

Description: What follows are several excerpts from previous students' ISP field journals. Students should look at these as examples. During your ISP you should feel free to take your ISP field journal in the direction that best compliments the work you are doing in the field. If you have questions about your field journal as you begin it, be sure to reach out to the SIT team for advice.

Excerpts 1 and 2: These entries came from Livey Beha's 2017 ISP field journal, which she kept while researching her ISP, titled *Luchadoras: Resistencias contra la violencia de género por las mujeres en la region de San Ramón*.

El 12 de noviembre: Day 4 en La Reina, Interview with Nohemí and Milena

Description:

When I went to interview Nohemy formally, I also met her husband. He started the conversation, and when he asked my major, very quickly he jumped into a philosophical conversation about the state of our world. Nohemy got up from the table and went to go talk to her sister, Elizabeth in the kitchen. However, he continued and said, a lot of NGOs do their best, but that the problems in our world are like trees. NGOs do their best to protect the trees we have, but not enough are planting them. If you want to change the world, first you have to change us, plant the seeds in us. He said, "it's just like my backyard and my manzana and a half. There used to be no trees, but I keep planting them, and now there's so many. Who are those trees for? I don't know if I will ever be able to see the fruits of my labor. He took me outside to see his trees, and said, "look at this papaya tree, it's so small, who knows if I will ever see the fruit? It's for the next generation."

After our interview, Nohemy took me to her sister in law and brother's house, Milena Piralta, and passed a group of men standing by the La Reina school who had clearly been drinking, one of which was peeing in the bushes, quite visibly. "Those are the men I am talking about," she said, referring to the community's alcoholism she discussed in her interview. Her look was disapproving and disappointed.

Her husband was a leader at the church that I remember from the first time we were here.

Also are having the mother of Valentina, their granddaughter, live with them while their son is in Costa Rica.

Interpretation:

This stood out to me as a conversation that differed from the notes that Norma had made about men and women's different tactics in planting (reaping funds versus caring for the earth, and having the earth give back to you in due time. But I would imagine that anyone who was married to a feminist would have to be as minimally machista as possible. However, it also felt like Nohemy's husband was well versed in taking control of a situation or a room, not necessarily in a way that could be considered machista, as in sexist, but rather, the power of male privilege in controlling a room. Nohemí was noticeably more reserved than when we had spoken on Friday night, when she was exceptionally passionate, though it's possible she was just tired. However, it also seemed like the camera and my questions had a leveling effect on her willingness to discuss the issues of government control, and UCA San Ramon's clientelism with the Ortega government.

Milena as an interview subject was also great to start out with because she, as a teacher seemed to be very much aware of all the violence in the community, because, as she said, the kids aren't going to keep a secret.

Both of these women were very well-educated, willing to speak and be open about the violence in the community, but neither of them actually work as campesinas (though they do work in ecotourism, and were spouses of socios) and so I find it difficult to fit their experiences into the same molds of understandings as some of the other women might have moving forward, but I think their presence and consciousness, in the community does say something about the community's overall resiliency level, that they have women who are willing to check in on women who they know who are victims of GBV.

el 13 de noviembre: Field Work Capacitación en San Ramón

Description

Today I was invited by Andres to accompany him to a "capacitacion de género"/training for men in the city of San Ramón. We took the crowded bus into town, and when we got there, there were about 10 men standing around the "Casa Del Movimiento Comunal Nicaraguense". The "Casa Del Movimiento Comunal Nicaraguense" is part of the "Ministerio de Salud" and the "Puente de Salud". Nelson, the head of the Casa, greeted us, and invited us to sign in to indicate that we were in attendance, and then were gifted an enchilada and refresco each. We sat around waiting (we had arrived at nine, and the training did not begin at nine. I began asking Andres what he knew about the training. He said this was his first time at the trainings led by this NGO, but he knew that they were very prominent in the community, and campesinos from all the San Ramon municipalities usually attend. People usually find out about trainings through publicity. He said that the hardest group to get to turn out to the trainings has been the men and young boys. They have been trying to get a baseball team going in the community, so that all the men can participate, and the men who are trained in the themes about gender could share the ideas in a casual way, and be a good influence on the youth, but there just isn't funds to buy the gloves and bats necessary. Instead, he will try and replicate the workshop in Danilo Gonzales. I talked about how I used to be an RA, and the serving of food is a great idea, and how the majority of the budget for our activities would be for giving out food. (Later in the day, he said he was going to copy this idea, and ask UCA San Ramon for a small budget to attract the men in the community to come to his replication of the training, which he planned to do the following Wednesday or Thursday). He also mentioned that he is going to bother Darling to try and get food in the workshops in the UCA. He also inquired about the theme of the workshop, which we found out was "Pregnancy Prevention in Adolescent Girls"/ "Prevencion del Embarazo en las chavalas Adolescentes".

