Local Actors Achieving Positive Youth Development: 
A Case Study of Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense

By

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ABSTRACT

LOCAL ACTORS ACHIEVING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF MOVIMIENTO COMUNAL NICARAGÜENSE

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Given that Nicaragua has lower levels of youth violence than northern neighbouring Central American countries, I discuss the strategies used by members of the Nicaraguan grassroots organization Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense (MCN) to deter youth from youth violence. These include providing youth with recreational and educational opportunities, and with a supportive and empowering environment enabling them to be confident, compassionate, engaged members of society. These prevention-oriented strategies, which stand in contrast to the repressive tactics used in neighbouring countries, are supported by the literature on positive youth development, raising the question, how and why did MCN develop these particular strategies? I argue that the social capital that emerged at the time of the Nicaraguan Revolution may be a principal contributing factor to MCN's current perspectives and chosen strategies. Additionally, I explore how local actors are significant and capable of impacting their surroundings at a local, national, and potentially, global level.
DEDICATION

To my sister, Katie Edwards, for being an incredible role model in my life, for being someone I can always depend on, and for being my best friend. You are an amazing person – perhaps more than you know – and you can do anything in life you set your mind to.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Do local level actors have the potential to create large-scale social change in the context of today's society? As we know, the world has become increasingly populated, globalized, complex, and technologically advanced, making the task of altering powerful global structures extremely daunting. However, certain local actors, who may seem small or insignificant by comparison, have proven themselves capable of creating far-reaching and significant change on both local and global scales. The Nicaraguan Revolution provides one such example of local actors who possessed the qualities necessary to create change on a large scale. They started with a vision, came together as a unitary force, fought for what they deemed socially just, and created vast change throughout their country. The Nicaraguan Revolution was essentially initiated in the early 1960s by Carlos Fonseca (Walker 2003:40) and became widespread in 1972\(^1\) (Walker 2003:31), escalating over time until its victory in 1979. Though the triumph of the Revolution was somewhat halted by U.S. forces who began the Contra War to oppose the Sandinista National Liberation Front (the revolutionary party that took power in 1979), the dreams and ideas of a socially just and liberated nation lived on among the Nicaraguan people. As my research will demonstrate, there remains a strong sense of community values, selflessness, collective interest, and a desire for improving the community to this day. Each of these features can be observed in the nation-wide organization I studied that was born out of the Revolution: Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense (MCN).

MCN is an organization that addresses many issues that the members deem important and relevant to current concerns of Nicaraguans; however, the organization places a specific emphasis on youth in the community. Youth in this context, and as defined by MCN members, typically refer to

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\(^1\) After the big Earthquake hit Nicaragua in 1972 and emergency aid was brought to the country, Somoza's corrupt nature was exposed when he decided to loot and sell the international relief materials, devastating the commercial sector, and creating popular discontent among the Nicaraguan people (Walker 2003: 31).
those members of society between the ages of 16 and 30 (though some provided a higher and/or lower age range). The members of MCN carry out many activities with the youth, and the majority of my fieldwork centred around the question of what strategies they believe are most effective in deterring youth from involvement with youth violence. The violence I refer to here is the violence commonly associated with gangs, such as theft, kidnapping, physical abuse and murder. During my time with MCN, I carried out 16 interviews and observed the various activities they carried out in their organization over a period of three months. Entering the field, I was aware that Nicaragua had lower levels of violence (lower homicide rates, in particular) in comparison to surrounding countries Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. Given this knowledge, I wanted to explore what particular strategies the members of Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense considered effective in deterring youth from involvement with youth violence. I wanted to know how these strategies might set Nicaragua apart from neighbouring, more dangerous countries, and further, how these particular strategies may have originated. During my fieldwork, I learned about some of the specific activities MCN members do, but also their general perception of the organization and the issues their community faces, and the broader strategies that they believe should be employed to effectively address the challenges faced by the community, and country at large.

One issue that is particularly prevalent in Central America is the presence of youth or gang violence; however, this problem is not as dire in Nicaragua as in surrounding countries Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. There are various possibilities proposed as to why Nicaragua may have less dangerous gangs, less gang members, and far lower homicide rates than its neighbours. Some of these explanations include its geography and migration/deportation patterns, its less oppressive police force, and its post-war policies such as reintegration of soldiers into society and destruction of army weapons (Rocha 2011). Another less explored area that I will argue is an important contributing factor to the lower levels of violence is the presence of social capital in Nicaraguan society, which is argued to be
rooted in the Revolution (Anderson 2010).

Within Nicaragua, and specifically within MCN, there has been a tendency to invest in the positive development of youth, and a general focus of re-integrating troubled youth into society, rather than using harsh punishment. MCN strives to provide alternative paths for youth by means of education (both formal and informal education), providing activities to fill their leisure time, and providing a supportive, encouraging environment where youth feel that they belong, that they are important and that they have potential. Furthermore, MCN aims to provide youth with the space to develop as individuals, to gain confidence, improve self-esteem, and become active, contributing members of the community. MCN members want to positively develop youth so that they will not turn to more destructive and dangerous paths (like joining gangs, for example), and want to teach them the value of community, and to be critical of and forward-thinking about their own communities. They wish to motivate the youth to recognize faults in their community and to try to improve upon them, collectively. Such ideals are very much related to those of the Revolution, and thus, throughout the course of this thesis, I will explore how the values born out of the Revolution may be an important contributing factor to the way in which sectors of Nicaraguan society perceive youth and behave toward them today.

If the Revolution is in fact partially responsible for the way in which society embraces youth, and as a result, also indirectly responsible for the low levels of violence, the power of the local actor is here revealed. The revolutionaries were indeed responsible for changing larger social and political structures in Nicaragua, but their actions also have had a deep effect on the consciousness of the Nicaraguan people, even decades later. I argue that the lower levels of violence in Nicaragua (though likely a product of a multitude of factors) may also be a beneficial consequence of the efforts of the Nicaraguan revolutionaries who came together for many years, to fight for a better community.

The first chapter will be a review of the literature, divided into three sections. The first section
will elaborate on anthropological theory of local and global connections. Here I draw on literature that demonstrates the relational nature of the local and the global, as both global forces and local forces are capable of affecting one another. Though global structures can have a very strong impact on people living their daily lives at the local level, those local people are also capable of acting in ways that may indirectly, or (on rare occasions) directly impact global forces. The overarching message in this section is that local actors still have agency and may use that agency to challenge the structures imposed on them. The second section will discuss current theories in the literature on positive youth development (PYD). Specifically, I will discuss the main strategies suggested to develop youth in positive ways so that they may become confident, competent, caring, compassionate members of society who are able to connect with others and who are capable agents of change. Finally, I will provide a brief overview of the conflict Central America has experienced since colonial times. Specifically, I will touch on the factors that may have led to war and revolution in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, the post-war context, possible reasons for the development of violence in the nations, and policies utilized to address this violence. Then, I will discuss the possible explanations as to why Nicaragua may be unique in terms of its lower levels of violence.

The second chapter will address the details of my fieldsite and the methodology used throughout the course of my fieldwork. Specifically, I will discuss how my fieldsite was chosen, and the important features of León and MCN relevant to my study. I will then elaborate on the details of the participant observation I carried out and the interviewing process. This will be followed by a description of the interviewees themselves, so as to provide some context as to their roles in the organization. Finally, I will discuss the ethical issues and challenges I faced throughout the course of my fieldwork.

The third chapter marks my research findings. In this chapter, I first explain MCN's principal values and the general way in which it functions. Here I highlight how MCN has evolved over the
years, and explain the voluntary nature of the organization. I further discuss in detail the large emphasis that MCN places on the youth, explaining why they believe the youth of society are a very important demographic to develop, in terms of their potential as energetic, creative, motivated human beings. I then talk about the most important strategies of positively developing youth, according to the members of MCN. These include the importance of providing them with leisure activities, educating them both formally (eg. teaching occupational skills) and informally (eg. teaching social skills), and providing them with an empowering, supportive, and overall nurturing environment. Overall, MCN's strategies parallel my findings on the positive youth development literature and suggest a preference for prevention-oriented strategies as opposed to punishment or treatment-oriented strategies.

The fourth chapter provides a deeper analysis of the unique social structure in Nicaragua, which, as my thesis argues, is relatively rich in social capital, vis a vis its northern neighbours. It begins with a more detailed account of the Nicaraguan Revolution. It reveals the way in which the Revolution may have contributed to society with "consciencia"², meaning one that is socially conscious, and to a community relatively enriched with social capital. This section also demonstrates the strength and abilities of the youth during and immediately after the Revolution, and the fact that the members of MCN have not forgotten this. Next I discuss MCN members' impression of Nicaraguan police and explore how the strategies of this police force stand in stark contrast to the police tactics employed in other Central American countries. Here, I reveal the belief that Nicaraguan police are far more interested in working hand-in-hand with the youth than are police from surrounding countries. Lastly, I discuss the importance of local actors, drawing on examples from the various topics in this chapter.

Finally, I share the lessons that can be learned from the stories of the local actors in Nicaragua.

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² Consciencia, as developed by Paul Freire, refers to a critical reflection of and upon one's material reality, also characterized by intention, temporality and transcendence (see Freire 1998). It is used in everyday parlance in Latin America to refer to social awareness or level of social consciousness.
Here, I will discuss how social capital can contribute to accomplishing goals and, in the case of Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense, developing youth in a positive way that deters them from further involvement with violence. Then I conclude with a discussion of the power of local actors, and their ability to have both small and large scale impacts.

In this thesis, I argue that the strategies that the members of Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense employ when working with youth are very much supported in the international literature on positive youth development, suggesting an overall preventative, re-integrative approach toward youth violence that stands in stark contrast to northern neighbouring countries. Moreover, I reveal the ways in which MCN's overall structure, core values, and manner of functioning exemplify the principals of social capital. I argue that this social capital is an important contributing factor to MCN members' tendency to employ such effective strategies when working with youth, and thus, suggests a compelling explanation for the comparatively lower levels of youth violence in Nicaragua. I then explore how the social capital present in Nicaragua may have emerged out of the ideas, values, and tendencies born out of the Nicaraguan Revolution. The Revolution, then, and the resulting social capital, are suggested to be important contributing factors to the comparatively lower levels of youth violence in Nicaragua today. An additional, overarching theme in this thesis is that local actors are capable of having important impacts on their society. This can be seen in various examples; however, this concept is principally demonstrated by the efforts and successes of Nicaraguan revolutionaries, as well as the local efforts of MCN members to improve the lives of youth in their communities who are in need of support.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: LOCAL ACTORS, POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND THE CENTRAL AMERICAN CONTEXT

Local and Global Complexities: Where Do Youth Fit In?

The ever-increasing flow of people, goods, capital and information within and between countries – which we call globalization (Trouillot 2001:128) – has become a popular topic of discussion in academia. Tsing (2005) explains how theories that draw on global frameworks are very prevalent among scholars, but also, are problematic, as such frameworks neglect the significance of the local (Tsing 2005:266). Rather than being identified as important in and of themselves, these local stories may be cast as “nothing more than an exemplification of a self-fulfilling global scheme” (Tsing 2005:266). She argues that rather than over-emphasizing abstract theories of power and knowledge, of much importance is engaging with tangible events, those which can only be studied at the local level (Tsing 2005:267). However, she nevertheless studies global connections in her own ethnography, drawing on local events, on interactions and collaboration between people with different worldviews, who, together, create what she refers to as “productive confusion” (Tsing 2005:247). It is through these interactions, where one local subject interacts with another, that global connections are made, which lead to unanticipated, unpredictable events worthy of in-depth study.

The importance of local studies is hinted at in Stewart's (2007) book, Ordinary Affects, which draws attention to the importance of local level events. Her work suggests that all subjects, even in the midst of seemingly mundane, ordinary tasks, are important in that they are affecting, and affected by, other forces in life. They are not solely a product of powerful, influential forces at a macro level, but are capable of having their own impact on the outside world. The significance of ostensibly inconsequential acts is also argued by Philo and Swanson (2008), who suggest that it is these small acts that might ultimately lead to the creation of more evidently important events, such as the creation of social relationships and self-identities (Philo and Swanson 2008:204). Brosius and Tsing (1997)
reinforce the significance of the local further, emphasizing the importance of local opinions and
testimony and can provide an ethnographer with a better understanding of the
intricacies of a situation. Additionally, they assert the importance of understanding the interactions
between local communities and institutions, in which both sets of agencies contribute to the process of
creating new concepts. These authors all argue for the importance of the local, and further, as a result
of the local’s interactions with the surrounding world, suggest their potential for having impacts on that
world.

