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Amor a la lucha: Women's narratives of community development and
resilience in Los Platanitos, Santo Domingo Norte, Dominican Republic

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Amor a la lucha: Women's narratives of community development and
resilience in Los Platanitos, Santo Domingo Norte, Dominican Republic

by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Mujeres Unidas and the residents of Los Platanitos, for their collaboration, generosity, and tireless struggle.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Amor a la lucha: Women's narratives of community development and resilience in Los Platanitos, Santo Domingo Norte, Dominican Republic

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This project investigates community resilience and gendered empowerment in self-built neighborhoods through the experience of community development organization Mujeres Unidas (Women United) in Los Platanitos, Dominican Republic. Although located within the city limits of Santo Domingo Norte, Los Platanitos is excluded from key city services and infrastructure, as well as from many formal city planning processes. Through qualitative methods of deep hanging out, semi-structured interviews, and participatory action workshops, this study identifies social entrepreneurship, mutual learning, and relationships of care as key dimensions of gendered forms of resilience for Mujeres Unidas. Engaging with social resilience and in particular loving and caring relationships forms part of a larger process of undoing fear of places and people in self-built neighborhoods. The broader impacts of this case study lie at the intersection of planning and development efforts that seek to create more equitable and inclusive urban community development processes, while taking care to avoid simplistic portrayals of communities where this work

is occurring. This project also contributes insight into the co-production of urban resilience and vulnerability, which allows for a more complete understanding of complex political, economic, and social processes in self-built neighborhoods. In the face of increasing urbanization and precarity worldwide, such comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is particularly urgent. Practitioners can draw on insights from this study to more effectively engage communities in a collaborative process for transformative planning outcomes.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Al principio muchos decían que estábamos perdiendo el tiempo. Pero a
veces hay que caminar mucho...toda en la vida es una lucha. Hay que tener
amor a la lucha, también paciencia y calma para lograr lo que quiere y todos
los sueños que tiene en la mente. / At first a lot of people said we were
wasting our time. But sometimes you have to walk a lot...everything in life
is a struggle. You have to love the struggle, be patient, keep calm to achieve
what you want and all the dreams you have in mind.

When asked about the challenges the community organization Mujeres Unidas

(Women United) has faced in its five years of work in Los Platanitos, a self-built

neighborhood located in Santo Domingo Norte, 44-year-old Elisa responded by slightly

reframing the question. While recognizing an initial disbelief on the part of other

community members in the power of social organization, she highlighted the importance

of amor (love) and lucha (struggle) to Mujeres Unidas' identity. Both came to characterize

many of the interviews and meetings Mujeres Unidas and I carried out together over the

course of seven weeks of field work. As we explored their motivations for forming Mujeres

Unidas and inspirations for continuing in spite of significant difficulties, it became clear

that both love *and* social struggle, as well as love *for* social struggle, are key aspects of

how members of Mujeres Unidas view themselves and their work.

However, I do not seek to romanticize the challenges, violences, and vulnerabilities

that women in Los Platanitos face in their daily lives, nor erase the many tensions and

contradictions embodied in aspects of their work. Mujeres Unidas' narratives of amor and

lucha are contextually specific and shaped by their spirituality, gendered subjectivities, and

networks of actors that exert varying levels of influence on their work. Similarly, my

understandings of these concepts are shaped by my identity and experience, and the limitations of translation to encapsulate their many meanings. As part of this recognition, I include original Spanish text throughout this thesis, unitalicized to avoid its othering in relation to my English translations. While I am fully bilingual, my efforts to understand these concepts in an academic planning context are inherently partial and incomplete. In spite of these limitations, I argue that Mujeres Unidas' narratives of amor and lucha to characterize their approach to community development work provide one way for planners and other development practitioners to understand processes of relationship-building and emotional underpinnings as motivations for community development work.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Although located within the city limits of Santo Domingo Norte, Los Platanitos is excluded from key city services and infrastructure as well as from many city planning processes. In response, a group of women in Los Platanitos founded Mujeres Unidas in 2012 to improve community relationships, solid waste management infrastructure, and economic opportunities. As the organization has grown and moved toward incorporating as an official nonprofit organization, it has received increased attention from city government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders. On the one hand, such participation has opened limited space for Mujeres Unidas to directly engage in community development processes, complicating top-down, exclusive definitions of planners and development practitioners as professionals. On the other, an emphasis on individual participation and entrepreneurship in planning processes reflects Santo

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Domingo Norte's neoliberal governance, which effectively places responsibility for services and infrastructure on grassroots organizations and individuals in self-built neighborhoods. These actors rarely have the capacity to assume this responsibility, particularly given ever-shrinking funding pools and strict institutional requirements for accessing resources. Further complicating these challenges of capacity and capital is the reality that planning relationships are imbued with power along racialized, gendered, and classed lines that shape participants' ability to appropriate these new "invited" planning spaces (Miraftab, 2009) to assert their community visions and plans.

However, Mujeres Unidas members appear energized by the possibility that they may be active agents in processes from which they were long excluded. In my research, therefore, I sought to facilitate reflections with Mujeres Unidas on their community development work and the formation of their organizational identity, which they often articulate in terms of entrepreneurship. Drawing on theories of resilience, gender and entrepreneurship in development, and loving attachment, I explore the particular forms of emotional and socio-ecological resilience that "empower" Mujeres Unidas to continue their work in the face of vulnerability and risk. In doing so, I seek to draw a connection between definitions of resilience used in planning theory, social work, and development studies, as well as the connections between individual and collective action. Given that Mujeres Unidas members consistently describe entrepreneurship as an essential part of their mission, it seems that entrepreneurship, while shaped by socially acceptable gender roles and gendered subjectivities within the context of Santo Domingo Norte, may serve as a

mode through which women's resilience in self-built neighborhoods is socially expressed and understood. Although women did at times describe entrepreneurship in terms of owning a business, getting ahead, and being proactive, they also consistently spoke about its perceived benefits to the broader community in terms of autonomy and alternatives to exploitative forms of employment, as well as its transformative potential for women's mobilities and sense of self. Whether or not this constitutes a conscious strategy, understanding and representing themselves as entrepreneurs emerges as one way for Mujeres Unidas to be recognized as full agents in planning processes as well as subtly challenge individualist, masculine notions of entrepreneurs (Bakas, 2017; Hanson, 2009).

In addition to working with self-identified women entrepreneurs, foregrounding emotional and social processes such as amor and lucha in planning praxis is itself a gendered proposal. Although scholars in the latter half of the 20th century began to imagine more critical roles for planners as advocates (Davidoff, 1965), storytellers (Sandercock, 2003; Throgmorton, 2003), anti-imperialists (Roy, 2006), and insurgents (Miraftab, 2009), planning remains largely grounded in positivist research paradigms and modernist rationality that seeks quantifiable results (Sandercock, 1998). This is especially true in Santo Domingo Norte's planning context, where even participatory planning efforts are approached in a top-down, technical manner. Such approaches perpetuate a gendered divide between the professional, scientific knowledge of planners and indigenous "folk" knowledge of the community (Agrawal, 1995), grounded in the historic construction of a binary masculine public sphere and feminine private sphere that has marginalized women's

knowledge production in planning (Fainstein & Servon, 2005). Calling on planners and development practitioners to value the emotional dimensions of resilience and incorporate them into praxis thus acts on two levels simultaneously, as it seeks to create more holistic reflections to improve specific project outcomes as well as unsettle gendered hierarchies of whose knowledge matters in planning more broadly.

My focus on micro-entrepreneurship as a popular strategy used to promote women's empowerment in informal settlements advances understanding of the relationship between specific contexts of urban vulnerability and particular modes of resilience that arise there, joining scholars that have highlighted emerging forms of collective entrepreneurship and sought to foreground women's agency in development processes (Bakas, 2017; Hanson, 2009; Hays-Mitchell, 1999; Pallarès-Blanch, 2015). Documenting how women actually understand and practices entrepreneurship in diverse places as they dialogue with development actors makes a key contribution to this process. My research is also situated within a critical feminist project that seeks to engage in collaborative knowledge production that questions assumptions about entrepreneurship in community development.

URBAN INFORMALITY

A paradigm of informality as an in-between, relational mode of urbanization produced through political, social, and economic networks provides a richer analysis of self-built or "informal" settlements like Los Platanitos. In alternately describing Los Platanitos as a self-built neighborhood and informal settlement, I draw on Roy's (2005,

2009, 2011) understanding of informality as a mode of urbanization selectively encouraged by the state. Borrowing Agamben's (2005) "state of exception" to support this characterization of informality, Roy argues that urban space is better viewed not in dichotomous terms of the informal and formal city, but rather an organizing logic or series of transactions that connect economies and space (Roy 2005, p. 148-149). Within an understanding of informality as a mode of urban space, areas that may seem to be spatially bounded are actually part of diverse networks, which complicates assumptions of spatial isolation in informal settlement (Simone, 2004).

While residents of Los Platanitos do experience spatial isolation and exclusion, they also travel around the larger city for many reasons, from doctor's appointments to working in private homes. Members of the community form part of diasporic networks, and some have traveled abroad to work. These mobilities are a function of the same conditions that produce informality and deny residents the possibility of accessing employment and services in their communities. Focusing on the mobilities that constitute Los Platanitos places its residents within the web of territories and collaborations that comprise the city (Simone, 2004; Sletto ed., 2016) and foregrounds the ongoing forms of social organizing that women in informal neighborhoods engage in order to pass the time, socialize, and support each other in daily tasks (Vargas, 2005; Bossin, 2009). Thinking of informal settlements in terms of networks and relationships highlights the potential for gendered forms of social organization and action, as well as the limitations of proposals to formalize

informal sectors via policies like neighborhood upgrades, microcredit, and titling, which have all been used in Santo Domingo Norte.

SITUATING LOS PLATANITOS

Los Platanitos is an urban neighborhood of about 2,000 residents located in Santo Domingo Norte, an autonomous municipality within the capital district of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The division of the capital into separate municipalities in 2001 formed part of the decentralization of Dominican planning governance that accelerated during the 1990's (Sletto ed., 2008). The 20th century had been largely characterized by centralized planning, first under the U.S. Marine Occupation of the country from 1916 to 1924, and then under the dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo from 1930 to 1961. Trujillo instigated genocide against Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent, death squads, brutal repression of social movements and political opponents, surveillance, and intellectual censorship. In terms of planning, his regime promoted a modernist approach focused on internal agricultural production in the countryside and urban infrastructure and industrial development (Torres, 2014). These policies were largely continued by Trujillo's political advisor Joaquin Balaguer, who assumed power briefly after Trujillo's assassination and then again from 1966 to 1978 and 1986 to 1996.

Torres describes Balaguer's first regime, which was supported by the U.S. government, as a "light dictatorship" that established a number of centralized and regional planning entities and continued to promote infrastructure development and state-run industry, at the same time as it began to establish free trade zones (Torres, 2014, p. 570).

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Structural adjustment policies oriented toward tourism and the expansion of free trade zones dominated the 1980's, and were eventually adopted during Balaguer's second presidency in the 1990's as part of increased neoliberal reforms. This effectively signaled the ascendancy of a new development model in the Dominican Republic oriented towards the global economy and free trade, carried out via privatization and decentralization at both national and municipal levels (Goldfrank & Schrank, 2009; Perdue, 2017). Policies enacted in the early 2000's further linked macroeconomic stability in the Dominican Republic to market liberalization and increased the power of foreign development and financial institutions in national affairs, using the United Nations Millenium Development Goals as justification (Bosman & Amen, 2006). For planning, these reforms meant an increased emphasis on city-level governance, citizen participation, and responsible citizenship (Torres, 2014; Sletto & Nygren, 2016).

Los Platanitos directly reflects this history. Their founders migrated to Santo Domingo beginning in the 1980's, forming part of a broader trend of rural to urban migration spurred by market liberalization that made it increasingly difficult for small-scale farmers to make a living. Often unable to purchase homes and denied formal claims to land, Los Platanitos founders constructed a temporary settlement on top of a landfill located between two rivers. Using salvaged scrap materials, they built homes and staircases that cut into the sides of a deep ravine that leads up to incorporated neighborhoods of Santo Domingo Norte. Over time, parts of Los Platanitos have undergone several state and NGO-led "consolidation" processes of titling and limited building improvements, and residents

have also continued to modify and upgrade their homes as their economic circumstances change. Relatively wealthier homes may be constructed of concrete and contain several rooms and two stories, including a front galería (porch) or patio, with brightly painted facades. More modest homes of just one or two rooms are often constructed of scrap wood and corrugated metal, with no porch space. Abundant plant life cultivated for consumption, medicinal, and aesthetic purposes (Sletto, ed., 2014) dots pathways, patios, and vacant lots, contributing to the variety of materials, colors, and textures in the physical environment that cover the bottom of the ravine and extend up to the roadways above.

Although Los Platanitos is bordered by large, paved roads networked into the city's transportation services—including the new Santo Domingo Metro built in 2007—and lined with middle-class homes and businesses, infrastructure and public services in the community are unreliable at best. Until 2017 Los Platanitos was only accessible by foot and motorcycle. Electricity is available only during limited hours of the day by unofficially tapping into the city's electrical grid, and potable water is now brought in by truck twice a week. Trash collection, which is privatized in Santo Domingo, does not serve most of Los Platanitos (Sletto ed., 2008; Perdue, 2017). Given the continued difficulties in packing trash up out of the ravine and to the main road for collection, trash accumulates on pathways, in vacant lots, and in the cañadas (drainage channels), mixing with the layers of refuse from the former landfill. This trash fills the three long cañadas that run through the bottom of the ravine, flooding homes with contaminated water during the rainy season (Sletto ed., 2010, 2016). As such, the cañadas play an important role in residents' lives,

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which is experienced differently depending on their geographic and social position within Los Platanitos. In general the lowest-income residents live closest to the cañada and experience its effects most acutely, while those with more resources construct their homes on higher ground (Sletto ed., 2008, 2010).

In addition to the absence of solid waste management and public infrastructure, residents in Los Platanitos face social exclusion and discrimination as residents of a self-built neighborhood. Formal education and employment opportunities are limited, especially for women. While younger women who grew up in Los Platanitos are able to attend school, many of the older women who migrated from rural areas cannot read or write. Work opportunities available to residents of Los Platanitos are gendered and highly exploitative. Men often work in day labor construction or doing odd jobs in the market place (Strange, 2010). Many women engage in home-based work, selling food, produce, or novelties, or as domestic workers in middle and upper-class neighborhoods (Bossin, 2009). Another income generation strategy across the community comes in the form of piecework for a nearby rum factory that decorates each rum bottle with woven nets. Residents are given a bag of yarn large enough to make 1,000 nets, and are paid $200 pesos (about $4 USD) for each bag they complete—at least one full day's work; usually more.

To address these complex planning issues, residents in self-built neighborhoods in Santo Domingo have organized a number of community groups over the years, accompanied by partner organizations that provide support and capacity building. Some low-income neighborhoods in the capital, such as La Zurza, have formed community-based

trash collection companies that contract with the city to address solid waste management (Sletto, 2014; Perdue, 2017). Juntas de Vecinos (Neighborhood Associations) have also been established throughout the Dominican Republic as a mechanism for residents to officially engage with state planning entities. In other cases, larger NGOs have grown out of movements fighting for formal land titles, basic utility services, and infrastructural improvements in self-built settlements constructed during the rural to urban migration of the 1970's and 1980's. COPADEBA and Ciudad Alternativa are two NGOs that emerged from this tradition, continuing to stage demonstrations, organize, and advocate for informal settlement residents and their right to the city through the 1990's (Sletto, 2013, 2014). Currently, these NGOs help to organize neighborhood committees in informal settlements, provide technical assistance, and engage residents in community development planning processes. Both organizations support Mujeres Unidas along with a newer NGO, CIAMF, that focuses on capacity building and supporting women and families.

In Los Platanitos, Mujeres Unidas and its three-part mission of building community, improving infrastructure, and promoting social enterprise forms part of a process of community adaptability and resilience in the face of urban vulnerability (Sletto ed., 2016). The organization formed in 2012 with the support of a University of Texas at Austin research team, and initially focused on vermiculture composting as both a solid waste management technique and income generation strategy for women (Sletto ed., 2012; Sletto, Dávila, Brigmon, Clifton, Rizzo & Sertzen, 2015). Membership in the organization has fluctuated over the last five years, but a core group of women continues to meet

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regularly and maintain contact with partners. They acquired a permanent space to meet and they maintain a vermiculture composting site near a popular colmado (corner store and gathering place) in the community. Mujeres Unidas is currently in the process of formalizing their bylaws and registering with the Dominican state, which is a requirement in order for them to legally receive any type of financial support.

One result of Mujeres Unidas's efforts has been increased recognition of Los Platanitos by formal planning entities and government officials. In 2016, President Danilo Medina, whose office maintains planning authority and discretion to finance specific projects via the National Direction of Special Projects (DIGEPEP), visited Los Platanitos for the first time in the community's history. Contact between the Santo Domingo Norte city government officials and Mujeres Unidas increased in 2016 and turned into regular meetings and visits to Los Platanitos in January 2017. Even more recently, in February 2017, the Aqueduct and Sewer Corporation of Santo Domingo (CAASD) broke ground on a cañada saneamiento (clean-up and improvement) project designed to remove trash, expand the drainage channel, and cover it with a road wide enough to permit vehicle access. After decades of residents' calls to fix the cañada, the project initially progressed extremely rapidly, displacing residents who lived in the path of the new roadway and leaving many homes with no toilet or drainage facilities. The resulting grade and drainage pipe also worsened flooding in certain areas. Just as abruptly as the project began, in July 2017 it halted, with the CAASD citing a shortage of funding from the President's Office. As of April 2018, residents continue to struggle with the lack of toilets and potable water,

worsened flooding, and relocated families who do not know when or if they will be permanently rehoused.

This increased recognition and rapid changes—not all of which are positive, as the CAASD cañada improvement project demonstrates—represent one of the tensions that Mujeres Unidas must navigate as part of their organizing work within Santo Domingo Norte's neoliberal planning governance. Neoliberal governance produces inequalities and simultaneously creates a logic of responsibility that places the onus to solve these challenges on individual citizens through their active participation (Sletto & Nygren, 2016; Watson, 2009). Citizens are expected to put forward their own proposals and take initiative to implement them (Tabory, 2016). In the case of Mujeres Unidas, invitations to participate in planning processes, trainings, and public events are points of pride for residents who have long struggled for improvement in their material living conditions and recognition as a community. They affirm women's status as citizens and community leaders with a right to the city, and provide limited spaces and relationships through which Mujeres Unidas can advance its work. Organizing around material living conditions can also bring women together to learn, dialogue, and create their own spaces to advance more critical projects.

However, engaging in local participatory planning process runs the risk of social organizing being coopted by state and private interests, absorbing Mujeres Unidas into a process of finding "solutions" for inequalities largely created by neoliberal governance, not community inaction. Their participation comes on institutional terms, such as the national organizational registration requirement that is prohibitively costly in terms of time

and financial resources for smaller organizations. While Mujeres Unidas may be officially recognized as community representatives or stakeholders at times, gendered hierarchies in community planning spaces frequently marginalize them from positions of influence. Furthermore, partisan politics and clientelism continue to shape the contours of social organizing in Santo Domingo Norte, as each city administration typically brings in its own staff to completely replace city government officials every four years. The relationship between these many actors at different levels of government, private contractors, and nonprofit entities is opaque, making it difficult for Mujeres Unidas to access people with decision-making power. In turn, the ways desired interventions are implemented may not align with community visions, as has been the case with the CAASD saneamiento project.

Official inclusion and participation in Santo Domingo Norte thus present a challenge for Mujeres Unidas, as they can be used to co-opt grassroots organizing processes through their very legitimization. Yet the terrain of neoliberal planning governance is uneven and presents opportunities for strategic maneuvers (Sletto & Nygren, 2015). The extent to which subaltern groups may be able to leverage officially sanctioned or "invited" spaces for citizen participation along with "inventing" their own "insurgent" counter-hegemonic spaces (Miraftab, 2009) that directly denounce and challenge neoliberal planning regimes is thus a key discussion that my study in Los Platanitos engages. Investigating Mujeres Unidas' entrepreneurship as a specific, gendered expression of community resilience enriches this discussion by connecting it to work on

development and microenterprise that troubles all-or-nothing understandings of either cooptation or empowerment within neoliberal planning governance.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

Conversations and workshops carried out with Mujeres Unidas members during my first two field visits with the UT Austin graduate planning practicum in January and March 2017 heavily shaped my research proposal. In order to explore urban resilience and vulnerability as well as individual and collective entrepreneurship through the lens of Mujeres Unidas, I established three research objectives for our thesis fieldwork:

1. Document the narratives that Mujeres Unidas members engage to describe their organizing work and related microenterprise projects, particularly related to their feelings of strength, inspiration, and pride.
2. Articulate Mujeres Unidas' definition of entrepreneurship and its relationship to women's everyday resilience in community development work.
3. Co-facilitate participatory action workshops that that further Mujeres Unidas' organizational priorities while foregrounding emotional and socio-ecological resilience within community development praxis.

To arrive at these research objectives, I defined three overarching research questions to explore through qualitative research methods.

1. What are the narratives of community development work for Mujeres Unidas members in Los Platanitos? Where do they locate their sources of resilience; what inspires them to continue in spite of challenges?
2. How do Mujeres Unidas members describe and understand entrepreneurship? How is it connected to their particular forms of emotional and socio-ecological resilience?
3. How can community development practitioners recognize and affirm Mujeres Unidas' particular forms of resilience?

Active membership in Mujeres Unidas has varied from five to twenty or so women.

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Given the small sample size as well as the nuance and emotional experience that I sought to explore, qualitative research methods seemed most appropriate. I envisioned these methods within a broader framework of intersectional feminist collaboration and activist research, which are explicit about their political commitments. I began my research by "deep hanging out," an informal ethnographic method that involves spending large amounts of unstructured time with co-researchers. Deep hanging out places an emphasis on sharing time together and conceptualizes the research relationship as more collaborative than traditional participant observation. Along with deep hanging out, I conducted fourteen semi-structured interviews with Mujeres Unidas, as well as two interviews with city government officials, and one interview with a longtime NGO partner in Los Platanitos. These individual interviews were designed to be flexible and carried out where women felt most comfortable, which was nearly always in their homes or in their galerías. Ana, a 63-year-old resident of Los Platanitos and Mujeres Unidas member who I hired as a coresearcher and accompanier, helped facilitate those visits with the members who I knew less well. These individual interviews were complemented with eight participatory action workshops that I cofacilitated with the Mujeres Unidas coordinator, Yurani. The workshops focused on organizational capacity building themes suggested by Mujeres Unidas members, and were intended to provide a supportive space for them to continue exploring their own organizational priorities.

THE RISKS OF ROMANTICIZING RESILIENCE

At the same time that narratives of resilience infuse Mujeres Unidas's engagement in social processes and understandings of themselves, the context in which their specific forms of resilience arise cannot be romanticized (Abu-Lughod, 1990). Women in Los Platanitos carry additional burdens as a result of their classed and racialized subject positions, the physical conditions of their neighborhood that make them vulnerable to structural violence, and the gender-based violence that was occasionally referenced indirectly in our conversations but never deeply discussed. I struggle to write about violence in Los Platanitos; I always struggle to write about violence. Any representation seems limited and limiting, reinforcing destructive imaginaries of self-built urban neighborhoods and their residents as dangerous and threatening. Yet failing to acknowledge the interlocking forms of violence that affect the women of Mujeres Unidas by focusing exclusively on resilience is also an incomplete story, and one that hides the complicity of systems in which planners and development practitioners work: systems that criminalize racialized bodies and force low-income, racialized women to care for themselves, their families, and entire communities with ever more limited support.

In this sense, women in Los Platanitos are resilient because they must be. There are stories to illustrate this—like Yahaira's, whose closest brother was electrocuted trying to fix improvised wiring up on his roof, and fell to his death. This death was preventable; it resulted from unsanctioned infrastructural solutions that institutional neglect compels people to build. In addition to losing her brother, Yahaira now has to help care for his children along with the five grandchildren she is already helping to raise. Or there is Deya's

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account of how police profile and target youth in the community, particularly young men, on trumped up charges in order to extort them for bail. Not long after Deya's husband passed away, the police imprisoned her son on false charges of drug possession. She took out a loan to pay his bail and almost lost everything she owned paying it back. Many more such stories highlight how resilience and vulnerability are intertwined (Norris et al., 2008; Jenkins & Rondon, 2015); my purpose here is to note that sources of resilience are also sources of stress (Lenette, Brough & Cox, 2012), and that sources of stress—though complex—can often be traced to policies and institutions whose indifference poses the greatest threat to developing a loving attachment paradigm for planning.