When the workshop started, the facilitator introduced himself, and explained that he has been doing these types of gender-based workshops for more than ten years, but this was his first time doing one in the municipality of San Ramon. One of the men had been playing a guitar in the center, and the facilitator asked that he share a song to start the group off. He asked everyone to go around and introduce themselves, where they were from, and why they decided to come. By the time the workshop started there were 25 men. All of the men received free notebooks and pens to take notes. It was about half of the men's first time attending such a workshop, and many of them cited "I was interested", "I wanted to learn more so I could share with those in my community", and "Every dialogue I learn something new" as their reasons for attending. There were some men

from El Roblar, and four from La Reina, including Andres. The other three from La Reina were teenagers or in their twenties. Two worked for UCA San Ramon, and the other was the son of the woman I stayed with my first time in the campo, Bertalina's son, Julio.

The facilitator outlined the goals of the workshop:

“Identificar los factores de riesgo de las chavarlas adolescents ante el embarazo”

“Reflexionar entre hombres sobre la responsabilidad de prevenir embarazos en adolescentes”

He asked the men to share what they thought were some of the reasons why teenage/young pregnancies happen, encouraging them to not be afraid, and that there was not going to be violence in this space, that we were going to learn and grow together. He received a range of answers to his question, including, *“porque las chavarlas no tienen metas”* y *“no se pueden castigar mi hijas porque la ley 779”*, y *“libertad de la juventud”*.

He then dropped two bombshells: some of these answers came from preconceived notions of machismo. *“Todos los hombres tienen machismo”* and that *“la mayoría del embarazo adolescentes son de hombres adultos”*. *“Todos esos son delitos”*.

After that conversation, he asked the men to identify the answers to several questions in small groups, and share their answers with the large group. All of the men wrote down their thoughts, and the facilitator went through to clear up misconceptions. The questions were as follows:

“¿Cuáles son los factores de riesgo para las chavarlas ante el embarazo?”

“¿Como podemos para prevenir nosotros los hombres los embarazos en adolescentes?”

“¿Que haríamos si nos damos cuenta de abusos sexuales y de violaciones a chavarlas?”

I took pictures of all their responses.

He then moved on, continuing trying to emphasize sex with underaged girls as crimes and explain the power dynamics of a sexual relationship between a child who does not have full understanding to consent, and a grown adult, and said, *“even if a girl who was thirteen who was completely naked in front of all of us men, it is our responsibility to control ourselves. We are the adults.”* He also brought up the theme that therapeutic abortion is not an option available to women in Nicaragua. He mentioned *“that’s a completely different topic, but it does limit a young girl’s options after she has been a victim of a rape”*. He also talked about how traumatic the denunciation process can be for a young girl, how many people they have to talk to, and what they have to talk about. *“These are all consequences of a machismo system”*.

The facilitator suggested that the two places men could make a difference was as fathers and as leaders among other men in their community. He talked about how in his own family, his mother was responsible for talking about sexual topics with his sisters. *“Why can’t we as fathers talk to our daughters about these topics”*. He also discussed bodily autonomy of children, and that they should stress to their children, *“if someone wants to touch your genitals or your body, you tell me...Talk to them about sex, and ask them to tell you when they are ready to start having sex, so you can make sure they know about prevention... Es parte de nuestras responsabilidades como padres”*.

He listed off the consequences of a life after young girl pregnancy, the struggles the young girl will face, often alone, and said that we should work to support these girls in our community. Also he encouraged the men to talk about everything they learned with other men; in church, with their family, as promotores de genero, cultura, y deportes in their communities.

At the end the facilitator asked for feedback, and everything was positive. Many men expressed wanting to continue to come back after their first time and bring these things to their community, and support the girls in the community who had suffered this fate. The next workshop theme is "Micromachismo"

All the men ate lunch together for free after.

Interpretation:

There was a clear divide between the men in the room, those who were under thirty, and those who were over. The men over thirty were much more inclined to share their opinions, while the youth were much more quiet. During the group feedback part, many of the younger men were instructed to simply write down the opinions of the older men, and did not add comments themselves. Sometimes, in one of the groups I was in, I saw the boys look at me when the older men said something they seemed to think was skeptical (especially comments about how having access to the internet and pornography caused the rape of young girls) and raise their eyebrows, but still put down the item. It's possible that their lack of response came because they wanted to take their direction from older men, or were looking to hear the responses of the facilitator. Either way, the behavior of the older men, and their failure to not invite the younger perspectives into the conversation, is indicative of a larger pattern of learned machismo. The loudest and perhaps, oldest, voices in the room are able to pass their ideas as unquestioned fact.

