes, "The question is not really whether anthropologists can represent people better, but whether we can be accountable to people's own struggles for self-representation and self-determination." (Visweswaran 2003:89)

Ethnographic advocacy in my case means solidarity with the aspirations of the popular classes for their own liberation from oppression and with NGOs and volunteer vacationers who seek to be in solidarity with them. Ethnographic praxis means being a

companion in that struggle, not by pretending to be a Nicaraguan *campesino* or an NGO functionary, but by making the insights of social science available to their cause. Social movements are one medium through which popular sectors can exercise a degree of agency through construction of social discourse and political practice. My interest in popular social movements is both analytical and ethical.

The interaction between the U.S. and Nicaragua has been a complex, continuing saga of dominations, accommodations, and rebellions, some of which I will address in the next chapter. Anthropologists traditionally have brought data from the periphery to the core of socioeconomic power. Even though colonialism and racism are not considered as defensible as they were during Malinowski's and Evans-Prichardt's era, nonetheless "The relation between imperialism, ethnography and theory is as problematic today as it ever was in the middle of the 20th century".(Lindisfarne 2002:404) It is incumbent upon social scientists from the U.S. working in Nicaragua to be cognizant of the history and politics that inform our ethnoscape, our imaginary of this field.

Even reflexive and ethically committed ethnography can be used against its subjects. This is inevitable. The specific danger in framing an ethnography within an applied anthropology framework, as I am doing, is its institutional linkages with development institutions. Because their objectives are to solve social problems by disciplining subaltern populations in a variety of ways, ethnographic knowledge will be integrated into the social management technology known as international development.

To build a consideration of power stratification into one's research design is a way to ensure that the voice of the subaltern populations will be heard and power dynamics will be analyzed. This type of study is less useful and even perhaps less attractive to agents of the power structure. It unmaskes the dynamics of injustice. If this dialogue between the anthropologist and informants explicates how subaltern populations empower themselves for liberation from oppression it will give scant

comfort to the oppressors and perhaps more clarity to those developing counter discourses. (Lancaster 1988:9)

An ethnographer's interests help define of the research encounter, and should not only be included in the data but clearly acknowledged and analyzed. Both what is said and unsaid in the ethnography should be a function of the commitment of the ethnographer to protect her subjects (Wolcott 1999).from a danger that she often perceives before the subjects themselves do.

Advocacy need not distort one's findings; rather, the opposite is true. Overtly committed ethnographers can access some field data that overtly detached anthropologists cannot. At the same time it is important to acknowledge and distinguish between biases that come from the standpoint of the ethnographer, the operative social science theory, and the standpoint of the participants (Spradley and McCurdy 1972).

James Clifford (1988:168), speaking about museum displays, observes, "I am suggesting only that *some* negotiation will necessarily take place around issues of authority, reflexivity, voice, and audience, and that there is no automatic outcome." The same may be said of ethnography. Ethnographic authority takes various forms, some overt and some not. The text may (and ordinarily ought to) include verbatim passages from research participants (co-researchers, informants, witnesses, and bystanders). But ultimately the author must vouch for the work and the integrity and veracity of its elements. Ethnography is negotiated, if not among multiple authors, then by one author with fragmented purposes and loyalties and a differentiated audience.

Ethnographers operate in a field in which "structures of power are fundamentally at stake" (Ames, quoted in Clifford 1988:207). They write of objects and interpretations that are not just their own, and they deploy these artifacts within a field of power in

which they themselves are located. Ethnographies are inevitably framed by the researcher/participant relationship. There is no unmediated objectivity in ethnography, not even (or perhaps especially not) within the hermeneutic of statistical analysis. Each ethnographic text is unreplicable.

Authors have dialogical relationships with their own texts both during and after their composition. Anything that they write subsequent to is influenced by the intertextuality that it creates. As soon as the text is complete and disseminated, it is no longer the sole “property” of its author. Ethnography reflects, de-constructs and re-constructs culture discursively among a heterogenous community of readers who aggregately constitute a field of power. Ultimately it is not what the writer but what the readers do with the text that impacts social structures. The writers’ intentions and the contingencies the text creates may not be congruent.

Ethnographic Authority and the Crisis of Representation

Ethnographies treating issues of development have often served either to address the dissolution of traditional community life under the onslaught of incursions by the “modern” world (Bodley 1990; Cruz 1996; Kottak 1999/1983) or to document the de-territorialization of traditional communities by means of global flows of people, ideas, and resources (Burns 1993; Kearney 1996; Ong 1999). My primary focus is not on the rural communities, or on the volunteer vacationers, but on how the two encounter each other and how solidarity forms between them. As a result the focal institution becomes the NGO intermediary. Yet this is not an ethnography of a development NGO [Bornstein, 2003 #862], nor of the industry as a whole (Crewe and Harrison 1998). Rather, it is an investigation of a cross-cultural practice used by a variety of small

development NGOs in one region. The tensions evident in this practice construct new transnational subjectivities and structures (Burns 1993; Cunningham 1999; Ong 1999).

One writes field notes in the field and ethnographies at home.(Geertz 1988). Exit from the field signals entrance to the academy. This translocation tends to create distance and discontinuity, thus effectively invisibilizing the imperialism, capitalism, and tourism that bind the two places together (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Cross-cultural, transnational research such as this study suffers from discontinuity in the write up stage because field work was done in Nicaragua and writing primarily in the United States, yet the issues and participants span both locales, though cyberspace blurs the distinction daily. This ethnography is a trans-local representation which illuminates global imagined life possibilities in local life experiences.(Appadurai 1991).

It is imperative that ethnographers not position themselves in some imagined neutrality whereby their work supports the idea that neo-liberal globalization is both inevitable and ethically neutral (Bodley 1990). The evidence in Mesoamerica, particularly in Nicaragua - the “darling”⁵¹ of neo-liberalism - indicates that the present global economic structure is lethal for vast numbers of people whose vulnerability is neither news nor cause for change on the part of global institutions.

The counter-hegemonic discourses that need to be constructed in order to “do no harm to our participants” must be faithful in showing how imaginaries of alternative worlds are being conceived, narrated, and performed in the hinterlands, far from the boardrooms of New York, Brussels, Tokyo, and Taipei. Any ethnographer who fails to

⁵¹ The term used by an ethnically Chinese, residentially North American, nationally Venezuelan investment broker I met on a plane to Managua who was looking for 10 million dollar projects that would yield 40% in three years for his European investors.

record these possibilities, who fails to point toward other possibilities is like the death camp chronicler who matter-of-factly records the names of the dead with an air of inevitability. Such studies have no “catalytic validity” (Lather 2003). They are, in short, unethical. They do harm by being useless for their participants. They are not atypical within a tradition of “salvage” anthropology, but they are no less reprehensible for that.

Social scientists need not collaborate with the civilizing mission of corporate globalization, no matter how attractive, lucrative and irresistible it might seem. The activities of the Bretton Woods organizations⁵² are oriented toward an accelerated articulation of global capitalism into the most remote locations of the planet. Their goal is concentrating production where it is most “efficient” and consumption where it is most “lucrative”. They seek articulation with or assimilation of non-capitalist relations of production according to capitalist logic. Their lack of substantive concern about the equitable distribution of resources is a function of that same logic (Heilbroner 1985). My experience in Nicaragua leads me to conclude that anthropologists who would work with the multi-lateral and bi-lateral aid agencies must take a critical stance or none at all.

Some ethnographers adjust to and even come to identify with the host cultures where they do their field work. Others become temporarily confused as to which culture they belong (Kondo 1990). Fieldwork has helped cure a longing in my heart to be in Nicaragua rather than in the U.S. My personal sympathy with the struggles of Nicaraguan *campesinos* mellowed through the course of this fieldwork into deeper appreciation for their survival skills and a more humble vision of my role as a solidary intellectual.

⁵² The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and more recently the World Trade Organization.

I was painfully aware every day that I was in Nicaragua that I am not Nicaraguan. The majority of Nicaraguans suffer poverty to a degree that I have not because of borders and unequal power flows that are constantly maintained. This is an ethnography of the encounter between the winners and the losers of the current (500 year) round of global accumulation. My sympathies are with both parties, but for different reasons. I fear for the subsistence of the Nicaraguans and the ethical authenticity of the North Americans. Those fears are interrelated in as much as the justification of North Americans is intimately involved with solidarity toward Central Americans. Returning what was taken from them is long overdue.

A Bi-Cultural, Multi-disciplinary, Dual Gendered Research Team.

Native Anthropology and Questions of Cultural Competency

To do foreign ethnography one needs to make the strange familiar, to do native ethnography one needs to make the familiar strange (Wolcott 1999). In considering doing ethnography in Nicaragua I was convinced that a U.S. citizen, for reasons already alluded to, could most responsibly do ethnographic research as part of a team with a Nicaraguan social scientist. The double reflexivity required in researching a bi-cultural phenomenon with a bi-cultural team has influenced how this research program took shape.

During my pre-dissertation research in 1999 I wandered the highways and byways of Nicaragua alone, associating with NGOs and individuals (my daughter, an anthropology student, accompanied me on a few excursions). When I arrived to do my dissertation research in 2003, I was put in touch with two potential research assistants by Marisa Olivares, a rural sociologist at the University of Central America. For the first two weeks I worked with a 20 year old senior sociology student who typified the counter

cultural tendencies current in Nicaragua at the time. I paid his field expenses and hoped to afford him an opportunity to do research for his thesis. His taciturn nature, counter cultural appearance and minimal initiative in the initial stages of fieldwork limited his utility in my research.

Returning after a short visit home, I arranged for a more equitable relationship with a 35 year old woman who was also a sociology student. As a wife and a mother of four she required recompense for her time, and as an attorney and experienced fieldworker her credentials indicated potential. Her initiative, once she understood the scope of the research questions, was outstanding, and she helped advance my research immeasurably.

Patricia provided many things to the team that I could not, including expertise in sociology and law, fluency in Spanish, a female perspective, three-and-a-half decades of life experience in Nicaragua through several wars and economic collapses. the dimensions of contrast between her and I interacted to create space for intense, cross-cultural, multi-disciplinary dialogue about the significance of our data.

The dynamic of our interaction varied depending on whether we were discussing the behavior of Nicaraguans or North Americans. Though we did not always come to consensus on the meaning of Nicaraguan behaviors, and those areas of disagreement urged us to rethink our respective theoretical assumptions, and gather different data. After discussion, I often acceded to her interpretations in light of her linguistic superiority in Spanish and her superior cultural competency. At other times, I felt that my distance as a “gringo” gave me a clearer angle of sight than her cultural “enmeshment.” I felt, on occasion, perhaps because of her cultural assumptions, her sociological bias, or her

middle class Nicaraguan status, that she was missing some key clues. She felt quite differently. Analyzing our dynamic she observes...

There were many times when I felt that he didn't understand some things the way the people had expressed them. Even though he knows about our country and about our culture, it is not easy to understand the cultural framework in all its totality and that's what I'm afraid of....Sometimes we discussed about a situation, because he was wanting to represent as correct something that in my opinion hadn't been dealt with like that, or didn't have the focus that he was giving it. I also felt that he was using polemics of his friends to help him interpret these issues. But that his friends, even though they had been here many years... but in last analysis they had not been in the field with us, experiencing the reality that the people lived. And they were gringos, children of another culture.(Herrera 2004 :5)⁵³

I noticed that when we were discussing North Americans I became proprietary and assumed that I could understand their mental processes and reactions better than she; partially because I understand English better, but also because I am North American, socialized to their cultural logic. My co-nationality with many of my research subjects was one reflexive wrinkle. The other one, mentioned by Patricia, was a "peer" group of expatriates that I considered personal friends, some of whom were also interviewees. Some asked about the progress of our research and I consulted periodically with those whose experience related to our study. Their "takes" on Nicaraguan and bi-cultural issues were at variance with each other's and with Patricia's and I would use their contrasting perspectives to challenge her interpretations. This was one of the factors that caused her to seriously analyze her field data, knowing that I would be conferring with others about her interpretations. But such a process produced tension that had nationalistic overtones. At times she seemed to feel that I trusted my friend's interpretations more than hers because they were North Americans. This caused me to be more conscious of my biases based on affinity and of submitting their interpretations to a

⁵³ The translation from Spanish is my own.

rigorous analysis in light of Patricia's. I found that even though I could understand and accept Patricia's critical analysis of NGO functionary behaviors, I was also deeply aware of the reasons why (emically) they did what they did. They were engaged in practices I myself had performed in the past.

I wondered about how the research process would be different if Patricia and I (as a team) went to another Spanish or English speaking country such as Mexico or Belize, and studied Japanese or European volunteer vacationers? How would that change our feelings of cultural propriety and our ability to find consensus on the meanings of actions. Our respective nationalities, ages, genders, and academic disciplines would continue to influence each interpretation, yet neither of us would be doing native ethnography, and the reflexivity issues would be qualitatively different and less personally threatening.

Though the collaborative process was lengthy and at times frustrating, as we encountered symbolic violence and incommensurabilities on each side, nonetheless it was exciting, as the power dynamics of such a complex encounter slowly began to clarify, or at least become somewhat less opaque. As Patricia observed

Whatever issue concerning the work we commented on, we analyzed the pros and cons and always we took decisions in consensus, generally the our field activities were agreed to. In spite of the fact that we had to deal with a hierarchical relationship, that didn't mean a straight jacket; we were always debating ideas and looking for the best consensus.(Herrera 2004:9)

Engaging in lengthy ethnographic research with an assistant involved me in her life circumstances, which during our fieldwork presented her with many challenges such as bouts with tropical diseases, an armed robbery of her store, and a street-gang attack on her son. She had to deal with my personal issues that impinged on our work such as my limited financial resources (which constrained the amount of work I could give her),

scheduled visits from my family members and my attitudes, which are dealt with at length below.

Masculine/Feminine Gender Dynamics

Gender relations, though unequal and problematic in both cultures, are different in their particulars between the U.S. and Nicaragua. This created tensions for our team as we entered the village field sites. Patricia's experience of vulnerability reflects the conflation of gender and nationality, which finds expression in the cultural trope of *malinchismo*⁵⁴

Everyone was checking out my body and my actions, in our patriarchal culture they didn't consider me his co-worker, but his co-worker who got the job because she was sleeping with him. Here the women are not considered capable of much according to our *machista* culture. When we made contact with the NGOs in the territory it was evident that they related me with the gringo similarly and not because of my work. But I came from the transformational school of the revolution where we proclaimed and achieved gender equality, I was used to working alongside men in difficult circumstances. I wanted to destroy the patriarchal myth that a woman could survive with a boss only because of her sexual relations with him.

Patricia's encounters with Nicaraguan patriarchal culture led her to intensify her work habits to disprove the myth of female competence only in sexual relations. Her gendered sensitivities and interpretations as they applied to North American as well as Nicaraguan culture were essential to our mutual understandings of sexism as a social power dynamic in volunteer vacationing. Confusion of sexual roles and rules is a significant source of cross-cultural misunderstandings. Our comportment as professionals over time, and the introduction of our respective spouses and children to some of our research participants, helped counter stereotypical assumptions about our relationship.

⁵⁴ The term alludes to Malinche, the Mesoamerican woman who served as Cortez's translator, cultural interpreter, and sexual partner during the Spaniard's conquest of the Aztec empire. It is applied disparagingly by Mesoamericans to local females who culturally and sexually collaborate with foreigners who come to exploit.

Patricia's husband played an active part in our research by providing occasional logistical support in the field.

Regarding the gender analysis of our research, Patricia was disappointed that I did not emphasize its importance more in our reports. I was not as sensitive as she to the implications of gender inequality that showed in the data. At times she was the one who led focus groups of women when we agreed that my presence might be intimidating, probably as much for my being male as for my being a foreigner. On the other hand I found myself defending Nicaraguan feminist scholars and activists who had been openly criticized by the FSLN leadership for putting gender before class in their social analysis. Patricia was less than sympathetic to the feminists' position and saw their ordering of gender oppression over class oppression as inappropriate in Nicaragua. For extensive treatments of revolutionary feminism in Nicaragua see (Chinchilla 1994; Kampwirth 1998; Randall 1992).⁵⁵

Nationality

Among the social positions that caused incongruent interpretations of field data was our respective nationalities. Patricia's perspective is informed by her experience as a 12 year old militia leader carrying a Garrand rifle taller than herself to defend her land from the Yankee funded counter-revolutionaries. As an adolescent and young adult Patricia lost many relatives, including two brothers, and most of her male friends as an adolescent to the armed struggle against the United States' proxy armies, the *Guardia* and the

⁵⁵ I do not concur with those who see former Sandinista feminists as prioritizing gender over class. Rather I see that they have generally insisted on resisting gender oppression within the ranks of the FSLN and have been ostracized largely for that reason. Nor do I think Molyneaux's (1985) distinction between strategic and practical gender needs exhausts the issue, but I do concur with her that the Sandinista administration while fully integrating women into the revolutionary process, nonetheless failed to integrate important gender specific needs into the national development plan

*Contra*⁵⁶. During our after-supper chats in the village she shared with me the heart wrenching and gruesome details of her losses as a youth in time of war. Her oldest brother was killed by the *Guardia* and her youngest by the *Contra* when he was 16. She waked the bodies of 17 of her high school classmates laid out in the church following a *Contra* ambush.

Sympathetic to Nicaragua's struggle for sovereignty, I had been on her side during the conflict of the 1980s, had worked to end *Contra* aid in th U.S., and had lived in Nicaragua during the war as a solidarity worker. But I was not prepared to deal with the cumulative sadness that descended on me as stories of the cold-blooded slaughter of youth, complete with the photos of the deceased, piled on top of each other night after night. As I lay in bed thinking that Patricia's stories had sister narratives in 10,000 homes across Nicaragua I came to the realization that I was angry at God because of my nationality. I had been born into an imperialistic nation soon after it had used atomic weapons against civilian populations and through out my life it has continued to kill as a routine matter of foreign policy. I had had no say as to the nationality of my birth, and precious little as to its foreign policy.

Confronting Coloniality

One hot afternoon in July Patricia and I were entering data from household surveys into an SPSS data base. The data had been shared with us by a community development NGO. We had bartered for it in return for the collated electronic files. Suddenly, I was

⁵⁶ The *Guardia* refers to the Somoza dynasty's National Guard, organized, trained and equipped by the U.S. Marine Corps prior to the corps' departure in 1932 and used as an instrument of repression until Somoza's overthrow in 1979. The *Contra* refers to the counter revolutionary military forces of the 1980s organized by the CIA and financed by overt and covert funding from the U.S. government and by illegal conspiracies within the government such as that led by Lt. Coronel Oliver North who surreptitiously sold U.S. military weapons to Iran to replace funding denied by Congress.

stopped cold by her refusal to correct some contradictory and, to me, obviously erroneous, entries from the survey sheets. She maintained that we had promised to develop a database that we could use but that the organization could also use and that the data belonged to them, not us. She refused to change anything, saying it was unethical.

I went ballistic. I shouted that I was not paying her to waste our time to put false data into a spreadsheet and that if she was working for me she would do as she was requested. Where, I wondered aloud, was her commitment as a social scientist to accuracy? At some point I realized I had lost control of my emotions and nearly my senses. So I took a long walk, sat on a rock, thought about it, and came back 20 minutes later. I apologized but sulked until the end of the day, feeling both frustrated and chagrined.

This was a pivotal moment in Patricia's and my professional relationship. Before there had been a comradery and we were both enthusiastic to find out together what thousands of gringos wandering through the Nicaraguan countryside in the name of altruism might be doing to her country. She describes the positive valence of our working together this way,

I smile to remember the times that we fought because we had different ideas about the same process or phenomenon, they weren't fights that distracted us from our objectives or that indicated conflict, but rather discussions about focus or interpretations, but always we arrived at a consensus, I don't think we did it so as to surrender our respective understanding, but always we fought and looked for agreement... We confirmed our momentary hypothesis, or we threw it out, it was very intense and productive. (Herrera 2004:14 & 17)

We had what Gudeman and Rivera refer to as a "conversational community," in which the cultural knowledge which lay dormant and taken for granted in Patricia's memory was activated in our discussions. Gudeman, a North American anthropologist and Rivera, a Colombian, after extensive fieldwork in rural Colombia, observe.

This dialectical drawing out and use of personal knowledge led us to question whether anthropology might be nearly impossible for the single foreign researcher, who, lacking a lifetime of personal knowledge, could never fill out, make the cultural connections, or turn into longhand what we increasingly understood to be elliptical field encounters; but it might also be impossible for the “native,” for whom every verb and noun, every phrase and explanation, was too familiar to require conscious explication – or was an atavism, unconnected to anything else. (Gudeman and Rivera 1989:269)

Because of our philosophical, political, and personal affinities we had managed to acknowledge, but not problematize, that I was a citizen of the colonizing nation and she, of the colonized nation. That I was a man and she a woman. That I was the PI and she was my assistant. That I was the employer and she the employee. Now the coloniality of power was in our faces. The colonialism, the sexism, the patriarchy came through me so transparently that Patricia saw a “monster” that day that she had never seen before.

He yelled some stupid things and said some ugly things about our work. That day his machismo came out, but the worst thing that came out was Yankee domination. I hope that this will be finally overcome for the sake of other human beings because that really was a situation that changed our work and it is very difficult to get beyond it from my position as a woman, a Nicaraguan and an anti-imperialist. (Herrera 2004:17). I was experiencing a situation of humiliation and domination characteristic of the most right wing gringo. ...I was not expecting this attitude. I thought I had known this person well, someone that I worked side by side with, and suddenly I met someone who had another personality, one he had not expressed, hidden, angry and grotesque. ...I was confused, his reaction seemed totally out of place since I was insisting on doing the right thing, for the research, for our professions and for the prestige and satisfaction that we were doing the right thing. ...I received his apologies, I accepted them, but my Gueguense had been awakened and I became more cautious, less open, less companion and more employee. (Herrera 2004:15)

Patricia told me that she had to re-examine her role in my work and determine whether or not our research might potentially be used to harm her country - something that she had never considered before (but of which I was constantly and painfully aware). Several times since she has mentioned that her initial enthusiasm and naivete have been

changed also by two other events: the US government funding of my research⁵⁷ and the war in Iraq⁵⁸.

I expand my treatment of methodology with this vignette not because I am proud of my comportment - quite the contrary. But it brings into stark relief the error of thinking that multicultural ethnographic teamwork inoculates the researchers or the research from the ideological constructs of the respective cultures forged in relationships of post-colonialism. Research in the post-colony, when carried out by teams socialized as post-colonizers and post-colonized, and when researching the micro-politics of the encounter between volunteers socialized as post-colonizers and the post-colonized villagers, becomes a hall of infinite mirrors where representations become a bricolage of identities that are differences and differences that are identities. Both the significance and utility of the data must be analyzed in a flux of radically unequal and constantly shifting fields of power.

In some ways our teamwork itself was counter-hegemonic resistance. She was a revolutionary woman working with a gringo “enemy of humanity”⁵⁹ in spite of her family’s fears of Yankee enculturation. I was working with a middle class, professionally trained Nicaraguan even though my background was working class and most of my Nicaraguan acquaintances were rural peasants. In others ways our team work

⁵⁷ I began my doctoral research in 1999 with a pre-dissertation grant from the Interamerican Foundation, then continued my fieldwork in 2003 with no institutional funding and finished in 2004 with Fulbright foundation funding.

⁵⁸ The bombing began March 20, 2003 as I attended the Society for Applied Anthropology meetings. Some comments from my colleague came in the week that photos of sexual torture of Iraqis by US soldiers were circulating globally.

⁵⁹ “*enimigos de la humanidad*” is a phrase used in early versions of the FSLN hymn to refer to Yankee (U.S.) invaders of Nicaragua.

replicates the social dynamics that we are studying. I was able to employ someone above my “station” because of the power differentials in our respective nationalities and resources that support a graduate student in the U.S. Nicaraguans usually assume North Americans are educated, wealthy, and powerful.

Patricia’s interest in understanding her own society is now being filtered through the concerns I raised, lending urgency, from her perspective as a Nicaraguan citizen, jurist, and social scientist, to this previously un-researched invasion of foreigners. My interest in how North American organizations foster solidarity is now colored by Patricia’s concerns about the continuing de-legitimization of her government and the undemocratic nature of the NGO sector.

This dialectical reflexivity keeps us guessing about our own motives and those of our colleagues. Patricia explains that “It created in me a great and continuing fear...to understand things in such a different manner in the way in which he is expressing them, because of these particular characteristics of the culture and worldview.” It raises questions about the usefulness of the research for our respective constituencies. It problematizes citizenship for us. What we are witnessing is the current phase of an international relationship that has not been satisfactory for most Nicaraguans. The very attempt to find liberatory value in volunteer vacationing that resembles colonial missionary activity is an attempt to discover alternate meaning in new historical contexts.

How does that coloniality of power get integrated into our work? The power differential between Patricia and I mirrors the differentials between her country and mine. The issues that arise in CAFTA/TLC are metaphoric for our issues. I had the research grant, technical equipment, male privilege, and North American citizenship, to effect this

study. She is highly capable, very ambitious, well read in the social sciences, dedicated to sociology and her country, and scrambling to provide for her family opportunities which would be considered necessities, even rights, in our society, but which in Nicaragua are the privileges of the fortunate few. My contract with her was to pay her a wage, which was much less than what I got paid for adjunct teaching in the States. She requires three or four sources of income because of the pay scale the part-time nature of her work with me.

Yet her social class is different than the participants in our study, and that difference allows me to reflect with her on the construction of identity/difference in the ethnographic enterprise. Patricia has good rapport with the villagers, but she also has a class role that is, in some ways, as distancing as my role as a foreigner. She dresses more “professionally” than I do. She administers questionnaires and leads focus groups in a warm but structured manner. She spends time studying rather than visiting. They call her “La Doctora.” She is a professional in the community. I don’t aspire to a professional persona, even though I have a professional ethical stance and am under no misconceptions about how “native” I am. Nothing is to be gained by being more formal or structured than my natural demeanor, which I perceive as relaxed and flexible.

But I do have boundaries that I do not allow Patricia to cross without confrontation. When she gives a “white” Barbie doll to a village girl I confront her on both its effect on the on the girl and how it complicates relationships with that family. She does not avoid relationships of reciprocity with villagers. My reservation is that we are altering social relations in the community and that the terms of the relationship are patronizing. The coloniality of it is striking to me, but not to Patricia. She does not labor under the

anthropological ambition to observe the community in such a way as to minimize the effects of our presence. In fact she sees such a stance as paternalistic.

We are chagrined by different aspects of our native cultures. She is embarrassed when I witness a drunk start a fight in the village or we are kept waiting while some bureaucrat avoids seeing us. I am embarrassed by the conspicuous consumption of some of my compatriots or the ugliness of their ethnocentricity.

Occasionally Patricia finds me patronizing toward Nicaraguans, though she has not confronted me on it at the time. But what angers her the most is observing compatriots who discriminate against fellow Nicaraguans in favor of North Americans. Every day, as we work and reflect together we are reminded by our own attitudes and behaviors of how complex and ambitious it is to bring two cultures together for the purposes of solidarity.

The key question concerning this research that is posed micro-cosmically in the relationship between Patricia and me is, “How is solidarity formed?” We learned that regardless of academically enlightened perspectives, overtly stated and mutually negotiated research objectives, political affinities and mutual respect, the coloniality of power operates powerfully and surreptitiously within the subjectivities and structures of cultural identity to constrain aspirations of collegiality, equity and justice.

A Plan for Qualitative Bi-Cultural Transnational Research

The Research Questions:

Research questions evolve. Those I mention here were operative during most of our fieldwork in more or less definite terms. I refine them yet again in the conclusion where I offer an agenda for the next phase of research on transcultural solidarity formation.

My first concern grew out of a desire to understand the effects that volunteer vacationing has on sustainable participatory development processes - in other words, to

what extent does it participate in alternatives to development. My wish to understand the subjectivity of the rural Nicaraguans involved in encounters with North American visitors led me to frame the question more in terms of solidarity rather than counter development practices per se, even though both involve values of collaboration and reciprocity.

The overarching question might be phrased, “How do volunteer vacationers, Nicaraguan villagers and NGOs interact in such a way as to foster solidarity?” Sub-questions that logically fall under this general query include, “How do North American volunteer vacationers to Nicaragua become solidarity travelers?” “What role do NGOs play in the formation of solidarity between villagers and visitors?” and “How do Nicaraguan villagers participate in the formation of bonds of solidarity between themselves and visiting North American volunteers?”

Always the focus is on the *encounter* among the three parties. Always the quality of relationship being sought is *mutual solidarity*. The questions differ in that each focuses on one of the three parties. Answering them required ethnographic data on each of the three and how they interacted. Because North Americans and rural Nicaraguans seldom engaged in direct interaction without NGO mediation, NGOs moved to the center of the research design.

How Nicaraguan villagers participated as agents of the encounter was not addressed as substantively in our findings as were the roles of the volunteer vacationers and the NGOs. The exploratory nature of the research, the multiple research sites, the thematic centrality of NGOs, and the limited cultural competency of the research team, combined with tight scheduling and limited resources to prevent gathering data to construct “thick descriptions” of *campesino* subjectivity. Further research will require

sites and methods that can capture the subjective agency of the Nicaraguan rural residents more profoundly.

Transnational Event Ethnography

The methodology here must be capable of describing the attitudes of the parties; before, during, and after the encounter. Since the encounter is mediated by the corporate persona of the NGO it is essential to describe its discourse and practice. My research indicates that it is within the institutional radius of influence and social network of the NGO that the attitudes and habits of the volunteer vacationers are formed.

This research must describe not only the practice of the NGO but also of those Nicaraguan entities who are brought into contact with the volunteer group as part of its orientation, education or recreation. Especially close attention was paid to how the groups interacted with community based organizations. This was one of the most significant variables among the volunteer vacationer experiences.

Multifactor Data Triangulation

Triangulation techniques are standard means for enhancing the reliability and credibility of data and analysis in a qualitative, post-positivist research design (Lincoln and Denzin 2003). Triangulation involves using multiple *data sources*, multiple *methods* and multiple *theoretical schemes*. It not only establishes convergent patterns in the data but also reveals counter-patterns as well. Anomalies may be clues to a reductionistic theoretical model.

Data sources

In the course of this multi-sited research I engaged a variety of participants from many different levels of local, national and transnational organizations.

Villagers: Locally our preponderance of contact time was spent among people in several villages. We focused predominantly on two adjacent villages, one peri-urban in lifeways and one in which land tenure patterns enabled a more agrarian mode of production, both were in the department of Masaya. We also observed groups in six villages in other regions of Nicaragua. Two of our participant observations involved groups in urban barrios rather than rural villages.

Within the villages we used purposive and snowball sampling to enlist individual and focus group interviewees.[Bernard, 1995 #1046 We were careful to include both men and women in roughly equal proportions. We also made sure our sample recruited as many community leaders, as identified by villagers, as possible, both in an aggregate focus group and in individual surveys. We interviewed by age and occupational variables, trying for a wide spectrum. We did convene three focus groups of women that were segregated by generally observable variables into three socio-economic strata. We interviewed NGO program functionaries and beneficiaries as well as those who were neither. We interviewed those who had day to day contact with visiting North American volunteers and those who did not.

Landowners We interviewed the three individuals who were publicly recognized as large landowners and lived outside the community, in the city. Even though all were wealthy by village standards, they varied widely in their apparent and reputed assets, owning 350 acres, 120 acres, and 35 acres, respectively. We interviewed small farmers, those who owned between 5 and 15 acres, and those who owned residential land only, family compounds of 1.5 acres or individual home lots of .25 acres. Many who had received agricultural plots in the agrarian reform of the 1980s had sold or abandoned their

land. Others retained their 10 acre plots which they farmed individually. We compiled a separate data base on 10 such households.

NGO functionaries We interviewed individuals serving at various levels in the 10 NGOs working in villages during our research. In the village we interviewed volunteers on local coordinating committees or volunteer promoters as well as paid community promoters and professional technicians. We interviewed the regional managers and national directors of each of the NGOs and in one case the international executive director. They were mostly Nicaraguans, with some North Americans and four Europeans (two Spaniards, an Italian, and a Dane).

Government officials We interviewed various government officials at the *municipio* level⁶⁰ including a vice mayor, city council representatives, a liaison with rural communities, and a foreign aid officer. We did not interview government officials at the national level, though we did attend public presentations made by sub-cabinet level ministers.

Visiting Volunteers: We interviewed 30 members of 10 groups that were volunteering in the villages or barrios at some time during our research, and some members we interviewed on more than one trip. We administered three sequential questionnaires to two different groups of ten members each.⁶¹

NGO grey literature: We procured a variety of types of grey literature from the NGOs in the study including; annual reports, budgets and financial reports, promotional

A *municipio* in Nicaragua is the only unit of local government below the national, analogous in general territorial extension to a county in the United States. But its administrative function would be more significant in that it is like the city administration of the county seat and the county administration combined into one. There are 145 in the nation.

⁶¹ See Appendix A

literature, training literature, correspondence from prospective and past participants, correspondence between NGOs and sending organizations in the United States, correspondence between NGO central offices in the United States and national offices in Nicaragua, household surveys of participating villages, funding proposals sent to multi-lateral or bi-lateral funding agencies. We did not compile every type of document from each organization and some we have only promotional literature from.

National press: We read copies of the Nicaraguan national daily papers, *El Nuevo Diario* and *La Prensa* several times a week, noting contextual information concerning the events and discourses that influenced our research participants.

National social scientists We had access to published and unpublished manuscripts concerning rural life and our zones of interest through libraries and centers of documentation in cities, universities, and social science institutes. I attended the Central American Congress of Anthropology in Managua in March 2004.

Civil Society Forums: We attended events concerning the Central American Free Trade Agreement and demonstrations against it and the privatization of water. I presented interim findings and engaged in dialogue with expatriate solidarity workers at Ben Linder House in Managua.

Methods:

Fieldwork Periods: Predissertation research, which included identifying those organizations bringing volunteer vacationers to Nicaragua, took place in June and July of 1999. Dissertation research took place in two periods, from February to August of 2003 and from January to October of 2004. A total of 18 months was spent in Nicaragua over the course of the three visits.

Participant Observation I spent six months living in villages during the week, and accompanying North American volunteers on their trips to sites of interest to foreigners during weekends. Three weeks were spent accompanying groups in urban barrios.

Interviews: More than 200, semi-structured, and structured interviews were done, sometimes several interviews with the same participant allowed us to gain more deeper understanding, broach topics of increasing delicacy, or get a sense of personal adjustment over time. I conducted many interviews of North Americans individually, Most Nicaraguan interviews were conducted by Patricia and I together. Some interviews of Nicaraguans were conducted by Patricia alone, or me alone. Europeans were interviewed jointly or by me alone. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and summarized. Then were then shared with our team mate in writing and/or orally, and analyzed jointly.

Questionnaires and Surveys We designed and administered three different five to ten item questionnaires in English to volunteer visitors, which were administered sequentially to each group member in two different groups of eleven members each. In addition to the questionnaires for volunteer groups we designed and administered a 22 item questionnaire in Spanish to 26 functionaries of NGOs and community leaders. For comparison purposes we used identical items for both categories of respondent.⁶²

We were fortunate to have two different NGOs doing needs assessment surveys in the villages where we worked and to be able to secure copies of their data. In each case almost all of the 350 households in the two villages had supplied extensive information. Because the surveys were similar but not identical and records were identifiable, we were

⁶² See Appendix B for the NGO and Community Leadership Questionnaire instrument.

able to combine and cross check data bases, giving us robust household survey information.

We developed a ten-page household livelihood survey which we administered to 10 small farmers in order to understand the sustainability of peri-urban agriculture. We hope to use linear programming to analyze the primary constraints in these small farm systems, but this objective is beyond the scope of the current research.

Focus Groups We convened focus groups, “a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher” (Morgan 1997:9), to get richer cross sections of data and interactively generate information that could be used in structuring interviews and surveys about

- 1) three economically stratified groups of women
- 2) *maquiladora* workers, all women
- 3) small farmers
- 4) youth
- 5) village leaders
- 6) three groups of volunteer vacationers.

As Agar (1995) notes, focus groups are only effective when prior ethnographic work and construction of a thematic model have been accomplished. Because in interviews local models of reality can be explained, in focus groups they are simply referred to, or “indexed” (Agar and MacDonald 1995:79). For this reason we used them as complements to our other qualitative methods.

Photography A total of 500 digital images of village and group activity were captured and catalogued to be used in public presentations of this research. We did not

engage in reflexive analysis of the images (Pink 2001), nor was I able to execute the final element of my original research plan which was to facilitate the filming of a rural community based video for volunteer vacationer consumption.

Archival Research We conducted archival research in the local, regional and national offices of NGOs in Nicaragua. Some of the research was in conjunction with an interview of executive staff. Other times we sought and were given permission to analyze files including correspondence and internal memoranda.

For documentary research we relied most extensively on centers of documentation at three organizations, (1) NITLAPAN, a rural social and agricultural research and development institute associated with the University of Central America, (2) IHNCA, The Historical Institute of Nicaragua and Central America, also associated with UCA. And (3) INIFOM, a para-statal agency devoted to development of organizational capacity at the level of *municipios*.

Theoretical Schemes

My research design relied on three theoretical schemes to structure our methodology (1) post-structuralist critical discourse analysis, (2) practice theory and (3) political ecology. Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995) was most appropriate for analyzing our interview, questionnaire and archival materials. Practice theory informed our choices of sites and events for participant observation and informed the insights we gleaned from field notes. Political ecology insured that we kept multiple scales and multiple stakeholders in mind when composing our ethnographic descriptions and helped us integrate our survey database data into our findings.

Post-structuralist discourse analysis The field notes from participant observations, recorded interviews and focus groups plus open-ended questionnaires

augmented by material from NGO archives and the national media, were all subjected to critical discourse analysis with the conviction that discursive formations make possible disciplinary socio-cultural practices.

Some of the critical discourse analysis we performed during fieldwork was synchronic and intertextual, while other work was diachronic, particularly toward the end of the fieldwork period when earlier discourse could be compared to later formations (Fairclough 1995). Texts were constantly being analyzed in light of their social context, as we sought to identify emerging themes that related to solidarity and transnational relations between the U.S. or Europe and Nicaragua. We compared institutional discourses to practices as we observed them.

In the case of NGOs we examined their various types of discourse as they were tailored to different stakeholders. Annual reports, thank you letters, promotional literature, budgets, and board minutes were considered prime avenues to communicate with donors. Themes that interested us here included religious, political, and economic orientation, images of Nicaragua and its people, images of poverty, and issues of citizenship, sovereignty, and solidarity.

We saw operational manuals, personnel policies, organizational charts, memos, unit budgets, office meetings and conversations, and correspondence with groups as having particular relevance to NGO staff. Here we were concerned with staff sense of mission, morale, images of North Americans and rural Nicaraguans, resource allocation tensions between group hospitality and rural development needs, and discourses of education/conscientization, assistance, development, and solidarity.

Regarding the volunteer vacationers we paid especially close attention to each NGO's promotional literature (both print and electronic), and its orientation materials for volunteers including prerequisites, admission criteria, training manuals, background reading about Nicaragua, testimonies of prior volunteers, newsletters, pre-trip meeting agendas and solicitations to post-trip events. The themes of interest here were tourism, adventure, exoticism, altruism, service, charity, assistance, development and solidarity with the poor as well as ideological orientations vis a vis the two national governments and the global economy.

In regards to the NGO program beneficiaries in rural Nicaragua we examined descriptions of program in initial community meetings, qualification of participants, accounting procedures for disbursement and reimbursement of resources, program guidelines, project status reports, staff descriptions of the community groups, families and individual participants. We were interested in themes of community cooperation, citizenship, volunteerism, accountability, economic development, and international solidarity were of particular interest.

Regarding the host villages, we examined the NGOs' discourse concerning characteristics of each village and comparisons between them, maps and textual descriptions, and how they described their presence to the community leaders. We also noted the degree of deference given the community leaders, the conversational dynamics between NGO staff and community members, especially identified leaders. Themes we were examining were constructions of the NGO as a civil society organization, and its relations with the government and social movements. We sought descriptions of

development assistance and international solidarity as occasioned by visits of volunteer vacation groups.

In all of the above cases we were interested in descriptions of U.S. and Nicaraguan citizenship, Nicaraguan sovereignty, NGO and community sustainability, and U.S.-Nicaraguan solidarity. We also focused on power differentials revealed through discourses and practices among the different sectors mentioned above.

Practice Theory: Because not all data is susceptible to discourse analysis, we also used practice theory as a framework. As Conquergood (2003) reminds us, ethnographic qualitative methods are powerful in large part because they are embodied. That is, one has to actually be present to engage in them. Practice or performance is an important way to conceptualize cultural patterns of social behavior and participant observation is a congruent method.

The strength of practice theory is that it problematizes bodily as well as mental behavior. It tends to balance material and symbolic dimensions and thus to deal better with the structure/agency conundrum. Bourdieu's particular political economy of practice, social praxeology or genetic structuralism, as he calls it, relies on two tiers of objectivity. The first order of objectivity is the distribution of resources (capital) of different kinds, and the second order is the classification system that is used to confer social meaning on the first order (Bourdieu 1977). Social science studies how symbolic power and material capital interact. Even though structural constraints are always in force, agency is as well "because the experience of meanings is part and parcel of the total meaning of experience" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

In addition to being somatic, practice theory is helpful in this case because of the key concepts of *habitus*, *field*, and cultural logic. In our research in Nicaragua we are analyzing what Bourdieu calls the “ somatization of social relations of domination” which helps explain why those who are socially dominated continue to act in ways that perpetuate that domination rather than rebel. In Nicaragua we must ask ourselves what are the rules of the game that keep the vast majority of Nicaraguans in social marginality, in conditions of material and symbolic resource deprivation? And what are the rules for North Americans who want to identify with, experience, and help transform some of that marginality? Who sets those rules?

We know from our data that most immediately it is the NGOs that constitute the field of international solidarity and development for these players. NGOs delineate what the rules of international assistance, development, and solidarity are for volunteer vacationers from the U.S. and to a large degree for rural Nicaraguans. But these organizations are part of larger public spheres, and as such are subject to a *field* or correlation of social power that sets the parameters of their practice and discourse.

Political ecology Political ecology allowed me to arrange salient data in different scales of complexity and comprehensiveness. It facilitated the identification of stakeholders in the volunteer vacationers’ visits and enabled me to correlate the micro-politics that I documented in the villages , with the meso-politics of the *municipio* and the national levels , as well as with the macro-politics of globalization as they were acted out on a daily basis. NGOs spanned all of these scales. Political ecology also enabled me to integrate the quantitative data we had concerning material conditions of village life and the livelihood strategies of its residents.

Sites and Organizations

The sites I visited included locations throughout the Pacific Littoral of Nicaragua but most intensely in Masaya, Nicaragua's smallest and most densely populated department, in the *municipio* of Masaya. The sites of significance for this study include the sending communities in the United States and the headquarters of the trans-national NGOs in the North America and Europe. While I was advised to pick a village and stay there, I chose instead to investigate the work of several NGOs and visit more than a dozen groups in rural and urban zones of five different departments, in order to understand the variation in practice and structure a more robust continuing research program.

The Villages Every ethnographer defines his/her community based on what s/he can learn about in the time allotted for fieldwork (Wolcott, 1999:26). In my case it was primarily two villages north of Masaya which were part of a cluster of six villages hard hit by the 2000 earthquake. These six villages, consisting of 600 homes, and some 4,000 people, were all linked by a common system of potable water, and also comprised the main service area of three grassroots development NGOs. The two focal villages were chosen because of (1) their proximity, they are contiguous, (2) because they have contrasting dominant relations of production, one of subsistence plus agriculture and the other of proletarianized commuters, and (3) because one of them has the most constant contact with volunteer visitors; it is where they are housed and fed, as they work in the surrounding region building single family homes.

The Sending Communities The volunteer vacationers originated from many different locations in the U.S. A significant number of groups came from sponsoring organizations such as churches, civic groups or colleges within close proximity to the

headquarters of the U.S. based intermediary NGO. So a preponderance of groups came from New York or from Northern California; Pennsylvania, Maine, Washington State and South Carolina were also represented by multiple respondents. The two largest intermediary organizations, both Nicaraguan based and one with international affiliation, had groups from throughout the U.S. and some from Europe as well. Some groups were constituted ad hoc of individuals from all over the States.

Most sending organizations sponsor annual trips to Nicaragua, almost always with the same intermediary NGO. Some sponsor trips to other foreign destinations and a smaller number sponsor multiple trips to Nicaragua each year. One small university sponsors three trips annually, two for students, faculty, and administration, and one for alumni.

The intermediary organizations' headquarters NGOs that brought groups included ones based in Scarborough, NY, Sonoma, CA, Sacramento, CA, and Springfield, MO. One other is a Nicaraguan organization based in Managua affiliated with a multi-national NGO based in Americus, GA. One is based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Two are based in Managua, Nicaragua and one in Ciudad Sandino, Nicaragua.

NGOs that did not bring groups included multi-nationals based in Milan, Italy, Barcelona, Spain, and Monrovia, California, as well as one national social movement with affiliates throughout Nicaragua.

The above organizations all had permanent staff, offices, and programming capabilities in Nicaragua. Some were local, operating within one *municipio*. Others were based in one region of the country, and still others were present across the entire country.

Some worked exclusively in rural areas, while others worked predominantly in urban centers.

The state and political parties: We interviewed state functionaries at the level of *municipio*, including the vice mayor (*vice alcaldesa*), the municipal council members, representatives of the office of foreign affairs, ombudsman for rural communities, and historian. We also interviewed those designated in various rural communities as the liaison with the mayor, the *alcalditos*.

In our research zones only two political parties were represented in any numbers; the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional or FSLN, known as Sandinistas, and the Partido de Liberales Constitucionalistas or PLC, known as Liberals. The population in the six villages were split nearly equally between the two⁶³. But parties only mobilize before elections, so even though many people were readily identified by their neighbors as either Liberal or Sandinista militants, and local elected boards were characterized by their dominant partisan tendency, there was almost no overt partisanship evident in the villages outside of campaign periods.

We did not document partisan affiliation as that was not central to our research question. We noticed, especially in communities where land tenure initiated in the Agrarian Reform of the 1980s continued (Enriquez 1997), that the leadership that had been trained in community organizing in the revolutionary decade continued to exercise those skills into the present.

Popular social movements In the zone where we worked most intensely there were a number of community based groups that functioned continually to manage community

⁶³ Based on voting patterns of 2000 and 2002.

resources, especially the churches, the schools and the water system. The school committees were elected from among the parents of the students, and the potable water system board was elected at large by the adults of the 600 subscribing households.

There were church leadership councils for the Catholic, Assembly of God, Baptist, and Jehova Witness churches. While religion was not the focus of our study, we documented some parochial tendencies in the volunteer vacationer/villager interaction. Some Catholic villagers who watched evangelical churches being built by visiting volunteers wanted similar assistance.

Movimiento Comunal Masaya, a local affiliate of a national social movement, received a grant to convert emergency post-earthquake family shelters at our site to permanent homes. Funding came from the European Union by way of a Spanish NGO, ACSUR. *Movimiento Comunal* staff from Masaya hired coordinators from the communities to administer the construction and other economic development components of the project. We interviewed community leaders who had been integrated into the program, as well as permanent staff from Masaya and ACNUR expatriate staff based in Managua.

Multiple groups: the volunteer vacationers During the course of our research we accompanied five groups from beginning to end and visited another eight for varying periods of time. Three accompanied groups pertained to the NGO that worked in Masaya. One accompanied group pertained to an NGO based in Matagalpa region, and two others in Esteli with two different Managua based NGOs. Other groups were visited in the above mentioned areas as well as in the department of Managua.

Disseminating findings to communities and organizations:

In liberation anthropology the research design does not end with data collection. The process continues with data collation, analysis and dissemination to the community from which it came for member checking. To this end we compiled an interim report, recording our findings to date and presented them to a community assembly of 60 people in July of 2003, and asked for feedback. We also distributed copies of our report to 15 different NGOs and social scientists who had assisted in the research.

When we returned to that village six months later, we were greeted initially by individuals stressing the value of our research for their work. They told us of adjustments community leaders had made during our brief absence: meetings had been called, wider participation had been solicited, and confrontations had occurred between NGOs and community leaders based on issues of self-determination versus NGO hegemony. The community was requesting additional accountability from the NGOs. NGO executives were changing their discourse about the uniformity of rural communities. New projects were entering the communities with higher levels of recruitment and training of local people as executors of the projects. International bi-lateral aid was by-passing the municipal government and a foreign embassy was negotiating directly with community based representative organizations.

Noting a litany of changes is not to ascribe causality between the research and subsequent changes, but simply to assert that, according to the participants, the research process was involved with the developments described here.