The relational quality of the local and global, in which the local affects the global and vice
versa, is a prominent theory in the literature. Sklair (1998) addresses this concept in her discussion of
local-global connections, suggesting that, though capitalism is organized globally, the people at the
local level are the ones who attempt to oppose the global order, struggling for their own interests
through means of collective action. This opposition to global structures, she explains, often occurs at
the local level where local actors make demands to local authorities who are accessible to them. She
explains that while directly fighting global institutions is very difficult (though not impossible), local
actors can nevertheless indirectly fight global forces through their local interactions. Furthermore,
Gille and Ó Riain (2002) point to the ways in which global processes are constructed collectively and
local actors are part of that process. Finally, Fisher (1997) explains how change can be achieved as
a result of complex relationships between different groups, which include individuals and communities,
in addition to agencies and agents of the state (Fisher 1997:442).

Various works on youth, in particular, that discuss local/global connections also emphasize the
importance of studying youth at the local level and the relational aspect of the local and the global.
Dolby and Rizvi (2008), for example, explain how political, economic, and cultural elements of the
world are not neatly divided into global, national, regional, or local sections (Dolby and Rizvy 2008:3).
Instead, all of these different “categories” are in fact inter-related. They are fluid, they interact, they
are constantly shifting. Kelly (2008), in the same edited volume demonstrates this idea with the example of how, in some cases, the “[y]outh is very much at the forefront of the intersection of the local and the global” (Kelly 2008:98). She illustrates this with the example of the dynamics at play with global capitalism and consumerist orientations. Indeed, youth’s preferences and role in cultural consumption have a large impact on the global capitalist economy. Koh (2008) also stresses the fact that the identity of youth is always changing, and that a universal or even national identity for youth cannot be created. Rather than having a singular identity imposed on youth by global forces, youth will create their own identities based on their own individual experiences and their interactions with countless factors and further, those identities will be in a constant state of flux and flow (Koh 2008:202-203).

Muncie (2007) discusses the notion of the multiple and divergent cultural practices and patterns of youth from one locale to another (Muncie 2007:40), which again demonstrates the importance of local-level studies, as a national-level study will not be able to access the intricacies of the reality of the situation. Furthermore, Muncie, as well as Bunty and Merry (2007) explain that this variation of youth behaviour from one region to the next illustrates the importance of making cultural and political decisions that affect youth at either a national or local (not global) level (Bunty & Merry 2007:324; Muncie 2007:49).

Finally, Zilberg (2007), Ranum (2011) and Wolf (2011), bring attention to the relational nature of global and local connections in their discussions of Central American youth migration to the U.S. and consequences of subsequent deportation. Wolf explains a cycle in which youth migrate from their homes due to poor living conditions (economic, political or otherwise) in search of potential income or refuge from unsafe living conditions (Wolf 2011:48). However, upon arriving to new territories (such as Los Angeles), the migrants in need of income and social inclusion become vulnerable to involvement with gangs (Rodgers and Muggah 2009; Mateo 2011; Wolf 2011; World Bank 2011).
There, they adopt the gang behaviour, and, if deported, bring that same behaviour back with them to their home country, thereby reproducing the gang activity (Zilberg 2007:66; Rodgers and Muggah 2009:306; Mateo 2011:95; Ranum 2011:74; Wolf 2011:48-49). Thus, this negative, criminal behaviour is transferred, demonstrating how the local situation is affected by global migration. Furthermore, the decision to migrate demonstrates how the local individual is capable of instigating change to deal with broader structural issues, such as poverty, war, or other forms of violence. The decision to flee the country demonstrates the local individual's attempt to act against negative global forces and exercise his or her own agency in search of better living conditions. Zilberg also explains how the Zero-tolerance policy toward gangs, which originated in the U.S., spread to Central American countries, again demonstrating global connections within youth policies. Later, we will see how the youth or gang members react to these policies at the local level, again showing their own agency in the midst of local and global forces. These forces thus prove to be relational, leaving youth somewhere in the middle, but also, leaving their ability to have an impact, and their agency, in tact.

**Positive Youth Development in the Literature**

The literature on youth development draws attention to the elements that both add to and take away from positive youth development (PYD), a concept recognized in the literature that leads to the positive development of youth. A model brought forth by Clary and Rhodes (2006) and Lerner et al (2006), which is based on American youth, expresses five central principle goals of PYD can be summarized with “the five C's”: creating competencies, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion in youth (Clary and Rhodes 2006:5; Lerner et al 2006:24; Nissen 2011:S25). Lerner et al in their work emphasize the importance of the strengths and assets of young people, or in other words, focus on the capacities of youth and the strengths they posses to help them positively develop, rather than focusing on punishing negative behaviour (Lerner et al 2006:32). Examples of strengths include self-esteem, spirituality, skills, knowledge, and motivation to do well (Lerner et al 2006:32).
Assets are divided into external assets, which include support, empowerment, constructive use of time, and boundaries and expectations, and internal assets, which include commitment to learning, positive values (such as caring and social justice), social competencies and positive identity (Clary and Rhodes 2006:6-7). While this model is principally based on American youth, Granger (2002), who draws on the work of Lerner, discusses positive youth development from a global perspective, explaining that, while cultural differences on strengths and assets are noted by academics – anthropologists in particular – numerous works suggest that the various lists of strengths and assets converge, to a degree (Granger 2002:151-152). He then goes on to reveal that the items common to most lists include the development of “hard skills” (education in a formal, academic and task-specific sense) and “soft skills” (education in a relational and not job-specific sense), and fostering supportive and meaningful relationships with fellow youth, as well as adults (Granger 2002:152).

Durand and Lykes (2006) write from an international perspective on positive youth development. Rather than focusing on what the specific tasks and assets are, however, their main argument is that the discourse on youth development should focus on the fact that youth do have agency, which should alter adults’ more paternalistic attitude toward youth. Providing examples such as the The Working Children's Movement in Latin America in the 70s and in Africa and Asia in the 90s, as well as youth's experiences with Participatory Action Research, and the widespread youth-led international organization Youth-Peace Child International, these authors demonstrate youth's capacity to be agents of change themselves, rather than simply recipients of initiatives led by adults (Durand and Lykes 2006:240-246). The examples provided demonstrate the ways in which youth demand and create space to deal with the issues that affect them in their every day lives, and in that way, these examples challenge the more conventional power relationships that exist between children/youth and adults (Durand and Lykes 2006:242). Durand and Lykes explain that “youth are frequently marginalized from power and decision making” (Durand and Lykes 2006:243). This is seen in youth
development policies in the U.S. (though the trend is shifting to a focus on youth assets) (Flanagan et al 2006:201) and in everyday interactions between youth and adults, globally speaking (Durand and Lykes 2006:240). In contrast, focusing on the positive attributes of youth, empowering them, trusting them and their abilities, and providing them with the resources they need to fight for change and succeed in their endeavours is argued to be the preferred method of youth development by Durand and Lykes. To summarize their argument, these authors make the declaration:

[W]e challenge social scientists, educators, and human service workers to rethink the discourse of empowerment in order to stand more fully in solidarity with the youth of the world and, in solidarity, mobilize adults to join youth in their push for more just and positive youth development. [Durand and Lykes 2006:248]

The general trend in the literature, then, is to focus on the positives: what youth have to work with (in an internal and external sense), what their strengths are, and what they are capable of achieving. This further suggests that punishment and external intervention that does not consider the perspectives and agency of the youth are not desirable methods of youth development. I will now draw attention to the specific conditions and strategies that add to or take away from the positive development of youth, beginning with the latter.

Some work does draw on conditions that are suggested to exacerbate issues of youth development, though this literature is not as widespread as that which focuses on the positives. These include issues of poverty, inequality, unemployment, early exposure to violence, the perpetuation of negative stereotypes of youth, the withdrawal of the welfare state, and the use of treatment-oriented methods or methods of punishment in place of preventative methods.

Among many of the conditions that may contribute to violent behaviour in youth, some scholars suggest the factors of poverty (Barton et al 1997; Najman et al 2010; Hallsten et al 2013), unemployment (Nissen 2011), and income inequality (Kelly 2000; Hallsten et al 2013), though the results are mixed, overall. Najman et al, who conduct a study in the United States, explain that poverty
experienced in the early stages of life can have an effect on individuals, potentially leading to aggressive, delinquent behaviour on a short-, medium- or long term basis (Najman et al 2010:544). Nissen (2011) who addresses the various opportunities needed by youth to achieve positive development, speaks to the importance of available employment. This study, also carried out in the U.S., suggests that lack of employment can hinder positive development among youth. The economic factor of income inequality was also shown to be associated with crime rates in both U.S. and Swedish studies (Kelly 2000; Hallsten et al 2013) and with homicide rates in particular, as stated by a Central American source (Cardenal Izquierdo 2008). Additionally, Bruneau (2011) who writes on Central America, states that distribution of wealth has been found to be a more significant predictor of violence than poverty (Bruneau 2011). However, the World Bank, writing on violence in Central America, suggests that though poverty and inequality are associated with some forms of risky behaviour, they are not directly related to violence. Moreover, an empirical study by Urdal and Hoelscher (2013), which draws on data from Asian and Sub-Saharan African cities, demonstrated that though slow economic growth is an indicator of social disorder, neither income inequality nor the level of development, were shown to affect social disorder. The social factors, however, to which we will now turn, are more widely accepted as contributors to delinquent behaviour.

Early exposure to violence was one such factor repeatedly seen in the literature as a strong predictor of delinquent behaviour in American literature (Barton et al 1997; Williams et al 2007; Spano 2010). Early exposure to violence was listed as one of the contributing factors to chronic violent offenders (Barton et al 1997:486). Williams et al also refer to the learned behaviour of violence, explaining that it can be picked up from violence within the family, within the community, and also from bullying (Williams et al 2007:197-198).

The tendency for communities, police, policy makers or other authoritative figures to negatively stereotype and homogenize youth as a group of delinquents is also regarded as destructive to positive
American studies by Lerner et al (2006), Nissen (2011) and Lustig and Sung (2013), and the internationally oriented work by Durand and Lykes' (2006), all draw attention to the fact that attaching a negative stigma to those in need of positive youth development is problematic. This tends to create an emphasis on the negative traits of the youth, which results in all blame being placed on the youth, thereby ignoring structural issues that have contributed to violence in the community (Lustig and Sung 2013:1197). Furthermore, there is an assumption that associating with delinquent peers is only harmful to the youth's development. However, as Lustig and Sung point out, in some cases, these peers can be helpful, as they can provide protection and security for the youth in otherwise very dangerous neighbourhoods (Lustig and Sung 2013:1198). These negative assumptions about youth will likely lead to a lack of faith in their capacities, thereby hindering their potential to strive for more. Durand and Lykes explain that adults perceive youth who are participating in activities such as political mobilization “as idealistic, insubordinate, or merely reflective of an adult-run organization that possibly is manipulating them” (Durand and Lykes 2006:250). The problem then, is that there is a lack of trust in youth from the adults, which likely will lead to a lack of trust in adults, from the perspective of youths (Durand and Lykes 2006:250). Thus, of much importance is breaking down negative stereotypes associated with youth that ignore external contributing factors affecting their behaviour, and that do nothing to stop the cycle of violence.

Hagedorn (2006) and Muncie (2007), who discuss gangs and youth from a global perspective, draw attention to the consequences associated with the structural issue of the withdrawal of the welfare state. Before the onset of Neoliberal policies, the welfare state strongly upheld values of justice and welfare (Muncie 2007:25). However, the policies have changed since then as the state's initial tendency toward rehabilitative strategies with the youth has been replaced with an emphasis on punitive policies (Muncie 2007:25). Furthermore, the lack of state responsibility has also resulted in greater need within communities for social services. Interestingly, in some regions, this vacuum created by the
state has resulted in gangs fulfilling the roles neglected by the state, in both U.S. and Central American contexts (Hagedorn 2006:181-182; Gyves 2011:187). This demonstrates the youth's agency in the midst of destructive state forces that are failing to meet the needs of society. However, Barrios, writing on Central America, explains that the state's actions (or lack thereof) are shown to backfire, as the appearance of gangs' “philanthropic behaviour” is also associated with a general increase in the quantity of gangs/gang members (Barrios 2009:189), which means more potential for violent behaviour, as well. This reinforces Koh's suggestion that youth's identities are constantly changing as they interact with the various forces around them (Koh 2008:202-203). In this case, the youth are experiencing a lack of needed social services at the local level as a consequence of national decisions, and thus change their identities from rebellious youth to community builders, or from members of the community to gang members. Thus, we see an interplay between the local forces of gangs and the broader structural forces of the state, that simultaneously affect one another.