In addition to this structural violence, women acknowledge gendered barriers to organizing in different ways. Patriarchal forms of control continue to demand extensive home and caregiving responsibilities of women, as well as physically constrain the participation and even daily movements of many women in Los Platanitos. Finally, a lack of material resources, onerous bureaucratic requirements to formalize their organizational status, and continued reliance on partner organizations who themselves have limited capacity continue to constrain Mujeres Unidas's growth.

THESIS STRUCTURE

Elisa's narrative of amor y lucha opened this introduction, and through the remaining chapters Mujeres Unidas members will continue to have the first and last words. Doing so is one small way to elevate women in self-built neighborhoods as contributors to a process of knowledge coproduction that contains multiple opinions, strategies, and

priorities. Fundamentally, this process is an ongoing conversation, and in an effort to capture that feel, I include many direct quotes and exchanges with Mujeres Unidas interwoven with my own writing. Having situated my research project and the physical site of Los Platanitos, in Chapter 2 I critically reflect on the notion of Los Platanitos as the "field" and my own positionality as a researcher using intersectional feminist epistemologies and racial formations in the Dominican Republic. I conclude by discussing the process of documenting the emotional register of Mujeres Unidas' work and describing my methods in more detail. Following my conceptual understandings of intersectional feminist methods, in Chapter 3 I describe three theoretical frameworks that guide my thematic focus on resilience, entrepreneurship, and emotions in planning. In contrast to planning theory's focus on resilience as adaptive capacities to environmental risks, my study understands resilience as socio-ecological and emotional. Critical scholarship on gender and entrepreneurship as well as non-representational theories of emotions and loving attachment provide additional insight into Mujeres Unidas' work. Chapter 4 describes the motivations that shape members' of Mujeres Unidas decisions to engage and persist in their work, while Chapter 5 describes the meaning that Mujeres Unidas members assign to entrepreneurship and community development. Both chapters address their identities as women and an organization, addressing the ways they speak about their context in terms of both vulnerabilities and resilience. Chapter 6 discusses the perceived impacts and implications of Mujeres Unidas' work, as well as how the associated narratives of love, community, and struggle may shape their results beyond the "tangible" outcomes

of capacity, technical assistance, and capital. Finally, I conclude with recommendations for planners and development practitioners focused on women's empowerment and community entrepreneurship, and close with a brief reflection on collaborative research. Mujeres Unidas' approval of this thesis is included in the Appendix.

> Y yo le digo, mira hermana, si es para que la gente te agradezca olvídate. Óyeme, siga pa´lante, él que tiene que agradecerte es Dios porque nosotros no lo hacemos para que nos agradezca sino por el amor, por amor a aquellos niños, aquellos envejecientes, aquellos jóvenes que para nosotros a la hora de morir hay un rasgo. / And I say, look sister, if you want people to thank you, forget it. Listen, you keep going. The one who has to thank you is God because we're not doing this for thanks but rather out of love--love for those children, those elderly folks, those youth, and so that when we die there's a mark left. -Yurani, 31

Chapter 2: Los Platanitos and the "Field:" Intersectional Feminist Praxis and Making Space for Feelings in Planning Methods

La inquietud acá siempre era la cañada. Aquí yo llevo 22 años viviendo. A veces con todo el agua que entraba cuando se llovía me tocaba poner la cama encima de la mesa y dejar a mis hijos durmiendo ahí mientras iba a trabajar, porque yo tenía que trabajar. / The concern here was always the cañada. I've been living here for 22 years. Sometimes when it rained the water came up so high that I had to put the bed on the table and leave my kids sleeping there while I went to work, because I had to work. -Teresa, 43

As Mujeres Unidas member Teresa notes, much of Los Platanitos' identity and the particular challenges it faces as an informal settlement have been constructed around the three cañadas that run through the neighborhood. Cañada refers to the open drainage channels into which stormwater and untreated home sewage flow, but can also mean the broader neighborhoods that surround them. In addition to the significance of the cañadas, Los Platanitos faces other infrastructural challenges and intersecting forms of social exclusion and inequities. These complexities shape my understanding of Los Platanitos as a "field site" situated within broader processes of collaboration, which is informed by an intersectional feminist analysis that attends to complexities and differences of race, class, gender, and other forms of power (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). As such, working in Los Platanitos requires a deep reflection on my positionality as a white woman from the U.S. with class privilege in relation to how I arrived at and continue to relate to the community, along with the associated implications for collaborative research. To guide this reflection, I draw on theories of self-reflexivity, racial formations in the Dominican Republic, and emotional geographies in research. Since these reflections and feminist epistemologies shaped my methodology, I also describe my research methods in this chapter.

INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST PRAXIS

My interest in working with Mujeres Unidas and in critical planning as a discipline stems from past experience accompanying communities facing displacement and intersecting forms of violence in Colombia. As a human rights accompanier, many of the communities I worked with lived in self-built neighborhoods whose physical and social conditions are similar to Los Platanitos. Indeed, conditions in Los Platanitos are characteristic of many informal settlements throughout Latin America. The neoliberal planning context in Santo Domingo Norte, while place-specific, also shares many characteristics with planning governance in many other Latin American countries. Los Platanitos thus presented an important case study for deepening understandings of informality, urban vulnerability, and resilience.

Additionally, since 2008 The University of Texas at Austin's School of Architecture has coordinated a graduate planning practicum focused on critical participatory planning in relation to solid waste management in Los Platanitos. Given the otherwise short timeline imposed by Master's-level fieldwork, I was drawn to the idea of situating our project within a longer process of collaboration and support. I participated in this practicum for two academic years between 2016 and 2018, which included theoretical grounding in community development issues as well as a practice component consisting of four field visits to Los Platanitos in January and March of 2017 and 2018. The first two visits with The University of Texas at Austin practicum team facilitated contacts with Mujeres Unidas and partners as well as knowledge of the physical site, and served as

preparation for my independent field research carried out collaboratively with Mujeres Unidas from June to August 2017.

During the 2017 practicum trips, entrepreneurship, amor, and lucha emerged as key narratives for Mujeres Unidas. In light of the continued emphasis in development on microenterprise as a strategy for empowering women in informal settlements, it seemed important to explore how Mujeres Unidas actually understands this concept, and how it may or may not align with connotations that entrepreneurship may carry elsewhere. The connection between entrepreneurship and resilience emerged to complicate portrayals of self-built neighborhoods only in terms of violence, problems, and lack. Understanding what motivates Mujeres Unidas to continue organizing in the face of social exclusion and environmental risks allows for a richer understanding of social organization and informality, as well as the ways vulnerability and resilience exist simultaneously and interact with each other.

A critical, intersectional feminist approach to this study positions Mujeres Unidas as collaborators in a mutual process of knowledge production and interrogates the stability of academic constructions of the "field" implicit in fieldwork. Critical feminist research understands the research process as constituted by fields of power shaped by historic identities of both academic and community researchers (Katz, 1994). In contrast to the positivist tradition of scientific research that presents knowledge as objective and rational, in critical feminist epistemologies the researcher's perspective is understood as "situated" and partial (Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1997; Sundberg, 2005). The understandings that

researchers develop are always shaped by their identities and relative power vis-à-vis their collaborators; in other words, as researchers we need to recognize that we can only see from where we stand (Haraway, 1988; Sundberg, 2003). Acknowledging these limitations and the relational aspects of knowledge production requires researchers to engage in an ongoing process of critical self-reflexivity on their own positionalities and describe this process in their research (Rose, 1997; Sundberg, 2005). Coproducing knowledge in the face of significant differences in power along racialized, gendered, and classed lines requires researchers to foreground these shifting categories in their analysis (Kobayashi, 1994) and acknowledge them as always relevant, whether or not they form part of the specific research questions.

Similarly, intersectional feminism as theorized by Black feminists and other women of color (See: Combahee River Collective, 1977; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Davis, 1983; hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1984; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983) emphasize the need to explore difference by highlighting interlocking dimensions of identity and oppression. Intersectionality engages in "both/and" instead of "either/or" thinking, engages complexities, and is contextually specific in its application across domains of power (Hill & Bilge, 2016). Practically, understanding systems of oppression as articulated systems of domination draws attention to contradictions in praxis that may variously contest and reinforce hegemonies (Curiel, 2005). In addition to its critical complexity, intersectional feminism foregrounds the contributions of Black and women of color feminists throughout the Americas to the construction of theory that highlights race and gendered oppression as

dimensions of the "coloniality of power" (Curiel, 2007; Quijano, 2000) at work in planning and academic research. Applying an intersectional feminist lens to my work with Mujeres Unidas means recognizing numerous distances and differences between us while accepting that the ways in which they shape knowledge coproduction may not be fully mappable or understandable (Rose, 1997).

To reflect on my position in relationship to this project, I draw on ideas of "kitchen table reflexivity" (Kohl & McCutcheon, 2015) and "real talk" (Bates & Zapata, 2012). These concepts refer to informal conversations with a variety of actors that emerge throughout the research process as an important way to engage with its nuance. Kitchen table reflexivity has four functions that help to distinguish it from other conversations: catharsis, an awareness to the ways spaces and relationship are racialized, seeking understanding rather than consensus, and reminding researchers not to romanticize their relationships (Kohl & McCutcheon, 2015). Along similar lines, real talk refers to authentic, uncensored conversations that do not shy away from difficult topics and demanding accountability.

Kitchen table reflexivity and real talk gave names to discussions that I had with classmates, friends, and Dominican activists informed by Black feminism and queer theory with whom I stayed during my fieldwork, all of which pushed me to think more deeply about my stake in this work as a white graduate student from the U.S. with class privilege. Another important part of this ongoing process of kitchen table reflexivity included regular "check-ins," or scheduled time to debrief and process feelings and reflections, with fellow

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UT Austin graduate students Moravia de la O, Caroline Daigle, and Raksha Vasudevan. Moravia was engaged in field work in Mexico City, so our conversations took place over Skype; Caroline and Raksha were in Santo Domingo and formed an important part of my support system there.

One of my ongoing concerns in engaging in collaborative research in Los Platanitos is how to incorporate an analysis of race and how it manifests spatially in the Dominican Republic. Although virtually all residents of Los Platanitos are of African descent, they do not publicly identify themselves this way or speak directly about racialized processes as contributing to their exclusion to me or other UT Austin researchers. Mujeres Unidas members include Afro-Dominican and one Haitian woman; many of them grew up in rural areas before moving to Los Platanitos. In conversations, they occasionally spoke about discrimination and brusque treatment they receive when trying to access services throughout the city as a result of being read as poor and uneducated cañada residents, which I understand as additionally racialized as a function of their class. Although the majority of the Dominican population is of African descent, much U.S. scholarship has focused on denials of this heritage, rooted in an assumption that Dominicans do not "know" that they are Black (Wheeler, 2015). Despite myths of racial democracies in the Caribbean, which erase official recognition of racial difference through mestizaje (racial mixing) narratives that whiten national identities (Curiel, 2007), racial legacies remain extremely important in the Dominican Republic (Howard, 2007). However, the terms in which these racial identities are expressed and affirmation of Black identities may not always be apparent to

scholars working in a U.S. context with a Black-white binary as the basis for racial formations (Chetty, 2013; Wheeler, 2015).

Torres-Saillant (2000) similarly complicates analyses of Dominicans as in denial of their blackness by drawing attention to the significance of the Dominican Republic's particular experience of colonialism, manipulated memories of Haitian occupation prior to Dominican independence, the Trujillo dictatorship, and the Dominican diaspora in the formation of racial discourses. Trujillo played a key role in further fomenting national imaginaries of white dominicanidad (Dominicanness) rooted in anti-Haitian sentiment, an enduring legacy carried out via genocide, forced deportation, and the erasure of blackness from official Dominican history and educational systems that continued through the end of the 20th century (Torres-Saillant, 2000). State racial ideologies have been internalized such that negative representations of blackness exist in all spheres of public life (Wigginton, 2005), while racialized and gendered hierarchies continue to associate Black women with the lowest-paying and lowest-status jobs (Valdez, 2005).

Race in the Dominican Republic can thus be understood as relational and hierarchical, enacted via the "spatial application of racial boundaries to mark territories conditioned by fear, motivated by protection or trespass" (Howard, 2007, p. 736). While Howard refers to national territories and in particular to the 1937 Haitian massacre and whitening project carried out by the Trujillo regime on the Dominican-Haitian border, this spatial analysis of racial violence also applies within Dominican cities and informs my understanding of structural (Farmer, 2004) and symbolic violence (Bordieu & Wacquant,

1992) present in Los Platanitos. Drawing on Gilmore's (1994) insight that racism can only be understood through the ways that power manifests spatially, Perry (2009) argues that state racial and gender ideologies are implemented and upheld through specific urbanization practices. The identification of racial hierarchies in urban space highlights the connection between the geographic margins of cities and the social margins of racial, gendered, and classed lines (Perry, 2009). In line with this theory, Santo Domingo cañadas function as more than a physical space of marginality: they are additionally a symbolic and racialized space that is used to associate the people that live there with filth and lack (Sletto & Diaz, 2015). This space stands in contrast to central city neighborhoods that are modernized, upgraded, and thus "whitened" for wealthy Dominicans and tourists. Persistent negative, racialized, and gendered images of "marginal" neighborhoods can then be used to justify their removal (Perry, 2009), which can be observed in current plans to sanear (clean up) the cañada and replace self-built homes with modernized apartments that may not be accessible for the neighborhood's original residents.

Within this context of forging a white Dominican national identity rooted in Spanish colonial heritage, a deracialized consciousness in the Dominican Republic can be viewed as a strategy that allows Dominicans to understand their blackness in spite of its systematic devaluation (Torres-Saillant, 2000). At the same time, there is also potential for black affirmation in Dominican history, cultural forms, and activism, which has been connected to Dominican experiences as part of the diaspora in the U.S (Chetty, 2013; Torres-Saillant, 2000). In particular, this line of scholarship emphasizes that Dominicans

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assume a new racial consciousness vis-à-vis U.S. racial formations through the diaspora. While many Dominicans have found affirming discourses of Black identity through diaspora, scholars must take care not to assume that Dominicans are only able to develop racial consciousness through the U.S. as a central referent, which is particularly complicated given U.S. imperial legacies in the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, access to racially affirming discourses in the U.S. is mediated by family migration, formal education levels, language ability, and other forms of power and privilege that affect how these experiences "travel" to the Dominican Republic and are interpreted and re-appropriated there. As such, their relative absence in Los Platanitos is perhaps less surprising, but still important to reflect upon as part of collaborative research.

In light of these racial formations, my whiteness, U.S. passport, and NSF scholarship afforded me significant power and mobilities, including the ability to choose to work in Los Platanitos and easily move between many spaces in the Dominican Republic. On the other hand, my gendered and sexualized female body constrained my mobility in other spaces and at times became a target for violence, an experience not unique to the Dominican Republic but which nevertheless shaped my field experience and relationship with Mujeres Unidas members. Although we are all women, I understand gender as fluid and performed (Butler, 1990), while Mujeres Unidas members generally speak about gender in binary terms with essentialized characteristics related to the complementarity of male and female roles. Their identities as mothers—all but one member of Mujeres Unidas have children and grandchildren—are also key to narratives of

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the community's children and future generations as motivations for their work. In our conversations, only the coordinator, Yurani, explicitly named feminism as part of Mujeres Unidas' project, despite the organization's focus on women and recognition of gendered forms of injustice. This is consistent with Weyland's (2005) finding that women's organizations in an informal settlement in Villa Mella, Dominican Republic identified more with local struggles than national feminist organizations, which they saw as less relevant to their immediate concerns. However, Weyland leaves open the possibility that these local organizations may become more politicized over time, in part through ongoing collaboration with transnational feminists.

In terms of formal education, one member of Mujeres Unidas has completed high school; others are working toward their diplomas, while others cannot read or write. Consequently, Mujeres Unidas places a high value on learning and formal education, at times referring to me as profesora (teacher) and our "classes" together. While the term "profesora" can also be read as a culturally-specific form of respect and was mediated by other references they made to us learning together, the implicit hierarchy made me aware of how difficult it is to shift these relationships of power, particularly following years of interactions with planning and development actors that devalue Mujeres Unidas' knowledge. On the other hand, this continued use of "profesora" as a title can also be interpreted as a strategic way to leverage our work together as part of a larger process of capacity building and training that increases the legitimacy of Mujeres Unidas as development actors and community leaders.

Religion was another important category of difference: I was raised Catholic, but do not have a strong religious identity, whereas many Mujeres Unidas members are evangelical Christians. The local manifestations of Pentecostal and Assembly of God churches shape their narratives of social change, community partnerships, and gender, as well as practices such as abstaining from alcohol, dancing, and non-Christian music. Many women dress in long skirts and cover their shoulders, and are discouraged from relaxing their hair and wearing makeup. All Mujeres Unidas meetings begin with a prayer, and many of the women are extremely active members of their local churches. I bring these points up because Mujeres Unidas members highlighted these as practices they adopted when they became evangelical, which I do not personally share but nevertheless respected as their collaborator.

Given these differences, which at times coincided with different political analyses and priorities, what drew me to propose collaborating with Mujeres Unidas? I seek to transform the processes of racialized capital accumulation and violence that drive displacement and the creation of informal settlements like Los Platanitos. While there are clear material injustices and interlocking forms of violence that constitute Los Platanitos, there are also complex, resilient people who bring all of themselves to struggles to change these realities and the relationships of power that shape them. Within this framework, whether or not Mujeres Unidas explicitly identifies as a feminist organization becomes less important than the fact that the work they are doing aligns in specific ways with feminist goals to challenge injustice and oppression (fonza, 2012; Naples, 2003; Walker, 1983). My

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work is motivated by a desire to support these global, interconnected processes of lucha in whatever small ways that I can from my specific position, while recognizing that doing so from the fields of planning, Latin American Studies, whiteness, and U.S. citizenship invokes terribly complicated legacies, especially in the Dominican Republic. I also wanted to ensure continued engagement and relationships after my "fieldwork," which made joining a ten year effort of sustained collaboration between UT Austin and Los Platanitos appealing. In sum, temporal considerations, an existing network of relationships built by prior students and my advisor, and a desire to be part of a longer-term critical pedagogical process of learning together came together to shape my work with Mujeres Unidas.

MAKING SPACE FOR FEELINGS IN PLANNING

While critical reflexivity implies thinking through how intersecting categories of difference shape research, my project also sought to foreground feelings by documenting the emotional register of Mujeres Unidas and our collaborative work. While working in Los Platanitos and even writing this thesis was a deeply emotional process, how to "do" feelings in academic work presents more of a challenge than critical reflexivity, precisely because feelings have been so marginalized from positivist research and planning traditions (Baum, 2015). This divide has gendered knowledge production in spatial disciplines, as "masculine" notions of rationality and objectivity have been promoted while emotions and subjectivity have been feminized and devalued in theory and practice (Anderson & Smith, 2001). Additionally, the suppression of emotions from research has tended to create smooth, linear narratives about community development from what is actually a messy

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process (Humble, 2012). This insight requires researchers to engage emotions in their work in different ways. As Humble puts it, "Writing emotion into development research is critical on two specific levels, firstly in the way that the 'field of research' is constructed and approached by the researcher and secondly, in recognizing that not only is emotion instrumental in the production of data but that it is itself also data" (Humble, 2012, p. 80). Scholars and practitioners need to recognize emotions and the people involved in their expressions, which implies making time to explore their own emotions as well as those of their co-researchers during and after the research process.

Jones and Ficklin (2012) stress the relational nature of emotions: while development researchers often assume they will be the ones empathizing with their co-researchers, they can receive this empathy as well. This process of bringing emotions into and out of the "field" and how feelings emerge there are complex and unpredictable. But analyzing emotions and documenting the emotional register also sheds light on questions of critical self-reflexivity, which further enriches research (Jones & Ficklin, 2012, p. 109). Although some scholars have sought to bring bodies and emotions more explicitly into planning work (See: Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010; Longhurst, Johnston, & Ho, 2009; Spinney, 2009; Sweet & Escalante, 2014), the innovative methods they describe proved unfeasible in Los Platanitos for reasons described in the next section. Rather than a specific process or method to get at emotions in my research, they instead emerged through relationship-building and spending time together. This finding implies that to some extent the specific methods used may be less important than how they are facilitated. I will

describe two experiences where emotions were at the forefront of our work together, one from midway through our fieldwork and one at its conclusion, to help illustrate how feelings shaped this process.

One of my longest interviews was with Ángela, 44, a member of Mujeres Unidas. Ángela had participated in participatory action workshops that UT Austin graduate student Caroline Daigle and I co-facilitated in January and March 2017, so we had already spent significant time together and had a good rapport. We spent nearly two hours chatting in her one-room house that sits halfway up the ravine, which she ironically refers to as her penthouse. Her house is open and airy, furnished simply with a rug and several chairs. We sat by the open window and rain fell intermittently as we talked. The conversation flowed around the questions I had prepared about her work with Mujeres Unidas, and included significant reflection on processes of social change and building a political analysis. Ana occasionally jumped in to offer her own thoughts, leading to a more relaxed and organic process of thinking together, as demonstrated in the below excerpt from the conversation addressing how building relationships between women and their influence over their children can reduce violence in the community:

> Ángela: Pero si yo conozco a Ana le voy a decir mira hijo, no lo hagas por mí, Ana es una amiga...ella es su mamá y yo soy su mamá y los cogemos y hablamos y eso se acabó el problema...Y eso es un asunto de todas las madres, por eso yo digo que es muy importante, es un 100% importante ser organizada. / But if I know Ana I'll say, look son, don't do this, Ana's my friend. She's a mother and I'm also a mother, and we pull [our children] aside and talk to them and that solves the problem. And this is an issue for all mothers, and that's why I say it's so important, it's 100 percent important to be organized.

Julia: Claro, porque lo que están hablando ahora es como ser organizada puede ser una forma de reducir la violencia y manejar los conflictos de una forma más sana. / Of course, because what you're talking about here is how organization can be a way to reduce violence and manage conflicts in a healthier way.

Ana: Sí y también porque un muchacho de cualquier vecino de uno que uno lo ve en problemas y lo llama y ya, deja eso, y después uno le llama y le habla ven pa´ca y esto y esto y el otro-- / Yes, and also when we see any neighbor's kid getting into trouble we call them over and say hey, leave that alone—we call them and say, come here, and this that and the other--

Ángela: Y le aconseja-- / And we counsel them--

Ana: ¡Y ya! / And that's it!

When I thanked Ángela for her time at the end of the interview, she replied, "Gracias por despertarme los sentidos siempre y hacerme sentir cada vez más humana. / Thank you for always awakening my senses and making me feel more human." This comment indicates that conversations allow for more than gaining new insight together, but also feeling together in a way that Ángela situated within a longer process of personal and social transformation. In this manner, conversations at times functioned as "potential space," characterized as a relationship of possibilities and potential for future action (Metcalfe & Game, 2008, p. 18).

In our final reflection activity in July 2017, which took place in a nearby park with Mujeres Unidas members and any children or grandchildren they wanted to invite, we initially spent some time enjoying being outdoors, playing with the children, and engaging in more informal conversations. Eventually we all converged around one of the picnic tables, and the conversation moved from a check-in to strategizing for an upcoming

meeting back into an emotional good-bye and reflection process. Each person responded to the questions, "¿Cómo te sientes ahora? ¿Cómo te sientes con el trabajo que hicimos?"/ "How do you feel now? How do you feel about the work we did together?" In addition to an outpouring of emotions that left all of us in tears, responses indicated a clear awareness of racialized differences, feelings of solidarity, and insight into the role of feelings in longer processes of social organizing:

> Ángela: Aunque no seamos de la misma raza o el mismo color somos de la misma sangre. Ustedes son nuestros hijos, nuestros hermanos y cuando están lejos de sus familias porque están acompañándonos aquí sepan que siempre tienen familia en Santo Domingo. / Even though we're not the same race or color we're the same blood. You're our children, our brothers and sisters, and when you're far from your own families because you're here accompanying us know that you have family in Santo Domingo.

> Yurani: Julia, cuando nos contaste que esos chicos te habían agredido nos dolió como si nos hubiera pasado a nosotras. / Julia, when you told us that those men had threatened you it hurt us like it had happened to us.

> Yurani: Es muy bonito que álguien llega todos los días y te pregunta, ven, ¿cómo estás? Qué hiciste ayer? Pensemos que vamos a hacer hoy y mañana y cómo lo podemos hacer tal vez de otra manera...este es un proceso que hace a una sentirse muy valorada y que estémos trabajando en conjunto. Aunque no veamos los cambios inmediatamente estamos sembrando en tierra fertil. / It's really beautiful that someone shows up every day and asks, how are you doing? What did you do yesterday? Let's think about what to do today and tomorrow, and maybe how to do it differently. It's a process that makes you feel valued and like we're working together. Even if we don't see immediate changes we're sowing fertile ground.