Design Adjustments and Limitations

My original hypothesis, which proved not to be true, was that the impact of short term visiting groups on a rural community depended primarily on the number of groups,

the intervals between group visits, and the length of time that a community had hosted groups. Our research revealed very quickly that the important variable in the intensity of interaction between North Americans and Nicaraguans and hence the long-term impact had much more to do with the manner in which their interface was managed by the NGO that brought them. Our study then began to focus on the philosophies, goals, discourses, practices and linkages of the NGOs. At the same time villager and volunteer agency continually manifested itself in ways that served to amend the institutional constraints.

Another shift that happened during the course of the study had to do with the “*coyuntura*,” or current context, in which Nicaraguan NGOs work. The cultural and political dynamic in Nicaragua is influenced by a strong tension between 40% of the population who are agriculturally employed and the more than 50% who are not. That is complicated by a tension between those in the formal economy (that have salaried jobs, benefits, etc.) which is about 25% of the population, and those in the informal economy (*campesinos*, small self-employed entrepreneurs, etc) who do not have a regular salary. A third tension that overlays them all is between advocates of two different development models. Those who think that Nicaragua should remain an identifiable economic entity with its own domestic economy and food supply, clash with those who believe that the nation should try to integrate as fully as possible into the international economy by making Nicaragua a highly desirable site for transnational corporations to build *maquilas*, or factories, and produce items for export.

My research acquired its meso/macro context when it became apparent that the Nicaraguan government in its National Development Plan and in concert with US trade policy, was siding with those who were more industrially based than with those whose

livelihood was subsistence plus agriculture. It sided with those in the formal economy over those in the informal, and it sided with those who want to internationalize Nicaragua's economy and de-emphasize the domestic market. On the other hand civil society and NGOs, had a variety of stands on these issues, some of them conflicting with the government's. The struggles took place in the press, in public forums, and in the streets as well as in the minds of Nicaraguans trying to negotiate a through the neo-liberal obstacle course.

We then needed to understand how NGOs who brought groups to Nicaragua to be in solidarity with the rural communities, would facilitate the construction of that solidarity. During the time of this research the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA/TLC) was being discussed, debated, and voted on. So it became important to understand how NGOs that brought citizens of the U.S. to rural Nicaragua articulated the issues between the two countries being negotiated in CAFTA; as this "free trade" agreement will have profound effects on rural Nicaraguans just as it has had on their Mexican cousins.

With whom do host NGOs want U.S. citizens to be in solidarity? If it is the rural poor of Nicaragua, then how are they specifying that solidarity? Are self-determination, sovereignty, empowerment, participation, democracy, citizenship, human rights, and political struggle important elements in the discourse of solidarity or is it articulated in terms of houses built, chickens raised, or schools constructed, in other words, of disaster assistance distributed and community infrastructure constructed? What are the methods employed to foster solidarity? How interactive are they? How much agency do the visitors and the villagers have in the encounter? How does the NGO create congruency

of expectations between them? These became our daily fieldwork questions as we traveled the Nicaraguan hinterlands in search of solidarity between villagers, volunteers and their NGO interlocutors.

Writing Culture in the Field

By reflexively writing fieldnotes I came to understand how my own viewpoint was influenced by that of my participants through shared struggles. This gradually led me to the realization that meaning is negotiated through relationships. I came to understand that my representations of others' worlds are negotiated and contested through our team's relationships to our participants (Emerson, et al. 1995).

Writing fieldnotes was cathartic. As emotions aroused during the day were settling from fatigue, I attempted to transfer my daytime observations to evening insights. During the first half of fieldwork our team only had one laptop computer, so Patricia had it between 5 and 7 PM when we ate supper together, and then I had it from 8PM until the next day. My most productive hours were between 5 and 7 AM.

Evening hours required computer battery power because Don Chepe Chu, my host, often was sawing with an industrial table saw that caused severe brown outs every time he fed wood through it. As I sat in a cornfield on a rock looking at the smoking Masaya Volcano about 8 kilometers away, sometimes fieldnotes and journaling became indistinguishable. The observations of hardships and happiness flowed from the villagers to my senses, through my head and heart and then onto the page, - personal and interpersonal, to the syllable. I recorded faithfully and wonderfully that same realization that June Nash had about the Quechua mining families of Bolivia; that these villagers had “transformed their hard and often bitter experience into a meaningful and rewarding life,” and not just a passive life but one of “self-expression” (Nash 1979:14). This, in spite of

the fact that modern capitalist development offers them (Bolivian miners and Nicaraguan peasants) diminishing possibilities for a future based on a progressively degraded resource base. The majority of rural Nicaraguans can expect little good to come their way from corporate globalization, yet they do not surrender. Instead, they struggle daily to develop new forms of subsistence and resistance. They not only survive; they create culture in the process.

I experienced trying to write ethnography in Nicaragua as complicated by the feeling of still being “in the field” and hence facing the distraction that more data was there for the gathering. It always seemed that I might answer my theoretical questions by finding some tidbit of missing data, rather than engaging in the disciplined analysis of the already voluminous quantity and challenging variety of information in our files.

A second difficulty was the residual emotional intensity of the experience unmediated by time and space. My attempts to describe and analyze the lifeways of my research participants could be verified directly with them. There was no need to send a copy of the manuscript to Nicaragua and wait for a reply. My key informants could look over my shoulder and ask me to translate what I had said about them. The psychological space is much smaller and more transparent than that constructed in academia on one’s return. Once home, one can theorize at a distance and do exhaustive searches to find substantial scholarly justification for one’s theoretical formulations. Accountability in academia is managed through peer review of my work rather than the vital critiques offered by those whose lives are directly affected by my conclusions.

Evaluation

Lather (2003) mentions four ways to establish data credibility in qualitative post-positivist research. The four types of validity are triangulation, construct validity, face

validity and catalytic validity. Since earlier in this chapter I devoted considerable attention to the triangulating qualities of my data sources, methods and theoretical constructs I will move on to construct validity.

Construct validity

Construct validity is a systematic reflexivity which recognizes how research questions are generated by theoretical presuppositions of the researcher. As the field data begins to be compiled and earlier hypotheses (like my assumption that the number of groups in a region will intensify the solidary relationship) are discredited, adjusted, or discarded, then new theory must be selected or constructed to frame new questions. In the end it is daily life experiences captured in ethnography which are the litmus test for any theoretical construct. Construct validity measures the degree of openness to and the precision of documentation of the evolution of one's operative theory.

My initial research design was intended to focus directly on the micro-politics between North American volunteers and their Nicaraguan village hosts. That design involved a rather structured interview for each of the parties that focused on the interaction itself. Very early on it became clear that the dynamic of the majority of the groups was that of an enclave society; it became apparent that there were few unmediated encounters between North Americans and host villagers. Even though this was a grassroots encounter that did not involve government entities or the discourses that surround international diplomacy; the encounter was not interpersonal. Because an NGO played a decisive role in marking and patrolling the boundaries between the two groups. Nicaraguans experienced North Americans and North Americans experienced Nicaraguans as the NGO constructed and contextualized the encounters.

This realization required that I adjust my research design to foreground the NGOs' agendas and disciplinary practices. Attempts to find unmediated cross-cultural experiences yielded few results. Both villagers and volunteers said their experiential learning had as much to do with the NGO as with each other. Whereas I had intended to try to describe changes in Nicaraguan subjectivity and agency based on exposure to volunteer vacationers and vice versa, it became apparent that I would only be able to do that with Nicaraguan NGO staff who had intimate contact with the visitors. The average villager, or even villagers who benefited from a program funded by the host NGO, had little personal contact with the visitors, not enough to register changes in villager or visitor subjectivity. While there may be villages and NGOs in Central America which would offer a more direct experience, I have not yet found them in Nicaragua.

Even though I had extensively researched NGOs, rural Nicaraguans, and volunteer groups prior to this time, I was not prepared for the degree of autonomy exhibited by the NGOs in the countryside, the almost total absence of the Nicaraguan state, and the truncated citizenship of rural Nicaraguans. Thus issues of sovereignty, nationality, citizenship and civil society membership became significant themes for this study. Here were communities with no coordinating institutions, little or no state presence, and multiple NGOs intervening subsequent to disasters and then remaining. Groups of foreigners were participating in "development" activities under NGO auspices in communities where residents had few mechanisms with which to influence the initiatives being taken on their behalf.

The prime focus of the study shifted from the micro to the meso level, involving us in organizational ethnography that looked for structurally significant patterns rather than

for life histories or individual testimonies of participants. Interviews were analyzed for links to the field of power relations. Micro-politics gave way to meso-politics. And what had been envisioned as an event that took place in a village now became an event that takes place largely in an organizational *melieu*. Where I had anticipated that the dynamics would be intercultural, they now became a matter of organizational intra-culture.

Face Validity

Face validity is integral to establishing data credibility in participatory and collaborative community based-research. Face validity involves verifying the veracity of one's findings by consulting with research participants for feedback. One way that face validity is operationalized is through the use of member checks, which ask a sub-sample of the respondents to consider the team's analysis of the data and suggest adjustments. This method establishes greater validity only if the results of consultation are integrated into the findings and influence any future phases (Guba and Lincoln 1981; Reason and Rowan 1981).

I describe elsewhere how interim reports to organizational and individual participants were disseminated, how community presentations were made and how repeated visits to "the field" ensured that the research became an ongoing program rather than a one time event. The results are still being shared widely.

Catalytic Validity

The final means of achieving credibility for this type of research is catalytic validity (Brown and Tandon 1978; Lather 2003; Reason and Rowan 1981) which indicates the degree to which the research influences what Freire calls "conscientization"- which is greater self-understanding and self-determination within one's social context.

This is an important measure of validity for transformational or action research where social change is one of the indicators of success. The conscientization sought is not only of individuals, but also of organizations and communities, and of the team members. The self-awareness that precedes self-determination among the stakeholders is crucial.

As Higgins and Coen (1992) in their ethnography stress regarding catalytic validity in the urban Nicaraguan *barrio* where they worked:

We struggle to do an applied anthropology that understands rapid social change in situations of dire necessities. ...The "meanings" of our work will be not in a declaration on our part of what is meaningful, but rather in its usefulness in the work of self-determination and solidarity with that work. (Higgins and Coen 1992)

Summary

In this chapter I situated my methodology within standpoint epistemology stressing that the knowledge I sought is "objective" in the sense of partial and contextual. Part of that context is the ethnoscape of Nicaragua, an ambience created by a historically contentious relationship between the United States and Nicaragua. Ethnographers cannot but heed this historicity at the risk of misunderstanding the symbolism surrounding them (Whisnant 1995). Special types of accountability to Nicaraguan self-determination necessarily infuse ethnography done there.

I considered it essential to enlist the collaboration of a Nicaraguan social scientist. I outlined some of the fecund interaction of that collaboration. I illustrated what I experienced and participated in as the coloniality of power in our relationship, which mirrored that of our research participants.

I stated what research questions guided my study and how they evolved with greater understanding of solidarity formation through volunteer vacationing. In addressing these questions, I showed that the reliability and credibility of the data

depended on multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical approaches, which I recounted in detail.

Attempts to establish the veracity of this study focused on construct, face, and catalytic validity. To achieve these measures we made various adjustments to our research design, including moving from a micro- to a meso-level emphasis, and using multiple community consultations and organizational reports. As with any ambitious plan, some aspects were not adequately developed and remain for future research concerning solidarity formation through volunteer vacationing.

I end this phase of the research program on solidarity as we began, with partial, perspectival, knowledge. I have widened my perspectives, reversed positions in some cases, pursued new avenues in others, but always with the understanding that this is not the definitive study. Much remains to be done.

In the next chapter I will present a portrait of the Nicaraguan ethnoscape focusing on the historical relationship between Nicaragua and the United States during the last 150 years, a relationship which has been instrumental in creating the disparate economic realities for the majority populations of the respective nations. The livelihood struggles of rural Nicaraguans are presented in some detail as are the tensions between development visions that would include and exclude them. Globalization from above and below has come to Nicaragua and like anywhere else, things will never be the same as they were.

CHAPTER 4
NICARAGUA: AN ETHNOSCAPE FOR SOLIDARITY IN AN ERA OF
GLOBALIZATION

The division of labor produces solidarity only if it is spontaneous and to the degree that it is spontaneous. But by spontaneity we must understand not simply the absence of express and overt violence, but of anything that might, even indirectly, shackle the free employment of the social force that each person carries in himself. This not only supposes that individuals are not relegated to particular functions by force, but also that no sort of obstacle whatsoever prevents them from occupying in the social framework the position ;which accords with their capacities (Durkheim 1984:377).

The Poverty Alleviation Strategy and the National Development Plan are focused on bringing people in out of the countryside. And the type of agricultural assistance that might be available are always to get the small producers to be more business like, more competitive, to stop growing staples and start growing for the export market. 70% of Nicaraguans' food is produced on farms of less than 10 manzanas. But the national policies and programs are designed to put the land back into the hands of the wealthy, as it was in the 50s and 60s. So responding to the economic crisis caused in the countryside by these policies the campesinos are selling their land, and who do they sell to? Other campesinos? No because they don't have money to buy land either, they are barely scraping by. So it is sold to someone who has money and who will be consolidating the small parcels into bigger pieces. Someone who can then become 'competitive'. After their land and its purchase price are both gone then they go to Costa Rica or the El Salvador to work as hired hands. But one cannot just decide to up and leave an entire lifestyle. It is not like just getting another job. The system itself is creating unemployment and poverty. Just a few children in the rural zones are going to school, because it costs so much to go now. In 1993 a sack of beans was worth 200 cordobas, today is worth about the same. School shoes however, for instance, have gone from 60 cordobas to 300 cordobas in that same amount of time. (*Magda Lanuza, Centro de Estudios Internacionales*)

An understanding of the historicity of the global present in Nicaragua is essential for comprehending the content, context and character of US/Nicaraguan citizen-to-citizen solidarity. Arjun Appadurai (1991) notes that constructed pasts

are as important as futures because they deconstruct toward locality, which is always the site of subject agency. He further observes that modern ethnoscapas, or global flows of persons, are constructed by confronting genealogies of the local with histories of the global. If we are to imagine a politically potent citizen-to-citizen solidarity we must wrestle with the global and local, the “glocal” or better the “gloncal”⁶⁴ specificities from which it will be constructed.

From 1515 the encounter between the peoples of two hemispheres in Nicaragua has been a contest between two competing development models, two alternative modernities. The model arriving with conquerors from the Old World seeks to stratify society with a cultural logic of unrestricted concentration of capital through primitive accumulation and the differentiation within society of the relations of production. The native Nicaraguan model offers a subsistence ethic which seeks social equilibrium through a more restricted socio-economic stratification and more equitable access to the means of production and the necessities for social reproduction regardless of social location. This struggle of two contrasting futures recurs throughout five centuries of Nicaraguan history.

My treatment of Nicaragua’s historic struggle to refashion its future unfolds in three steps in order to communicate more effectively its implications for the formation of solidarity between citizens of the Nicaraguan popular classes and citizens of the U.S. middle classes. I open with the development of the

⁶⁴ the articulation of global, national and local scales of social relations Gorostiaga, Xabier

1987 Centroamerica : Hipotesis para un Debate. *In* Costa Rica Crisis y Desafios. F.J. Hinkelammert, P. Richard, C. Alvarez, and J.D. Aruj, eds. Pp. 133-145. San José, Costa Rica: Editorial DEI.

agro-export sector of the Nicaraguan economy through a succession of commodities destined for world markets. The progress of mono-crop plantation agriculture through the process of agro-industrialization, continually articulating with a peasant economy, has had drastic consequences for the agrarian peoples of Nicaragua. But a region as plundered of its wealth as was colonial Nicaragua, at independence, found itself at a comparative disadvantage in developing the technological infrastructure necessary to compete for global market share. Under such circumstances the creole elites of Nicaragua, motivated by the capital accumulation development model, sought alliances with elite classes of more industrialized regions of the world to acquire the capital necessary to launch agro-industrialization.

The second section of this chapter deals specifically with the building of Nicaraguan elite class solidarity particularly with its largest trading partner, the United States. This section, contemporaneous with some of the events and processes described earlier from an internal Nicaraguan perspective, treats of the political and economic tribute exacted from Nicaraguans by their New York financiers and the Washington politicians that structured bi-lateral terms of trade. The fact that elite hegemony was so tenuous as to require frequent military interventions by the United States for 150 years eases my task of demonstrating transnational elite class solidarity.

Having recounted both the development of Nicaraguan agro-exportation and the international accommodations that were its *sine qua non*, I then examine the perennially competing Nicaraguan development models in their current form. For

these are the choices which Nicaraguans and their North American allies have available to them.

This chapter provides the context for understanding the role of transnational NGO activity in present day Nicaragua (explored in the next chapter) and to problematize NGO discourses and practices. Such practices may vacillate between the two development models, opt for one model over the other, or even avoid choosing either model. Clarity about competing modernities is one of the criteria for doing social analysis and hence a pre-condition for fostering the formation of transcultural solidarity. NGOs which claim to foster solidarity are, *ipso facto*, obligated to articulate their development model.

This contentious history frames the form and substance of potential solidarity between U.S. citizens and popular sector Nicaraguans. A North American can come to Nicaragua and volunteer for a week and depart without understanding the deepening poverty of Nicaraguan *campesinos*. Or, conversely, that volunteer can participate in community development and also learn why the poverty of these communities intensifies in the midst of a global economy which generates ever greater wealth. The dire circumstances of the majority of rural Nicaraguans are historically evolving appropriations of their material and cultural resources by others.

As William Roseberry reminds us, historical consciousness provides the chronological scale and analytic framework necessary to illustrate the importance of innumerable minute daily choices. Ethnography without historical context results in portrayal of anthropological subjects as “fictitious primordial

characters”(Roseberry 1986:150). Subject agency is often evident in retrospect when one compares actual events with the imagined futures that preceded them. Some imaginaries came to pass and others did not. In order for an imaginary of US/Nicaraguan citizen solidarity to be operationalized, the parties need to understand how both solidarity and non-solidarity between our peoples has been historically constructed in its material and symbolic dimensions.

The Evolution of Nicaraguan Agrarian Political Economy

I use the framework of chronological history to give form to the political economy of Nicaragua over the postcolonial era. I relate the succession of agro-export crops selected by the elite and cultivated by the popular classes accenting their effects on the access to resources of both the indigenous and mestizo ethnicities that comprise the popular classes in Nicaragua. None of these events happened in a vacuum. The intense competition between the United States and Britain, with the former on the ascendancy from the second half of the 19th century till the present, overshadows the internecine battles of the Liberals and Conservatives that debilitated the nation for half a century.

The pre-European contact era already symbolized Nicaragua’s peripherality. Chroniclers (Oviedo y Valdéz 1855/1547) and archeologists (Lange 1996) verify that at the time of conquest the indigenous civilization was a unique form of local polities unlike either the Mesoamerican or Andean cultural complexes. There is archeological and ethno-historical evidence of interspersed chiefdoms who coexisted in a multi-lingual pluri-cultural kaleidoscope quite unlike the Aztec, Inca or Arawak societies circumscribing them. Incontrovertible evidence of culturally different complex chiefdoms cohabiting without the relationships of

domination and subjugation so evident in the indigenous empires to the North and South requires hypotheses of “buffer zones” (Lange, et al. 1986) and “interaction spheres” (Abel-Vidor 1986) to try to explain the anomalous cultural pluriformity.

Chibcha migrations from the South as early as 4000 BP (Haberland 1986), and Mesoamerican migrations from the North, the Chorotegans circa 1300 BP, the Subitavas circa 1000 BP, and then the Nicaraos 1000 to 800 BP (Arellano 1993; Lange 1996) provided successive layers of cultural resources. Polities remained linguistically distinct but became related through agrarian cultural and dietary affinities and interaction over the centuries.

The Spanish conquest of Nicaragua is infamous for its rapacious brutality which continues to affect the collective unconscious and the political culture of Nicaraguans (Vargas 1999). Demographic collapse on the Pacific coastal region was nearly total; Newson (1987) estimates close to 96% attrition of the approximately one million inhabitants in the first 30 years due to small pox, slavery, starvation, and homicide at the hands of the conquerors. The Spaniards had not come to farm but to expropriate and extract (Stanislawski 1983). Complex chiefdoms and their village-based agricultural societies withered in zones of Spanish control. Central highland regions of the country remained outside of colonial administration for more than two hundred years, and the Caribbean littoral was not politically integrated until the late 19th century, and remains culturally distinct today.

After a century of conquest, primitive acquisition of extractive resources, and demographic collapse, the colony, and later the nation, belatedly attempted,

with limited success, to build an economy based on agricultural exportation. The Nicaraguan ethnoscape is a space and a narrative of farmers and entrepreneurs whose nation-building project progressed in fits and starts, razed by forces beyond their control. The 17th century was the origin of the agro-export economy with cacao and indigo being the principle products. The 18th century saw the introduction of sugar and cattle exports. A long list of other potential export products were experimented with unsuccessfully (McLeod 1973).

Through out the pre-contact, conquest, colonial, national and globalization epochs up to the present, the “folk” of Nicaragua, first identified as indigenous and then mestizo, engaged in subsistence plus agriculture. Growing first what foods their families needed there was also a surplus for the *encomendero* or the market. The ratio of the amounts and types of crops grown for subsistence and those grown for market depended on family access to the means of production, their nutritional requirements, the demands of the state, accessibility of markets and the livelihood strategies of each household.

As indigenous populations plummeted, Spanish and Creole elites consolidated control over large tracts of land for agro exports. Wealth rather than stability was their goal. With the incursion of merchantilist and capitalist modes of production peasant agriculture took on the dual functionality identified by De Janvry (1981) whereby it perpetuated the peasant mode of production, and simultaneously subsidized the capitalist mode. Exporters welcomed the self-subsidization of peasant reproduction only to the extent that it did not interfere with the availability of agricultural free labor or desirable acreage on

which to cultivate their export crops. Attempts to deny or permit *campesinos* access to land was used by elites as a narrowly political tool as well (Gould 1990).

The 19th Century: Independence without Sovereignty

Bradford Burns (1991) sees the first half of the 19th century as a time when Nicaragua entered independence with an economic and social balance between the common folk who were subsistence farmers and the elites of Granada and Leon who sought to engage in international trade. Because of warfare at first between the the elites of the respective city states, Leon and Granada (Radell 1969), and later by the elites against the folk, there was little change in the economic hierarchy of the country.

In Nicaragua there were two societies and cultures, the rural indigenous culture of subsistence agriculture lived in a communal village where all enjoyed access to the means of production. On the other hand was the urbane, Europeanized and capitalist lifeways of the Creole. Subsistence agriculture and the internal market functioned quite well during this time. People were well fed. Local markets served all classes, the export market served primarily the elites, the nation builders. During the first half of the 19th century the Nicaraguan people were more economically independent and sovereign than at any time since, even though there was a bewildering succession of different heads of state, nearly one a year.

Nicaragua experienced a late national consolidation as well as a late integration into capitalist world markets – both occurred during the last third of the 19th century. By mid century the patriarchs had gotten themselves into a mess by inviting the U.S. soldier-of-fortune, William Walker, to help put down the armies

being led by populist leaders. This necessitated that Central American elites and popular classes band together to repel the usurper, who had declared himself their president.

The trans-isthmian passage to the California gold fields was functioning. Cornelius Vanderbilt's Accessory Transit Company had secured 85-year rights to the concession for trans-isthmian passage across Nicaragua from the new national government. The private North American corporation had relied on aggressive diplomacy by the United States government in competition with Great Britain's prior dominance and competing interests (Bolaños 1984). Vanderbilt did not appreciate the civil strife and overt harassment (such as the demand that he actually pay contractual fees to Nicaragua)⁶⁵ that his company suffered at the hands of Walkers' administration. The Commodore assisted the Central Americans in ridding themselves of the filibusterer by supplying money for armaments needed by Costa Rican forces advancing on Walker from the South (Williams 1976).

The Nicaraguan elite patriarchs, envying the developing coffee export economy of their neighbor to the south, looked for resources to 'develop' their homeland. Land and labor were two of the key ingredients necessary to develop coffee and other export crops. In the tumultuous decade, 1849 –1858, the elites seized control of the newly consolidated state and prepared the machinery of government to expropriate those lands which would become the coffee producing areas; cotton and cattle would follow.

⁶⁵ Walker seized Vanderbilt's steamships and demanded some \$400,000 in lease arrears owed to Nicaragua.

At this time they decided to throw in their lot with the United States industrialists and bankers rather than those of Great Britain. Development of agro-export industries could only be accomplished by borrowing capital from financiers in industrialized countries. Great Britain and Germany had the greatest foreign investments in Central America in the 19th century but lucrative trade was always more geographically feasible with the United States, and subsequent to World War I capital was more available there as well (LaFeber 1993). Newly independent Central American elites began involving themselves in linkages of commercial and political exchange with the United States which would ensure agro-industrial development in exchange for U.S. political and economic hegemony in the region.

This historical tendency to seek agro-industrialization and to finance it with foreign capital made by culturally Euro-centric elites throughout Latin America in the 19th and early 20th century influenced the character of development in the region. That fateful choice, to ally themselves with the international capitalist class rather than to pursue a more domestic route to national development in alliance with their indigenous and mestizo compatriots, set the pattern for underdevelopment and loss of sovereignty for the subsequent century and a half.[Burns, 1980 #1057 The people, who were-designated as mestizos, when to be Indian meant to be rightful owner of a royal land grant, were progressively dispossessed of their lands, livelihoods, and cultures (Gould 1998; Téllez 1999). These specific acts of expropriation and the legacy of general inequity flowing

from a hierarchically structured and internationally vulnerable agro-export economy set the scene for the 1979 revolution, and its aftermath.

Sugar, Bananas, and Coffee

The latter half of the 19th century saw the introduction of sugar, bananas, and coffee as agro-export crops coming from Africa or Asia, by way of Europeans. As with other such agricultural commodities, as they became profitable on the world market, the best agricultural land in the country was sown with the crop. Where corn, beans, *cacao* and *añil* had grown now one could find sugar cane. Bananas and coffee required different ecological niches, with bananas on wet lowlands and coffee at altitudes between 2500 and 4500 feet above sea level. This meant new expropriations and acreage conversions from basic food production to mono-crop agro-exportation, constricting availability of foodstuffs for the working class and deteriorating nutritional levels.

The *Ingenio San Antonio*, since its inception in 1890 the largest sugar mill in Central America, was founded by two wealthy Italian immigrants, with interests by three families of the Granada oligarchy. English capital allowed them to purchase mill machinery in Scotland and 8500 acres on which to grow cane in North Western Nicaragua. Rum was as important an end product as sugar. The current president of the commercial conglomerate that has evolved from it, Carlos Pellas, great grandson of one of the corporate founders, in 2004 was the wealthiest man in Central America.

Bananas and coffee were also the means for Nicaragua to enter the modern world economic system. The structural adjustments (political, economic and physical) necessary to expand the agro-export sector were implemented by the

liberal administrations of Central America even at the cost of considerable social upheaval due to land tenure changes and changes in the relations of production. Increased economic prosperity for some and authoritarian oppression of others ensured that the scheme would survive. The traditional elites, who were mostly cattle raising *hacendados* gave way to a new entrepreneurial sub-class of coffee growers and processors. As this small but powerful group of growers managed to bend liberal administrations to their will, Indian land, expropriated by the government, was parceled out for development into coffee farms.[Téllez, 1999 #207 By 1890 fully 70% of Nicaragua's foreign exchange earnings were due to coffee (Paige 1997).

As the elite class evolved the peasantry had become proletarianized. As Gould (1990) notes, hegemony seeks to unify production and appropriation and to extend appropriation beyond the productive act into daily life, into the realms of reproduction and consumption. It is in this manner that those involved in mixed modes of production, such as the peasantry, become sites of new cultural production where hegemony meets resistance and domination meets rebellion. Gould (1990) stresses that the struggles for economic and cultural survival of the Nicaraguan *campesinos* employed a new amalgam of resistance strategies arising from two fonts of solidarity. The original source of solidarity was communal and was steeped in kinship linkages that had indigenous roots. This allowed for some cross-class alliances built on relationships such as consanguinal, affinal and fictive kinship as well as friendships and associations. In this way they were able to enlist occasional support from wealthier peasants, petty merchants, bureaucrats,

and even the occasional maverick landowner who was involved in intra-class conflict.

Their proletarian identity was their second source of solidarity and allowed them to develop a class consciousness and engage in worker tactics to resist exploitative initiatives of the business owners and their managers. Eventually the *obrerista* movement was able, by using combinations of communitarian and proletarian tactics against agrarian, industrial and political elites, to reappropriate, during the 1960s and 70s, a small percentage of the expropriated lands livelihoods, and communities that had been lost to the sugar, cotton and cattle industries in the Pacific region.

The banana export industry, although buying product from local growers, was a foreign owned enterprise. As such, it owned its own railroads, acquired its financing from foreign banks, and functioned as an economic enclave (Burns 1991).

The 20th Century: Coffee, Cotton, Cattle and Land Reform

During the 20th century the liberal ideology required to arrange for large scale agro-export economies dominated, and was sorely tested in 1930 and 1980 by counter discourses of economic egalitarian communitarianism (Paige 1997). In 1913 agro-exports from Nicaragua in terms of value were coffee (65%), gold (13%), bananas (6%), hides (4%), timber (4%), cattle (4%), rubber (4%), cacao (1%), and sugar (0.5%). Also in that year 35% of all exports went to the US, 25% to Germany and 13% to England. During the war the European exports were re-routed to the United States which then received fully 86% of Nicaragua's exports. Imports followed that same trend. In 1920 there was five times more domestic

use agriculture than export agriculture, but by 1984 that ratio had changed to 55% export agriculture to 45% domestic use agriculture (Bulmer-Thomas 1987).

Coffee

The sequential rise of coffee in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua ushered in a liberal political philosophy which sought to displace agrarian restrictions on labor, land and markets. Liberalism assumed power as coffee came to dominate the export economies of the respective nations. Liberal revolutions deepened the structural adjustments to a capitalist world economy. Measures included dispossessing the indigenous communities of their remaining lands, dispossessing the church of its vast tracts, privatizing public lands, encouraging European immigration and foreign investment, developing ports and railroads, and pressing the newly proletarianized rural masses into service on the coffee estates. This social engineering generated new wealth while amplifying wide-spread poverty to explosive dimensions twice in one century. In Nicaragua Zelaya's Liberal revolution and administration (1893 – 1909) ensured that coffee would be the reigning economic engine of the country.

“It was the ‘second conquest’ of the highlands and its conversion into the fulcrum of a national coffee and cattle based economy that provided the material basis for nationhood” (Gould 1998:180) During the Zelaya regime the government was committed to modernization but the means used were not capitalistic in that land was expropriated, labor was forced, not paid, and industries were given state-sanctioned monopolies. However, the indigenous communities continually resisted the incursion of the state onto their land, and resisted their proletarianization in a variety of ways (Téllez 1999). When the

government sold tracts of land (much of it of indigenous ownership) to American, German and Nicaraguan immigrants, the new *cafetaleros* were unable to enforce the debt peonage that they held over local indigenes (Gould 1998). Coffee weakened and divided the indigenous community, yet operated along side it for some forty years. The Liberal policy of instituting immigrant owned coffee plantations incurred the wrath of the indigenous communities who came to the aid of the anti-Zelaya forces and were instrumental in the Conservative led insurrection which toppled him.

The U.S. was also responsible for his downfall. Having opposed Zelaya since his attempts to lead the Liberal Central American cause against Guatemalan Conservative Estrada Cabrera and embroiling the region in warfare, the U. S. finally managed to get him to the conference table in 1907. Despite treaties giving the U.S. more influence in the area, U.S. businesses on the East Coast of Nicaragua gave quarter to a Conservative rebellion against Zelaya. When government forces killed two Americans, who were involved in the revolt as combatants, Zelaya was held responsible by the U.S. government. He resigned when it became clear that the U.S. was not beyond landing troops, as they subsequently did anyway. The U.S. invasion ushered in a series of corrupt regimes culminating in the Somoza family dynasty of the middle half of the 20th century.

Coffee growers fought rear guard actions against the banning of debt peonage which was legally abolished in the 1905 and 1911 constitutions, but reinstated in 1919, and abolished again in 1923. Without indigenous assistance

harvesting their crops the growers had to hire migrant labor from the coast which cut into their growing profits. After the state had expropriated 30% of Indian land and redistributed it to *mestizo* growers then it became easier for one ethnic group to exert leverage over the other. It is the ethnicity combined with relations of land and class power that reveal the underlying racial dynamic of the strategy.

Resistance sometimes took the form of proletarianized *campesinos* accepting advances on pay from one grower and then going to work for another grower instead. Widespread occurrences of this practice point up both how the subsistence wage offered was in reality infra-subsistence, and also how Indians were very aware that the increased productivity of the coffee industry was built primarily on increased exploitation of the workforce. *Mestizo* growers' racism as well as their greed prevented them from considering a truly proletarian, rationalized technology of coffee production. They believed that coercion was a necessary component of any Indian labor regimen.

Finally the myth of *mestizaje* (how the noble race of savages died out due to their inability to cope with the modernizing influences of the mestizos) enabled the majority to erase not the memory, but the social fact of the current existence of indigenous communities of some 100,000 people. They disappeared with a lexical flourish, by the total extension of the racial category, *mestizo*.

Disappearing along with the Indians were their land-grants from the King of Spain. The real estate reverted back to state ownership and was subsequently sold to growers (predominantly European immigrants or wealthy Granadians) (Télez 1999).

“Technologically backward in both production and processing, deprived of control over exports, and hemmed in by the Somozas, the Nicaraguan coffee elite never completed the transition to agro-industrial production.” According to Jeffrey Paige (1997:84) the level of rationalization of the industry in Nicaragua was behind that in El Salvador and Costa Rica because US intervention (particularly the ownership & control of export financing and the imposition of the Somoza dynasty) had prevented the consolidation of a powerful coffee growing elite. Because of this lack of consolidation the 20th century revolution in Nicaragua, as compared with El Salvador, was more a nationalist one and less of a class struggle. Ironically, the United States’ direct and prolonged intervention made Nicaragua more susceptible to a popular national uprising and prevented the new government from being controlled by a central economic block of Nicaraguan capitalists (Spalding 1994).

The relative powerlessness of the coffee elite of Nicaragua caused them to opt for revolutionary politics in 1979 in hopes of achieving the kind of control over the state that their Costa Rican and Salvadoran peers had. They defected from the revolutionary government when it became apparent that the FSLN’s popular support, revolutionary rhetoric, and military discipline was too strong to bend to their advantage and that their economic strategies could not withstand U.S. aggression. The elite had to deal with historical particularities that were not of their own choosing, but the narrative elements by which they obscured the subsequent contradictions were carefully selected, maintained and adjusted over time to assuage the political unconscious. Some material class relations are

acknowledged and others are denied, (e.g. the primitive accumulation of their farms and the cultural disenfranchisement of the *campesinos* are part of the coffee elite's non-discourse.)

Sugar

The sugar export industry began with the formation of the Ingenio San Antonio (ISA) in Chichigalpa, between León and Chinandega, at the end of the 19th century. As the largest agro-industrial enterprise in the country, and the birthplace of trade union organizing ISA labor organizing grew into an autonomous workers movement, *obrerismo*, allied with the Liberal Party against the Conservatives and the U.S. military which propped up their corrupt regime. Gould (1990) shows how the displacement of *campesinos* due to the cotton and sugar expansion was a direct threat as well to the communal land tenure and common resources of the indigenous communities on the Pacific Plain.

Cotton

Cotton became the fastest growing export crop in Nicaragua during the third quarter of the 20th century due to the concurrence of natural resources (fertile land, cheap labor, and propitious meteorological conditions), technical innovations (primarily insecticides and tractors), and growing demand, first regionally for the Central American Common Market and then world wide⁶⁶ (Williams 1986). The availability of technical and material assistance through the Alliance for Progress

⁶⁶ World market cotton prices peaked in 1950 at \$58/100 lbs.(Spaulding 1994)

in the 1960s and the building of infrastructure (the Central American Coastal Highway) with World Bank financing put the pieces in place to jump-start the massive conversion of Nicaragua's most productive land to agro-export.

While Guatemala and El Salvador also grew significantly in cotton exports during this boom, Nicaragua was the flagship country of Central American cotton. Mean acreage increased in the late 1970s to a total of nearly 6000 farms averaging 88 acres each for a total of 520,000 acres,⁶⁷ generating nearly 150 million dollars in annual export value for the country, surpassing coffee in importance.

Before the cotton boom there were still significant tracts of forest as insects and inaccessibility discouraged small holder residency. DDT and the coastal highway opened up large tracts for first peasant swidden agriculture then cotton planting. In 1958 the cotton acreage surpassed the corn acreage on the Pacific plain of Nicaragua. Within four years cotton acreage was three times that of corn. The cultivators of the corn acreage were no longer needed for the cotton and so were displaced. In 1963, 65% of the land was in the hands of the peasants, but in cotton producing areas that ratio had fallen to 28% (Williams 1986:57). A landowner could rent his land to a sharecropper of corn for about \$10 an acre paid at harvest, whereas he could easily get \$30 an acre in cash up front from cotton planters. The cultivation of cotton became progressively more mechanized and less labor intensive, so less land was lent out for subsistence crops.

The structure of relations of production was changed by cotton. As land became scarcer people resorted to buying their food instead of growing it. This

⁶⁷ This was up from a total of only 1000 acres in 1947.

need for cash proletarianized the former peasants. Most of the wage labor in cotton is only sporadic or seasonal, particularly at harvest. Most of the pickers needed for harvest no longer lived in the area and had to migrate in from the cities or other departments. Migrant labor is vulnerable to many abuses in which people are either not paid for work that is done, are exploited to gain back the money they have earned, or are stranded without work. As Paige (1997:31) says “The coffee export economy created the oligarchic political structures of Central America: cattle and cotton destroyed them.” Without land or work, the *campesinos* had no stake in a patriarchal system.

Without land or steady work the peasant evolved into an itinerant day laborer, often times far from home, and between harvests eking out a living in the informal urban economy. The only obligation of the bourgeoisie was to pay the worker an infra-subsistence hourly wage. But when land is converted to cattle range then even the wages disappear.

Cattle

In 1957 the first modern beef packing plant in Central America was built in Managua with funds from the World Bank and USAID (Williams 1986). Within a week after its completion its products were being eaten by hamburger hungry North Americans. The 1961 Alliance for Progress promoted Central American beef production and export to the U.S. Extensive infrastructure (a road network, packing houses, and refrigerated transport containers) were constructed which resulted in a \$95 million/year export business by 1979. In 1950 all the beef raised in Nicaragua was consumed domestically, by 1979 that had fallen to 25%, and per capita consumption had fallen dramatically despite more than a 30 fold increase in

production (DeWalt 1987). The industry is characteristically owned by Nicaraguans and multinational corporations.

Whereas coffee required moist mountain and cotton required the flat Pacific coastal plain and bananas the wet Atlantic lowlands, cattle ranching was possible wherever grass would grow. As a result, from a 1960 herd of 5 million head occupying 9 million acres of pasture or 70% of the agricultural land, the livestock supply of Central America expanded to a 1979 size of more than 10 million head on 20 million acres or more than 80% of the agricultural land. By 1974 beef was ahead of coffee and second only to cotton in export earnings for Nicaragua (Spalding 1994). This gave impetus to the deforestation of huge tracts.⁶⁸

Gould documents the ‘primitive accumulation’ of Indian lands by the state declaring it to be ‘national land’ and then turning it over to ranchers who proceeded to make millions in the ensuing cattle boom. Cotton cultivation is six times more labor intensive than cattle ranching, sugar seven times more, and coffee is 13 times more labor intensive. Cattle require a lot of land and very little labor. As cattle ranching expands it utilizes the labor of the *campesino* to clear the land, by swidden agriculture, and within three years has moved the peasant off the land to make room for the cattle.

Campesino Solidarity Movements

The discourse of liberalism, at first accepted at face value by the *campesinos*, was, over time, revealed as a technique to alienate *campesinos* from

⁶⁸ In one traditionally basic grain production *municipio* in Nicaragua, Matiguas, in 1963 30% was forested, compared to less than 5% in 1976. Similarly in 1963 36% was in pasture, and in 1976 that rose to 94%, with less than 1% used for basic grains (Williams 1986:131)

their resources and proletarianize them for the benefit of the elites. At this point the *obreristas* began to organize in the countryside against overwhelming economic and military force by forging a discourse based on human rights and rights to livelihood and private property which could be wielded in their favor in the press and the courts. Their adept negotiation with Somoza and the Chinandegan elites indicate political savvy that transcends clientelistic ‘moral economy’ (Scott 1976) or ‘infrapolitics’ (Scott 1997).

The *campesino/obrerista* movement that combined peasant and worker resistance strategies had forged a communal class consciousness by adapting and deploying the liberal discursive concepts of private property, nationalism, citizenship and worker’s rights that had been used to construct a hegemonic discourse against their interests. As Gould (1998) observes, resistance must be fashioned out of symbols that elite cultural domination make available. In Chinandega the peasants were able to fashion a new integrated discourse once they understood that their exploitation as workers and peasants could be traced to functional alliances between Conservative landlords and Liberal industrialists and their politicians. The deteriorating credibility of Somoza’s populist discourse and his ultimate interests in consolidating class interests with the landowners enabled the peasantry to recognize their social class subjugation to all the elites.

In Chinandega the expansion of cotton cultivation during the 1950s became known as “el tiempo de los ricos”, the time of the rich people. Whereas workers, petit bourgeoisie and peasants may not hold entirely congruent material interests, if they can find a communal solidarity, if there are social relationships and

stability of residential and occupational proximity, then perceiving that there is a class in opposition to them can allow for a constructed identity and solidary political activity (Smith 1987). Here class consciousness is formed through realization of opposition and struggle.

Conversely the political coalition that was necessary to overthrow Somoza required first the oppositional identity and political subject agency of the *campesino* class, as well as the intellectual opposition of the *intelligencia* and various competing commercial interests. The FSLN was able to provide a unifying discourse to bring these two culturally disparate sectors together⁶⁹. It is extremely doubtful that the Sandinista led rebellion could have triumphed in 1979 without a pre-existing, anti-Somocista peasant solidarity which had already exposed the contradictions of the dictatorships' empty populist rhetoric. "While the Somocista state sought to create a semi-proletariat –seasonal laborers with minimal access to land – the *campesino* movement struggled to create a politically unified and economically cooperative peasantry" (Gould 1990:297). The composite, worker/peasant nature of the *campesino* movement couched in refashioned liberal populist discourse enabled rural Nicaraguans to hear the Sandinista political position with its dual discourses of economic equity and national sovereignty. Somoza was resisted as a repressive military and economic strong man who had, as had many of his predecessors, mortgaged the country and its common citizens to the United States' interests in Nicaragua's resources, particularly in its agro-export economy.

⁶⁹ Gould (1990:288) attributes a key role to liberation theology in forging a common political discourse between the *campesino* and Sandinista ideologies

Millennial Capitalism

Nicaragua has remained a classic case of agro-export economy with concentrated land tenure tied to a world market and under the political hegemony of a regional power. Moreover the structure of the agro-economy is relatively restricted into two or three primary products. The interminable search for a product which could be sold to distant markets meant Nicaraguan elites had little control over terms of sale. The internal political, cultural and economic structure of the country has not worked to the advantage of the majority since the first decades of independence. “The prewar [WWII] system of Central American agriculture had been based on labor exploitation; the new system was based on labor expulsion.” (Paige 1997: 93).

In a new globalized division of labor international capital takes advantage of cheap labor by means of tax exempt free trade zone *maquilas* as economic enclaves whose direct involvement in the Nicaraguan economy is primarily through the infra-subsistence wages paid to their workers⁷⁰. Migrant remittances are now an important component of most Nicaraguan household livelihood strategies⁷¹. Extractive industries such as mining and lumbering have been revitalized where neo-liberalism thwarts environmentalists. Tourism is being developed in the midst of a ‘paradise lost’.

Even though Nicaraguan agriculture has never been fully industrialized (with the exception of the cotton industry during the 1960s and 1970s) because it

⁷⁰ maquilas in our research zone paid workers an average of 80 to 90 dollars a month based on production, well below the value of a market basket for a family of four at 200 dollars a month.

⁷¹ In 2002 surpassing the value of all foreign aid coming into the country through bi-lateral or multi-lateral sources.

does not have the research and development capabilities, the terms of trade, or resource base to continually increase industrial yields; agro-export crops are still the most important economic activity within the country.

Nicaragua's agro-exports have been developed through the centuries by "people who have asserted a privileged relation to history" and the cost has been borne by the "people to whom history has been denied" but as Eric Wolf (1997) reminds us they "encounter a common destiny."

United States Government's Relations with Nicaragua

19th Century

Such squalid and brutish savages [the Indians of southeastern Nicaragua] had little thought that the great world without was meditating the Titanic enterprise of laying open their primeval solitudes, grading down their hills, and opening a gigantic canal, upon which the navies of the world might pass, laden with the treasures of two hemispheres. Ephraim George Squier, U.S. *Chargé de Affaires* to Central America (Squier 1852:1) cited in (Whisnant 1995:96)

The first official representative of the U.S. to Nicaragua perceived his mission as one of bringing industry to a country populated by a race who was devoid of it. This ethnocentricity was not a personal idiosyncrasy of Ephraim Squier, rather his articulation of it was a personal iteration of a racism that pervaded elite society and its government in the U.S. Although the elites of North America distrusted the Catholicism of Central American elites and hence doubted their democratic potential, nevertheless, their common Euro-centrism, particularly a belief in Enlightenment ideas of positivistic scientific and social progress, as well as their class based understanding of capitalist economic practice formed the basis of a cross-cultural solidarity.

This solidarity, whose character evolved through time, always involved partnership between Nicaraguan elites and North American capitalists. This ruling class could make Nicaraguan natural and social resources directly available to North American investors or could wholesale their agro-export production to North American distributors, whichever arrangement was most mutually agreeable at the time. When Nicaraguan elites either charted a course that conflicted with North American capital interests or when they lost control of the Nicaraguan popular classes, then U.S. military intervention realigned the power flows and restored inequity.

Canalism

From its first sighting by Christopher Columbus Nicaragua has been perceived by some foreigners as a barrier more than a destination. Every European, North American and Asian power has envisioned the Rio San Juan and Lake Nicaragua as an aquatic passage between the world's two great oceans. Nicaragua's entire history has been colored by that geopolitical image; not just in the fantasies of global merchants who are its direct potential benefactors, but also in the political consciousness of its ordinary citizens who have considerably less to hope for from such an eventuality.

Squier was sent in 1849 by President Zachary Taylor to negotiate a treaty that would ensure that the United States and not Britain or Japan would be the executors and managers of any transoceanic canal in Nicaragua. The discovery of gold in California in that same year upstaged Squier's task as Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt's Accessory Transit Company negotiated a lease for trans-isthmus transit of the prospectors. What Whisnant (1995) calls "the North

American Decade” began with the first of what would eventually total some 150,000 prospectors plying the waterway that defined the southern border of Nicaragua.

These Californians were not concerned with developing relationships of any duration with Nicaraguans. One North American, commenting on the comportment of his mid-century companions noted, “The brutal conduct of many of my countrymen in Central America perpetuates the most indecent outrages upon a people whom they call unenlightened, but who are their superiors in every virtue that gives value to civilization.” (Dr. Jacob Stillman 1967/1850:31 cited in Whisnant 1995:67).

With the U.S. civil war and the building of the transcontinental railroad, U.S. interest was diverted from a Central American canal until the 1898 victory over the Spanish that ceded Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Phillipines to U.S. protection. That event sparked renewed interest that led eventually to a canal under U.S. auspices in Panama, after which it became more important to prevent a canal in Nicaragua than to promote one. Under the administration of Adolfo Diaz, a Nicaraguan president appointed by and maintained in power by the U.S., the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty gave the United States sole and exclusive rights to any inter-oceanic canal through Nicaragua. This agreement superceded and voided the earlier Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of a canal development partnership with England.

The Monroe Doctrine and England

While the ethnocentricity of North Americans in Nicaragua manifested itself early among the Californians, there was no less arrogance exhibited

officially by the emissaries such as Mr. Squier and the national policy statements which constituted the discursive formations within which they worked. The first overtly hegemonic political designs by the Colossus of the North was the Monroe Doctrine which asserted that European colonial powers were not to meddle militarily in any territories in the Western hemisphere (beyond those they already controlled in 1823 that had not yet revolted and achieved independence). But US political leaders were not friendly with the Latin Americans as they distrusted that Catholic countries could govern themselves democratically. Some South American revolutionary leaders such as Simon Bolivar had little confidence in the friendship of the United States and feared its imperialistic rhetoric (LaFeber 1993).