One of the very prominent themes in the youth development literature is that treatment programs, such as the harsh Zero-tolerance program, are not effective. Although these approaches are still common in various countries, treatment-oriented approaches were more common in the U.S. in the 1960s, then a shift toward preventative methods occurred in the 1980s (Olson 2010:208). These methods were not immediately effective, however they did increase in success and quantity over time (Olson 2010:209). Today, treatment methods are generally regarded in the literature as more harmful than beneficial to youth as they can have the opposite of desired effect. Heinze et al (2010) explain that particularly strict rules and a harsh approach toward youth may create a sense of shame among youth as they lack a sense of autonomy and receive no empathy or respect from other sources (Heinze et al 2010:1371). Furthermore, this can create a lack of trust in adults or other authority figures (Heinze et al 2010:1371). Additionally, a constant emphasis on the negative aspects of youth, as opposed to their positive attributes and their potential, will likely further reinforce the negative stereotype toward youth.
for both society members and youth themselves. This may hinder the belief that youth do in fact have the potential to change (Checkoway 2011:341). Zero-tolerance methods will also serve to aggravate issues of unemployment by perpetuating a negative stereotype of youth. This can lead to a situation in which employees will not want to hire youth, given their poor reputation (Lustig and Sung 2013:1201), which will likely only serve to reproduce the cycle of delinquent behaviour, as youth will have no employment to occupy their time. While these academic works draw principally on U.S. studies, they support the argument of Durand in Lykes, who advocate an emphasis on the positive aspects and capabilities of youth. The ineffectiveness of the zero-tolerance framework will be further explored from a Central American perspective in the following section.

Alternatively, preventative methods can be used toward youth, which the literature suggests are a far more effective means of addressing delinquent behaviour, crime, aggression and substance abuse (Barton et al 1997; Granger 2002; Williams et al 2007). Williams et al point to local-level organizing in communities, which has increasingly focused on programs with a prevention-oriented approach toward youth violence (Williams et al 2007:200). They reveal that such efforts are seen as crucial in the reduction of crime in a community (Williams et al 2007:200). This shift to preventative methods is also recognized by Barton et al who note that preventative strategies can be seen in the work of practitioners, youth advocates and researchers (Barton et 1997:487). Lerner et al, however, voice a need for even more of a focus on prevention-oriented positive youth development. They also draw attention to Development Systems theory, which emphasizes the “relative plasticity of human development”, whereby humans are not determined by their genetics, but rather, are viewed as beings capable of systematic change (Lerner et al 2006:22). Humans’ capacity to change, they argue, confirms the importance of focusing on the positive aspects and potential of youth, as doing so may in fact positively alter the behaviour of an otherwise delinquent youth (Lerner et al 2006:22).

A study carried out in Honduras looked at the effects of a national community policing
programme called Comunidad Más Segura (CMS), based on preventative crime policies, that included workshops, school training, personal visits and telephone contact with community members (Ungar and Salomón 2012:30-31). The majority of participants revealed that this community policing programme improved communication between police and residents, increased confidence in police, increased security, led to less violence, and improved relations with the police overall. Unfortunately, though the homicide rates did drop shortly after the project began, over the next 5 years they returned to previous levels, demonstrating a lack of sustainability (Ungar and Salomón 2012:32). One factor that may have contributed to this problem was the lack of funding and training invested into the program. And, one of the drawbacks of the study was that answers varied drastically, depending on local conditions, as some regions, for example, had far more police corruption than others (Ungar and Salomón 2012:37).

However, this programme, which emphasized preventative tactics, and the relationship building between police and community members was demonstrated to be capable of achieving positive effects on the safety and perceptions of safety in the community. Further, it acknowledged the ineffectiveness of repressive tactics more common throughout Central American countries, reinforcing instead a preference for preventative tactics that focus on rehabilitation.

Another important strategy suggested by several academics (Barton et al 1997; Granger 2002; Heinze et al 2010; Tomlinson & Walker 2010; Müller 2011; Nissen 2011) is education. Some suggest the need for opportunities to develop academic, task-specific skills (hard skills) (Granger 2002), while others suggest the importance of education for developing meaningful social relationships with both adults and peers through such means as cooperative dialogue (soft skills) (Barton et al 1997; Granger 2002; Heinze et al 2010). Müller (2011), who writes from an international perspective draws attention to the idea that education should be about more than the achievement of skills, but should take into consideration children's wider aspirations. Furthermore, the literature suggests that, whereas the presence of education in a child/youth's life can contribute to one's self-esteem (Tomlinson and Walker
a lack of commitment to school is a predictor of chronic violent offenders and other forms of risky behaviour (Barton et al 1997:486; Heinze et al 2010:1365)

Another strategy suggested in the literature was the use of sports activities as a means of positive youth development. Riley and Anderson-Butcher (2012) discussed how youth's involvement in sports activities was not only positive for improving youth's activity levels and helping with weight loss, it was also an effective means of improving child behaviour. Furthermore, by occupying the children's time, the activities serve to keep youth/children off the streets (Riley and Anderson-Butcher 2012:1373). In addition to these points, Lerner et al add that youth involvement in sports activities helped youth to develop their character through values learned in sports such as teamwork, diligence, motivation, the importance of fair play, etc (Lerner et al 2006:24). They also explained that such involvement could serve to improve relationships between parents and children (Lerner et al 2006:24). These studies, and most literature on the relationship between sports activities and PYD, are based on American models. However, Sandford et al (2008), who do use an international model, find that youth are benefiting from sports projects implemented in their schools, and that programs with an emphasis on physical activity can also serve to help with personal and social development among youth (Sandford et al 2008:106). Specifically, Sanford et al draw attention to improvements in youth's confidence, teamwork and leaderships skills, development of communication, as well as improvement of behaviour (Sandford et al 2008:106). The authors did point out, however, that advantages could not be seen in all youth, and noted that the effects of these projects can vary from one individual to the next, as results are both situation- and context-specific (Sandford et al 2008:106). Sanford et al's work is part of a larger volume that takes on an international perspective, and that speaks to the specific ways in which recreational activities can be effective in positively developing youth. Overall, the volume indicates that youth involvement with sports projects can contribute to the achievement of PYD, but that the success of such initiatives does depend greatly on how the individual programs are delivered to
Family interventions are also recognized as a very effective means of preventing delinquent behaviour. Numerous scholars, writing in both a North American and international context, suggest that the relationship between children and their family – specifically, whether or not the family provides an emotionally supportive environment – has a large impact on whether or not a child adopts delinquent behaviour (Barton et al 1997; Lerner et al 2006; Najman et al 2010; Olson 2010; Viner et al 2010). Furthermore, some pointed to the importance of providing a safe environment for the child (Viner et al:1641) and of dedicating time to the child in both school related and after school activities (Barton et al 1997:489).

The final, and arguably most important strategy toward creating positive youth development is to provide youth with a supportive, encouraging, empowering environment. This is particularly important for those children and youth who cannot find such support among their family, and must look to other sources, such as NGOs, or other community projects. It is with this support and encouragement that youth can learn to be confident, and to develop social skills and knowledge, so that they can become active participants and decision-makers in their communities. Various scholars note that a caring and supportive community can potentially help youth foster their identities (Granger 2002; Nissen 2011), self-esteem (Lerner et al 2006; Heinze et al 2010; Allison Riley and Dawn Anderson-Butcher 2012), a sense of agency (Heinze et al 2010) and sense of belonging (Barton et 1997), can create meaningful social relationships and trust with others, including adults (Barton et 1997; Granger 2002; Lerner et al 2006; Heinze et al 2010; Allison Riley and Dawn Anderson-Butcher 2012) can achieve pro-social behaviour (Nissen 2011; Allison Riley ad Dawn Anderson-Butcher 2012) and educational and occupational success (Heinze et al 2010; Nissen 2011) and can lead to positive life choices (Granger 2002; Lerner et al 2006). Furthermore, the importance of meaningful relationships...
amongst youth and between youth and adults was acknowledged by Granger as one of the assets common to most lists. Alternatively, a lack of support for youth has been associated with substance abuse, gang activity, risky sexual behaviour, and crime (Barton et al 1997; Heinze et al 2010).

Positive youth development also speaks to the importance of empowering youth so that they may participate in policy decision-making and development in their own communities (Durand and Lykes 2006; Lerner et al 2006; Viner et al 2010; Nissen 2011). Lerner et al explain that youth immersed in a supportive and developmentally facilitative community can lead to the youth's own involvement in civic engagement (Lerner et al 2006:24), as they are provided with the confidence to make their own decisions and act on them (Checkoway 2011; Nissen 2011).

However, in order for the youth to thrive, an important contributing factor is social capital within the community. Bourdieu (1986) began using the term social capital in the 1970s. Writing on capital in general, he describes it as accumulated labour in either a materialized or embodied form (Bourdieu 1986:241). He explains that capital can be seized by agents, and can allow them to capture social energy in the form of labour (Bourdieu 1986:241). He identifies three forms of capital: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital (Bourdieu 1986:242). Social capital, he explains, allows for membership to a “durable network”, which is then linked to actual or potential resources (Bourdieu 1986:247). The members of the social network can also have certain social obligations to the group (Bourdieu 1986:242) – an idea reinforced by Williams et al, who discuss the obligations and reciprocity created between members of a network (Williams et al 2007:200). Bourdieu further states that the capital that is gained within that network is collectively owned by all members (Bourdieu 1986:247). However, he also argues that social capital can lead to distinctions of class, or inequality, as the process of institutionalization that can occur within a particular network can create a titled nobility among members (Bourdieu 1986:242). Putnam, on the other hand, focuses more on the positive outcomes of social capital. He states that social capital refers to “features of social organization, such
as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam 1995:67). This more positive perspective is also supported by Anderson (2010), who explains social capital’s association with concepts such as mutual faith, respect, and gaining resources through cooperation with others (Anderson 2010:3-4). Field (2003) states that social capital can essentially be reduced to the simple idea that “relationships matter” (Field 2003:1). He goes on to explain that, as a group of people work together, forming similar ideas and values, the group members can begin to achieve certain ends that would have been far more difficult to achieve as an individual (Field 2003:1). Like Bourdieu, he says that the resources that the group achieves together can be considered capital (Field 2003:1). Thus, the relationships formed, values shared and capital created leads to the concept of social capital.

Putnam has done extensive research demonstrating the potentially strong and positive impacts of social capital. For example, his research on the United States reveals that educational performance and child welfare improves as social capital increases, violent crime (i.e. murder) is not as common in states with higher levels of social capital, people are less pugnacious in states with higher social capital, health is better in states with higher social capital, civil and economic equality increases as social capital increases, and high social capital is also positively associated with tolerance for diversity (Putnam 2001). Williams et al also assert that social capital is an important aspect of carrying out successful community-based interventions (Williams et al 2007:200). Social capital, then, is shown to have potentially far reaching, positive effects. Furthermore, in relation to my research, the features associated with social capital such as trust, respect, mutual faith, and coordination and cooperation as a means of gaining resources are all characteristic of Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense. Thus, in line with Putnam's perspective, my research also emphasizes the benefits of social capital. Social capital was a critical aspect of MCN, and perhaps speaks to its effectiveness. As the positive youth development literature suggests, encouragement, support, trust, collective interest and consideration for
those within a social network are key elements that contribute to the positive development of a youth’s confidence, self-concept, and future behaviour.

While I have touched on a few economic factors that might play a role in the overall behaviour of youth, this section demonstrates that social factors are crucial in the positive development of youth. As mentioned, of much importance is whether youth are punished for their behaviour, or alternatively, whether they are (re)integrated into society with community programs that attempt to develop them in positive ways, focusing on their assets and strengths. Broadly, these strategies include fostering meaningful relationships with youth, educating youth, and providing them with the space to develop on their own as capable agents. Some of the specific strategies acknowledged in the literature include participation in sports activities, formal and informal educational activities, improving familial relations, and immersing youth in an environment high in social capital. These methods of positive youth development can lead to the improvement of self-perception, individual agency, a sense of belonging, relationships with others and can lead to more opportunities for work and community engagement in the future.

While broader global and national forces may serve to worsen social, political, and economic conditions of the local people, there are forces at the local level that can serve to reverse the negative effects of those broader forces, and turn the affected youth into strong, confident, and socially conscious individuals. The local forces, in this case, are the people within homes, or within community-based organizations or local institutions that employ strategies that strive for positive youth development. The recipients of these efforts may also turn out to be the people who fight back against those structural forces in the future by means of civic engagement and community participation. Thus, investing in them is also a means of investing in the community at large. The youth, as suggested in the Nicaraguan case, are ultimately the people who have the power to make big changes that affect not only their communities, but the entire nation.
Central America: War, Gangs, Drugs, and Policy in Recent History

The Central American region has endured vast conflict over the last several decades. Social and economic inequality has led to war and revolution, there has been a surge in drug-trafficking and crime, and in many regions, recent policies have typically failed to improve security in neighbourhoods or the social and economic conditions of citizens in general. This section will outline a brief history of Central American countries, beginning with social, political and economic issues that led to armed-conflict scenarios, followed by the post-war socio-economic and political conditions. Additionally, this section will elaborate on the issue of the presence of gangs in Central America and the factors that may have contributed to their development in various regions. The policies implemented in post-war scenarios and in reaction to the presence of criminal behaviour in Central America will be explored, as will the effects of these policies. Finally, I will discuss Nicaragua in particular to explain the ways in which its social and political situation, and the policies set in place, may have led to lower levels of violence, in comparison to surrounding countries (namely Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador).