This is why the format of this workshop, especially the small group work, seemed to be particularly effective in encouraging the men of all ages to express their preconceived notions, and be forced to rethink them, especially the notions of the older men. The way the questions were phrased were cleverly leading, in a way that implied that men do have a responsibility to contribute and prevent rape of under-aged girls and teenage pregnancy. However, It was clear that not everyone had taken away the message he had been trying to communicate prior to the small group discussions (that the majority of pregnancies in young girls were the result of rape) based on the answers of some of the small groups, including "giving the injection" to the young girls. This was why the facilitator's ability to give feedback and comment on the parts he thought were moving in the right direction and which parts of the men's opinions were based in machismo, gently explaining why, or adding new perspectives that maybe the men had not thought about before. All the men appeared to be receptive and engaging, and did not have any qualms talking to a "Managua" outsider.

It was interesting to see there were that many men who were receptive to engaging with this theme, wanting to discuss it, and bring it back to the other men in their community as leaders. The fact that the half of the La Reina group was under 30, and three of those who were in some way directly affiliated with UCA San Ramon. It seems like the challenges moving forward to get men on board is lack of resources and perhaps a barrier between those who are more interested and affiliated

with UCA San Ramon, and the group of ecotourism social capital, and the others who are more distant. This capacitacion also suggested to me that the interventions from the UCA are not as “top-down” as most would tend to believe, but rather driven by those who have a vested interest in improving their community, that they are willing to go to capacitacions outside of what the UCA offers. However, the presence of three UCA San Ramon and La Reina men indicates that those who share that vested interest are also affiliated with UCA by choice.

Evaluation:

I really appreciated the opportunity to see this capacitacion, and made me think about the relative lack of interest in such things in most communities in the United States, how I would not possibly be able to get my neighbors, especially the older men in my neighborhood to come to a workshop on preventing teen pregnancy, even if I offered a feast. How I couldn’t tell you who my neighbors even were growing up. To me, I think this has something to do with the power of community resilience required in rural impoverished areas, and how it’s necessary to work to lift up not just one’s own family, but the entire community, because they are not so distant from one another. There’s also something to be said that they actually have a lot of common ground beyond that, there is very little division as far as religion, ethnicity, or politics, and so it might be easier to come together to work on the challenges that are the biggest dividers in the community.

Excerpt 3: These entries came from Michaela Jenkins ISP field journal, which she kept while researching her ISP, titled *In Search of Paradise: The Challenges of Internal Colonization, Globalization, and Community Definition on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua*.

11/13/17

I did not come into the principal’s office at La Instituto Las Perlas expecting to interview Ms. Janina Cuthbert, but it quickly became apparent that she was my interview subject. I was led into the office by the principal, Edgar Bennet, a tall dark skinned man who reminded me of one of the brothers at my church—polite but aloof, and nearly purple in the poorly lit corner of his office. Following me as I followed him was Ms. Cuthbert, seeming younger than him but clearly just as in charge, her hair slicked back in a low bun and her arms crossed in front of each other as she settled down into the main desk in the office and looked at me. She introduced herself, prompting me to soon follow her, and though she declined to be recorded, Ms. Cuthbert eagerly started sharing information about her life without any shame or hesitance, and I soon realized what a resource I had on my hands.

A math and science teacher at Instituto Las Perlas as well as the vice-principal, Ms. Cuthbert also described herself as one of seven siblings, a single mother to three children, two in their twenties and one, just eleven, and a lover of hometown of Pearl Lagoon. She described her childhood as safe and idyllic, speaking of a strong sense of communal pride and unity. She said when she was young, there were no robberies or locked doors in Pearl Lagoon—“we used to look out for each other” she said. There was also no mayor, and little technology in the community. The communal leaders met often and guided the town, and she said there was little need for much more. In her memory, there was none of the drug abuse each and every one of my interviewees has

mentioned as a prominent problem in Pearl Lagoon today, and people only drank on holidays. In her opinion, much of that has now changed.

While she praised the improvement of health and education in Pearl Lagoon, she said that these days, there is much less communication between community members, and that all doors are locked and fenced away. She also felt that some of the new laws that were established in the community, particularly in regards to education, didn't serve to make better students or citizens. She said in her day, school was truly about learning, but now laws put in to protect the poorest students have created a culture where anyone can behave however they like. In the past, students could be suspended for disrespecting teachers, and had to do double make up homework if they came to class without an assignment, but now Ms. Cuthbert remarked that there were "absolutely no consequences" to coming to school without your uniform or homework, or for disrespecting teachers. She mentioned times when students had come in threatening to hit her, and she'd had to speak strongly to them to get them to back off, or when students yelled and screamed at her and she felt that all she could do was yell back.