The United States' greatest political and economic rival in Central America in the 19th century was England. The British had had a strong presence throughout the 18th century but the tide was beginning to turn. In 1850 the U.S. and Britain signed the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty which mutually promised that any Nicaraguan canal would be a bi-national partnership.⁷² In 1913 England had 115 million dollars invested in Central America, particularly in Costa Rica and Guatemala and mostly in government securities. By this time the U.S. had more than 93 million invested but directly in productive enterprises and particularly in Nicaragua and Honduras (LaFeber 1993).

By the time the United States had aided Panama's independence from Colombia and begun building the canal there President Roosevelt in 1905

⁷² Nicaragua was not a party to those negotiations

articulated his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, namely that the United States would now police the entire hemisphere, maintaining order both inside and outside national borders. National revolutionary movements came to be constructed as social delinquency. But only some revolutions were problematic, those that ushered in a more pro-U.S. business stance were progress, such as Panama's U.S. abetted revolt from Colombia.

Central Americans, who had not participated fully in the independence movement from Spain, sensed less threat from the United States than from either Mexico or from South American nations. Realizing their vulnerability because of their geopolitical location and their small size they tried two dozen times to unite their 5 or 6 small nations into a Central American state federation, but regionalism always won out over common aspirations. The end result of such efforts was to fracture the elite classes into Conservative and Liberal camps who proceeded with internecine warfare that prevented not only confederation but also, as in Nicaragua, strong national consolidation.

Vanderbuilt and Walker

In 1855 an adventurer⁷³ named William Walker arrived from San Francisco on orders from his boss, a San Francisco newspaper owner, to assist the Liberals of León in their struggle for national supremacy with the Conservatives of Granada. Walker and his band of 156 soldiers of fortune and Nicaraguan allies, after a few setbacks, were able to occupy Granada, force surrender of Conservative forces, execute the foreign minister of Nicaragua, and install a

⁷³ Also a medical doctor, lawyer and journalist in prior occupations

puppet government that acknowledged him as president in 1856. As president he declared English an official language, passed vagrancy laws that forced every one older than fourteen to work for hire, legalized indentured servitude, passed regulations that favored white land ownership, and confiscated the property of anyone who opposed him. Within a few months his administration was experiencing difficulties which eventually forced him to flee Nicaragua and Central America. At that time his only allies were the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy and the U.S. Consul (Burns 1991). He razed Granada to the ground before leaving. Getting rid of Walker was something the contentious Central American elites came to agree on. On his fourth invasion attempt he was shot by a Honduran army firing squad.

There was opposition to Walkers' antics among his countrymen in the United States, particularly those fighting against slavery, a cause which he championed. But there was as well a significant amount of support in the press for his civilizing mission. One New Orleans paper lauded him as reminiscent of the blond race of "first civilizers, the Teutonic Saxons or Vikings who with a single ship of hardy followers set out to destroy and rebuild nations"(Whisnant 1995:78).

Liberals and Conservatives

Both political tendencies tended to seek domestic non-bellucose resolutions to their disputes subsequent to the Walker debacle. For the next three decades Nicaragua was ruled by governments which put into place the preliminary mechanisms for transformation from a "backwater republic" organized according to the needs of landed *hacendados* to one more to the liking of an entrepreneurial

generation of Nicaraguans bent on modernization. New York bankers, alerted to opportunity by Vanderbilt's and Walker's exploits were also interested in investment potential from Nicaragua.

The Conservatives preserved their elite status by converting their agrarian society into a more liberal export oriented secularized state. Roberto Sacasa's Conservative administration (1889-1893) subsidized the growing coffee elite with government funds and correspondingly cut back on other government social services except prisons. Zelaya's Liberal administration (1893 – 1909) ratcheted up the development momentum by seeking foreign investment, building modern infrastructure, subsidizing exports, and educating elite youth in European universities. Modernization was paid for in part by the expropriation of indigenous community lands and labor. Over 2 million acres were sold to immigrants for coffee cultivation. Continuous labor drafts applied to indigenous communities coupled with loss of their lands eventually resulted in the demise of the communities themselves, and the triumph of the myth of mestizaje.

20th Century

Zelaya was a pragmatic businessman and sought development funds from the United States, but also Europe. The United States did not look favorably on British money being invested in Nicaragua, and even less favorably on rumours of Dutch or Japanese financing of a trans-isthmus canal under Zelaya. When a Conservative rebellion broke out, and government forces shot two US citizens who were participating in the rebellion, the United States cut diplomatic ties. Zelaya's designs on leading a Liberal dominated Central American Federation did not sit well with Washington which preferred to deal with smaller countries

separately. Instead the United States landed 400 marines in 1909 and began a 27 year long military occupation of the country.

Bring in the Marines

Adolfo Diaz, former accountant for a US owned mining company was appointed president of Nicaragua by the American forces. Diaz received a loan from New York bankers which was secured with the import duties from Nicaraguan customs and control of the national railroads and banks. By 1912 most Nicaraguans were disgusted with Diaz's auction of their country and rebelled. Diaz called for U.S. Marine reinforcements who remained until 1925. In 1914 the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty gave the US exclusive rights to a canal.

Another Conservative/Liberal conflict broke out in 1926 and the United States sent the marines back in to occupy all Nicaraguan seaports and railroads to protect American interests. To prevent a Liberal victory, U.S. presidential envoy Henry Stimson was sent to negotiate a ceasefire that disarmed both warring factions under threat of US military intervention. Diaz ended up back in the presidency and the U.S. Marines, his perennial guarantors of authority, stayed until 1933 when military power was transferred to the U.S. trained, equipped and advised Nicaraguan National Guard, commanded by Anastasio Somoza

Crucible of Neo-Colonialism

From the end of World War I the United States became the only political and economic superpower in Central America. Both Britain and Germany who had been present were completely overshadowed by U.S. investment between the wars. On the eve of that war President Wilson made that economic hegemony complete when he coined the Wilson corollary of the Monroe Doctrine.

According to Wilson, European powers were not free to invest in the Western Hemisphere unless the United States judged that concessions let by Latin American governments were not jeopardizing those countries own independence. What had begun as a threat against European military intervention had now become a prohibition of economic investment as well. As U.S. Marines were deployed simultaneously in Haiti, Santo Domingo, Nicaragua and Panama by 1917 it had also become a blanket justification for U.S. military intervention.

In Nicaragua United Fruit and Atlantic Fruit companies owned 300,000 acres. North Americans owned and/or managed the leading mines, the railroads, the lumber industry, and banks. When the depression hit in 1929 the prices of all Central American commodities sank like stones. The profits from those industries were not only financing North American investor interest but were keeping the agrarian population alive in a mono-cropping regime that no longer allowed them to raise enough food to feed themselves. As a result of market failure revolutions began erupt. It was in Nicaragua that the U.S. happened upon a mechanism that would control popular revolutions without requiring the expensive and domestically unpopular deployment of U.S. military personnel. The Nicaraguan National Guard became a proxy for the United States Marines.

Somoza, “Our SOB”.

Anastasio Somoza García (1896-1956) the son of a coffee planter, went to Philadelphia to college where he studied business administration and met his future wife, Salvadora Debayle Sacasa of a prominent León Liberal family. Somoza’s primary assets were his command of the English language and good political intuition. Accordingly he became powerful in a U.S. orchestrated

Nicaragua. After his assassination of Augusto Cesar Sandino he ascended to the Presidency of Nicaragua and remained in control until his assassination in 1956. Soon after, his son Luis and then, Anastasio Jr, or “Tacho”, a West Point graduate and commander of the National Guard, assumed control until overthrown in the revolution of 1979

At the time of his death, Anastasio Sr. personally owned 15% of the nation of Nicaragua. The family dynasty was built on its close relationship to the U.S. Government. Anastasio would boast that Nicaragua was the only country that voted with the United States every time in the United Nations. When Harry Truman was challenged on his cozy relationship with such an obvious despot he countered; “Yeah, he’s a son of a bitch, but he’s our son of a bitch.” Tacho reportedly sent a million dollar donation in cash by way of his mother to Richard Nixon for his re-election campaign (LaFeber 1993:227).

When Tacho ran for president in 1968 the Conservative opponent requested international monitoring of the election, but neither the US government nor Somoza thought oversight a good idea. In an unsupervised election Somoza, supremely unpopular, won a 75% landslide. Meanwhile the FSLN was organizing in the central highlands. Somozas’ National Guard, 5000 strong, well equipped and with 100% of its officers trained at the US Army’s School of the Americas in Panama, seemed more than a match for the boys in the mountains.

Sandinistas

When Henry Stimson was negotiating disarmament with Liberal forces in 1927 he received a letter of agreement signed by all the Liberal army’s general staff except one, Augusto Cesar Sandino, who considered that giving in to U.S.

pressure was a surrender of Nicaraguan sovereignty. Sandino began a six year guerilla war against the marines which ended with marine withdrawal from Nicaragua. After signing a truce/amnesty agreement with the Nicaraguan government he was assassinated by Somoza's National Guard. Sandino's successful resistance was based on active support among the popular classes who had no interest in prolonging United States political and economic control of their country. He was opposed by many of the elites whose status was dependent on commerce with the United States.

In 1961 the FSLN was organized with a handful of university students and a few *campesinos* with memories of Sandino's struggles against the marines. Their target was the Somoza dynasty which had ruled with the active support of the United States for 40 years. An earthquake which destroyed the capital in 1972 demonstrated Somoza's inordinate greed when less than half of the international emergency aid could be accounted for. Even private aid had been confiscated and sold by the National Guard. Reconstruction funds were channeled exclusively to Somoza's own companies bought or created after the disaster. In the 1974 election Somoza outlawed six opposition parties, and won the election by a 20 to 1 margin, a sign of his growing weakness.

The FSLN had suffered defeats at the hand of the Guard in the mountains but scored some victories that netted them both publicity and ransom money. The Carter administration urged Somoza to lighten up on the National Guard's repression of Nicaraguan citizens' human rights and at times made military and economic aid contingent on improvement, but continued to urge multilateral aid

under all circumstances. The FSLN had substantial support from other key nations (Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba, Panama and Costa Rica) and an attempt by the U.S. to mount a multilateral O.A.S.⁷⁴ intervention to save Somoza was unsuccessful. Somoza, sensing his imminent demise desperately shifted Guard policy from one of repression to one of extermination of the masses. Aerial bombardment of entire sectors of Nicaraguan cities and indiscriminate slaughter of civilians became the *modus operandi* of the Guard at the end. Carter administration officials were trying to salvage a Somocista government without Somoza by proposing that the Guard itself be in charge of keeping order in an interim government.

When the US government realized that it was facing a sovereign and independent Nicaragua without a Somoza or a National Guard it was without leverage. Except that Nicaragua was in a shambles, its economy, infrastructure and population devastated by Somoza's war against his own people⁷⁵. Initially the US government offered promises more than actual funds and by the time aid was sent (because US banks did not want the government of Nicaragua to default on loans) the Soviet Union had offered even more. One of Carter's last acts was to approve a million dollars for covert organization against the revolutionary government of Nicaragua. Then Ronald Reagan was elected. Reagan had consistently opposed the FSLN and supported Somoza, both before he was elected and afterwards.

⁷⁴ Organization of American States

⁷⁵ He fled with 100 million dollars leaving debts totaling more than 1.5 billion and no money in the national treasury

For the first six months to a year members of the Nicaraguan economic elite who were not Somocistas joined with the FSLN leadership in several joint governing bodies. But FSLN control of final decisions alarmed some of the more cautious members of the bourgeoisie in the government to resign. There was an intense effort to recapture elements of Nicaraguan culture representing indigenous and agrarian traditions that had been lost during a half century of enculturation by North American media during the Somoza dynasty (Whisnant 1995).

The first three years of the Sandinista administration saw a renovation of the role of government for the popular sectors of the Nicaraguan population. Services such as education, health, and access to the means of agricultural production that had been neglected or actively denied by Somoza now became available (Walker 1997). There was a spirit of hope and social solidarity in the country that motivated the population to work voluntarily on projects to rebuild and improve the communities where they lived⁷⁶. Slowly the counter-revolutionary army organized in Honduras by the U.S. C.I.A, led by former National Guard officers, and manned by disaffected peasants began to target the identifiable accomplishments of the fledgling revolution. Counter revolutionary forces waged a campaign of terror across remote areas (the counter revolutionaries were never able to capture and hold a town).

This “low intensity” warfare (Barry 1986) continued for the rest of the decade of Sandinista leadership. Predictable effects of militarization of the society to protect itself from the threat and the total absence of multi-lateral aid

⁷⁶ Testimony from North American solidarity workers and visitors and from many Nicaraguans of the popular classes concur that 1980 – 1982 was an extraordinarily optimistic era.

eventually obscured the material and later the symbolic accomplishments of the revolution. When the US Congress had refused temporarily to support the terrorism of the contras in 1984 almost immediately elements in the Reagan administration, led by C.I. A. director William Casey, began an illegal covert fundraising operation to keep them functioning. By the time the Sandinistas were voted out of office in 1990 the economy was practically as destroyed and even more in debt than when they had assumed power⁷⁷. The inability of the FSLN led administration to deal with the effects of continual U.S. government hostility, tens of millions of dollars in U.S. funds for the opposition campaign, and, most importantly, the constant active threat by the first Bush administration of more counter-revolutionary terror in the event of a Sandinista victory ensured that they would lose (Booth and Richard 1997; Castro and Prevost 1992).

Neo-Liberalism

In 1990 Doña Violeta Chamorro became President of Nicaragua. She was an icon of maternalism and reconciliation to many Nicaraguans and her late husband had been considered an anti-Somocista martyr before the FSLN had become the leading force in the opposition. Under pressure from Washington and in dire economic straits she withdrew Nicaragua's claim to the 17 billion dollars awarded by the World Court for damages due to the counter-revolution. But in other ways she maintained some semblance of sovereignty, such as refusing repeated US pressure to fire Humberto Ortega, the Sandinista *commandante* who was the commander of the Nicaraguan Army at the time (Close 1999).

⁷⁷ Walker (1991:52) places the cost of the war at 31,000 dead, \$9 billion in direct damages, 350,000 internally displaced, 170,000 having served in the Army and 30,000 in the Contra.

The economy did not rebound as anticipated due to cessation of hostilities, US government aid and elites returning from Miami to reassume a dominant role in a neo-liberal economy. In fact social indicators except for the importation of luxury goods continued to deteriorate. Real wages dropped 50% in the first year, 69% of the population lived in poverty in 1992, and per capita food consumption fell by 31 per cent between 1990 and 1992 (Envío 1993:18). The number of small agricultural producers and cooperatives receiving credit through the national development bank dropped by 80% between 1989 and 1994. Between 1991 and the following year the percentage of agricultural loans that went to large scale producers jumped from 31% to 71%. (Jonakin 1997).

Spontaneous outbreaks of individual and collective violence as well as pandemics of street crime, prostitution, and drug addiction unraveled the social fabric and replaced the sense of collective solidarity that had characterized the 1980s revolution with a disturbing social anomie and political apathy. (Robinson 1997:40)

In 1996 Arnaldo Alemán was elected President as a member of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party (PLC). Many of his supporters are people who were and are still supporters of the neo-liberal agro-export economy built with US backing during the Somoza era and implacable foes of the Sandinistas. Alemán is not remembered as much for his official acts as president as much as his Somoza-sized avarice that enabled him to embezzle well over \$100 million of government funds while in office. Mirroring Tacho's tactics Alemán stole much of the aid that came to Nicaragua subsequent to Hurricane Mitch in 1998, a natural disaster similar in economic impact to the 1972 earthquake.

His crimes while in office would have met with impunity due to his official lifetime immunity had his successor and fellow partisan, Enrique Bolaños, and

Daniel Ortega, ex president and head of the FSLN, not stripped it from him . Bolaños who possesses the necessary credentials for Nicaraguan chiefs of state in the neo-liberal Washington mode as a U.S. educated elite patrician who can speak English fluently, is now a president practically without a party. His electoral party, the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) declared itself in opposition to him when he indicted Alemán for embezzlement.

Meanwhile supposed ideological enemies, Ortega and Alemán, formed a pact in 1999 that allowed their parties' representatives in the National Assembly to revise the electoral laws in such a way as to make it very difficult for other parties to participate in the government. It also lowers the plurality of votes necessary to be elected president to 35%, which would allow Ortega, even as a three time loser, a definite possibility of success. Currently it allows them to shift governmental powers from Bolaños' executive branch to their legislative branch, with the concurrence of the judicial and electoral branches, which they also control (Nitlapán/Envio 2004).

The FSLN leadership remains revolutionary in rhetoric only,(Rocha 2004) and cooperates with the PLC in formulating and passing neo-liberal policies that favor elites and conform to the multi-national agencies' directives. Nevertheless, the United States continues to work against Ortega's re-election every six years. Their record thus far is 3 and 1.

After several years of non-opposition to CAFTA, the FSLN has, due to popular pressure, stated its opposition to ratification of the treaty. But the momentum for that movement is in the streets with the social movements and not in the National

Assembly. Daniel Ortega's *caudillismo*⁷⁸, and the anti-democratic nature of FSLN protocols has caused the FSLN to banish or lose many of its most capable leaders⁷⁹. Meanwhile Bolaños, whose constituency consists primarily of the CEOs of the major corporations in Nicaragua checks with the United States embassy before and after every executive initiative.

As this brief survey of the relationship between the U.S. and Nicaragua shows, the solidarity between Nicaraguans and the U.S. has historically been between the elites that are the gate keepers to Nicaragua's resources and the commercial elites of the United States and the U.S. Government acting on their behalf.

Solidarity between middle class citizens of the U.S. who are motivated by altruism and the popular classes of Nicaragua who are motivated by survival is a more recent historical phenomenon. Nicaraguans of the popular classes, especially those educated in social analysis, understand that solidarity between them and Nicaraguan elites, in a neo-liberal context is highly improbable. Middle class North Americans are not as clear about their political subject position vis a vis their own elites, their own working class, or their own government. Hence, cross-cultural solidarity with middle class North Americans is an unknown quantity for most Nicaraguans of the popular classes. Cross cultural experiences which have the potential for generating solidarity between them require an awareness of distinct relative social positions in a commonly understood historical narrative.

⁷⁸ identification of political power with the person who occupies the office

⁷⁹ e.g. Dora Maria Tellez, Victor Hugo Tinoco, Henry Ruiz, Herty Lewites et al.

Two Development Models

When a North American commits to solidarity with a rural Nicaraguan they also commit to a general understanding of their agricultural lifeways, both its quotidian routines and details as well as to how it positions the *campesinos* within the local, regional, and national political economies in which they function.

There are many people in both nations who are actively engaged in strategies to remove the small holder subsistence plus agricultural model as an option for rural Nicaraguans and this is not a new policy (Maldidier and Marchetti 1996). The systemic importance of this effort for the Nicaraguan economy is not immediately apparent to North Americans because the U.S. ceased being an agrarian economy over a century ago. Presently 2.5% of North Americans work in the agricultural sector. In Nicaragua it is 42% and growing, greater by far than any of its neighboring countries . This quantity signifies more than two million rural residents, 60% of the poor and 75% of the extremely poor in Nicaragua.(Acevedo Vogl 2003:9) In the countryside 1% of the producers are large landowners, 4% are medium sized farmers, 70% are land owning *campesinos* (subsistence plus farmers) and 25% are agricultural wage laborer *campesinos*, or peasantariat. Of all those who work in agriculture some 26% pertain to a sector that with appropriate national policies are fully sustainable and can produce crucial agricultural products for subsistence and for the market with increasing levels of intensification. (Maldidier and Marchetti 1996)

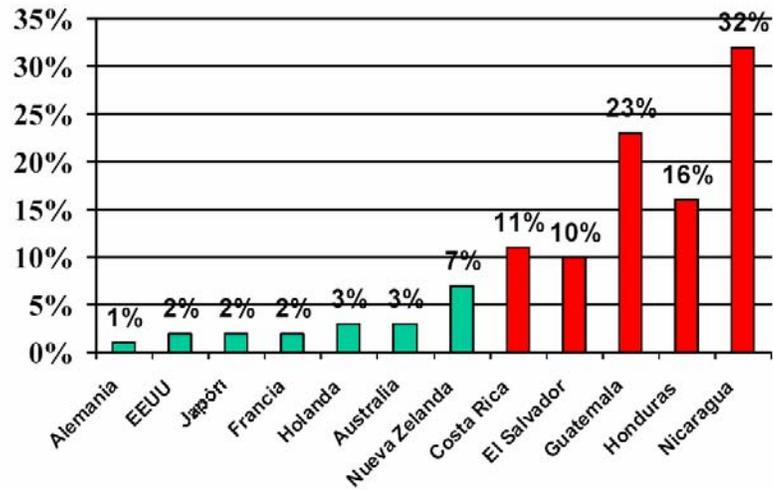


Figure 4-1: Percent of Gross Domestic Product derived from Agriculture Selected Countries (Acevedo Vogl 2003)

Campesino households do not depend exclusively on subsistence plus agriculture, nor have they for centuries. But to remove this crucial means of production from the *campesino* is to threaten as well their relation to the land by displacing them into urban shanty towns, do violence to their sense of place by forcing them to relocate to centers of production away from their ancestral land holdings, to challenge their sense of occupational competence by negating the local agricultural knowledge that their elders have conveyed to them through the generations, threaten their relation to nature by transplanting them to manufactured urban environments, endanger a folk culture built around maize based agriculture, and attack an important element of indigenous collective memory.

It has been my experience that many *campesinos* do not frame their agricultural activity in economic terms. They readily admit that their hours spent in the field frequently earn them less than most other economic activities in which

they might engage. Significant numbers are choosing to abandon agriculture, or at least basic grain cultivation. Nonetheless, many do indeed feel that, “they have a right to belong to the land.” They feel neither inevitability nor justice in the neglect that they have suffered from their governments under Somoza, the Sandinistas, and now in a neo-liberal era of corporate globalization.

In this section I present two competing development models currently being promoted in Nicaragua which have very different implications for the agrarian population. One prioritizes an export-oriented economy that is fully integrated into the global division of labor and sustained by foreign investment. The other prioritizes a domestically oriented economy that emphasizes food security, economic self-sufficiency, and development of the small farmer and small business person.

These competing models are constantly contested in the media and in the cornfields, homes and boardrooms of Nicaragua. Export-orientation is championed predominantly by some agro-export industries, the textile manufacturing enclave economy, financial interests, and the executive branch of the national government⁸⁰. The domestic oriented economy is advocated by unions of workers and small farmers, by social movements and some research institutes and community based organizations.

The United States Embassy, representing the State Department and the Executive branch of the United States Government favors the export-oriented model. All multi-lateral lending organizations, the IMF, IADB and the World

⁸⁰ The legislature is divided on development models and not always along partisan lines.

Bank also favor the export-oriented model. The currency of debate on the Central American Free Trade Agreement, (CAFTA) and its related agreements both in the United States and in Nicaragua adds specific focus to the issue of development models. CAFTA supports the globalization, export-oriented model and threatens the domestic oriented economy model.

Domestic Economic Stability through Prioritizing Small Farms and Small Buisnesses

Orlando Nuñez Soto,(2003) Nicaraguan economist and the director of CIPRES⁸¹ turns William Roseberry's observation from Venezuela that cities are the "structural percipitates of capitalism" on its head and claims that subsistence farmers on the agricultural frontier are new economic subjects that have been created in record numbers in Nicaragua by neo-liberalism. Their urban counterparts, the legions of self-employed who construct the informal economy with their small businesses, are the other component of the new economy of Nicaragua. A new, more equitable and just economy is possible at this juncture in Nicaragua's history because these two groups comprise the majority of economically active subjects and generate the bulk of the domestic economy including its food supply.

In the agricultural sector small farmers comprise 77% of the work force and till over two million acres of mostly food crops. Industry is similar, with 63% of industrial workers working in small industries whereas 37% are employed in *maquilas* and other large industries. The largest single block of producers is the

⁸¹ Centro para la Promoción, la Investigación y el Desarrollo Rural y Social, Center for Rural and Social Research and Development

one million women who are engaged in domestic duties in their homes or the homes of others. Particularly impressive is that these sectors have grown in spite of almost total government negligence of their credit and infrastructure requirements. In Nicaragua this popular economy sustains the national economy and its producers pay the vast majority of taxes to a government that provides precious few services in return.

A new, more progressive and more equitable economic model would prioritize this economic majority, ensuring that they had the financing, technical assistance, infrastructure and political forums with which to develop their sectors. The small producer agricultural sector is potentially the most efficient in terms of the government's balance of payments because they produce both food for the population and agro-export products with a minimum of imported inputs, something that large industry is not able to do. Nicaragua, which used to be a net exporter of food is now using the equivalent of 60% of its export earnings to import food. Prioritizing food production would make obvious economic sense.

The *campesino*/small entrepreneur sector aggregate gross export receipts exceed half a billion dollars in 2000, more than the *maquiladora* industrial sector which is not integrally a part of the domestic economy. According to Acevedo (2003) the *campesino* sector, while growing to record numbers, has been losing productivity and suffering from more extreme poverty for the last decade as agricultural assistance has been decapitalized and agencies dismantled by the national government. This sector would yield relatively greater growth in efficiency if investments were made there, compared to large agro-industrial

concerns, and because of the regressive tax structure would yield greater tax revenues as well.

The artisanal and small business sector, like their agrarian counterparts are characterized by intensive manual labor, they are motivated by satisfaction of basic necessities, acquiring a secure lifestyle and achieving general well being. They are oriented toward the internal domestic market and relative to larger more capitalized concerns they disperse their earnings more widely in the community. They are more apt than larger businesses to invest in people rather than to automate and have less tendency to consolidate into monopolistic industrial formations.

The economic model being proposed here is based on prioritization of the popular sector, the informal sector of the economy and its domestic arena. Exports are also necessary and should be encouraged by government policy when goals of food security and domestic economic sustainability are assured. Nicaragua has proportionally more farmers than any other nation in Latin America, it has more arable land than any other Central American country, and it has an urgent need to expand its agricultural output of basic grains. Government and non-governmental policy that ignores this potential does so at great risk.

Facing mandates to balance budgets, control inflation, raise domestic savings rates, and shrink public sector activity, indebted developing countries face restrictive fiscal and monetary policies. The impact on farm credit is often severe as the state and private banking sectors maintain historically high nominal, if not real, interest rates; impose sharp restrictions on the supply of producer credit; tighten loan eligibility requirements; and promote agro-export lines of production over peasant-produced domestic food crops. In this process, small-scale farmers, who comprise the vast majority of producers, are those most often denied short and long-run credit and thus less able to reap the advantages of early adoption of technical

improvements or to make long-term investments in land or infrastructure... The market remedies proposed by IMF and World Bank conditionality often intensify the market failures characterized above.(Jonakin 1997:355)

Trans-national Globalization and Export Economy

The second economic model is one based on Nicaragua engineering its domestic economy to correspond to initiatives by foreign investors; transnational corporations who might wish to locate there and governmental, non-governmental and supra governmental multi-lateral agencies. Why are there so many foreign advocates for this type of economy for Nicaragua? Because the financial benefits that accrue, the surplus capital accumulation that results, are exported.

Nuñez (2003) calls this economic model which is most recently formulated in the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (Nicaragua 2003), the PND or the national development plan, “the old economic model” because it is based on the same presuppositions that the economy of Nicaragua has been based on for 500 years.

1. Large capitalists will distribute their accumulated wealth in such a way that the living standards of all will increase⁸².
2. That competition is the best way for everyone to profit from the market; to produce more, faster and cheaper.
3. Those who aren't competitive as independent producers should go to work for those who are.
4. Competition results in automatic resource distribution without regulation.

If these presuppositions are true as claimed then there is a need to explain why in Nicaragua where they have determined the shape of the economy for centuries the wealthy are proportionally fewer and richer than 500 years ago and

⁸² At this point Nuñez (2003:17) quotes the PND “the private sector is the motor of the economy and foreign capital is the engine that guarantees progress”.

the vast majority are proportionally poorer than ever. Most Nicaraguan families have had to send members abroad in order to survive here. Only during two short periods in the 20th century did the popular classes profit from the national economic model in place. The first was a brief agro-export boom when international prices were favorable to Nicaraguan products during the last decades of the Somoza regime and the second was immediately following that boom, during the redistribution of resources during the first half of the Sandinista regime. But apart from those brief two decades they have not been included as beneficiaries of the economic model.

The PND proposes that the country be divided into 4 categories of territories based on two factors, the rate of productivity (based on high or low average income) and the rate of marginality (based on accessibility to transportation and urban services) It is a triage model in which the most rapidly growing areas receive second priority, the potentially high growth rate areas (low productivity and low marginality) will be given highest priorities, and the lowest potential areas (low productivity/high marginality) will be given the lowest priority for development funds and attention. In those areas especially attempts will be made to move people out of subsistence, basic grain agriculture and relocate them in new territories with new jobs. The PND does not address poverty as an issue of maldistribution of resources, but as a function of the aggregate economic growth rate⁸³. In the PND there is little mention of civil

⁸³ The text explains that a current average annual income of \$400 US in 20 years will become \$800 annually at 6% growth or be only \$600 annually at 5% growth. (Nicaragua 2003:391)

society as an economic player except as a source of micro-credit for subsistence farmers who now have no access to commercial credit. The PND complains of the economic difficulty of dealing with a population that is dispersed in 7000 villages throughout the country, stressing that clusters of businesses will reduce operating costs, accelerate technology transfer, and encourage growth of secondary businesses. What it fails to mention is that the businesses that are planned to anchor these clusters are trans-national corporations whose profits will not remain in Nicaragua and whose production is dependent on the vicissitudes of a global market. Small agricultural producers are portrayed in very problematic terms, and five pages are spent emphasizing how important it will be to have CAFTA to widen the U.S. market for Nicaraguan goods. No cautions concerning the disasters of NAFTA for Mexico are mentioned. Nor is there any mention of trying to achieve food security as a nation.

This plan mentions the importance of Plan Puebla Panama (PPP), the network of highways, hydroelectric dams and an interconnected energy grid that is proposed to stretch from southern Mexico to Panama and tie the entire region together facilitating industrialization. PPP, estimated to cost between 25 and 40 billion dollars, will be financed by public funds of the nations involved through multi-lateral loans.

Acevedo (2003) mentions the ten years of liberalizing agreements and policies that the post Sandinista governments have engaged in. For instance tariff reductions in agricultural products, when combined with Nicaraguan currency overvaluation resulted in an 84% drop in the price of imported agricultural goods

in comparison with domestically produced ones between 1990 and 2000. And at tariff rates nearing 5% the overvaluation of the currency almost immediately results in a negative net tariff, in effect subsidizing imports. If all the distorting subsidies for agro-food products, primarily from the United States and European national governments, were eliminated, international prices would increase on average some 12% and corn, rice and soy would be even higher. Some estimates run to 33% higher.

Summary

From the turn of the 19th century the history of Nicaragua has been one where its agrarian popular classes have lost access to the means of production (Burns 1991). National and international elites appropriated to themselves the resources necessary to construct the socio-economic stratification, consolidating their status. Elite status in Nicaragua depended on access to foreign capital, and hence compromised sovereignty for the small fledgling nation.

The national elite's reliance on agro-exportation of plantation grown monocrops increased Nicaraguan vulnerability to the vicissitudes of the international market and to international terms of trade that favored industrialized nations and regions (Cardoso and Faletto 1979). The succession of agro-exports developed through the 19th and 20th centuries led to the utilization of more and more acreage and less and less labor (Williams 1986). This contributed to the rapid eastward expansion of the agricultural frontier by peasants and an accelerated disappearance of Nicaragua's once vast rainforests (Edelman 1995), resulting in climactic changes.

Foreign financed agro-exports became the mainstay of elite class survival. From the dawn of the 20th century the United States had become the primary economic and political force in Nicaragua. Two world wars increased the North American advantage over European commercial interests in Central America. Progressively restrictive extensions of the Monroe Doctrine ensured United States military, political and economic hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. When popular class resistance mounted against US and Nicaraguan elite domination, a Nicaragua military force, trained and equipped by the United States secured economic control of the country for seven decades of the 20th century.

A brief revolutionary decade seemed to offer hope of an alternative for the popular classes for a few years and then, as the economy deteriorated under external pressure from US military aggression and economic embargo, and as FSLN economic policy continued to ignore campesino concerns, (Bendaña 1991) popular unrest grew. Even before the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas the government had begun surrendering its economic sovereignty to multi-lateral lending agencies whose interest was in the creation and concentration of wealth and not in its distribution. Today, after 15 years of neo-liberal structural adjustment, poverty is endemic and the degree of socio-economic disparity in the country is so extreme as almost incomprehensible.

Into this milieu, beginning in the 1980s came agents of trans-national civil society, NGOs who wished to stand with the organized popular classes. With the advent of the neo-liberal state and multi-lateral regimes NGOs now occupy a critical socio-political juncture between the popular classes and their social

movements and the global elites and their national commercial and political agents.

The popular struggles seem Sisyphean. Trans-national corporations are managing to institute a transnational, global legality which is no longer subject to national regulation. As it becomes contested whether or not democratic initiatives can curb corporate license, NGOs have choices to make about what futures they work toward, and with whom.

NGOs who bring volunteer visitors from the United States have both an obligation and an opportunity to share the intertwined histories of these two nations. For as we noted in opening this chapter, histories are as important as futures because they deconstruct toward locality and it is in the locality that human beings exercise subject agency. NGOs have the obligation to share histories so that their participants, citizens of both nations, might understand their choices about their respective and shared futures. They are choices about growth and sustainability, about wealth and equity, choices that are made by action or inaction, by discourse and by silence. They are choices about forging a *habitus* of transcultural solidarity. Or not.

CHAPTER 5
TRANSNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NGOS AND THE PRACTICES OF
SOLIDARITY

NGOs: Elements of or Agents for Transnational Civil Society

Civil Society as Locus of Cultural Production in a Transnational Context

Non-governmental organizations are usually considered actors in the sector of culture known since the ancient Greeks as civil society. Civil society is an inherently ambiguous and evolving concept, difficult to define because it is distinguished from and therefore relational to the state and the market; both of which are evolving sectors of social reality in their own right.(Carnoy and Castells 2001) Some may see civil society as more fundamental than the other two sectors because they share the Lockean concept of social contract as the very condition for the possibility of a civilization or organized polity. Others prefer to imagine society as did Montesquieu, as an amalgam of differentiated autonomous centers of power including legal political organization and voluntary association among them. From a politically historical perspective, as John and Jean Comaroff (1999:12) observe, “civil society becomes especially ‘good to think’, and to signify with, at moments when conventional connections between the political and the social, state and public, are perceived to be unraveling.” A case can be made that such is the actual condition in Nicaragua at the present time, as a ‘darling’ of corporate globalization in Latin America. A globalized economy that encourages the mobility of ideas, production sites, and commodities to the exclusion of possibilities of community

and place is found in increasing intensities in Nicaraguan “free trade zones” and proposed “development clusters”.

One of the more common objections against concluding that volunteer vacationing is a civil society practice, or that it might be a transnational social movement is the contention that NGOs, the critical organizational matrix in this transnational practice, are not civil society entities. There are those who consider NGOs as a fourth sector of society, not pertaining to the state, to the market or to civil society. Some political scientists maintain that NGOs (because primarily of their non-representative corporate constitution) are a type of intermediary organization between the state and civil society. In this case NGOs might, as I mention elsewhere, be conceptualized as para-governmental organizations or as para-civic organizations. My contention is that when NGOs align themselves with the interests of civil society membership organizations then they function within the realm of civil society. When they align themselves to receive state or trans-state funding and perform social functions formerly identified with the state then they function as an extension of the state. When they align themselves with the interests of transnational for-profit corporations and serve as legitimizers of private enterprise then they can be considered extensions of the market sector. In a country such as Nicaragua where they are so influential, they inevitably perform functions within all three sectors.

The question of representation, (that is, who NGOs represent in their practice) can be dealt with by considering the stakeholders in NGO practice. NGOs are governed by a board of directors who determine policy and a professional staff who determine operational procedures. But NGOs are dependent on their donors and their volunteers

who are designated as voting members of the organization when it sits in general assembly. This is the body which elects the board annually. NGOs also consider their program participants or beneficiaries and the general public as other stakeholders who have an interest in the function of the organization. NGO governance is private in the sense that uninvolved bystanders have no vote in the general assembly, although they may voice opinions. On the other hand, corporate accounts are open to public scrutiny to a higher degree than for-profit corporations. NGOs also differ from for-profit corporations in that they are chartered for some social mission or objective. They are not taxed by the state precisely because they render a social service of some type, which the state might otherwise have to finance itself. In that sense, the public is represented by NGOs that function effectively to accomplish their mission. Transnational advocacy movements involve networks of community based organizations and NGOs which represent the interests of many who may not have actually delegated the NGOs to represent them (Keck and Sikkink 1998). The question of who NGOs represent may refer to whose political will they represent or whose interests they represent, in the sense of who they benefit. Those two representations may be related but they are not identical.

One additional complication in determining who an NGO represents is the scale on which the organization operates. A transnational organization cannot be a community based organization at the village level. Yet an NGO can structure itself differently and with differing types and degrees of representation at each level, as evidenced by World Vision's attempts of democratization at the level of local regions. Esman and Uphoff (1984) also talk about "apex" organizations which are NGOs that coordinate community based organizations' efforts aggregately. The point is that NGOs are not organized

uniformly. Some are more connected to the base, or to the popular classes among whom they work. Others are tightly controlled top down organizations that represent the philanthropic impulses of captains of industry who understand the long-term utility of benefaction. NGOs represent a myriad of different interest groups in society. When they meet Gramsci's criteria of being an oppositional force to the state, then they are organs of civil society, whether or not they represent the political will of a general population of a given area.

The presence of NGOs in zones of minimum state presence raises the question of citizenship standing of the residents of those zones. Citizenship confers standing in civil society as well as in the state. If an NGO performs the functions of common good for the community as a state would, and if the NGO institutes practices that allow citizen input into its operation, then citizenship vis a vis the local NGO has much more salience than citizenship vis a vis the state. Popular social movements are organs for holding the state and the market accountable to the popular classes. NGOs can choose to ally themselves with those movements, thereby giving them popular legitimacy, or they can ignore popular social movements and proceed with their own agendas, which may nonetheless represent the interests of some elite or subaltern population. In other words NGOs can decide in policy and practice how integral they will be in popular sectors of civil society. Just as popular movements can decide whether to regard an NGO as an ally or an adversary. Where NGOs become ersatz states under conditions of neo-liberal structural adjustment programs they run the danger of being stratified within society as an elite, not a popular sector (Pfeiffer 2004). But this social location is not structurally determined.

The democratization of transnational NGOs might offer some insurance against elite co-optation.

Emblematic of the flux in defining civil society is the role of NGOs which as Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar (1998) observe is becoming in many cases “neo-governmental” or “para-governmental” rather than non-governmental. Governmental or not in the formal sense of organizational accountability to the state, NGOs are always concerned with governmentality, that is, with the disciplining of its various groups of stakeholder/participants to think, speak and act in particular ways. NGOs are organizational technologies of what Foucault (1978) refers to as “bio-politics”, disciplining of the mind and body of individuals and societies, the sophisticated techniques of social control through normalization upon which our modern Western world is formed.

Nicaraguan *campesinos* and volunteer vacationers alike are invited into a discourse of development that determines the corporate culture of the NGO. And, as villagers experience constantly, those discourses and disciplined practices differ among the NGOs. Some are more professional and based on bureaucratic norms that are in print and inculcated through training manuals and workshops. Other NGOs are very personalistic, clientilistic, and patronistic in their dynamics, dispensing with formalities and focusing on interpersonal relationships. Positively the first type are experienced as organized, transparent and predictable by those rural Nicaraguans who have been trained in organizational dynamics (most of them by the mass organizations of the revolutionary era). Negatively they are experienced as cold, instrumental and utilitarian, by many

Nicaraguans who prefer verbal understandings to written agreements and personal reciprocity to contractual adherence.

NGOs which run on a more informal and personal dynamic are positively experienced by some Nicaraguans as warmer, more sincere, and more flexible. Negatively they are perceived by some as prone to nepotism and favoritism on the part of the staff, as disorganized or organized around the personal inclinations of the staff, rather than the community needs.

In our research villages there was a spectrum of management dynamics of NGOs. The most longstanding NGO in the villages was an international NGO with a very democratic philosophy and delegative organizational style. In these villages this large integral development NGO employed a charismatic coordinator from the village who began, according to many in the village, to manage the operation as a personal family business, without sufficient oversight by the International NGOs' local and regional office. The eventual outcome was a lot of community conflict and her transfer by the NGO to another village where she could not route NGO resources through nepotistic channels. In the villages where we worked this organization had, as a result of this style of leadership, lost much of its prestige, and although still active, was now overshadowed by several more recently arriving NGOs.

In contrast, an international European based NGO which arrived in the wake of the earthquake, had started in the community with an extensive professionally designed and administered needs assessment managed by five full time professional staff including a doctor, an agronomist, an educator and a social worker. This NGO presented programs in formal meetings with written protocols and contracts. It was investing greater

resources in the community and making more dramatic differences in terms of infrastructure. Its professional staff were Nicaraguan but not locals. The dynamic was more structured than the other NGOs working in the area, but also very consistent. Those villagers whose abilities to liaison between the village and the NGO depended on their interpersonal skills with outside personnel were not as effective in getting flexible responses from this bureaucracy.

A third transnational NGO, also entering subsequent to the earthquake in 2000, was administered by a North American couple and a Nicaraguan who had lived in the United States for nearly a decade. This team, while also having policies and procedures, was more personalistic in their leadership style. They spent more time in the community than the staff of the second NGO and less than the first. They took pride in getting to know the families that they were working with, and since their mission was home construction they had the opportunity to spend significant time with each family. They employed a professional construction crew from one of the villages (half of whom were related). They had an organizational mission but often times they, and/or the groups that they hosted, would intervene in villager's lives to help solve problems of resource access to health or education services. They were perceived as having some biases, for instance bringing in groups of foreigners who brought resources for the evangelical (protestant) community. They were also perceived by some villagers as being more flexible and therefore more approachable than the more bureaucratic organization mentioned above. They also lacked the statistical data about the community and its different sectors of development that the two previously mentioned NGOs had.

NGOs are not partisan in the same sense as political parties are, mobilizing its members to enact a party platform into law. Rather NGOs are involved in what might more expansively be called the “politics of culture”. To the extent that they construct their social networks more or less tightly with social movements of one tendency or another or to the extent that they utilize strategies of accommodation and/or resistance to the dominant social class, NGOs engage in differential cultural production.

Nicaraguan NGOs are often extremely sensitive to being co-opted by one political party or another. One transnational NGO in Nicaragua experienced the embarrassment of realizing after the fact that they had become involved in what they perceived as a highly partisan event capping a literacy campaign for rural adults. When the time came for their final graduation they learned from the local chief of police that Daniel Ortega, former president, present opposition party leader in the National Assembly and general secretary and perennial presidential candidate of the FSLN, was coming to speak. Some NGO staff felt like they had been duped by their partner agency, a Nicaraguan NGO concerned with literacy, into participating in an event which was highly partisan in nature.

Some critics accuse NGOs of going over to the “market” side of the equation, more interested in self-preservation and growth than mission. More often than not the “public service contractor”⁸⁴ type of NGO is likened to the commercial business firm, because while private voluntary organizations begin with a social mission and then seek funding for it, PSC NGOs seek out available funding sources and then structure their programs to fit donor priorities (Hulme 1997). In Nicaragua state politicians frequently complain of

⁸⁴ Korten (1990) distinguishes by funding sources between voluntary service organizations and public service contractors, with the former using membership generated funding and the latter being channels for bi-lateral or multi-lateral official development assistance.

the lack of legal oversight of NGOs, citing the fact that many have either begun or have evolved into organizations whose *raison d'être* is to provide employment and even generate profit for its staff.

The relationship of NGOs to popular social movements is a crucial issue in this research. An interesting choice for NGOs was outlined by the Nicaraguan social scientist, Orlando Nuñez Soto, in which he maintained that the NGOs had to make choices about what “power block” to support in order to ensure their economic, political and moral sustainability. Positioning the national government, transnational business, multi-lateral regulatory and lending agencies and the Catholic Church on the neo-liberal side of the political economic geography, and putting the labor organizations, the social movements, the farmers and informal entrepreneurs on the alternative side, he challenges the NGO community to look after its own good by looking after the good of the marginalized but organized. For if NGOs do the bidding of the neo-liberal forces in society rather than commit to solidarity with the popular classes they will survive economically but their political and moral future will be short lived (Nuñez Soto 1999).

John Clark (Hulme 1997) on the other hand, states that NGOs should not pretend to offer a development model that competes with that of the state, rather NGOs should offer development that is complementary to the state model since any successful development will necessarily involve the state sector. Stepputat (1997) also shows that dialectical reinforcement of development discourse between state and NGOs has a powerful, but not always unifying effect among the popular classes in the countryside. Particularly in situations like Nicaragua and Guatemala where government development policy itself has vacillated between contrasting models. Others)(Constantino) see the ideological

tensions in the West being transferred to the Two-Thirds World by an ideologically diverse NGO sector. Appadurai (2004) stresses that development models are culturally produced by the popular classes themselves and NGOs ought to foster popular aspirations for the future rather than to try to fit them into a pre-existing model.

The Nicaraguan experience has historically been one in which the cultural imaginaries of the elite classes have not been complementary to the aspirations for the future of the popular classes. If Clark is correct and the state is essential for the maintenance of any domestic development model, then NGOs, specifically the private voluntary organizations, and popular social movements may play a key role in protecting the aspirations of the popular classes within that development process.

Institutional Ethnography of NGOs

Arturo Escobar (1991) urges that development anthropologists become marginal to mainstream development organizations and critical of them. They should be concerned with the political and cultural implications of development interventions, always conscious of power dynamics among the parties to the development process. Specifically in regards to NGOs he is wary of their romanticization as the primary sector opposed to state malfeasance in development. He is uncomfortable with the ambiguous role of NGOs in local development because, as a category it is difficult to place them as outsiders or insiders to the communities in which they work. Are they community-based organizations or transnational corporations? The answer is, more often than not, both and/or neither. They are what Esman and Uphoff (Esman and Uphoff 1984) call “Intermediaries” or Radcliffe (2001) calls “hybrid institutions of development”⁸⁵.

⁸⁵ Radcliffe says “hybrid institutions of development” include local community based organizations, national or regional non-governmental organizations, nation/states, and transnational and/or multilateral

NGOs are complex in their internal composition, sometimes existing at local, regional, national, and international scales simultaneously, sometimes warranted from below and other times from above. They are usually conceived of as existing in the civil society realm of the public sphere, but often times are primarily funded by state agencies .(Biekart 1999; Economist 2000; Tvedt 1998) Even where their funding is independent they are often working in close linkages and for congruent goals with private enterprise (Petras 1997) and/or national government (MacDonald 1995; Stepputat 1997). Other analyses see them as aligned with international agencies representing the interests of local people against local elites and national governments (Forbes 1999; Murray 1987; Murray 1997) or conversely, in league with national governments or international agencies to suppress or co-opt popular initiatives (Gill 1997).

Challenges to Researching NGOs

The challenge to anthropological research concerning NGOs is fivefold: The first challenge is spatial and concerns the complexity of scale. Research on NGOs must be conducted on their ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ linkages. Their roles as intermediaries, which seems constitutive of their development industry function, is only as effective as their authority in the local communities where they work and in the international arena where they seek donor resource commitments and political networking contacts. The NGO that is equally adept at circulating in local , national and global venues is rare (Biekart 1999; Crewe and Harrison 1998). The challenge of scale might be termed the ability to assess at multiple levels the gloncal efficacy of the

funding organizations. They arise out of neo-liberal structural reforms that legitimate transnational formation of development policy.

development NGO. This can potentially be multi-sited cross-cultural research, what Max Gluckmann called working on an awkward scale.

For instance one of the NGOs that was in my research area was part of a confederation of NGOs with the same name but chartered independently in 19 different countries. It was based in a European industrial city where it had 20,000 private subscribing members, utilized this private funding, Bi-lateral funding from its European home nation as well as funding from the European Union and the UN. NGOs from the United States had similarly complex donor and participant networks with fewer levels of government funding.⁸⁶ One transnational NGO with presence in our research zone is in 100 countries around the world, employs some 18,000 people and had an operating budget of over a billion dollars in 2002. With an 8 million dollar budget in Nicaragua, one municipal level employee referred to its size as “monstrous”. She said an organization of that size had no need to cooperate with the state when it came to doing rural development. As she saw it, it could do whatever it wanted simply because of its scale of operation and its access to resources. No matter how extensive or complex a network, its manifestations are always locatable in space and time⁸⁷. But it is the relationships among the “nodes” and not the nodes themselves that reveal power flows which are of primary cultural import.

⁸⁶ One US NGO with a one million dollar annual budget had received funding from private donors (a mailing list of 10,000) and including private universities and churches as well as from the InterAmerican Foundation, the InterAmerican Development Bank and USAID, for different projects over a ten year span.