I include these comments not to imply that significant differences in power and privilege are erased simply by allowing space to share feelings. As kitchen table reflexivity suggests, maintaining an awareness of our relative position between fields of power is crucial. Feelings of concern and care for my well-being—as in the case of the threat Yurani

referenced—may be shaped by the care work that many members of Mujeres Unidas have had to perform as domestic workers for women with more relative privilege in order to survive. Furthermore, in reflecting on this experience later with a Dominican acquaintance, she noted how many communities that have been socially marginalized and excluded for so long often accordingly express effusive thanks for any intervention, and getting critical feedback can be difficult. UT Austin researchers have also noted this in attempts to collaboratively evaluate our work in Los Platanitos over the years. Facilitating a variety of spaces that can address different aspects of collaborative research experiences, both emotional and program related, thus remains critical. However, I was particularly struck by Yurani's comment that explicitly acknowledges feelings and the mutual emotions to which Jones and Ficklin (2012) refer. Spending large amounts of unstructured time together, dedicating time to check in and hear from everyone at each meeting, sitting together, eating together, and laughing together helped create spaces in which these types of thinking and feeling could occur, constituting what Pratt terms "being-in-common" (Pratt, 2012, p. 177).

METHODS

I carried out qualitative field research in Santo Domingo Norte during a period of seven weeks from June to August 2017. In order to continue building rapport with Mujeres Unidas, I began my research by engaging in a form of participant observation called "deep hanging out." Deep hanging out refers to an informal immersion in a group, culture, or social experience (Geertz, 1998) and has been further articulated as an umbrella that

includes various forms of introspection and participatory action research (Walmsley, 2016). This method consisted of accompanying Mujeres Unidas members during their daily activities in their homes and organizational office in Los Platanitos. Generally I arrived to Los Platanitos several hours before we had any formal activities scheduled and would spend time accompanying women in whatever they happened to be doing at the moment, whether it was sitting on the porch at the neighborhood store, keeping them company as they cooked lunch, or visiting elderly community members. This unstructured time spent with Mujeres Unidas members helped give more of a feel for the pace of life in Los Platanitos, as well as the many responsibilities and demands on their time that women face even when they do not have formal employment. It also led to more organic conversations in which women could express their opinions more freely than they sometimes did in group activities or in more structured interviews. Though it is more time consuming, deep hanging out forms part of a broader collaborative research process that values people for who they are and seeks to build genuine relationships of care and respect in pursuit of shared project goals.

After obtaining consent from collaborators, I also conducted semi-structured interviews designed to draw out Mujeres Unidas' understandings of entrepreneurship and how this relates to specific organizational activities as well as their individual and collective identities. Questions also focused on their personal motivations for participating in Mujeres Unidas and sources of strength and inspiration for their work, which helped inform my understanding of resilience. Interviews were conducted in women's homes,

often at their kitchen table or in their galería (porch). Visiting women in their homes facilitated more open conversations in their own space, as well as provided them with more flexibility given their extensive home and caregiving responsibilities. After nearly every interview I was invited to stay for a coffee and keep chatting, which formed part of informal visits and hospitality that helped make interviews feel less transactional.

Having a paid coresearcher and accompanier from Mujeres Unidas was another useful strategy, as she identified additional women for interviews, introduce me, and explain the research project. My advisor suggested Ana, a long-time member of Mujeres Unidas and respected elder resident of Los Platanitos, for this role. Ana knows many families personally, and has a positive rapport with all of the Mujeres Unidas members; beyond that, she is enthusiastic about the UT Austin collaboration, Mujeres Unidas' vermiculture composting project, and is extremely reliable. She has also struggled to find work due to her age and recent health issues. Though selecting a paid research assistant could have generated tensions among Mujeres Unidas, as a respected elder Ana represented a less controversial choice. Ana helped me build rapport and facilitate contact with members of Mujeres Unidas, but we ultimately did not interview women who have not been a part of the organization.

Based on experience during previous field trips, it was clear that members of Mujeres Unidas highly value education and training opportunities. As such, I wanted to make sure this project provided a space that felt tangibly useful to them and contributed to their ongoing organizational development process. We mutually agreed upon themes

related to organizational strategic planning and project development to explore in eight participatory workshops grounded in the principles of popular education, which seeks to equalize power dynamics between "teachers" and "students" and have community members direct the learning agenda as well as prioritize critical reflection towards social change (See: Freire, 1970; 1982; Giroux, 1988; hooks, 1994, 2003). In this framing, education becomes the "practice of freedom" and an essential means of building hope for the future (hooks, 1994, 2003). Popular education workshops that I designed and carried out with Caroline Daigle and Farzad Mashhood during the 2016-2017 UT Austin planning practicum helped me develop this approach for my summer 2017 research with Mujeres Unidas. The eight workshops we did together helped Mujeres Unidas explore several topics on their organizational calendar for this summer and continue to meet regularly about their current projects. The workshops also provided additional material for analysis of gender, resilience, and entrepreneurship. Mujeres Unidas decided on the following themes for workshops:

1. Who We Are
2. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis
3. Organizational Planning, July-December 2017
4. Defining our Gender Analysis
5. Facilitating Meetings
6. Basic Accounting 1: How to Make an Organizational Budget
7. Preparing for a CAASD-Community Meeting
8. Basic Accounting 2: Tracking Incomes and Expenses

We began each meeting with a check-in in order to allow each person to express how they felt in that particular moment, with the goal of recognizing and valuing each person's presence and keeping their feelings in mind throughout the meeting. After hearing

from everyone we reviewed the agenda for the day together and solicited any additional items before continuing with the scheduled activities. In two workshops we did brief role plays as a participatory, performative methodology that allowed women to put discussions into practice. Skits also proved to be more interactive and inclusive than visual methods. In each case, I played the role of the outsider, and Mujeres Unidas members played themselves. They leveraged these opportunities to solidify their organizational identity and narratives, as well as prepare for specific meetings and activities.

Lastly, in order to better understand embodied experiences of resilience I had planned to facilitate an adapted form of body mapping. Body mapping tells a story by visually representing social, economic, and political contexts in relation to participants' specific embodied experiences on a trace of their physical body (Sweet & Escalante, 2014). Maps can then be analyzed collaboratively or using qualitative content analysis. However, through interviewing Mujeres Unidas members it became clear that very few of them would have felt comfortable picking up a pen to draw. Having someone else try to represent their spoken instructions would have somewhat undermined the purpose of body mapping, which is deeply personal and self-represented. Not wanting to put them in an uncomfortable position, I ultimately dropped this method, instead focusing on the workshops they had requested and performances that Mujeres Unidas members enthusiastically engaged. This experience highlights the importance of flexibility in adapting methods to local contexts, strengths, and interests, which is consistent with collaborative and participatory research.

My methodological approach was informed by both activist scholarship, which has an explicit commitment to transformative social change as articulated by research collaborators (Hale, 2001, 2006) as well as critical feminist praxis of solidarity and collaboration. Critical feminist praxis and activist research both imply subordinating academic research questions and interests to the agenda of the organization or community where research is occurring (Nagar, 2002; Perry & Rappaport, 2008; Rankin, 2009). They are also grounded in principles of reciprocity and accountability to co-researchers (Pulido, 2008), which are not simple actions but an ongoing process of negotiation and reflections (Gupta & Kelly, 2014). I first consulted with Mujeres Unidas about working together over the summer in my March 2017 trip to Los Platanitos. During our fieldwork, whose themes were largely determined by their own organizational focus on entrepreneurship, I shared initial research findings and analysis with them roughly halfway through in order for them to offer feedback.

This presentation occurred as part of a public panel of UT Austin graduate student recipients of the National Science Foundation International Research Experience for Students (IRES) fellowship for research in Santo Domingo. The event was held at the Santo Domingo Norte city hall, and we each presented our preliminary findings and conclusions to city officials and other project partners as well as community members. While Mujeres Unidas members said they felt heard and represented, the presentation occurred in a formal space with other city government and project partners present. It became an opportunity for them to promote their work to strategic partners and so they ultimately did not provide

much specific project feedback. The final reflection activity at the end of July 2017 provided another opportunity to discuss how they felt about the process, though it again became less of an evaluation and more of a closing ceremony. Accordingly, in March 2018 I met with Mujeres Unidas members to share a summary of my thesis and discuss how they are represented in it. At UT Austin Master's students do not have to defend their theses, but I felt it was important to defend the thesis to Mujeres Unidas so they had the opportunity to make suggestions, ask questions, and ultimately have the power to formally approve it or not.

The particular forms of resilience and vulnerabilities that Los Platanitos faces as a cañada as well as forms of social organization that Mujeres Unidas can leverage are shaped by a specific planning history, racialized and gendered formations, and contemporary governance in Santo Domingo. In critically reflecting on our collaborative fieldwork with Mujeres Unidas, including my own positionality, the emotional register, and methods, I hope to have complicated conceptions of fieldwork as a bounded geographic and temporal phenomenon (Hyndman, 2010). Instead, I view it as an ongoing relational process constituted through specific historical legacies and fields of power (Katz, 1994). An intersectional feminist analysis foregrounds these issues in relation to a collaborative research process of inquiry and interpretation, rather than clear, definitive answers. This approach shapes my engagement with frameworks of socio-ecological resilience, gender and entrepreneurship, and loving attachment, which I describe in relation to my study in the following chapter.

Me siento bien, con fuerza, capacitada. Estamos con gente que sabe expresarse, dialogar, una aprende de ellas. Me siento bien. Capacitada, emocionada. Hemos aprendido cosas que no sabíamos. / I feel good, strong, capable. We're with people that know how to express themselves and dialogue, and we learn from them. I feel good. Capable, excited. We've learned things we never knew before. –Yahaira, mid-40's

Chapter 3: Paradigms for Resilience, Entrepreneurship, and Loving Attachment in Los Platanitos

Yurani: Ya sabemos tocar las puertas, no esperar que venga otro sino podemos dar seguimiento a los procesos. / We know how to go door-to-door, not to wait for people to come to us, but how to follow up on all our processes.

Yahaira: Esa es la fortaleza que nosotras tenemos que dar, que dependemos de nosotras mismas y darle a la fundación, no dejarla caer y dejar a la comunidad saber que nosotras estamos en eso. / That's the strength that we have to give, that we depend on ourselves. We need to give that to the foundation so it doesn't fall and to let the community know that we're in this.

Julia: Están hablando de ser mujeres muy-- / You're talking about being women that are very—

Todas/All: Emprendedoras! Emprendedoras, recursivas--/ Entrepreneurial! Entrepreneurial, resourceful.

Yurani: De aprender nuevas ideas.-- / Learning new ideas—

Ana: Crecer, crecer, crecer, aprender cada día más cosas. / Growing, growing, growing, learning new things every day.

During our initial discussions of what themes Mujeres Unidas might like to address in our workshops, Yurani suggested a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, a common heuristic devise used in organizational strategic planning processes. Mujeres Unidas had donde SWOT analyses in earlier years with CIAMF, a close collaborator of both UT Austin and Mujeres Unidas, so they were already familiar with the method. As members reflected on their experiences they had little trouble identifying both vulnerabilities and significant strengths, such as being resourceful, entrepreneurial, and seeking opportunities to learn and grow. Although these traits reflect neoliberal discourses

of responsibility, initiative, and economic success, Mujeres Unidas also imbues these terms with their own meanings that often reflect a more community-based understanding and love ethic (hooks, 2000). These were the themes I hoped to tease out during the SWOT exercise with Mujeres Unidas. In order to grapple with the productive tensions of Mujeres Unidas' community development work in Los Platanitos, I draw on three bodies of literature: socio-ecological resilience, gender and entrepreneurship, and loving attachment.

An intersectional feminist framework of "both/and" (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016) along with post-structural theories of informality challenge notions of spatial isolation and vulnerability, instead highlighting the coproduction of resilience and vulnerability in informal settlements and residents as key actors who exercise agency in their daily lives and organizing activities. Mujeres Unidas' own focus on its strengths and the potential to "convertir una debilidad en una gran fortaleza/convert a major weakness into strength," as Yurani has stated, prompted me to explore theories of resilience as one conceptual framework for this study. Within this focus on resilience, entrepreneurship plays a central role: throughout multiple visits to Los Platanitos Mujeres Unidas members have consistently identified themselves as emprendedoras (entrepreneurs). Along with Mujeres Unidas members' own definitions, which frequently conceive of entrepreneurship as a social process, literature on gender, entrepreneurship, and empowerment helps articulate alternative, context-specific notions of entrepreneurship that allow for broader expressions of women's agency. This literature provides additional framings for what this entrepreneurial identity means to Mujeres Unidas and how they envision it contributing to

their desired organizational outcomes. Finally, conversations about entrepreneurship were frequently interwoven with themes of community, amor, and lucha. Mujeres Unidas members consistently claim that love informs and is inseparable from their organizational and entrepreneurial activities. In order to better understand this relationship between love and community, I engage theories of affect, emotional geographies, and loving attachment in community development work.

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

To complicate narratives of trauma and vulnerability in informal settlements (Varley, 2013) as well as one-dimensional "third world women" (Mohanty, 2003), I critically engage resilience as an organizing framework. Its flexibility has the potential to highlight connections between humans and their natural environment, between individuals and their community, and between the emotional experiences of individuals and their community development work. Such articulations enrich my understanding of how Mujeres Unidas has developed as a group and bring perspectives from this area into critical gender and development studies.

In contrast to official planning agencies like the CAASD, which sees physical infrastructure as separate from "collateral infrastructure" that serves social purposes, Mujeres Unidas articulates its three areas of work—infrastructure improvements, community-building, and entrepreneurship—as interrelated. The significance of the cañada and other aspects of the environment as an agent in Los Platanitos requires an analysis that treats social and ecological vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities as interwoven. For

example, regular flooding restricts resident mobilities; the unreliable availability of electricity and water determines women's schedules and interferes with their ability to set regular meeting times; improvised infrastructural solutions like tapping into the city electrical grid at times lead to injury and even deaths in the community. Yet residents have also found ways to cope, such as claiming recycled materials to develop potters and other green spaces in the community, or developing raffles and other forms of redistribution that build community as they also serve an important economic function.

Whereas engineering conceptualizes resilience as the ability of a system to return to equilibrium after a disturbance (Holling, 1973), ecological resilience refers to a natural system's persistence and adaptation to stressors (Adger, 2003). Work on environmental risk and hazard similar to what residents in Los Platanitos face has looked at both human and physical dimensions of vulnerability, but Pelling (2002) offers the notion of "adaptive potential" as another lens for informal settlements that explicitly focuses on social assets as key to enhancing community resilience. Along these lines, social resilience has been defined as the ability of communities to withstand external shocks to their social infrastructure (Adger, 2000, p. 361), and can be linked to ecological understandings to form a holistic socio-ecological notion of resilience (Folke, 2006). Further developing this connection, Carpenter et al. (2005) articulate an understanding of socio-ecological resilience as the ability of socio-ecological systems to change, adapt, and transform in response to stresses and strains. Finally, Norris, Stevens, B. Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & R.L. Pfefferbaum (2008, p. 130) contribute an understanding of resilience as both a compelling

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community metaphor and a process linking a set of adaptive capacities to a positive trajectory of functioning and adaptation.

Social work theory offers an understanding of resilience centered on overcoming adversity and recovery from trauma (Gitterman & Night, 2016), while feminist scholars have advanced an understanding of resilience as relational (Drolet et al., 2015; Ungar, 2013), grounded in everyday practices, and a process rather than end state (Jenkins & Rondon, 2015; Lenette et al., 2012). A relational understanding of socio-ecological resilience allows for theorizing the connection between individual women and their communities, though it does present difficult questions of whether resilience promotes women's participation in community organizing or if participation enhances resilience (Suarez, 2015: 13).

In any case, a feminist understanding of resilience complicates its relationship to vulnerability, theorizing them as intertwined rather than dichotomous (Norris et al., 2008; Jenkins & Rondon, 2015). Sources of resilience can also be sources of stress, and resilience is constantly negotiated between women and their environment--itself a gendered process (Lenette, Brough & Cox, 2012). Feminist theories of resilience also conceive it as an ongoing process rather than a single set of traits. This process is iterative, mutually transformative, and embedded in community, which implies that scholars must take care not to impose their own culturally specific referents onto particular, grounded expressions of resilience that arise in specific places and circumstances (Pearce, McMurray, Walsh, & Malek, 2017). These relational and contextualized understandings of resilience allow for

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the transformative potential of Mujeres Unidas' work in Los Platanitos while also maintaining awareness to the limitations of resilience as a discourse, particularly within neoliberal governance.

Building on this proliferation of definitions as well as planning literature that primarily understands resilience in the context of disaster recovery and ecosystems (Berkes, 2007; Gunderson, 2010), scholars have argued that resilience has the potential to bridge the natural and social sciences and link them to political transformation (Davoudi, 2012; Shaw, 2012), rethink complex socio-ecological problems (Chandler & Coaffee, 2017), and reground economies in ecologies (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016). However, they do so with a number of caveats and critiques of the ways in which resilience has been operationalized in planning. Too often, empirical applications of resilience have ignored questions of power (Davoudi, 2012; Shaw, 2012), instead advocating for "bouncing back" to a fundamentally unjust status quo (Cretney & Bond, 2014; Mackinnon & Derickson, 2012). This has resulted in the imposition of technocratic processes that place the onus of problem-solving on individual responsibility and resilience, coopting collective processes of transformative change (Mackinnon & Derickson, 2012; Diprose, 2017).

In contrast to these structuralist critiques, a performative understanding of resilience (Gibson-Graham, Hill & Law, 2016) takes it as a discourse shaped by power relationships (Shaw, 2012). Subaltern people thus have the power to reshape and remake understandings of resilience in more radical ways (Cretney & Bond, 2014; Shaw, 2012), changing the "hidden transcripts" (Scott, 1990) to subtly subvert state cooptation.

Ramanath (2016) articulates this as processes of sensemaking (understanding and making sense of changed circumstances) and sensegiving (influencing actions and vision) that shape women's particular adaptive strategies to their environment that may act with or against societal and organizational norms. Such micro-shifts over time may in turn expand community ideas of what is possible (Gibson-Graham, 2006) and cause them to demand increased accountability from governing institutions (Cretney & Bond, 2014). There are certainly indications of such micro-shifts in Los Platanitos, especially among women who never dared to attend public meetings before, much less speak, that are now recognized leaders.

In spite of its limitations, resilience is one way to shift a community development paradigm often focused on trauma, vulnerability, and lack in informal settlements to a more liberatory theory of women's organizing that also reflects the way women in Mujeres Unidas speak about their hopes and visions. Resilience can be an important component of how women survive and organize in informal settlements with little institutional support. The ways in which everyday resilience may lead to local alternatives intersects well with questions of resistance and entrepreneurship in Los Platanitos, and the extent to which Mujeres Unidas members may be remaking definitions of these concepts.

GENDER, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND EMPOWERMENT

Feminist literature addressing gender, entrepreneurship, and empowerment connects resilience to Mujeres Unidas' identity as mujeres emprendedoras engaged in microenterprise projects, which has been a key part of their development and group

identity. The term "entrepreneur" can be used in terms of owning a business, whether part of the formal or informal economy (Hanson, 2009). Common discursive practices in entrepreneurship studies reinforce essentialist understandings of gender as well as masculinist, individualistic understandings of entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006; Warnecke, 2014). However, entrepreneurship can also be viewed as process of social change that leads to diverse outcomes (Calás, Smircich, & Bourne, 2009); Datta & Gailey, 2012). This analysis holds that analyzing entrepreneurship only in economic terms misses its other functions (Calás et al., 2009).

In contrast to neoclassical, "rational" notions of entrepreneurship focused on individual profit, empirical studies have found that many women entrepreneurs explained their involvement in economic activities as a community or collective good (Bakas, 2017) and emphasized improvements in community quality of life (Hanson, 2009). These observations are intended not to reify feminine subjectivities shaped by stereotypical gender roles in patriarchal societies, but rather to open a discussion on if they actually create alternative, more resilient forms of entrepreneurship. Combining this insight with a post-structuralist approach to gender recognizes both gender and entrepreneurship as performed (Butler, 1990) and socially produced (Ahl, 2006), allowing for the possibility that more collective forms of entrepreneurship may arise from women's economic activities (Warnecke, 2014; Bakas, 2017). Entrepreneurship can be further analyzed as a local process embedded within social networks across scales (Hanson, 2009). This possibility is fascinating in thinking about Mujeres Unidas entrepreneurship in Los

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Platanitos, as well as the relationship between resilience and entrepreneurship more broadly. Indeed, scholars have called for gender and development to integrate social resilience as a framework to account for social, political, and ecological complexity in local development (Pallarès-Blanch, 2015). Examining women's "eco-preneurship" projects emerging in rural areas of Spain as a potential expression of community resilience, Pallares-Blanch (2015) finds that projects provide some forms of empowerment and shift traditional gender roles to some degree. However, their transformative potential is undermined by a lack of institutional support, which is also a concern in Santo Domingo.

Microenterprise can be framed as a transnational mode of entrepreneurship popular with gender and development programs in the Global South (Calás et al., 2009). In addition to interrogating the coproduction of entrepreneurship and gender, feminist scholars critically unpack the assumption of "empowerment" as an outcome of women's microenterprise (Moser, 1993; Wereinga, 1994). As a massive global initiative, microfinance has multiple impacts (Garikipati, 2017), and evaluations of its effects on power relationships and material resources require attention to the differences between programs (Kabeer, 2017) as well as what women are actually doing within the discourse of microfinance (Calás et al., 2009). Empowerment is complex and non-linear, and can include economic, political, and social outcomes that do not necessarily reinforce one another (Garikipati, Johnson, Guérin, & Szafarz, 2017). For example, programs focused exclusively on financial services are less likely to increase women's political participation,

whereas organizations that focus on relationship building are more likely to increase social mobilization and solidarity (Kabeer, 2017).

While Molyneux (1985) implies that empowerment is more akin to advancing strategic gender interests toward political transformation, which she distinguishes from practical gender interests necessary for daily survival, other definitions of empowerment include power over resources (Chant, 2006) or the ability to make choices as measured by access to resources, exercise of agency, and outcomes (Kabeer, 1999). Kabeer (2017) later clarifies that while empowerment is a process that increases capacity to make meaningful choices, it is incompatible with choices that reinforce structures of inequality (Kabeer, 2017, p. 651). Other scholars seek to bridge Molyneux's divide between strategic and practical gender needs in considering the extent to which microenterprise projects empower women (Hovorka, 2006; Hays-Mitchell, 1998). While some women use microenterprise projects as a means of meeting daily household needs, others see it as a way to work toward social and economic empowerment that changes "the rules of the game" rather than accepting them (Hovorka, 2006). Acknowledging this diversity of motivations also leads to a more nuanced understanding of women in informal settlements that may enable "producer" or "entrepreneur" identities that reshape gender relations and economies (Hayes-Mitchell, 1998). Whereas relegating women's daily activities to mere "survival" minimizes their role in shaping their economic and social environment, disallowing their diverse productive and reproductive activities to be read as resilience, women's own understanding of themselves as entrepreneurs mutually supporting each other—as in the

case of Mujeres Unidas—may be a counterhegemonic act to the extent it reshapes stereotypes of poor urban women as passive victims (Hayes-Mitchell, 1998).

Along these lines, a resilience approach to community development questions assumptions of vulnerability by recognizing "economically marginalized" people as already economically active (Cameron & Gibson, 2005), which has important implications for women's microenterprise in informal settlements. Feminist economics have sought to address the gendered processes that exclude women from the economy by "adding up" or "counting in" activities performed by women (Cameron & Gibson-Graham, 2003). However, this approach tends to reproduce the notion of the economy as contained with countable components, along with gendered binaries of masculine/formal and feminine/informal. In order to achieve a feminist transformation of the economy, Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2003) argue that alternative economies must allow economic projects and businesses to have more than one identity. Imagining nonprofits, cooperatives, and other alternative capitalist enterprises informed by social or environmental ethics is an interesting framing for microenterprise projects, as it raises the possibility that they do not necessarily seek to reproduce traditional, market-based understandings of entrepreneurs.

By contrast, critiques of microfinance note that microenterprise discourses and practices are embedded in patriarchal local contexts (Strier, 2010) and the same political structures and patronage networks from which they may promise liberation (Guérin & Kumar, 2017). Other scholars question the extent to which microenterprise initiatives actually lead to collective action (Rankin, 2002), and note their limitations to challenge

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existing gender norms (Grasmuck & Espinal, 2000). In spite of the rhetoric of group solidarity employed by microfinance projects that attempt to leverage social capital, Rankin (2002) argues that most microenterprise projects only engage collective action for practical purposes of loan repayment and reducing costs, which limits the transformative potential of organizing. In particular, microenterprise programs focused on home-based work may actually increase women's social isolation and gendered divides of labor (Strier, 2010). In the Dominican Republic, home-based work can put women in a difficult position of choosing between the success of their family and the success of their business (Grasmuck & Espinal, 2000). Furthermore, informal work may be viewed as a logical extension of women's appropriate domestic sphere and accepted until women's earnings begin to approach and overtake men's economic contributions, at which point their business may be co-opted by men (Grasmuck & Espinal, 2000).