The social unrest and resulting civil wars in Central America, taking place between the 1960s and late 1990s, were suggested to have principally been a result of just a few factors. These include an unequal distribution of land, power and resources, and U.S. intervention that tended to side with the already powerful (and often oppressive) elites of the countries (Coleman & Herring 1985; Stolen 2007). After the Spanish colonizers left Latin America during the wars for independence in the 1820s and 30s, the social organization of Central American countries (particularly Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador) was based very much on class. The land was controlled by very few, which led to mass poverty and slavery (LaFeber 1985:9-10). Costa Rica, however, in contrast to the other countries, was already quite racially homogeneous and had a fairly equal distribution of land, which led to a more democratic political system (LaFeber 1985:10). Honduras was different, in that there was an abundance of land, so that peasants were sufficiently accommodated. The particularly fertile land,
however, was taken over by the U.S. banana companies (LaFeber 1985: 10). After the Spanish colonizers left, the result was a fairly democratic, equal society in Costa Rica, a less equal society in Honduras, and extremely unequal conditions in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. In the end, these last three countries were those that endured war and revolution. The inequality in each region is argued to in large part be a product of the global forces of colonialism. The emphasis on class and the creation of elite sectors of society ultimately led to a state of poverty and inequality among many populations in the Central American region and therefore, a state of social unrest.

In addition to the unequal distribution of land and resources, however, was increased social tension from U.S. intervention. For example, Nicaragua's chief director of the National Guard and later president, Anastasio Somoza, was placed in power by the U.S., which was attempting to gain control over the political situation in Nicaragua, which, according to U.S. administration, was being threatened by Augusto César Sandino (Kallen 2009:13-14). Sandino was the Nicaraguan revolutionary and anti-imperialist who, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, fought against U.S. domination for a free and sovereign nation (Walker 2003:22) and later became one of the most honoured Nicaraguan revolutionaries. He was interested in Marxist principles, in resisting U.S. imperialism, and in achieving a free nation (Kallen 2009:12-13), and thus stood in the way of Somoza and the U.S. agenda. Anastasio Somoza, who was both president and chief director of the national guard as of 1937, had gained control over major forms of communication, the IRS, health services, most illegal income-generating initiatives and various businesses throughout the country (Kallan 2009:16-17). His role as the chief director also granted him the ability to punish his enemies by means of detention, assassination or torture (Kallan 2009:16). He was assassinated in 1956; however, this did not mark the end of the Somoza regime. His son, Luis Somoza Debayle took his place as president and the national guard was overtaken by his brother, the second Anastasio Somoza. The result of this was increased corruption, control and violence throughout Nicaragua (Kallan 2009:17-18). In 1961, the next
powerful revolutionary figure, Carlos Fonseca Amador, initiated the Nicaraguan revolutionary party in Nicaragua in 1961 with a Marxist inspired grassroots movement (Walker 2003:40). He was a Nicaraguan socialist, critical of the Somoza authoritarian-style dictatorship and inspired by Marxist ideals and the Cuban Revolution (Kallan 2009:18). Fonseca aimed to liberate Nicaragua with a revolution that promoted socialist principles. In line with the goals of Sandino, the Nicaraguan Revolution also strove for a socially just nation run by liberated citizens. Eventually, the efforts of the revolutionaries prevailed when Somoza was overthrown and the Revolutionary party, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (Spanish acronym: FSLN), was democratically elected into power. The result, again, was U.S. intervention when the Reagan administration, fearing communism, funded Contra soldiers to take down the FSLN (Kallen 2007:64). However, despite the constant external intervention, Nicaraguan local actors refused to surrender to powerful U.S. forces. As Perla (2005) notes, the Sandinistas' successful attempts to defend themselves from U.S. forces during the Contra war for over ten years demonstrates how small powers can impact materially more powerful forces by strategically exercising their agency.

Similarly, in Guatemala, the U.S. C.I.A. also supported a military coup when a leftist government had been democratically elected in the country in 1954 (Streeter 2006:58, 61) and when leftist reforms were taking place in an attempt to distribute land more equally (Stolen 2007:19). The land distribution, however, was not reformed in the end, as a consequence of the rise of the new rightist military, and social unrest and mobilization grew (Pacific Ecologist 2009:17). In El Salvador, the U.S. again supported the rightist government, which was opposing leftist rebels – namely the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (Spanish acronym: FMLN) – with Marxist-Leninist goals (Herring 1985:102-103). In these countries, U.S. administration continuously sided with rightist (and often inhumane) forces, helped administer fraudulent elections (LaFeber 1985: 4), and used the C.I.A. to carry out (sometimes top-secret) operations to oppose leftist politics. In Honduras, apart from owning
the banana plantations, the U.S.'s intervention entailed occupying the country's border as a base for the contra soldiers (LaFeber 1985:10). Neither Honduras nor Costa Rica engaged in a civil war. By the end of the three wars, 200,000 lives had been lost in Guatemala, 75,000 lost in El Salvador, and 50,000 had been lost in Nicaragua in the Revolutionary war and a further 38,000 lost in the Contra War (Walker 2003:183; World Bank 2011:19).

Ultimately, the problems and dissatisfaction in society stemmed from mass inequality. As an explanation for why the different countries did (or did not) start a revolution, Coleman theorizes that a revolution is more likely among those regions that have been denied reformist elements over the first 75 years of the 20th Century. Additionally, he theorized that the larger the role of reform in political processes is, the less revolutionaries will be taken seriously (Coleman 1985:73). This theory is exemplified by the fact that reformists were least present in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador (where war and revolution transpired), there was weak military reformism in Honduras (where there was never any sustained revolutionary activity), and reformists governed in Costa Rica (where there was no serious threat of revolution) (Coleman 1985:73-74). Furthermore, Nicaragua, which was denied reformism more than any other country, was the only country in which the revolutionaries gained power (Coleman 1985:74).

These aspects of Central American history first demonstrate how the global processes of colonization and U.S. intervention led to unsatisfactory conditions for the local people of the countries most repressed. In addition to the global forces, however, these events illustrate the local actors' ability to react to these forces, and in certain cases, have a large impact on them. The revolutionary people of Nicaragua, for example, were indeed agents of change. As Coleman suggests, those most repressed states were those who took it upon themselves to create a different social/political/economic order in their country. This is in line with the arguments of Sklair, Gille and Ó Riain, and Fisher, who suggest that local-level actors will attempt to oppose the global order if it leads to unsatisfactory conditions at
the local level, and that they will collectively strive to achieve change in their communities or on a larger scale. The oppression, colonization, inequality, poverty, rebellion, war and revolution that took place in these countries indicate the interaction between local and global forces, and their ability to affect one another in significant ways.

In Nicaragua, the revolutionaries overthrew Somoza in 1979, which ended the revolutionary war and started the Contra War, which lasted until 1990. At this time, the National Opposition Union won against the FSLN party, and there was mass demilitarization (Rocha 2011:110). In El Salvador, peace negotiations began in 1989 and the state finally became demilitarized (Kruijt 2008:166-167). In Guatemala, peace agreements were signed and the police was reconstructed and armed forces reduced, but only ten years after the re-establishment of democracy (Kruijt 2008:167). However, Kruijt suggests that the results of the peace talks in Guatemala and El Salvador were more in favour of the upper classes. Furthermore, in the case of Nicaragua, even though the Somoza dictatorship was overthrown and the Contra War never prevailed, FSLN was still defeated in the 1990 elections and the ideals of social equality envisioned by the Revolution were never fully achieved (Kruijt 2008:170-171).

Where do these countries stand today in this post-war era? Their situations have not drastically improved. In the “disability-adjusted life years lost” (DALY) measure, which measures how many years of life are lost as a consequence of premature mortality and disability (World Bank 2011:5), the worldwide ranking of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua are 12th, 21st, 36th and 40th, respectively, with El Salvador ranking 2nd in all of Latin America (World Bank, 2011:5). Specific homicide rates per 100,000 in 2011 were 58, 45, 43, and 14 for the same respective countries (World Bank, 2011: 1). In 2011 the estimated number of gangs throughout Central America was 900, with an estimated total of 70,000 gang members (World Bank 2011:15). Estimations of the number of members and gangs per country, respectively, are as follows: Honduras: 36,000 and 112; Guatemala: 14,000 and 434; El Salvador: 10,500 and 4; and Nicaragua: 4,500 and 268 (World Bank 2011:15). As
can be seen with these numbers, whereas Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador have between two and eights times as many gang members as Nicaragua, Nicaragua has a drastically higher number of gangs. In order to explain this phenomenon, a distinction must be made between two different types of gangs that exist in Central America. The first of these is maras, which are particularly dangerous transnational gangs that originated in Los Angeles, and the second is pandillas, or “street gangs” (Bruneau 2011: 2), which are less dangerous and more localized (Rodgers and Muggah 2009:305, 307). The transnational maras are massive in scope. Formally, there are only two of these: Dieciocho, or 18th Street Gang and Mara Salvatrucha-13, or MS-13 (Rodgers and Muggah 2009:305; Bruneau 2011:2-3), and both have almost completely taken over EL Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala (Rodgers and Muggah 2009:305). While maras and pandillas can be found in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, only pandillas are present in Nicaragua (Rocha 2011:107). And, because pandillas are localized, there is a significantly higher number of these types of gangs in Nicaragua, despite the low number of total gang members. Typical gang activities include armed robberies, kidnapping, money extortion from public transportation drivers, and murdering police informants and rival gang members (Barrios 2009:179), though Rodgers and Muggah explain that for both pandillas and maras, the most common gang activities are small-scale, localized delinquency and crime, including mugging and petty theft (Rodgers and Muggah 2009:305).

Homicide rates and number of gangs/gang members range greatly from country to country. The question, then, is: What contributed to these high (or not so high) rates and quantities? There are various factors theorized as to what the contributing factors are, but most agree a myriad of elements working together are responsible for the outcomes. The principle factors include: a history of violence, availability of firearms left over from the wars, geography that has led to an increase in drug-trafficking, structural adjustment policies and the withdrawal of state institutions, violent and/or corrupt criminal justice institutions and zero tolerance/mano dura policies, and urban growth and
migration/deportation trends.

Some sources (Brueau 2011; World Bank 2011) bring forth the possibility that the culture of violence adapted during the wars is one potential explanation for why so much crime and gang activity exist in Central America. As Bruneau states, this can be explained by the “psychological trauma, warlike mind-set, weak state capacity and legitimacy, and police militarization” (Bruneau 2011:10) resulting from the wars. Another theory is that the tendency to solve problems with violence, as was done in the civil wars, may have lingered on within the communities affected by war (World Bank 2011:20). However, the critique of this theory is that the departments within the countries most affected by wars are not the areas with the highest levels of criminality (Cardenal Izquierdo 2008:68). Additionally, Nicaragua, which did experience much armed conflict, has much lower homicide rates, whereas Honduras, which did not experience a civil war, had higher rates than Nicaragua (Cardenal Izquierdo 2008:87). Thus, this theory alone does not seem sufficient to explain the levels of violence.

Another effect that the armed conflict had on society was the increased availability of the arms themselves. Many weapons were imported during the war years and still remain present in some of the countries today (particularly El Salvador and Guatemala) (World Bank 2011: iii). The Document of the World Bank reveals that firearms are responsible for 80% of the killings that take place in Guatemala and El Salvador (World Bank 2011: 20). However, not all arms can be traced back to the civil wars (World Bank 2011: 20).

Additionally, the simple fact that Central America is (in)conveniently located “between drug supply and demand” contributes to its increased level of violence (Bruneau 2011:8). It is not the soil and climate that have made this region particularly prone to trafficking drugs, but the fact that the region's geography enables easy concealment of drug cultivation and drug trafficking (Roberts and Chen 2013:112). Another issue noted in the literature is the way in which the illegal status of drugs in a region increases violence and encourages further corruption among public officials (Bruneau 2011;
World Bank 2011; Roberts and Chen 2013). Because of narcotics' illegal status, any problems that transpire in the midst of drug trades cannot be legally handled in the court of law, and thus are usually solved with violence (World Bank 2011; Roberts and Chen 2013). According to the World Bank, the association between drugs and violence can be seen in the statistic that there are 100% more crimes in hotspot drug trafficking areas in comparison to the non hotspot areas (World Bank 2011:ii).