⁸⁷ To be able to do on site ethnographic research at all of the principle “nodes” of the NGO development network that was the focus of my research in Nicaragua would have required research in Milan, Italy, Barcelona, Spain, Monrovia, CA, Scarborough, NY, Sonoma, CA, Americus, GA and various sites in Florida, Pennsylvania, Washington State, and South Carolina to mention some of the principle sites outside of Nicaragua.

The second challenge to anthropological research on NGOs is the complexity of institutional identity politics. NGOs have complex constituencies and different relationships with each. Most NGOs are not membership organizations, although a number are “apex” organizations for community base membership organizations (Esman and Uphoff 1984). If they are composed of a membership from the base then their authority is different from autonomous board-directed NGOs. Bratton cited in (Atack 1999) distinguishes between membership organizations for mutual assistance and service organizations that exist to serve others. Korten (1990:147) offers a four category functional taxonomy of NGOs as 1) relief and welfare organizations, 2) local self-sufficiency organizations, 3) sustainable development organizations, and 4) organizations that liaison with popular social movements. NGOs usually spend a considerable amount of time on forging a group identity (Hale 1996) and clarifying consensual values which gives them a different type of legitimacy than corporate or state organizations (Korten 1990). Even though they seek to universalize or standardize themselves by a corporate trademark or logos, transnational NGOs are inevitably imagined in culturally relative ways (Appadurai 1991; Radcliffe 2001).

The anthropologist needs to be able to observe the confluence of different political actors in the drama of development, how their discourses consist of both autochthonous terms and ‘boundary’ terms or images that help bridge barriers of race/gender/class/ethnicity/geography/ and corporate cultures. How are subjectivities formed and reformed in the development process? One young adult who had come to Nicaragua five times as a volunteer vacationer and had also been to Africa with the same United States based NGO related how she wanted to go into international development

work. But her parents, both corporate officers in transnational corporations, would be disappointed in her if she settled for working with a small transnational NGO, so she was looking for positions with the World Bank or the United Nations.

How are, as Escobar warns, subjectivities converted to objectivities within the NGO? How are subjective complexities of individuals and groups reduced to stereotypes to meet organizational programming needs? How do people and communities become ‘projects’ and what dangers and violences are entailed in that process? For instance there is evidence that imaginaries of victimization are extremely effective in political and material resourcing for transnational NGOs (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Are there alternative, less enervating, images that can attract global support? Under what circumstances does the representation of ‘self as victim’ function as an act of resistance and when as accommodation or capitulation? Do NGOs construct villagers as victims or do villagers construct themselves as victims to NGOs? My Nicaraguan research assistant noted several times where villagers portrayed themselves as victims when conversing with me, but not when she interviewed them.

How does the NGO construct community leadership? In one encounter I overheard an NGO staff member complaining about the “project hunters” that he had to deal with in the villages. He was speaking of the individuals who approach NGOs looking for help in solving community development issues by proposing projects to them. NGO staff can find such people annoying, particularly when the organizational capacity for new projects is not available. They also find them bothersome because the more dedicated and self-assured project hunters rarely take an initial “no” for a final answer. Instead they research the genesis of projects of that NGO in other communities and come

back with more acceptable proposals. Even though the skills necessary for securing a project from an NGO are crucial to both the community and the NGO, oftentimes these key individuals meet with harsh criticism from both directions as their motives are impugned and their authority is questioned.

How do NGOs construct their visitors? One U.S. born NGO director who was critical of the value of visiting groups from the United States said that in his experience with such groups they were more bother than they were worth. He estimated that his organization needed at least one six figure donor annually to keep the organization afloat and so far had not heard that any of the visiting group participants had written checks for that amount⁸⁸.

A third challenge to anthropological research concerning NGOs is historical. What is the provenience of the particular organization, and more structurally, what is the global conjunction that gave rise to it? We know that NGOs are relatively recent players in the development game, becoming prominent in the 1970s (Carroll 1992) increasing the importance of their roles in the 1980s, both independently in the civil society realm and linked to either private corporations or governmental aid agencies. And in the 1990s NGOs can be seen to have 'arrived' within the development industry,(Salamon 1993) as their role was written into bilateral and multilateral policies and widely utilized in resource distribution.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Large one time donations do happen. One small NGO that hosts volunteer vacationers received a \$300,000 check from one impressed first time participant.

⁸⁹The Clinton terms in the White House expanded AID funding to NGOs from 13% to 50% by 1996. As bilateral governmental foreign aid decreases, the NGO share of the business will increase proportionately (Tvedt 1998)

With increased prominence at every level of the gloncal scale, what types of evolution occur? For instance Murray attests to his reliance on church based NGOs in Haiti in order to help farmers get trees in the early 80s, one of the first times that USAID Haiti had worked with NGOs in any significant way (Murray 1987). Yet, a decade later he would warn others of the presence of FONGOs, or foraging NGOs, who had taken on predatory functions formerly reserved to the state in Haiti (Murray 1997). Some emphasize that the real hope for North/South solidarity is not by way of middle class NGOs but rather when the organizations of the popular classes in both the North and the South can link up and develop strong relationships(Campfens 1996).

In Nicaragua one of the startling findings was that among the eight NGOs that I identified that presently bring multiple volunteer groups down annually from the United States, five were genealogically related. From a large Nicaraguan NGO that began bringing down North American groups subsequent to the 1972 earthquake in Managua, a national affiliate of a transnational housing NGO began bringing groups in 1986, from that housing organization a group primarily concerned with rural potable water systems was organized in 1990. Also in 1990 another NGO was formed from among people who had been down to Nicaragua building houses with the second NGO mentioned above and wanted to attend to the needs of education directly. The fourth NGO began building and equipping rural schools. In 1992 a group who had been down with the rural water NGO started their own NGO and began to do integrated community development projects in various rural areas of Nicaragua. In 1995 a sixth NGO was formed by a former international board member of the housing NGO that began in 1986 and is presently working in 6 different rural *municipios* in Nicaragua doing integrated community

development. Presently those six organizations continue to function and aggregately bring at least 100 groups a year to Nicaragua, mostly from the United States.

Some envision NGOs as social movements that arise to tackle a particular social problem and then, after the problem is successfully or unsuccessfully addressed, continue to search for new *raison d'être*s (Economist 2000). Or, continue to multiply functions as the core activity recedes to the background.(Biekart 1999) Some see in the evolution of mission an escape from the difficult or controversial, others maintain that it shows sensitivity to its appropriate role in a changing society. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph the trend in Nicaragua among the NGOs that bring volunteer groups in is to diversify into daughter organizations that do similar or related types of work among the popular classes of Nicaragua, perhaps in different communities or with different specific program objectives.

One of the historical conjunctures that affects the rise and demise of NGOs is the national political ambience. Margarita Bosch (Hulme 1997) shows how in Brazil the NGO sector began consolidating with elements of the church and Marxist political groups in order to oppose the military dictatorship. The subsequent trajectory of the Brazilian civil society sector has kept it in a consistently confrontational stance with the government. In Nicaragua during the Sandinista administration foreign NGOs were facilitated by official protocols, cooperative agreements, and price controls in their grassroots efforts to help workers and campesinos. Cheap cement was available from the government owned cement plant, the only producer in the country, and housing for the popular classes was prioritized in national policy⁹⁰. The NGOs and their personnel who

⁹⁰ In 1988 a sack of portland cement cost a transnational housing NGO \$1.50 in Nicaragua compared to \$6.50 in Haiti.

were attracted to the area were those who could understand and see a convergence of goals with the revolutionary effort that was underway. Hundreds of groups came from the churches, unions and political solidarity organizations of Europe and the United States to assist cooperatives with the coffee harvest in the mid 1980s. Some brigades came for a week and others for much longer. They even warranted their own popular labels, called *internacionalistas* by most, they were referred to as *sandalistas* by those more critical of the Sandinista project.

Subsequent to 1990 many of those organizations (both NGOs and the agricultural cooperatives that had hosted brigades) faded away and a new generation of what MacDonald (1995) would call “neo-liberal” or Townsend would call “compliant” NGOs were organized and generously funded by overt and covert sources. This latter group was interested in maintaining and furthering the market based economy while ameliorating some of the more egregious effects of inequity that results from it. They constructed their efforts not as rebuilding after two wars against foreign powers, but as compensating for the socialism and mis-management of the Sandinista administration.

Another agenda item was displacing the “progressive” or “alternative” NGOs from the civil society sector, especially as many of those NGOs that remained from the revolutionary era had hired a large number of the mid-level Sandinista professionals that ran the former government and who lost their jobs in the change of administration and political economy.(Nuñez Soto 1999) As mentioned in our genealogy of NGOs that bring volunteer vacationers we see that the initial Nicaraguan NGO was formed during the Somoza dynasty, immediately after the earthquake that destroyed Managua in 1972. The second NGO which is a national affiliate of a transnational began during the

Sandinista administration. The subsequent four organizations, although their founders had journeyed to Nicaragua on work teams during the late 1980s, actually organized during the post-revolutionary or neo-liberal era.

The fourth challenge to NGO research is the charged political economy of the global arena. With the gross inequities which exist globally, the activity of NGOs can never accurately be construed apolitically although the technospeak which is ubiquitous in the development industry, attempts to do just that.(Ferguson 1990) Simple service provision is political.(Townsend, et al. 2004) How do power differentials between and among members of development NGOs function and how does this affect the subject agents themselves?(Radcliffe 2001) NGOs affect power changes among the poor themselves, resulting in heightened tensions that fall along other than class divides (Stepputat 1997) yet still involve unequal access to resources.

The fifth challenge to anthropological research into NGOs is the issue of reflexivity, the 'self' of the researcher, the 'standpoint' of the ethnographer. Feminist anthropology in particular challenges us as social scientists to consider our own places within the 'development industry'; an industry which is notorious for utilization of neo-colonial constructs of race/gender/ethnicity/religion, etc. (Kabeer 1994; Mohanty 1991; Parpart 1995). Ethnographers must acknowledge and attempt to compensate for the lenses which influence them when trying to evaluate the efficacy of an NGO for subaltern peoples. Included in this challenge is the concern of whom the anthropologist works for. To work for the donor will provide one perspective but questions generated from that standpoint will tend to mask certain power dynamics and foreground others. There are

questions which the donors, the staff, and the program participants respectively would prefer to relegate to non-discourse; certain voices that are not as welcome as others.

I found my self on the horns of the dilemma as to whether I was doing development anthropology from within the development enterprise itself, or whether I was doing anthropology of development critiquing from outside (Crewe and Harrison 1998). Haraway in her treatment of standpoint epistemology seems to assume a unitary identity with different facets, but my standpoint itself vacillated. If I was doing development anthropology, as I was welcomed to do by the participants as a former development practitioner, then I was dealing from within the discursive regime of development and could critique as a loyal participant who accepted certain basic presuppositions. In which case I could assure my NGO subjects that I empathized with their struggles. If I were an anthropologist of development, on the other hand, I could question the self-evident presuppositions that under- girded development discourse. In which case I became a development agnostic rather than a devotee. As an agnostic I would be perceived with suspicion by the development faithful and even by my own inner development anthropologist.

Issues of loyalty and hipocrisy became affective avenues to ethical and analytical ambiguity and doubt. I found that my standpoint vacillated contextually, that when my subjects (some of whom were also friends) were questioning the efficacy of their own efforts and seeking counsel, then my development anthropologist was there to provide perspective on the issue at hand. When I sensed self-assuredness or even unreflective ethnocentricity in their programatic practices I could feel the anthropologist of development surging to the surface, challenging, sometimes tacitly and other times

audibly, the cultural baggage that they might be imposing on others. The reader will have to be the judge of the effects and efficacy of my shifting standpoint in constructing a cohesive perspective.

Theoretical Approaches:

I used a bricolage of a discourse centered approach, a practice theory approach, and political ecology to analyze NGOs. I found that none of the three was sufficient alone. I am concerned with the historical discursive formation and operation of NGOs as key players in the development 'regime' (Escobar 1995) which is maintained by a constant realignment of knowledge/power in the context of concrete historical conjunctures. Escobar and other post-structural critics of positivist understandings of development (Crewe and Harrison 1998; Crush 1995; Ferguson 1990; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997) hold out for a more processural understanding of how knowledge/power is created than their colleagues. Basing their understandings of development on the historical post-structuralism of Michel Foucault (1972) and others they find that the scientific objectivity of eurocentric modernist development theory is one among many ways of perceiving reality, society and social change. They critique (deconstruct) the political function of the development discourse and the institutions which have been generated from that discourse. The difference between what the discourse says development is about, and what it in fact does, creates a dissonance that causes one to question the origin of the discursive formation itself to ascertain the actual political (knowledge/power) genesis of development technology. In Bourdieu's terms, it is revealing the symbolic violence.

Knowledge is generated by individuals and institutions to order society.

Escobar's analysis of the development discourse is that it has a definite 'Western' bias in

its formulation: that it is positivist in its epistemology and modernist in its philosophy. It seeks to marshal all the peoples of the world into a “progress “ that is best exemplified by Western Europe, North America and Japan. In order to gain the cooperation (or at least acquiescence) of billions of people in this enterprise it is necessary to construct an ideologically powerful discursive formation. This formation is institutionalized in the form of multi-lateral or bi-lateral organizations that tie all communities through out the world into a grand scheme for progress. The duplicitous aspect of this is that the contingent, interested, vernacular, constructed, parochial and partial nature of this project is not acknowledged by the millions who are engaged in it, nor are the results produced that which has been promised.

One of the main criticisms that can be leveled against Escobar is his reconstruction of a monolithic and univocal “representational regime” of development. The vast majority of the examples that Escobar uses to build his “development discourse” are from government bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies.

My experience in Central America illustrates the reductionism of assuming that private voluntary organizations with organizational links to community based organizations and social movements follow the same development logic that Korten’s “public service contractors” do. In fact in the boundary areas where the PVOs come into contact with Bi-Lateral and Multi-lateral aid agencies the contradictory logics cause considerable cognitive dissonance among NGO leadership. As one director of a development NGO shared, “When we get a phone call from USAID and another from the World Bank, and both want to lend us money, we have to ask ourselves, ‘What are we doing wrong?’”

In Central America there are entire rural regions where the state is rarely if ever present in a stable ongoing sense and NGOs have become the primary organized presence in an area. The quality of that presence can be, but seldom is, highly participatory or even democratic.(Bronkema 1997) The discourse of these rural-based organizations often differs significantly from the modernization mantras of urban technicians. Escobar's critique is not detailed enough, that is, it deals only with the meta-narrative of modernization and not with the counter discourses that are generated locally in villages and valleys across the developing world. While he is decrying development as a destroyer of worlds he has not carefully sought out the local exceptions that prove the global rule nor has he acknowledged the many modernities that are being generated on the margins and in the fissures of globalization.

Such a monolithic approach to the development industry actually gives more coherence to its discourse than it warrants and neglects to point out ways in which NGO and social movement practitioners are using the development lexicon in counter-hegemonic ways. For instance, a "free trade zone" that involves worker owned cooperatives rather than transnational corporations strikes at the heart of neo-liberalism's bias towards finance capital over labor. A housing program that finances rural housing for 20 years at "no interest" is equally subversive. Programs that put financial capital and technological expertise in the hands of the popular classes strike at the heart of capital accumulation strategies of the state and transnational corporations. Legal instruments that protect communal forms of property for community infrastructure are direct challenges to the corporate privatization orthodoxy of late global capitalism. The examples of grassroots resistance efforts are many and varied. Some are more obvious

but the most systemically effective are sometimes the more subtle variations on a dominant discourse.

Escobar's limited scope does not discredit his methodology or approach. Rather, it strengthens it. Because it is precisely where he deviates from that method that he falls into the error of essentializing. He has forgotten one of Foucault's principle insights about power, that it is not exclusively or even primarily economic (Foucault 1988). Escobar falls into the trap of assuming that economic power can be equated with cultural power. And so the discourses he analyzes are predominantly those from the metropolises.

On the other hand, as Stuart Hall says, "power in the first instance is economic". And it is for this reason that political economy, and particularly its 21st century variant, political ecology, is an essential balance. Post-structuralism provides the critical tools to see power at work and to suggest strategies to counter hegemonic domination within the development regime and among NGOs, but it is also the material resource flows which indicate how power moves. One of post-structuralism's weaknesses is its inability to articulate how power coalesces and flows in directionally focused as well as disperse ways. There are correlations between material and ideological constructions. A budget is an ideological statement. It may be difficult to answer which came first, the dollars or the dominant discourse, but the coincidence and congruent logic is demonstrable. Agential opportunities are afforded by the contradictions between them.

NGOs can be evaluated based on whether they deliver the goods to those that already have a lot or to those who have comparatively less. Development has been shown to be materially beneficial to the developed equally, if not more so than to the 'underdeveloped' who are its nominal beneficiaries (Pigg 1992; Shrestha 1995). As

Charles Hale observes, the practical efficacy of a theory for the material benefit of subaltern populations is its only reliable evaluation (Hale 1996) While we must admit of the multiplicity of political subjects we cannot abandon the necessity for creating powerful counter-hegemonic collective voices. Our theories must do more than be self-referentially consistent, they must also make a difference for our subaltern friends, which can only be accomplished through "experience rooted analysis" of both a discursive and ecological nature.

NGOs and Neo-liberal Nicaragua

A History and Scope of the Nicaraguan NGO Sector

Civil society international aid is much older than bi-lateral international foreign assistance which only began in the 1940s. The oldest NGO of all was founded in England in 1854 to combat slavery. *Cáritas* (the Roman Catholic foreign aid organization) was organized in Germany in 1895. *Save the Children*, *Redd Barna* was created in 1919 in Denmark. When we talk of sustainability of NGOs we need to keep in mind that at least in Europe they have a 150 year history. Over the last 25 years the multilateral and bilateral aid of the 26 richest countries to countries in the South has amounted to about \$60 billion a year.⁹¹ Private investment has averaged four times that amount (George 1997:208)⁹².

⁹¹ In 2003 alone countries of the South transferred \$47 billion to the North in debt payments.

⁹² Between 1982 and 1990 the developed countries invested 927 billion dollars in developing countries. During that same period developing countries remitted 1.3 trillion dollars in debt service alone to the creditor countries. The net gain for the rich countries was 418 billion dollars. In 1990 the debtor countries were 61% more in debt than they had been in 1982 (George 1997: 208).

In the 1970s it was proposed that the rich countries contribute 0.7% of their GDP to support the developing countries. The actual figure today stands at an average 0.22% with the United States at the bottom with 0.14 % and Denmark at the top (Oxfam 2004)⁹³.

During the 1960s and 1970s NGOs from Europe and North America that had been involved in charitable assistance to developing countries began to realize that solidarity, not charity should be the goal. They began trying to educate their donors in the North to consider changes in world political and economic relationships. Solidarity NGOs tried to impact the development policies of their own governments. During the 1980s solidarity oriented organizations continued but they were joined by a group of more entrepreneurial NGOs who sought to work in high profile widely publicized locations where it was relatively easy to raise funds. Most of these locations were in Africa, but after the peace accords in Guatemala in 1996 and Hurricane Mitch in Nicaragua and Honduras in 1998 they came to Central America in large numbers (O'Neill 2004).

In 2000 the amount of NGO aid coming South amounted to 6.6 billion dollars, of which 80% was from private funds, much of it raised by mass appeals to the European and North American middle class, often through churches. Yet the average per capita income gap between the one-third world and the two-thirds world has widened from 10 to

⁹³ Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg have reached and sustained the .7% target for some time, none of the G7 members is even close. In some countries, the amount of aid expressed as a percentage of GDP, has actually fallen, particularly over the last decade. At only 0.14 percent of GDP, U.S. foreign aid in 2003 ranked dead last among all wealthy nations. U.S. development assistance comes to less than one-fortieth of its annual defense budget. The G7's combined aid budgets expressed as a percentage of GDP in 2003 0.24 percent -- were only about half of what they were in 1960, when they stood at 0.48 percent, according to the Oxfam International report "Paying the Price" released in December 2004.

1 in 1980 to 60 to 1 today. And the internal income gap in Latin America between the elites and the popular classes is the least equal in the world.

Since 1979 Nicaragua has received fifteen billion dollars in foreign governmental aid. Yet there are more poor and a higher percentage of poverty now than then. In 2000 NGOs brought 152 million dollars in aid to Nicaragua⁹⁴. Northern donors demand much more in terms of efficiency, efficacy and transparency than they have in the past. In the past recipient communities were unaware that large sums of money were being raised in their name, but now they not only solicit help but they study NGO budgets and denounce those who would use their images of poverty without addressing its causes in their communities. NGOs used to be perceived by the Nicaraguan people as a uniformly beneficial presence, but since the advent of “MONGOs”⁹⁵ and briefcase NGOs generated by English speakers who know the technical jargon of development, there has been a lessening in public confidence in the NGO sector.

Twenty eight percent of Nicaragua’s GDP is from foreign aid. This contrasts with 6% in neighboring Honduras. Because of the revolutionary experiment here in the 1980s Nicaragua continues to receive disproportional amounts of aid from people who visited in support during the 1980s.⁹⁶

After explaining that a British aid agency had closed most Latin American programs and slashed the budget of all the others except the one in Nicaragua primarily

⁹⁴ Roughly equal to the Nicaraguan national budget for health and education in that year. (Collado, 2004)

⁹⁵ MONGO signifies “My Own NGO”.

⁹⁶ 9 billion dollars during the decade of the 1990s.(O’Neill 2004)

because the foreign minister of that country had picked coffee on a solidarity brigade in the Nicaraguan mountains in 1981, Sally O'Neill, goes on to generalize the phenomenon..

Those who in the eighties made fun of “*cheles internationalistas*” – light skinned solidarity activists – should know that many of those *cheles* have become true ambassadors of Nicaragua in their home countries, some of them even from positions of influence. And that pro-Nicaragua favoritism has to be recognized as a tribute to the Nicaraguan people. (O'Neill 2004:44)

In 2003 the European research institute, CIDSE, concluded that Nicaragua received 60% of European aid to Central America. But the proportion of European foreign aid destined for Latin America has declined to 10% of total European aid and is still falling. With the IMF and World Bank eclipsing the UN as the primary conduit for multi-lateral aid it is doubtful that revolutionary reminiscences will continue to motivate giving. U.S. bi-lateral aid formerly administered through USAID was accountable to congress, but the Bush Administrations' Millennium Account will be administered directly out of the White House without congressional or any other independent oversight.

Characteristics of NGOs Operating in Rural Zones of Nicaragua

The following section begins with some generally applicable observations about the NGOs operating in rural Nicaragua and then focuses specifically on practices utilized by those bringing groups of volunteer vacationers.

Most NGOs work independently.

Most NGOs work alone or in coordination with networks that operate outside the rural communities where they work. The NGO sector of civil society in Nicaragua is dis-articulated, that is to say, it is not consolidated. While there are networks of NGOs that function both under the *Coordinadora Civil* and in sectoral networks (eg. Those working with children, or with women, or the environment) there are many NGOs, including the one's that my study focused on, that basically operate apart from any coordinated

planning or even direct regular communication with other NGOs. They find out about each other's activities through the community residents to whom they relate, usually in a casual rather than systematic manner.

It was very awkward as a research team to interview representatives of the various NGOs in the zone when they didn't talk to each other about their respective programs. It became apparent early on that we were bearers of extremely sensitive information, simply because no other agents in the community, including the village development committees were aware of the details of each of the NGO programs, and hence the "big picture." We found that any conversation about village development would easily lead to multi-directional issues of confidentiality. On more than one occasion we delivered, with prior NGO permission, "public" NGO reports about a community to leaders of the community in question who had not as yet received them.

In the primary zone where we worked there were six major NGOs present. Two were working in housing. Three were working in household scale production of chickens and pigs or artisanal hammocks. Four were working in different types of education, formal and informal. One was working on potable water supplies. One was working on letrines. One was a micro-finance organization. All six had dabbled in financing home based businesses. None of them met with each other regularly even though they sometimes saw each other in passing on a daily basis in the villages. Aggregately they were investing about \$500,000 a year in a region with six villages and 800 households.

Given the presence of NGOs in Nicaragua (4000 of them by official count) (Briones 2004) and their importance to the economy and social welfare, 70 % of foreign assistance is distributed by them,(CAPRI 1996) lack of coordination is a significant issue

on a national level, and it has concrete consequences in the rural communities we researched. The six NGOs worked amongst each other with no regular coordination with each other nor with the village or municipal authorities, except one that coordinated in a sporadic way with the *alcaldía*. The *alcaldía* itself was basically uninvolved in the development of the community. This mutual NGO independence predominated even though many of their activities were similar in nature and dealt with the same general population. For instance two NGOs did house to house, universal needs assessment surveys of all 800 homes in the same zone within a few months of each other, but did not coordinate efforts nor share data sets.

The advantages of operating as lone entities are that these NGOs spend more time on program activities and less time in meetings. They are also more independent and thus less able to be controlled by a governing body such as a state agency. One of the obvious dangers of doing so is the potential for duplication of services and lack of synergy because of poor timing or competing community development projects. It's not that no meetings were held but all the ones that were held were ad hoc and were convened at the request of one or other NGO, not a regular coordinated effort.

Another difficulty is the strain it puts on the community leadership to respond to the needs of six different organizations without a central forum in which to achieve consensus and coordination of efforts. Friction erupted in one community meeting when an expatriate NGO director accused one of the villagers of disloyalty because he had accepted a temporary paid organizing position with another NGO working in the village. His reply was "I work for my village, with what ever organization is willing to do development work here, I do not work for one NGO exclusively."

There are networks of NGOs that operate on the municipal as well as the national level. But we found the municipal level network in our focus region poorly attended and only 20% of the NGOs were affiliated. The *alcaldía* indicated that only 10% of the NGOs operating in the *municipio* had registered with the municipal council. Even fewer attempted to integrate their development projects with the municipal five-year development plan. In our research zone only one of six NGOs had done so.

The Absence of the Nicaraguan State in rural communities

NGOs are often dismissive concerning the role of the state in the lives of its rural citizens, seeing little, no or negative value of the institution for the people with whom the NGO works, and therefore for the NGO's work itself. In some municipalities the *alcaldía* has attempted to work with the NGOs and vice versa and the relationship has built into an integrated development effort. But this is not as widespread or common as dis-articulation.

There can be variability even within one NGO as to how closely it relates with different municipal administrations. We found that different NGO staff of the same organization related very differently to neighboring municipal governments, coordinating closely with the one and basically ignoring and being ignored by the other.

During the governmental transition in 1990 some international NGOs whose political vision was more in concert with the Sandinistas left the country, also at that time Sandinistas who no longer had government jobs became a cohort of new staff for the NGO sector.(Nuñez Soto 1999) In 1992 and later another cohort of NGOs came on the scene with different political orientations and funding and linkages from neo-liberal sources.(MacDonald 1995) many of these were the public service contractors mentioned above.

Two important distinctions need to be made here. Public service contractor NGOs in Nicaragua deliver Bi-lateral or Multi-lateral funding to programs operate in the grassroots usually through Nicaraguan NGOs or Nicaraguan affiliates of transnational NGOs. This sidestepping of the Nicaraguan state apparatus is a source of international friction and, from the Nicaraguan state's point of view, an organizational undermining of its legitimacy. It is permitted nonetheless because it has an ideologically compatible goal, which is to foster a neo-liberal globalized society. Private voluntary organizations who distribute private funds into programs that present alternative economic development models are seen by the state as fiscally separate. Their private moneys were never bi-lateral state funds. Ideologically, however, they can be subversive of the Nicaraguan states' development plan to tie the national economy into the global division of labor.

Some internationally based NGOs are hybrid organizations that spend home government monies in state approved strategies that aid corporate globalization from above, while using private funds to support programs that are more alternative or confrontational in design. The degree to which this hybridity of funding sources and ideological tension can be maintained is usually a function of the spectrum of ideological plurality and bureaucratic flexibility of the donor governments.

When speaking of European NGOs a further nuance is necessary since they are often recipients of state and multi-lateral European funds at three levels. European cities frequently include in their budgets foreign assistance funds for "sister city" programs that are annual line items. These are often channeled through NGOs working in the recipient country but with home offices in the European country. A second level of funding for these transnational European based NGOs is national, which corresponds to the type of

assistance that USAID would give to US based NGOs operating in developing countries. The third level of funding is from the European Union, which in 2004 opened an office staffed by 200 expatriates in Managua. It is predictable that foreign policies of municipalities, nations and the EU exhibit significant differences, and so may fund programs with different development philosophies. European NGOs are fortunate to have multiple tiers of funding which can compensate for shortfalls at one level with increased reliance on another. However this requires them to consider the policy implications for their own organization. In addition to these three levels of potential state funding, European NGOs also have their own membership generated private funds.

Both tendencies of NGOs, the alternative and the neo-liberal, attempt to occupy the political space afforded to civil society in Nicaragua. But in a country where the NGO sector is so influential it was inevitable that State/NGO tensions would come to a head, and predictable that the conflict would ignite along partisan lines.

In November 2000, the president of Nicaragua, Arnoldo Alemán, responding to critiques from militants of his Liberal party, sent a platoon of army troops in the middle of the night to shut down a women's health clinic owned by a cooperative of women in one of the most remote areas of the country (Collado 2004). One of the measures in moving against the cooperative (which had roots in the Sandinista era) was the threat to deport the director of the clinic, a U.S. citizen. The official accusation was that the clinic was favoring Sandinistas with medical services while turning away others and performing abortions, which is illegal in Nicaragua. The women's cooperative decided to contest the closing and the deportation in the courts and in the public arena of civil society. Thousands of *campesinos* from the remote town of Mulukuku came to Managua

and demonstrated in front of the Presidential palace. In the end the Supreme Court ruled that the President had no right to arbitrarily close a clinic and deport its director without proof. Many of the social movements saw this as a rare victory for civil society and the popular classes in their fight against a neo-liberal state. Among the North American expatriates who worked in NGOs there was widespread concern that the director's decision to go clandestine within Nicaragua while the court case was being heard could have resulted in government repression against their organizations or the NGO sector as a whole.

This incident formed part of a pattern of state harassment that subsequently involved investigations without prior cause into the legal and fiscal affairs of at least half a dozen NGOs (all national NGOs) across the country by the national Department of Registration and Control of Associations. Both Liberal governments, that of Alemán and the subsequent Bolaños administration have threatened to enact much stricter laws and exercise more stringent bureaucratic controls over the NGO sector (Collado 2004). Given the current trends of multi-lateral strengthening of the third sector and Nicaragua's structural reliance on this foreign aid the state might study carefully the situation of India where the national government tried in the 1980s to institute controls and a code of ethics on NGOs, invoking wide spread organized resistance by them and ultimate failure of the attempt, see Ranjith Wanigaratne's chapter in (Hulme 1997).

Some NGOs seek the official acknowledgement of their work by the local municipal government. Some even seek to integrate their development agendas into the local municipal plan. Many don't bother with either. All seem concerned to be operating legally by registering with the national government, but that does not imply any

coordination. A common response by NGO representatives to the question of whether or not they worked with the *alcaldía* was, “Why would we?”

There exists in the minds of NGO staff, both expatriates and nationals, and in the minds of the rural residents, an identification of the government with the party presently “in power” with the concomitant assumption that government resources will be utilized to reward militants of that party to the exclusion or comparative neglect of others. This belief is prevalent regardless of party and despite disclaimers to the contrary. On first entering the village I kept hearing about the houses that the Liberal Party (PLC) built for its militants after the earthquake. Later I was to discover that it was not the party itself, but the *alcaldía* of the *municipio* which had a PLC administration that had sponsored the project. The villagers considered it a partisan project financed by municipal money.

NGOs feel compelled to offer basic services when the government does not do so, which in many cases changes the practice of the NGO from one of fostering sustainable development to one of offering emergency or on-going social assistance. This corresponds well with the neo-liberal ideal of privatizing all social and urbanization services. The five-year development plan for the *municipio* included only one public works infrastructure project in the six villages. Four kilometers of road was to be upgraded from sand to hard packed gravel. It was never done. All infrastructure improvements, such as a basketball court and restrooms and water fountains for the school, and most services, such as garbage collection or agronomy extension services, were executed by the NGOs (often with villager participation) or, in one case, expansion of the potable water system, directly by the Japanese government. The only state involvement I saw in the villages themselves was the presence of teachers, whose

salaries⁹⁷ were paid by the national Ministry of Education, and once a week, for half a day a nurse from the Ministry of Health saw patients in a local health clinic which had been built by an NGO. She had prescriptions, not medicines, to dispense.

In disaster relief situations it is often the NGOs who respond materially before the government does, and continue to respond after the government emergency assistance has been distributed. After the 2000 earthquake it was two North American based NGOs and an Italian NGO who were working in the communities within a week or so after the disaster. The municipal and national governments which admittedly had multiple disaster zones to deal with, showed up late and stayed but a short time.

NGOs often initiate interventions in a community as a disaster relief agency after a catastrophe and then continue to operate long term as an agent of long term sustainable development. Only two of the six NGOs working in the zone had been there prior to the Earthquake, the other four came in at that time with emergency assistance and then stayed on. The transition from emergency aid to sustainable development is hindered by the high degree of dependency inherent in the emergency aid dynamic which must be left behind in order to achieve sustainable development.

The villages were being rebuilt house by house, and had taken on a much more modern appearance than before the quake. This new, more prosperous appearance, according to the director of the school, gave residents a new-found community pride. The village had become a believer, the idea that NGOs can effect significant material change in a community was widely held. As one young community leader stated "Here

⁹⁷ teacher salaries are between

there is a saying that people use when considering who to go to for community development assistance. They say, ‘An NGO is a sure thing’”.

NGOs, Democracy & Citizenship

The non-democratic corporate structure of NGOs often prevents Nicaraguan rural residents from feeling that they have a voice in the decisions made by the most well organized and endowed organizations in their communities. Community advisory committees selected by NGOs, usually from among their “beneficiary” population, are used as sounding boards by the NGOs but locals rarely have policy making influence. Beneficiary drop out has sometimes been the cause of the discontinuance of a program.

On the other hand, factors which ameliorate the frustration engendered by this structural voicelessness are the personalism and availability of the NGO leadership (in contrast to government officials) and the rapid access to a flexible variety of material aid. (eg. A housing NGO was assisting individuals or families in an ancillary way with education or micro-finance or health on a request basis).

Organizational flexibility is also evidenced by the rapid conversion to disaster response on the part of the NGOs whose programmed projects had to be abandoned. One national level NGO talked about abandoning a several million dollar budget and starting over from scratch. Another which specialized in schools stopped building schools and started building components for single family homes instead for an entire year after Hurricane Mitch, increasing their budget by 400% during 1999. That NGO returned back to school construction in the following year but another NGO which partially shifted to single family housing construction after Mitch in 1998 and even more so after an earthquake in 2000 has since come to focus heavily on that form of assistance, building a

total of nearly 300 houses to date. Its' promotional literature now declares that it intends to eliminate poverty housing in the *municipio*.

Rural residents sometimes feel that the offer of community development that they have from an NGO is "take our project in the form that we are offering it, or we will take it somewhere else". They sense little negotiating room. One community leader described it as a "straightjacket". It became clear that such feelings were inversely proportional to the degree of participation that people had in the planning of the project in question. Many NGOs do a needs analysis that consists of a rather lengthy questionnaire which inventories household resources and infrastructure. These questionnaires are often collated electronically, compiled into a report, and a program is developed by professional staff to deal with the more obvious shortcomings. Then a community meeting is held where people are offered an explanation of how the program will operate and the option of enrolling or not. Standards, regulations, expectations, costs, etc. are not generally up for negotiation. As one village leader explained

The opinion of the NGO professionals prevails in decisions about our community development. They come with their project components, their budgets, and have already decided which element of the community population they will work with. Unfortunately we don't have many NGOs available from which to choose. The NGOs which work in our communities are providing assistance, rather than attacking the causes of the problems they are working at the level of their symptoms.

There is a philosophy which still exists among some NGO staff that all rural communities are basically the same, and thus programming which is appropriate to one should be transferable to many or to all with a few minor adjustments. While there may be some truth to the material homogeneity of rural communities, the social and ecological heterogeneity requires that empowerment fostering projects involve emphasizing the

uniqueness rather than the commonality of communities, a more difficult task than implementing a standard program.

The community residents do not usually make the mistake of conceptualizing NGOs homogeneously. The more active among them understand and leverage the differences between NGOs in accessing resources.

Some NGOs include citizenship training, how to organize to secure your rights as a Nicaraguan citizen, as part of their programming, but those are rights vis a vis a state which is often absent. Citizens do not enjoy those same rights vis a vis NGOs, although they do, by law, have the right to know their budgets. This is a right which, according to community leaders, is seldom recognized. Even NGOs who aim for long term sustainable development indicated reluctance to open their books to the communities within which they operate. As one expatriate NGO executive observed, “I don’t want all the line items in my budget to be open to scrutiny so that any community member that wants to can say ‘Well my brother could do that for less, why don’t you hire him?’ I wouldn’t be able to manage this organization like that.”

Community leaders on the other hand ask for decentralization of NGO decision making.

The material aid that NGOs bring into the communities is undeniably important, but they are not reducing the extreme poverty in which the people live. Because their poverty includes a loss of hope and a loss of the motivation to mobilize themselves to change their living conditions. We need to replace this de-mobilization with a true accompaniment. The whole NGO effort needs to be democratized, with transparency of programs and budgets so that people can see that monies are being collected and disbursed to help them eradicate their poverty, not to prolong it.

And another observed, “Our communities already have customary solidarity organizations, patterned on indigenous community traditions, but NGOs come in with their own organizational dynamics that suit them better.”

NGOs and Nicaraguan Civil Society

NGOs form a critical component of “civil society” which structurally enables neo-liberal capitalism, as found in one of its purest forms in Nicaragua. If the 4000 NGOs that channel 70% of the 28% of Nicaragua’s Gross Domestic Product that comes directly from foreign assistance were absent, then the whole system would not function. NGOs are more critical to the functioning of Nicaraguan society than that of any other in Latin America. (O’Neill 2004) Certainly in the zone where we operated the six NGOs were investing nearly a million dollars a year into the six village area, outstripping state investment by ten to one.

The Nicaraguan and United States governments have embarked on a coherent international and national plan of neo-liberal development which is concretized in documents such as CAFTA/TLC-USA and Plan Puebla Panama. They focus on making Nicaraguan human and natural resources available to transnational corporations operating in enclave economies in Nicaragua. The consequent neglect of the rural agricultural productive sector and lack of development of an internal market have long term consequences for internal displacement of communities, continued emigration, deepening poverty and continuing loss of food security and food sovereignty. As we have seen this is a continuation and intensification of an historical trajectory that began in earnest 150 years ago. What is different about this latest phase is the transnationalization and globalization of the popular classes through out-migration as well as the elites.

NGOs and the “coyuntura actual” or current socio-political situation.

Some few NGOs in Nicaragua have allied with the social movements who are proposing alternative models of development to the dominant neo-liberal one promoted by the Nicaraguan government, which prioritizes transnational investment over small

holder agriculture. One of the transnational European NGOs in our zone had chosen to work in partnership with a national community based social movement and specifically included in its program design citizenship training to teach community members how to organize to secure their entitlements from the state. Another NGO that had been instrumental in securing financing for a series of 14 rural potable water systems in the *municipio* used a system whereby communities solicited whatever types of projects they saw as necessary. But they became concerned with the fact that people were able to secure water, houses, agricultural credit, small business loans, etc. and yet continued in extreme poverty with little control over the resources around them. This NGO began shifting its emphasis to training of community leadership.

Some NGOs believe in the efficacy of the neo-liberal model of development being promoted in the National Development Plan, the Central America Free Trade Agreement and Plan Puebla Panama. One NGO that works in six different rural municipios of Nicaragua was founded by a North American businessman who believed that one of the weaknesses of the typical rural development model was that it did not follow good business practices, with up to the minute accurate accounting of income and expenses, etc. The executive director of that NGO in Nicaragua, also a North American, wrote a paper for his graduate program, that assessed the effects of CAFTA as positive for rural Nicaraguans.

Many others restrict their attention to the local scale and do not attempt to conceptually link their work to a national, regional or international development model. Most NGOs that bring groups from the United States to Nicaragua rely on expatriate education professionals from the capital to present an overview of the history and politics

of Nicaragua to their visitors. Little discussion of such topics is initiated or sustained by NGOs in the rural work zones. Consequently few municipal or rural community leaders are asked to address the groups concerning current events or their interpretations of the national and international scene.

NGOs have an ambivalent stance toward the presence of *macquilas* in their zones. While most are conscious of the harsh working conditions and low pay that the workers, mostly women, bring home; they are also aware that it is one of the few wage labor positions available to villagers. One NGO director expressed to me his agitation with people who were univocally anti-*macquila* in their discourse, as he felt it was out of touch with the dire necessity for employment in the countryside. Yet when a contracted speaker came in and spoke disparagingly of *macquilas* to a group of visiting volunteers, he indicated his sympathy for her stated position.

Many NGOs are actively involved in organizing marketing networks for local artisans and growers of non-traditional crops. These networks are horizontal along industry lines and verticle in seeking niche international markets where profits can be generated. To the extent that they are tying producers into international commerce they might be considered agents of globalization. To the extent that they are giving marginalized populations *entré* into a formerly exclusive economy, or one that extracted their labor at exploitative rates, they can be seen as subverting the accumulation of capital by traditional recipients.

NGOs and Rural Communities

NGOs are more likely to form committees of their “own” than they are to work through already existing community development committees in the rural areas. Occasionally we encountered NGOs that had intervened in communities prior to

identifying the local leadership, much less seeking permission to initiate involvement. Usually that correlated with some emergency or disaster relief where needs were considered self-evident and a matter of survival. Because of the lack of state organization at the local rural community, village, level, there is no standard procedure for rural development NGOs to use when entering a community. The tendency is to find someone compatible with NGO objectives and who has some informal authority among their peers to deputize as a representative. In many cases residents who become employees are relied on as community sounding boards as well. In which case autochthonous community leadership becomes compromised. We found villages where there were three or four NGO advisory committees who never met with each other nor with any community-wide development committee. Even where there was a widely recognized community development committee there were often NGOs that never sent representatives to their meetings. Since the NGOs had the resources to carry out their own initiatives, and the communities did not, the community committees quickly became irrelevant.

Some NGOs form committees of their own but also coordinate with a community development committee. We found that degree of NGO responsibility to the local community, when the community was organized, was often much higher than its responsiveness to the municipal authorities. Rural development NGOs often operate on a de-centralized basis. On the one hand it keeps them close to the grassroots, on the other it means they only interact with very local authority and hence have less risk of being regulated.

Many rural communities have no community development committee, or, occasionally, they have a disaster relief committee which fades as the acute crisis abates. In one community where we worked there was an emergency committee formed immediately after the earthquake because there were 8 different NGOs involved in rebuilding the homes of the village. Later, as half of the NGOs left, the other four that remained in the years following, rather than converting the emergency committee into a standing community development forum chose to go their separate ways without any coordination among them.

Often rural communities have a community development committee that simply changes names depending on which NGO is currently most active in the community, but it is often sequentially the same people for each NGO. This occurs because some NGOs desire to be the exclusive rural integral development NGO in a community, and will not enter a community where another NGO is present. Another factor is the limited leadership pool in each community. NGOs often prefer that their leadership be literate enough to read and take minutes, and numerate enough to manage minor fees-for-services types of accounting. The average education in these rural communities is fourth grade. Social network centrality is also another aspect of social capital that NGOs desire in their committees. Prominent citizens are favored over the more socially marginal ones, except in cases where NGOs rely on their program participants or clients to serve also as leaders.

Some NGOs pressure their local committee members not to serve on the advisory committees of other NGOs. They cite a “lack of loyalty” or a “conflict of interest” as the reason for doing so. It is common to find NGOs that are not reticent about requiring

large amounts of volunteer or “sweat equity” hours from program participants, but then are concerned when they find that community members are counting the same hours for two different organizations. On the other hand, if NGOs are providing training for their community leadership committees, it hardly makes long term development sense to train the same handful of people multiple times, rather than spreading out the investment in social capital.

Because many communities have more than one NGO operating in them the recruitment of advisory committees exclusive to each NGO can result in a disarticulation of the community leadership and can create lack of coordination of community development goals, competition for human and material resources and even partisan rivalry. This condition has become widespread because of several factors.

One of the primary factors is the lack of official state structure at the village level, and the unrepresentative nature of the institution of village “*alcaldito/o*”. We met people in some villages that were widely recognized as the “*alcaldito/a*” designated by the *alcalde/esa* of the *municipio* as his/her representative. But because the institution was not legally defined nor representative of the residents, and because the *alcaldías* rarely used the office as a means of distributing municipal resources it usually simply indicated someone who was of the same political party and enjoyed some minimal level of confidence of the *alcalde*. Many villages had no such designee.

Another reason for lack of unity, focus or consensus has to do with the partisan rivalries at the village level. In the villages where we worked the balance between Liberals and Sandinistas was almost exactly half and half, based on 2000 and 2002 voting records. Many people distrusted the advisability of making common decisions with

people of the other party, especially decisions which involved interfacing with organizations at the municipal level. During our research the political dynamics continued to slide from a position of two ideologically opposed parties to one of two populist parties led by their respective *caudillos* but relatively indistinguishable as far as national policies. But important differences do still exist between the parties at the local level, both in rhetoric, in social networks, in symbolic and material artifacts of the revolutionary era and in some orientations to community development.

In the rural communities of our research zone community members elected by a general assembly of all the subscribers managed the potable water systems. With the privatization of water being proposed by the national government, and clear attempts to take over local water commissions by members of the Liberal Party who would according to some, be more prone to “sell out”, campaigns for water commission were often perceived along party lines. Some hoped that a “Sandinista” water commission, linked to other local water authorities through a more progressive NGO and to some of the local popular social movements could forestall privatization. In the communities where we worked the water commission was one of very few representatively elected organizations. When difficulties arose in the daily operation of the water system party affiliations became less salient and management skills became of paramount importance.

A third reason for dis-articulation of local leadership was lack of participatory planning by NGOs. In many cases not only were programs and projects planned in central offices in Managua, but national NGO leadership often believed that a program that was developed in one community could be duplicated, replicated or transplanted to other communities in other regions. Several NGOs had very detailed models, complete

with manuals and flow charts that could be deposited for use in any given community. Local leadership becomes titular at best in such a system.

A fourth reason that leadership lacked coherence in the villages was the lack of coordination among NGOs. Not only did they not meet to coordinate. In many cases they gave the impression that what the other organizations were doing in the community was of little or no interest to them. Many explanations can be given for this including that there is enough for a myriad of organizations to do in each community. There is no lack of needs in rural Nicaragua. Another possible explanation is that each NGO leadership team feared that sitting down to coordinate with other like organizations would involve compromises, or even perhaps confrontation with an organization that was more powerful or influential than they themselves. It is certainly a question that bears more research.

A final reason that rural communities have not been able to consolidate their development has been their unwillingness or inability to insist on inter-NGO coordination in their community. Many leaders expressed a feeling of relative powerlessness vis a vis the NGOs in their area. Some of the more canny leaders believe that they will get more for themselves or their community by not encouraging greater coordination among NGOs. In our area there were three NGOs that gave prominent programming emphasis to sponsoring school children to attend school by supplying such materials as school supplies, uniforms or book bags, as well as hot meals at school and tutoring after school. It was not unusual to have all three NGOs each sponsor a different child of the same family. In a few cases single children were able to secure multiple sponsorships in violation of NGO guidelines.

Many leaders sincerely believe that requiring NGOs to be present at a community meeting would be either ignored, or in the worst case scenario, would result in the NGOs deciding to leave the village that had such a requirement.

NGOs are not democratic but do generally comply with their stated goals and objectives though these may be more modest in their completion phase than they had been in their planning. They rely on personal relationships in the communities to reach those objectives. This produces a tendency for NGOs to become clientelistic, that is, to operate on a paternalistic dynamic which involves the NGO officials offering resources of the NGO to community members based on their personal relationship with the official. This is perceived in the community as favoritism and residents seek to get on that list of “favorites”. Those who consider themselves slighted by the NGO then become disgruntled. Often the dissatisfaction is not over the favoritism itself as an organizational method, but rather disappointment that they themselves were not among the favored.

The conditions of scarcity of employment in Nicaragua have created heightened awareness of kinship ties that parallel employment relations. NGOs that employ multiple members of the same family, especially in rural zones, are subject to accusations of nepotism and can create problems for an NGO’s community relationship. On the other hand many rural residents immediately assume that anyone with access to resources is bound by family obligation to provide employment to his own kin before employing neighbors or even less ethically, strangers. In this sense complaints about nepotism are often motivated not by reservations about the conflict of interests that might arise in the organization, but more about the concentration of opportunity and earning power in a few

families. Envy that it is not my family who has access to those resources is also a major affective position.