Warnecke (2014) makes a similar point in analyzing the potential of microenterprise to create community, acknowledging that it can have the opposite effect if women face extreme pressure to pay back loans quickly without sufficient capacity to do so, along with resentment from men that can result in patriarchal societies when women's businesses succeed. That said, Warnecke advocates for a participatory planning framework for microfinance to improve its capacity for community building and move entrepreneurship from its current individualistic framing to collective forms more compatible with social solidarity economies (Warnecke, 2014). International planning practice thus has a role to play in promoting more collective approaches to microenterprise

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and empowerment as part of community development. In grappling with this question of women's empowerment through microenterprise, Nagar and Swarr's articulation (2005) of empowerment as entangled with disempowerment is particularly useful. In their critical feminist analysis, "empowerment" in development contexts is always partial, interpreted, and reappropriated within specific contexts. To respond to these limitations, they call on development practitioners to engage place-based strategies at multiple scales to advance social justice projects. Documenting how Mujeres Unidas actually understands and practices entrepreneurship as they dialogue with local and international actors forms part of this process.

Structural critiques of microenterprise development projects and associated entrepreneurial identities parallel similar critiques made about resilience. While both highlight the risks of further entrenching existing gendered and economic inequalities, performative understandings of entrepreneurship, resilience, and gender foreground women's agency in shaping their daily lives and socio-economic environments as they also develop their own definitions of these terms. Acknowledging ongoing processes of resilience and critically reflecting on assumptions of empowerment in relation to entrepreneurship fits within a broader project of building diverse, alternative economies (Gibson-Graham, 2008). Understanding capitalism as a collection of practices scattered across landscapes in the same ways that alternative economies are typically portrayed allows alternative economies to be "performed" and recognized as just as essential to ongoing social and environmental well-being as formal economic practices (Gibson-

Graham, 2008). This paradigm creates an opening to analyze Mujeres Unidas' entrepreneurship as more than neoliberal cooptation to a potentially more transformative project.

EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHIES AND LOVING ATTACHMENT

While literature that connects informality, resilience, and gender and entrepreneurship provides helpful insights into community development in Los Platanitos, it does not fully capture the significance of emotional attachments and relationships that Mujeres Unidas members express as a key part of their work. The interconnected processes of amor and lucha introduced at the beginning of this thesis require attention to affect, emotion, loving attachment, and care, which have been connected to the spatial realm of planning in only limited ways (Porter et al., 2012). Scholarship in this area includes affective and emotional geographies, which draw attention to how social sciences have suppressed an understanding of the ways in which emotions shape lives and societies despite their centrality to how we experience the world (K. Anderson & Smith, 2001). This process of marginalization from academic research and policy is deeply political and gendered, given that rationality and objectivity have been valued as masculinized, while emotions and subjectivity have been devalued and thus feminized (K. Anderson & Smith, 2001, p. 7). By extension, emotions have been conceived as totally separate from economic and public life, when in fact they mediate social relations (K. Anderson & Smith, p. 8; Bondi, Davidson & Smith, 2005).

This recognition has increased interest in affect as phenomena that defy objective verification and mediate relationships between bodies and environments, in turn contributing to the production of urban spaces and places (Porter et al., 2012). The application of affect to planning validates emotions as a real dimension of community development processes and outcomes, complicating understandings of planning as a field that acts primarily on the natural or built environment. Writing on affects of hope, Ben Anderson (2006) defines affect as the capacity to affect and be affected that emerges from relations between bodies. Anderson distinguishes between affect, feelings, and emotions, which are more akin to the ways the ways that affect is felt in the body and then consciously registered and expressed. Affect, feelings, and emotions are thus tied in relational and non-linear feedback loops that give rise to distinct spatial and temporal sensations (B. Anderson, 2006). Along similar lines, Duff (2010) describes affect as a bodily potential or capacity, while emotions are a particular feeling state, and notes the role of affect in producing a sense of place. As he puts it, "Affects link places together, providing a lived sense of belonging in place, while giving form to the meaning and purpose of one's neighborhood or community" (Duff, 2010, p. 892).

Throughout this process, feminist scholars note that affects are produced within particular geometries of power and historical contexts that shape the capacities of differentiated bodies to affect and be affected (Tolia-Kelly, 2006). This insight is particularly important in order to avoid the same Western, androcentric referents that dominate the academic tradition that affective and emotional geographies seek to

complicate (Tolia-Kelly, 2006). Researchers must unpack "universal" emotional sensations along with differential capacities for affect. Within this analysis, emotional experiences are social and political, which requires an embodied understanding of social change and a theory of the body as the geographic space where emotions are felt (Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010; Sweet & Escalante, 2014).

Drawing on observations from Los Platanitos, Sletto (2012) argues that emotions play an essential role in the production of both reciprocal knowledge and urban space by shaping participants' agency and action in unpredictable ways. This link between emotions and agency is important, as scholarly accounts of community development work that seek to avoid problematic, romanticized assumptions of cohesive "communities" have tended to portray agency as purely strategic and political, leading to a further separation of emotions from positivist research traditions (Pratt, 2012). As Pratt describes, this scholarship fails to capture the actual daily practices of community building. Inspired by Ben Anderson's work, Pratt (2012) articulates the relationship between these phenomena as a practice-affect-emotion spiral through which practices are made and understood. In this context, community re-emerges as an important concept and a "powerful teleo-affective structure that shapes practice and emotional currents" (Pratt, 2012, p. 184). This framing of emotion and community is particularly relevant for Mujeres Unidas, who speak of their community as both a motivator for and primary beneficiary of their work grounded within processes of amor and lucha.

Together, these notions of affect as linked with emotion, fundamentally relational, and both spatial and temporal provides an additional layer of analysis in my exploration of the relationship between socio-ecological resilience, gender, and entrepreneurship as they manifest in and produce the place of Los Platanitos. Furthermore, attention to emotional geographies of amor and lucha honor Mujeres Unidas' framing of development and take my analysis closer to their lived realities, which is one of participatory research's major commitments (Sanderson, 2012). This was not always a smooth or easy alliance: as discussed in Chapter 2, Mujeres Unidas' community development work and emotional understandings are informed by an evangelical Christian spirituality that I do not share. However, being in relationship with Mujeres Unidas on their terms, as Sanderson (2012) puts it, meant that our interactions included expressions of spirituality and spiritual knowledge. Sanderson (2012) describes the "spatial spiritualities" that characterized her work with community development organizations with an explicitly Christian focus, noting the importance of prayer and the use of love to describe relationships between community members that resonated with my experiences in Los Platanitos. She writes,

> This embodied conception of human and divine relationships became the relational context, within which the emotions within my research practice were experienced. In such a context, it is impossible to address separately the emotional subjectivity of oneself as a researcher and the spiritual or religious dynamic being identified in the research environment (p. 124).

Such entanglements between love, spirituality, and community development work have rarely been taken seriously in academic literature (Sanderson, 2012), which has further

prevented the work of organizations like Mujeres Unidas from informing development praxis.

To further enrich my understanding of love in community development work in Los Platanitos, I draw on bell hooks' (2000) definition of love. Articulating the radical potential of love in processes of social change, hooks writes, "Love is an action, a participatory emotion," (p. 165) that is better understood as a collective political process rather than as an individual feeling or idealized state. This analysis also allows love to be understood as a relational space that goes beyond an emotion felt by a subject (Metcalfe & Game, 2008), and as an ongoing project constituted through everyday practices (Kondo, 2012). Understanding love as an action implies accountability and responsibility, which are similarly key in theories of feminist collaboration and activist research. For hooks (2000), a love ethic for community work is defined by care, respect, commitment, responsibility, trust, and knowledge, as well as an intense connection to spirituality. It is also foundational to "learning communities" and social change (hooks, 2003).

Linking hooks' definition of love and its connection to spirituality to planning, fonza (2012) advocates for loving attachment as a counterhegemonic proposal that is inclusive of people who may not openly identify as feminists but who nevertheless challenge inequities in planning. To that end, fonza (2012) proposes a dialectic between feminism and womanism, describing womanist theorists thusly:

> Most of them, Christian social ethicists, delineated womanist thought and theory in four parts: radical subjectivity, traditional communalism, redemptive self-love; and critical engagement (Floyd-Thomas, 2006). These four pillars of womanism, articulated by Alice Walker in 1983 and

then rearticulated by others, are the embodiment of what it means for a black woman to be a self-namer, self-aware and openly committed to issues affecting black women and black communities in particular and in general (p. 612-613).

The four womanist pillars that fonza describes along with a somewhat more ambivalent relationship to feminism are certainly present in Mujeres Unidas' community work. Without wanting to assign political identities to Mujeres Unidas, foregrounding their love ethic and its connection to spirituality and processes of lucha seems consistent with fonza's call for people who have been on the margins of planning theory and practice to drive definitions of loving attachment and its relationship to planning. Such community-driven understandings of loving attachment help shed light on the relational, spatial, and emotional dimensions of their community development work.

While emotional geographies and loving attachment hold great potential to enrich understandings of community development as well as the research process, using this analytical framework runs the risk of reifying feminine subjectivities of caring. Particularly for Mujeres Unidas' members, who have been assigned caretaking duties in the form of unpaid home and family care or in exploitative domestic worker roles for wealthier Dominican families, an uncritical focus on emotions could be read as an extension of the socially accepted role of women in informal settlements to assume emotional and care labor. Feminist scholarship that explores care work in neoliberal governance is particularly helpful here, as it provides a bridge between emotional geographies and the material political-economic inequalities that Mujeres Unidas members face in Los Platanitos.

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Care work has historically been relegated to the private sphere and feminized (Fainstein & Servon, 2005), and this trend has continued with the extension of market logic into all spheres of the economy under neoliberalism (Lawson, 2007). In addition to being gendered, the division of care labor is deeply racialized and classed, liberating men and wealthy women from caretaking duties at the expense of the most vulnerable women (Tronto, 2002). The disproportionate care work performed by women of color, migrant women, and impoverished residents of self-built neighborhoods has further marginalized it from view and devalued it via association with "low status" people (Lynch, 2007). To counter this dynamic, Lawson (2007) engages Jaggar's (1989) notion of "outlaw emotions" and the power of public, collective emotions to advocate for a feminist ethic of care. This framing promotes the centrality of care and social relationships to all of our lives (Lawson, 2007). Echoing critical emotional geographers, Lawson writes,

> Social relations of love, connection, mutuality, commitment, and so on are not idealized terrain, rather they are fraught with power relations that are worked out in specific contexts. As such, we need to take seriously the ways in which social relations are produced through emotion and the ways in which emotional connections are also sites of power (p. 4-5).

In other words, a feminist care ethic takes emotions and diverse forms of power into account as it seeks to re-center care as society's work, essential to our individual and collective survival (Lawson, 2009, p. 210). In this analysis, care provides the link between daily practices, emotions, and policy, and can lead to new supportive relationships (Lawson, 2007). In order to operationalize this, Lawson (2007) calls on scholars and practitioners to build networks of interdependence that draw attention to specific historical

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and institutional contexts. I view this thesis, situated within the ongoing collaboration between Los Platanitos and UT Austin, as part of this effort to develop mutual understanding and connection across geographic scales.

Similarly highlighting how we all depend on care, Lynch (2007) notes the importance of feminist scholarship in making care work public and a concern in academia, drawing attention to affective spheres along with political, economic, and power relationships. Lynch defines three concentric circles of care work: love labor, care labor, and solidarity work, where love labor refers to the work required to sustain primary relationships. Lynch understands the actual realization of love as distinct from a declaration of feelings; it requires physical, mental, and emotionally engaged work in which the well-being of others is the principal goal. While neoliberal governance assumes the market is the best provider of services, Lynch argues that love labor in particular as inherently other-focused and grounded in mutuality and commitment cannot be commodified. Achieving more dignified working conditions for care workers is an important project, but a feminist care ethic goes beyond valorizing and recognizing care work in the market to articulating how the outcomes of love, care, and solidarity are *felt* by all even if they are immeasurable (Lynch, 2007, p. 554). This latter point in particular provides a productive insight into Mujeres Unidas, as their work inhabits the three concentric circles of care work that Lynch describes. In addition to reinforcing hooks' articulation of love as a process, understanding love labor as related to but distinct from other forms of care raises some limitations to the ways in which Mujeres Unidas work may be framed within microenterprise projects.

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Mujeres Unidas members frequently spoke about their extensive caregiving duties for their families, and the importance of their organization as a space to care for each other as women. They also strategically invoke their identities as mothers and grandmothers as the basis of their commitment to the community's well-being and their neighborhood activism, which has emerged as a common strategy in environmental justice movements (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). On the one hand, patriarchal norms and inequalities produced by colonial legacies and neoliberal governance drive members of Mujeres Unidas into caregiving work. On the other, their caring relationships and love ethic represent important dimensions of resilience that may be strengthened and leveraged to contest the inequities and reduction of social support promoted within neoliberalism.

In this chapter, I sought to make linkages between three areas of literature across numerous disciplines that have deepened my understanding of Mujeres Unidas's work. Although these bodies of work are thematically distinct, I hope that an intersectional feminist and performative analysis that stresses complexity, entanglements, and interlocking power geometries has helped to put them in conversation with one another. The recognition of residents of Los Platanitos as active participants in the multitude of transactions that comprise urban life along with Mujeres Unidas's own focus on their strengths and hopes led to an exploration of theories of resilience, which I use to encompass social, ecological, and emotional dimensions. The organization's additional emphasis on entrepreneurship brings my project into discussions of gender and empowerment, wherein entrepreneurship needs to be complicated as more than an economic activity to include its

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social and communal dimensions as well as conceptualized as a mode through which Mujeres Unidas members express their resilience. Finally, these processes of resilience and entrepreneurship as situated within broader processes of community development work are imbued with emotions and are fundamentally relational. Theories of affect and emotional geographies, particularly those expressed in relationship to love and care, help articulate the importance of these intangible phenomena and relate them to Mujeres Unidas's material political-economic realities. These conceptual frameworks inform my understanding of Mujeres Unidas's diverse motivations for their work, which I describe in the next chapter, as well as the meanings they assign it and associated impacts and implications described in Chapters 5 and 6.

> Me llamó la atención todo el comportamiento de Mujeres Unidas. Son más despiertas de la mente, eso de estar unida y apoyada entre ellas me gustó...El comportamiento me llamó la atención por las actividades, su deseo de luchar para un nuevo futuro. Nunca se había visto antes aquí. / All of Mujeres Unidas' work caught my attention. Their minds are more woke, and I liked that they're united and support each other...Their activities and desire to fight for a new future caught my attention. That had never been seen here before. -Deya, 45

Chapter 4: "Para que la comunidad salga adelante:" Motivations for Mujeres Unidas

No me siento cómoda porque mis vecinos no están bien. Mi casa no es tan afectada pero no me puedo sentir bien mientras mis vecinos pasan por esto. / I don't feel comfortable because my neighbors aren't doing well. My house isn't as affected but I can't feel good as long as my neighbors are going through this. -Ana, 63

In order to explore narratives of amor and lucha in Los Platanitos, I analyze them in three overlapping spheres: women's motivations for doing the work they do; the meanings assigned to this work and the strategic identities it leverages; and the perceived impacts that their work has for women and the broader community of Los Platanitos. While it is difficult to separate these narratives into neat categories—certainly amor and lucha themselves could be conceptualized as motivation, meaning, and impact—organizing my analysis in this way helps me address the process of Mujeres Unidas's work more systematically. Consequently, this chapter describes the motivations that shape Mujeres Unidas' decision to engage and persist in their organization. It begins with the notion of the community of Los Platanitos as a motivator, which is connected to their desire to improve material living conditions and participate meaningfully in processes of social change. Additional motivations include desires for power over economic resources, independence, and most significantly education and training. Given that access to all three is mediated through gendered relationships and forms of power, they are commonly understood as aspects of women's "empowerment," especially in neoliberal governance and Women in Development (WID) frameworks (Peet & Hartwick, 2005). However, placing these motivations alongside the more community-focused terms that Mujeres

Unidas members also use suggests that women motivated by something more than individual empowerment. Related to this point, the patriarchal nature of social organizing in Santo Domingo Norte also motivates Mujeres Unidas to seek their own organizational space to address gendered barriers. This autonomy allows women to emerge as visible leaders in processes of community development, even as they continue to confront gendered oppression in their struggle to improve the quality of life for all residents. Finally, many women expressed motivations for their work in terms of love and spirituality, which influences how they understand their gendered identities and broader processes of social change.

COMMUNITY AS INSPIRATION

Like many older residents in Los Platanitos, Ana, mother of nine and grandmother of 14, worked from a young age in the countryside and never had the opportunity to attend school. After migrating to the capital, she worked as a domestic worker for several different families, but since she was diagnosed with cervical cancer seven years ago she has not consistently found paid work. As one of the most active members of Mujeres Unidas, Ana has largely taken responsibility for caring for the organization's vermiculture composting site. She pours a great deal of love and energy into the project, expressing frustration and anguish when the compost balance is upset and the worms begin to die. Ana's wooden house is small, painted a now-fading blue and tucked just off the new road covering the cañada. The two rooms are dimly lit by the sunlight that filters through the back door. The front room contains a gas stove top, kitchen table, rusting fridge, small cabinet and two

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plastic chairs, while the back room is furnished with two beds and a television. When we

arrive for Ana's interview her two youngest daughters, both in their late teens, were

watching TV with a friend and trying to keep Ana's youngest grandson away from the

CAASD construction equipment drilling away outside. Ana makes sure everyone has eaten

lunch and offers me rice and beans, and then puts the percolator on for afternoon coffee. A

neighbor woman selling blouses drops in to show Ana her new merchandise, and a

discussion about appropriate sleeve length ensues before she finishes her coffee and carries

on her way. As Ana and I chat, she describes the history of Mujeres Unidas, the importance

of learning, and the key role of community in relationship to both:

> Me gusta trabajar con comunidad, eso también me motiva. También porque
> organizado se logra hacer muchas cosas que se necesita en la comunidad,
> porque no podemos quedarnos estancados esperando que hagan cosas. Si
> quedamos asi sentadas no va a pasar nada. / I like to work with the
> community, that also motivates me. We can achieve a lot more things
> needed in the community when we're organized. We can't sit around
> waiting for others to do things. If we sit around nothing will happen.

I open with Ana's story and an excerpt from my field notes during our research

together in order to re-ground my research findings in the lived experiences of Mujeres

Unidas members and the spaces they inhabit and construct through their work. My

interviews with Mujeres Unidas members were all conducted in similar settings, part of the

flow of interruptions, relationships, and daily life mediated through women's homes. While

workshops were conducted in the organization's office —a rented, two-room concrete

home—youth, children, and other residents frequently gather outside on the stoop to chat,

and may pop in and out of the office during meetings. Throughout, the sounds of dembow,

merengue, bachata, the more recently popular Christian worship music; roosters crowing;

vendors with recorded promotions blaring through loudspeakers; horns from vehicles newly able to enter Los Platanitos—and, for a few brief weeks, the construction equipment dredging and pouring—flow over each other to infuse every conversation. When it rains in Los Platanitos, sheets of water drum down on zinc roofs, and the stagnant pools that remain on streets, doorsteps, in homes fills the air with odors of trash and raw sewage. It becomes nearly impossible to hear, let alone run a meeting, and messages get lost as people change their daily walking routes to avoid the worst of the flooding. A blending of public and private space means that people are frequently in contact with each other and with the natural environment. The place of Los Platanitos, then, and the notions of community it inspires, significantly shape and are shaped by the work of Mujeres Unidas on every level, from how frequently they are able to meet to who they imagine as the beneficiaries of their efforts.

As Ana's comments indicate, many members describe themselves as firmly situated within a particular socio-ecological community, composed of relationships between one another and with their built and natural environment. Ana was perhaps the most vocal in repeating the importance of community throughout multiple conversations and workshops, consistently emphasizing it as Mujeres Unidas' motivation and focus. Yurani, the current coordinator of Mujeres Unidas who works as a school police officer, also sees Mujeres Unidas as working on behalf of the community of Los Platanitos. She describes Mujeres Unidas as a group of women united in "trabajo colectivo/collective work." As mediators between government institutions and Los Platanitos, she believes

Mujeres Unidas must faithfully represent community proposals because "Mujeres Unidas sin la comunidad no somos nada/Mujeres Unidas is nothing without the community."

Ángela, who has been involved with several different community organizations over the last 10 years, sees a similar role for Mujeres Unidas. She described Mujeres Unidas's central purpose as working to unify the community of Los Platanitos as well as their own organization. Elaborating further, Ángela stated,

> El motivo es algo humanamente. La comunidad estaba viviendo infrahumanamente. Y nosotras como Mujeres Unidas queremos el cambio en la comunidad de una mejor forma de vivir para cada uno de los comunitarios....De una comunidad llena de basura, de agua negra, de incertidumbre, de un sinnumero de cosas, se ve una cañada limpia, sin basura. / The motivation is something human. The community was living inhumanely. And Mujeres Unidas wants to change the community and bring a better standard of living to each resident...from a community full of trash, black water, uncertainty, and countless other things to a clean cañada with no trash.

Interpreting this passage, Viviana, 66, reiterated the importance of community organizing and strength in numbers in seeking a better quality of life for residents of Los Platanitos.

Notably, Ángela's comment also links the human and environmental dimensions of community, highlighting the interactions between physical surroundings and social relationships in Los Platanitos. Yurani is also clearly aware of these connections. While she noted the cañada as the largest infrastructural challenge, she also articulated the importance of promoting what she termed "community infrastructure," or social infrastructure that continues to strengthen community engagement and organization regardless of government-supported changes to the built environment. This includes proposals voiced by other women for a health clinic, recreational space for youth, and

dignified housing, which go beyond the limited water management infrastructure envisioned by the CAASD. In this manner, Mujeres Unidas members articulate a holistic and community-focused understanding of improvements in quality of life.

Elisa, who helps run a popular colmado and who also served as one of the early coordinators of Mujeres Unidas, echoed this reference to improvements in quality of life for all community members. She described her motivation for participating in Mujeres Unidas as "El deseo que uno tiene para su barrio que necesita un cambio. / The desire that you have for your neighborhood that needs a change." Teresa, who runs a food stand at a nearby market six days a week, also voiced her passion for working with communities as well as her desire for community improvements:

> Me gusta trabajar con la comunidad, me gustaría ayudar a las personas que la necesitan…me gusta servir a mi comunidad, que cada día es más interesante porque mejora/I like to work with the community and help those in need...I like to serve my community, which is more interesting every day as it improves.

This emphasis on community transformation also appeared in comments relating changes in the built environment to hope in broader social processes as a means to achieve a better future. Linette, who is in her 60's, referenced the improvements in parts of the cañada under the CAASD project as well as Mujeres Unidas' strides toward microenterprise through their production of cleaning products as changes that give her hope and motivate her to continue. Paloma, who at 24 years old is one of the youngest women to be involved with Mujeres Unidas, described the organization as working toward a better future for the community through its diverse projects:

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> Mujeres Unidas tiene una misión que es escalar cada día más un escalon. Quieren que esta comunidad sea otra, no quieren quedarse así/Mujeres Unidas has a mission to climb one new step every day. They want this community to be different; they don't want it to stay this way.

Comments expressing a desire "para que la comunidad salga adelante/for the community to get ahead" and "Pensando en que en el mañana podemos conseguir, lograr otras cosas que no hemos logrado / Thinking of what we can do tomorrow, achieving things that we haven't achieved" demonstrate this sentiment as well.

Community in both its social and spatial dimensions thus serve as a motivation for Mujeres Unidas's work as well the referent through which they measure their impact. While they are clearly working to transform specific vulnerabilities they have identified, many spoke about a cohesive social community in positive terms that highlight its resilience. As Yurani put it,

> Si viene otra persona de gente de otro lugar la cojemos como si fuera nuestra familia...Por eso la gente de nuestra comunidad no quiere irse, a pesar de toda las precariedades y la vulnerabilidad. / If a new person comes we bring them in like our family...That's why people from our community don't want to leave, in spite of the pracarities and vulnerabilities.

Her focus on the strong social relationships strategically positions Los Platanitos as a unified, desirable place to live despite its challenges. This representation can be complicated by other women that expressed a desire to move elsewhere if they had the possibility to do so. However, the idea of being spatially confined in some ways to Los Platanitos was still used as a way to construct a community with a distinct reality and interests from those of privileged government outsiders in order to leverage participation

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in social organizing. As Elisa expressed in a community meeting about the ongoing cañada project,

> Cada quién tiene que proponer sus ideas pero trabajando siempre juntos, trabajando propuestas juntos. La CAASD no está trabajando por la comunidad sino por sus propios bolsillos. Si van a desbaratar las 200 casas hay que luchar para que lo hagan bien. Todos tienen que luchar por su comunidad, luchar para que se haga bien. Los ingenieros no ven, no están. Cuando llueve y el agua llega hasta aquí enviamos fotos por Whatsapp y dice que no es problema de ellos sino que el gobierno no ha depositado el dinero...y qué? ¿Que la gente muere mientras tanto? Estamos aquí porque no tenemos donde más ir. / The CAASD isn't working for the community, but to line their own pockets. If they're going to remove 200 houses we have to fight to make sure they do it correctly. Everyone has to fight for their community, fight to ensure a job well done. The engineers don't see; they're not here. When it rains and floods, we send them pictures and they say it's not their problem; it's the government's fault for not depositing their funds...and what? People are just supposed to die in the meantime? We're here because we don't have anywhere else to go.