Drugs also lead to problems with public official corruption, particularly among police forces. In fact, polls taken from the public in Central America and Mexico indicate that 47.7% of respondents believed that their local police were involved in crime (World Bank 2011:14). The Document of the World Bank also reveals that drug traffickers pay off authorities, thereby corrupting the justice system, so that they need not fear prosecution. Furthermore those that bribe the police are more inclined to settle all problems with the use of violence, as they do not fear the repercussions (World Bank 2011:14). Roberts and Chen explain that a combination of a low level of training and low salaries makes the police particularly vulnerable to corruption (Roberts and Chen 2013:113). Pine (2008), who carried out her fieldwork in Honduras, reveals one gang's observations on the relationship between the local police and a different gang. She explains that, “When I asked the boys about Dieciocho, they told me, 'Si, Dieyoyo [Dieciocho] is over there. They're bad – they have the police on their side. When they get caught the police treat them like kings – they're out drinking sodas while we're getting kicked in the heads like this –’” (Pine 2008:39). Pine does not explicitly state that the reason for this favouritism of gangs was that the favoured gang paid off the police, but regardless of this fact, it demonstrates the corrupt nature of the police in that some known criminals are purposely spared, while others are brutally attacked. Pine also draws attention to a complete lack of a moral code among the police force and/or military by explaining that those in society who fit the general description of a “delinquent” – the young and poor – are the target of violence (Pine 2008:57-58). This is also referred to as street cleansing, in which the “delinquents” are systematically removed from society (Pine 2008:58). One
example of this “removal” is highlighted in an event that occurred in a Honduran prison, in which 173 prisoners, all of whom were youth, were killed in a prison fire, which evidence suggests was no accident (Pine 2008:65). Furthermore, 28 of these victims were arrested for illicit association and 33 were not accused of any crimes (Pine 2008:65). Pine's work demonstrates the structural nature of violence in this society and the evident corruption present in the police force.

The withdrawal of welfare state institutions is also argued to have contributed to an increase in gangs/gang members. A decline in social welfare came as a result of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), which led to a decrease in social security, an increase in gender inequality in the workforce, and increasingly unequal access to resources (Okongwu and Mencher 2000:114-115). Two effects of the SAPs on increased violence are recognized: an increase in the demand for drugs, as the social situation became more dire (Roberts and Chen 2013:115), and the increased appearance of gangs that were filling the vacuum left by the state with regard to social services (Hagedorn 2006:181-182; Gyves 2011:187). In some cases, gangs were viewed as defenders and would take on roles neglected by the state (Barrios 2009; Rocha 2011), as previously mentioned. The gang members, dissatisfied with the current state of their communities, became local agents, making the decision to fulfil the state's neglected responsibility themselves, and changing their environment in the process.

In addition to withdrawing social services, the state also implemented treatment-oriented policies that are suggested to increase levels of violence, and in some cases, lead to organized violence. Zero tolerance – also known as *Mano Dura* (firm hand/iron fist) – policies, have become widespread in the Central American region. These policies permit police to use particularly repressive tactics as punishment for supposedly criminal behaviour (Bruneau 2011: 15). A youth, for example, could be detained purely based on his/her appearance (eg: tattoos or attire) (Wolf 2011: 58). This has led to a decrease in trust between police forces and the general public (World Bank 2011; Muncie 2007) in addition to massive increases in the incarceration rates (Bruneau 2011; Roberts and Chen 2013).
Another tendency in these societies is to exaggerate gangs' drug use and danger to society in the media (Rodgers and Muggah 2009; Wolf 2011; Robert and Chen 2013), instilling fear in the public and further justifying excessive repressive tactics toward youth (Mateo 2011:97). However, Barrios asserts that mareros (gang members) have ways of subverting their subordination in society through transforming power relations, so that they see themselves as more powerful, or better than the state (Barrios 2009:198), thereby refusing to accept the structures and negative stereotypes imposed on them.

The media's large focus on gangs is suggested by some to be a state strategy to use the gangs as a scapegoat to larger structural issues in society, such as exclusion and inequality (Rodgers and Muggah 2009; Mateo 2011; Roberts and Chen 2013). Pine argues that the state of Honduras and other Honduran institutions (such as Alcoholics Anonymous) emphasize that blame should be placed on the individual for delinquent or other negative behaviour in society. Furthermore, she explains that the implication of this is that the responsibility to improve such behaviour also remains on the individual, and in this way, the government may evade its responsibility to address the structural issues. A direct example of this can be seen in a speech by the Honduran president in 1999, Carlos Flores, who stated: “There won't be a new Honduras for anybody if there isn't a different Honduran”, suggesting that the future of the country lies in the hands of the individuals, and that the state and/or structural issues have nothing to do with it (Pine 2008:12).

Additionally, the Mano Dura tactics that many Central American states use to address the rising levels of violence and presence of gangs, may actually serve to exacerbate the problems further (Rodgers and Muggah 2009; Wolf 2011). Cracking down on these gangs, Wolf explains, “encouraged more clandestine behaviour and increased gang cohesion and criminality” (Wolf 2011:63). Rather than minimizing the number of gang members on the streets, repressive tactics in El Salvador led to more secretive behaviour among the gang members, strengthened loyalty and gang identity, and also led to a
more hierarchical structure within the gangs (Miguel Cruz 2011; Wolf 2011). Additionally, Miguel Cruz (2011) explains that mass incarceration also aided gang members in forming connections with drug-trafficking networks and organized crime (Miguel Cruz 2011:156). The *Mano Dura* policies have thus proved ineffective, instead having the opposite of the desired effect. Moreover, these gang member reactions demonstrate that the state's attempt to repress gang members has only increased their power and capacity as criminals, thereby strengthening their agency and impact in the midst of repressive state forces. This again reinforces Koh's argument of the constantly changing identity of the youth. Youth cannot be expected to act in one particular way. They are active agents who react to repressive forces in a variety of ways. In this case, the repressive forces led to an increase in stealthy and organized behaviour of the youth, serving to further challenge state authorities.

The U.S. led war on drugs likely plays a role in the highly repressive policies employed in Central American countries – particularly, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. The tactics employed by the war on drugs include the intensification of criminalization (Johns 1991; Kilgore 2013; Beeten 2013) and incarceration (Kilgore 2013; Beeten 2013), increased jail time (Pitts 2014; Portland Central America Solidarity Committee 2014), and the increase of (largely U.S. supported) militarization (Jelsma 1997; Kinney and Abbot 2013; Portland Central America Solidarity Committee 2014). Furthermore, this increased militarization has led to an increase in repression, violence, and a general abuse of human rights (Jelsma 1997; Beeten 2013; Bonifaz 2014; Pineo 2014; Portland Central America Solidarity Committee 2014) – as well as the justification of these horribly destructive tactics (Jelsma 1997). And, as suggested in the above literature, these repressive, abusive tactics are ineffective, and are failing to achieve the goals of the war on drugs (Ince 2013; Portland Central America Solidarity Committee 2014). The military's involvement is leading to increased violence throughout Latin America – Colombia and Mexico, in particular (Jelsma 1997; Pineo 2014), though homicides in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala are also on the rise (Beeten 2013; Ince 2013).
Additionally, as Jelsma explains, the increased attention on the illegality of drug trafficking has led drug trafficking networks to further professionalize, improving techniques to both subvert their opponents and to strengthen their power within the political system. Only the strongest drug trafficking organizations can survive - those with the best political and social connections. [Jelsma 1997]

Not only are these repressive policies failing to prevent drug use and drug trading, but they are also extremely violent and destructive in nature, and are in fact strengthening drug trafficking networks, and evolving criminal techniques, overall.

One other possible contribution to the increase in gang prevalence and violence is migration to other countries or to urbanized areas. Those fleeing rural poverty tend to end up in poorly designed, disorganized urban areas with scarce opportunities (Ranum 2011; World Bank 2011). Migrants who flee to the United States in search of work or refuge, often find little in terms of opportunities. Due to marginalization in these new territories, they are often in need of protection, a sense of belonging, and solutions to their socio-economic problems, which they can find in gangs (Mateo 2011; Wolf 2011; World Bank 2011). However, those that join the gangs, if deported, tend to bring back their newly discovered gang culture to their home country, thereby spreading the gang culture (Mateo 2011; Ranum 2011; Wolf 2011). As mentioned earlier, these migration patterns and skills learned are consequences of local and global interactions. In other words, the national socio-economic structures affect youth, the youth react by migrating to countries where they are faced with difficult socio-economic situations for a second time, which leads them to gang involvement, and eventually deportation. These ex-migrants then create changes in their home countries that have far-reaching effects, thus proving the power of the local actor, and his/her ability to fight back against national or global forces. Another issue with migration is that, if parents migrate, leaving children at home without one or both parents, this lack of parenting is problematic, as the presence of parents in a youth's life decrease the likelihood that they will take part in risky behaviour such as violence and substance abuse (World Bank 2011:18).
These are some of the principle factors that may have led to more violence and a presence of gangs. However, Nicaragua is an interesting case as it has relatively lower levels of youth violence. What factors, then, might have led to this favourable outcome? Why did Nicaragua, in particular, diverge from the trends apparent in surrounding countries? One explanation for this is the particular migration patterns in Nicaragua. In contrast to many other Central American migrants, Nicaraguans have not migrated nearly as much to Los Angeles, California, where the MS-13 and 18th Street maras originated. Instead, most Nicaraguans migrate to Costa Rica, a far less expensive destination in terms of migration costs. Furthermore, the smaller population that does migrate to the United States tends to settle in Miami, or other parts of Florida, avoiding the gang culture in Los Angeles (Rodgers and Muggah 2009:307; Bruneau 2011:13). Additionally, Nicaraguans had a far smoother transition into U.S. society starting in the 1980s, as they were considered refugees of the socialist Sandinista government and thus welcomed by Cubans who migrated to the U.S. to escape communism (Rocha 2008:158). With a small portion migrating to the US, an even smaller portion migrating to Los Angeles, and the benefit of being socially accepted into their communities, the likelihood of migrants adapting the trends of MS-13 and 18th Street Gang becomes substantially decreased. Furthermore, Rocha finds that there are significantly fewer Nicaraguans being deported as a consequence of gang-related activity (Rocha 2008:156). Therefore, they are less likely to be sent back to their home countries with newly acquired criminal skills. The spread of gang culture as a result of deportation from the U.S. has been, however, common amongst migrants from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala (Rocha 2011:108).

Another consideration explored by Rocha was Nicaragua's comparatively superior reintegration of soldiers into socioeconomic and political life after the war in 1990. Because of Nicaragua's low population density, the government was able to offer land to those demobilized, enabling them to re-establish their civilian life (Rocha 2011:110-111). The Sandinistas fought for popular power, which
meant a fairer distribution of wealth. Lancaster (1992) reveals one informant’s explanation as to why she became a Sandinista:

At first we were afraid of the Revolution. We became Sandinistas when we saw that the Sandinistas were taking land away from the big landowners and dividing it out to the poor farmers, when we saw that the Sandinistas were for the poor and humble people. We then came to understand the idea of popular power. [Lancaster 1992:178]

Not only did this gesture help to improve the livelihoods of the Nicaraguan people, but it also served to promote the revolutionary ideal of popular power, which strives to benefit the majority of society, not just a small elite minority. Such offerings were not present in post-war Guatemala or El Salvador (Rocha 2011:111). Additionally, U.S. pressure to institutionalize the police force and the military so that they would no longer be controlled by the FSLN served to avoid potential corruption and reduce tension in the country (Rocha 2011:112). This action was not taken in surrounding countries where levels of corruption and tension between society members and police/military are high (Rocha 2011:112). The election of the National Opposition Union also led to vast military reductions to the point where Nicaragua has the smallest military in all of Central America (Rocha 2011:110). There was also mass destruction of weapons with an estimated 143,000 weapons destroyed between 1991 and 1992 (Rocha 2011:112).

Some suggest that the police force also played a large role in this trend. Namely, they suggest that, in contrast to other Central American countries, the police force has taken on a non-criminalizing attitude, which, according to the observed cases, serves to inhibit stimulation of further violence and criminality (Rocha 2008; Rodger and Muggah 2009; Rocha 2011). In Nicaragua, the police force views youth violence as acts of experimenting rebels, whereas those from neighbouring countries viewed their actions as organized violence (Rocha 2011:115). Rocha suggests that this attitude toward the rebellious youth likely stemmed from the National Police’s own experiences in the guerrilla (Rocha 2011:115). It was the police commissioners who sided with the FSLN that encouraged re-integrative,
preventative approaches for the youth (such as combining the efforts of the police with those of the churches, schools and NGOs) (Rocha 2011:115). In contrast, those who sided with traditional, elitist Nicaragua were in favour of more repressive tactics (Rocha 2011:115). In general, the police force in Nicaragua was far less oppressive, took on a more preventative approach, and attempted to better understand the broader context of the youth’s actions (Rocha 2011:116). Unlike other countries, Nicaragua did not take on the Mano Dura approach. However, Rocha expresses concern about a possible increase in repression now that the FSLN is back in power and his concern for an increase in violence resulting from this (Rocha 2011:119).