Characteristics of NGOs that Utilize Volunteer Vacationers in Nicaragua

National and Transnational NGOs

Two of the ten NGOs that we worked most closely with are headquartered in Nicaragua and the rest have transnational relationships with boards of directors and executive directors that work in the United States. One NGO is an affiliate with its own Nicaraguan board but which has fiscal and policy ties to an international headquarters in the U.S. Two NGOs which were headquartered in Western Europe did not bring groups to Nicaragua.

We found that there existed a tension concerning the formulation of policy for programming in Nicaragua which was made in large part in the United States. Even though many of the people who were involved in making NGO policy had had short-term volunteer experiences in Nicaragua they were not perceived by Nicaraguan staff as having sufficient understanding of the reality “on the ground” to make good policy without frequent consultation with Nicaraguan resident staff. It was felt that the stateside staff because of their remoteness had limited responsibility for execution of the decisions or their consequences. This leads to an “us” / “them” dynamic within the organization that could be programmatically addressed. Annual or bi-annual trips to Nicaragua by U.S. based executives were the norm.

US central offices were sometimes perceived by staff in Nicaragua as valuing the work-group experience for North Americans above the community development experience for Nicaraguans, particularly by requiring or requesting that groups be larger

or more frequent than advisable for the quality of experience for the communities and/or the NGO staff.

In the tension between hosting solidarity groups and doing sustainable development the NGO staff in Nicaragua would evaluate its work prioritizing its facilitation of sustainable development in the communities. The NGO staff in the US would evaluate its work prioritizing the quantity and quality of solidarity groups hosted. Both sets of staff were often conscious of their biases and sought to balance them.

One Nicaraguan based U.S. expatriate NGO official admitted that his first loyalty was toward the villagers, since he had to live among them day to day. His boss, the executive director based in the U. S. opined that such loyalties were natural evolutions as expatriots spent more extended tours of service in Nicaragua, but that the tension between the two objectives of education of North Americans and rural community development needed to be maintained consistently in order for the NGO to fulfill its mission.

There is a high degree of integration of electronic information technology in data storage and analysis and communications. Even though there is the possibility of daily communication with remote locations of the organizations, it does not prevent, although it lessens, the tension mentioned in the previous finding.

There was sometimes pressure from Nicaragua to the North American headquarters for more financial resources when NGO logistical capabilities enabled expansion of programs or service areas. But the more common dynamic seemed to be donor pressure on Nicaraguan staff to expand programs to meet the abundant supply of resources or groups.

Multi-level National NGOs.

NGOs which have national offices in Managua and also branch or affiliate offices in the Nicaraguan departments or *municipios* experience specific bureaucratic tensions regarding groups. The visiting volunteer groups and the local rural communities often want more direct communication and more direct resource transfer. The national offices want to maintain management and monitoring not only of the agendas of the volunteer groups while in country, but also of the communications between the communities and the localities between visits. This is true even when there is an ongoing relationship between the local groups in the United States and local Nicaraguan communities. One national NGO required in its policies that all electronic and written communication go through the national office.

NGOs Budgets and Group Logistics

Most of the NGOs we studied that brought groups had budgets between a half a million and two million dollars a year, with the vast majority of that spent in Nicaragua on direct program expenses. The pressure to raise that money affected the Nicaraguan locations differently depending on whether the “home office” was in Nicaragua or in the United States.

Those Nicaraguan based NGO staff with home offices in North America were involved with fundraising only as an ancillary activity. That is, they supported the development officer of the NGO as requested, which included cultivating their own direct relationships as organizational funding sources. They also often raised discretionary funds which were outside of the organizational budget and were used by the staff in Nicaragua as a means to respond to non-programatic but urgent needs as they arrived.

Occasionally they would begin a non-programmatic activity that would overtime evolve into a component of the central mission of the NGO.

One frequent role of NGO staff was to monitor the individual initiatives of volunteer groups that chose to fund a rural development project of their own design after a visit. In some cases these became major projects involving investment of tens of thousands of dollars and multiple trips by the sending organization.

One NGO built and staffed a primary medical clinic, including laboratory, pharmacy, dental care, and women's health unit serving a community of 12,000 largely with donations from a private university in the United States. The president of the university was at the dedication after a five year process in which 12 groups of students, faculty and alumni had participated as volunteers. That university's support continues with three groups of volunteers arriving annually.

Budgets: Most NGOs rely on the groups they bring down to be positive cash flow line items in the budgets and some NGOs get the vast majority of their funding from group related income & donations. Other NGOs get about half of their budget from group related activities.

Another group of NGOs would like to increase the amount and percentage of their budget generated by groups but realize they need to increase their capital investments in groups in order to do that. Sometimes groups begin as an element of the NGO program that is envisioned as long term organizational development and fiscal expectations are simply to meet the expenses incurred by hosting groups. But when organizations realize the motivational power of experiential immersion, it becomes clear to development

officers that individual volunteers and groups are willing to respond generously to the NGOs work.

It is not routine but it is common for a group to decide on a project that they would like to finance in the future during their volunteer group experience. This is true where there is a sending organization in North America. If the group is from a sending organization that has sent groups in the past then there is even more of a tendency to want to “own” a part of the NGO mission. If a project has already been identified and requires long term development, such as the community clinic mentioned above, then subsequent groups have more clearly defined resource acquisition goals. When the group is an *ad hoc* group that meets for the first time at the airport on arrival in Nicaragua post trip coordination is rare, except for sharing photographs.

A fourth category of NGOs are those that have never generated much income from groups and who host groups for other reasons. Previously mentioned was an NGO official that saw groups’ utility solely in financial fundraising terms. When significant amounts of money were not raised quickly by the first few groups then his estimation was that they had failed, and were more of an investment than warranted for the return. He is able to make this judgement because funds are generated for his organization by other means in the United States. However his board of directors have since chosen to include volunteer groups as a regular component of their rural development efforts.

A cautious or even skeptical attitude toward groups is particularly pronounced with NGOs who work in extremely remote locations where the logistics of group support requires a total effort by the organization and utilizes its entire staff, infrastructure and

resources during the visit. There are project sites where the costs or the risks preclude the possibility of volunteer group visits.

One medical NGO located in a particularly remote rural region accepts only qualified medical professionals in its bi-annual groups. It judges that the presence of groups of laymen would be a net drain on the mission of the organization. It tries to foster solidarity through annual visits of its director to the United States for speaking tours. During those tours she emphasizes the results of neo-liberal policies on the peasants of that region, and asks U.S. citizens to try to change the current policies of their nation-state. But she only invites medical professionals to visit in groups.



Figure 5-1: NGO owned group transportation, note luggage and equipment rack above.

Infrastructure: Those NGOs which most heavily rely on group funding and which consequently bring the most groups down often invest in infrastructure such as staff, vehicles and lodging structures to service their groups.



Figure 5-2: NGO group transport, note snorkel engine air intake for crossing streams

Staffing: NGOs have different staffing patterns to deal with groups. The majority (5) utilize permanent staff time to attend to groups when they are present. Some (2) have full time group coordinators. One subcontracts out their group accompaniment responsibilities to professional group guides.

Lodging: Four NGOs that we researched had dormitories and one was building one. This allows the host organization to control costs and the environment of the group. Some concerns are for their convenience and safety, others are for their privacy and security of their belongings. Schedules are much easier to control when room and board are provided by the NGO itself rather than other businesses. One of the results of having dedicated dormitories for North American groups is the inevitable lessening of their contact with Nicaraguans. Cross-cultural discomfort discourages volunteers from mixing with locals and where necessities of daily life are available within the organizational perimeter of the NGO there is little motivation to step outside one's comfort zone. Opportunities for cross-cultural learnings are lost.

Two NGOs primarily used rural school buildings to house their volunteers, displacing the students in the process. Two primarily used Nicaraguan owned and managed hotels or rooming houses.

Two of the NGOs used family stays with their short term volunteer groups in rural zones. One NGO included a week of language school as the first half of a two week experience. During that first week the volunteer/students stayed in family homes. Two educational organizations bringing non-volunteer (study) delegations did use homestays as part of their experience.

Home stays can be significant transformational experiences for both the visitors and the home families. I visited families that ten years later still had pictures and letters from North Americans or Europeans who had stayed in their homes during a volunteer work experience. Home stays in the countryside are logistically more difficult to manage, can be more of a health risk for the volunteers, and require more orientation for host families and visitors alike. They can result in closer interpersonal experiences and also result in a wider community distribution of the resources brought by the group. Care must be taken not to exacerbate socio-economic stratification or village social tensions by lodging visitors exclusively among those families with the more adequate housing. For some visitors home stays may be too intense an experience, provoking extreme culture shock which is difficult to deal with on a short experience.

Transportation Two NGOs own small busses to transport their groups, Three others rent small busses and the remainder use pickup trucks or utility vehicles to transport groups. Several NGOs combine rental and own vehicles for transport. Nicaraguans of the popular

classes generally travel in overcrowded busses or in the back of trucks. NGO officials generally travel in company SUVs, trucks or on motorcycles.

Traveling to a rural location in an air-conditioned tourist bus or SUV is symbolic of the level of consumption that the visitors can be expected to expect. Traveling on urban public transportation is risky for short term visitors because of thievery and on rural public transportation because of infrequency of schedules. Traveling in trucks or busses that also include Nicaraguan passengers and open air audio and visual exposure to the streets and countryside offer a different quality of verisimilitude, a different cultural experience, than air-conditioned vehicles afford. Rides in farm trailers behind tractors or in ox-carts offers even greater immersion experiences at the cost of comfort and convenience.

Food Most groups have catered meals with cooks who are trained in protecting vulnerable North American stomachs. Some NGOs try to include North American menu items, others rely on standard Nicaraguan fare. Sometimes evening, and often weekend meals will be either restaurant or NGO staffed dining hall meals. Rarely do volunteers and Nicaraguan villagers eat together. Even when they eat at the same time and from the same menu they often sit apart so that they can converse effortlessly. Some NGO staff have observed that visitors bring purified water to some villages in which the residents drink contaminated water, without offering purified water to the villagers.

Accessibility All NGOs bring groups to rural communities that meet their limitations of accessibility. Some communities are too remote for even the most ambitious NGOs to access with a group. Some communities are both remote and lack basic services such as drinkable water or sanitary facilities, such as letrines. When a group is visiting for a

week to ten days, it is not generally feasible to spend two or three days to journey back and forth to a rural community, spend two or three days in tourist activities, and then have only two or three days to actually volunteer in the village. Most groups' expressed desires emphasize the volunteer experience itself and would be dissatisfied if more than half their stay was spent in other activities. Many communities lack the social infrastructure to host a group. If the community is small enough they may feel inadequate to care for a group of ten or fifteen foreigners, even with NGO assistance.

Sending Organizations: Visiting groups who are sent by organizations in the United States (churches, universities, civic groups) which have ongoing relationships with the NGOs in Nicaragua have a higher percentage of repeat visitor volunteers and a specific and cumulative resource transfer function. As mentioned previously they often have developed sub-projects that they feel a great deal of ownership in and which visiting volunteers seek to revisit, monitor, and sustain over the years.

There is a tension in NGO management of veteran volunteer vacationers from veteran sending organizations between facilitating their re-establishment of relationships with a Nicaraguan community from a previous year's visit and the current development agenda of the NGO which might require this group's involvement in a community quite remote from the previous village.

If the sending organization has strong ties to the NGO in the United States and is aware of a policy that does not privilege continuing US/Nicaraguan community partnerships then there is usually little overt resistance to going to a new community and not visiting the former community. If, however, the sending organization has sent a volunteer group to the same rural community on more than occasion, if the community

still has obvious and un-addressed development needs, and if the sending organization's delegations have included a strong leadership component then there exists the possibility of the sending organization formally requesting to visit the same community.

Occasionally sending organizations decide to participate in a development project in the known community that requires them to disassociate from the first NGO, associate with another NGO or to form an NGO of their own.

Some sending organizations send groups annually or more often. As mentioned above one university sends three groups annually, one from its student body, one from its faculty and one from its alumni association. Many of them bring up to 40% repeat visitors. Some of them have taken on ongoing responsibilities to the communities that go beyond the basic commitment of the group to participate in volunteer work, at times moving from sectoral assistance (eg. housing) to integral rural development efforts.

Some groups have developed a long term project that they work on annually or even send various groups in the same year. Other organizations take on annual special projects that they fund in their entirety or in coordination with other groups from the United States. My sense is that sending organizations would prefer to develop long-standing relationships with communities and would participate in ongoing rural development projects if the community had the managerial capacity to absorb the assistance. But since it is the NGOs which have the logistical capacity and technical capabilities to manage rural development, sending organizations go where they are requested to go by NGOs, often truncating community to community relationships. It is not unusual for individuals who have relationships with villagers from a prior trip to

come a few days before their current volunteer group arrives or to remain a few days after so that they can travel on their own to the prior community and renew old friendships.

Almost all groups from sending organizations return to the same NGO in Nicaragua, there is very little switching. This client loyalty is recognized by NGOs themselves. One board president of an NGO shared with me that they were trying to expand their number of groups to meet the demand since, as he put it, “once they go to Nicaragua with another organization then we’ve lost them forever.”

Often members of a group who come with one sending organization will, in subsequent years, organize groups from other sending organizations with which they are affiliated, and will come down to participate with the same NGO. One group volunteer who made his first trip to Nicaragua in 2002 and his second in 2003 with a church group from another state had organized his own group at his home church for 2004 and 2005. This kind of growth creates a strong pressure for NGOs to expand their calendars.

Often group members and their sending organizations generate ideas and resources for specific development projects in communities where they have volunteered. Sometimes the proposed projects are inappropriate or unsustainable for the sponsoring NGO. One of the banes of NGOs is dealing diplomatically with an organization or individual that is enthusiastic about starting an initiative that is culturally or technologically unfeasible or unsustainable. Polite refusals must be made without alienating the potential donor. The objective is to work with the enthusiastic volunteer group and steer them toward an achievable objective. Difficulties arise especially when North Americans are unaware of the specific constraints under which projects must operate in Nicaragua. For example, a group might want to install a potable water system

relying on submersible electric pumps and other expensive components without considering the formidable challenges of long term management and maintenance in a rural Nicaraguan context.

When NGOs insist on sticking to their original mission sometimes new NGOs are formed to respond to an additional type of need identified by visiting group members. This results in the interrelated family trees of many of the North American NGOs working in Nicaragua.

Availability of groups generally exceeds hosting capacities. Many NGOs calendars are practically filled with regular annual groups from the same sending organizations and in order to accept new groups the organization will have to expand its logistical capacity to host groups and its programming to have appropriate volunteer opportunities available. One organization that brings large numbers of groups (almost one a week) to Nicaragua, was faced with expanding its operations to meet the demand for destinations for its volunteers. It was anticipating opening a new rural development project site staffed by expatriates and Nicaraguans every year for three to five years primarily to meet increasing demand for placement opportunities for groups.

Rural development NGOs can absorb two groups a month at the same site with the same staff if the groups are only 7 to 10 days in length, and 10 to 20 members in size. Past that point the attrition that happens to the integrity of the program itself is unsustainable. Money is not the only necessary resource to maintain a balanced operation.

Some NGOs are expanding their number of staff and number of sites to host groups. Even though pressure comes from the North to expand the number and size of

the groups accepted, not all of the staff are equally excited about an emphasis that skews the sustainable development focus. One veteran NGO staffer expressed that he was considering leaving the organization that he helped found because the board of directors and the U.S. management were insisting on increasing the number of groups and decreasing the intervals required between groups. He felt like his original commitment had been to the rural residents of one area of Nicaragua and he was being asked to focus his work on the needs of the “gringos” rather than on the peasants. He considered the rate of project generation to be too fast and too donor driven, thus lessening community leadership, participation and ownership of the project. In one village where four workgroups had come in quick succession the local participation dwindled down to nothing.

When volunteers realize that they are working instead of villagers rather than along side villagers their morale drops precipitously and anti-villager sentiments become part of the common discourse. One volunteer group leader noted to me that in past years and in certain locations one national NGO had rules in force that anytime a volunteer group was present to work on a family home’s construction, the family was required to be on the site as well, working along side of them. Recently it appeared that there had been a change, as the organization started working with homeowners in the formal economy, and it permitted the homeowners to continue working their job during the week that the volunteer group was present as long as they hired some laborers to work along side the group. The North American group leader, a veteran of decades of annual volunteer groups, said. “It’s just not the same. People come to meet and get to know the family”.

This points out the personalism that is constituent of civil society solidarity travel. Without personal interaction the solidarity remains an abstract value with less motivating power. Whether personal relationships that become one-sided expressions of grateful dependency are adequate foundations on which to build solidarity is a further question. The fact that volunteers desire the presence of the family often indicates more than just the desire to be personally thanked for their work, although that is a factor.

Some NGOs are turning away group requests, capping the number and frequency of groups to that which they feel is the maximum they can host and still maintain the integrity of their program. That maximum number or frequency possible is often determined after an experience in which it has been exceeded and the NGO has suffered staff burn out, logistical difficulties or community saturation. Stories are legion concerning how NGO staff have collapsed from exhaustion subsequent to the departure of a particularly large or a particularly problematic group.

The most taxing aspect of hosting groups is when the NGO staff have too little recharge time between groups. I was aware of many instances when NGO staff went to the airport to drop off an outgoing group and pick up an incoming group at the same time. NGO staff operating in a Nicaraguan rural context cannot maintain that pace for even one month. The responsibilities that an NGO take on with a group are unrelenting. While the group is in country they are the responsibility of the host organization. Even when they are on tourist excursions they expect the NGO staff to be “on call” in case of any eventuality. To host newcomers in a culture is a formidable task because even the most mundane routines are unfamiliar to visitors and must be either done for them or must be demonstrated and instructions must be repeated seemingly incessantly.

Some NGOs are set up for a slightly greater number of groups than they actually host. Most NGOs like to schedule groups a year in advance, and then adjust when there are cancellations. Regular groups provide many services besides volunteer labor to the NGOs. They are couriers for mail, supplies and tools which are more economically acquired in the United States. They are sources of recent news and media entertainment. And most importantly for the expatriates, they are fellow countrymen who can provide a “stateside” view of current events there.

Groups’ Internal Relationships: In regards to age, groups can be either heterogeneous or homogenous. There are groups that consist primarily of high school or college students. One group has several elder hostels annually. But the vast majority of groups are heterogeneous, with a potential age span from infants to octogenarians.

Some NGOs have regulations against minors participating. Others allow children below a certain age only with a parent or legal guardian. One NGO advertises 14 as the minimum age on its website, but it has admitted younger children accompanied by parents. Since 1999 the median age of group volunteers seems to be getting generally younger.

Some NGO staff believe that high school groups involve too much effort for too little return. They believe that a certain degree of maturity is necessary to appreciate the visit, and that average North American high school age individuals rarely have the conceptual and emotional ability to fully integrate the experience. But the maturity level and social dynamics of adolescent age groups varies tremendously.

Adequate leadership of a high school volunteer vacation group requires that a previously acknowledged and respected authority figure accompany them. Young people

have been sent back to the states early from such groups when serious infractions such as drug use has been detected.

Generally NGOs use US cultural mores and laws as guides in regards to alcohol usage. Substance abuse by young group members has been a significant problem for some NGOs.

The presence of children in a group allows for opportunities for community interaction that might not otherwise occur. Village women and children sometimes become more engaged with the group when a child visits.

Ageism affects volunteer groups in various ways. Nicaraguans often assume much more responsible positions in their society at an earlier age than citizens of the United States and North Americans are often not accustomed to youth who have negotiated life issues that are dealt with only later in adulthood in the North.

Internally groups that include youth and older adults sometimes have difficulties when individuals of either age don't have the skills to relate to those of the other age cohort. Sometimes groups can fissure along age lines, becoming effectively two groups

Most groups are heterogeneous in regards to gender, although females predominate slightly in both membership and leadership of volunteer groups. Sexism and heterosexism are problematic both within groups and in gender relations cross culturally. Sexual tension, flirting and "romantic relationships" can complicate dynamics both within a group and between a group and NGO staff or community residents. Cultural differences in sexual mores are sometimes a topic for group orientation.

Regarding Class most groups are homogeneously middle class as the investment of some \$2000 per person per trip cannot ordinarily be justified in a working class family

budget. Some sending organizations provide scholarships for students or persons of lower income.

Many groups engage in a variety of fundraising events to subsidize their trip. Sometimes these involve post-trip presentations to sponsoring sending organizations.

Some sending organizations are based in church, business or civic groups of affluent areas of the United States. Among the groups that they send are a few high income individuals who could be categorized as upper middle class. Some NGOs recruit group members for certain trips from among “high net worth” individuals and orient the programming with an end to securing substantial donations, in the five or six figure range. Sometimes these trips involve more upscale accommodations than those enjoyed by the non-executive volunteer vacation groups.

In regards to race most groups that have local sending organizations are as racially diverse as those organizations (which in many cases, especially with churches, is very homogeneous). The power dynamics engendered by the cross cultural encounter of the group visit is different for group members of color, who often recognize visiting group and NGO practices as paternalistic more readily than dominant race group members do.

The subject position of volunteer Latinos/as from the United States is more complex than that of non-Latinos/as because linguistic and cultural affinities with Nicaraguans can precipitate more profound identity questioning among Hispanic visitors. The categories of “us” and “them” can blur. Group members who are North Americans of Nicaraguan origin are often deeply affected by the experiences and can cause personal conflict and growth as they confront the class differences between their own families and

that of their Nicaraguan hosts without all the social conventions that usually mediate those differences for Nicaraguans⁹⁸.

Groups' relationship with Nicaragua

Groups relate to Nicaragua primarily (and sometimes exclusively) through the NGO that facilitates their trip. They are exposed almost entirely to individuals, organizations and communities selected by the facilitating NGO. Criteria for selecting what slices of Nicaraguan "reality" to present lies primarily with the facilitating NGO but groups have some influence over their itinerary. More experienced leaders have more influence than neophytes.

NGOs generally provide an orientation that includes socio-historical and cultural elements. Some provide an explicit political and economic orientation as well. Some NGOs avoid political/economic analysis because they understand that both Nicaraguan and United States society is bifurcated into neo-liberal and alternative perspectives on development issues and either don't wish to confront the issue within the group or don't feel competent to present either or both perspectives. Some NGOs prescind from offering social analysis in the belief that it is too "political", meaning partisan. Some NGO staff believe that because they are "non-profit" and "non-governmental" that to protect their legal status they need to be not only non-partisan but also non-political.

Many NGOs receive bi-lateral or multi-lateral funding which counter indicates the wisdom of critiquing policies that originate in those entities. Some NGOs don't consider

⁹⁸ One young man who came to Nicaragua with a volunteer group was a direct descendent of the Somoza family. His presence and the process that ensued around his participation was highly charged but also very educational for all involved, especially him.

it of equal importance to other aspects of their mission with the group and so relegate it to optional status.

Other NGOs see the political/economic analysis as one of their primary roles in facilitating North American citizens' solidarity with Nicaragua. Those NGOs utilize several strategies to heighten group awareness. Many provide and may require pre-arrival orientation readings, audio visual materials, and moderated group discussions. Socio-cultural and historical materials often remain unread by individuals unless there is accountability for group discussion during an orientation session. The tendency is for group orientation meetings to be occupied predominately with logistical topics such as finances, immunizations or flight itineraries and reservations.

Some NGOs seek out presentations by recognized authorities on the current situation in Nicaragua either before departure or on arrival in Managua. NGOs sometimes, but not usually, include testimonies by community leaders concerning local struggles and sometimes their regional, national or global links. Because many of these groups have a religious, philosophical or spiritual tradition in common they often conduct daily group reflection on the causes of poverty in the visited communities. Many of these also ritualize their understanding in meditation, prayer, worship, group readings or drama which integrate their learnings

Social, Political, Historical and Economic Analysis: Some groups and individuals actively seek social, political, and economic analysis from their facilitating NGO or other Nicaraguan hosts. Others do not. Some resist it when offered. In some cases resistance is due to global social analysis too early in the program for visitors to have the personal emotional and cognitive experiences with Nicaraguans which open hearts and minds to

new perspectives. Resistance is minimized where social analysis is not a compartmentalized, one session component of the program but is incorporated into the entire experience, with frequent opportunities for reflection, discussion, and integration. This requires that NGO staff have had opportunities to clarify their own perspectives on these matters.

Individuals and groups often have unexamined political perspectives that never get articulated or analyzed before, during or after the trip⁹⁹. Such individuals and groups focus primarily on the concrete physical or relational tasks at hand. Their understanding of Nicaraguas' problems and possibilities is circumscribed by the practice of the facilitating NGO. Individuals in these groups tend to prioritize "doing" over "learning" when describing their trip objectives.

These volunteers in groups that don't engage in social analysis have various explanations for the poverty that they witness in Nicaragua. Some attribute it to chance, some people are lucky and others are not. Others believe it is a lack of technology. Others believe that low levels of education is the root of Nicaraguan poverty. Some ascribe it to individual or cultural lack of ambition or willingness to work. Some volunteer vacationers conclude that Nicaraguans are basically content in spite of their poverty and would rather be left as they are, as they have chosen to be. Some blame poverty on God and say that North Americans are blessed by God and Central Americans, in general are not.

Some who have read history attribute Nicaraguan poverty on foreign aggression and hegemony from former colonial powers and/or the United States. Others locate the

⁹⁹ Often these unproblematic presuppositions are similar within a group and correspond to those of the sending organization.

problem within the nation state in internal political or military strife or corruption in Nicaraguan society, especially the government.

Social analysis which links Nicaraguan poverty to global power dynamics that advantage transnational corporations causes cognitive and emotional dissonance among group members because it differs from the dominant “free market” discourse present in both countries. One hour orientation sessions by external social analysts have significant but limited effects on visitors’ pre-existing notions of global economics. It should not be assumed that all first time visitors have not engaged in social analysis prior to arrival in other venues.

Some NGOs try to facilitate critical thinking by exposing visitors to contrasting social analyses (eg. world social forum fair trade analysis vs. neo-liberal free trade analysis) which sparks more intense focus on the global issues. Critical social analysis is most effectively facilitated when NGO staff themselves allude to global structural contexts for their visitors’ daily experiences of Nicaraguan poverty.

Summary

For many civil society is based on a social contract, a similar contract to that which constitutes the State and the market. But many, in Nicaragua and elsewhere, do not experience their relationship to the institutions that give form to their social existence as a contractual one. Rather their primary subject position is one of contention, of a struggle from below to ascend to a level of dignified lifestyle commonly recognized as the entitlement of a citizen, a producer, and a social agent.

For rural residents of Nicaragua and those foreigners who come to visit and live with them non-governmental organizations are the locus of social power. NGOs are present but whose interests do they represent? Are they essential instruments of neo-

liberal hegemony or harbingers of a gentler, kinder world? Are they about the distribution of wealth or its concentration? Do they believe in the discourse of democracy or their own practice of corporatism? Do they construct their stakeholders as citizens or as consumers? Do they champion economic growth or sustainability?

NGOs in Nicaragua are poised to wield policies and practices of both resistance and accommodation. They work among the popular classes yet they derive their funding from elites. They originate in one nation but exist in multiple. They depend on the market but embody an alternative to the market. As an organizational form they can perform dual functionality of conservation and confrontation.

NGOs are structurally critical actors in Nicaraguan rural development. They deploy greater resources than the state in many rural areas of Nicaragua., distributing more than 2/3rds of the foreign aid. Their economic activities constitute fully a quarter of the domestic economy. They reach rural communities and populations that would otherwise have no help from outside. They operate in a generally inclusive way and remain through political and economic changes. Their practice of bringing foreign citizens into rural and urban environments of the popular classes is engendering a new transnational social movement.

NGOs operate in Nicaragua under significant constraints. Their strongest organizational links are to their home offices in the United States, Europe or in Managua. They do not maintain strong linkages with the state at the national or local level, nor do they coordinate with their fellow NGOs at the national or local level. NGO policies are strongly affected by what their donor's will fund, including what visiting groups will support. Even though NGOs engage in practices to benefit the subalterns who are

participants in their programs, their clients rarely have much influence in policy and program formulation. Hence NGOs are not community based organizations in that sense. Nor do they usually have articulated philosophies and policies of community development.

NGOs that operate by means of groups of foreign volunteers find that there are significant material, organizational and moral rewards that accrue both to the NGO itself and to the villages where the volunteers work. On the other hand there are considerable financial and personnel costs involved in hosting groups. Sometimes the programming priority of hosting groups can compete with the programming objective of doing sustainable integral development. Risks such as illness or injury of visitors, paternalism and dependency in the communities, and staff “burnout” are constant matters of concern.

NGOs that intend to facilitate long-term bonds of solidarity between North Americans and Nicaraguans understand the process of solidarity formation and structure their programming to that end. First they ensure that there are opportunities for visitor/villager interaction and inter-relationships. Second, they prioritize social analysis of the cultural reality of rural Nicaragua. Social analysis is made an aspect of many different components of the NGO’s volunteer group itinerary. This analysis is brought together by the end of the volunteering experience by articulating why and how Nicaraguans and North Americans have common cause. They understand that solidarity formation happens over time and do not try to accomplish it all in one volunteer experience.

Nicaraguan NGOs engage in disaster relief and assistance, in sustainable development and in solidarity formation. The three different processes are related but not

identical. Those NGOs that see solidarity as the priority objective must make clear choices about development models, about linkages to social movements, about finding ways of accommodating and resisting neo-liberal economic policies that oppress the popular social classes. Meanwhile such visionary organizations acknowledge that effective resistance involves understanding the rules, the *habitus* of neo-liberalism, and making new rules as the interests of the popular classes require it.

CHAPTER 6 THE ENCOUNTER

The struggle to forge transcultural solidarity is formidable and fraught with risks of diversion into altruism or institutional self-service. The following pages layout in three elements the encounter among a volunteer group, a village and the NGO intermediary that brokers the encounter. First I show the institutionalization of service and solidarity by the formation of an NGO for the express purpose of bringing North Americans to volunteer in rural Nicaragua. It is an organization that continually seeks to balance the objective of personal transformation of North Americans toward altruism and solidarity with the rural development of Nicaraguan communities. The discourse and practices of this NGO will show how both altruism and solidarity are embedded in, and compete for, the institutional *habitus* of Global Partners.

Second, I describe the individuals that come to volunteer and their daily regimen. They explain their reasons for participating and their aspirations. The cultural tension between altruism and solidarity, between coloniality and intersubjectivity, evident in the NGO discourse also manifests itself in the consciousness of individual volunteers. Their responses give an idea of the variety of visitor motives and a sense of how increased exposure to volunteering in Nicaragua over time is a vehicle for potentially deeper transcultural awareness.

Finally, I describe the host communities in rural Nicaragua and the perceptions of their most active citizens concerning the impact of the visitors on their villages. Their assessment of the material and organizational importance of the NGOs in their village

contrasts with their critique of the uni-directionality and non-consultative dynamics of modes of communication. Clearly, personalism is a necessary but insufficient condition for fostering dialogue and solidarity. Community/NGO consensus-building is essential.

What becomes clearer as we examine the data at close range is the centrality of the NGO for determining the general quality of the experience for visitors and villagers alike; and the complexity of the life trajectories that are inflected during these encounters. Theoretically it provides clues to the formation of transcultural solidarity between middle class North Americans and rural Nicaraguans, as they both struggle to clarify, in their discourse and practices, the distinctions between charity and justice, altruism and solidarity, development and counter-development, a past characterized by coloniality and a future characterized by greater equity.

The NGO: Global Partners

Mission

We've always had two objectives. One was to try to create a life changing experience for the North American Volunteer. We've never apologized for that. That comes out of my conviction that the average North American citizen is unaware and uninformed. ... Democracy doesn't work if you don't have an educated and an engaged populace. The same thing holds for global citizenship. The other objective was to identify communities who had real needs and concrete hopes and dreams. We looked for communities that were organized or somewhat organized with internal leadership. We started building schools, wells, wash houses, clinics, and community centers (Ray Krause – founder and executive director of Global Partners)

In one six-month period in 2002-2003 Global Partners was scheduled to bring twenty seven groups from North America to Nicaragua. Colleges and universities, including five medical schools sent thirteen of those groups, and two were from high schools. Churches sent nine groups. Three groups were open to the general public.

Twenty-two of the groups were engaged in construction projects and five provided medical care.

Founders and Evolution

Ray Krause came straight from seminary in 1987 with ideals of working with subaltern populations and paradoxically got a job in a “country club” church in suburban Westchester County that sought “hands-on mission outreach.” He was interested in transformation of people, and short-term mission trips proved an effective means to that end. “You don’t see people coming out of church on Sunday morning thinking that they’re going to rearrange how they see or engage with the world. But, honest to God, I saw it on these trips, even if it was only in the moment.”

Krause organized church trips to work with the homeless in NYC, with Habitat for Humanity, trips to Appalachia, Mississippi, and Mexico. “I came out of five years of watching people have those immersion experiences and I knew what was happening was very real because people were asking existential questions like “Who am I? And “What do I believe? What is life really all about? What is happiness and why does it seem to be tied to truncated definitions of success?”

In 1992 he made a trip to rural Nicaragua with Dick Williams, a fellow Presbyterian minister, who was working with tenant organizing in Yonkers. They arrived under the auspices of *El Mantial*, a transnational NGO based in California that funds and provides technical assistance for rural potable water systems in Nicaragua. There he met *El Mantial* staff member, and bi-cultural former foreign affairs official in the Sandinista administration, Felix Cortez. The trip “was a wonderful and intense experience.” Less than a year after his first trip to Nicaragua, Williams had resigned from his pastor's position, gone for language training and enlisted a board of directors consisting of four

Presbyterian ministers. He then made arrangements with Williams who went down to live in rural Nicaragua, and Cortez who had contacts with organizations and communities throughout Nicaragua, to bring down six groups of North Americans in Global Partners's (Partners) first year, 1993.

In 1999 they were bringing 250 to 300 people a year to Nicaragua in 8 to 10 groups. Their biggest brigade consisted of thirty-five students and faculty who came from Depaul University for three weeks to work at URACCAN¹⁰⁰ in Siuna. Colleges and universities along with churches have become their most frequent sending organizations. Most groups do construction but some do medical work instead. In fall of each year the board of directors sends representatives to Nicaragua for the annual program evaluation.

In the early days volunteer brigades were housed in family homes, classrooms or tents. Now the presence of groups is so frequent that a dormitory, complete with kitchen and bathroom facilities has been constructed to house them at their Masaya location. By 1999 they had brought about a thousand people down, 20% of whom were repeat visitors. In that post-Mitch era Partners began to engage in construction of single family homes.

Partners works as independently from local political authorities as most NGOs in some of the locations where it works, but in others it works closely with the local government. A past *alcaldesa* of Teustepe said

Now we have Global Partners here with Dick Williams, but they operate independently of city hall. They do projects and even invite us to the dedication, but it is different when it is their project, rather than a project of city hall which

¹⁰⁰ University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast

they fund. We, the government, do not own and run such projects, and this weakens the authority of the local government.¹⁰¹

When I asked Williams if he worked closely with the municipality in their planning and implementation of rural development projects he simply replied, “What for?” On the other hand, in other communities Partners works very closely with municipal authorities, even having them generate lists of potential program beneficiaries. Cortez observed that relating to the municipality was the local (village) community’s job and not Partners’ job. Yet it is Cortez’s project that works most directly with the *alcaldia*. There is no formal structure of authority sanctioned by the national government in the seven thousand villages of the country. Local authority may be informal in character with no official standing with the municipal authorities, or it may be appointed by the *alcalde*. In one of the villages a local development committee requested the services of a European expatriate NGO director to plead their case for them at the *alcaldia* because they felt he had more political leverage.

Whereas relations between NGOs and local governments during the Sandinista epoch were not necessarily close, they were often respectful and characterized by non interference on the part of the government toward the NGO mission. During the 90s those relationships deteriorated generally in the countryside as the NGOs experienced less and less government services for the populace, with consequent popular pressure on the NGOs to become social service agencies(MacDonald 1995).

¹⁰¹ National Director of Foreign Relations for the para-statal Institute for Municipal Development, INIFOM, explained that after the 1990 elections, 90% of the FSLN mayors lost. When they left office many took the files that pertained to international solidarity to redirect those relationships towards NGOs they were organizing. This resulted in a nationwide debilitation of the power of municipalities.

The Building of a School in Las Barancas:

A 1999 visit to one of the Partners sites after the organization had left revealed several important points about its pattern of insertion into the local communities. Over an eight-month period in 1997 and 1998 four short-term volunteer brigades built a one-room school in Las Barancas, a village of 40 families twelve kilometers down a paved road from the *municipio* of Teustepe. According to the account given to me by the local teacher two years later, North Americans did every bit of the construction work even to the painting of murals on the outside walls.¹⁰²

The village played a support role allowing the volunteers to sleep on the floor of the small common building and many of the women washed clothes for them. Each group stayed in the village about a week. The first group, the largest, laid out the building and dug and poured the foundation. The second group of 12 to 15 volunteers laid up the brick walls several months later. A third brigade of seven people put on the tin roof and poured a concrete floor. The final group consisted of three mural painters. Dick Williams came to live in the community during the last phase. According to the teacher lack of popular participation in the construction of the school was due to a conflict between the construction schedule and the agricultural cycle.

A sister school in the United States donated children's books in Spanish, but anticipated on-going support from them had not been forthcoming according to the village teacher. The latrine was not finished so the children had to go home to go to the

¹⁰² My findings of lack of community involvement based primarily on interview data with the local teacher in 1999, directly conflict with ethnographic field data attributed to the same informant found in a 2002 internal evaluation of Partners' Nicaraguan projects.

bathroom and three plastic skylights had rotted out causing major roof leaks when it rains. The teachers' letter to his counterpart in the sister school had not been answered.

The building of the school was a meaningful experience for the residents because these volunteers were the first foreigners to come to the village. The residents were surprised that North Americans did physical labor. A Nicaraguan Partners staff member observed, "People here meet people that they see on TV and realize that they are much more human and similar to us than they are portrayed on TV." One community member related how festive the school dedication had been when Partners had supplied a hog to be roasted and people came from miles around.

According to the teacher it was crucial that the North Americans brought building materials which the village lacked directly to the village rather than letting the government siphon off a percentage. The Ministry of Education supports the school solely by paying the teachers' salary , fifty five dollars a month, and supplying textbooks for the classroom. Seven written requests to the Ministry over a two-year period asking for three pieces of sheet metal roofing had not even been acknowledged. The teacher had fifty three students in six grades in the new one room schoolhouse. If attendance falls below 40 students the government will close the school. The teacher was convinced that no NGO would be willing to come to his own home village, a two hour walk away, because there was no road to it.

Because, as Williams said, "We don't go looking for work projects, they come to us," organized communities get more assistance. Projects are sited partially based on village leadership capabilities. One village has had seven or eight projects over six years

including a school, a well, a church, a communal wash-house, a windmill to pump water from the well and to generate light for the church.

A school and other infrastructure such as potable water and washing facilities are of long term material and social consequence for a village. One villager compared hosting a Partners group to winning the national lottery. But not all Partners interventions are successful, especially those that are culturally more complicated.

During the 1990s Partners lent money to agricultural cooperatives in the Teustepe region and lost their investment when the cooperatives decided they didn't have to repay it. Those cooperatives eventually folded from lack of external support and internal management. Management weaknesses compounded the unfavorable agricultural credit policies of the government under structural adjustment and the complete disappearance of its development bank, BANADES, in 2000.

A local Partners coordinator claims that

when the community draws back from participating in the work, so do we, until they're ready to begin participating again. We experience the sacrifice that the volunteers make to come here and work. It is an example to the community. I tell them, "these people have spent a lot of their personal money and vacation time to come down here and be with you, you should be appreciative."

Officially they follow the principle that the communities are the primary agents of the work. My side trip to Las Barrancas had caused me to doubt Largaespada's assertion that Partners only works on development projects when the community itself is actively participating. My concerns about the incongruency of institutional rhetoric and practice concerning this issue were to deepen in the coming years.

By the time I had returned to Nicaragua, three and a half years later, Partners had grown exponentially. Partners in 2003 was an institutional example of how a successful idea can start small and scale up. Instead of the nine groups Partners brought South in

1999, and the twenty that they brought in 2001, now there were forty groups coming to three sites.

An urban youth center was completed in Puerto Cabezas/Bilwi. The last work group had gone there in 2001. Even though there had been two years of research and negotiations before the project was begun, the three way politics between a Presbytery in the United States, the local Moravian authorities in Bilwi and Partners as an intermediary were not sustainable. A large youth center was built and locally staffed, but financial management issues complicated by the distrust between *Costeños* and *Españoles*¹⁰³ and *Costeños* distrust of central government authority escalated to physical threats against Partners staff in Bilwi. As in the case of the cooperatives, historical cultural realities and rivalries derailed the best-laid plans.

Two of Partners stalwart short term volunteers, Presbyterian ministers from the Pittsburg area, Bruce and Jane Garrett, got tired of spending time on airplanes after their fifteenth short term trip to Nicaragua in seven years and decided it was more feasible just to stay. In 2000 they moved into a house in Masaya and proceeded to help finish up a post-Mitch relocation project of 39 houses in Nandaime, which also included some micro-enterprise development as the project involved moving rural families to an urban setting. The Garretts had been hired by Partners to help expand the Nicaraguan operation but they did not expect plate tectonics to become one of the factors influencing the nature of Partners' growth.

¹⁰³ *Costeños* is a term used by Nicaraguans to designate people who live on the Atlantic side of the country and *Españoles* is a term, used by *Costeños* with an Anglo affinity to designate people from the Pacific side.

Disaster and Development

At 6:19 PM on the 7th of July, 2000 “the ground rolled visibly up and down and to the side like waves on a lake during a storm” as the earth under the villages north of Masaya were shaken with a force not seen in Nicaragua since the destruction of Managua in 1972. The seismic activity began ten kilometers underneath the hill known as Coyotepe on the North side of the city of Masaya, when the Los Cocos tectonic plate shifted under the edge of the Carribbean Plate. The trees shook, the fruit fell to the ground, the animals scattered and the people fled . The devastation to structures in some communities, like Las Cruces, was nearly total.



Figure 6-1 Plastic shelters still in use three months after the earthquake, note date in lower right corner.

In the following days and weeks various agencies arrived with emergency aid; at first with rolls of black plastic as shelter from the elements, and later with construction materials for new houses. Save the People was there first because they had already been working in the communities for several years before the earthquake. Within days two more NGOs arrived. Europeans without Borders, an Italian¹⁰⁴ NGO with Central American offices in Managua, arrived with a team to do damage assessment and develop an assistance program financed by the Italian government, the UN and EU disaster funds. Global Partners had arrived even sooner, immediately after their night watchman had informed them that he had been late for work because his home had been destroyed. Actually his entire village had been destroyed. The *Municipio* of Masaya or the Liberal Party, depending on how you construct the organization, arrived later, as did the Catholic Archdiocese of Managua's social service program, CARIDAD.

All of the above mentioned organizations began their work in the community by constructing provisional or permanent replacement houses.

Each organization had its own house design and a distinctive financing and "sweat equity" arrangement with the beneficiaries. Coordination among the relief agencies became essential to ensure that multiple houses were not built for the same families. Extended families often came to have houses supplied by three or four different organizations within the family compound, each housing a nuclear family. Partners built a 30 square meter house which cost about \$2000, including skilled labor.

¹⁰⁴ Europeans without Borders, sometimes was simply referred to by villagers as "Los Italianos" (the Italians) even though only the regional director in Managua, was an Italian. Likewise Global Partners was often referred to as "Los Gringos", as the Garretts were in the communities daily and brought hundreds of North Americans to the village. Save the People, because it had no North American staff in Nicaragua, even though it is a U.S. based transnational NGO, escaped nationalization in the village discourse.



Figure 6-2 A “Partners” house, one of the permanent rebuilding designs

Homeowners paid \$865 of that cost over seven years at ten dollars per month, which helped finance the construction of future homes. Partners homes required more financial investment than other housing plans, and their building rate was slower but continuous.¹⁰⁵

Starting in the hardest hit communities they eventually expanded their coverage area to include eight contiguous villages north of Masaya. After building 27 homes in the most drastically affected and most populous village, *Las Cruces*, they decided to distribute their impact more gradually and evenly by rotating to a different village after ten homes had been built in the prior village. Each village was encouraged to meet, and select a coordinator who would compile the village census information and a list of the

¹⁰⁵ \$2000 represents the direct costs of materials and labor. Solicitations to donors between years 2000 and 2004 designated \$2500 as the donation amount, recently rising to \$3500.

ten most appropriate home recipients based on need. In more than one instance the Garretts and their Nicaraguan team mate, Victor Quintana, after having made home inspections in the community, judged that extraneous considerations had influenced the selection of candidate families. In such an instance they would return the list to the coordinator and request that it be reconfigured to include the most needy and not just the better connected. If the list was not reconstituted based on need as determined by the Partners's staff, then Partners would skip that village and go to the next one for the proximate ten houses, to return eighteen months later when the cycle had come back around.

Within days the Garretts had personally raised the money through personal appeals to rebuild their employee's house and begin to construct others. They had built 8 homes with ancillary funds by the time Ray Krause arrived for his annual visit in October. Subsequently earthquake residential reconstruction and later general housing improvement and new construction became the primary focus of the Partners Masaya program. By 2003 the Masaya housing program could no longer be considered a disaster relief program. Materially and socially it was now a rural housing development program with long range goals of infrastructure improvement.¹⁰⁶ In the minds of Partners leadership they were building for individual families that needed housing, a need that was more acute after the earthquake when people were living under sheets of black plastic, but was equally critical for large families living in one room dirt floor shacks made out of

¹⁰⁶ The first houses were for employees including the building crew, and early on the construction began to be focused on poverty housing not on earthquake damage. This is logical due to the slow rate of Partners construction compared to the immediate investment of relief funds by larger NGOs.

sticks and flattened oil drums. This was not urban planning. It was sheltering the populace one family at a time.

Transitioning from relief to development



Figure 6-3. Volunteers and Nicaraguan Crew building in rural Masaya.

By the time I arrived in February of 2003 they had completed 86 homes. When I left near the end of 2004 they had completed 150 and at this writing they have completed more than 206 in the villages north of Masaya and 100 in neighboring Ticuantepe.

There is an organizational commitment to build at least one house per week in Masaya, as well as a Friends of Masaya Fund that encourages individuals or groups to donate the funds to build a house. Many of the Friends of Masaya are members of

volunteer groups who come down to participate in the building of the homes¹⁰⁷. The Business Leaders groups, encourage each of its members to individually donate the funds for a house with each trip. Partners' website features photographs of these businessmen with the families that received houses financed by their personal donations. Three of those groups a year generate another thirty or forty homes. The twenty some groups arriving annually in Masaya are helping, both by their \$975 per person fee and also by the myriad of different fundraising connections that arise from the trip, to generate the general revenue of one and a half million dollars that keeps the Nicaraguan operation solvent.

Of the non-governmental organizations that arrived to rebuild the villages after the earthquake, three remained to work long term. Europeans without Borders, Global Partners, and Save the People.¹⁰⁸ All three were active in the area during our field work and indicated plans for continuing in the villages for the foreseeable future.

In 2003 and 2004 there were four NGOs involved in community development in the eight villages north of Masaya. These NGOs did not coordinate regularly with one another concerning their development or construction programs. They did occasionally, but not regularly, send communications informing each other of some of their immediate intentions. Usually information was transferred informally, by means of villagers.

¹⁰⁷ Not all "Friends of Masaya" have been or intend to come to Nicaragua. Bruce Garrett relates the story of an octegenarian who, after one of the Garretts' presentations at a Church during their annual September speaking tour in the States, lamented his inability to participate personally in one of the trips and wrote out a check to cover the cost of two houses.

¹⁰⁸ Save the People's community insertion policy is unique in that they will not enter a village where other NGOs are already present since they consider their mission as integral rural development. However there is no policy guideline which explains what they will do when other NGOs enter villages where they have been working, with duplicate types of services. Such as was the case in Masaya.

The Garretts stated that given all their other duties, they couldn't find time to meet or coordinate with the other NGOs in the villages. They knew who the other organizations were generally, except for the social movement, Movimiento Communal, but they were not sure about what they did in the community. They were interested in talking to Mastriano, the director of Europeans without Borders, because he was interested in building some administrative infrastructure in *Las Cruces* and thought that they might coordinate something with him. But eventually both NGOs decided to build separate facilities.

Occasionally the disaster coordination committee of six individuals that had been appointed immediately after the earthquake would re-convene as an ad hoc community development committee to review a request from an individual NGO, but neither the committee nor the NGOs considered it a forum for formal coordination of development efforts. Interview and survey data indicate that community leaders felt the lack of coordination. None of them perceived themselves as having the authority to require such coordination and the NGOs themselves did not perceive advantages to coordinating their ongoing efforts¹⁰⁹.