Here Elisa portrays residents of Los Platanitos as living there not by choice but for lack of other options, and of suffering the consequences of institutional indifference and structural violence. These realities create an imperative for neighbors to organize together and hold institutions accountable, at the same time as they generate pressures to seek better conditions elsewhere. In at least two other conversations, members suggested the ability to move away from Los Platanitos to a neighborhood with better material living conditions as a possible goal. Others have actually left to work in other neighborhoods or abroad, a consequence of the limited employment opportunities in Los Platanitos. However, Ángela still connected a potential move to initiating social organizing processes articulated between different neighborhoods, while two other women that have left Los Platanitos ultimately returned to the neighborhood and described it as their home.

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Community clearly functions as a complex motivation with different understandings and definitions of how it relates to Mujeres Unidas's work. As in any community there are conflicts, disagreements, and different interests, and the performance of a unified community can be a strategic choice to gain support for different initiatives. However, the consistent references to working on behalf of the community as well as the material and social dimensions of life in Los Platanitos as a distinct place indicate that Mujeres Unidas members see themselves as working to advance collective interests as well as their individual goals, which are explored in the next section.

GENDERED EMPOWERMENT: ECONOMIC RESOURCES, MOBILITIES, AND EDUCATION

We make our way over to Doña Adelia's house in the relentless afternoon sun, Ana stopping to greet neighbors every few yards with a cheerful "¡Dios le bendiga!" or "¡Cristo te ama!" Doña Adelia sits with a cluster of neighbors presiding over the goings-on of the street from their plastic chairs, and she invites us to conduct the interview at her house. Doña Adelia's house sits on one of the slightly larger streets closer to the main road. The house is made of wood and looks to be about three rooms. Photos of Doña Adelia decorate the walls around her kitchen table, and there's one in particular taken at the Mother's Day celebration this spring where she is wearing a white dress with flowing sleeves, smiling softly at the camera and looking like a queen. After admiring her pictures, we sit outside under the pea vines where you can sometimes catch a breeze that blows through the gap between the side of the house and the neighbor's wall.

At 72, Doña Adelia is the eldest member of Mujeres Unidas, with a long history organizing housewives clubs and mutual aid societies in the countryside where she lived into her young adulthood. From her stories it becomes clear that she has always been active making things—art, crafts, food, cleaning products; anything here and there to help support her neighbors, as she puts it. Another neighbor woman, Juana, joined us for most of the interview, occasionally chiming in along with Ana. They describe mutual aid and communal assistance on a neighborhood scale, and Doña Adelia critiques what she perceives as taking advantage of the collective or expecting something for nothing. Doña Adelia particularly frowns on women who do not appear to express an interest in social organization or demand how it will benefit them, since she claims she has never worked that way. At the same time, she recognizes that limited participation may be because of women's urgent material needs and numerous home responsibilities in Los Platanitos, as well as women who want to organize but whose male partners do not allow it:

> Doña Adelia: Hay muchas mujeres que no son organizadas porque los hombres les dicen todos los días en reunión y no traen nada, a mí me decían eso. / There's a lot of women who aren't organized because men say to them every day, All that time spent in meetings and nothing to show for it. They used to say that to me.

> Juana: A mí también me decía eso, mi hermano me lo decía a veces. / They told me that too; my brother said that sometimes.

> Doña Adelia: Hay muchas cosas que las mujeres quieren y no pueden. Hay algunas que no quieren pero muchas que quieren y no pueden. / There are a lot of things women want to do but can't. There are some who don't want to but more who want to and can't.

Doña Adelia frames this section on the gendered barriers that simultaneously motivate Mujeres Unidas's work and present an ongoing challenge to it. Many of her

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comments encapsulate the tensions within narratives of gender empowerment and the difficulties of maintaining a collective orientation for social action within neoliberal governance, particularly where patriarchal forms of power may make women more likely to blame themselves or each other rather than unjust structures. Along with working to advance community interests, Mujeres Unidas members describe motivations related to overcoming specific gendered forms of oppression. While this is not necessarily described in systemic terms, and women frequently shared perceptions that the status of women has steadily improved over time, they still point to limited economic resources, restrictions on their individual autonomy, exclusion from educational opportunities, and persistent patriarchal control of existing social organizations as reasons for why they feel compelled to participate in Mujeres Unidas. In particular, neighborhood associations and an earlier attempt to found a community foundation in Los Platanitos are controlled by men, who women critique for being motivated by their own political interests rather than community well-being.

A desire to increase their power over economic resources as a means to contest economic control exerted by male partners as well as larger economic inequities emerged as a common concern. Both Doña Adelia and Ángela described increasing women's economic resources as a way to reduce women's dependence on their male parters: "Cuando las mujeres trabajan y ganan su propio dinero ya llegan al cuello del hombre y él ya no la puede gobernar / When women work and earn their own money they're on the same level as men, and he can't control her anymore." More generally, Ángela noted that jobs are more limited for women in Los Platanitos than men, particularly for adult women

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with minimal formal education. Overcoming the exploitative, low-paid domestic work and piece work available to racialized women in cañadas thus motivates women to seek microenterprise opportunities in their communities. Paloma, who has worked as a domestic worker, likened it to being enslaved: "Una trabaja por obligación o necesidad y por eso una siempre trata de superar. Es una sobra, una es esclavo ahí, una cansa mucho. / You work out of obligation or necessity and that's why you always try to overcome. It's too much. You're like a slave there. It's exhausting." She was similarly critical of the hours of work required to complete a bag of mayitas (decorative nets for Brugal rum bottles). The rum factory provides residents with a bag of yarn large enough to weave 1,000 nets and pays them $200 Dominican pesos (roughly $4 USD) for what represents at least one day's work, perhaps more. Nora, a widow and mother of three children who is currently unemployed, also expressed a desire to start her own company in order to achieve more dignified employment: "Me motiva seguir para llegar un día a algo...Para mi, quiero aprender para poner una empresita para mi. / I'm motivated to continue to achieve something one day...for myself; I want to learn how to start my own business."

In addition to occasional paid work, all of the women interviewed also provide the unpaid and emotional labor of maintaining their households. Nora summarized the numerous responsibilities and constraints on their time that women face:

> Claro que las mujeres que no trabajan tienen que lavar, cocinar, fregar, trapear, hacer los mandados. Si hay un chiripero por ahí van y lo hacen. Así es que vivimos en Santo Domingo. / Of course women that don't work have to wash clothes, cook, wash the dishes, mop, run errands. If there's an odd job available they'll go and do it. That's how we live here in Santo Domingo.

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Further complicating these numerous responsibilities is the unpredictable provision of basic services in Los Platanitos, which shapes women's time and availability to meet. They may only have electricity two to three hours a day and water twice a week, so women have to constantly rearrange their schedules to perform household labor and chores when these utilities become available. Roughly a quarter of the women interviewed mentioned this as an issue particular to their organizing work as women.

Along with a desire to increase economic resources as form of empowerment, Doña Adelia described freedom of movement as an important motivation for Mujeres Unidas work. Her comments highlighted the level of control men often exercise over women's activities and daily routines in Los Platanitos, and the role that she sees Mujeres Unidas playing in working toward collectively improving women's mobilities:

> Doña Adelia: Porque algunas tienen libertad y otras no la tienen. Es importante ser emprendedora para que tengan las mismas posibilidades y libertad. /Some have freedom and others don't. It's important to be entrepreneurial so that we all have the same possibilities and freedom.

> Julia: Qué significa la libertad para usted? / What does freedom mean to you?

> Doña Adelia: Que si tiene que ir a visitar a una amiga la puede, si quiere ir a una boda o un cumpleaños lo puede. / If she wants to go visit a friend she can; if she wants to go to a wedding or a birthday party she can.

> Ana: Lo mejor de la vida es ser libre. / Being free is the best thing in life.

> Doña Adelia: Todo mundo tiene que tener momentos de salida, de alegría. Hay una vecina acá que se casó con un hombre mucho mayor y ya no se deja ver. El esposo la tiene encerrada en la casa. / Everyone needs time out of the house, moments of joy. There's a neighbor here that got together with a much older man and now we never see her. Her partner keeps her shut inside the house.

Similarly, Nora and Deya, who is also a widow and works at a custodian at an elementary school, spoke about increasing mobilities for women in Los Platanitos as an important motivation for their participation. Deya expressed that she was drawn to Mujeres Unidas by "el carisma que tiene y el vivamento. El valor que tiene, donde van ellas siempre van con la frente en alta y con todo el respeto que merece / their carisma and liveliness. Their bravery. Wherever those women go they go with their head held high and with all the respect they deserve." In further reflections in our March 2018 workshop, Deya echoed Doña Adelia's comments and described overcoming objections from her husband and children, who questioned why she wanted to leave the house to participate in church and other community activities. For her, Mujeres Unidas has been key in motivating increased movement and presence in the community, as well as promoting mutual learning. Interest in getting to meet new people, see new places, and generally "move up" as dimensions of women's mobilities are thus significant alongside economic resources in women's perceptions of empowerment.

Of the distinct motivations for organizing through Mujeres Unidas, a desire to learn and develop new skills and abilities emerged as the strongest. Cited in 12 of the 14 interviews and two workshops with Mujeres Unidas members, learning, trainings, and capacity building take on particular significance among women in Los Platanitos, given that roughly half the women cannot read or write, and have limited time to engage in national literacy campaigns like Quisqeya Aprende Contigo. Women connected learning to increased economic resources, increased mobilities and visibility, and collective social action. While some responses regarding learning as a motivation reflect narratives of

individual education as the key to development, the linkages between learning and broader processes of social transformation expressed by others reflect a more critical pedagogical project that engages capacity building as a pragmatic tool through which low-income, racialized women from Los Platanitos can advance their right to the city.

Mujeres Unidas frequently draws attention to literacy as a gendered barrier for many of its members, and has also devised support strategies to allow them to participate in community workshops. Coordinating workshop attendance with other members who can read and write is one example; more broadly, the emphasis on the production of compost and cleaning product through microenterprise compost and cleaning products also represent areas that require basic counting and sales abilities, not literacy. Ana, who is a regular participant in community workshops despite never having received formal education, describes in more detail how barriers like limited literacy may be strategically overcome through community education:

> Me gusta participar en el trabajo comunitario y ir a todos los talleres. Siempre que ofrecen un taller yo lo cojo porque me gusta aprender. Ahí enseña a uno que tiene derechos, muchas cosas que no sabía antes y si uno no sabe puede llegar a quitarse de ahí. No sé leer ni escribir pero sé defenderme y me gusta aprender, y voy a seguir aprendiendo hasta Dios me permita. / I like to participate in community work and go to all the workshops. Whenever they offer a workshop, I go because I like to learn. There they teach you that you have rights, lots of things that I didn't know before, and that if you don't know they can take advantage of you. I may not know how to read or write but I know how to defend myself. I like to learn, and I'm going to keep learning as long as God permits.

For Ana, these rights-based frameworks represent a useful tool that allow her to exercise agency and become a leading participant in neighborhood organizing processes.

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Paloma, Nora, and Linette, a 65-year-old member of Mujeres Unidas, each stated that they were animated to participate in Mujeres Unidas in order to "aprender nuevas cosas / learn new things." Yuderkys, who is also in her 60's and has not been able to participate as actively in Mujeres Unidas recently due to a cancer diagnosis, also referenced a desire to engage in collective learning via Mujeres Unidas: "Quería aprender lo que otras aprendían, y experiencias que he oido, he hecho y todas las cosas que faltan por hacer, por eso me integré. / I wanted to learn what others were learning. Also the experiences that I've heard, that I've had and all of the things that remain to do—that's why I joined." Berta made a similar point and also connected acquiring new skills with improved future possibilities, while Yahaira associated capacity building with increased independence for women, and Ana saw learning as related to meeting new people and getting to expand her world outside of Los Platanitos.

Several women also emphasized the importance of learning and capacity building to longer processes of social change. Berta explained challenges in recruiting more members to Mujeres Unidas as a lack of experience and knowledge with social organizations; thus, social organizing itself represents an important dimension of learning. Ángela spoke at great length about the transformative potential of learning through her work with Mujeres Unidas:

> Yo siento que después que yo me integré a la organización que he aprendido tanto, porque yo sé muchísimo, aunque lo tenga por dentro, pero siento que lo sé, yo pienso que la vida a mí se me ha transformado. Siento que soy otro tipo de persona. Porque una aprende compartir, una aprende muchísimo, la vida se le tranforma, no es la misma vida. Es un cambio total cuando uno se organiza. / I feel that since I joined the organization I have learned so much—because I know a lot, even if I have it inside of me, I feel I know

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it—I think that my life has transformed. I feel like a new sort of person, because you learn to share, you learn so much, your life changes—it's not the same life. It's a total change when you organize.

Ángela relates learning to increased social organization, which reflects a more popular education analysis. Doña Adelia similarly connected these two ideas by describing the purpose of Mujeres Unidas as a social struggle informed by ongoing education:

Se arriesga a luchar. Han hecho muchas cursos muy importantes para ellas, han hecho mucho más por eso y han aprendido muchas cosas que no hacían antes…todos los días desarrollan una experiencia más./ They dare to struggle. They've taken a lot of very important classes, they've been able to do a lot more because of it and they've learned things that they didn't do before...every day they develop a new experience.

Finally, Paloma saw increased knowledge about their own community as a valuable aspect of learning and social organization:

Es bueno ser organizada. Vamos a lugares nuevos. También aprendemos de nuestra comunidad porque una tiene su entorno, pero no saben quiénes son, quién es Fulano o Fulana por ahí, o cual calle es esa. / It's good to be organized. We see new places, and we also learn about our community, because you'll have your own context but you don't know who everyone is, who Fulano or Fulana over there is, or which street that is.

Ana agreed with Paloma's comments, further describing this process of getting to know neighbors and the broader community as interwoven with mutual learning and applying those insights toward community organizing. From the ways that women often spoke about lucha and learning interchangeably and in relationship with one another, it appears that they imagine learning as both itself as a process of social struggle and a necessary tool for increasing the leadership of women in Los Platanitos in neighborhood social movements. Given that institutions in Santo Domingo frequently devalue the lived experiences of racialized women from self-built neighborhoods like Los Platanitos, community learning

processes that validate existing knowledge and contribute new analyses and ideas for discussion become a significant source of support and motivation.

PATRIARCHAL CONTROL OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Along with gendered constraints to material resources, movement, and education, women also described patriarchal control of existing community processes as a motivation for establishing their own organization. When several women attempted to get involved in other social organizations focused on community quality of life concerns before Mujeres Unidas's founding, they often found themselves marginalized from decision making and prevented from assuming leadership roles. After having this experience, Ángela described herself as disenchanted and distanced herself from community development work for a time. But refocusing her efforts on women's organizing and leadership revived her interests, and she has found Mujeres Unidas more rewarding. Similarly, Yurani articulated Mujeres Unidas in terms of feminism and unity, describing a feeling of more trust, credibility, and equity as well as more active participation than she has encountered in other organizations. In addition to feelings of autonomy and support, Paloma also saw a women's organization as symbolically important to combat patriarchal stereotypes of women's proper roles in society:

> Muestra que nosotras podemos, que no solo estamos para lavar, planchar, fregar, cocinar, verdad? Nosotras las mujeres también podemos. / It shows that we are also capable, that we're not just here to wash clothes, iron, wash dishes, cook, right? Women are also capable.

Although women enjoy more autonomy within their organization, they also described ways that men in the community attempt to reassert their control over women's

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lives in response to their work. Three women reported extensive criticism from male community organizers that Mujeres Unidas's efforts were a waste of time that would not lead to anything. Ana suspected this had to do with men's fear that women would "quitarle su espacio / take away their space" as community leaders. Said Yurani:

> Sí ha habido reacción y en la parte de la palabra machista. Aquí en República Dominicana y en Los Platanitos hay muchos machistas y quieren que la voz de la mujer no se oiga / Yes, there's been a reaction in terms of machismo. Here in the Dominican Republic and in Los Platanitos there are a lot of men who don't want women's voices to be heard.

In spite of this reaction, Yurani felt it essential for Mujeres Unidas to continue their work as community truth-tellers and leaders, who are open in their critiques of machismo and vocal when their proposals are coopted or altered. In a March 2018 reflection, Yurani added:

> Es algo como cuando tú tienes una herida y le echas un poco de vinagre y te va a picar. O sea cuando nosotras reaccionamos, accionamos, no importa lo que diga el otro. Sino que permanezcamos firme en la lucha y el amor y la entrega para poder realizar realmente lo que nosotras queramos lograr. / It's like if you have a cut and you apply a little vinegar it's going to hurt. But when we react, when we act, it doesn't matter what others say. Instead we need to stay strong in our struggle, love, and commitment in order to realize what we want to achieve.

Paloma agreed, explaining that, "Claro, muchas personas han criticado. Cuando hacemos reuniones de la mañana dicen será que esas mujeres no tienen oficios?...pero una no le pone atención. / Of course, lots of people have criticized us. When we have meetings in the morning for example they say, don't those women have chores to do?...but you just have to ignore them."

While Paloma perceived these as inevitable comments that women simply have to ignore and carry on with their work, other members described what they perceive are male strategies to weaken women's increased involvement and visibility in the community. Teresa, who works six days a week outside her home, claims that men undermine women's organizing work and increased economic power by reducing their own financial contributions to the home. She notes that they also refuse to help women with domestic chores, even when they are capable of doing so:

> La mayoría de los hombres cuando trabaja la mujer se desatienden el hogar….ya se acostumbró tanto que sea yo que le cocine, que sea yo que le arregle, que yo misma me siento a veces incomoda porque yo le digo ¿por qué tienes que esperar que yo llegue? Si a veces yo llego muerta del hambre y tú me puedes hacer algo sabiéndolo hacer, porque él sabe...aunque sepan hacer no lo hacen. / When women start working most men let the house go...my husband is so used to me cooking, me cleaning, and I get upset sometimes. I say to him, why do you have to wait until I get home? Sometimes I get home starving and you could cook me something that you know how to make, because he does know how—even though they know how to do it they don't.

This observation emerged in our first organizational planning meeting, where women voiced their frustration about the gendered dynamics present in their attempts to collaborate with other community organizations in the public outreach process surrounding the CAASD project. Yurani described how male-led organizations now speak publicly about the importance of Mujeres Unidas and their role in initiating the cañada improvement but refuse to actually incorporate Mujeres Unidas' proposals for community infrastructure into their meetings or cede meaningful power to women. Men use the fact that Mujeres Unidas is not incorporated as an official nonprofit as a justification to exclude them from local organizing processes. Yahaira interpreted this failure to include women's proposals

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as a gendered attack as well as a failure to faithfully represent community interests. In her

mind, male subjectivities were defined by more individualistic or partisan interests whereas

Mujeres Unidas had a closer relationship with the community that men systematically try

to undermine:

> Ellos creen que las mujeres no somos nadie, que nada más son los hombres.
> No sé, es el problema que hay aquí que el hombre quiere romper el
> mandamiento de las mujeres…Y eso es lo que pasa aquí, que el machismo
> y si alguna mujer habla quiere de una vez amenazarla. / They think that
> women are nobodies, that it's just the men. I don't know, it's a problem that
> here men just want to break women's power...and that's what happens here,
> this machismo, and if a woman speaks out they immediately want to
> threaten her.

In spite of these clear and ongoing examples of patriarchal control, women also

expressed feelings that machismo in the Dominican Republic is not as significant a problem

as it used to be, and that women's possibilities were generally improving. Only three

mentioned specific negative reactions from community members in response to their

organizing work when individually asked directly. Instead, these anecdotes and venting of

frustrations tended to emerge in group conversations, which suggests a growing critical

awareness of gendered forms of power emerging through dialogue and sharing experiences

with other women initially sparked by concerns about material scarcities. At the same time,

in many of these conversations women expressed the notion that teaching men how to not

be machista is women's responsibility, given that they are primarily responsible for

childrearing. Yurani described this as one of Mujeres Unidas's primary tasks:

> Compartir y combatir el machismo. Hay que desaprenderlo a los hombres
> para poder combatir el machismo que tiene. La mamá le enseño una cosa a
> él pero nosotras como mujeres le podemos desaprender de eso / Share and
> combat machismo. We have to teach men to unlearn it, to combat their

machismo. Their mothers taught them one thing but we as women can teach them something else.

Ángela agreed, drawing on women's positions as mothers and partners to men to argue that they should teach men how to share household labor and help the women in their lives. The ways in which Mujeres Unidas members articulate their work in relation to gendered barriers and patriarchal authority are thus complex and at times contradictory, expressing their direct experiences and frustrations with patriarchal control but also drawing on traditional gender roles to conclude that they as women have the responsibility to educate men to be less machista. Nevertheless, male control of neighborhood organizations serves as an important motivation for members of Mujeres Unidas to form their own group.

LOVE AND SPIRITUALITY

Visiting Teresa's house, I was always just one of a steady flow of visitors who were each offered enormous plates of food and glasses of soda. Teresa's concrete house is painted red, and sits just next to the newly-covered cañada. Now that the CAASD project has raised the street level, a steep dirt embankment covers half of Teresa's galería windows. On rainy days dirty water pours directly into this visiting space and pools outside her front gate, where it sits for days. When I arrive she is rightfully frustrated with the stagnant water in her porch, and brings out a fan in a vain attempt to dry things out. I complement her bata (house dress) and she laughs that it's her pajamas, more comfortable for being at home. Teresa is the current treasurer for Mujeres Unidas, but she confesses that all the numbers stress her out at times, and she particularly dislikes the algebra she has to study for her high school diploma equivalence. Eventually she arrives at stories about her time living in

Venezuela where she worked as a cook, became an evangelical Christian, and traveled to Colombia, where she considered staying before ultimately deciding to return to Los Platanitos. Back in Santo Domingo she likes to stroll on the malecón and go to the beach with her aunts when they come back for visits from Spain.

Teresa defines herself by love realized through small everyday gestures and her work with Mujeres Unidas. In our first group meeting, she described herself as:

> El amor sobre todo, me identifico por el amor. Si no tengo amor no puedo estar en nada. El amor refleja tantas cosas bonitas, es tan inmenso. / Love above everything else. I identify myself with love. If I don't have love I can't be in anything. Love reflects so many beautiful things; it's so huge.

In that same meeting, Elisa and Ángela both echoed the significance of love to their identities, with comments that they seek to "demostrar amor para los demás personas / show love to others" and live "dos valores prinicipales, que son la fe y el amor / two principal values, faith and love." These comments reflect Mujeres Unidas's organizational values of love, faith, and perseverance, which were referenced in many interviews and which infuse Mujeres Unidas's narratives of community development work and social struggle. Elisa's opening statement regarding the necessity of "amor a la lucha / love for the struggle" as well as Yurani's comment that Mujeres Unidas does their work not for recognition "Sino por el amor, por amor a aquellos niños, aquellos envejecientes, aquellos jovenes que para nosotros a la hora de morir hay un rasgo. / But rather out of love--love for those children, those elderly folks, those youth, and so that when we die there's a mark left" express this clearly. Further articulating this connection, Ana stated:

> El trabajo que hemos luchado y todo con mucho amor hace que podemos estar más organizado. Y las instituciones ven eso y hacen que tomen acción

más rápido. / All the work we've struggled for and with lots of love has allowed us to be more organized. And institutions see this and it makes them take action faster.

Elisa found this reflection particularly important for her, as it reflects her belief that anything is possible through love.

Mujeres Unidas' values of love, faith, and perseverance take on spiritual tones, as God is frequently imagined as love. Faith appears to be understood not as a passive acceptance of the status quo but a deep conviction that years of community struggle will lead to change. Yurani and Teresa both likened this process to cultivating plants for harvest, stating that they are preparing the soil and do not expect immediate results. As Teresa explained:

> No te puedes cansar apenas no ves los frutos de tu trabajo. Tienes que ser persistente. Mira, no puedes sembrar una mata de papa o de yuca y ya cosecharla. Todo tiene su momento y tienes que ser paciente y sobre todo trabajar en conjunto porque la lucha es de todos. / You can't give up if you don't see the fruits of your labor right away. You have to be persistent. Look, you can't plant a potato or yucca plant and harvest it immediately. Everything has its moment and you have to be patient and above all work together because the struggle is everyone's.

In this case, Teresa likens faith to a persistent and tireless commitment to a project that will eventually succeed. This persistence informs women's understandings of the need to fight for their community, which Elena noted in her reflections on Teresa's quote: "Hay que luchar por lo que queremos. / We have to fight for what we want."