Another important factor that perhaps distinguishes Nicaragua from neighbouring countries is the relatively high level of social capital present in the country (Lancaster 1992; Bayard de Volo 2001; Anderson 2010). To demonstrate this point, Anderson reveals the ways in which social capital emerged at the time of the Revolution, and how this effect on society has lingered on, even decades later. Additionally, Lancaster and Bayard de Volo offer ethnographic examples, which provide intimate examples of the social capital that exists between members of the community.

Anderson argues that the nature of the Revolution and the ideals it proposed had the effect of rapidly creating social capital in Nicaragua, ultimately affecting the mentality and actions of society members. She explains that the resulting social capital was a consequence of several factors affecting the development of the Revolution. These include: “1) the interchangeability of leadership, (2) the centralization of ideas rather than personality that underlay the cooperation of multiple leaders, (3) the fostering of grassroots initiatives, and (4) the creation of cross-class ties” (Anderson 2010:32). Anderson demonstrates the remarkable way in which social capital was formed over the course of the Revolution by contrasting it with the mass mobilization that took place in Argentina, which did not lead to an increase in social capital. She compares the two forms of mass mobilization, first discussing the importance of an ideology in moving the movement forward, as opposed to a single leader. Whereas
Sandinismo consistently represented the ideals of social justice, self-governance, resource distribution (Anderson 2010: 36), Peronism ideology in Argentina was inconsistent, and at times contradictory, and fostered top-down or “vertical” ties in society (Anderson 2010:92-93). The result in Argentina was that the people did not have a particular set of ideals to fight for, and were helpless without the guidance of their leader, Perón (Anderson 2010:117). Additionally, in Nicaraguan, the leaders of the movements were constantly changing, which was often a result of the assassination of revolutionary leaders. However, despite the efforts of the Somoza dictatorship, the death of leaders, such as Augusto Sandino and Carlos Fonseca, did not work, as revolutionary actors' ideology and togetherness kept them moving forward (Anderson 2010:39). The ties fostered throughout the Nicaraguan Revolution were of a horizontal nature, leading to mutual trust, respect, and cooperation.

Furthermore, the Sandinistas encouraged mobilization, and this Revolution led to an explosion of grassroots initiatives. Anderson notes how this environment created a “classroom of learning” (Anderson 2010:57) in which citizens learned important skills such as cooperation, mutual support and tolerance of one another (Anderson 2010:58) that they would continue to use in the years to come. Contrarily, Perón gave the people no responsibility and opposed grassroots initiatives that did start to develop (Anderson 2010:93). Another important factor of the Nicaraguan Revolution is that, not only was there a high degree of mobilization, but there was mobilization occurring across all sectors of society. This coming together and cooperation of people, and the ability to put differences aside to accomplish common goals is known as “bridging social capital” (Anderson 2010:98). In the Nicaraguan Revolution, this is demonstrated by the cooperation and trust between the urban and rural poor, the business community, the church, the youth, and middle class intellectuals, to name a few distinct groups in society. Thus, in contrast to the ideas advanced by Bourdieu, rather than creating divisions and inequality among classes, the social capital that emerged at the time of the Revolution fostered horizontal ties and equality between members of society. Therefore, Putnam's definition of
social capital, which focuses on cooperation and trust, provides a better representation of the social capital present in Nicaragua. Bourdieu's concept of the division of classes created by social capital is more evident in the case of Argentine mobilization, in which only people from the same group came together to go against the “outside enemies” (Anderson 2010:98). This form of social networking is referred to as “bonding social capital”.

Overall, the characteristics of the Nicaraguan Revolution fostered trust, mutual faith, cooperation as well as horizontal ties between members of various sectors of society, and in that way, created bridging social capital throughout society. Moreover, it led to a strong presence of volunteerism in society with an upsurge of grassroots organization. To further emphasize the impact that the Sandinista ideology had on society, data shows that there were even higher participation rates in organizations among Sandinista-affiliated citizens, relative to non-Sandinistas (Anderson 2010:124-125). The tendency for Nicaraguans to participate in society also led to higher political capital, and, as Anderson argues, the development of democracy. Anderson reveals that Nicaragua's institutional democracy is still new, and relatively weak (when compared to Argentina's institutional democracy), which does hinder the development of its democracy overall. However, she explains that it is the local level democracy that is particularly strong in this country (Anderson 2010:247), which can be traced back to the Revolution.

Though social capital can take a long time to develop between members of a community, Nicaragua's history has demonstrated that certain conditions (a strong ideology, the interchangeability of leadership, cross-class cooperation, and grassroots initiatives) can indeed lead to a dramatic increase in social capital, that lingers on in society decades later. Nicaraguan mobilization still occurs in the country today, as seen by current rates of participation in organization (Anderson 2010:120-125) and, as I shall argue, is demonstrated by my ethnographic study. Anderson, for example, reveals that in comparison to Argentina, where 10.9% of the population is a member of an organization, 26.6% of the
population in Nicaragua has one membership. In Argentina, 4.5% of the population has 2 memberships, while 10.7% have 2 memberships in Nicaragua. Anderson also found that, for those non-Sandinistas who did join organizations, they were more likely to be part of a religious club or organization than Sandinistas (Anderson 2010:120-125). In the context of my research, I found that community members continue to volunteer, and care for the greater good of their community, putting group interests ahead of their own, and fighting for social causes. Lancaster's and Bayard de Volo's ethnographies also exemplify such features of Nicaraguan society.

As mentioned, the Sandinista Revolution was based on a popular struggle, or, as one of Lancaster's informants expressed: “We [Sandinistas] are not interested in personal power, but in the popular power, not personal wealth, but social wealth” (Lancaster 1992:141). They were striving to advance society as a whole, without discrimination based on gender, class or sexual orientation (Lancaster 1992). There were, of course, many struggles that women, for example, faced during the Revolution (some struggles which continue into the present day). However, their struggle was nevertheless acknowledged, and much social organization took place in the pursuit of gender equality (Black 1981:323-328; Lancaster 1992: 94-106; Walker 2003:115-116; Kallen 2009:50). Additionally, Nicaragua's Revolution marked the first of the 20th Century that did not persecute a sexual minority in society (Lancaster 1992:263). The goals, efforts and ideals of the Revolution can be summarized by Máximo, one of Lancaster's informants, who expresses:

We created mass organizations that engaged people's energies in the project and affected people's consciousness in important ways. No one can forget the feeling of power we experienced in the literacy brigades, when we virtually wiped out illiteracy, or in the health-care campaigns, when we eliminated most of the preventable childhood diseases, and in the various mass projects of the communities. We took our destiny as a people into our own hands. That is what popular democracy ought to be like in a revolutionary state: the people take the initiative, they rebuild their own society. Most of us remember that. [Lancaster 1992:161]

Máximo explains that the dedication to the community and to society at large that the Revolution
promoted had a lingering effect on the consciousness of the Nicaraguan people. They took it upon themselves to enhance their own society, and the individuals within it. Though structural forces perpetuated by colonialism and the Somoza era were damaging Nicaraguan society, the people of Nicaragua were capable of being their own agents of change and fighting against those structures, creating a new, more equitable society in the process. Unfortunately, the Revolution was unable to reach all of its goals, and was indeed inhibited by the U.S.-led Contra War, but the efforts made by the society, and the concept of a popular movement, Máximo suggests, were not forgotten.

Lancaster also draws attention to the concept of the revolutionary “New Man”. In contrast to the old idea of a good man in Nicaraguan society, who could be described as a “machista” (a drinker, fighter, gambler, womanizer), the New Man can be described as a hard worker, a nationalist who strives to improve his country, family-oriented, responsible and generous (Lancaster 1992:40, 175). Again, the notion of improving the country on large and small scales is present in this New Man. However, Lancaster also points to the difficulty that men faced in transitioning from machista behaviour that was (and remains) very prevalent in Nicaraguan society. He cited examples that demonstrate the inner-conflict men faced with the two different sets of ideal behaviour and the fact that the “New Man” ideal was never fully achieved in Nicaragua. Nevertheless, a new ideal was acknowledged by the public and had an effect on society, even if it was not as strong as desired.

A powerful sense of community and social responsibility can also be seen in the practices of reciprocity that Lancaster observed. He noted a constant sharing of resources and two important beliefs surrounding friendship: “first, that no one should be stingy and withhold goods that they have and others do not, and second, that one should never try to take advantage of someone else's generosity (Lancaster 1992:56). He explains that this exchange of gifts and services was a means of “cementing social relations” and was a “moral and ethic imperative” (Lancaster 1992:57). He also reveals the concept of compadrazgo, or the ritual of co-parenting, which essentially serves to extend one's social
network through fictive kin. These co-parents can serve to increase one's resources, which may include material wealth, friendship, security and comfort (Lancaster 1992:66).

Bayard de Voiy (2001) in her ethnography also revealed this sense of solidarity, and the sharing, supportive nature among women, or more specifically, “the mothers of heroes and martyrs”. She explains that during the Contra War, when mothers were losing their sons to the war everyday, they turned toward tendencies of love, compassion and solidarity. They built strong and long-lasting friendships that truly improved the quality of their lives. She explains how the mothers began to realize that “Alone you aren't going to do anything. But among everyone, and with each one doing a bit, all together we will get something done” (Bayard de Voiy 2001:135). They acknowledged and embraced the power of the collective. These practices, like those above, demonstrate a strong sense of social capital, as individuals come together, sharing their resources, embracing norms of reciprocity, and supporting each other, thereby enhancing the well-being of the community at large.

One final example that demonstrates a high degree of social capital in Nicaragua, and the people's desire to advance collectively and not individually, can be demonstrated by Jaime, an informant of Lancaster. Jaime was a very intelligent individual, and was capable of doing very well in school, despite his tendency to skip class (Lancaster 1992:167). He even tutored his friends to help them succeed in their studies. However, one day, Lancaster met with him and found out he failed his geometry exam, which was very surprising to Lancaster. He goes on to reveal that Jaime did not fail his exam because he did not understand the material. He failed because he knew one of his friends that he tutored still did not understand it, and he did not want his friend to feel bad for failing, so he failed on purpose to protect his friend (Lancaster 1992:167-168). Not only did Jaime try to help his friends achieve better grades, but he also tried to help them emotionally, demonstrating selflessness and a sense of social capital.

Lancaster does illustrate a great deal of contradiction throughout his ethnography, as some
social advancements were made in society, while others not. Highlighting these contradictions, Lancaster writes: “It is impossible to say where good faith ends and bad faith begins. The conversations I record are mixtures of hope and despair, politics and religion, analysis and passion, conviction and compromise, idealism and self-interest” (Lancaster 1992:187). However, he concludes the ethnography hopefully, explaining that in the midst of the Contra War, the FSLN's loss in the 1990 election, and the poverty and unemployment that ensued as a consequence of the war and structural adjustment policies, the popular movement carried on. Mass organization in the form of strikes, sit-ins, demonstrations continued with a goal of advancing the popular interests in society (Lancaster 1992:297), despite the broader forces that were working against them. This concept of acting for the common good of all people promoted by the Revolution is an important contributing factor to the social capital present in Nicaragua.

Social capital, then, is noted by several social scientists to have a substantial presence in Nicaragua, and to largely be a product of the Revolution. In addition to Anderson's arguments, and Lancaster and Bayard de Volo's ethnographic examples, my work with MCN further provides ethnographic data to reinforce the presence of social capital in Nicaragua. The strategies used by MCN to positively develop youth, as I will later discuss, are associated with the ideals of volunteerism, collaboration, striving to improve the community as a whole, and placing a large emphasis on the importance of social relationships – elements which can also be observed in the development of the Revolution. In general, MCN strives to create a positive social environment for youth where they can flourish. This suggests that the social capital that emerged out of the Revolution has a strong presence in MCN today and plays an important role in MCN's attempt to positively develop youth and deter them from involvement with youth violence. This does not come as a surprise, however, as MCN was born out of the Revolution with strong revolutionary values. My argument, then, is that social capital contributes to maintaining lower levels of youth violence, as it leads to a socially supportive
environment where, in the case of MCN, youth are provided with the conditions necessary to avoid more destructive paths. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, Putnam suggests that lower levels of violence are associated with higher social capital, thereby strengthening the argument that the relatively high presence of social capital in Nicaragua may be another explanation for its comparatively lower levels of violence.

Taken together, the combination of Nicaragua's geography and migration patterns, the state's effort to re-integrate the soldiers into society in the post-war context, mass demilitarization and the destruction of weapons, a general preventative approach to troubled youth in society, and the presence of social capital among the people, all in contrast to the patterns of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, may have led to a safer, less violent environment in Nicaragua.