In an area of eight villages development initiatives were being managed by six separate and independent entities, without civil or governmental planning, monitoring, or evaluation (Briones 2004). Lack of oversight allows NGOs to deliver goods and services below the bureaucratic radar that requires its *ex officio* "administrative fees." It also allows NGOs to work in a manner less hampered by partisan politics of the locality.

¹⁰⁹ In one interview Partners Masaya staff indicated that they were not aware of what the other NGOs were doing in the communities where they worked nor were they aware of what the other Partners projects were doing in the other three locations where they worked. But in other conversations they opined about what other local NGOs or other Partners staff were doing.

Development without democracy

Lack of state oversight enables NGOs to work in rural areas with almost total lack of public accountability. Apart from an initial community assembly to publicize their program and enlist participants, NGOs rarely provided mechanisms for civic input. Although regulations in Nicaragua, resembling those in the U. S., state that NGOs financial statements and development budgets are to be open to public scrutiny by interested citizens, no formal mechanisms exist in the local communities for complying with that civic responsibility. Rural residents of Nicaragua feel even less rights to examine NGO operations and expenditures than they do asking their own government to be accountable to them. This is especially true where the NGO is transnational in nature. It is well known in the community that NGO program funds come from foreign civil society or foreign government assistance grants. Often times administrative documentation of NGO programs and policies is recorded in a language other than Spanish and denominated in currencies other than the cordoba.

The *habitus* for rural Nicaraguans of how to interact with rural development NGOs includes elements learned from the clientelism of populist politics and rarely includes democratic structures of accountability. Among the NGOs working in the villages north of Masaya only Save the People had incorporated democratic policies into its corporate governance at the village and area level. Its governance at the PDA (Program Development Area) level of 15 villages or communities was weilded by a council comprised of an elected representative of each of the communities. However, at the national level, Save the People Nicaragua had experienced difficulties with PDAs that sought to succede from the organization, taking all corporate assetts, such as buildings and vehicles, with them. This prompted the organization to rethink its approach to rural

development in a way that would preserve democratic values and yet retain some fiduciary responsibility for donated assets through the national organization.

The national organization is an affiliate of the transnational organization, based in California. Because of Save the People's size at the national and global scale, attempts to articulate a more democratic development model hold great import for transnational civil society organizations in general. Most NGOs do not engage the issue of democratic corporate governance by various stakeholders, and instead rely on the central board of directors, elected from an annual general assembly or mailed ballots to a membership list, consisting primarily of donors and volunteers.

Whereas many community activists are emboldened to request more accountability from a government that is delivering ever diminishing quantities of services to its citizens, they are less inclined to look a gift horse in the mouth when it comes to NGOs that render tangible services to the community or some sub-group within it. Often times the program beneficiaries and the local employees of the NGO will exert enough political influence to dissipate any community demands for accountability. And the citizenship rights training that some NGOs sponsor in their efforts to foment democracy rarely include rights *vis a vis* civil society organizations (Biekart 1999). The transparency that donors and boards of directors are concerned about is not primarily to rural communities, but rather to themselves and their public in donor countries.

Transparency and accountability require expenditures of time, effort and political finesse on the part of any NGO that wants to maintain both program momentum and community input into its operation. As one NGO official told me. "I can't operate if I have to justify the amount of every transaction to a whole community. If José, down the

street, sees that we are buying 10,000 blocks at such and such a price, and his brother makes blocks, I will never hear the end of it. He will want to know why I didn't get his brother to sell us the blocks. And that dynamic will potentially occur multiple times for every item we purchase every time we purchase it." Herein lies a structural dilemma for NGOs, private entities are more efficient than those that must submit every decision to public scrutiny, but they are less institutionally accountable. In this sense NGO partnership with any population in its service area is limited. Solidarity with folks is vitiated by the fact that their voices are welcomed in some organizational forums and not others¹¹⁰.

Growth and diversification

The board of directors of Partners was intending to open a new program site in Nicaragua every year for the next several years in order to meet increasing demand and to accommodate groups from new sending organizations. One of Partner's board members indicated that there was need to respond to increasing demand for trips or else other transnational NGOs based in the United States would become the volunteer vacation host and those sending organizations, their groups, and their individual volunteers would be "lost" to Partners forever. He rightly perceived that institutional networks, once established, tend to endure, and that the one-third of all volunteers that become repeat visitors almost invariably return with their original NGO host.

It is this intensifying mutual investment of social capital between the NGO intermediary and the sending organizations that constitutes much of the dynamism and

¹¹ One organization which brings groups to Nicaragua, split from its transnational parent organization when the transnational based in the United States indicated that, since funds were coming from the United States, then board members should be from there as well.

growth not just in the size but in the diversity of volunteer opportunities that continue to proliferate. An NGO such as Partners, that begins building rural community infrastructure such as wells and schools and wash houses gets involved in building churches, computer labs, and university radio stations. One which begins on the Pacific side of the country soon finds itself in the separate culture of the Atlantic side. NGOs that came to do disaster relief find that they have stayed for decades and are involved in long-term integral rural development.

Partners has gone through just such a metamorphosis, experimenting with a variety of volunteer opportunities, a great diversity of sending organizations, and with a variety of commitments to local communities, from building one piece of infrastructure such as a community center or health clinic, to committing to eliminate substandard housing from an entire rural region of multiple communities. Partners worked an ongoing relationship with a regional Nicaraguan university which resulted in volunteer projects on each of five geographically disperse campuses. Disaster relief efforts led them into residential construction, an effort which now consumes the vast majority of their resources and provides volunteer sites for the majority of their visitors.

Regarding imaginaries of place, Partners speaks of Nicaragua (not the three significantly different local project sites) as the destination in its literature,. Differences that are noted discursively among the sites are based on programmatic differences internal to the NGO such as the number of houses built, or types of volunteer work to be accomplished. There is little differentiation based on indigenous factors such as attributes of the host communities, differences in the NGO's relationship to the local government or civil society authorities, local history, politics and economics, etc.

It is clear that Partners has an affinity for Nicaragua as a nation and Nicaraguans as nationals. What is not so clear, until one arrives at a site, is Partners' particular relationship to communities. The orientation of the groups to the Masaya homebuilding project includes an emphasis on the unique "fit" between the rural culture of Nicaraguan villagers, the dire need for housing, the resources that every group brings, the hospitality of the particular host community, the strong Nicaraguan family structure, and the outstanding contributions of the particular Nicaraguan construction team.

Personalism

The dynamic of personalism that permeates the Masaya project of Partners is influenced strongly by Bruce and Jane Garrett and Victor Quintana. The three initiate, maintain and strengthen all their professional relationships and social networks in a highly personal style. People are addressed by name, in some cases names of respect with appropriate titles, and at other times using familiar and intimate nicknames, but always by name. The caring personas of the Partners staff may be one of the most important keys to the effectiveness of their work in the community. While Partners has policies and procedures, people always come first. People who relate to Partners do not have to feel apologetic or to beg permission to voice a request which is out of the ordinary or the routine. Partially because the routine varies according to the the inclinations and intuitions of the project triumvirate, and partially because personalism is such a prominent value. People and families are considered in their complexity and not just as functional categories. Personal tragedies and triumphs are acknowledged by the Partners team in such a way as to encourage interaction. Even the way they drive their vehicles through the communities, at a moderate rate of speed with windows down and oriented toward the outside, contrasts with the practice of other NGO drivers that fly

through the community at higher rates of speed with windows up, not inviting interaction with local passers by. Villagers rarely refer to Partners as an organization, rather their appreciation for services rendered and their requests for attention are always articulated in terms of Bruce, Jane and Victor.

The sense of time that is conveyed by the casual manner in which Partners staff engage with community members fosters the *habitus* of an organization that values relationship over structure and uniqueness over numbers. I once asked Bruce Garrett how he felt about completing the one hundredth house in Masaya, assuming in my mind that such a benchmark would have some personal and institutional significance. Jim's reply however was to act a little surprised that it actually was the one hundredth house and then to non-chalantly state that it was just like any other. That it mattered totally for the family that was being housed, but it was just one more for him and the crew. It was of priceless unique significance and simultaneously of no aggregate significance.

He told of teasing a young mother about selling her young child to him. She laughed and said, "He's not for sale." He replied, "But if he was for sale, how much would you ask for him?" She smiled and retorted "One million dollars!" Bruce said, "This house will house a family which is priceless." In his view whether it was the first house, the one hundredth house, or the one hundred thousandth house was insignificant in the scheme of things, since each one was priceless, unique and complete. In this sense Jim's understanding of his work had little to do with community building *per se*. It was all about persons, individual human beings. Each house also signified another week that he and Jane could be in relationship with the people of the villages. Without meaningful employment such a privilege would have been impossible.

Bruce and Jane Garrett's radical personalism and even individualism, undoubtedly reinforced by nightly readings from the Christian existentialism of Soren Kierkegaard whose writings they keep on their nightstand, help construct a local *habitus* for Partners that individual persons matter. More corporate or political considerations obfuscate the truth rather than clarify it. Kierkegaard's "The crowd is untruth"(Kierkegaard 1859) cited in (Kaufmann 1966) frames a unique perspective for strategic planning and a radical interpersonal ethic that individualizes justice. Kierkegaard's sensitivity to the plight of the poor is clear, but subject agency to redress it is, to him, a solitary enterprise. Politics requires crowds and it is within the crowd that Kierkegaard sees authenticity dissipating into popularity.

To love one's neighbor (everyman) is to believe in human equality and solidarity. To love the crowd, in contrast, is according to Kierkegaard to seek material and political power, and hence to slip into selfishness. The communicator of truth can only be a single individual. According to Kierkegaard one can, in the last analysis, only be in solidarity with a person, not a community or a social class. Not a crowd.

The *habitus* of Partners in Masaya reflects belief in personalism as it adjusts the rules to fit the person. It is the passion and feeling that motivates, the intuition as much as the *ratio* that guides decisions. When describing communities where they work Bruce and Jane use phrases such as "The people are so nice there." or "They are hardworking, industrious and eager to learn." The terms are all relational, motivational, and personal.

When relating stories of how Partners chose to go into one village or another Jane tells of someone who approached them several times asking them to come to his community as well. After a process of repeated requests, and getting to know the

supplicant, the staff agreed to send a representative to meet with the community. This organization evolves through social networks within material parameters. Not according to five year plans. The *campesinos* know and often appreciate this quality.

Since clientilism is, in Nicaragua, a traditional colonial and neo-colonial mode of interface between individuals of different social classes. It is a culturally familiar dynamic with which to navigate the treacherous waters of post-colonial neo-liberalism. Partners Masaya has proven, in the eyes of several village leaders, to be “flexible,” meaning open to negotiating the satisfaction of mutual needs, without a burdensome and complex bureaucracy or sacrosanct protocols. Other community leaders, those with more “formality,” who value more structure, predictability, and documentation, are less satisfied with a seemingly clientilistic leadership dynamic and lack of public forums for input.

The revolution has trained an entire cohort of leadership who have been formalized by the deployment of modern educational technologies and goals among the *campesinos* and workers. Concomittant with that training was inculcated a nationalism and a conviction of the rights of citizenship. Citizens are more than subjects. They require accountability of society’s institutions toward its citizenry. NGOs who operate in areas with revolutionary trained leadership cannot operate in the same way as in areas without it. It is evident that Partners and other NGOs are ambivalent about dealing with such “formal” people¹¹¹.

¹¹¹ Stepputat (1997) found NGOs “formalizing” the peasants of Guatemala, conferring the skills and values of modernization. I find village leaders formalized by revolutionary mass organization training to be modernizers, but also sources of discursive resistance to unfettered NGO hegemony. Their resistance, unlike that of indigenous leaders, has more to do with the exclusivity of NGO decision making and the citizenry’s lack of voice, than with substantive differences over modernities.

On the one hand these organic intellectuals have the capacity to interface with NGO and state technologies of governance. On the other hand they have a self-confidence which enables them to resist, more directly, NGO designs which they deem disadvantageous to themselves or the community. They are more fluent in development discourse and hence can speak in public forums. Like the *campesino* who, when an NGO executive was berating him for working for another organization, declared that his first loyalty was to the village, and that therefore any NGO which was of benefit to the village would get his active assistance.

Sense of Place

Partners sense of place is transnational. New York is the base, the United States is the sending country, Nicaragua is the receiving country and Masaya, (or Ticuantepe or Siuna) is the site of life changing experiences for the visitors and life style improvements for the villagers. The metaphor of partners, which is incorporated into the name of the organization, signifies a trans-local mission which transports people from North America to Nicaragua and back again. The return trip is supposed to be made with a new understanding of the point of origin. New York will never be the same after Nicaragua. On the other hand, Nicaragua never changes.

As one board member related in the context of seeking other possible destinations for Partners within the country, "There's no shortage of poverty in Nicaragua." In this imaginary, Nicaragua becomes the culturally static destination, "poverty." The Empire State, by its citizens' mobility, has performed North Atlantic privilege by building a bridge to two-thirds world poverty. To the extent that they build a bridge to poverty for the sake of themselves as altruists or for sake of the Nicaraguans as poor people, then solidarity may never materialize. Who travels on that bridge and who does not is pretty

clear in the Partners model. I never heard discussion of groups of Nicaraguans traveling North under Partners' auspices. The location of the metaphorical partnership is thus both geo-politically and interpersonally nebulous. Can a one way thoroughfare support solidarity travel? Some organizations do take Nicaraguans north and others claim that their solidary activities take place after they leave Nicaragua, as they confront the coloniality of policy in the U.S. But Partners stresses neither of these approaches. It seeks solidarity in the encounter itself, partially in the material construction or the social service and partially in the interpersonal interaction.

After building almost 30 houses in the largest village¹¹², *Las Cruces*, Partners responded to regional pressure (always by means of personal emissaries) from the other villages where people were waiting, and promulgated a policy of building only ten homes in one community during a cycle. Initially 6 villages were included in the service area and in 2004 another two communities were incorporated. At a rate of 50 to 60 houses a year this meant that a village would wait about 18 months before Partners would reappear to build for their ten neediest families. The rotation was an effort to diminish the inter-community jealousy and rivalry that was exacerbated by NGOs investing much more in one village than in its neighboring villages. All of the NGOs operating in the area seemed to include approximately the same six to eight villages in their program area. Partners Masaya's sense of place was anchored in *Las Cruces* as their base of operations, where they housed the groups in the local public school in return for goods and services rendered to the school. Before I left the field in 2004 Partners had already begun building

¹¹² Las Conchitas consisted of 125 households arranged in a densely populated four square block area.

the largest structure in the village, a dormitory for the volunteer groups, complete with kitchen, and a field office for the project.

Development Objectives

The Partners Masaya staff saw home construction as their primary mission during the years immediately following the earthquake. But imagining other avenues for community development had already become a necessity by 2004 as the number of houses continued to grow. The fact that unemployment and underemployment were severe chronic issues throughout the villages was forcing Partners, as well as the other NGOs working in the area, to envision various employment and micro-enterprise schemes that they might support. By requiring a long term mortgage payment for the homes, Partners was involved in deepening the cash requirements of household livelihood systems in the villages, tying them closer into the market economy. Reciprocal justice and economic viability of the project pressured the NGO to become involved in the development of productive employment.

Europeans without Borders, was already involved in financing micro-enterprises, one of the first being the roadside comedor, or dining room, where their staff ate lunch on a daily basis. Soon they were branching out into support of artisans and attempts to initiate an Italian niche market for local products such as hand woven hammocks, utilizing the civil society network of their organizational membership.

Save the People, as the senior NGO in terms of both longevity and resources had begun the organization of an alternative national and transnational marketing scheme for local products from their PDAs. They were trying to organize producer associations that would cooperate horizontally in commercial and technical respects as well as organize alternative vertical commodity chains that would access niche markets at the national and

international level. Partners Masaya, by contrast, and congruent with its ethos of personalism and decentralized national structure, was very locally focused, and was seeking to generate some local options to the growing *maquiladora* sector and the diminishing agricultural sector of employment.

The Italians and the Spaniards were involved in supporting household subsistence projects such as patio animals (chicken and pig raising), horticulture and micro-irrigation. Because of its lack of financial viability, not one organization, not even the micro-credit banks operating in the area, were supporting basic grain agriculture. Most economic development projects were not aimed at family nutritional self-sufficiency, but rather at successfully integrating the household into the market economy by producing negotiable goods and services that could generate income. Sustaining subsistence plus *campesino* lifestyle was not a goal of their development schemes rather they were interested in developing a sector of small producers, or people who held small quantities of land but who derived the most significant part of their livelihood from commercial transactions.

In the last analysis, NGOs in this area are contributing to the de-peasantization of the countryside, even while providing services and alternative employment modalities that might allow them to reside in rural areas. NGOs have yet to address the internal dislocation which will accompany the increased concentration of the economy into *maquila* and eco-tourism development poles, centered in proposed development clusters.

Some volunteer group / community issues for Partners

Perhaps because of personalism or because of the decision to invest substantial time and effort in a community, Partners has always found community support or solidarity for its groups. In the extremely rare cases where some group members' belongings have been

stolen, it has been the villagers themselves who have ferreted out the perpetrators and recovered the stolen goods.

Host communities have been more lenient toward group inappropriateness than the Partners staff has been. Some groups composed primarily of high school students have come to party more than volunteer. When supervision within the group itself is inadequate then substance abuse or overt sexual behavior can become problematic.

Partners Masaya staff has been embarrassed for the Nicaraguan villagers on more than one occasion, and has in one extreme circumstance even flown individual group members home prior to their planned departure dates. Drug and alcohol abuse and sexually explicit behavior have particularly offensive overtones for the expatriate staff. While the North Americans indicated that these behaviors cause scandal in the villages, particularly among the Evangelicals, it was possible that much of the emotionality surrounding these incidents proceeded more from the expatriate staff's embarrassment than from any distress among the Nicaraguans. With Evangelicals being openly opposed to drinking alcoholic beverages and with alcoholism a chronic social problem in rural Nicaragua, NGO staff discourage the consumption of alcoholic beverages by volunteers while in the village. Such restrictions do not apply to their tourist excursions or while staying in the city.

Some of the Masaya Partners staff is opposed to high school age volunteer groups for reasons of supervisory responsibility and because they doubt that minors generally have a level of maturity that allows them to understand the importance of the experience. Not only is the experience "wasted" but there may be a tendency in the immature individual to assume that because they came as a teenager, therefore they experienced and

understood the Nicaraguan reality, when in fact they missed most of it due to adolescent self-preoccupation. Other Partners staff members, who first came on trips as teens, encourage youth volunteer involvement, with the proviso that Partners screens all candidates thoroughly for appropriate motivations and maturity levels, as well as requiring adequate internal group supervision.

Another issue that preoccupies the Partners staff is pressure by the head office to host more groups. The Masaya site had ten groups scheduled for 2003 and were being asked if they could take two groups a month for 2004. They informed the home office that such a workload would kill them. They mentioned that another NGO had considered one group every two months as being a major workload. Headquarters was also requesting that they host their biggest groups during Holy Week, which is considered a nationally and religiously sanctioned holiday week in Nicaragua. All commerce, except for tourist venues, ceases. It was culturally inappropriate to require the construction crew and other support personnel, as well as the homeowner families themselves, to work during that week. Nonetheless a group of forty volunteers arrived and five houses were built during Holy Week 2003. I never heard any complaints from the workers or the homeowners afterwards.

Building a church

A suburban Presbyterian church from Westchester County, New York, through the agency of its pastor, had become a major player in *Las Cruces* reconstruction. In 2002 they had sent two different groups to *Las Cruces* to build a church building for the local Assembly of God congregation as well as several homes. In 2003 they brought down ten new computers to start a computer lab at the local school and funded two local young adults to provide classes for adults and youth in the village. In 2004 and 2005 Partners

built their dormitory/kitchen/office/training facility with a \$30,000 donation given for that purpose by the church.

Partners staff maintains that the building of the local church, or even the computer lab was not the work of their organization, but rather the initiative of the church. Yet Partners undeniably arranged the logistical conditions of the possibility for it happening. To many of the villagers, including leaders, Partners was effectively building a Protestant church¹¹³. In a country which is largely bifurcated into Protestant and Catholic the semiotic value of the brand new Assembly of God church on main street is undeniable. A verbal explanation that the account books were separate is not adequate to distinguish Partners from the suburban church when compared to the impression made by forty gringo volunteers constructing an imposing and enduring edifice. The only North Americans that have come to *Las Cruces* thus far have come through Partners.

Cultural Identity

It's tricky to bring North Americans down and put them along side Nicaraguans in a horizontal paradigm. If you don't have the right kinds of people you don't know where that will lead. Whether it will perpetuate all the wrong things in terms of power and process. Old forms don't work, I don't want North Americans controlling the process, but given how interconnected we all are politically, economically, spiritually, I think our best chance of creating a better future is in that very difficult unformed place of unlikely people working together, really trying to listen, to be in dialogue. (Ray Krause)

Partners is a transnational NGO which works in three different countries. Its central office is in Westchester County, New York in the United States. Its donors and its volunteers emanate from a core constituency there to include groups from the North Atlantic seaboard. Most of the sending organizations are Presbyterian churches and

¹¹³ One year later Partners was the conduit for a large donation for the completion of a Baptist church in the neighboring village. Partners groups were present as guests at the ground breaking and the dedication.

private, non-sectarian colleges and universities. There are also “business leaders” groups who are organized from among the same upper middle class individuals as one might find in chambers of commerce or rotary clubs. In Nicaragua Partners has always employed a bi-cultural staff which depended on key Nicaraguan personnel in order to establish itself and to grow. Dick Williams was Partners’ first resident North American staff member and Felix Cortez was their first Nicaraguan. But Cortez and subsequently Victor Quintana in Masaya, have been critical players in that they are bi-cultural. Cortez, born in Nicaragua, was raised in Los Angeles in the 60s and 70s and returned to his homeland to serve in the Government during the 1980s and with North American based NGOs since 1990. Quintana spent five years in southern California during the mid 1980s and was a disc jockey in both countries. Both of these men, Cortez at a national level and Quintana at a local level have served as culture brokers that have enabled Partners phenomenal (25% per year) growth in Nicaragua. Their abilities to navigate nearly equally well, the cultural logics employed in suburban United States and rural Nicaragua have been key to its success. Where difficulties arise is more in the interface with staff who don’t have the same degree of bi-culturation.

One particularly revealing cultural vignette involved a business leaders group arriving in Masaya. Such groups are bivouacked in more upscale hotels on weekends than the middle class volunteers, even though both types of groups experience similar conditions in the villages themselves. One such group included among its members a man who had just raised \$25 million dollars to build a children’s hospital in Westchester County, and one of his buddies who had personally contributed one million to that campaign. Jane Garrett had asked for Victor Quintana to set up an appointment with the

director of the local public hospital in Masaya to take these two men, at their request, on a tour of the hospital. When Victor returned he said that the director had indicated that he could meet the men but he did not have time to give them a tour of the hospital. Jane was incredulous. “Did you tell him who these men were?” she asked? “Did you tell him that they had raised millions for hospital construction?” Victor sheepishly admitted that he had not stressed that point. Jane was exasperated.

I saw Quintana’s cultural dilemma. As a staff member of a North American based NGO he was being asked to arrange a business contact. As a Nicaraguan with meager social status he was to ask the director of the Hospital, a man of responsibility in his community, to take time from an impossibly difficult job to receive foreign visitors. I could understand where he might have felt that stressing the utilitarian, monetary end of the visit would have been culturally inappropriate and perhaps even offensive to the director unless social protocols had been attended to. Something that Quintana had neither the status nor the time to accomplish. What seemed simple negligence to Garrett had been a practice limited by social status and motivated by cultural propriety for Quintana.

The limits of their staff members’ cultural competencies, for instance in relations with *Costeños* who mistrust *Españoles*, have constituted the limits of cultural competency within the organization itself. It is ironic that Partners’ difficulties in Puerto Cabezas/Bilwi stemmed as much from cultural alienation between Hispanic Nicaragua and Anglophone Nicaragua as it did from the difference between North American and Nicaraguan cultural logics. As *Costeños* are hired, as they have been in Siuna, the

organization is able to expand into areas that were formerly off limits, or where they had previously tried but “missed the mark”, on the Caribbean littoral.

Partner’s success with groups depends not only on culture brokers such as Quintana and Cortez, but also on Nicaraguans who must supervise North Americans in their volunteer work activities. Just such a key individual is their construction foreman, Camilo. Qualities which he possesses and which are essential to his success as a cross cultural supervisor include the patience and ability to teach neophytes how to do construction tasks without verbal instruction. He also understands that volunteers’ interactions with each other and with Nicaraguans may take forms that are culturally alien to Nicaraguans. In four years, with more than forty groups, Camilo and his crew have consistently shown adaptability

Temporality

In the same way that Partner’s concept of place includes trans-local space so its concept of time is trans-temporal. In the 14 years of its existence Partners has brought thousands of North Americans to Nicaragua. Most of those organizations that have come through Partners have remained with them, sending groups at least annually. 35% of the visitors who come each year are returning to Nicaragua because of prior trips. But the follow up trips don’t involve any intensification or variation on the first trip itinerary. The experience begins with trip organizational meetings and discussions in the US several months prior to departure and is completed on arrival home. There is an effort to recreate the experience and transition to another stage in solidarity at the annual conference mentioned below.

Politics

In our reflection sessions we ask three things. What does poverty mean? What does service mean? What does citizenship mean? That last is the trickiest because that is where we attempt to articulate the connections. A lot of people can stay with us through the first two and then the third one is hard. Americans identify themselves as individuals, which gets in the way of them seeing themselves as part of their own collective history. There is some sort of resistance to understanding the big picture. (Ray Krause)

In Fall of 2003 Partners organized its first post-trip conference for volunteers, entitled “Coming Home, Moving Forward with Courage.” It had four objectives, to revisit the emotional intensity of the Nicaragua trip experience, to try to articulate the personal changes that they had experienced, and third, to apply it to a current transnational issue, CAFTA. And finally to provide a smorgasbord of opportunities for ongoing activism. About 100 veteran Partners volunteers attended. The participant evaluations were positive about everything except the presentation on CAFTA. They said they were overwhelmed and didn’t really want to think about the political implications. Williams saw the volunteers’ hesitancy surrounding the political implications of solidarity as a cause for concern. The board decided that it needed to be an annual event.

Solidarity

“Don’t steal experience from the Nicaraguan people. If you go home and you don’t do anything from this you are stealing from these people.” Ray Krauses exhortation, which he makes to each of the Partners groups he accompanies, underscores both the opportunity and the challenge of solidarity. The people leaving Nicaragua after an intense ten-day immersion experience with Partners are motivated and need a channel. Partners tries to offer suggestions but doesn’t have a standard after-event follow up program other than the annual conference. It hopes that the volunteers themselves will

move from volunteer vacationer to solidarity traveler. It articulates an undefined expectation of subsequent activism toward the volunteer, but it lacks the kind of intentional follow up program such as that utilized by the more policy oriented NGOs that bring delegations such as Witness for Peace. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, some people respond in dramatic ways, changing the courses of their lives. Williams says that several former short term volunteers call the central office every month, volunteering to go to Nicaragua for a year or two, because of their trips.

Partners also is in solidarity with the Nicaraguans with whom it works. They are conscientious about only making agreements that they can keep, and following through on commitments to individuals and families. They lament that others, often associated with government agencies, make empty promises. But their solidarity is limited to those things that they can channel to an individual or a family, material goods or opportunities for education or health care. Partners does not involve itself directly with popular social movements, or with politics on either side of the partnership. Issues, such as CAFTA, which will affect the villages and neighborhoods where Partners works, are sometimes raised, but rarely in consistent ways that enable individuals to committ to political action for social justice.

The crux of Partners' challenge of solidarity comes with their ability or inability to move individuals from a state of emotionally intense interest in a Nicaraguan experience to one of committed activism on behalf of a more just world order. As middle class and upper middle class North Americans, the people that they bring to Nicaragua are among the privileged beneficiaries of global capitalism, and, as such, are are less likely to spontaneously ask critical questions of an economic system that has rewarded them

handsomely. On the other hand, the cognitive dissonance that they experience when they encounter the plight of rural Nicaraguans will be all the more intense for them. The relationships with Nicaraguans they meet may or may not suffice to pierce their class consciousness and other cultural constructions to forge a longstanding solidarity.

One of the disadvantages that Partners has is that it brings such [politically] diverse brigades. It is both a strength and a weakness. There are things that certain people can't get and they are going to need to come back two or three times to get it. Yet people feel more alive and they feel engaged and they feel like they've made a difference, a change. They don't often feel that at home. There are always people on the trip that are unsettled. Unsettled that 70% of the world's population live in poverty, but then they fall in love with a particular Nicaraguan family and the experience is generally positive."- (Ray Krause)

For some, solidarity will be predominately personal, and they will shun the political implications of their friendships. For others the politics is less problematic than interpersonal cross-cultural relationships. But when interpersonal contact and social analysis are combined then solidarities of the personal and the political variety are possible. If not, then volunteer vacationing devolves into another form of simple ego-tourism.

The Volunteers

All the people who think they are going to save Nicaragua by taking two weeks of their vacation coming down here and building a health center or whatever, they really ought to just not waste their time. Other people see a whole lot of value in that kind of work. But my own personal perspective is that you need to be here not because of what you can *do*, not because *people here* need you to be here. You need to be here because *you* need to be here. This is something other than what you know. It is a full sensory experience. You cannot have the same experience, gain the same understanding or insight by reading a book, or watching a broadcast or a documentary. You have to *be here*, you have to smell it and taste it and touch it and see it and feel it. No one can describe it. You have to live it. (M W –staff member of an NGO)

They come here thinking they are going to give something to us, but many discover that instead they receive, from people who have almost nothing, a new experience of hope, faith and love. – Dámaris Albequerque, Executive Director of the NGO, CEPAD, the Pastoral Committee for Education and Development.

Many team members are changed by the experience. Although they have volunteered in order to do something for the poor, their paternalism comes apart when they meet articulate poor people who often believe in God more than they do and who want a world where North –South relations are characterized by justice rather than charity. ...A good start is to help volunteers overcome the “edifice complex” by downplaying the notion that what/s most important for the group is the classroom, clinic or house they are going to build, and emphasizing that the real purpose is accompaniment.(Jendrzejczyk 2001)

These volunteers are exercising an option that their social class has not only made available but has invested with social prestige, globe trotting. They are also involved in activities that their church or university considers valuable and prestigious, service-learning and community building. So their practice is facilitated by the market and by civil society. Considerable subject agency is constantly involved but the *habitus* of volunteer vacationing already exists and provides the rationale, the social skills, and the institutional connections to make it happen. Personal agency is most dramatically apparent in the individual’s decision to participate and in their decision whether or not to return. But agency is also exercised in the daily opportunities to risk transcultural interaction or to bury oneself in the instrumentality of the physical task at hand, to opt towards solidarity or to allow alienation to continue unabated. Some people never converse with a Nicaraguan in the course of their volunteer vacation. Others do so incessantly. Language facility is not the only variable involved in the difference between the two, there is a human predisposition toward solidarity that is only awakened sometimes.

The Group:

Knox Presbyterian Church sends a group to work with Partners in Masaya every year. This year (2003) the group consists of eleven individuals, seven females and four

males. The age range is 17 to 60 with the average 39 and the mode 44. There are four teenagers, three people in their forties and four people between 50 and 60 years of age. The average number of times they had been to Nicaragua is 2.3, all of which were with Partners. None of the volunteers has any connections with Nicaragua apart from their association with Partners.

Arrival

Jane, having arrived at the international airport (known as A.C. Sandino, or Las Mercedes, depending on your politics) an hour early, is, from past experiences, anticipating the impending struggle. After expressing her *faux* disbelief in the incompetence of the rental car staff she employs a variety of tactics, some more conciliatory than others, to actually secure the vehicles that she had reserved from the rental agency a week before. It is no mean feat in Nicaragua to get companies to comply with verbal or written agreements, any more than it is in the United States. There are innumerable reasons given for non-compliance, each time a different one. But after one full hour of cajoling and paying more than initially agreed, Jane has managed to close the deal on the required vehicles.

As the group trickles through customs and into the lobby, with only the most overburdened group members warranting a cursory rifling through their baggage, they are greeted by Bruce and Jane with great warmth, hugs, kisses and other gestures of affection that signal the reunion of old friends. Luggage fills the body of the double cab pickup and is tied together to discourage thievery at stoplights. Fifteen of us get in the passenger van and the cab of the truck and head off for Masaya, a 45 minute ride south through the parched pastures and cornfields of the dry season. Pacific Nicaragua has two seasons, the season of dust from November to April and the season of mud from May through

October. Passing the rusting hulk of a cotton mill the bus passes new textile factories and offers a view of Volcan Masaya belching a plume of sulfuric gasses toward the sky.



Figure 6-4. Volcan Masaya spewing sulfuric fumes

More than half the group has come because their church had made the commitment. They are joiners who have heard exciting stories from past volunteers. They are coming to explore, enjoy themselves, learn something and help out all at the same time. Everyone is multi-tasking. There is a long history between Knox, a 900 member church in central Pennsylvania, and Partners. Back when Dick Williams was living and working in Yonkers Knox would send weekend groups there to work on vacant row houses and do a street bible school. Then Dick moved down to Nicaragua. In 2000 Knox sent a mission team to a frustrating experience in Mexico. They learned how important it was to have someone like Bruce and Jane on the ground. So they reconnected with Partners and have been coming down for the last three years.

George, who says he makes a very good salary as a computer and marketing professional, leaves Nicaragua with a feeling of gratitude for the quality of his life back home. He imagines that a Nicaraguan who receives a house from Partners would be comparable to a North American being encountered by a millionaire willing to build him a mansion. George wanted to start a community development fund that would be utilized directly by the villagers but Bruce and Jane are intent on using the money for specific purposes such as providing medicines for sick persons, scholarships for deserving students, and loans and houses for people that don't meet Partners criteria of economic viability. Harriet's family has five cars for two drivers, which she gets uneasy about when she comes to Nicaragua. Candace is the only one in her family that is willing to rough it enough to come on a Partners Trip. She sheepishly admits that her daughter wants to be a fashion designer.

Knox raised all the money for the two houses they will build and all trip expenses at fundraising events like a pancake breakfast, choirfest, and church dinner, so the only expenses people had out of pocket were for their flight and their souvenirs, about \$800. As the night progresses the female young adults in the group are ambivalent, some want to go dancing to the music of the sound system which shakes our hotel and others want to avoid potentially weird guys.

Darrell says you get more back than you give on these trips. But people who haven't been before don't realize that and there is not really any way to convince them. Many people in the church are willing to contribute, but few want to put up with primitive accommodations. Some people don't come because they want to work closer to home, or they don't speak the language. Out of nine hundred people only seven

volunteered to come this year. But the church as a whole is financially supportive, and they commission the volunteers on the Sunday morning before they depart, putting their names and a little paragraph about them in the bulletin.

Several in the group want to increase their Spanish skills. They are excited about developing relationships with Nicaraguans deeper than a tourist might aspire to. For several the bottom line is to work hard, in many cases doing more physical labor in one week than they do the rest of the year. For those with a sense of history their desire to work and to interact with Nicaraguans is fueled in part by a desire to show them that “Americans are not all bad.” Or perhaps it is to show that not all Americans are bad. Either way there is some awareness of historical transgressions.

They see themselves as here to serve, helping others without asking for reward of any kind. This kind of service, physical labor and interaction with the community carries, an innate reward of satisfaction and fulfillment. For members of this group, service is done in a Christian spirit as a member of the church community. Regarding how to institutionalize helping the poor, the group generally feels that governments can do very little. They believe it is important to empower people toward self-sufficiency.

“You come from a different world.”

Bruce Garrett begins the orientation as all group members settle into wooden folding chairs arranged in a circle in the large front room of the house that serves as Bruce and Jane's residence. It also serves as a dormitory for Partners long-term volunteers or special guests, and as the Masaya project office. Bruce, after a few introductory jests, begins casually reciting a litany of cautions and points of information while consulting his standard outline to avoid major omissions.

The first topic (because it is most crucial to the success of the trip) is health. Always wear shoes. One veteran volunteers a testimony about a particularly virulent strain of creeping eruption that attacks the feet. Don't pet animals; their pets aren't like our pets. Wash your hands often. Don't feed animals from the table or many more will come. Don't drink alcohol, as it doesn't help your dehydration and it can potentially scandalize the Evangelicals in the community. If you are sick don't keep it a secret, tell someone. Don't take Imodium for diarrhea, take an anti-biotic instead. We haven't had anyone get sick for months and never had to take anyone to the hospital.

Don't walk around alone. Don't give gifts to individuals. You can throw your toilet paper in a latrine but not in a flush toilet, use the trash receptacle to the side instead. Watch out for Flaco, the beggar boy, who was burned as a child and abandoned by his parents. He's harmless, and you can shoo him away. There are watchmen for your things in the school classroom, and nothing has ever been taken here. People in *Las Cruces* don't beg. You can have laundry washed whenever you want for fifteen cents a piece, and your clothes will be cleaner than they have ever been. Don't buy popsicles from the street vendor, unless you are willing to buy them for all the children who will gather around to watch you eat them.

"You come from a different world," Bruce reminds them. The othering implications of that statement hang in the alien air.

The second topic is the community. *Las Cruces* has been the site of Partners activity since July 10th, 2000, the day after the earthquake. They are now finishing house 89 and 90. Bruce is effusive in his praise of the community and gives the impression that this community, unlike others that they know, is appreciative, cooperative, friendly and

welcoming. Partner's three year longevity in the community, which Bruce sees as unusual for an NGO, is due to several factors. First the conscientious Nicaraguan workcrew enjoy working with North American volunteers. The extraordinary receptivity of the seven rural communities where Partners works makes long-term relationships possible. Finally, the strong and healthy family social structure succeeds in raising outstanding children even in the midst of poverty. The children are major in this experience. The fourth element in the satisfactory relationship between Partners and the communities is the dedicated hard work of the volunteer groups.

Victor Quintana is introduced as the linguistic and cultural translator. He knows North America because he was sent to Los Angeles when he was 13 to avoid the Nicaraguan military draft and returned to Masaya four and a half years later in 1988 when he was no longer in danger of being drafted. Victor is introduced as one who has the cultural clairvoyance of being able to tell when Nicaraguans are lying. Which Bruce and Jane, as foreigners, can't. The non-discursive implication is that Nicaraguans lie as a matter of course. For that reason Victor has saved Partners from countless mistakes that they might have made as an organization, for instance building houses for people that already had houses, etc.

The third topic is Partners' work in the communities. In the past Partners has focused on community projects, but beginning after Hurricane Mitch it began to shelter those who had lost their homes. Masaya is an extension of that kind of work. They pattern their program after Habitat for Humanity, in that the families have to work on the construction of their homes and pay approximately half the cost of the house.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Actually Partners home recipients often did not work on their homes because between the Nicaraguan construction crew and the volunteer group there was little opportunity to do so, and they were encouraged



Figure 6-5. Victor introducing the Nicaraguan workcrew and orienting the volunteers (note the predominance of females)

According to Bruce, Partners was the first to arrive in the communities after the earthquake and requested help from other NGOs. Save the People arrived next and like subsequent NGOs gave people building materials to construct their own homes, but did not facilitate the construction process. Hence some houses were constructed in a timely manner, others took a long time and others will never be finished.¹¹⁵

to continue with their regular employment to earn a living. Habitat requires volunteer work on the homes of others as well as one's own home, and they are, in theory, required to pay back the full value of the home minus the volunteer labor utilized to build it. But since Habitat now builds homes only for those in the formal economy, homeowners usually hire laborers to work in their stead.

¹¹⁵ Our research indicated that most organizations homes were constructed rather quickly, but some were not as durable as Partners' concrete block homes. Some were completed in a timely manner, for instance those of COPROSA the Catholic NGO that supplied materials and a foreman to build 22 homes which were completed within 2 months.

Bruce notes that Partners' houses are small , five by six meters, so that they are more affordable to homeowners and more can be built and more people can be sheltered with Partner's finite resources. They are concrete and steel beam reinforced to enable people time to escape in the event of another earthquake. With Camilo's construction crew there is only three days of unskilled and semi-skilled labor for a brigade to do on each house, the other two days are skilled labor that the Nicaraguans must do. So our group will be building two houses simultaneously with half the Nicaraguans and half the North Americans on each, in competition with each other, because Camilo likes competition. (Why do I suspect it is Bruce and Jane who enjoy the competition more?)

What is not mentioned or framed in any way is the stark poverty that people will encounter on arrival. Nor is there any mention of the economic or political structure of the community, There is no mention of the religious life of the people, the adequacy of their diet, land tenancy, access to potable water or health services, or educational issues. Villagers' experiences with groups including the number and frequency of groups is not mentioned. In short there is no historical or social context provided before we go forth to build houses. It is all about building and about individual families. The only contextual information has been concerning health or security threats to the volunteers. We are here to get a job done. Build a house, or two. Our education as citizens and our interaction with Nicaraguans in the village are not topics for orientation. Though some of our group has been here before and Kathy will lead a children's puppet show as she did last time. When we send recruiters out into the streets we soon have about 60 children and several parents present for games and a puppet show. The interaction for that hour and a half is very intense.

The groups responses indicate that they understand full well the *habitus* outlined in the orientation. Half have come to Nicaragua to build one or more houses, and three have come to generically help. Three have come to interact and make friends. One has come to learn and one to change the world a little piece at a time. A 19-year-old says “I have come to build a house in the concrete and build partnership in the abstract.”

At the orientation our group, which represents a church who has sent three groups in past years, told Bruce, Jane and Victor that we had brought a polaroid camera and lots of film to take pictures of every child in the school. We also brought puppets to have a show with the children. We brought handicrafts materials for the street boys who now live at the El Albergue shelter, so that they could make more bracelets and hammocks and other items. We brought two bibles for the homeowners of the houses that we built but didn't finish last year. We also brought \$110 to help those homeowners plaster their houses should they choose to do so. We also brought down baseball gear to replace the set that we brought down last year that must be worn out by now. We also brought \$100 to buy ice cream for all the boys at the shelter. There are lots of ways to help and in responding to our questionnaire our group reveals the complexity of helping.

We asked¹¹⁶ “What ought to be the institutional (governmental, multi-lateral, non-governmental) process of helping the poor of the world?” Answers indicate that if there was a dominant discourse concerning addressing world poverty or international inequity at the institutional level within the Partners literature it was not strong in the

¹¹⁶ Data and analysis from this sub-section is culled from a written questionnaire of 17 short answer questions which were administered in three installments during the week long experience. The first seven questions were administered on the first full day of work , the second five questions on the third day of work and the final five questions on the day of departure. See Appendix A for a copy of the instrument itself.

consciousness of the volunteer vacationers. Two people simply stated “I haven’t a clue.” Some said empowering self-sufficiency and self help. One person stressed NGO and personal involvement as better than government involvement. Two stressed financial investment in basic services for the population. One suggested “de-Americanization.”

When asked “What is your concept of being, as Partners literature mentions, ‘in solidarity’ with the people of Nicaragua? How, practically speaking, do you do that?” The answers fell into four categories. Some felt that solidarity meant *convivencia* or immersion in the lives of the Nicaraguan families for a week; working, eating, recreating and conversing with them. A second contingent thought that solidarity was an attitudinal reality synonymous with mutual respect and cultural tolerance. For a third group solidarity meant understanding the complex social, political and historical context of the Nicaraguans. One person was an activist and said it meant communicating with their representatives in Congress about US policy towards Nicaragua.

Later, after they had been building houses for a few days we asked them what Nicaraguans they had been interacting with. To that point in the trip their interactions had been almost exclusively with either Partners staff or the families with whom they were building their homes. This in spite of the fact that they lived in the middle of a village of 125 families. Their interactions with Partners staff including the construction workers yielded strong interpersonal bonding and feelings of respect.

Nicaraguan traits that were found attractive were physical beauty, friendliness and acceptance of strangers, their unity as families and communities, and their willingness to work hard. The conditions that the visitors found most problematic were the ubiquitous

trash which appeared to be purposely strewn across the landscape rather than piled in distinct piles or in receptacles, and dirt or unhygienic conditions¹¹⁷.

The most positive experience for these volunteers was their interaction with the village children or the beneficiary families. The most negative experiences were related to illness or fear of illness and to inability to communicate verbally. They saw themselves as supporting long term development materially through building the homes, buying in local markets and by financially supporting the NGO that employed several people in the community.

When asked near the end of their experience with whom they would remain in contact, two thirds answered, "the Partners staff." Three people thought they would remain in contact only with their own church who would relay information and four indicated that they would not be in contact with Nicaragua after the trip

The group indicated that their post-trip commitments would include returning on another trip (4), financially supporting the NGO (3) and organizing similar trips from other sending organizations (1). Three people doubted that they would have any ongoing commitment.

Group members indicated in almost equal measure that there were two things they would take with them, a deeper appreciation for Nicaraguan Culture and a deeper gratitude for the advantages they enjoy at home. It became clear that "life changing" is a modifier used to describe only the first Partners experience. Subsequent experiences

¹¹⁷ Household surveys reveal that as there is no community garbage collection or disposal 73% burn their own garbage, 10% bury it, and 17% admit that they throw it in piles on the side of the road. (Terres de Hommes, 2004:9)

provided opportunities for deepening personal understanding but perhaps because of lack of novelty were experienced as less metamorphic.

A work day in the life of a volunteer

We rise from our bunks , cotton stuffed mattresses on steel frames, wondering what all the racket is. Then we realize that it is a cacophony of mixed roosters, dogs, children and country music Nicaraguan style which blares from the radios around us. Everything around us appears blurry until we realize that we are under a gauze mosquito net which defines our private space in this alien environment. Laetitia, a six year old girl is hanging in the doorway asking for dirty clothes from the group for her mother to wash. Victor just went running in the early morning air with one of the group members. Going to the bathroom in the school latrine is easily one of the least favorite experiences of any volunteer. We have been warned not to shine our flashlights down the hole or the seething mass below us will be forever etched on our memories. Brushing teeth at the washing stations outside, recently built by the Italians, seems an inappropriate ritual to perform in public, but we do. We must vacate the school property before the teachers begin opening their classrooms for the children.

We walk two hundred yards to the construction foreman, Camilo's, house for breakfast on the picnic tables under the trees in his front yard. The foreman Camilo's sister Lina, and his two teenage daughters set out cereal and milk as well as eggs, and of course, rice and beans for breakfast. Some of us are in clothes we obviously wore yesterday and others of us are more fastidious. One young woman in the group wears high heel pumps, a short skirt and halter top. She definitely will get the "Gringa" of the day award today in the village. We all hope she doesn't break her ankle hauling buckets of cement. Her father is a radiologist and they live in a large house on top of a mountain.

In the street near where we are eating breakfast under the trees an outsider from *Los Manolos* is challenged by a local drunk from *Las Cruces* and it comes to blows. Victor, being the biggest Nicaraguan around and having some authority, breaks it up. , My Nicaraguan assistant, is mortified that the gringos saw Nicaraguan's acting so stupidly.

We go back to the bunk room (actually the fourth grade classroom which has been surrendered for the week of our visit) where we get our water bottles, gloves, hats, bandanas, etc. and mount up in the back of one of the two trucks. Our two trucks are the only vehicles on the road, in fact they are the only private motor vehicles we see all day. Most people ride bikes, some ride two wheeled horse drawn carriages called *berliners*. By the time we get to the construction site, a 15 minute drive on dirt roads, the Nicaraguan crew has already been there getting things prepared for our arrival.

We are at two homesites about 300 yards apart, across a dirt road and just out of sight of each other. Bruce and Camilo encourage a competitive spirit between the sites. The morning is spent mixing concrete and pouring it into footings for the pillars and the foundation. Some of the less burly are cutting wire and reinforcing rod and tying columns of steel to put inside the pillars and beams that will hold this anti-seismic house together. The work is hard, and we gringos go at it with great gusto at first while the Nicaraguans work steadily past us without missing a beat. Soon we seek out shade and water to try to recuperate. Even the 260 lb football player can't keep up with the Nicaraguans, because he doesn't know how to use a shovel efficiently.

The homeowner, Isai, is a small farmer with two acres in yucca and one each in corn and beans. His son, Melvin, works in Tip Top, a chicken packing house that has just been bought by a European subsidiary of Cargill Corporation. His teenage daughter,

Haydee stays home and takes care of her ailing mother, Estela. Josué, Heylin's brother is 12. He works on the farm with his dad. Xochilt, his younger sister is in third grade at the local school. Javier is ten years old, and he has a hernia. The corrective surgery, if his dad had it, would cost 5000 cordobas or about \$340 dollars. Estela's illness is mental and she is on medication. Nobody else in the group interacts with the family after the initial introduction. The family does not participate except for Javier occasionally. They sit and watch us work. Jane and Bruce visit with the group members, the Nicaraguan construction crew, and occasionally the family as well but mostly they are working hard themselves, Bruce cutting form boards with a circular saw and Jane bending stirrups for the reinforcing steel. I ask Isai why his family doesn't participate in the construction and he replies that he wanted to, but Camilo told him not to.