While both Catholic and evangelical churches have a deeply troubled and complicated legacy beyond the bounds of this discussion, the small house churches in Los Platanitos represent some of the only institutions led by women in the community. Several

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women describe their churches as sites where they lost their fear and began to speak out; originally in the context of song and praise, it is now a practice that they bring to their community work that they feel enables them to become community leaders. When Deya expressed insecurity about speaking up in public meetings, Ana shared her experiences from church to encourage her to overcome her fear:

> Deya: No me atrevo pararme como para Yurani, Angela, Teresa. / I'm not brave enough to stand up like Yurani, Ángela, Teresa.
>
> Ana: Yo era así antes. Antes en las reuniones bajaba la cabeza y no la levantaba para nada...En la iglesia para cantar alabanzas o coro tienes que presentarte y cantar delante de un grupo. Hace tiempo perdí los nervios y ahora lo gozo. Es bueno ser organizado, perder el temor, soltarse. / I used to be like that. At meetings I kept my head down and didn't look up at all...in church to sing prayers or a song you have to introduce yourself and sing in front of the group. So a while ago I stopped getting nervous and now I enjoy it. It's good to be organized, lose your fear, let go.

Mujeres Unidas's understandings of love, faith, and perseverance are entangled with their Christian spiritualities, which shapes motivates and shapes their work in significant ways. Given the importance that Mujeres Unidas place on their faiths and their churches, as well as linkages to their definitions of love, both must be acknowledged as important inspirations for their work.

Women have diverse motivations for founding and continuing to participate in Mujeres Unidas. Highlighting connections between their natural and social environments, women frequently spoke of themselves as working for or on behalf of the community rather than for their own personal advancement. At the same time, gendered barriers to employment, mobilities and education also motivate women to take action. Women situate learning and capacity building in particular within a critical pedagogical project of social

transformation, in which racialized women from Los Platanitos become leaders as well as producers of valuable knowledge. Through their contact with other women, Mujeres Unidas members begin to articulate the ways in which patriarchal power operates to constrain their agency and undermine their status as an autonomous organization. Finally, interconnected processes of love and spirituality further motivate many women's participation, influencing their approaches to specific projects and shaping their imagined impacts. The following chapter explores the meanings that Mujeres Unidas assigns to social processes present in their work, focusing in particular on entrepreneurship, feminine subjectivities, and lucha in relationship to the motivations discussed here.

> Por un futuro de mañana que sean activas e inteligentes. Si nada aspira nada llega. Siempre adelante, nunca hacía atrás. / For a future in which women are active and intelligent. If you don't aspire to anything you won't get anywhere. Always forward; never backward. -Yuderkys, 65

Chapter 5: "Ayudar a los demás mejorar cada día más": Understandings of Community Entrepreneurship, Gender, and Organizing in Mujeres Unidas

Aunque no tengamos dinero, como dicen, pero yo doy amor a mis hijos, a mis vecinas, con un chin de cafe aunque sea un chin chin chiquitica. Pero con ese amor tú te sientes bien. La mujer allá, aquí verdad, es solidaria. / Although we don't have money, as they say, I give love to my children, my neighbors, with a little bit of coffee, even if it's just a little teeny tiny bit. But with that love you feel good. Women here support others. -Yurani, 31

Building upon the diverse motivations for Mujeres Unidas's work, this chapter explores the ways that Mujeres Unidas articulate entrepreneurship and their gendered subjectivities as women in Los Platanitos within a broader process of lucha. As previously mentioned, the focus on emprendedurismo (entrepreneurship) as a key dimension of their organization grew out of earlier workshops carried out with Caroline Daigle and Farzad Mashhood in January and March 2017, in which women spoke extensively about themselves as mujeres emprendedoras. The intricate connections they draw when they describe emprendedurismo or a mujer emprendedora suggest that it contains more meanings than individualistic or business connotations of the word. Though some members do describe entrepreneurship in terms of business and hard work, overall members of Mujeres Unidas articulate an understanding of entrepreneurship as a social process closely connected with their identities as women and aligned with a broader struggle for a more just local economy.

Within this process, Mujeres Unidas members often invoke essentialized characteristics of women as more organized, trustworthy, and virtuous, as well as feminine subjectivities of women as responsible home administrators, caregivers, and mothers.

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Women construct and refine narratives of social struggle in relation to their gendered subjectivities through meetings with other women, which came through particularly clearly in performative workshops. Interactions and partnerships with municipal planning institutions and NGOs in "invited" spaces of participation inform these discourses, so I also include comments from the two interviews I conducted with the Santo Domingo Norte municipal government and a Dominican NGO that supports Mujeres Unidas. In analyzing the meanings Mujeres Unidas assign to their work, it seems that women leverage the feminine subjectivities produced by structural conditions as well as gendered social norms in Los Platanitos to construct a narrative of entrepreneurship and resilience in relationship to larger community transformations in Los Platanitos via women's struggles.

ARTICULATING COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Yurani lives with her parents on the main road bordering Los Platanitos, and became involved in Mujeres Unidas and eventually selected as the coordinator due to her high school diploma. Women felt it important to have a leader who can read and write, and who has a Dominican cédula (national identity card, which migrants from the countryside and particularly from Haiti are often denied)—in order to handle bureaucratic requirements. Yurani's mother sells sandwiches and drinks out of her window onto the street, and whenever we walk past on our way up the hill to the metro Yurani insists we stop for a homemade juice. As a school police officer, Yurani is one of two Mujeres Unidas members with regular paid employment. Every afternoon after finishing her shift at the school, she changes out of her police uniform into a blouse and knee-length skirt and makes

her way down to Los Platanitos to spend several hours in meetings or visiting with residents. In addition to coordinating Mujeres Unidas and serving as a liaison with the CAASD public engagement committee as well as the Santo Domingo Norte municipal government, Yurani is deeply involved in the neighboring Assembly of God church, organizing field trips and other activities with local children. When I first arrived in June her responsibilities were giving her constant headaches, placing her among the women in Los Platanitos whose bodies carry stress, trauma, and material inequities manifesting as diabetes, cancer, migraines; early mornings and hours spent in transit and waiting in line at the nearest clinic. After a few days of rest, Yurani was eager to get workshops started and advance with the organizational planning process. She would arrive promptly at 2pm and immediately set about securing a cup of coffee to share, stretching it between as many women as necessary, and send small children scurrying off to search for Mujeres Unidas members to convene them for the meeting.

Yurani was one of eight women of the 14 interviewed who described entrepreneurship in terms of business, hard work, and effort. However, Yurani was also clear about the social value of Mujeres Unidas as a women's space for taking care of each other and contributing to an improved quality of life for the whole community. In this way, Yurani's framing of entrepreneurship helps demonstrate the complex ways that Mujeres Unidas understand and use the term. In their responses I identified three key themes: entrepreneurship as related to business and hard work, entrepreneurship as related to learning and capacity-building, and entrepreneurship as social collaboration and a community benefit. These themes indicate a mix of individual and collective

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understandings, which may also stem from the actual entrepreneurial activities in which women in Los Platanitos engage.

Officially, Mujeres Unidas has engaged in two pilot microenterprise projects: the vermiculture composting site, which was intended to help address the solid waste issue in the community as it also generated income through the sale of organic compost and compost tea, and the manufacture and sale of químicos (household cleaning products). Though not formally constituted, these projects have elements of cooperatives, as women pool resources to purchase supplies and contribute a portion of their earnings from product sales back to the organization. Both of these projects have continued at a very small scale, as they have not generated sufficient income for more women to feel secure in leaving their other income generating strategies to dedicate themselves full time to either projects. Plans to create a vivero (plant nursery) that would draw on women's extensive knowledge of plant cultivation for nutritional, medicinal, and aesthetic purposes as well as provide an additional point of sale for organic composting products continue to be a priority for Mujeres Unidas, but have not been implemented due to a lack of capital and challenges acquiring a physical site for the project.

In addition to these group efforts, two members of Mujeres Unidas run colmados, which serve as community gathering and social spaces in addition to providing groceries and household goods. Often, social relationships serve as collateral for "informal" microcredit that people use to purchase needed goods, settling their accounts later when they have the funds available. Many other women in Los Platanitos prepare food for sale whether at a nearby marketplace, community events, or out of their homes. Similarly, some

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women run fantasias (very small notions shops) from their homes as well. These ventures combine with domestic work, piecework, occasional odd jobs, and extensive, unpaid household labor and care work to characterize the majority of economic activities available to women in Los Platanitos. A 2016 survey conducted with 33 women by a UT Austin research team found that only 27.6 percent of women in Los Platanitos have formal employment (Sletto et al., 2016). Consequently, their relationships and uncompensated economic activities take on even more importance. Additionally, while the majority of the women surveyed are not primary wage earners for their families, they still report high levels of autonomy in managing household finances and resources (Sletto et al., 2016). Together, these findings help demonstrate that women in Los Platanitos are economically active in many ways even if formal compensation is low, and that much of their work continues to be home-based and depend on networks of relationships between women to continue.

Yurani qualified her definition of entrepreneurship as primarily related to business with the importance of responsibility toward others, motivating others to produce high-quality products, and "being human." Teresa, who identifies herself as a "persona emprendedora / entrepreneurial person" similarly defines entrepreneurship as working hard in an ongoing, dynamic process to advance and grow a business. Deya also suggested that an entrepreneurial woman is someone who starts her own home-based business. Although Deya works as a custodian, she feels it important to maintain a second and more independent source of income in the event her hours are cut at the school where she works; this allows her more protection and flexibility as a vulnerable worker.

In addition to microenterprise, women associated entrepreneurship with hard work and persistence more generally. Though Teresa defined entrepreneurship in relation to business, she also described it as overcoming obstacles and helping others in the process: "Para mi ser emprendedora es superarte y ayudar a los demás mejorar cada día más. / For me being entrepreneurial is overcoming and helping others improve each day." Paloma and Nora's understanding of entrepreneurship also reflected this notion of progress and overcoming; they respectively spoke about entrepreneurship in terms of surmounting life's barriers to advance one's goals and "Seguir arriba, nunca quedar hacía atrás, seguir su trabajo para aprenderlo y subir arriba hasta donde usted quiera. / Move up, never fall behind, keep up your work to learn it well and get as far as you want to go." Berta described an entrepreneur as "Trabajadora, luchadora. Trabaja para lograr muchos objetivos. / Hard-working, courageous. They work to achieve their objectives." Related to this point of entrepreneurship as overcoming, Yahaira and Linette both described entrepreneurs as keeping their word and being dependable. As Yahaira put it, "El emprendedurismo es sacar de la mente lo que van a hacer / Entrepreneurship is putting your thoughts into action," while Linette said that entrepreneurs follow through on their proposals and do what they say they will. Finally, Doña Adelia suggested that entrepreneurial people are motivated to improve their surroundings and work hard to do so, putting love and energy into the process in order to ensure its success.

Within this understanding of achieving goals and overcoming, learning again emerged as a significant aspect of how women conceive of entrepreneurship. Many women

perceive learning new skills and the desire to learn as fundamental to entrepreneurial identities; this can have both individual and communal dimensions. Yahaira commented:

> Nosotras las Mujeres Unidas somos unas mujeres emprendedoras que aprendemos hacer mucho, que al día de mañana tendremos proyectos...Queremos capacitar y aprender más porque uno vale lo que sabe. Si nada sabe, nada vale. / We in Mujeres Unidas are entrepreneurial women that learn how to do lots of things so that we have projects for the future...We want to build our capacity and learn more because we're worth what we know. If you know nothing, you're worth nothing.

Altagracia, a 66-year-old member of Mujeres Unidas who ran a food stand before closing it to take care of her chronically ill husband, also stated that entrepreneurial women constantly seek to learn and acquire new knowledge. This desire to learn was also connected to being proactive, dynamic, and creative; or as Yuderkys put it, "Activa, inteligente, siempre cumpliendo las cosas al pie de la letra. / Active, intelligent, always paying careful attention to detail." Ana also saw learning as key to entrepreneurship, but instead grounded it in a process of community education and collective benefit: "Una mujer emprendedora puede enseñar a otras personas y también vender. Es multiplicadora para las otras personas que quieren aprender. / An entrepreneurial woman can teach others and also sell. She's a multiplier for others who also want to learn."

The idea of multiplying knowledge for others as an entrepreneurial activity also arose in our first organizational planning meeting when Yurani shared one of her goals as being an entrepreneur who supports youth and children in the community. She connected this support to sharing her knowledge without concern for pay, in order to "servir y seguir ayudando y animando a todos en la vida / serve and keep helping and motivating others in life." Similarly, Elisa, who is one of just two women who currently run their own small

business, stated that "Una emprendedora siempre quiere aprender y trabajar por su comunidad y también por otras comunidades./ An entrepreneur always wants to learn and work for their community and other communities too."

Ana, Yurani, and Elisa's comments typify responses from at least six interviews and several of the workshops that expressed entrepreneurship in terms of social change and benefits to the community. Ángela explicitly linked entrepreneurship to social change in her definition:

> Una persona emprendedora es una persona que quiere lograr metas, quiere lograr sus objetivos con lucha pero quiere llegar a ver una transformación. / An entrepreneur is someone who wants to achieve goals, who wants to achieve their objectives through struggle but who wants to see a transformation.

In this case, desired goals are not just individual in nature, nor necessarily related to a business. Reflecting on this social entrepreneurship, Teresa saw it as a feeling that inspires Mujeres Unidas to persist and have faith that their work will bear fruit in the future, distinguishing them from other community members who insist that nothing will come from their efforts.

Elaborating further on entrepreneurship and community, Ana said that entrepreneurs:

> Trabaja con la comunidad y le gusta compartir con los demás, y así gana el reconocimiento de los demás. No tiene que generar ganancia. A veces una trabaja sin ánimo de lucro, ahora el único proyecto que genera dinero es el jabón. Luego con el tiempo viene el dinero, pero primero es el proyecto que empieza desde abajo. / She works with the community and likes to share with others, and that's how she gains recognition from others. The work doesn't have to generate a profit. Sometimes you work with no profit motive. Right now, the only project that generates any money is the laundry

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soap. Then money comes with time, but first you have to build a project
from the ground up.

Notably, Ana includes nonprofit initiatives in her discussion of entrepreneurship, as well as how working on behalf of the community allows the organization to gain recognition and visibility. While she recognizes the possibility of turning a profit in the future, she does not consider it to be the primary motive. This understanding allows for the possibility of alternative structures beyond traditional enterprise, leading to a more social definition of entrepreneurship. Ángela also expressed a desire for alternatives in this vein, stating one of her goals as creating a collective microenterprise to benefit all women in the community. The incorporation of alternative economic structures into entrepreneurship somewhat reflect Mujeres Unidas's roots in dorcas (community raffles) that function as networks of redistribution and support between women. As two different women explained in their interviews, each woman purchases a cooking ingredient or household staple, which are all put together in a basket. Women then purchase a raffle ticket for the chance to win the whole basket. The funds from raffle tickets go toward group activities, and the raffle itself serves as a fun social event that brings women together to share moments of joy and laughter.

Doña Adelia described similar neighborhood-scale collective activities in her rural home community, which continue to inform her understanding of social organization. She described rural mutual aid societies that took up collections to organize neighborhood activities as well as support each other through illness and death, as well as work parties to help each other with home repairs and other chores. Doña Adelia continues to advocate for

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taking up collections to organize neighborhood activities, with participation contingent on contributing: "Estamos tratando de preparar algo y para preparar algo hay que dejar algo, dar algo. / We're trying to prepare something and to prepare something you have to leave something, give something." While these rural forms of social and economic support shift and adapt to conditions in Los Platanitos, community relationships and mutual aid continue to inform Mujeres Unidas's approach to microenterprise. Bossin (2009) notes the importance both of these informal support networks as well as more consolidated solidarity groups that provide social and economic capacity building among women, who view them as key mechanisms to overcoming gendered employment barriers. These forms of support provide a basis from which women in Los Platanitos can further organize and develop their unique forms of social entrepreneurship.

Accordingly, Mujeres Unidas members imagine the principal community benefits of a successful microenterprise as a more just local economy, increased community autonomy, and liberating women from exploitative employment conditions in private homes. Teresa saw their work producing low-cost cleaning products as simultaneously saving their neighbors money while giving them access to a higher quality product. She suggests that, over time, this neighborhood-scale microenterprise enables women to choose not to accept exploitative work due to their new source of income and increased savings:

> Elaborar un producto muy bueno a un precio económico es una gran ayuda para todos. Así la gente puede ahorrar $200 pesos cada mes y eso nos hace importante...También es importante ser emprendedora porque así no tenemos que ganar dinero en casas o salir a la calle sino podemos ganar dinero aquí. Una persona como Ana no tiene que ir a alquilarse en una casa sino con $200 que gana de una cubeta de jabón puede cocinar uno o dos días para su familia. / Creating a great product at a reasonable price is a big

help to all. That way people can save maybe $200 pesos each month and that makes us significant...It's also important to be entrepreneurial because that way we don't have to go work in private homes or in the streets and can earn money here instead. Someone like Ana doesn't have to go work in someone's home; with $200 pesos she earns from a gallon of detergent she can buy food for her family for one or two days.

Nora made a similar point regarding the benefits of having her own small business, where she can be her own boss instead of being exploited. She described substantial barriers for women living in cañadas, such as literacy and maintaining an active bank account, that preclude employment in public and private sectors and constrain her job possibilities to domestic work in private homes or occasionally washing dishes at restaurants. For Nora, community entrepreneurship is important, "Para que todas ya no gastarnos trabajando para otra persona sino que trabajamos nosotras / So all of us don't have to exhaust ourselves working for someone else but rather we can work for ourselves." Paloma, who critiqued the conditions of domestic and piecework earlier, agreed that Mujeres Unidas's entrepreneurial focus is intended to provide women with dignified alternatives to these jobs.

Ángela also emphasized the importance of having income-generating projects and diverse employment opportunities located within the community. She sees this as not only increasing community autonomy, but also strengthening social and family relationships. A community enterprise that provides jobs for people with different skills would allow women to spend more time in their own neighborhood and care for their own families:

Si nosotras nos emprendemos nuestra empresa aquí en la comunidad no tenemos que salir a otro sector, no tenemos que ir donde los ricos a lavarles los platos para que nos puedan pagar, no tenemos que salir a lavar la ropa, porque tenemos cómo ganar nuestro dinero aquí con nuestro esfuerzo.

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Entonces cuando la comunidad de nosotros ya tenga su propio negocio, su propia empresa, para nosotros es un bien porque tenemos más facilidad cuidar nuestros hijos, estamos más cerca a la casa, podemos trabajar medio tiempo, en fin que nos podemos identificar de diferentes maneras. / If we start our own business here in the community we don't have to go out to another neighborhoods, we don't have to go wash rich people's dishes for money, we don't have to do their laundry, because we have a way to earn money here with our own effort. So if our community has its own business, its own company, then that's good for us because it's easier for us to watch our kids; we're closer to home; we can even work part-time—in sum, it's appealing for different reasons.

Ángela imagines that were community enterprise successful on a larger scale, it would teach wealthier families the actual value of the domestic labor that they take for granted, and they would have to either take care of their own chores or pay dignified wages. Effectively, in this analysis microenterprise serves as a starting point for a transformation of the economy that allows communities to become more self-sufficient, as well as for strengthening social relationships.

As these diverse responses demonstrate, women's definitions of entrepreneurship in Los Platanitos do include more individualistic associations of entrepreneurship with business, hard work, and persistence, but also incorporate social concerns, as well as alternative economic structures like nonprofits and cooperatives. In many cases, their use of the term emprendedurismo seems to be more akin to activating efforts toward collective social change via learning, organizing, and socializing together. In particular, the ways that women describe their group microenterprise pilot projects highlight additional functions of building community and learning together even if the actual profit generated is minimal or nonexistent. While microenterprise development workshops and seed capital emerged as clear priorities in our workshops, they were discussed as funding activities that will benefit

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the whole community. This insight suggests that support for microenterprise in this context must incorporate a more social approach and alternative economic structures, along with expanding the definition of success beyond short-term profits, in order to accommodate the richness of understandings that Mujeres Unidas members hold. Such an approach could in turn lead to more equitable local economies with a more explicitly social emphasis.

GENDERED SUBJECTIVITIES IN LOS PLATANITOS

Throughout our conversation Paloma's hands never stop moving. From the moment Ana and I climb the stairs to the shaded patio that sits in front of the house Paloma shares with her family she is preparing a fish for stew and slicing vegetables, before taking up a bag of mayitas to weave while we talk. Paloma only rarely attends Mujeres Unidas events so we had not spoken at length before; as the youngest member of Mujeres Unidas and the only one with a young child, it is challenging for her to make it to meetings. Paloma's mother recently had a stroke, so now she cares for her in addition to her three teenage siblings and her own four-year-old daughter. Conscious of these many responsibilities, Paloma describes being a woman in terms of the emotional resilience required to assume these tasks:

> Ser mujer en Los Platanitos es un trabajo muy fuerte. Ser luchadora, tener amor para poder trabajar, ser honesta, tener fe que tú vas a salir adelante. Sin fe no puedes luchar. / Being a woman in Los Platanitos is a big job. It's being courageous, having love to be able to work, being honest, having faith that you will get ahead. Without faith you can't fight.

As Paloma's comment indicates, women's gendered subjectivities in Los Platanitos shape the ways they think about social processes. Narratives regarding what it means to be

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a woman in Los Platanitos inform what it means to be an entrepreneur and a person involved in community organizing, and vice versa. Although women's responses regarding gendered structural or institutional oppression were somewhat mixed, they generally described being a woman in positive terms. I categorized their responses into three major themes: women as competent administrators due to their management of domestic tasks, women as intelligent and hardworking, and women as caring and loving. While these narratives reflect societal stereotypes and gender roles as well as women in development discourse, women in Los Platanitos leverage and reinterpret these characteristics to build community together and assume leadership roles. This process allows them to express themselves as active and resilient, unsettling narratives of women in neighborhoods like Los Platanitos as passive victims.

Although women had mixed analyses as to whether women and men have the same economic opportunities, women generally spoke about themselves as highly competent in matters of microenterprise, which earlier UT Austin research teams also noted (Sletto et al., 2016). Ángela and Altagracia suggested that women have the same economic possibilities as men, while Linette and Doña Adelia felt that men still have more opportunities in this aspect owing to their gendered privilege and continued power over women. Other women recognize that men have more economic opportunities as a function of their gendered privilege, but emphasized that women are just as if not more capable. Ana responded that men may have more opportunities now, "pero las mujeres pueden y con el tiempo y el esfuerzo se puede / but women are capable and with time and effort they can."

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Echoing microenterprise narratives that focus on women as more responsible money managers due to their home responsibilities, Yurani gave voice to the idea of women as managers:

> Nosotras somos las administradoras, o sea, administramos lo más que podamos. Administramos el hogar y administramos en cuestion de los hijos porque las mujeres entendemos ser más organizadas que los hombres. / We are managers, that is, we manage the best we can. We manage the home and we manage issues relating to our children because we women better understand how to organize than men.

In addition to drawing on women's experience managing limited home resources, Yurani also suggested that women can leverage their feminine subjectivities in order to strategically overcome gendered barriers like illiteracy and become more successful salespeople to support their families. To illustrate this process she gave an example that is worth quoting at length:

> Las mujeres a pesar de eso tienen ese entusiasmo, las características para vender…y saben conquistar a la otra persona. Porque al que no sabe conquistar que no tiene ese don para vender no vende nada me entiendes? Que llega yo, Ay ven, cómprame eso Fulano, Ay no, yo no quiero. Ay está bien, yo me voy. Pero que yo le digo ay pero Julia como estás de bonita, ay mi amor pero sabes que yo te tengo, pero yo te tengo esos cinco chocolates y si tú compras esos cinco chocolates yo te doy uno gratis y tú dices, Wow! Yo le compré cinco, pero me regaló uno, o sea, busca una estrategia, pero ya yo te convencí…Entonces tú ves mujeres que venden fritura y que hacen esas mayitas, óyeme, busca estrategia...estamos hablando de la sabiduría. No es obstáculo que no sepa leer y escribir. O sea, es un elemento importante pero como le digo...es importante, imprescindible, pero no es todo. Porque el que no sepa leer ni escribir hay estrategias que se puede hacer para vender porque tú tienes tu boca y vendes con tu boca. / In spite of this, women have the enthusiasm and the characteristics to sell. They know how to draw people in. Someone who doesn't know how to draw people in, who doesn't have that gift for sales, won't sell anything, you understand? Like if someone shows up and I say, Hey Fulano, buy this, and they reply, No I don't want any. Okay, that's fine, and I leave. But if I say, Hi Julia, wow you look beautiful today! My dear, guess what I have for you

today. I have these five chocolate bars and if you buy these five you get one free. And then you say Wow! I bought five and I got one for free. So it's like you'll try to bargain but I already convinced you. So you'll see women that have food stands and weave the nets, they look for strategies...we're talking about wisdom. It's not an obstacle if they can't read and write. That is, of course it's important, but how can I say this—it's important, it's essential, but it's not everything. For those that can't read or write, there are strategies that they can use to sell, because you have a mouth, and you sell with your mouth.