**Conclusion: Tying the Literature Together**

This section has provided literature on three distinct areas. First, it drew on literature suggesting the significance of local level actors and their interactions with one another. While powerful global structures can indeed greatly influence the everyday lives of the local people, the local people are also agents of change who possess the power to influence the functioning of society on a local, national, and sometimes global scale. Furthermore, I have discussed the positive youth development literature, which draws attention to the importance of providing youth with both recreational and educational (both formal and informal) activities, and fostering meaningful and supportive social relationships with youth. Additionally, in relation to the first set of literature, the international literature on positive youth development stresses the importance of treating youth as significant agents, with their own perspectives, voice, and capability for change. Though youth may commonly be viewed as an untrustworthy, irresponsible, or incapable demographic in need of adults' help, the literature suggests that this perspective is the problem with the current discourse on youth development, and that it should be changed. Rather than promoting interventions by youth
development practitioners that impose development models and initiatives onto youth, the youth should first be consulted for their perspectives and ideas, and provided with the space to make their own decisions and be their own agents of change. Finally, I have provided a background on the history of Central America, beginning with the wars that ensued as a result of social and economic inequality and external intervention. Demonstrating the ways in which war and violence developed in Central America, I revealed how the social environment, and broader national and international structures can push local people to take action. The people of Nicaragua endured much repression from the state, and as a consequence, started a revolution that was eventually victorious. Repressive police policies throughout Central America have also demonstrated the ways in which youth are not only recipients of the repressive tactics of police, but also react to them, demonstrating their agency and potential for impact. Additionally, the social capital that developed at the time of the Revolution in Nicaragua was not something imposed from above (at a national or global level), rather, it was a product of the initiatives and actions of the revolutionary actors. It was the people at the local level who came together to change the destructive, harmful state of society, creating social capital in the process. Thus, while I address different sectors of literature, all reveal that the local is significant, and that change is certainly possible when individuals interact at the local level.
CHAPTER 3: FIELDSITE AND METHODOLOGY

León, León, Nicaragua

The first step in conducting this research project was to make contact with an organization in Nicaragua. In my case, the research question developed out of the organization, rather than the other way around. In terms of choosing an organization with which to work, I first chose the municipality León, located in the department of León, Nicaragua. This colonial, urbanized municipality of León is also home to one of the first universities in all of Central America. University students in León were in fact one of the contributing forces to the Revolution in Nicaragua, which overthrew the oppressive Somoza dictatorship in the late 1970s. In the early 70s, university students were among those who joined the revolutionary struggle against the Somoza dictatorship, by participating in hunger strikes and drawing increased attention to the Sandinista party, FSLN (Black 1981:85). León has also been a significant department in the country, due to its previous status as the capital city, which alternated for many years with Granada since Nicaragua's independence from Spanish colonizers in 1821. However, Managua has officially been declared the capital city since 1852. Taking into consideration its status as a municipality deeply rooted in education, and social and political significance, I considered it to be an appropriate fieldsite in which to carry out my research, which was initially concerned with social activism and community involvement in Nicaragua since the Revolution.

Contacting An Organization

Before further developing my research project, I wanted to have contact with the organization in order to meet the people with whom I would ultimately be working. I wanted to hear straight from the source what type of work they do, what their principal interests are, and to see whether it would be possible to carry out my fieldwork with them. I felt it important to ensure that the members of the organization would be comfortable and happy working with me and open to having a researcher take part in and observe their organization for several months. Though such a connection can often be made
online in the modern era of internet technology, I found it rather difficult to find organizations online in Nicaragua. I was further advised by my supervisor to go directly to my prospective fieldsite in person before deciding that it would be an appropriate site for my fieldwork.

With this in mind, I took a trip to Nicaragua for the first time before the onset of my fieldwork to see if I could establish a connection with an organization. The organization I would end up working with for three months was essentially brought to my attention by luck. When I first arrived in Nicaragua, I had already made contact with three or four organizations via email, connected through faculty members of universities in León. However, upon arriving in León, I discovered that these organizations were not in León, León, but were in more remote areas of the department of León, quite far from where I had intended to stay. I then inquired of the family with whom I was staying if they knew of any nearby organizations that worked with the community. The father told me he knew of an organization whose work seemed applicable to my interests and said he would be happy to set up an interview for me with them. And so, I went to the meeting (with a friend who fortunately could translate for me, as my Spanish at this time was not quite adequate), and had the first of what would be many wonderful encounters with the volunteers of Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense (MCN).

The two individuals who met with me were more than happy to share the history of this 35 year old organization (established in 1978), what their goals were, and how they strive to achieve them. Everything I learned that day about their goals and motivations were very intriguing to me, and I was interested in learning more. They were also very excited to have an international researcher taking an interest in their organization. I further found out that MCN was a nation-wide organization with branches throughout the entire country. The connection was established, I was overjoyed to have found this particular organization and I was happily welcomed into their group.

**Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense**

Through my first two meetings with the volunteers, I learned about the activities that they carry
out in their MCN branch, as well as many other branches in various departments of Nicaragua. Later, I discovered that MCN is a nation-wide organization with branches that exist in 11 out of 17 departments and 75 out of 156 municipalities, according to my informants (though some data suggests there are fewer at the municipal level [City Population 2014]), signifying its ability to have a widespread impact on communities all over Nicaragua. I discovered that Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense, in general, works with the people from the community, striving to defend their rights. The organization's slogan is, “De la comunidad, en la comunidad, para la comunidad”, or “Of the community, in the community, for the community”. I also discovered that the organization works in large part with youth, and recognizes the importance of placing much attention on youth, as a means of preventing them from getting involved with more harmful activities, such as drugs, alcohol, violence, and delinquency. Specifically, some of the activities MCN principally carry out with youth include educational talks, health education and nursing courses, providing employment opportunities, campaigns to access basic services, and recreational and cultural activities. During my second meeting with MCN, many volunteers attended, and explained why they were involved with the organization. Many times over, these volunteers explained to me that if they provide opportunities for youth to participate in sports, for example, then the youth will have something to do to occupy their leisure time and they will be part of a group. For these reasons, they told me, the youth would be less likely to spend their time on the streets getting involved with violence, drugs, delinquency and so on.

The organization will be discussed in greater detail in the analysis section, where I will discuss its history, the transformative nature of its mission and vision statement, its current focus and areas of interests, the voluntary nature of the organization, the strategies it carries out, and its perspectives on youth violence.

Having chosen my organization and having learned about its background and current interests, I returned to Canada and with the help of my supervisor, reshaped my research plan to complement the
main features of MCN. Taking into consideration its emphasis on and work with youth, and the knowledge that, in comparison to its Central American counterparts (namely Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador), Nicaragua has lower levels of youth violence, the new research project developed. My new focus was on what strategies MCN considered important for deterring youth from involvement with youth violence in their community.

**Language Barrier**

The second matter I wanted to settle in my first trip to Nicaragua was to find a translator, as my Spanish was not strong enough to conduct detailed fieldnotes on the verbal aspects of my participant observation fieldwork, to conduct interviews, or to communicate effectively with the organization's members in general. Once again, my homestay family knew of another wonderful candidate, Brayan Torres, a friend of the family who happened to be just my age, had completed his bachelor degree in social work, had a specialization in political science, and was in need of employment. So, he was invited to the house one night, and by the end of the night, after hours of talking and getting along magnificently well, it was settled. He would be my translator, and ultimately, my survival guide to my new life in Nicaragua.

**Methodology**

When I next arrived in Nicaragua to begin my fieldwork, I wanted to take the first three or four weeks to better get to know the organization's volunteers, improve my Spanish, and conduct participant observation to observe and understand the types of activities that the organization carried out. Within the first two weeks of my arrival, my key informants from León invited me to multiple meetings and events to introduce me to the organization's members and to witness the type of brainstorming sessions the organization held in various municipalities. There was an abundance of meetings happening at the time of my arrival, as MCN was in the process of restructuring the organization's mission and vision statements. Some of these meetings brought members from numerous regions together in one space,
while others were restricted to the members of one particular branch, which exposed me to a variety of interests seen throughout the different regions. In these meetings I heard about some of the principal challenges expressed by the members with regard to their communities as well as the country as a whole. In addition to the types of activities I was observing, in the following two to ten weeks I also observed nursing courses run by the organization, activities with children that took place within the reinforcement school (an after school program for students) in a nearby municipality, meetings with leaders from the various branches, fundraising barbeques, and meetings to try to recruit youth to get involved with their communities via MCN. Throughout nearly all of these events, my translator, Brayan, accompanied me, in order to translate what was being said to provide me with a more in depth-understanding of the content and nature of the meetings/events. Brayan's assistance was also crucial in helping me navigate Nicaraguan public transportation, as many of the events were outside of our municipality.

During the first four weeks, I was also placing much emphasis on improving my language skills by taking Spanish lessons, meeting up with new friends for language exchanges, and practicing my language skills with my homestay family and with MCN members. In my third week of fieldwork, I also began giving English lessons to several of the MCN volunteers. This was a wonderful way of establishing a relationship and a better rapport with the volunteers. It also provided me with the opportunity to give back to the community, which was so generously offering their time and assistance to me. The members that were most dedicated to the English lessons came to be my key informants, and thus very helpful throughout my research process.

Before conducting each of my interviews, the interviewees were asked to sign an informed consent form so that they fully understood their rights as my informants. This form included a section on anonymity, which stated that their names and any other personal identifiers would not be published in my final work. Each of the informants signed these forms. However, before the onset of the
interviews, I asked each participant if they would like to choose their own pseudonym that would be used in my thesis. It was at this point, for the most part, that I realized informants had no interest in concealing their identity. One informant outright refused to use any pseudonym, and several others chose nick names they had, or names that would in some way represent their identity. For example, some used names that rhymed with or were dangerously close to their actual names. After returning home to Canada, I realized that using pseudonyms was not necessary for my thesis, as the members were proud contributors and had no desire to remain anonymous. I did have the opportunity, however, to obtain some signatures on forms declaring that identities could be exposed while on a brief trip to Nicaragua following my fieldwork. Unfortunately, I could not obtain consent from all informants. However, for those who have formally agreed to have their identities exposed, I have listed their specific roles in MCN. For these individuals, I have continued to use their previous pseudonyms, as they still remain meaningful to the participants, and further, in this way, the naming process is consistent among my informants.

I planned to postpone my interviews until I was more comfortable with the Spanish language, the MCN members, and the organization itself. I wanted to have a better understanding of the types of activities they carried out and what their main interests were before commencing the interviews. Therefore, I began my first interview in my 5th week in the field. I also began conducting interviews with the informants I was most comfortable with (and who were most comfortable with me) in order to ease into the interviewing process. Brayan also was present for the majority of the interviews. However, there were two interviews toward the end of the interviewing process that I conducted on my own, as Brayan was unable to come to the interviews at the required time, and I considered my Spanish skills sufficient by that point.

All but four of the sixteen interviews took place in MCN spaces, often referred to as “casonas” or communal houses. These were spaces in which both the interviewee and I were comfortable, as we
usually spent much time in these spaces and further, the *casonas* usually provided us with a quiet place to talk. Additionally, MCN, in general, considers their *casonas* a space open to everyone who can make use of them, and so they were often the most logical places for conducting interviews. Apart from interviewing in the *casonas*, two interviews took place in an MCN member’s home, because the *casona* was not available at the required time for use. Another two interviews were also conducted in a house of another MCN member for convenience purposes, as the house was closer to an MCN event we had just attended than was the *casona*.

With regard to saturation of data, sixteen interviews were carried out under the assumption that this would provide sufficient data, as the research question draws on one principal group of interviewees: volunteers of Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense. There was no need for any form of comparative analysis between separate groups. Though the roles of the various groups vary, the overarching purpose of their work is the same – to contribute to their communities – and further, all volunteers work with youth in their communities. According to Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), saturation within the interviews conducted in a relatively homogeneous population is reached after twelve interviews, thus sixteen interviews were considered sufficient.

Although interviews ranged significantly in length (approximately between twenty minutes and one and a half hours), the average length of the interviews was approximately one hour. All interviews were carried out in an open-ended, semi-structured format, to allow the participants the opportunity to express their own, personal ideas and perspectives in relation to my questions, in a private setting. My technique for recruiting interviewees principally entailed meeting volunteers at MCN events, learning about their roles in the organization, listening to their comments at meetings and subsequently, asking to speak with them if they seemed like appropriate candidates for my interviews. Another technique I used was snowball sampling. This principally entailed going to my key informants, who were generally very knowledgeable of the different members in the various MCN branches, to ask who
would be an appropriate member to interview. This was the logical method to use when I had not yet
been acquainted with an MCN member who could provide very rich responses to my interview
questions, which, without going to my key informants for advice, I would not have received.