I ask Jorge, the second homeowner, why he isn't working beside the volunteers. He informs me that he is actually working with us (contrary to appearances). He prepares to leave for Masaya with a handful of hammocks that he and his wife have woven over the past several days. Victor informs me that the family is invited to participate but that if they need to attend to their normal employment that Partners understands that they have to make a living.

Jane reflects that our group is one of the best. Our leadership is low key but recognizable and recognized by the group. There is a division of labor within the group to accomplish common tasks. Candace convenes group prayer and the bible school that we will put on for village children. George brought \$500 worth of tools and several hundred more of new baseball equipment.

I reflect on how the North Americans continue to work hard and keep a good humor. Not much verbal interaction among them but they are non verbally communicating with the Nicaraguans to coordinate tasks.

There is a good feeling as we see the walls go up throughout the week. We are proud of our progress and the homeowners seem quite pleased with the results. Looking at their present home built of scraps of lumber and tin I am not surprised at their satisfaction. I wonder if we have cheapened the experience by building it for them rather than with them. But then how many of us in the United States actually participate in the building of our own homes?

A Partners Volunteer

Aisha is twenty one and a senior in government and economics at Colby. This is her sixth Partners trip. Her first experience of poverty came when as a teen she was sailing a Club Med sailboat along the Coast of Santa Lucia and became stranded up the beach from the resort. She had to walk along a beach occupied by poor people to get back to her parents. Her parents are high level executives, one a vice president of a large Wall Street investment firm and the other an executive of one of the largest banks in the United States. They spend a lot of time in Asia.

Aisha sees two distinct ways to help people, by community service or by political activism. People who try to do political activism, such as the UN agencies where she has some experience, have trouble actualizing their plans sometimes. Whereas Partners, which focuses on community service, really gets things done. They help people although they are not able to address the root causes of the poverty that necessitates their work. She got a grant to study all of Partners projects from the past and finds that in most

communities the projects have been successful. Largely because of the personalism that animates Partners' work.

Aisha knows that her parents would be deeply disappointed if she were to decide to work at the local level like Bruce and Jane. Even though personalism is important to her, she wants to work on the macro scale with the social forces that cause poverty. That will, as she sees it, require her to work for a multi-lateral agency such as the UN or World Bank. Even such high level development jobs will not be seen as equal to a Wall Street financier's career in her parent's eyes. But it is a compromise they might accept. Working in Nicaraguan villages on the other hand would not be acceptable.

Aisha has seen people change as a result of these trips. Six different members of her Knox Presbyterian Church youth group have elected to go into the field of international development based on their Partners experiences. One wealthy member of her church has become a regular but anonymous donor of financing for houses to the Masaya project. As the group leader she sees her primary responsibility to monitor group dynamics and facilitate group sharing. Jane's people skills make Aisha's job very easy. She likes to balance occasional reflection sessions with a very flexible and open schedule. She believes that while some people's lives will be changed, others will remain self-centered.

Aisha has the idealism of youth tempered by the economic realism of upper middle class aspirations. Her acknowledgement of the purity of inter-personal solidarity she sees between the Partners staff and the villagers contends with her social analysis that Partners is not about systemic social change. She understands as a student of economics and as an experienced traveler that no matter how many houses Partners builds it is not in active

political solidarity with the people for whom it is building. Her belief that multi-lateral organizations are the key players in international development allows her to seek another kind of solidarity with Nicaragua from above. It is ironic that the grassroots experiences that have steered Debbie, much to her parents' dismay, toward international development work are considered by her less efficacious than the bureaucracies whose limitations she also understands. Those that come on these excursions are motivated toward international solidarity but the transnational organizations that serve as the medium for their idealism must also be a good fit for the *habitus* of their social class. It is one thing to be in cross-class solidarity, and quite another to abandon one's class of origin.

A director/volunteer asks why

Roland Moss, a successful insurance executive from a "very very affluent" community in Westchester County, New York is down in Nicaragua for the third time to build a house for a Nicaraguan campesino family. Fredy, the father of the family of five, makes \$18 a week cultivating pineapples. Roland has personally donated the \$2500 dollars that the house costs and has decided to add a kitchen and letrine (which is not included in the basic home package) for another \$300. He says he spends that much playing one afternoon of golf.

His first trip down was eighteen months ago when he helped build the Assembly of God Church in Las Cruces. "Partners doesn't build churches" he explains paradoxically, "but a request came in from the congregation, and my church responded." In one week they had 75% of the church built. Six months ago he was invited to join the Partners' board of directors where his role is to raise money in the U.S. to maintain Partner's mission. There has been an exponential increase in the number of groups coming to Nicaragua, but one of the problems for the organization is that not everyone pays what it

costs to have them here. It costs about \$1,100 to host one volunteer for a trip (not counting their airfare), and adults pay full fare, whereas students (75% of the participants) only pay \$800. If the ratio stays the same and the number of groups increase, but Partners' does not increase fees, then they will continue to lose money on the trips. All this is apart from the direct costs of building the 60 to 80 houses that will be built this year. Not all of the funds to construct those houses is accounted for yet and they are over and above the cost of the trip. Most but not all sending organizations fund at least one house for the week that their group is here.

But while there is the vision of eliminating the housing problem in this part of Nicaragua, the other objective is providing the volunteers with a spiritual adventure. I believe a lot happens for the people who come on these trips. The sharing sessions are the most important and amazing part of the trip.

Roland likes being around young people, he has served in youth ministry in his church for many years, and has a teenage son himself. Every year he brings 20 teens from the church to Nicaragua. It has become part of their spiritual formation. This year there are 30 participants because the idea has caught on so well, and people in the youth group want to bring friends that are outside the church. It has now become a general community event for the youth of the Town. They don't need to advertise it, the teens spread the word among their peers. They have to put a cap on the number that can come, and they don't want to bring the same kids over and over again.

He used to take the teens to Appalachia but the Pastor suggested Nicaragua. He was reluctant at first, but not any more. Now the whole congregation is intensely aware of Nicaragua since the teens get up every fall and present pictures and stories from their summer trip.

I asked Roland if there was anything about the experience that he thought needed adjustment.

This time when I came down I was impatient and frustrated with that whole first two days when we go to restaurants in Managua and to talks and see some sights. I felt like we were just screwing around. I wanted to get to work. But now having gotten here to the village I realize how important it is to have that transition period of a few days at the beginning and end to ease in and ease out.

But getting back to that thing about the economic inequity, So I can build this family a kitchen and a bathroom for the same amount of money I would spend playing golf with my buddies back home. It just seems so out of whack. Why are we so rich and they so poor? Why does God let that happen? I'm never going to answer that question. But we can take baby steps. The experience of the trip is a big part of it. Our church does a good job of doing reflection. That will be one of my main points at the board retreat, to stress the value of the reflections. But why are people so poor here? And why can't they leave?

Since this conversation Roland has returned to Nicaragua several times. He has taken it upon himself to organize business leaders groups in which professionally successful people from this very affluent area come down to work hard for a week in the midst of abject poverty. I was once invited to address one of the groups, but after reflection I wasn't clear on what was appropriate for me to say at the time. This dissertation writing process has helped me to more clearly understand how to raise the possibility of the solidary option.

Lessons from a Partners' group

In regards to the groups' relation to the NGO we can observe that the relationship is total. The NGO is what has been termed by Erving Goffman (1961) a "total institution."¹¹⁸ The NGO is responsible for all the primary (physical) and secondary (social) needs of the group. As such the response of the group is to conform compliantly

¹¹⁸ a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life

to the NGO *habitus* and internalize its discourse and practice. New volunteers become avid supporters of the NGOs' work and propose creative new ways to help extend it. Ongoing relationships to Nicaragua on the part of these volunteers will be through the NGO¹¹⁹. The continuing commitments to Nicaragua mentioned by volunteers, organizing or participating in subsequent trips and financial support all centered on the NGO. The change of life that neophyte volunteers experience, while articulated in terms of appreciation of Nicaraguan culture and of North American culture in a world context, behaviorally consists of fealty and practical support for this particular organization. The Partners board member who said "If they come to Nicaragua with some other group then they are lost to us forever" may not have been guilty of hyperbole.

When we analyze this group's relationship to the host village we find again that it's interactions happen in very specific limited venues. They include, its nightly vigils with the village children on the basketball court outside their dorm room, interactions with the homeowner family and their relatives at the work site, working along side the construction crew at the worksite and then being served lunch by Camilo's female relatives and eating near the crew at Camilo's house. While there are multiple sites of interaction they are not part of the warp and the woof of village life. They are interactions which are specifically engineered to include the group as the focus. It is Nicaraguan life lived in support of North American visitors. It is difficult to ascertain what is really important to the villagers because in every instance, it is we volunteers who are the feature event.

¹¹⁹ There was one exception in this group from the sole Catholic who had "sponsored" a child in Bluefields through an international Catholic organization and she was intending on going to the Atlantic Coast to visit him prior to her departure from the country.

Perhaps because, as one of the volunteers mentioned above, the short time frame prevents the normal construction of social relationships with villagers, there are no interpersonal relationships with villagers other than NGO employees and program beneficiaries of the houses currently under construction. What we are seeing here is so insular that it might be termed “enclave development”, in the sense that the development process occurs in a compartment which is separated from the rest of community interaction.

Two other constant distractions that prevent the visitors from focusing on their hosts are the rather involved and arduous procedures involved in quotidian tasks such as using the toilet or latrine, taking a shower, and brushing one’s teeth. All must be done using unfamiliar technologies and often in a degree of public view. Lack of privacy is one of the psychologically most difficult adjustments for North Americans in Nicaraguan villages. It is difficult to establish a relationship with someone whose prying eyes are unwelcome. One culture’s curiosity is another culture’s rudeness.

This factor is compounded by the need for any group to establish its own inner and outer psychic boundaries. Much intra group stress is generated by North Americans adjusting to living constantly with a dozen strangers. Personality traits of other group members that were merely peculiar in one’s hometown become a source of grating annoyance and can escalate to hostility. The psychic energy required to establish and maintain relationships with one’s colleagues comes from the same finite supply that must also furnish the courage to establish cross-cultural friendships. The tendency of human beings in the state of sensory overload known as culture shock is to shut down attempts to reach out. It is to retreat into the inner self and seek to preserve the threatened identity by

introversion. It is not unusual to see a group volunteer seated on their bedroll on the floor, under their mosquito net, with a book or journal in hand and intentionally blocking out the bedlam surrounding them. The gossamer film of the mosquito net becomes as effective a psychic barrier to social intercourse as if it were plate steel.

Solidarity

This group shows us that solidarity which relies on interpersonal contact with and personal empathy for Nicaraguans will, at least in this instance, be borne almost entirely by the groups relationship with the NGO staff itself. This exclusive reliance on NGO functionaries runs two immediate risks. First that the NGO functionary then comes to signify, to represent in the mind of the North American volunteer, the archetypal rural Nicaraguan. In point of fact NGO staff are elites among the rural populace in that they possess the skills and contacts to work for NGOs who are the most important “formal” organizations in the community. A second risk is that solidarity with the Nicaraguan people will be collapsed into solidarity with Partners itself. We have ample evidence from the group that this conflation is occurring constantly.

This group experience does not include social analysis as a prominent programmatic part of the experience (most Partners groups do experience a session of historical contextualization even though we didn't in this instance). Neither the NGO staff, nor local spokespersons are enlisted to offer some sort of context for the homebuilding. The orientation given on the first evening is a pragmatic list of do's and don'ts that addresses the health, safety and occupational concerns of the brigade. It says little about Nicaragua *in se* except to affirm cryptically that it is a “different world.” Social analysis of the Nicaraguan reality that will be done by volunteers will be done based on prior knowledge and skills which they themselves bring to the experience.

Analysis will not be part of the trip process unless they themselves initiate it. Some of the nightly prayer reflection sessions of the group grapple with the intense emotions engendered by the stark poverty.

To conclude this section we must then ask. What types or forms of solidarity between North Americans and Nicaraguans may be expected to form from the kernel of this particular group experience? With truncated intimacy, limited interpersonal cross-cultural interaction, and with a paucity of social analysis, our expectations should be modest.

As we have seen, for some volunteers solidarity would be experienced by immersing oneself in the lives of rural Nicaraguans. But this has not really happened, operationally. For other volunteers solidarity is openness and respect toward Nicaraguan culture. Because of the enclave nature of the group we don't have the cross cultural data to evaluate the respect level of volunteers adequately. For others it is to understand the political, social and historical complexities and contexts of Nicaraguans' lives. We have seen that there has been little to no attempt at social analysis on the part of the group, the NGO or the village. One activist said that his solidarity would be to approach his Congressman concerning U.S. government policies that affect Nicaragua. There is no guidance in this volunteer experience for framing such a policy critique. Other NGOs who bring groups, such as Witness for Peace focus on this form of solidarity. Partners, however, does not.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ It must be noted here that many of the printed materials in the orientation packet and many of the guidelines given for pre-departure group discussion focus clearly on social analytic themes. As does part of the annual post-trip conference. This criticism is directed only on the process that happens between arrival and departure in Managua.

The Villagers

The villages of *Las Cruces* and *Las Penca* are two of the more populous of the seven rural communities North of the city of Masaya, a region of some 4,500 inhabitants. The city itself, located 28 miles south of Managua, is also the urban center for the smallest and most densely populated department in the region. The municipio which has an extension of 141 square kilometers has a population density of approximately 1000 inhabitants per square kilometer, compared to less than 50 for the country as an average. Three quarters of the population of 145,000 residents are located in 83 urban neighborhoods and the other quarter is divided into 27 rural communities. The two villages that our study focuses on are located about four kilometers North of this urban area.

Las Cruces is known as “el barrio” [the neighborhood] because it has a peri-urban character. It is contiguous to the peripheral neighborhoods of Masaya and its demographic density is much higher than the five villages to the North and East.. It has 125 homes on six square blocks, and, It also has the largest school in the villages with 340 students from preschool to sixth grade¹²¹. The population of 700 is remarkably stable with 98% of families having lived in the village more than 5 years and 86% for more than 20 years (Terre de Hommes 2004). Only 15% of all the villages’ homes are what is considered in “good” condition. 42% are fair and 44% are poor¹²². Eighty five

¹²¹ There is an 80% attrition rate between first and sixth grade, a small percentage go to high school in Masaya, which requires daily round trip bus fare, and even fewer go to college. In Las Conchitas there were only four young people attending institutions of higher education, usually on weekends.

¹²² These are 2001 statistics by 2004 due to NGO construction programs, the ratios were 40% good, 33% fair, and 27% in poor condition, a dramatic improvement. though 15% still lacked a house of their own, and 17% of all homes housed more than one family.

percent of rural residents have electricity and potable water¹²³ 15 % do not.. One third of the households earn less than \$50 a month, one third earns between 50 and 80 dollars, and one third earns above \$80 a month.. Only 12% of the children are free of all chronic diseases such as respiratory infections or parasites. Twenty six percent of the children are suffering from malnutrition and fourteen percent are in the “at risk” category.

There are three furniture making workshops and a bakery as well as three *one room shops* where one can purchase basic food stuffs, snacks, and minor household items such as soap or matches. Perhaps the most important distinction between Conchitas and other rural villages is the urban employment of its residents, who work as domestics, seamstresses, security guards, or laborers in Masaya. Only 25% of the residents live primarily from agriculture or animal husbandry, the other 75% work in artisanal production, commerce, or urban employment such as that mentioned above (Terre de Hommes 2004; Terre de Hommes and Masaya 2001).¹²⁴ The *macquiladoras*, or clothing factories owned by North Americans and Asians are becoming an important source of employment, with three factories employing more than 2000 people opening in the area between 2000 and 2004.

Las Penca, located just East of *Las Cruces*, by contrast, has a rural character with a small village center with a school and health post and some 20 houses in the vicinity. While the community has 1000 residents, more than *Las Cruces* or any of the other

¹²³ This is up from 67% in 2001.

¹²⁴ Global Statistical Information in this chapter comes from three sources, two studies done by Terre de Hommes-Italia (2001 and 2004), and one done by Asociacion para Cooperación con el Sur - Las Segovia (ACSUR) and Movimiento Communal Nicaraguense – Masaya (MSN) 2004. All three of these studies were done utilizing data from household surveys done with over 90% of the homes in the villages under consideration. Some statistics apply to the villages as an aggregate and others are disaggregated as indicated in the text.

villages, it is very spread out. With families on homesteads that average six to eight acres in size. There are a few farms that have as much as 40 or 50 acres, but there are no large landholders. Agrarian reform of the 1980s (Enriquez 1997) affected this community more permanently than the others by allowing for transition from “low equilibrium” subsistence agriculture to “high equilibrium” subsistence plus diversified small farm systems (D'Exelle and Bastiaensen 2000). The contrast between the two communities shows different lifestyles, two different economic structures and several cultural distinctions. As one of the villagers told us, "When my mother moved from *Las Cruces* to *Las Penca* she suffered from culture shock."



Figure 6-6. Las Penca is an agricultural community

The average size family has 5 or 6 persons, with 4 children. There are nine Protestant churches in the area, four Catholic churches and one Jehova Witness temple (the most modern and well appointed of the structures)

Sixty seven percent of the survey respondents indicated they were Catholics, 18% were Protestants, and 8% were Jehova Witnesses. 7% indicated no religious preference. *Las Cruces* was 77% Catholic, 12% Evangelical, 3% Jehova Witness, and 9% no preference. (Terre de Hommes 2004) .

Regarding education fully one quarter of the adult population is completely illiterate and have never been to school. 45% of heads of households never graduated from primary school, bringing the illiteracy rate of adults toward 70%. some 1033 children attend the six primary schools in the area. Only 40% of the students go through from pre-school to graduate from 6th grade. Only 25% who begin high school are able to graduate five years later.

Only 43% of the families have legal title to their land. The main reason for not having title is that the land was received by inheritance or gift within the family. Only 10% have more than 3 acres of land, and only one percent have more than 9 acres. Of those who identify their occupation as grower (agricultor), 70% say they grow both to satisfy their family's food needs and also to sell. 20% say that they grow only for subsistence and 10 % say that they grow primarily for the market. Only 8% have received technical assistance in their cultivations and one third claim to have used credit at least once when planting and cultivating their crops. In regards to artisans, three quarters are involved in making hammocks, 12% clothing, 10% shoes and 6% traditional items such as baskets. 90% of them buy their raw materials and sell their wares locally,

in Masaya. One out of every three families has sent members outside the country to try to survive. Two thirds of emigrants go to Costa Rica and one third goes to the United States. Remittances usually amount to between 20 to 50 dollars a month once the emigrant begins work. Much of this emigration is short term, two to four months every year to Costa Rica., coinciding with coffee and sugar harvests.

Sixty one percent of *Las Cruces* residents have a radio in the house, compared with 78% in Las Penca. In regards to televisions, sixty nine percent of *Las Cruces* residents and 73% of Las Penca households have one. Thirty percent of families have neither a radio nor a TV. Only five percent have telephones, all of which are cellular as there are no telephone lines running to either community.



Figure 6 -7. A newly planted bean field

A quarter of all crops produced in the area is corn, and 20% is beans. Other important crops are yucca, peanuts, squash, plantains, sorghum and rice. Usually crops are grown first for family consumption needs and then to sell. Over half the families live on lots big enough to afford them the opportunity for animal husbandry and gardens.

The school in *Las Cruces*, was begun during the revolution, in 1981 by one man who got the agricultural cooperative to donate 3 acres of land and built a thatch roofed shelter there for 60 first and second graders. In 1984 the first two classrooms were built. In 1988 the next two, and in 1997 the Japanese donated enough money to build four more classrooms. That year as well Save the People built a single room school library. One Partners visiting group painted the whole school, bright blue and white.



Figure 6-8. Las Cruces village school (and periodic volunteer dormitory).

After the earthquake Terre des Hommes started helping students with school supplies, tutoring, health care, and repairs to the school. In 2003 and 2004 Europeans without Borders built a basketball court, several wash stands and water fountains, and two letrines. Global Partners donated classroom materials, library books, computers, and classroom repairs.

The school is a focal point of the *Las Cruces* community, both because it is centrally located and serves as almost a central plaza, but also because the size of the school is impressive in a rural zone where most schools are one or two room affairs. With a staff of two directors, and ten teachers it is a sizable investment of the state who pays the salaries and the NGOs who keep it maintained. The very high rate of child school attendance (92.4%) is due in large measure to the overlapping child sponsorships and ancillary funds for teachers and classrooms that are available through foreign assistance. Child sponsorship takes care of all uniforms, school supplies, and other ancillary costs that often keep rural residents from sending their children to school. Save the People sponsors 67 children in the school and Europeans without Borders sponsors 76, leaving about half the children un-sponsored.

Conversation with a Village Artisan

Don Chepe Chu (José Jesús) sat on a bench of his making, sorting debris from the red beans that he and his brother had planted and harvested. He was a loquacious interviewee.

During the 70s and 80s, back when there was credit for agricultural inputs, I could get 2500 lbs of beans from a manzana (1.6 acres). But now, without money to pay a tractor to plow deeply, or money for the 300 lbs of fertilizer and the insecticide necessary, or the hybrid seeds, I'm lucky to get 800 lbs. Which means in order to feed my extended family of 9 people, I have to cultivate two manzanas of corn and two of beans twice a year. I used to plant rice, but it is much more fragile to grow, very susceptible to drought. So I don't even bother anymore.

Don Chepe Chu was explaining to me the subsistence agriculture that he engaged in, but his cash income had nothing to do with agriculture directly. Rather he was a millwright and furniture manufacturer who made doors and windows for all the Global Partners' homes and beds and other furniture for the national market in Managua.

Bruce and Jane are great people, they work on every one of the houses right alongside the homeowners. If you gave the money for 100 houses to a government agency, not even one house would be built. I remember Don Enrique (Bolaños) (the current president of Nicaragua) during his (2000) campaign promising to build 185,000 new homes when he was elected, 100,000 would be constructed in the country and 80,000 in the cities. Where are they? Not one house has been constructed, nor will one ever be constructed. The government is not good for anything. I remember when we got our water it was because an NGO got some foreign money and helped us put in a deep well, a pump and the whole distribution system. A couple of years later we learned that the national water agency wanted to take it over. We rose up together and let them know that we didn't want the government involved. As soon as they took over management it would have started to fall apart. The next village over has a government managed system and they get water twice a week for a couple of hours at a time. People line up with their barrels to get three days worth of water. That's what would have happened to us if we let the government take over our well.

But Global Partners does what it says it will do. When I first started I had an agreement with Bruce and Jane. I was willing to build two doors and two (wooden shuttered) windows for each house for \$115 per house, on two conditions. First that they front me half of the money so I could buy materials. Second, that I would be their exclusive supplier, that they wouldn't go looking for a cheaper millwright to underbid me. Well, that worked OK as long as they built here in Las Cruces, but when they went to one of the neighboring villages that had a millworking shop they wanted to share some of the business with them. So I said, OK. But that shop took three months to do the first house. Bruce and Jane came back to me asking me to continue as their sole supplier. I said OK, and I don't need any advances, but now the doors and windows are going to cost you \$135 per house. They agreed. Right now half of my income comes from that one house per week. The other half comes from my beds that I send to Managua, but those are on consignment and I only get paid if and when they sell. One time I had to go to Managua six times to get paid for one shipment of beds.

This short conversation reveals the deterioration of the agricultural infrastructure, the complexity of village household livelihood systems, the importance of the NGO to the economy of some of the villagers, and an antipathy to government. Don Chepe's

millworking shop was one of three in the village, and the most active. It was able to support nine people at a sustainable level if subsistence agriculture could be relied on for generating the bulk of the family diet. Don Chepe was eager to upgrade his saw and lathe but limited availability of power prevented him from installing more powerful equipment. In his family compound were three houses constructed by his family, one by Global Partners, and one by Save the People.

Village leaders speak their mind.

Thank you for coming to visit us, because we know it is no easy thing for you to get here. We're very happy that you came to see with your own eyes and experience with your own hands how Nicaraguans live and work, rather than getting your information from the media. We hope you will come back.¹²⁵

When listening to villagers, both the acclaimed leaders and others who are not recognized as such by their peers, it became evident that one could not understand the role of the volunteer groups or even the interpersonal interaction between individual North Americans and Nicaraguans without considering the framework, the social field, created by the NGO/village articulation. Villagers see no viable alternatives to NGO involvement in their lives. Not just the development, but the very maintenance of their communities has, in many cases, become inextricably linked to these local avenues of foreign aid. As the North Atlantic and Asian financiers come to Nicaragua to get high annual returns on their investments, often pulling profits not from the surplus but from the substance of the country, NGOs provide an offsetting (albeit monetarily smaller) reinvestment in the social infrastructure of the country.

At the village level that means that NGOs become the conduits for almost all of the provision of services and infrastructure development. Many *campesinos* look upon a

¹²⁵ Address given to a volunteer group by a village president in the North of Nicaragua.

village such as *Las Cruces* as extremely fortunate to have five or six NGOs operating simultaneously within it providing outside investment in sectors of housing, education, potable water, agricultural extension, economic development of household livelihood systems, health, etc. This structural dependency on NGO capital, a graphic daily reminder of the tenets of neo-liberal economics, combined with the deep political divisions that exist even at the base and the amorphous nature of local organization and leadership are the structural factors that foster a *habitus* of deference on the part of the villagers. Add to this the strong modernization ideology touted by NGOs, political parties and the media and the internalization of a subaltern subjectivity becomes predictable though not inevitable.

“Sometimes village leaders are afraid to confront NGOs policies or decisions for fear of them leaving the community.”, shared a representative community leader. “Even though they might be conflicted internally, they resolve that conflict the easiest way, by accepting the decisions of the NGO, even though it might not be the most just.”¹²⁶

On the other hand some villagers perceived that those leaders who worked directly with the NGOs came to have a more global understanding of the rural development issues of the area. They noted the difference between native leadership that remains in the community and NGO staff that come for the duration of a project or a program and then depart. “When the project ends, the NGO goes, but the village stays and the village leader lives in that community.” The political issue over which the leaders felt some control was

¹²⁶ Input from village representatives here are culled from individual interviews and from a 22 item short answer questionnaire administered to 22 individuals, 8 of whom were village leaders. The instrument can be found in Appendix B.

not in the initial incidence of the NGO in the community nor in its departure, but rather in prolonging its tenure by not creating conflict with it during its stay.

Villagers understand in principle that NGOs have particular project cycles or terms of commitment to a community, but the singularity of each organizations' plans and the way that short term projects evolve in to long term ones, precludes the possibility of village leadership distinguishing between short-term tactical interventions and long-term strategic interventions by these organizations. For instance, Save the People had been in the community 8 years before the earthquake and envisioned a 15 year total commitment to the area. Whereas Europeans without Borders came in with the earthquake, did a six month emergency program which became a 3 year integral rural development program, and was being proposed to donors that it be extended for another 3 years. Partners entered with the earthquake, had replaced several hundred homes over three and a half years, perhaps one fifth of all family structures, and now was proposing in its promotional material to "eliminate poverty housing from the area" and in the minds of Bruce and Jane would remain in the villages for at least 10 years in order to accomplish that.

The villagers noted gratefully and in detail all the services rendered by the different NGOs. There was neither ignorance of nor lack of appreciation for their work. Some of the difficulties occasioned by their presence in the communities included the creation of factions in the community when certain pre-existing coalitions capture the material benefits of a particular program or project. The presence of transnational NGOs was perceived as a two edged sword, on the one hand they weren't identified with a political tendency (in the eyes of the villagers, although that was not true from the perspective of

municipal authorities) so they could be more impartial, on the other hand their lack of local knowledge often set them up to be manipulated by informal village power dynamics.

Some noted that externally planned and professionally executed programs in the village could have a dampening effect on community participation and demobilize people. They noted that sometimes NGOs enter the community and enlist support from villagers as if the whole community will benefit from their presence, but later, after utilizing a lot of the local leadership's time, it becomes apparent that those that are directly affected by the project are a small portion of the total community. Villagers values change when they envision NGO projects as opportunities for personal economic benefit rather than as a means to community development. The NGOs are the primary motors of local development and often work with the most needy families in the community.

The leaders saw themselves as intermediaries between the community and the NGOs in the sense of having responsibility to educate the NGOs about the community and educate the community about the NGOs. Decisions should involve both parties. They understood that there were different advantages to the community depending on the nature of the NGO and their willingness to inform the community about their goals and that there was a civic attitude of receptivity and participation that was needed on the part of the community to attract the NGOs. They distinguished their own role as providers of local knowledge and the NGO staffs' role as providers of organizational and material resources.

As to who determined or identified and defined the development goals of the community there were two tendencies expressed. Some stated that community development goals were basically defined by the NGOs who designed programs to meet those goals. Others felt that the community defined the goals and the NGOs responded to local articulation. A third group felt that determination of local development objectives was a process that involved either NGO needs assessment surveys of the community or on going dialogue between community leadership and NGO staff that eventually reached consensus.

When asked if the community was capable of planning its own development or whether it needed technical assistance to do so, most villagers felt that either NGOs or the state had the necessary expertise to strategically plan development. A minority opinion was that the community could identify the necessities for development without outside help but couldn't do much about them because of material constraints. The image that I got from all the answers was of a village with leaders who could identify its own problems without sophisticated needs assessment instruments, but that didn't have the will to plan development without assurance that any of the plans might come to fruition. The NGOs, ironically, while sometimes autocratic in their leadership style, were essential to mobilize the planning function of the local village leadership because they made development an attainable goal, rather than just a fantasy. While the *modus operandi* of some NGOs fostered apathy among the community, the fact that NGOs were present at all prevented generalized apathy from devolving into fatalism.

In regards to the difference between national NGOs and transnational NGOs some leaders saw no differences in their effects in the communities. Others saw the political

issues mentioned above. Several observed that foreign based NGOs were better financed than Nicaraguan ones. And a few villagers commented on the fact that local NGOs had a much higher cultural competency and so their activities were more integrated into the daily life of the village where as the foreign NGOs related to the village by means of projects, in a more instrumental manner.

In the last analysis the community leaders saw it as their responsibility to confront an NGO that might be pursuing a policy that was harming the community, but many were convinced that such a challenge could likely result in the offending NGO leaving the community altogether rather than adjusting its practices, and that effective challenges to practices and policies needed to be made early on, not after the project was in full swing.

When asked whose viewpoints were considered more authoritative in negotiations between the community and the NGO the leaders shared a very nuanced understanding of the process. Some felt that there was no such thing as negotiations and that the NGOs came into the community and basically did what they had previously planned to do. They also observed that local knowledge should have a privileged place when negotiations took place, but rarely did. One leader said. "Both locals and NGO professionals should relate democratically with each other but in the last analysis it is the NGO policies which determine what can be done."

When asked to describe the different types of NGOs that work in their community some leaders, such as the following, were clear in their distinctions. "Some offer assistance and they only give out stuff but they don't teach us how to live without begging, and there are others that come to train us but they don't give us the practical tools of how to apply what they have taught." They were pretty clear that the decision

about what component of the community would be benefited by any NGOs programs was a decision that the NGO alone made, sometimes based on an NGO administered needs assessment.

When asked to identify whether in their experience NGOs in their communities were primarily concerned with addressing acute immediate needs or were interested in organizing for structural change most indicated the former. But they did not deprecate one over the other, they saw a role for both. One leader recognized that an NGOs' charter may be to do long term community development but due to the effects of "the neo-liberal scourge" on the rural communities, it may be forced into a more service dispensing mode.

In regards to the practice of NGOs raising money for poverty abatement in their communities by using their villages in their appeals to donors, the community leaders indicated that they were not opposed in principle to that practice, but there needed to be an accuracy of the portrayal of the community, the more direct the better, and there needed to be some accountability for the funds raised in that way. They indicated that there generally had not been any formal accountability for NGO finances and most seemed unaware that such information was legally in the public domain. As one leader of a village development committee said "They [NGO staff] have told us how much particular project components cost, but I have no idea of the total project budgets."

When the leader's views of the volunteer vacation brigades were broached there were several trends of thought revealed. Several responded that materially the families in the community benefited greatly by the houses, but that those same families continue to live in poverty or even extreme poverty. Several mentioned that the volunteer groups

represented international good will and an efficient helping organization in a corner of the world that sometimes feels forgotten. Others said that the action of working together and living together allows the volunteers to learn about the villagers' life. "It's a very positive thing because we are getting to know each other through real practical action and not just by hearing about each other." said one.

When asked specifically about whether the community takes advantage of the opportunity afforded by the presence of the volunteer group to strengthen international solidarity they responded variously. A few felt that the volunteer groups did not interact with the community and little was known about them. Others felt it their responsibility as hosts to make the visitors comfortable and to put forth a good image for them to remember Nicaragua by. Some of the community families continue to communicate with members of the group that worked on their home after they go back to the United States. Not reflecting present practice but rather a wished for dynamic one leader said,

It seems to me that the volunteer groups ought to attend community activities such as open discussions, exchanges of ideas, they should shoot videos of our community that reflects the real situation. It would be great if they could attend our feasts, our parties, and our religious ceremonies. In other words it would be good to have a much closer social bond so that we can get to know who donated and who brought the resources that are being invested in our community.

Orientation of the Community

To the extent that the visit of a volunteer group for a week is an extraordinary occurrence in the daily life of a village we can expect to see some orientation process by the NGO preceding the visit, and we did. There was of course the logistical orientation to prepare to take care of a dozen dependents for a week, which involved a support crew from the village. There was an orientation of the Partners program beneficiaries whose houses were being constructed during the week. One could have imagined that there

would be notification of leaders in the community and staff of other NGOs but such was not the case. If the groups come repeatedly, as in *Las Cruces*, then after a few basic in depth orientations there would logically be less need for formal re-orientation.

In regards to logistical services such as food, lodging, security, laundry, etc. a group of some ten to twenty villagers (depending on the number of visitors) were enlisted to perform services which they understood well from many iterations. The directors of the school understood the dormitory facilities and degree of separation that they needed to afford the visiting group that was lodged in their midst. Permissions and audiences had to be obtained for childrens' programs that were administered on school or church properties.

Concerning the beneficiary families there was a necessity to reach an agreement with them about storage of construction materials and tools and about the supply of water for construction. If the family planned to participate in the construction, which we witnessed with some , but not all Partners groups, there was a need to explain how to work with the visiting group and explain the NGO's expectations of the family's involvement in construction. There was a dramatic difference in the intensity and quality of interaction between Nicaraguans and North Americans when families were actively involved in the construction process. In cases where the family was looking on or absent there was a noticeably lower level of interaction and perceptibly less emotional involvement of both parties.

A third dimension of orientation in the community is with general community leaders or key villagers. It would be reasonable to expect that there would be a formal prior notification of the leaders about the dates of arrival of a group, the size of the group,

the project objectives for the week, the composition of the group by individual members and any particular interests the group might have in learning about rural Nicaragua and the particular village. In *Las Cruces* we never witnessed such conversations, except those individuals who had to be contacted to supply a logistical need of the group.

Several village leaders mentioned that they were not previously notified of the arrival of a group, much less what their agenda was. We saw some evidence of change in this regard after our submitting a report including this observation in a general village assembly.

There was a commercial dining establishment in the community that sold very good food at reasonable prices, but the groups were never fed there. All food was served at the home of the construction foreman with his family doing the preparing. There was very little financial impact to the village economy because of the group's presence apart from the in kind infrastructure improvements for individual families and the pay to Partner's employees.

The Encounter between volunteers and villagers

The component of the community that the volunteers inter-related with the most, by far, was the Partners construction crew. Camilo, Jaime, Samuel, Mambo, and Wilson were known both by name and by personality to the volunteers. Special working relationships characterized by humor and at times even affection formed between an individual volunteer and the Nicaraguan with whom they worked most closely. The Nicaraguans needed, because of the cultural barriers, to have extraordinary degrees of patience and humor. Not only were the North Americans repeatedly and continually culturally inappropriate by Nicaraguan standards in their interactions, but they often either knew too little or too much about construction to be of very much help. Never the less because of the remarkable flexibility of the crew and the cultural "receptivity" that

has been recognized as a Nicaraguan national trait, the working relationships were always amiable and productive. Most communication was non-verbal by means of signs, facial expressions, and gestures. Humor was a constant component of the communication, at times subtle and other time's slapstick, as in the complex water balloon attacks and counter-attacks. Camilo shared that he appreciated working with the visiting groups because it gave him a chance to teach them some of his construction skills as a way of expressing his love and affection for them.

Apart from the construction crew, the Nicaraguans most in contact with the volunteers were the beneficiary families whose houses were under construction. Many of the visitors were most attracted to the children because they could communicate easier with them non-verbally than with the adults. Those who spoke Spanish communicated with other family members. In each group there was usually at least one or two Spanish speakers¹²⁷. . .

In Conclusion, we see that the villagers had a variety of opinions about the volunteer visitors in their midst. Some, like Martha, the director of the school pointed out the material gains made by the community through the work of the brigades, especially the cumulative semiotic effect of replacing shacks that symbolized poverty and victimization with sturdy new homes that symbolized progress and stability. To others its significance was the manner in which North Americans, who they assumed would be 'above' physical labor, worked along side local folks. Yet others mentioned that in spite of language barriers and cultural differences the interpersonal interchange was rich in its

¹²⁷ Some NGOs, not Partners, require every group to have at least two Spanish speakers or else employ a translator. Since Bruce, Jane and Victor were constantly present with the Partners Masaya groups, such a regulation was unnecessary

diversity and mutual learning. Some thought of the North Americans as potent emissaries of modernism, with new technologies of conceptualization and of organization that could be learned and internalized by rural Nicaraguans on the road to self-improvement. Most believed that the groups were integral to generating the funds necessary for Partners to continue its work in the region. These willing volunteers from the North symbolized in their persons a continuing resource stream that would facilitate the construction of new homes in their communities..

There are villagers who saw the value of teaching the visitors “just how we live”, some desiring to do so to show their victimization , others to share their accomplishments. Several mentioned that it was a stimulus to the community to try to be the best hosts possible in order to interest the North Americans in returning again, because the needs are great. Many believed that the experience of living together and working side by side increased the communal energy necessary to effect true development. The community took heart and grew in morale when the visitors arrived.

Even while accentuating the positive, village leaders also contributed cautions and criticisms. Several offered observations that improvements to the physical infrastructure notwithstanding, the presence of volunteer groups had little effect in training, empowering, or mobilizing local people. Some observed that the groups related to a small specific sub-population of the village, consisting of kinship groups. Several were concerned with broadening the number and variety of community/volunteer group interactions in the future. One young villager said

Once a college age group came and we village young adults conversed with them for hours on the basketball court with Victor translating for everyone. We wondered how they felt as Yankees, as North Americans, about what has happened between our countries in the past. When they told us that they were critical of their

government's policies towards Nicaragua we felt closer to them. We would like to do things like that more often, but it has only happened once.

Summary

In this chapter we have shown how solidarity finds sporadic opportunities and obstacles during a specific group visit administered by a particular NGO in an identified village. The conditions for the possibility of solidarity formation will vary considerably as aspects of each of these components change with each encounter.

We saw how the NGOs themselves spring forth from cladistic relations of solidarity through time. We saw that the particular *habitus* of the organization itself influences and constrains the forms of solidarity that group members can choose for themselves in the future. We saw that incommensurability is always a potential obstacle to solidarity as in the incident between Victor and Jane concerning the hospital tour. We saw the ideological and educational difficulties that the NGO encountered in leading its own volunteers from a stance of service to one of solidarity after they had returned home.

Next we examined the encounter from the point of view of the group itself and saw that group composition and group dynamics influenced the group/community boundary. Our observed group was composed of many veterans and new comers and we saw that this mix facilitated the work of Partners, their host. We found the groups' aspiration for solidarity with Nicaraguan villagers to be fulfilled almost exclusively by the NGO work team and support personnel. Ancillary programs of material benefit for Nicaraguans organized by the group members accrued more to the NGO staff and less to villagers at large. Beneficiary families played a minor role, and random villagers, with the exception of children playing in the evening, had negligible contact with the group. The response of the group to this regimen was not to complain and demand more interaction, but rather to

collapse their hopes for solidarity with the Nicaraguan villagers into solidarity with Global Partners.

When we moved from the perspective of the volunteer group to the perspective of the villagers we find gratefulness for the significant help that the group has occasioned, but also a yearning for more contact, for dialogue, perhaps a yearning for solidarity. Precisely because of the material importance of Global Partners to the community, village leaders were reluctant to initiate interaction with the volunteers since such forthrightness might interfere with NGO agendas for the group. Coloniality held sway. In summary, what we have witnessed here is a semi-enclave encounter in which villagers and volunteers are largely reduced to “gazing” at the other because they lack and do not proactively create the opportunity for some deep hanging out. Both parties are involved in largely non-participatory observation of each other.

In other volunteer groups, even other groups hosted by Global Partners, there were greater degrees of interaction and community involvement than just described. I would hesitate to say that the limited interaction in this example is representative, but I can say that it is not atypical. When NGO involvement with the community is extensive and profound, then it is reasonable to assume that volunteers will profit from that interchange to understand Nicaraguans in a more complex way. Conversely, when an NGO’s popular base in Nicaragua is very narrow or superficial, its suitability as a launch-pad for transcultural solidarity is considerably reduced. It is reduced to an enclave development organization offering an enclave development experience to its North American supporters. When democratic process is not the dynamic that powers the NGO, and when community consultations are few and far between, then lack of community/NGO

interaction should not be surprising. Many positive outcomes (for instance, service), may arise from such a situation. But transcultural solidarity will not likely be one of them. To the extent that there is little intentionality in planning group/community interactions, to that extent an opportunity to accelerate what can occur slowly on a casual basis, has been lost. To the extent that the NGO is operating from a development model that is not articulated to the volunteers, it is likely that there will be confusion in the mind of the volunteer about how service and solidarity correlate with each other. Yet perhaps we can take solace in that, as Ted Lewellen (1997) has said, much that happens in the name of development is unplanned serendipity. On the other hand perhaps that is the at least part of the reason that counter-development is now such an urgent need.

CHAPTER 7
THE *HABITUS* OF TRANSCULTURAL SOLIDARITY

The first thing that appealed to me was the chance to actually live among people in a culture so different from our own. I didn't want to go to a developing nation, stay in some fancy hotel, and view people from the window of an air-conditioned tour bus. I wanted to be with them. I wanted to talk to them. See their homes. Eat their food and somehow make a connection with them. The chance to learn from that experience was enough for me. The opportunity to actually do something good for them while I was there was just an added bonus.- (Grace, A Global Partners volunteer and board member).

If they come to “help”, it won't work. Better that they stay where they are. If they are coming to interact, and to help everyone learn something mutually, then welcome! (Boff 2002:180)

Solidarity demands that as US citizens we change US policies toward Nicaragua, which in our opinion are contributing to US impoverishment of Nicaraguans. Economic policies that do not lead to what we would consider long range development. (Susan Hoffstedler, Global Field Director for Witness for Peace).

Chapter Overview:

I sat outside the village school room where the rest of our group was sleeping, watching the stars above. Miguel, the volunteer night guard for our dormitory and a member of the partnership committee leaned toward me and whispered in Spanish,. “Do you think this partnership between our village and this North American church is a good thing?” I thought for a minute and replied, “I think it's a good thing for the North Americans. Do you think it's a good thing for the Nicaraguans?” Is volunteer vacationing and the transcultural solidarity that can come from it a “good” thing? What and whom is it good for?

This chapter offers a synthesis of my findings, detailed earlier, that address my research question: “How do volunteer vacationers, Nicaraguan villagers, and NGOs interact in such a way as to foster transcultural solidarity?”(pg 157). In Chapter 1, I defined my research quest as having three levels of explication. First, I wanted to know why, from the perspective of the intentionality of the participants, these encounters happen. Second, I wanted to understand the practical issues of how they are performed transculturally. Finally, I wanted to understand their significance, both to the participants themselves and to the communities in which they live. It is obvious from the expansiveness of this inquiry that this initial phase of exploratory research will have been successful if it can provide the parameters for an ongoing research program which will explore the myriad of more specific questions that my investigation raises. This final chapter will frankly acknowledge the limitations of our findings and make two types of recommendations, those for future research, and recommendations for future practice.

I was concerned that my study provide theoretical insight into the anthropological question of transcultural solidarity construction. I also wanted the findings to have some application in transnational civil society’s struggles to cope with global capitalism. I am confident that I have contributed in a small way toward each objective. Let us consider first the theoretical issues of transcultural solidarity and the implications of this study for the discipline of anthropology and the subfields of tourism studies, development studies, peasant studies, and globalization and transnational studies mentioned in chapter 2.

Thinking Transcultural Solidarity

The theoretical issue for anthropology addressed here is how can we think about transcultural solidarity as a conspecific relationship that can reconfigure the borders of

difference that threaten the species in any given historical context. How can human solidarity be conceptualized as transcultural and still have political potential?

In our ethnographic archeology and genealogy of solidarity I was able to discover dimensions or attributes of solidarity and also a sequential schema for its formation. I identified cognitive, affective, somatic and volitional components of solidarity, which when taken in the aggregate constitute a *habitus* within the *social field* of the transnational NGO sector of global civil society.

The Encounter Phenomenon

Transcultural solidarity does not begin primarily with some transnational affinity like membership in organized labor or an international political party, or an international fraternal organization like Rotarians or Kiwanis. Nor does it begin with the international socio-economic solidarity of the working class or the managerial class. Transcultural solidarity as it is analyzed here is based on a cross-cultural phenomenon or event, an encounter which takes place in a specific time and place. Transcultural solidarity begins in a locality. It is a global event, partaking of symbolism that resonates at the local, national, and global scales. It is an encounter between citizens of the one-third world and citizens of the two-thirds world. The catalyst for the possibility of solidarity is two fold; an arresting inequity, and an experience of personal intimacy. Its social context is a local community development project. The cultural broker is a transnational NGO. The participants are North Americans and Central Americans. It is a phenomenon that gets repeated hundreds, possibly thousands of times annually and involves thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands of people.

The Dimensions of Transcultural Solidarity

The dimensions of solidarity I outlined in chapter one as 1) an awareness of human interdependency usually achieved through an interpersonal relationship of intimacy and empathy, 2) an identification of a specific situation of injustice, 3) a decision or commitment to address the injustice, and 4) the disciplined development of a *habitus* of solidarity by engaging in practices to right the injustice.

The Movements of Transcultural Solidarity

I was able to detect a four part movement in the formation of solidarity in the volunteer which begins with the existence of a situation of injustice which is usually a motive for his/her volunteering. Awareness of the injustice is followed by interpersonal bonding between the volunteer and someone directly affected by the injustice, establishing empathy with the overt victim. Third, the volunteer analyzes the injustice and formulates a plan of action that will address the suffering and the injustice that gives rise to it. Finally the volunteer commits him or her self to the plan and acts accordingly. As Freire observed, everything up to the point of committed solidary action is incomplete and cannot be considered as solidarity. Solidarity is performative not merely affective.

Three Subjectivities of Transcultural Volunteers

Understanding the components, and sequence of solidarity formation led me to the realization that volunteers can be grouped into three subject locations. I was able to identify among the visitors a sub-population for whom the values of volunteering, specifically, the corporeal work and recreating, were predominant values. It was clear that this subjectivity was more prevalent among first time volunteers.

About a third of volunteer vacationers return to Nicaragua. Most return with the NGO that facilitated their first journey. The second trip is a qualitatively different

experience; not because the external stimuli vary, but because the volunteers are in a different place personally. Whereas the first experience was “life changing” because of the volunteers’ emotional reaction to previously unimaginable abject poverty and cultural diversity, the second is a deepening of the strangely familiar as prior contextual knowledge ameliorates the chaotic intensity of images, sounds, smells and textures. The development tourist shifts his/her focus from the brute activity of the volunteer to a deeper awareness of the symbolic and communal as well as the material grassroots development process. This understanding is achieved by osmosis as s/he works alongside villagers and NGO staff in multiple iterations of a process. S/he also shows increased interest in the host culture by seeking wider or deeper cultural experience.

At some point the development tourist may become aware of the limitations of the community based development effort in which s/he is engaged. Personal transcultural relationships deepen and the visitor’s sensitivity to suffering and joy is more refined and nuanced. Romanticism fades. One’s relative impotence to change macro forces of society engenders immersion in the particular, general discouragement or a desire to understand the systemic issues. If the response is to engage in social analysis then the solidarity traveler seeks out Nicaraguans and North Americans who can articulate their understanding of the symbiotic relationship between their respective nations.