In her analysis, women's resourcefulness and the strategies developed to support themselves and their families economically constitute a particular form of wisdom that can inform their microenterprise management. To complement this knowledge, Mujeres Unidas members were particularly interested in organizational trainings on microenterprise, small business development, and accounting. The two workshops we conducted on applying for a grant and basic accounting had strong participation and interest. Although they were not the most interactive in terms of methodology, the focus on tangible resources that the organization had been awarded in order to attend an organic composting course captured people's attention. Everyone spoke at different points and asked questions about the logistics and ethics of organizational funds. This again highlights the importance of increasing women's material resources for Mujeres Unidas on both individual and collective levels.

In addition to narratives of women as capable business owners and managers, women spoke about themselves as generally more hardworking, intelligent and organized. One woman commented that continued male privilege exists:

A pesar de que las mujeres somos más aptas. Las mujeres son más inteligentes, más responsables, más aptas para el negocio. / In spite of the

fact that women are better suited. Women are more intelligent, more responsible, more suited for business.

Yahaira and Berta also agreed with this sentiment, claiming that women are more intelligent and more capable than men, in addition to being more hardworking. Yuderkys added that women are more motivated than men, who do not fully take advantage of the possibilities they do have.

Related to ideas of women as more intelligent and motivated, other responses cited women as more socially organized than men and therefore better suited for managing businesses. Said Altagracia, "Las mujeres son unidas, son más, dominan. Las mujeres son más organizadas que los hombres. / Women are more united, there are more of them, they dominate. Women are more organized than men." Teresa's response matched that of Altagracia in that she did not perceive men to have more economic possibilities than women, and even suggested that women's ability to work outside the home was a sign that machismo had improved. However, she claimed that men are less involved in community microenterprise activities due to a lack of interest. Ángela also felt that men were less committed and reliable in community activities, describing them as charlatans. Consequently, Ángela suggested that women were more honest and better suited for public service, particularly in positions managing shared financial resources.

In addition to describing women as more hardworking, responsible, and suited for business, women also connected feminine subjectivities to care and love. This in turn led to a conviction that Mujeres Unidas as an organization serves an important function of offering emotional support and social relationships to women, which makes them feel more

valued. Yurani described being a woman as "Significa ser llena de gozo de espiritu, llena de amor. / It means being full of a joyful spirit, full of love." Deya's response reflected this idea as well, and further connected women's energy and love to processes of social struggle:

> Veo mucho avivamiento, me encanta ver como ellas luchan...Es un logro muy grande todo lo que viene trabajando, el deseo, el ánimo, todo lo que hace con amor. Todo el orgullo y valor que tiene luchar para lograr una meta. / I see liveliness; I love to see how they fight...Everything they've been working on is a big achievement: the desire, the energy, everything they do with love. All of the pride and courage they have to struggle to achieve a goal.

Berta stated that being a woman in Los Platanitos meant a lot to her, particularly in the context of Mujeres Unidas. She expressed feeling supported and valued through participating in Mujeres Unidas due to the ongoing construction of values of love, faith, and perseverance between women. Yahaira also expressed feeling supported by organized and capable women who can depend on themselves. Similarly, Ana also described being a woman in terms of positive feelings and pride:

> Hay trabajo como mujer pero ser mujer es algo bueno. ¿Qué significa ser mujer en Los Platanitos para mí? Me siento orgullosa de ser mujer, sobre todo haciendo trabajo comunitario. / There's work as a woman but being a woman is a good thing. What does being a woman in Los Platanitos mean to me? I feel proud to be a woman, above all one who works in the community.

Paloma's response also acknowledged the extensive responsibilities that women in Los Platanitos hold. Given their many caregiving duties in addition to their domestic chores and paid work, Paloma described caring for each other as women as an important dimension of Mujeres Unidas's work:

Una como mujer tiene que hacer varios trabajos, no solo una. Creo que es más para las mujeres. La mujer tiene que trabajar en casa, si trabaja fuera también, y el trabajo en la comunidad. En cambio el hombre llega del trabajo y descansa un poco y si quiere trabajar en la comunidad lo hace. Es más fuerte el trabajo de la mujer. Tiene que cuidar el bebé, los niños, la tía, la abuela, ¿y a nosotras quién nos cuida? / Women have various jobs, not just one. I think it's more for women. Women have to work at home, sometimes outside the home too, in addition to their community work. In contrast men get home from work, rest a bit, and then if they want to work in the community they can. Women's work is harder. We have to take care of babies, kids, aunts, grandparents. And who takes care of us?

Following up on this comment in March 2018, Paloma added that women have so many responsibilities and so little support that it is up to God to take care of them, which provides additional insight into women's participation and leadership in local churches.

In addition to developing strong faith as a means of self-care, Yurani described Mujeres Unidas as a place where women are able to share personal experiences, counsel each other, and form deep friendships together. She expressed appreciation and love for other members of Mujeres Unidas even when the organization is not able to meet as regularly. Echoing this sentiment, Ángela spoke about gestures of sharing and support that result in Mujeres Unidas:

Siento que nosotras compartimos, porque tal vez nos compartimos un plato de comida, tal vez nos compartimos un vaso de agua, pero las experiencias, hasta los malos ratos, la comprensión nos comunicamos con la otra. Cualquier problema que yo tenga puedo ir a Ana y decirle, me voy a sentar en su casa y le puedo decir. O Elisa y yo, Elisa y yo hemos llorado abrazadas en su cocina...Nos abrazamos, nos lloramos las dos, a veces nos reímos, volvemos y nos abrazamos, ¿tú entiendes? / I feel that we share together. Maybe we share a plate of food, maybe we share a glass of water, but we also communicate our experiences—even the bad ones—and understanding. Any problem I have I can go to Ana and tell her, I can go to her house and sit down and tell her. Or Elisa and I, Elisa and I have cried and hugged each other in her kitchen...We hug, we cry, sometimes we laugh, we hug again, you understand?

It is clear that the function of Mujeres Unidas as a space of mutual support and exchange between women and related positive feelings are just as significant as the organization's work on material, neighborhood quality of life issues. Indeed, the two are related in that women get to know each other better as neighbors and develop collaborative strategies for making change. Ultimately, while women acknowledged extensive responsibilities and machismo in some ways, none of them described feminine subjectivities in overt terms of oppression or generally negative terms. On the contrary, their answers describe a more complex picture of themselves as courageous, intelligent, resourceful, competent, and loving, which in turn shape how they engage in entrepreneurship and community organizing.

LUCHA AS STRUGGLE AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Mujeres Unidas members consistently expressed their work in terms of lucha (struggle). This focus suggests an emphasis on process in addition to results and allows for a more transformative framing for entrepreneurship and gendered subjectivities. Narratives of lucha appeared in 11 of the 14 interviews and dominated our performance workshop on facilitating community meetings. While some described lucha in ways that could be interpreted as individual courage and effort, it typically had more social and collective connotations of working toward a shared goal or desired improvement. Teresa described herself in terms of lucha in both her individual interview and our first workshop together: "Soy una mujer muy luchadora, me gusta la lucha. / I'm a courageous woman. I like the struggle." Yurani and Ana also identified themselves in terms of lucha in our first

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workshop, with Ana noting that "Las batallas que no se luchan no se ganan. / Nothing struggled, nothing gained." Nora agreed, stating that struggle is necessary to achieve goals. In explaining why she joined Mujeres Unidas, Elisa simply said that "Necesitamos una organización para luchar y ellas ya estaban organizadas y eran mujeres luchadoras. / We needed an organization to fight and they were organized, courageous women."

Women also perceived lucha as a way to augment their individual power by joining together with other women around a shared cause. Explained Altagracia, Linette, and Berta:

> Nos unimos y podemos lograr muchas cosas unidas. Porque una sola no haría nada pero cuando son un grupo unido podemos lograr cualquier cosa, cualquier objetivo. / We unite and we can achieve a lot of things together. Alone you wouldn't get anything done but when you're a united group we can achieve anything, any objective.

Ángela reiterated the importance of collective struggle for a desired goal, especially in order to hold institutions accountable. Speaking about the CAASD project, Ángela stated that the mission of Mujeres Unidas was to ensure that local authorities completed the project to an excellent standard. Beyond those specific goals, Ángela believes that social organization is a transformative process on every level:

> Después que aprendí organizarme creo que nunca más voy a ser desorganizada...si tú cambias de ser desorganizada por un modelo organizada tu vida yo siento que hay una transformación, yo pienso que hay una transformación personal. Yo siento eso. / After learning to organize I think I'm never going to be able to be unorganized. If you change your unorganized way of life for organizing I feel that there's a transformation, a personal transformation. I feel it.

Along these lines, Deya felt that lucha helped women become more involved in their communities and more visible. Before Mujeres Unidas existed she stated that women were

more isolated and dedicated to what she felt were silly pastimes like dominos and cards. Now she thinks that social organization has changed how women relate to each other.

Our fifth participatory workshop demonstrates a particularly strong example of the shared narrative of collective struggle on the community's behalf. Per Yurani's request, the workshop focused on facilitating community meetings. After brainstorming together what makes a successful meeting based on their past experiences, I invited workshop attendees to participate in two role play activities. In the first, they practiced a regular Mujeres Unidas meeting, focusing on facilitation techniques and including all participants. The second skit was a meeting focused on the CAASD project open to the larger community; Yurani observed and took notes while I played the role of an outsider to Los Platanitos, Doña Julia, who interrupted the meeting, talked over people, started side conversations, and began to make demands that the CAASD move the project to my neighborhood.

In response to Doña Julia's disruption, Ángela, who had stepped into the role of facilitator, first tried to reason with me before reprimanding my attempts to distract Ana in a side conversation with a "Señora, usted no tiene educación? / Ma'am, don't you have any manners?" that sent everyone into laughter and applause. She continued, "Nosotros estamos hablando. Usted no puede venir a interrumpir así a desconcentrar la comunidad. Hemos luchado demasiado / We're talking here. You can't come in and interrupt like this and distract the community. We've fought too hard," and then invited Doña Julia to listen to each woman's experience working as part of Mujeres Unidas for neighborhood improvements. Each participant referenced the intensive effort and long process of struggle

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required to get to the CAASD project, emphasizing that Doña Julia was welcome to join them and learn from them in order to work toward a similar project in my neighborhood. However, their comments made it extremely clear that they were responsible for the improvements in Los Platanitos and that the first step in any community development project is organizing:

> Elisa: Lo que la Doña Julia tiene que hacer es como nosotras hicimos comenzar una organización, comenzar a tocar puertas en el ayuntamiento en instituciones recordar de las necesidades de su barrio ...Tiene que unirse con nosotras trabajar para que después que termine que resuelve el problema que hay en nuestra comunidad. Pero hay que luchar. / What Ms. Julia has to do is what we did: start an organization, start making contact with the city and other institutions to remind them of the needs in her neighborhood...She has to join us and work so that when they finish the project here is resolves the problem in our community. But it requires struggle.

> Ana: En este caso yo diría que la compañera Julia lo que tiene que hacer es en su barrio unirse a nosotras y empezar a tocar puertas porque las cosas no son así, no puede llevarse el proyecto que nosotros ya trabajamos aquí en nuestra comunidad para nuestra comunidad. / In this case I'd say that what our colleague Julia has to do for her neighborhood is to join us and start to look for resources. This isn't how things work; she can't take away a project that we've worked on here in our community for our community.

> Deya: No podemos permitir que ella nos lleve el proyecto que ya está planeado. Ella tiene que unirse a nosotras para nosotras poder llevarle hacía allá. / We can't allow her to take away the project that's already planned. She has to join us so that we can help her get something similar where she's from.

In addition to asserting clear ownership over the CAASD project, women developed a more critical analysis that drives Mujeres Unidas to engage more assertively with institutions. Ángela noted that residents of Los Platanitos should demand what is duly owed them by different levels of government in return for the taxes they pay:

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Tenemos que tener en cuenta que eso no se llama pedir, sino devolverle lo que nos deben en bienes y servicios a nosotros. Entonces nosotros tenemos que decir que nosotros queremos una calle porque nosotros también somos seres humanos y merecemos vida digna. Necesitamos luz, necesitamos descontaminación, necesitamos vivir de otra manera como viven las otras comunidades. / We have to keep in mind that this isn't asking, but rather returning what they owe us in goods and services to us. So we have to say we want a street because we're also human beings and we deserve a dignified life. We need electricity, we need a clean environment, we need to live differently as they do in other communities.

Ana added specific planning priorities to Ángela's statement, sharing that Mujeres Unidas wants a clean cañada, dignified housing, a health clinic, and green space as well as a park for youth. Finally, Elisa concluded by sharing the story of how Los Platanitos has shifted from a "rincón de los olvidados / corner of the forgotten ones" with poor living conditions to a neighborhood that receives international and national attention. Elisa warned Doña Julia that the overall process requires ongoing and constant lucha: first to make the community visible to Dominican state institutions, and then to hold those institutions accountable to the promises they make, which continues to present a significant challenge to Mujeres Unidas. Finally, to conclude Ángela once again reiterated their reasons for why another neighborhood coopting their project makes them uncomfortable, and invited Doña Julia to join them instead:

Ya usted se ha dado cuenta que es lo que queremos y que se incluye en el proyecto que no se lo lleve, sino que se incluye en nuestro proyecto y trabajamos todos unidos. Porque nosotros somos un grupo de mujeres que se llama Mujeres Unidas. Nosotros lo que queremos es la unión de más mujeres. Nosotros se llama, Si te sumas, somos más. / Now you can see what we want and you can be included in our project—not coopt it, but rather join us, and we can work together. We're a group of women called Mujeres Unidas and we want more women to join us. We always say we're stronger together.

On that note, the skit concluded with lots of applause and more laughter. When I asked participants what they thought about the exercise and how they felt doing it, they immediately noted the connections between the skit premise and reality. All of the women said that this scenario is currently playing out with competing interests and cooptation of different aspects of the CAASD project. Yurani observed that interruptions like this occur frequently, and she appreciated that in the skit they were able to ensure that "La voz de la mujer fue escuchada / Women's voices were heard." Both Ángela and Yurani were particularly excited about the performative methodology used as a means to analyze social processes. Ángela remarked that it seemed like a play, and Yurani imagined the women performing a short play at the 10 year project anniversary conference in March 2018—an idea that we ultimately realized in our conference session focused on popular education and mobilizing community knowledge.

The actual facilitation that occurred during this skit was notable in its own right: Ángela managed to diffuse a potential conflict and then create a space for coalition-building with other communities while still maintaining organizational autonomy. Yet even more than practicing meeting facilitation skills, this short and improvised performance served as an opportunity for women to construct the story of their organization as one of committed struggle and critically reflect on their experiences in community development work. Through this narrative, women claim a role for themselves as effective leaders in the community who seek to validate the participation of residents of self-built neighborhoods like Los Platanitos as urban citizens with a right to the city. In their analysis,

Dominican governing institutions are not imagined as adversarial, but rather as important partners in creating just living conditions in Los Platanitos.

INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVES ON GENDER AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Mujeres Unidas often seeks partnerships and strategic collaborations with local institutions. Accordingly, their narratives of entrepreneurial and gendered subjectivities grounded within social struggle reflect some local development and planning discourses at the same time as lived experiences in Los Platanitos diverge in key ways from official analyses. Both staff members I interviewed from the Santo Domingo government expressed admiration for the work Mujeres Unidas does and a desire to collaborate with them; however, they differed in their understanding of the key barriers that women in Los Platanitos face and the best ways to support the organization. An interview with a local NGO partner more closely reflected the ways that Mujeres Unidas describe their work, while observations regarding community interactions with the CAASD indicated a gendered dismissal of resident concerns and a failure to acknowledge infrastructural improvements as interconnected with holistic quality of life concerns and social relationships.

Karina, a city staff member who focuses on gender issues, described Mujeres Unidas's vermiculture composting project as an important example of entrepreneurship for other women in the way that it addresses both solid waste management and microenterprise. Karina identified lack of economic resources and education as well along with male control of household earnings as significant barriers for women in Los

Platanitos. She also discussed machismo in relation to gender-based violence, and the need for men to intervene and educate each other in how to be less violent. Recognizing that women in Los Platanitos have significant responsibilities and that a lack of economic resources limits their capacity, Karina sees the role of local institutions to help support organizations like Mujeres Unidas through public policies as well as technical assistance in obtaining financial support:

> Creo que tienen mucha responsabilidad y las instituciones como ésta debe hacerse valer y ver cómo crear políticas públicas que vayan en beneficio de ellas para también ayudarlas para que se encuentre una mano que les ayude a lograr sus sueños, ya que tienen iniciativa que se encuentre una persona que les ayude lograr su propósito. / I think that they have a lot of responsibility and that institutions like this one should value that and create public policies that will benefit them, and also help them find a helping hand to help them achieve their dreams. They already have initiative, so it's help them find someone to help them achieve them.

She further explained that financial support combined with technical assistance to women's community development organizations will help them achieve their goals and motivate more women to participate, in turn engaging more women in other communities in these processes. Karina also saw women's neighborhood organizations as key to a new initiative to provide social and psychological support for survivors of gender-based violence. Karina's analysis noted classed and gendered forms of oppression particular to women in Santo Domingo Norte and described institutional support for them in more holistic terms of technical, financial, and psychosocial assistance. She was also the only person interviewed to suggest that men also bear the responsibility of unlearning patriarchy and intervening in issues of gender-based violence.

In contrast, Karina's colleague Zenaida, who also works for the city of Santo Domingo Norte but does not focus specifically on gender issues, saw the challenges facing Mujeres Unidas as fundamentally one of education. This shaped her analysis of gendered power and women's status in Los Platanitos. Similar to some members of Mujeres Unidas, Zenaida claimed that women have the responsibility to raise their male sons to not be machista and to share household responsibilities. Without such women-led educational efforts, Zenaida suggested that public policy initiatives to increase women's representation in government would not succeed. Women's domestic responsibilities also led Zenaida to conclude that women in neighborhoods like Los Platanitos are more empowered than men because their concern for their children motivates them to be more resourceful and active. She described Mujeres Unidas members as entrepreneurs due to how "de nada saca algo y desde abajo / they make something from nothing, and from below." Like Karina, Zenaida saw women's entrepreneurship as an example to be promoted in other communities. But in a particularly strong contrast to women's own stated dreams for their communities and accounts of their numerous responsibilities, Zenaida said that in Los Platanitos,

> Veo muchas mujeres sentadas no haciendo nada y tienen que entender que en la vida hay más que buscar un hombre que la mantenga y parir sus hijos y no hacer nada. / I see a lot of women in Los Platanitos sitting around not doing anything and they have to understand that there's more to life than looking for a man to maintain them, giving birth to his children, and not doing anything.

Zenaida perceives Mujeres Unidas as breaking this monotony and everyday routine. She claimed:

> Otras mujeres no lo hacen. Es un asunto mental, educacional y una falta de visión, que en 10 años se ven en el mismo lugar, pero con cuatro

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muchachitos más. La educación es la única manera de cambiar las cosas. /
Other women don't do that. It's a mental issue; educational; a lack of vision.
In 10 years they see themselves in the same place but with four more kids.
Education is the only way to change things.

Rather than acknowledging any of the structural reasons for why women in Los Platanitos may not feel that they have meaningful choices or that their dreams are achievable, Zenaida sees the root problem as one of individual motivation and proposes education as a means to increase women's sense of possibilities. This understanding is distinct from Mujeres Unidas members who link education to a struggle for a transformation of their communities, suggesting that narratives of education as key to empowerment have been absorbed in some ways but also reinterpreted and reappropriated in a potentially more collective and liberatory manner.

While the Santo Domingo Norte city staff have taken up regular contact with Mujeres Unidas in the last year, their support so far consists of an expressed intent to help connect Mujeres Unidas to capacity building and funding opportunities, as well as inviting Mujeres Unidas to participate in city-sponsored events. Local NGOs like CIAMF have accompanied Mujeres Unidas for longer and work with them more closely, providing trainings and technical support for Mujeres Unidas to formalize its bylaws and officially register as an organization. As such, they have significant influence in Mujeres Unidas's organizational development and analysis, and are in turn informed by their experience working directly in Los Platanitos.

Sara, a close partner of Mujeres Unidas who has also been involved in neighborhood organizing for basic services and preventing displacement in informal

settlements since the 1980's, noted that limited access to formal employment as a consequence of lack of education remains a significant issue for women in informal settlements. This recognition leads them to seek microenterprise opportunities through organizing. Sara described entrepreneurship as a set of skills that allow women to increase their productive capacity by creating high-quality products, which requires creativity, dynamism, vision, and self-esteem. She sees entrepreneurship as an important strategy to enable women to:

> Formarse como mujeres y fortalecer su liderazgo, vivir dignamente y vivir el desarrollo personal, social, de la comunidad y su familia. También fortalecer su capacidad productiva y manejar recursos, sobre todo porque tienen potencialidad humana. Las mujeres son dispuestas y son el corazón de la familia que hacen que las cosas marchen. / Develop as women and strengthen their leadership, live in a dignified manner and promote their personal development as well as that of the social development of the community and their families. Also to strengthen their income generation and resource management, but above all because they have human potential. Women are ready; they are the heart of the family that get things done.

Sara makes many of the same connections between women's entrepreneurship and community or social benefits that Mujeres Unidas members do, as well as drawing on feminine subjectivities of family care to support the notion that women are uniquely talented as entrepreneurs. However, Sara acknowledged several significant limitations to scaling up women's entrepreneurship in Los Platanitos that reflect women's concerns. She stated that demands on their time is the barrier that Mujeres Unidas cite most often as a challenge to growing their organizational capacity, in addition to insufficient funds to manage the start-up costs of a microenterprise. As she put it, "No hacen nada las

capacitaciones si no tienen recursos. / Capacity building won't do anything if they don't have resources."

These few examples from city government and local NGO partners to Mujeres Unidas reflect the different analyses of gender and entrepreneurship that shape and are shaped by Mujeres Unidas' work. They form part of a web of relationships that also includes local faith-based actors, national government agencies, and international institutions like UT Austin. The complex interactions between each of these generates new forms of knowledge and discourse, with Mujeres Unidas increasingly claiming their space as a contributor to discussions as well as architects of community development solutions. While some staff are receptive to their proposals, other agencies devalue the analyses of Mujeres Unidas and other neighborhood organizations as insufficiently technical and therefore unworthy of attention (Tabory, 2016). At a community meeting about the CAASD project multiple participants expressed frustration that engineers consistently rebuffed their attempts to get more information about the project or express their concern. Yurani summarized it thusly:

> Dicen los ingenieros cuando los buscamos para hablar con ellos, ¿Qué tiene usted de hablar con un ingeniero cuando nosotros somos los que sabemos? / When we try to talk to the engineers, they say, What could you possibly have to talk to us engineers about when we're the ones who know?

Making it difficult for community members to get meetings with officials, subjecting them to long waits, refusing to share detailed project plans, and substantially limiting who was allowed to speak were other ways that residents felt that the CAASD dismissed their concerns.

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Women describe their gendered and entrepreneurial subjectivities in generally positive and community-oriented terms, drawing attention to their roles caring for their families as well as each other as a particular form of loving attachment that gives additional meaning to their work. These narratives are solidified via group sharing and performative activities like role plays that allow women to take control of situations and represent their organization on their own terms. While women chose to focus on these ongoing processes of resilience, it is also important to note that the conditions in which these narratives emerge are deeply violent in racialized, gendered, and classed ways. As such, resilience is not a romantic process but rather emerges alongside specific vulnerabilities. Members of Mujeres Unidas are beginning to acknowledge the responsibility that institutions play in producing conditions in Los Platanitos, particularly given the blatant problems with the CAASD intervention, and demand accountability. I further explore these impacts and implications of Mujeres Unidas's work in the next chapter.