Young people's behavior isn't the only thing Ms. Janina had seen change in her schools—now, they were much more diverse. When she was a student at Instituto Las Perlas, the very school she now teaches at, it was almost entirely Creole, as was the whole community. She described Creoles, the ethnic group she belongs to, as being an "ambitious and prideful" people in the past, who rarely participated in what she referred to as "mixing" between races. She admitted that this was not necessarily a good thing. In the past, she described how Creoles would not trade with people who could not speak their language, and attributed this standard to the loss of Garifuna language. Now, she says that behavior is much less common amongst her people, and that Instituto Las Perlas is "multiethnic" school, with Garifuna, Creole, Miskito, and mestizo students. She admitted that while other towns still felt that Pearl Lagoon might think they were better than them, this had greatly improved since her youth, where fights sometimes broke out between members of visiting communities like Hanover during baseball games.

But not all discrimination had been put to rest. With the increasing mestizo population in Pearl Lagoon came some issues. She said that the mainly mestizo police rarely were "moved to protect" black and indigenous members of their community. "Spaniard goes for Spaniard," she said, referring to her belief that the mestizo members of the community (or Spaniards, as they are often called by Creoles) only support each other, both politically and economically. Not only did she feel that the mestizo police force rarely protected other ethnic groups, she also felt that mestizo immigrants ran the majority of the businesses in town. Creoles, she said, didn't have a culture of business running, but apparently mestizos did. Still, she said that great efforts were taken to not allow any bit of discrimination to occur in the schools.

Returning to the topic of education, I asked her to speak some about the curriculum, particularly in courses like history or "civic morals." Civic morals was, perhaps unsurprisingly, a class where students learned civic values and responsibilities—"how to live in a community," she said. Ms. Cuthbert thought this was especially important because she felt that many parents were not teaching their children these values, and that without them the community would not be able to thrive. More disheartening was the curriculum for history class, which Ms. Cuthbert said had nothing to do with local history. The closest it came was when they discussed the history of the Pacific coast, or when they learned Mayan and Incan history. This lack of local education really bothered Ms. Cuthbert. She said mainly of her black students were "ashamed of their race" and felt that they had little to be proud of in their culture. She believed that a change in curriculum was necessary to bring a sense of pride and peace back into the community. She hoped that the rise

of tourism in the community could hopefully be used to preserve and present their cultural in ways that would bring pride and be economically useful.

When I asked her about other changes she thought should be made, she quickly returned to the subject of drug abuse. Mainly NGOs had come to the community to teach about the danger of drugs, but she said very few provided rehabilitation, and this, she said, would truly change the community. Regretfully, she explained that now that drugs were in the community “we cannot continue ignoring it.” She dreamed of a free regional rehab center where young people could get help, since the only one she knew of very an extremely pricey one in Managua, where very few people could afford to go.

She also mentioned that she was concerned about government and democracy. She said local leaders needed to be reminded that they served the community, and that parents needed to be reminded that technology could not raise or love their children. She spoke of how common it was for parents to go work in cruise ships or in Panama to bring money back to their children, but she was concerned that this was creating large generations of children who didn’t have a strong sense of family or anyone really looking out for them. In the past, she said this was less common, and thusly, the few grandparents or aunts who did this type of raising had lots of support. For example, she was raised by her grandmother, who could not read or write but ensured that every night her homework was done and welcomed her every time she came home. Now, she said, many children come home to an empty house and are parented by the cellphones their parents who are abroad pay for. She was disheartened by this—they try to “substitute love for money,” but she said that one day a student came in crying, telling her that “he would give everything to see his mom again.” When I asked her about the other problems in the community, she mentioned that teen pregnancy was on the rise again. She suggested that girls were getting pregnant as young as twelve, and she knew personally how damaging that could be—she was fifteen years old when she became pregnant with her first child. It was only the year before that the school had decided to allow pregnant students to continue there students, and she said she was as grateful as the teachers—her tenth grade year, she and 12 other girls were pregnant. Now, she was thankful that people in the community were looking out for her. She described how one teacher pulled her aside after she had her baby and told her to become a teacher, and by the time she was 16, with a one year old at home, she was teaching a course to people almost four years her senior. It wasn’t easy or well paid work, she said, but she was proud that she was known in the school as “the Hag” for how she heard everything and knew everything, and kept a firm grasp on her students.

Soon after, we naturally cmae to the end of the conversation as we connected over the fact that I too was raised by a STEM teacher who often wasn’t very popular with students, but was very effective at teaching. While I spoke about how grateful I was to have been raised by a teacher who was able to prepare me to go to school, I couldn’t help but think about how I was grateful to have been raised by a woman who was a lot like Ms. Cuthbert, strong and smart and constantly dreaming and hoping for her community.