The solidarity traveler develops a long term action plan to keep in contact with Nicaragua and the people s/he has come to know and to engage in social action for policy change in their country of origin or in the global economic system. These are the 10% who organize groups to Nicaragua and join solidarity organizations in North America. Some become annual group leaders or start new transcultural NGOs to introduce others

to Nicaragua. Each new initiative weaves a denser citizen-to-citizen network. They, and their Nicaraguan counterparts, are leaders of a growing popular social movement of transcultural solidarity.

Volunteering sometimes created the conditions for the possibility of transcultural solidarity formation between villagers and visitors. The performance of the NGO in defining the context and the rationale was a critical factor in determining how many and to what extent both visitors and villagers would form solidary relationships and enter into a *habitus* of solidarity.

Two Alternatives to Transcultural Solidarity

I found that two common conceptualizations of the encounters, other than transcultural solidarity, were transcultural altruism and NGO centered solidarity. I documented the commonly observed difficulties that middle class North Americans and popular class Nicaraguans have in entering reciprocal relationships when immersed in coloniality. I found that the cultural logic of altruism contends with that of solidarity. They are two different ‘games’, with distinct rules. One acknowledges mutuality and reciprocity and the other does not.

The social field constructed by the NGO can foster a *habitus* of altruism or of solidarity. Its discourse and practice may include elements of both, as we have seen, but the organization continually makes choices that support one or the other. Since altruism conflicts less with neo-coloniality of the one-third world as much as solidarity does, it is more common among the visitors than solidarity. And since altruism does not conflict with clientilistic strains of neo-colonialism found in the two-thirds world it is more common among the villagers than solidarity is. Only when there is a strong predisposition toward solidarity on the part of any of the three parties in the volunteer

vacation encounter is there the potential for transforming the individual, group, organization or community from a *habitus* of service to a *habitus* of solidarity. The power to enable such a transformation lies predominantly, though not exclusively, with the NGO as the institution responsible for structuring the *social field* of the transcultural encounter.

The second obstacle to the formation of transcultural solidarity through volunteer vacationing is the NGO that displaces the rural community and its residents as the object and counterpart subject of volunteer solidarity. In this case the *habitus* of solidarity can be maintained because reciprocity is preserved, but the emotional identification generated by the empirical experience of abject poverty is displaced from victims of that poverty to the NGO which works with the poor. In this case the relationship may not be fully transcultural in as much as the NGO shares the class and national logic of the volunteers¹²⁸. In this case *mis-recognition* is almost inevitable since the *habitus* or rules of solidarity require being in relationships of reciprocity with the victims of injustice and any appeals or actions made on their behalf will accrue to the NGO as a proxy for the community. Because NGOs are positioned between the volunteers and the villagers, strategies are required to preserve the solidary relationship between volunteers and villagers without substituting the easier volunteer/NGO relationship in its place. If visitors identify the NGO as the proxy subject of solidarity, the distance between the subjectivity of the NGO and that of the community will erode the authenticity of the solidarity over time. As the traveler becomes aware of the limitations of the NGO's

¹²⁸ It is possible for volunteer/NGO solidarity to be transcultural when the NGO is Nicaraguan and administered by organic intellectuals of the popular classes.

solidarity with the village their fealty to the organization may wane and alternative organizations may be created.

Transcultural Solidarity Travel and Group Ego-Tourism

I find much support for Munt's (1994) neologism 'ego-tourism' in describing this form of alternative tourism. Every volunteer had not just an altruistic rationale but issues of (sometimes masked) personal development that they were bringing to the experience. Unlike Salazar, (2001,2004) however, my findings do not justify choosing between labeling the intentionality of the volunteer vacationer either altruistic or egoistic. Such a bifurcation reduces the complexity of the ethnographic data. Rather travel motivations should be evaluated on those two scales separately as each individual volunteer has a unique personal configuration of motivations.

People who belong to civil society groups make decisions about travel that are heavily influenced by their membership in those groups. Much tourism literature uses the individual as the unit of analysis, treating decisions about travel individualistically. I have found that several visitors in each group have come to Nicaragua primarily because their organization, which also serves as a social network, arranged the trip and solicited their participation. This kind of travel is done in pre-existing or ad hoc groups.

As mentioned previously this is the first study of volunteer vacationing or development tourism that includes ethnographic material from the host community. Data presented in that regard tends to reinforce Cheong and Miller's (2000) contention that travel brokers have more agency in the encounters than either visitors or locals do, and thus can determine whether or not interpersonal encounters or mutual gazing sessions

transpire.¹²⁹ My research explains why culture brokers may not encourage transcultural interaction. I found that NGOs are often more secure in promoting controlled transcultural interactions with designated individuals than they were in turning free ranging volunteers loose in a community. By structuring encounters NGOs were able to minimize the inevitable discomfort, confusion, and occasional dangers that come with cross cultural communication. They could minimize requests for gifts or favors from villagers as well as shield villagers from what they considered culturally inappropriate visitor behavior. Crowded NGO program agendas did not often lend themselves to casual interaction.

We see in the volunteers' subjectivities a complex pattern of identities and locations. Initially volunteer vacationers participate in the practices of commercial tourism that involve globe trotting and sight seeing. Those who value exoticism and variety above the other characteristics of volunteer vacationing will be drawn toward multiple destinations and photo opportunities. Beyond the commercial tourist mode, in the realm of alternative tourism, values of sharing in community life, or *convivencia*, will come to the fore. This *convivencia* can be accompanied by a service dimension or not. If *convivencia* consist mostly of accompaniment and learning from the Nicaraguans, then the transition to a subject position of altruistic, non-reciprocal service is less likely and a *habitus* of solidarity is probable. If *convivencia* and service occur simultaneously then,

¹²⁹ A recently completed study of community members preparing to host visiting volunteers found that villagers wanted more cooperative planning but felt dependent on the NGO's initiative to make it happen. Sherby, Ellen

2005 El grado de participación comunitaria de familias relacionadas con el CEPAD en el proceso de planificación programática de una delegación educativa facilitada por el Programa Nehemías de CEPAD en la comunidad de Susulí, Matagalpa, Nicaragua, abril 2004. Master's, UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTONOMA DE NICARAGUA..

depending on what the service signifies to the respective parties, there is the possibility of a contradictory *habitus* that involves elements of both altruism and solidarity. If service is the rationale for the North Americans' presence, and *convivencia* happens incidentally or not at all, then the likelihood of a solidary relationship developing is remote. I am not arguing that accompaniment is superior to service as a modality of developing solidarity but rather that service needs to be contextualized within transcultural relationships or it becomes a distraction from solidarity formation for both North Americans and Nicaraguans.

Dynamic movement from one subject position to another requires overcoming logistical, institutional, or political constraints that foster ego-tourism or altruism instead of solidarity. Some practices of sending organizations and NGOs facilitate a solidary trajectory and others do not. Those which ignore or deny the power differentials of the two different citizenships will not tend to foster solidarity. Those practices which acknowledge and creatively address the power imbalances will open possibilities of transcending transcultural alienation and fostering solidarity. Solidarity does not presuppose power equality, on the contrary, it assumes a situation of inequity in which the two parties have different stakes but a common goal, social justice.

Developing Modernities:

What this study reaffirms that NGOs, community based organizations are key players in community level development in rural Central America. The large institutional players such as bilateral and multi-lateral aid agencies are primarily about importing large-scale transnational corporate modernity to Nicaragua. They are financing Plan Puebla Panama to attract transnational corporations. Pursuing counter-development of local modernities often involves joining a different alliance. Culture wars in Nicaragua

takes the shape of competing development models and competing modernities. NGOs sit on the sidelines of this competition at the peril of rendering themselves irrelevant to the people with whom they work. Here, as starkly as anywhere in the world, it is clear that the fault line in development studies and practice has to be defined by whether one opts for unitary modernity or for distinct modernities (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993).

One major contribution of my study is to correlate the development/counter-development debate with the distinctions of service and solidarity. Volunteers repeatedly analyzed their service as uni-directional, in which they “sacrifice and perform selfless acts without expecting reward”. This discourse replicates orthodox development doctrine that “we’ve decided to do this for your good”. While the term “service” is defined by other volunteers in a more dialogical and mutual manner, its ordinary meaning as something done for others distinguishes it from a solidary relationship. Service lends itself to the discourse of what Ferguson (1990) refers to as the “anti-politics machine.” Solidarity does not. This conceptual distinction can be a tool to lend more clarity to contested concepts such as participation, empowerment, and sustainability.

The Demise of Peasant Studies:

Kearney’s (1996) death knell for the peasantry is challenged by Nuñez’(Núñez Soto 2003) appeal for an agrarian small holder development model for Nicaragua. Peasants may be dead as anthropologically constructed pre-modernist others. But redefining them polybians as Kearney does (1996:141), and describing them as “involved in complex, non-contiguous, transnational, formal and informal modes of production so varied and complex as to defy characterization as ‘articulation of modes of production,’” does little for their political efficacy.

Kearney's cogent and convincing argument from his Mexican and Mexican – American ethnographic base, writing on the cusp of NAFTA, must be evaluated in light of Zapatista era agrarian modernities. Some Mixtecs and Zapotecs may be resigned to transnationality and agro-industrial proletarianization as a *fait accompli*, but his proclamation of the death of subsistence plus agriculture in general is just a bit premature. The clue to his surrender comes on page 111 of Reconceptualizing the Peasantry when he states that “at some point in recent history a threshold was crossed whereby the classical surplus-producing peasant community types have largely evolved into communities of ‘infra-subsistence’. Peasants which ... produce less than they consume.” While I acknowledge that there are Nicaraguan campesino communities which have slipped into infra-subsistence, there are others who have not. And the issue remains the securing of resources for agrarian peoples to pursue their productive lifeways rather than accepting their displacement into proletarianized/informal economy hybrid relations of production to survive late capitalism.

The obvious advantages of an agrarian lifestyle for sustainability in the fragile ecosystem of the Mesoamerican isthmus is, by itself, reason enough not to accommodate to the rural diaspora to the urban informal economy. The fact that 42% of the population of Nicaragua makes its living in the countryside from agriculture shifts the burden of proof that we should accede to the global demise of productive agrarian small holders back onto Kearney.

This is not to argue that Plan Puebla Panama, CAFTA, the National Development Plan of Nicaragua and other high modern schemes of socio-economic engineering cannot make it so. The danger to *campesinos* in Nicaragua is imminent and real. Attrition is

currently high and could go higher quickly. But Kearney's translocality trope is not a viable alternative, not least because it fails to offer the very "collective symbolic value" that he admits undergirds political power.

It is more accurate to refer to the agrarian peoples of Nicaragua as *campesinos* as they do themselves thus enlisting traditions of both ethnic and class identity (1990; Gould 1998) while avoiding some of the Northern stereotypical baggage of the word peasant. Nonetheless *campesinos* correspond closely to Eric Wolf's time honored (1953) definition of peasants as "people with a stable relationship to the land such that they produce primarily from agrarian activities and primarily for subsistence rather than reinvestment." (Wolf 1955:453-454) It is the last concept in the definition that distinguishes peasants from small holder subsistence agriculture on diversified family farms. For the only small growers that are likely to retain their land tenancy in the future in Nicaragua are those that are able to reach "high equilibrium" (D'Exelle and Bastiaensen 2000) by reinvesting profits from annual and especially perennial crops into the farm itself, intensifying and diversifying their agricultural rubrics and thus maintaining or even increasing yields and profitability. These small holders grow for subsistence and market simultaneously, they are not commercial growers in the strict sense. Rather they participate in at least two modes of production simultaneously¹³⁰ But they are different than Kearney's polybians in that the connection to the land and agrarian production is constitutive of their identities. This is not to argue that people are not leaving the land in numbers looking for alternatives in cities on industrial farms, or in foreign countries. I am simply denying the universality and inevitability of that exodus.

¹³⁰ Usually their household livelihood system includes petty commodity production and wage labor as well, but the more agriculturally productive have managed to stick to the two modes..

Indigenous peoples ceased to exist in Western Nicaragua in the late 19th century when they shed their ethnicity in order to survive persecution or government census officials redesignated them all mestizos in order to gain access to their communal lands (Gould 1998). We should closely examine in whose interest it is that the subsistence plus mode of production becomes an artifact of traditional culture, no longer credible in a modern context. I fear that, by surrendering their symbolic tie to the land, regardless of their relations of production, Kearney's position dis-empowers the very people he purports to champion. As one campesina said, "They have a right to belong to the land!" The leaders of the transnational resistance movement *Via Campesina*¹³¹ would tend to agree with her and would, I believe, meet Kearney's post modern subjectivity of post-peasants with considerable reservation. Kearney would seem to consider their struggle to maintain an agrarian base a mute point in Mexico. Perhaps he is conflating modernities with modernity.

When NGOs abandon the small holder agricultural development model and buy into agro-industrialization and enclave economics, then it is clear that their visiting volunteers as well as the agrarian peoples with whom they work will be impacted. In which case anthropologists of Nicaragua will become, like Kearney, charged with the job of documenting the passing of a way of life and counting the abandoned development projects strewn across the countryside.

Two development models presently compete in Nicaragua as they have since 1525. One is based on concentrating wealth and increasing consumption within a particular social class of society. Another is based on distributing resources and the means of

¹³¹ An international meeting of which was attacked militarily by the Indonesian national police during this writing.

production to individual producer households for the satisfaction of basic necessities.

The wealth concentrating model is the model supported by the elites and the egalitarian subsistence model is that supported by small holder agrarian peoples. The first is environmentally unsustainable, the second is potentially sustainable.

The governments of Nicaragua and the United States, representing the interests of their national elites, have consistently supported the first model of development to the subjugation or exclusion of the second. They are continuing to do so with a solidarity of elite social class across national boundaries, consolidating what Sklair (2002) calls the “transnational capitalist class”. Popular classes have been prevented from establishing that same transcultural solidarity and middle classes have been confused as to their loyalties in transcultural solidarities. It has been in the middle classes’ interest to be confused, because middle class prosperity is predicated on the same economic system which structures poverty for the majority of Nicaraguans and for ten percent of North Americans. But middle class interests are changing as the global terms of trade and division of labor exacerbates inequity in the One Third World as well as the Two Thirds World. It is becoming easier for social analysts to draw the parallels and interconnections among struggles for social justice globally.

Perhaps it is the class confusion of the middle classes which makes them so desirous of the opportunity to engage in transcultural solidarity. They are less certain of the origin of their wealth than the capitalist class and have more leisure for political activity than their working class compatriots. In the village, in a pair of work pants smeared with cement, class emblems are rare among the volunteers and Nicaraguan village class differentiation is less than evident to visitors. Transcultural solidarity then is

not symbolically about class, but about ad hoc community and the alliances that might arise from that.

The material and human potential for viable small holder agriculture exists (D'Excelle and Bastiaensen 2000) today in Nicaragua, just as it did once and could again in the United States. The cultural insight and political will to make the investments necessary to enable campesinos to survive on the land by raising their productive capacities from infra-subsistence to subsistence plus may not prevail. It could well be too distributive of an economic model to appeal to the politicians and those they represent.

This is precisely where civil society organizations, transnational philanthropic institutions, European municipal solidarity funds, and transnational NGOs could provide the cultural and financial capital necessary to underwrite another modernity in Nicaragua. Homologous to the industrialists of the North Atlantic that financed the agro-export model in Nicaragua from its inception, transnational civil society has an historic opportunity to step forward in a more concerted way in a transcultural solidarity that does not go through the elite commercial class nor their government apparatus. Leadership from the *campesinos* themselves, through their village organizations and social movements can supply the direction and transcultural solidarity can provide the resources to reestablish sustainable agrarian living in Nicaragua. for those who want it.

Globalization and Innovative forms of Human Solidarity

My research focuses directly on the assertion that “globalization from below gives rise to innovative forms of human solidarity and citizenship”(Carnoy and Castells 2001:2). I document that an innovative form of human solidarity, namely that engendered by citizen-to-citizen transcultural short-term contact, began in Nicaragua in

the 1980s with solidarity brigades that arrived by the hundreds from Europe and North America.

That particular form of transnationality has continued into the neo-liberal era of the 21st century unabated, though the rationales and the characters of the solidarities have evolved. Contingent on availability of international air travel, this phenomenon appears to be growing steadily, as it has for the past 25 years.

Volunteer vacationing is not restricted to Nicaragua but is widespread between North America and MesoAmerica and the Caribbean. Not only are the number of host NGOs growing, the number of trips per NGO are also growing, and the percentage of repeat visitors appears to be holding steady at between 30 and 40% per annum, projecting rapid growth in volunteers and encounters. This growing demand from the North is also highly sensitive to and positively correlated to natural disaster relief efforts. Incidence of disasters in Nicaragua can be anticipated to augment the volunteers enroute and disasters in other Central American or Caribbean locations may well detour them.

Concerning transnational subjectivities (Ong 1999) my research reveals the especially sensitive political terrain that exists in the Nicaragua/United States transnation. Citizens of either country come with an historical subconscious of the other nation. The transcultural imagined community that emerges from this encounter enables citizens of either country to reappropriate their own nationality in light of new and divergent information. This important process of forging new transcultural subjectivities is short circuited when politeness, timidity, ignorance, apathy guilt or lack of opportunity precludes open dialogue on sensitive political and historical issues. Similar opportunities

and obstacles exist concerning transcultural communication regarding gender, race, class, and sexual orientation.

In the process of forging transcultural solidarity, encounter participants construct a new transcultural ethnoscape that we could call Nicusa. In Nicusa subjectivities are fostered that challenge the borders of the imagined communities of Nicaragua and the United States. Transcultural solidarity is “border thinking” but it is not Nepantlism because it is not about people torn between two ways of living, but rather about people seeking a common respect for life from two respective and distinct lifeways. The issue is not conversion from either lifeway to the other or to some hybrid culture, but rather a deepening respect for interacting but distinct modernities. E.B.Tyler’s cultural convergence is not the value here, rather it is Benedict’s “making the world safe for diversity”.

Concerning the question of how fundamental civil society is vis a vis the state, we have a valuable case study in Nicaragua where the state has been progressively divested of resources, legitimacy and jurisdiction. The wars and embargoes of the 1970s and 80s, multiple natural disasters, pilfering of the national treasury from Somoza through Aleman, and the largest per capita debt service of any country in the western hemisphere all conspired to drain state resources to the insufficient level. Official corruption, flawed elections, subservience to the United States Ambassador, lack of compliance with campaign promises and secret pacts between the leading political strong men all contribute to subvert the governments’ claims to legitimacy. Constant IMF and World Bank auditing of government revenues and expenditures under structural adjustment ultimatums, trade agreements immune from amendment by the national legislature, and

devolution of authority to regional and local governments, all weaken the jurisdiction of the state over policy, territory and citizenry.

In this setting the functioning of the NGO sector provides a window into what a stateless nation might look like. Is civil society more fundamental an institution of social compact than the state? Will it be possible for the nation to function without a state? At the local village level that is close to the reality. Transnational NGOs displace the state, and while not pretending to dispense the depth and breadth of services that citizens are entitled to, have provided a higher level of access to social resources than Nicaraguans of the popular classes in rural zones are accustomed to from government agencies. It seems feasible to imagine governance or at least governmentality without a state.

Could rural Nicaragua also have a stateless democracy, that is, civil society governance involving democracy with out involving the state? There are instances of this in other places in Central America (Bronkema 1997). This research indicates that some NGOs, an example would be Save the People, are experimenting with democratic forms of local governance in their multi-village development jurisdictions. This is all the more important because Save the People's corporate policy is to enter communities where no other development NGOs operate, hence their presence would be exclusive, at least initially, similar to the Honduran example that Bronkema analyzes. Movements in this direction could involve redesignating NGOs as PARGOs (para-governmental organizations) or POSGOs (Post-governmental organizations). Issues of territoriality and nationhood will have to be rethought if the state is conceptually delinked from local governance.

Future Phases of the Research Program in Transcultural Solidarity

Campesino/villager subjectivity

The pre-eminent subsequent topic for this research is to understand in greater depth the types of solidarity that are formed from the perspective of the *campesinos*. While we have some general findings based on interviews with village leaders it is important to note there is an uneven depth of understanding in this study, which reveals much more of the subjectivity of the North Americans than of the Nicaraguans. It is important to do a study like Gould's ethnography of the *campesino* movement in latter 20th century Chinandega (1990). A villager perspective will show how *campesinos* evaluate the political utility of NGOs and solidarity brigades. It is not clear, for instance, how *campesinos* who are aware of the threat of CAFTA to their livelihood, regard U.S. based transnational NGOs who take no public stand on the issue.

I attempted but was not able to locate a rural Nicaraguan community where the overt decisions concerning community development and the construction of local modernities were being made by villagers who then enlisted the support of NGOs and their volunteer vacationers. Such communities probably exist and it should be a high priority to identify them in order to understand the transcultural solidarity formation in circumstances where agency is more openly contested, where rural Nicaraguans exert more relative political power vis a vis that wielded by the NGO. I hypothesize that transcultural solidarity would form in such circumstances much more readily

A related concern is the character of village leadership, NGO leadership and group leadership. While we did mention that NGO staff widely credited the quality of volunteer group leadership with effecting the quality of the transcultural encounter for all

parties, especially the volunteers, we did not have the opportunity to explore in depth the qualities of leadership deemed essential for the formation of transcultural solidarity

Religion

It remains to be determined just how “typical” volunteer vacationers are. Even though they are numerous and geographically disperse there may be socio-cultural attributes that characterize them as a subgroup in the general population. One particularly salient factor is religion. Although our research design did not track religious variables it is clear that the vast majority of volunteer visitors are religiously active. Most are Christians, but not new right evangelicals. Rather they are members of older Protestant denominations and, to a lesser extent, Catholics. Their orientation toward religion is more “liberal” and ecumenical. Often times more so than the denominations of Christians present in their host villages. Ray Krause, a Presbyterian (PCUSA) minister and one of the founders of Global Partners states “ I was interested in trying to create a space for democrats, republicans, the informed, the uninformed, the Christian the Jew, the agnostic, the atheist.”

Some proselytizing Christian missionaries come to Nicaragua on short term mission trips that resemble the volunteer vacation experiences are more fully enveloped in a conversion ideology. They come not to meet fellow Christians but to create them. These groups may be more numerous than volunteer vacationers (Beek 2004).¹³² Given the coloniality in their discursive constructions it is less likely that they would be contributing to transcultural solidarity. The exact relationship of proselytizing groups to the construction of transcultural solidarity is a future phase of this research program.

¹³² Van Der Beek (2003:2) citing Peterson et al. 2003, estimates between one and four million in 2003.

Single entity and comparative ethnography

This exploratory study is like a qualitative documentary that focuses on the volunteer vacation encounters wherever they occur. The strength of this type of study is that it provides a general lay of the land, identifies the key players, and provides some historical context. What it cannot do is provide the high resolution information of an ethnography which is focused on one volunteer group, NGO, or village. Nor can it do the comparison that longitudinal or comparative ethnographic studies can. Most of the questions that remain require that type of research.

There are precious few ethnographies of transnational development NGOs (Atack 1999; Bornstein 2005; Carroll 1992). We have evidence that NGOs are agents of globalization from above (Hulme 1997; MacDonald and Schwartz 2002; Petras 1997) We analyses of the NGO sector that distinguish between the progressive and the neo-liberal (MacDonald 1995), the compliant and the alternative (Townsend, et al. 2004).

What is sorely lacking is an in depth political ethnography of an NGO struggling to chart a course in good faith with its donors, its clients, and its host nation without surrendering its political loyalties to the popular classes or alliances with their social movements. It will be in minute daily choices that an organizational discourse, practice and culture will be built over time. The intricacies of that process reveal how decisions are made, sides are chosen, and strategies of solidarity or non-solidarity are enacted. Bornstein (2005) has done something of the sort concerning World Vision in Zimbabwe, noting the isomorphism of Christianity and Capitalism that the organization practices and symbolizes. But we need examples from the post-colonies of this hemisphere, of NGOs that are struggling to affirm that another world is possible. Such a study has import for those who would understand how social agents construct new discursive formations and

who would support them in that struggle. The assertion that NGOs individually and in the aggregate are contested spaces, merely whets the appetite for more detailed analysis in hopes of liberatory outcomes.

Another second phase ethnography is that of a volunteer vacation group, in all its complexity, with its volunteer vacationers, its development tourists and its solidarity travelers. This needs to be narrated so that the sequential impact of transcultural stimuli on the volunteers can be tracked within individuals and the group. The intricacies of infra-group politics and how discourses are contested on a daily basis will provide some of the answers about how transcultural solidarity formation is a group process with personal implications.

Another fertile area for research is to understand how transcultural solidarity might be different between a European country and Nicaragua than between the United States and Nicaragua. Cities in Europe have foreign aid budgets that are invested through NGOs and often for solidarity and citizenship training activities. This is a policy decision on the part of European civil society in the 1980s (Biekart 1999; Grugel 2000). Europeans, with the exception of the Spanish and the British, do not have the conflictual history with Nicaragua that the United States does.

Before coming South the volunteer's underlying attitude should be one of a profound self-critical analysis, because they are coming from a continent that was our old colonizer. The decision to come South is symptomatic of something. The volunteer is expressing in his or her own action a response to the historical injustice that affects us all." Leonardo Boff in (Ferrari 2002:179)

I once shared with the executive director of a Spanish NGO, an anthropologist by academic training, that I assumed Spaniards must have similar problems with their historical unconscious in regards to Nicaragua as U.S. citizens did. She displayed great

surprise that I would say such a thing and launched into a narrative about how Spain had contributed half of the genes for the mestizo race. I changed the subject.

My concern about selective historical aphasia aside, many of the European NGOs operate more in alliance with Nicaraguan social movements and fund Nicaraguan citizen rights training than do North American NGOs. The quality of their transcultural solidarity should be different because of the different ethnoscapes. Correlative differences could be anticipated if North American volunteers came to another destination, Honduras, for instance. Different historical transnational narratives apply in each particular international relationship.

There remains the question about gender specific modes of solidarity formation and the explanation for a predominance of women in the volunteer vacation phenomenon. Are the subjectivities of transcultural solidarity gender specific? Can female/female transcultural solidarity be distinguished in important ways from male/male or heterosexual transcultural solidarity?

We get some indications of issues of the Nicaraguan lesbian and gay movements and how transcultural solidarity of various sexual orientations might develop from recent work there by Florence Babb (2001; 2004). Babb does not report on any solidarity group visits, though she does indicate that Nicaraguan gays and lesbians are very in tune with international movement events.

The skepticism of some volunteer vacation practitioners as to the efficacy of adolescent participation in the encounters should be examined in a framework of developmental psychology and the culturally specific manifestations of childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Our research encountered groups of adolescents who were

“unruly” but largely because of mismanagement by the adults. We encountered other groups where young adolescents seemed to profit greatly from their encounters (see Appendix C). The personal impact of a transcultural encounter is not an easy factor to read accurately through North American adolescent ego defenses. It is for this reason that NGO entreaties to have experienced youth workers in every such group are well taken. Intergenerational volunteer groups’ experiences of service and solidarity formation may vary from age cohort specific groups in important ways. The role of children should be given the special emphasis as my study indicates their centrality in the process of initiating transcultural empathy in adults.

Race and ethnicity may be important variables for solidarity formation in the sense that racial stereotyping and prejudice exist in Nicaragua in complex ways, particularly in as much as the country has an Afro-Caribbean population, an Indigenous population of two continental traditions and mestizos as well as a minority that claims exclusively European derivation. The different racial groups in North America and Nicaragua would present different subject position and subject location configurations on transcultural encounters as hierarchies are culture specific and location specific within Nicaragua. Special issues arise for solidarity formation for North American Hispanics, particularly, as mentioned earlier, for those of Nicaraguan heritage. Diasporic Nicaraguans would have a potentially much different subjective experience depending on family narratives of Nicaragua and current social networks there.

Working class volunteer vacationers , particularly family farmers might find transcultural solidarity less complicated and less prone to transcultural altruism than upper middle class North American volunteers. An important focus of further research

would be to track the transcultural solidarity formation of volunteers based on some ideological indicators that would indicate whether solidarity was already a value for the sending organization. Orientation materials and practices would be important indicators of solidarity potential

There is a need to identify and understand how solidarity travel would be different to villages where the management of the visiting group was subject to local community initiative (Sherby 2005), and where the function of the NGO was to serve as culture broker and logistical support agency but not as a primary community development agent or group host. There are some transnational NGOs who operate only as funders or supporters for Nicaraguan community organizations who have their own program agendas

Three levels of short-term volunteer involvement

NGOs may choose to involve themselves in three different levels of short-term work group activities. One level is volunteer vacationing, another is counter-development tourism, and a third is solidarity travel.

The first type of trip might look much like many of those presently offered: a week of work & meetings sandwiched between two weekends of tourist type activities. Inter cultural contact is largely restricted to volunteer interaction with NGO staff and program participants. Interaction with the community as a whole happens through formal

Table 7-1. Volunteer Vacationer / Development Tourist / Solidarity Traveler Matrix

	Volunteer Vacationer	Development Tourist	Solidarity Traveler
Median Number of Visits	1 - 2	2 - 4	4+
Number of Communities Worked In more than once	0 - 1	1	1+
Motivational Priorities	To Do, to Enjoy	To Help, To Learn	To Learn, To Do
Expectations of Nicas program beneficiaries	Gratitude	Mutual Endeavor & Instruction Politeness	That they will do what they need to do, and inform me if I can be of some help. Be open to socializing
Expectations of NGO	Infinite	Limited	Specific
time spent in tourist resorts by preference	30%	20%	10%
time spent relating to fellow expats	90%	50%	25%
% of cross-cultural relation time spent with NGO staff	95%	50%	40%
Reaction to Poverty	Shock	Concern	Anger
Sense of Responsibility for Nicaraguan poverty	None	Confusion	Conviction
Cognitive grasp of structural causes of poverty	Little (Chance or Providence)	Local and Regional circumscription of poverty (often corresponds to that of the NGO)	Systemic Global understanding of linkages, including own consumptive lifestyle
Current trip "life changing"	Yes	No	No
Post Trip Personal Plan Reverse Mission	Sometimes, share travelog, get together	Organize trip of own, initiate project outside service charter of NGO	Starts orienting life decisions in ways that accommodate Nicaragua in a special way
Stranger (marginal) in own culture	No	Sometimes, usually not	More than likely

welcoming and farewell ceremonies. Language or cultural proficiency are not assumed on the part of the volunteer. Translators are NGO staff who facilitate communication when they are not doing their other duties. Historical, and political economic background and analysis are provided by expatriate presenters who have lived in Nicaragua for some time. Some trips stress work more than recreation and others the opposite. Discourses on these trips include the gratefulness of the community for the work that the volunteers will accomplish.

Volunteer vacationing is the entry level. NGOs without aspirations to foster solidarity or do sustainable development and whose objectives for the community are to do social service or infrastructure improvements, need not concern themselves with stratifying the intensity of their transcultural encounters. This includes those NGOs for whom the groups are primarily to raise funds for their own development projects or be of general institutional support to the NGO. It appears that a single level of group intensity which is adjusted for community and volunteer group variables, such as percentage of repeating volunteers, their expertise and/or preferences, as well as the current needs of the community, should suffice.

In a single tier model veteran volunteers provide a source of transcultural knowledge to the neophytes and significantly reduces group anxiety in an alien environment. The veterans are also guardians of the NGO/group interface as they know people on the organization's staff and procedures. Prior volunteer vacation experience is among the most important criteria for group leaders.

NGOs that focus on long term sustainable community development, or better said, counter-development, in specific localities may want to offer a second, more intense

transcultural experience for those who have already experienced the volunteer vacation. This second level would intensify the frequency and depth of interaction with Nicaraguans.

In this experience not only would worksites include both North American volunteers and local Nicaraguans working side by side, but the teams themselves would be integrated by task. For instance if two people are needed to tie steel, then one would be North American and one would be Nicaraguan, etc. Conversations on the worksite would be transcultural as often as they are unicultural. Translation capability would be readily available when non-verbal communication or halting Spanish fails. Meals, though taken together as a group would always be culturally integrated and the cuisine would be Nicaraguan.

In this model, the project under construction would be explained to the volunteers in the context of the villages' overall development plan by the coordinating committee for the village, who would also provide a community historical and political economic context. The villagers understanding of the role and meaning of the volunteer groups' presence would be shared, as would the groups' understanding of the meaning of their own objectives. Necessary negotiations and clarifications would take place. The dimensions of long term relationships between the community and the sending organization of the volunteer group could well be on the agenda. The NGO would participate in but not lead or dominate that dialogue, understanding that the growing solidarity was group to village and not group to NGO.

Table 7-2: Three levels of volunteer encounters

Program Component	Volunteer Vacationing	Counter-development Tourism	Solidarity Travel
Pre Departure Orientation	Reading NGO guide, national and local orientation materials including project information	NGO and social movements news grassroots development theory	NGO, Social Movements News and US Solidarity Movement literature
Group Formation	Initial Group Intros And motive sharing	Group within work of NGO and village	Standing Local Solidarity Group
In Country Orientation	Introductory, Safety, Community, etc.	Current Issues at National and Local level. NGO evolution options of development projects	Current Issues at National and Local Level – Intro to selected Social Movement
Rural Development Activity	Project assigned by NGO	Project assigned by the community	Project chosen from among current community initiatives.
Socio-Cultural Orientation	By NGO	By Village	By Municipio
Social Analysis	Two National level presentations one local level and daily NGO staff input	Two national level and two local level daily staff input village roundtable	Nightly Global presentations and reflection sessions Action Plan feedback
Community/Group Interaction	Formal forums or group activities know workers and program participants	Formal and Informal Forums, Meet local officials and neighbors, work, play and eat	Develop friendships with a variety of Nicaraguans. More informal and intimate forums.
Logistics	Eat /Sleep in NGO facility/ dorm	Use local rooming & dining facilities	Family stays
Departure Ritual	Celebrating recent visit	Celebrating Relationship	Celebrating challenges of future
Post-Trip communication with community	Through NGO	Direct	Reciprocal Visit
Post Trip activity with sending organization	Give presentation about personal experience and invitation to attend future trip	Give presentation of personal experience with social analysis and invitation to visit and invest in the community	Challenge to covenant relationship of reciprocity with the village

The third type of experience which would be oriented toward transitioning toward solidarity traveler might be longer, a minimum of two and better three weeks long. It would include home stays for lodging and dining. The traveler/family interaction would be considered a prime component of the experience and so work days might involve pitching in on the household livelihood activities, rather than working on a community project. Some minimal language proficiency would be expected at this level.

Every night would include time for attending presentations and dialogical forums with local community or social movement leaders. The solidarity travel group could plan for solidary activities on return home and consult with the Nicaraguan spokes persons about their plans. At some point of relationship between the village and the group and its sending organization, reciprocal trips by Nicaraguans would be explored.. Linkages to the municipal office of foreign relations would be made and the potential of a sister city relationship might be discussed concurrent with solidarity travelers having made inquiries in their community of origin in the United States.

In this study I have shown that short-term volunteer vacationing has the under-realized potential to foster transcultural solidarity. Many of the variables which indicate whether or not such solidarity will emerge are under the purview of the host NGO. In the complex interaction between a group of visitors, an NGO, and a rural community, a *habitus* of transcultural interaction evolves. Each NGO and its affiliate volunteers and beneficiary communities constitute a social field within which the *habitus* enables all the actors to engage. Some social fields tend more toward altruism or institutional solidarity with the NGO, others tend toward long term citizen-to-citizen solidarity. Some tend to

stress personal service while others emphasize social activism. Some accept the dominant development discourse, others offer alternatives. The preeminence of civil society over state presence in rural Nicaragua amplifies the importance of relationships of transcultural solidarity. The corporate structure of NGOs requires alternative avenues for popular self-determination.

In summary, the habitus of transcultural solidarity consists of long-term reciprocal relationships. Currently those relationships are mid-wifed by NGOs who have made on-going commitments to bring the citizens of nation-states together. When the NGOs acknowledge and programmatically accommodate the modernities of the Nicaraguans and North Americans with whom they work, then the *habitus* of volunteer vacationing becomes one of solidarity.

My fervent hope is that this social movement will continue to offer, and to experiment with, new ways of connecting human beings across cultural boundaries. Not to satisfy the desires of one party or the needs of another, but to establish new forms of human solidarity that can become the sites in which to “re-fashion futures” and construct counter-part ideals toward a more equitable common destiny in which human diversity is valued.

The volunteer from the North doesn't come to the South to help those who have needs. S/he comes to participate in and reinforce this other type of globalization, one which serves as the conscience of humanity. ..it is about a spirit of brotherhood, walking together, celebrating with the victories of others, suffering with the suffering of others. And it is essential that this is a two-way street. That they come from the North and that we come from the South. This is a round trip journey for both. (Boff 2002:183)

APPENDIX A
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES FOR GLOBAL PARTNERS KNOX PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH GROUP, MARCH 2003

Questionnaire #1 (administered on first day in country)

Code # _____, Age _____, Sex _____,

1. If you have ever visited Nicaragua before please explain the circumstances
2. How did you prepare (orient yourself) for this trip (both as a group and as an individual).
3. Why did you come on this trip?
4. Why did you come to Nicaragua specifically?
5. Why did you come with Global Partners?
6. What was the most difficult obstacle you had to overcome to get here?
7. What are your expectations for this trip, including sightseeing, working, serving others, learning, socializing, etc?
8. What are the goals or objectives of your group for this trip?
9. What are your personal goals and objectives for this trip?
10. What are your biggest fears about this trip?
11. Why do you think that the average North American is much wealthier statistically speaking than the average North American? [\$30,000/year vs. \$400/yr income].
12. What is your understanding of the political relationship between the United States and Nicaragua in the last 50 years?
13. What do you think of CAFTA (The Central American Free Trade Agreement signed this year between Nicaragua and the United States?)

Questionnaire # 2 (administered on third day of work)

1. What are you learning on this trip about yourself?

2. What are you learning about the people in the village, give an example.
3. What are you learning about Global Partners?
4. What are you learning about Nicaragua?
5. What has surprised you the most?
6. What attracts you about the lifestyle in the village?
7. What do you find strange or disagreeable about the lifestyle in the village?
8. What still confuses you about the lifestyle in the village?
9. Which Nicaraguans are you most friendly with?
10. Which residents of the village do you know the best? Describe them.
11. How do you think your presence as a group (and as an individual) is helping the community of the village?
12. How is it for you to work side by side with Nicaraguans? What are you learning about yourself? About them?
13. How are you (as an individual and as a group) helping Partners in its mission?
14. How is the welcome that has been extended to you on behalf of the village community helping you (as a group and as an individual)?
15. What doubts or misgivings do you have about your presence (as a group or as an individual) in the village?
16. When you need help understanding something at the worksite, who explains things to you? How do they do that?
17. How do you think it would be different if you came on a study tour instead of a work tour?
18. What do you like about the way GP has arranged your visit to the village and to town?
19. What concerns you about the way GP has arranged your visit to the village. What would you suggest?

Questionnaire #3 (administered after last day of work)

1. What was your most important discovery about yourself during this experience?
2. What was your most important discovery about your group during this trip?
3. What was your most important discovery concerning the community of the village or any of its residents?
4. What did you discover about Global Partners?
5. What was the most important thing you learned about Nicaragua?
6. What was the most significant discovery about the United States?
7. What personal experience was most rewarding?
8. What personal experience was most challenging?
9. What caused you the most anxiety or worry on this trip?
10. What did you want to accomplish on this trip? Did you accomplish it?
11. What did Partners want you to accomplish on this trip? Did you do it?
12. What did the community of the village want you to accomplish on this visit? Did you get it done?
13. What do you still feel uneasy about in regards to this experience?
14. Who here, if anyone, do you plan on staying in contact with? How?
15. Do you have a further commitment to Partners? What is it?
16. Do you have a further commitment to the village (or anyone there)? What?
17. Do you have a further commitment to Nicaragua, What is it?
18. What are you taking with you from Nicaragua?
19. If “to be in solidarity” with the people in the village means to identify and participate with them in their struggles, how might you do that from the United States?
20. Would you say that this trip has been a “life changing” experience? How so or why don’t you think so? What options has it opened up for you?

21. Why is the average North American more economically wealthy than the average Nicaraguan ?
22. What do you think about CAFTA?

APPENDIX B
NGO STAFF AND COMMUNITY LEADER QUESTIONNAIRE

Administered in Las Cruces, May of 2003, 26 Respondents

I-Señale a cual de los siguientes cargos pertenece: No de Cg: ____

- * Lider Comunitario:
- * Coordinador Comunitario:
- * Promotor de ONGs:
- * Funcionario ONGs:

II-Conteste: En el caso de que el espacio para contestar las preguntas no sea suficiente puede escribir al anverso o ocupar hojas auxiliares. En el caso que no entienda o no desee contestar una de nuestras preguntas no será ningún problema. Cada una de sus respuestas es vital para nuestro estudio.

A: Sobre los Liderazgos

1. Que es liderazgo comunitario o que entiende usted por liderazgo.
2. Quienes en su comunidad o en su territorio de incidencia, considera tienen liderazgo (por ejemplo, por qué).
3. Como cambian los valores o las visiones de las personas que desde la comunidad trabajan mas estrechamente con las ONGs de origen extranjero.
4. Un liderazgo valido como resuelve las tensiones entre su lealtad a la comunidad y a la ONG que lo vinculo con su territorio.
5. Cual considera usted debe ser el papel de la comunidad y el papel de los profesionales con experiencia en desarrollo sobre la planificación para la intervención en el territorio por parte de una ONG.
6. Puede usted considerar que existen mas de un tipo de ONG y según usted cuales serian estas?
7. Se puede afirmar que las comunidades están preparadas para desarrollar sus propias perspectivas o estrategias de desarrollo, o que su soberanía esta limitada al diagnostico de las ONGs o instituciones estatales?

B: De las ONGs

1. Considera usted que existen diferencias entre las ONGs nacionales y las extranjeras. Y cuales serian.
2. Quien puede prevenir que un ONG implemente una política que perjudica a la comunidad y como y quien tiene la capacidad de cambiar la planificación del ONG a nivel de la comunidad, puede ser una iniciativa individual, grupal, o por vínculos con la ONGs?
3. Considera usted que algunas políticas o practicas de la ONG propician familias o grupos elites y como repercute ello en la comunidad.
4. Considera la negociación como una habilidad para tener la presencia y servicio de la ONG o como una cualidad imprescindible del liderazgo?
5. Dentro de las diferentes opiniones sobre el desarrollo y la organización comunitaria, cuales son privilegiadas, las de los oriundos de las comunidades o la de los profesionales de las ONGs que llegan a incidir en las comunidades, quien determina la validez de las mismas?
6. Puede usted considerar que existen mas de un tipo de ONG y según usted cuales serian estas?
7. Que pasa con los diversos tipos de ONGs en las comunidades y cree usted que puede decidirse desde la comunidad con quien trabajar y con quien no?
8. Linda MacDonald, Antropóloga de ONGs en América Latina identifica dos tipos de ONG, los asistencialistas que tratan de resolver las necesidades inmediatas y mas graves que salen de una economía neo-liberal globalizada a sus victimas mas deprimidos, otro tipo es "progresista", es decir, tiene estrategias del cambio estructural vinculado a su practica y la acción social. Con que tipo se identifica a las que trabajan en su territorio.
10. Que procesos históricos culturales han perdido las comunidades que deseen recapturar y como los ONGs son ayuda o obstáculos para ello. Que calidades las comunidades quieren conservar y los ONGs están ayudando o impidiendo.
11. Un ONGs debe trabajar con todos los sectores o solo con los pobres o en pobreza extrema o con los que puedan sostener un programa y mantener el proyecto a flote.
12. Que considera usted de las ONGs que demanden ayuda económica a organismos y personalidades en el extranjero a nombre de las necesidades de las comunidades, para la ejecución de obras de desarrollo comunal.
13. Conoce de algún mecanismo de control social de las finanzas de las ONGs que se realice en Nicaragua y particularmente en su comunidad para con las ONGs en su territorio.

C- De las brigadas extranjeras

1 Que significa la presencia de brigadas de voluntarios extranjeros, vinculados con ONGs en su comunidad.

1. Como aprovechan o no, sus comunidades la presencia de voluntarios extranjeros para fortalecer la solidaridad internacional.

APPENDIX C
VOLUNTEER VACATION REFLECTIONS OF WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT GROUP

These are responses from fifteen Washington high school students and four adult leaders to the question: What did you learn here that you couldn't learn in a classroom? Please visualize a scene, a conversation, an encounter or an image that illustrates what's most important to you about your experience in Nicaragua in the last 8 days. February 15 - 27th, 2003

My last trip was 11 days that changed my life. The smell... when I got off the airplane this time.... I knew I was back home.

If I learned about it in a classroom I would always still wonder what would it be like to be there. Seeing it first hand is so much more powerful!!!

To hear about the effects of war on Nicaragua is one thing to see the bullet holes takes it to a different level.

In a classroom at home you can't make friends with these Nicaraguans. There are no new personal relationships and you don't hear people's stories ... from them.

I remember the heat and the smells, and that surreal drive from the airport.

Touring the barrio we were just a big pack of freaks! They were curious about us and we were curious about them, it was weird.

Life here during the day and at night are completely different.

The kids here are so excited to see us. People are much more open about their feelings, they approach us and feel free to share about themselves.

The Nicaraguans are interested, really interested, in us.

Going from barrio in the morning to the Mall in the afternoon was harsh, the contrast between extreme poverty and wealth is not just between Nicaragua and the U.S., but its right here in Managua.

Because I knew how to speak Spanish, my most memorable moments are those conversations that I've had with Nicaraguans. It made so much difference between my first time here and this time.

Seeing the T shirts, the hammocks, the blocks, the pewter mugs, the pottery, the water filters, etc. being made by artisans reminded me everyday that real people make the things I buy and use. That is hidden from me in the states when I purchase items made in a foreign country or in a factory far away. But they are real people and the things are their personal products.

I'm reminded from my conversations with specific people how complex the politics of this place is.

My heart goes out to these people... who have so little.

Maria told me, "there is a saying,...'Poor people don't have dreams', ... but I do have dreams nonetheless."

Poverty in real life is so different than seeing it on TV.

The symbol that strikes me is all the plastic bags everywhere. The plastic bag symbolizes disposability, like governments who consider their people disposable.

At first everything here seemed so surreal. Now it seems so real. In fact, I'm worried about what it will be like when we go back.

Christina opened up her heart to us.

These people are so beautiful. The country is so beautiful. The people are hard working and have the potential to thrive and prosper. I went from thinking "Oh these poor people" to envying them their vitality.

I took 600 cordobas to the Masaya market and couldn't buy anything, even though I wanted to support the local economy, because I don't need anything more. I have too much already.

These people, who have so little, seem so happy, Christina is a great example of that.

The women who belong to the sewing coop lost everything they owned, but they are so strong.

When you're in the United States it seems normal. Here the US seems like a different world.

In the first world, when you're a capitalist you go out and do the things you need to do to make a living. Here the people are part of a system where no matter what they do, their economic destiny is totally out of their control, yet they have hope and they keep trying.

The coffee cooperative was the perfect example of a sustainable system, they grow organically, they preserve their forest, they conscientiously plan in order to preserve their land for their children, but a drop in the world price of coffee prevents them from being financially successful.

It was the first time I saw a little girl walking from car to car begging.....it was so sad.

We make a little effort to sell the cooperative's coffee and we get four dollars for every pound we sell. They work everyday of their lives to grow and process the coffee and make two dollars a pound.

People here are so strong and so beautiful.

If I could be even one half the person that that five year old is....She has a tiny body but she is a huge person. She has responsibility beyond that of a child.

My image is of Eugenio with his hands in the organic fertilizer, with a passion for farming and his way of life. Making new dirt is as basic as it gets.

Maria, our cook, has eleven children, one of them is named Eric. She didn't know how to spell his name so the doctor taught her.

I am surprised at how little resentment I sense from the Nicaraguans. Even though we are working beside them, we obviously have much more than we need, and we are citizens of a country whose government has screwed them over time and time again. Yet I sense no anger directed towards us.

I carry with me the image of the history of Nicaragua that was painted on the murals of the Church. This is these people's history. They know this and when they go to sleep at night and when they get up in the morning they are part of a people that have a history.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tim Fogarty was born in 1950 and grew up the oldest of six children in Vero Beach, Florida. Graduating from college with a degree in philosophy, he pursued graduate studies in theology at Catholic University of America, and later earned a master's degree in religion and religious education from Fordham University. Tim pursued a career which included positions in youth ministry, adult education, and administration of community non-profit organizations. He and his wife and two children served four years with Habitat for Humanity International in rural Central America and at the organization's international headquarters. Tim also served as executive director of the local Habitat for Humanity affiliate in Gainesville, Florida prior to entering the graduate program in anthropology at the University of Florida. He and his wife, a practicing marriage and family therapist, presently live in Gainesville.