> En verdad es un privilegio ser parte de la organización. Antes una tenía la mente estancada, cerrada y siendo parte de la organización una aprende. Una va a nuevos sitios, aprende, conoce personas e instituciones y cómo presentarse en esos lugares. / It's truly a privilege to be part of the organization. Before you had your mind stuck; closed. Being part of the organization you learn. You go to new places, you learn, you meet people and institutions and how to present yourself in those places. -Elisa

Chapter 6: "Mujeres organizadas, hermanadas, unidas:" Implications for Community Development Praxis

> El logro más grande es estar unidas, lograr tenerles ese orgullo de esa palabra de que pertenecemos a la organización de Mujeres Unidas, que nos conozcan en otras partes, ahí Mujeres Unidas. / The biggest accomplishment is being united, having pride in being able to say that we belong to an organization, Mujeres Unidas, and that they recognize us in other places as Mujeres Unidas. -Berta, 44

In this thesis, I have explored the complexities of community resilience and development through the experiences of Mujeres Unidas, with a particular focus on the entrepreneurial activities and gendered subjectivities of their members. Sixteen semi-structured interviews, seven weeks of deep hanging out, and eight participatory action workshops, as well as observations carried out during the UT Austin graduate planning practicum before and after my independent field research, sought to identify key narratives of community development work for Mujeres Unidas members in Los Platanitos. This process in turn led to additional questions regarding what inspires women to continue their work in spite of challenges and vulnerabilities in self-built neighborhoods, the role of entrepreneurship, and the ways in which community development practitioners may recognize and support Mujeres Unidas' particular forms of resilience. As described in Chapters 4 and 5, some members of Mujeres Unidas describe motivations and meanings for their work in terms of individual enterprise and linear progress, which reflect dominant community development (Tabory, 2016) and gender empowerment paradigms in the Dominican Republic. However, many also expressed a strong current of communal benefit, mutual support, and love that are not usually accounted for in technocratic development models. I argue that these narratives of amor, lucha, and community may shape Mujeres

Unidas' results in significant ways, beyond quantifiable outcomes from microenterprise and capacity building initiatives. In addition to deepening relationships of support and care between racialized women living in cañadas, who have historically been the providers of uncompensated care work and excluded from formal social support and recognition, the narratives that emerge and solidify in exchanges between Mujeres Unidas members allow them to recognize their existing strengths, and reimaginine themselves as community leaders with valid knowledge and experience to contribute to urban planning. Although this is not a smooth process and remains constrained in many ways by racialized, classed, and gendered barriers, Mujeres Unidas's work has allowed women in Los Platanitos to begin to articulate and reflect on their right to the city. This case study thus holds significant implications for community development praxis, which are informed by the the socio-ecological resilience, gendered empowerment, and loving attachment paradigms described in Chapter 3.

RETHINKING RESILIENCE AS A RELATIONAL PROCESS

Mujeres Unidas members perceive that their social organizing has increased their participation in local planning processes, which they measure through official recognition from institutions, new partnerships with organizations, and a feeling of increased confidence in their own knowledge developed through capacity-building. Dominican president Danilo Medina's visit to Los Platanitos in 2016 remains a significant referent for many woman, who directly connect his recognition of their neighborhood with their own organizing work and collaboration with UT Austin. Women also describe a closer

relationship with city officials and NGOs, and take pride in the fact that their work may provide an example for other communities experiencing similar challenges. The significance of recognition and institutional relationships lends itself to an emphasis on increasing women's participation in "invited" planning spaces: those officially provided by local authorities (Miraftab, 2009).

At the same time, women's increased feelings of confidence in their own knowledge and abilities—described as emerging from their ongoing processes of learning and capacity-building—appear to be prompting them to develop a more critical analysis, even if it has not yet translated into the formation of counterhegemonic or "invented" planning spaces (Miraftab, 2009). Additionally, despite narratives of seeking a "solución, no revolución / solution not revolution," Mujeres Unidas's negative experience with the CAASD cañada infrastructure project and the gendered dynamics that worked to undermine and ultimately exclude their participation seems to drive them to more directly recognize state responsibility in creating conditions in Los Platanitos. Performative methodologies like skits inspired critical reflection where women develop narratives of themselves as community leaders with valuable experience, and demand accountability from governing institutions. Women easily identified the similarities between their realities and the premises of both performative workshops—first an outsider who wants to disrupt a project they initiated; then a dismissive engineer who attempted to undermine and silence them—and claim their roles as leaders, make explicit the power differences between government officials and residents of Los Platanitos, and articulate assertive requests. In a March 2018 visit to Los Platanitos with the UT Austin graduate planning practicum, Yurani

brought up our second workshop in a community meeting, describing it in the following

terms:

> Hicimos un drama y lo que pasó ahí sucedió real y exclusivamente allá en la asamblea, ¿entiendes? Entonces la dramatización es un medio de expresión y cuando ya nosotras hicimos el acto pasó idéntico, ya nosotras teníamos una idea, ay mira, no me quiere dar asunto, no me quiere dejar hablar. Nos pusimos y dijimos no, tenemos derecho, tenemos voz para hablar. O sea, como Mujeres Unidas tenemos una voz para poder expresarnos realmente lo que la comunidad quiere. / We did a skit and what happened there actually happened in our meeting, you understand? Performances are a means of expression and when we had already done the skit and then the same thing happened, we already had an idea. Oh look, he doesn't want to listen to me, he doesn't want to let me speak. And we put ourselves out there and we said no, we have rights, we have the right to speak. As Mujeres Unidas we have a voice to express what the community really wants.

Yurani's comment speaks to the power of performative methodologies as a tool for

practicing how to engage with different actors, as well as a critical pedagogy that prompts

reflection on gendered roles in community development.

In the same way that social organizing has increased women's participation in

planning processes, it also provides spaces for women to strengthen relationships with each

other and reflect on their gendered subjectivities. In addition to creating community

networks that allow women living in informal settlements in the Dominican Republic to

meet their material needs via reciprocity, redistribution, and mutual aid (Vargas, 2005;

Bossin, 2009), this process is deeply social and allows women to avoid loneliness and

isolation that can result from home-based work. Such spaces also provide essential support

and relationships of care for women who perform a disproportionate amount of care labor,

usually unrecognized and uncompensated. The caring aspect of Mujeres Unidas's work

can also be situated within a feminist care ethic that recognizes the importance of daily practices, emotions, and power in its efforts to promote the centrality of care in all societies (Lawson, 2009). Through dialogue and relationship-building with each other, women are able to share experiences and develop an awareness of gendered barriers. They have begun to articulate this analysis, albeit in contradictory ways, but several women have emphasized the fact that they did not interact with other women or even consider getting involved in community activities before Mujeres Unidas.

The relational process and outcomes of Mujeres Unidas's work also shapes their understandings of entrepreneurship and its framing within a broader process of community lucha. Although some women described entrepreneurship in terms of business and individual economic empowerment, many others conceived of it as a social process that will improve community quality of life in the long term (Calás et al., 2012). This framing allows women's microenterprise activities in Los Platanitos to emerge as socially significant even if they have yet to generate any profit. Furthermore, in the long term women also imagined being entrepreneurial as a way to free women in informal settlements from exploitative piece work or domestic work in private households, increasing the autonomy of Los Platanitos in the process. Women's community-based social enterprise in Los Platanitos can thus be recognized and valued as part of a long-term process of building alternative economies and social transformation (Gibson-Graham, 2008). Given the diversity of functions that women's entrepreneurship may serve, holistic support that recognizes the importance of strong relationships between members and promotes their social mobilization, as well as providing necessary resources, is essential (Kabeer, 2017).

Lastly, Mujeres Unidas's social organizing and entrepreneurship activities also reflect an emphasis on loving attachment between community members as well as with their surroundings. The frequency with which women named love as a motivation for their work, as well as the importance of Mujeres Unidas as a space for them to take care of each other, stands out as a key dimension of community development processes that planning theory has only recently begun to acknowledge (Porter et al., 2012). Returning to bell hooks's (2000) understanding of love as an active and participatory process, which Kondo (2012) elaborates upon as an ongoing project constituted through everyday practices, loving attachment reflects the ways in which Mujeres Unidas are in relationship with one another and bring community into being. This is not always a romantic or harmonious process; people have conflicting priorities and visions, as well as disagreements. But loving attachment is compelling precisely because of how it frames the process of enacting love in the midst of tensions and nevertheless working toward social change. It thus constitutes a significant dimension of community resilience in Los Platanitos, and should be recognized and validated in order to cultivate sustainable community development processes and outcomes.

In sum, Mujeres Unidas appears to be contributing to community resilience and loving attachment in at least three key ways. Firstly, the organization has increased relationships between women in Los Platanitos and outside institutions and organizations, which have led to new forms of support and recognition. Through ongoing processes of collaboration and capacity-building, women feel more confident and recognize their own experiences as valid knowledge, which in turn begins to shape how they conceive of their

relationships with institutions and partner organizations. In the longer term, this has the potential to shift how they actually interact with institutions, and imagine their own alternative models for planning and community development. Finally, and no less significantly, Mujeres Unidas has strengthened relationships between women in Los Platanitos, allowing them to care for each other and envision forms of gendered empowerment firmly grounded in local context and socio-ecological understandings of community. Together, these three interrelated processes allow racialized women from a cañada to emerge as leaders in a struggle to improve material living conditions as well as a developing a critical social analysis, transforming their community. These three functions reflect a relational (Drolet et al., 2015; Ungar, 2013) and contextual (Pearce et al., 2017) understanding of resilience as an ongoing process (Jenkins & Rondon, 2015; Lenette et al., 2012). Community development planning will benefit from developing more process-focused, relational, and context-specific understandings of community resilience, as well as from prioritizing social organizing and critical pedagogy as praxis.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In reflecting on the coexistence of resilience and vulnerability; gendered empowerment and disempowerment; and loving attachment forged through conflicts and contradictions, I return to my initial observation from Chapter 2: the interlocking systems that have created the conditions in communities like Los Platanitos require a planning praxis grounded in a both/and, intersectional feminist analysis that attends to interconnections (hooks, 2003; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016) and seeks to build authentic

relationships. Intersectional feminist praxis emphasizes the different forms of power and identities present and produced in relationships in order to develop the trust necessary to build coalitions for social change, which requires ongoing critical reflection. Along with critical reflexivity, a relational paradigm requires reframing loving attachment as a collective process (hooks, 2000) with a significant role to play in community development. Finally, foregrounding relationships and critical reflection suggests a need to reorient community development praxis from quantifiable results and linear progress to creating just processes and strong collaboration.

Without wanting to overgeneralize, this study presents several important lessons for transformative planning practice. In order to strengthen such a relational paradigm, community development practitioners must commit to valuing social organizing and develop authentic relationships with community members and local stakeholders. This requires building trust, engaging emotions, and spending large amounts of unstructured time with people where they feel comfortable. In the case of women in Los Platanitos, this was typically their homes; in each case, relationship building and outreach should be tailored to what community members express as most appropriate. Activities should be mindful of the many demands on participants' time and always scheduled in consultation with potential participants. Co-facilitating sessions with community members and inviting participants to set the agenda, along with dedicating regular time to check-in, share stories and experiences, and socialize, also helps to build relationships and develop an environment of mutual learning and support.

Collaborative research provides another way to strengthen relationships as well as broaden the definition of who "planners" are. As much as there appears to be a growing consensus on participatory planning, practitioners still tend to assume their own analysis of community development problems, solutions, and metrics should ultimately prevail. Truly collaborative community research unsettles this hierarchy between professional planners and community members by allowing communities to take the lead on defining the problem, methods, interpret results, and determine recommendations. Within this process, popular education and performance-based methods like skits create spaces for critical reflection and dialogue that allow community knowledge to be further mobilized. The intense time commitment that building relationships, collaborative research, and critical pedagogy each require implies that project timelines and objectives must be flexible and validate quality relationships and collaborative process alongside verifiable results.

In terms of microenterprise and gender empowerment, a relational approach would recognize entrepreneurship as a social process and recognize activities as productive in more than economic terms. This recognition implies providing enough funding to allow women to dedicate themselves full-time to developing a strong membership base along with their business model. In turn, financial support should not be contingent upon short-term profits, and should account for the time required to build a strong organization. Partner organizations and funders should also be flexible in their application and reporting requirements in order to allow new organizations with limited capacity to have the opportunity to succeed. Together, these practices would allow women to ensure that their immediate needs are met as they develop relationships and organizational capacity.

In closing, I hope that this study enriches discussions of community resilience and gendered empowerment in self-built neighborhoods by drawing attention to the significance of relationships, power, and process—including amor and lucha—as they manifest in particular contexts. While these phenomena are complex and may evade objective verification, this case study makes clear that they nevertheless shape women's understandings of their own work and identities, and must be recognized as intertwined with community development challenges. Rather than avoiding the realms of feelings for fear of reinforcing essentialized notions of women's work, the way through the tricky terrain of emotions, care, and gender is to emphasize the centrality of emotional geographies to human and more-than-human (Gibson-Graham, 2016) experiences and structures. Engaging with emotions and in particular loving and caring relationships forms part of a longer process of undoing fear of places and people in self-built neighborhoods, instead making the "choice to connect" (hooks, 2000; Kondo, 2012). Although emotional geographies are seen as problematic in positivist research traditions, planning is enriched by unique perspectives that loving attachment to people and places can yield (Umemoto, 2012). Accordingly, I hope that this thesis provides productive insights into the possibilities that arise when we reframe a commitment to equitable community development as "amor a la lucha / love for the struggle."

> Estamos dispuestas con una dirección clara hacía dónde queremos ir y es una fortaleza. Cuando nos reunimos sentimos lo mismo y hablamos el mismo lenguaje y aunque muchos tienen todavía el temor para hablar pero cuando decidan hablar, hablan porque es el momento de hablar de construir esto. / We are ready with a clear direction of where we want to go, and that's a strength. When we meet we feel the same and we speak the same language. Even though some of us are still afraid to speak, when they decide

to speak, they speak, because it's the moment to speak up, to build this. –
Yurani

Epilogue: "En conjunto se puede hacer esto:" Reflections on collaborative research

Mi nombre es Yurani Rodríguez, soy coordinadora de Mujeres Unidas y coinvestigadora de este proyecto con la Universidad de Texas. / My name is Yurani Rodríguez. I'm the coordinator of Mujeres Unidas and co-researcher on this project with the University of Texas.

In March 2018, these words from Yurani set the tone for "Resilience and the Right to the City: Commemorating 10 Years of Shared Efforts in Los Platanitos," a celebratory conference co-organized between our graduate planning practicum, Dominican partners, and residents of Los Platanitos. Following 10 years of ongoing student efforts to engage in a coproduction of knowledge in critical international planning, Yurani's opening address marked the first time that a member of Mujeres Unidas publicly identified herself—in front of city officials, international scholars, nonprofit partners, and university professors—as a co-researcher and contributor. This claim to knowledge characterized the remaining two days of the conference, in which we saw women from Mujeres Unidas and other community members from Los Platanitos hold space on an elite private university campus to speak, lead panel sessions, offer questions and comments, and draw connections between their work and struggles for land and rights to the city in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Puerto Rico shared by visiting scholars. These exciting instances of Mujeres Unidas coming into their own to assert their leadership and the value of their own contributions prompted this final reflection on collaborative research in relation to this fieldwork, which concluded just before the conference with a participatory defense of my thesis to Mujeres Unidas.

In line with the principles of collaborative research, I sought to share key findings from complete thesis draft with Mujeres Unidas members, hear their reactions and interpretations to selections, discuss feedback and suggestions for any needed changes, and ultimately request their formal approval for the thesis publication. More broadly, I hoped that this session could return some of the power that UT Austin holds over the research process to the women actually generating these insights and narratives. For this reason, the session comprised two distinct moments. At the suggestion of my second thesis reader, Dr. Rebecca Torres, the first half of the workshop facilitated women's interpretations of key quotes from our fieldwork interviews that corresponded to key findings in the thesis, as a means of checking and enriching the analysis. The second half of the session included a thesis defense, which we discussed at the meeting's outset as a formal evaluation of an academic project. I invited the Mujeres Unidas members present to form my thesis committee and included formal details such as "Committee" name tags with their organizational logo and a signature sheet modeled on the UT Austin document that advisors sign to certify their formal approval (See Appendix). After sharing the document with the women and explaining that they would be invited to sign it after deliberating and making their decision, I gave a 10-minute oral presentation summarizing my key arguments and recommendations, and invited them to offer any comments, questions, or reflections for me to address before deliberating. This participatory thesis defense provided a forum to consult my representation of Mujeres Unidas' work with them, obtain their formal approval, and bring closure to this stage of our work together—and it also prompted a rich

conversation about collaborative research and the uses of academic knowledge production in relation to Mujeres Unidas.

Women expressed enthusiasm about being asked to participate in my thesis committee and the content of the thesis itself. In particular, the title of this study stood out to them, as variations of "amor a la lucha" had emerged in many different interviews. In interpreting key quotes, people expressed feelings of identification with words that they or their neighbors had spoken. This process of co-interpretation allowed women to see this wisdom reflected and further relate it to other stories and narratives of their own. In particular, women spoke of the importance of narratives and qualitative research as a means of capturing each person's unique perspective to more deeply inform an understanding of community history and realities.

More broadly, women related both the title of the thesis as well as the field-based, praxis-focused approach of our work together to a process of lived, embodied knowledge production. Their comments below also demonstrated a keen awareness to and critique of academic research conducted merely to meet institutional requirements, which they saw as removed from community realities and fundamentally based in recycling old ideas:

> Yurani: Quiero opinar algo con respeto al nombre de la tesis. Es algo extraordinaria y a mí particularmente me ha gustado porque realmente es lo que nosotros vivimos aquí en República Dominicana y lo que nosotros también hemos expresado, porque una narrativa amor a la lucha, la narrativa de las mujeres y la lucha constante que hacemos para lograr el desarrollo en la comunidad de aquí de Los Platanitos. Es algo real, palpable, visible, y que también se puede oler en realmente lo que hacemos, que no es una tesis por hacerla sino una tesis que estamos viviendo y que estamos desarrollando a la vez. Hay personas que hacen una tesis, pero buscan la información en muchos libros y se hace una recopilación de muchos datos de muchos libros y ya. / I want to share my opinion about the title of the thesis. It's something really

extraordinary that I particularly like, because it's truly what we live here in the Dominican Republic and what we have expressed: a narrative of love for the struggle, women's narratives, the constant struggle that we wage for our community's development here in Los Platanitos. It's something real, palpable, visible, that we can smell, really, in what we do. It's not just a thesis for its own sake, but rather a thesis that we're living and developing at the same time. There are people who write a thesis just looking up information in books; they collect a lot of data from lots of books and that's it--

Viviana: Se quedó ahí. / And there it stays.

Yurani: Exactamente. Pero es una tesis que aparte que tiene su nombre y que vivimos-- / Exactly. But this is a thesis that apart from its name and that we live--

Teresa: Que nos refleja / That reflects us--

Yurani: Es algo práctico que día a día nosotros hacemos con esta tesis. / It's something practical that day to day we make with this thesis--

Ana: Y lo vivimos / And we live it.

Women also expressed that documenting their lived experience of amor and lucha provides the possibility for future generations and other communities to engage in a process of mutual learning and also appreciate their struggle. As 27-year-old Elena put it, "Y pueden decir, wow, mira eran luchadoras. / And they can say, 'Wow, look, they were so courageous!" Yurani further imagined engaged scholarship as a model for academics, who can draw on examples of this type of community work in order to push their students to go beyond repeated topics and instead envision more lasting social impacts and a praxis-focused orientation.

Within this process of collaboration, women recognized their leading role in gathering and interpreting information, speaking about themselves as co-researchers and now a thesis committee more so than they did even just one year ago in our workshops

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together. Two comments from Teresa and Yurani illustrate the uses of collaborative research and this particular study:

> Teresa: Es muy importante ese documento porque una como una recopilación de datos sobre lo que es la vida y el pensamiento de lo que es la comunidad. Porque no solo con una persona se recopila ideas, sino con todas esas entrevistas, todas esas preguntas que ustedes hacen a uno que muchas veces. Por eso es bueno que recuperan todos esos datos de cada persona porque así hace un análisis de en verdad qué quiere la comunidad. / This document is really important because it's like a collection of data about life and thoughts in our community. You can't gather ideas from just one person but rather from many interviews and questions that you ask, multiple times. For that reason, it's good to collect all of that information from each person, because that's how you build an analysis of what the community really wants.

> Yurani: Nosotras las mujeres tenemos la resiliencia porque tenemos la lucha constante y el amor para poder empoderarnos de seguir y ayudar también al otro. Entonces no se basa en el bolsillo, lo que realmente queremos conseguir económicamente, sino el desarrollo. Y algo que tú mencionaste ahí en la tesis que fue los métodos, las evaluaciones, las reflexiones, la hipótesis que en conjunto tanto tú como estudiante de la universidad como nosotras Mujeres Unidas hemos planteado, para todas corregir eso. Decir mira, vamos, quítame eso, vamos a hacerlo así, vamos a buscar un método para que esto quede mejor. Entonces en conjunto se puede hacer esto. / As women we are resilient because we have a constant struggle and love to empower us to keep going and help others. So it's not just about our pockets and what we want to achieve economically, but rather development. And something you mentioned in your thesis were the methods, evaluations, reflections, and the hypothesis we developed together between you as a university student and us as Mujeres Unidas, for all of us to correct. To be able to say, okay, let's go, take this out, let's try this, we're going to figure out a method to improve this. And this can be done together.

Both women recognize the ways in which qualitative research can be enriched by shared analysis developed through knowledge co-production. In this case, a collaborative process led us to identify key narratives and theoretical frameworks

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that resonated with Mujeres Unidas members and provided additional insight into their work and identities.

This final point brings me to the limitations to the collaborative nature of this project. While this study was inspired by collaborative, engaged, and activist research principles, I cannot claim that it was fully collaborative. The limited time duration of this study to just five field trips—the longest of which was just seven weeks—and the geographic distance between us in the interim meant that I did not actually develop the writing together with Mujeres Unidas. Furthermore, I was not able to share this 150-page document to them and have them thoroughly consider each chapter; I instead had to present an overview of my key arguments. While my goal is to ultimately translate the complete thesis into Spanish, I was honest with Mujeres Unidas that this will take time, and that in the short-term all I will be able to offer is a translated summary. Even then, due to literacy barriers making this study truly accessible to all members of Mujeres Unidas and other community members would require more creative, non-writing-based methods.

In spite of these limitations, the renewed sense of ownership and recognition of community knowledge among Mujeres Unidas speaks to the multiplying effects of collaborative research. As people see their experiences reflected and engage with their own insights, they claim positions as community leaders with expertise to apply toward community development issues. This position enables them to facilitate more reflections and activate community knowledge grounded in experiences. In the long term, this has the potential to prompt them to demand more accountability from researchers and other partners. While Yurani stated that, "Tú has sido la primera estudiante que ha tomado la

gentileza de que nosotras le aprobemos su tesis con carta, con sello. / You are the first student who has had the courtesy to ask that we approve your thesis with a letter, with our stamp," I hope that with time Mujeres Unidas comes to view this not as a courtesy, but as a minimum requirement in a deeper process of accountability and reciprocity in engaged scholarship.

> Soy un poco mayor, pero ¿qué pasa? Están los hijos míos. Ahí están mis nietos, están mis bisnietos, están también los otros muchachos que van subiendo de la comunidad, porque tampoco debo pensar en lo mío nada más sino van a gozar los otros, que por eso es que trabajamos con la comunidad. Y queremos bienestar por la comunidad, luchamos para que la comunidad tenga bienestar, porque antes si caminamos dentro de esa agua de la cañada con todas esas cosas bajando con mal olores, en el futuro que estemos caminando por una pista, que haya calles, que las cosas estén limpias, también que él que tiene en su casa pueda tener una vida digna. Porque yo nada más no puedo pensar en mí sola. Yo debo pensar más adelante en los demás. Yo estoy trabajando ahora por lo menos ver mi trabajo eso no voy a saber yo, pero lo van a ver los otros y en el futuro van a recordar todavía...ellas lucharon mucho para que estemos viviendo de esta manera y ése es el trabajo de nosotras. / I'm elderly but guess what? My children are here. My grandchildren are here, my great-grandchildren are here; all the children growing up in our community are here. That's why I can't only think of myself but rather how others will benefit; that's why we work with the community. We want well-being for the community; we fight for well-being for the community. If before we walked in that dirty cañada water with all the trash and bad smells, in the future we'll be walking on a road, with streets, with a clean environment, and each person and their home can have a dignified life. I can't only think of myself. I must think beyond that; I must think of all the others. I'm working now, and I'm not going to know the results of that work, but others will, and in the future they are going to remember...they fought hard so that we could have a better life— and that is what our work is. – Ana

Appendix: Mujeres Unidas Thesis Approval

Nosotras las miembras de Mujeres Unidas declaramos que ésta es la versión aprobada de la siguiente tesis:

"Amor a la lucha: Narrativas de mujeres sobre la resiliencia y el desarrollo comunitario en Los Platanitos, República Dominicana"

Por
Julia Katherine Duranti-Martínez

Realizada como cumplimiento parcial de los requisitos para obtener el grado de

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Firman:

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Vita

Julia grew up in Seattle, WA. Prior to her graduate studies at UT Austin, Julia worked in Colombia providing human rights accompaniment and facilitating popular education delegations focused on the effects of U.S. military, trade, and development. She has also worked in family and emergency services for Latinx immigrants in Portland, OR, and volunteered in Bolivia and Chile. Julia received her B.A. in Anthropology and International Peace Studies from the University of Notre Dame, where she was involved with campus and community activism related to LGBTQIA and immigrant rights, and studied abroad in Santiago, Chile. Julia is fluent in Spanish and proficient in Portuguese. She is committed to using her language abilities and interpreting skills to build language justice in social movements, and regularly interprets at community events.

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