With regard to the interview questions themselves, I wanted the first few sets of questions to be
simple and not require too much reflection or address any potentially sensitive subject matter, so as to
ease the participants into the interviewing process. Thus, initially, I inquired about the volunteers'
specific role in the organization and the types of activities they carry out in that role. Next, I asked
questions regarding the characteristics of the youth with whom the volunteers work (in terms of
familial background, socioeconomic status, relationship with police, the importance of MCN activities
to youth). I further asked the volunteers what it means to them to support youth. The next set of
questions centred around violence in terms of what violence exists in their communities, and their
opinions on what factors cause violence. Subsequently I questioned them on the factors they consider
prevent violence in their community and on whether punishment or preventative methods are more
effective. The following questions dealt with the funding of their organization and the volunteers’
views on international trade and the importance of internal and external markets. Finally I asked for
any closing thoughts on any of the issues discussed, so as to provide them with the opportunity to
express important thoughts they did not have the chance to express in the other interview questions.

In terms of the demographic of interviewees, I wanted to achieve a variety of responses in my
interviews so as to not miss any interesting insights from the volunteers. For that reason, I tried to
interview MCN members who performed a variety of different tasks within the organization. Some
volunteered for a reinforcement school, others were coordinators of youth commission in various
municipalities, others were national coordinators, others department coordinators, some coordinators of
health commission, and others teachers of nursing courses offered by MCN. Interviewing informants
with different roles would allow me to achieve a broader perspective on the strategies used and
opinions held in relation to my research question. A more detailed description of these various roles is listed in the table below. Additionally, I wanted to receive responses from both males and females to avoid a bias from either one gender or the other, and I also wanted to interview volunteers from a variety of ages. A range of ages would enable me to receive responses from volunteers who have been working with the organization for different lengths of time, to again allow for more variety in the perspectives/responses of the volunteers. Moreover, older members would be particularly helpful in providing personal experiences and insight from the Revolution. For specific demographics of the informants, see the table below.

Interviewee Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Youth?</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maitexu</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Volunteer of Reinforcement School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Coordinator of Health Commission, Participant in Campaign Against Energy deficiency, Participant in Youth Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabuka</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Coordinator of Youth Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Loco</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>MCN Coordinator, Legal Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briana</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>National Coordinator of Youth Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Coordinator of Youth, Representative of MCN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bebito</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teacher of Nursing School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erika</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Coordinator of Youth Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabroso</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Departmental Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pereira León</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teacher of Nursing School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fhole</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Assistant of the Departmental Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Volunteer of Reinforcement School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chela</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Coordinator of Municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tita</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Coordinator of Youth Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Güiricero</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Protector of those with low economic resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arito</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Volunteer of Reinforcement School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have omitted the specific departments and municipalities in which the interviewees work to maintain
their confidentiality. However, interviews were conducted with MCN members from the departments of León (13 interviewees), Managua (2), and Chinandega (1), and from the municipalities of León (6), Walter Ferreti (3), Managua (2), Mina de Indai (1), Malpaisillo (2), El Viejo (1), and Nagarote (2), with one volunteer representing two distinct municipalities.

**Challenges/Ethical Issues**

One of the challenges/ethical issues I encountered in my project took place in the interviews. Because, in a way, I felt like a guest in MCN (though they so kindly insisted that I should consider it my home), and because I was so grateful for everything the members were doing for me, I never wanted to assert any sort of authority over any other member or interrupt their natural order of things. Therefore, during some of the interviews, at times people would walk in, either to interrupt the interviewee, or to have a discussion with someone else while the interview was taking place, or at times would listen to what the interviewee or I was saying. Because I did not feel comfortable saying “Shhh!!” or “Puedes salir, por favor,?” or “Can you leave, please?”, sometimes the interview would be overheard, or an interviewee's train of thought would be interrupted by someone coming in and shuffling through the office drawers. However, despite these interruptions, I have still achieved an abundant amount of data, and in most cases, was able to get back on track smoothly with the interview after an interruption occurred. And if there had been anything an informant was uncomfortable saying in front of someone, they likely would not have expressed those ideas in the presence of others.

Another aspect I was conscious of throughout my time in the field was my positionality. I could not help but notice that the majority of the members of MCN seemed to hold me in rather high regard, which likely was a result of my status as a white Masters student from a Canadian university who was interested in their organization. They would often give me a formal introduction at meetings, and would even interrupt an activity in the middle of a nursing course to introduce me when I arrived. At times, and much to my surprise, the entire group would applaud me after an introduction just for taking
an interest in their activities. Further, they would sometimes ask me to make speeches at important events (even though I had little knowledge of what was going on in comparison to others and had rather unimpressive Spanish skills). Additionally, they were always happy to help me with my various requests. I consider myself very lucky, because I cannot be sure that locals would have been treated with as much as importance as I was. However, I tried my best not to take advantage of this status. I was sure to always remain humble, praise them and their work during my speeches, and only ask favours when they were crucial to my fieldwork. If I ever felt there was a chance I might be imposing on a particular event, I would refrain from asking for an invitation. I was always sure to be as gracious as possible for every one of my informants' favours and would let them know that I was very impressed with their efforts within the organization and that I found their commitment and efforts very admirable.

During my fieldwork, I also had the issue of the Spanish language barrier. Although I am certain my data (fieldnotes, in particular) are not as rich as they could have been had I been completely fluent in Spanish, my translator Brayan helped me significantly on this point. As mentioned earlier, he came to nearly every MCN event I attended, and could thus tell me what people were saying when it was too fast for me to follow. I was very lucky in that Brayan was exceptionally talented at summarizing what people were saying, even after they had been talking for 10 or 15 minutes straight. Furthermore, he attended almost all of the interviews, he helped me set up meetings and clarify when and where they would be taking place, and helped me phrase my interview questions properly. Additionally, whenever anyone asked me a question in Spanish and I had absolutely no idea what was said, I knew all I had to do was turn my head to Brayan and he would bail me out. He also helped me substantially in the transcription process. After the interviews were complete, he would transcribe them for me, send them to me, I would translate them from Spanish to English, and he would review my translation and fix any mistakes.

With regard to rapport with my informants, I am not certain of whether or not I would have
been able to establish a stronger relationship with them if I had stronger language skills. With the skills I did have, I still felt as though my informants (especially my key informants) understood my intentions, appreciated my interest in their organization, trusted me, and were willing to be both my informant and friend. Though conducting fieldwork in a Spanish speaking country without being fluent was challenging, it certainly was possible with the help of my translator and a little determination.

**Conclusion**

Here, I have discussed the significance, brief history, and means of choosing my fieldsite, with reference to the municipality of León and the organization with which I worked, Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense. I also revealed the methodology I carried out during my research, including both participant observation and interview techniques. Finally I discussed the challenges and ethical issues I faced during the research process.
CHAPTER 4: MOVIMIENTO COMUNAL NICARAGÜENSE: STRUCTURE, LOCAL INSIGHT, AND PYD STRATEGIES

**Vision, Mission, and History of MCN**

Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense is a grassroots organization that is strongly committed to being a community-based organization – an organization *of* the community, *in* the community and *for* the community. However, the main goals and principles of the organization have shifted over time. Initially, the organization was born out of the Revolution, founded in 1978, the year before the Sandinistas overthrew the Somoza dictatorship in 1979. When MCN was created, it was named Comité de Defensa Civil, or Committee of Civil Defence, which emerged out of the insurrectional struggle against the Somoza dictatorship. However, in 1979, the name was changed to Comité de Defensa Sandinista or Committee of Sandinista Defence, when the organization principally aimed to reinforce the ideology of the Nicaraguan revolutionary, Augusto Sandino. Sandino was a man who fought against dominating forces of the United States whose military had been occupying Nicaragua since 1912 (Walker 2003:20). Sandino, also referred to as “The General of Free Men” (Kallan 2009:12), was fighting for a free country and for peace. When MCN changed its name, it was aligned with the Sandinista government, FSLN. However, the name changed once more to its current name, Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense, or Nicaraguan Communal Movement, in 1988. At that time, the organization's priorities were changing, placing a larger emphasis on the community, and the youth, and detaching itself from the government and politics. The organization was, in some ways, going back to its roots, emphasizing the importance of “human strength and commitment to justice, equality and full democracy” (Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense 2013). From that point forward, MCN has maintained its autonomy and independence from all political parties and its mission and vision has principally centred around the community. Today, MCN is considered by its members to be a social autonomous movement.

The mission and vision statements of MCN have gone through several changes. The first was
established in 1992, when MCN aimed to refocus its attention on the people of the community. At this
time, MCN emphasized pluralism within the community – incorporating women, men, boys, girls –
with an elevated social consciousness, in the defence of human rights, justice, democracy and
independence (Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense 1992). In 2005, it changed again by incorporating
a focus on economic, political, social, cultural, ethnic and environmental rights, as well as gender and
different generations (MCN National Council 2013). In 2007, another change to the statements took
place, when the emphasis shifted to improving the quality of education, which currently remains on
their agenda. With regard to education, although Nicaragua passed law 89 on the Autonomy of
Institutions of Higher Education in 1990, signifying free and open access to higher education
institutions to all Nicaraguans without discrimination (National Assembly of the Republic of
Nicaragua), MCN still asserts a need for an improved quality in education, and also the desire to
increase the numbers of students enrolled in school (fieldnotes June 7, 2013). Furthermore, MCN
acknowledges the issue of schools producing students with skills that are not relevant to the job market.
In an interview, El Loco, one of the principal leaders of the organization, expressed that, “there is
disengagement...in the reality of employment and what the universities do. The reality of employment
is a technical training, I mean, there isn't really technical training in this country”. This concern that
students are not being trained in skills that can be utilized in the Nicaraguan workforce was echoed
many times in the various meetings I attended at MCN. The members of MCN thus believe that a
change in the education plan is needed, and further, they believe that youth should be raising their
voices on this issue.

Currently (2013-2014), MCN is revising its mission and vision statement yet again. These
changes are being made because the members of this organization believe that it is important to evolve
the organization as the community evolves, and as new needs, new perspectives, and new problems
arise. As Sabroso, a long-time MCN volunteer, expressed:
There are things that were valid 35 years ago, right, but they were in different contexts, they were different times, as much historical, as economic. Now we are in another stage. So the MCN, we should...define new strategies. That's something we are working on.

And so, MCN has made – and continues to make – a great effort to be current, keeping its main interests in line with the current issues and with younger generations. Erika, who is the coordinator of youth commission in her region, when explaining her motivation for being involved with MCN explained that, “I like its mission, its vision, to be in constant communication with the young kids of different ages, different places with different ambitions and interests and maybe that diversity that exists in MCN is what I like, it is what calls my attention”. For Erika, MCN's willingness to listen to the youth and to have an array of interests that are applicable to the numerous people in the community are important, compelling characteristics.

One of the main issues today in Nicaragua is the lack of jobs available for youth. The majority of jobs are held by the parents, and so the children must depend on their parents. Furthermore, MCN members expressed that jobs that are available for youth are principally given to those youth aligned with the FSLN government (fieldnotes June 30, 2013). This was a concept also expressed in Lancaster's ethnography. One of his informants explained, “I'm sorry to say it, but that's the way it is. You have more job and educational opportunities if you're a member of the Sandinista Youth” (Lancaster 1992:137). And so, if the youth are not aligned with the government, new jobs are not available for them, and if their parents are no longer working or can no longer support them, what can they do for money?

Another of the internal issues that MCN is currently trying to improve upon is communication within their organization so that ideas can openly be communicated throughout the national organization in a non-hierarchical fashion. Moreover, various members mentioned the need to ensure that the voices of the youth in particular are being heard, as adults have a tendency to take over the
authoritative positions, neglecting the views of the youth. El Loco, for example, reveals the responses of the youth when asked about the greatest weakness of the organization. They say: “[It's] the relationship with the adults, because the adults don't listen to us, they don't hear us”. He goes on to explain that,

There is a problem in the medium, of communication, because...they put the adult in the position of respect, but when [the youth] don't ask directly for [that position of respect], it is the adult, the villain in the movie [that gets it]. So, I believe we still need to emphasize how to achieve a link between the generational gaps.

Thus, the disconnect between youth and adults is a problem that the organization is trying to address. They want to more strongly emphasize the importance of enabling youth in their organization to make their own decisions and have their voices heard. A final broader goal, which in some ways incorporates the previous one mentioned, is the goal of solidarity between people. This is a goal that MCN hopes to achieve in the realms of the community, the neighbourhood and the organization. Thus, as new problems and ideas arise, Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense evolves and adapts in line with those changes, which likely accounts for its ability to survive for 35 years in a socially, politically, and economically dynamic, challenging environment.

**Volunteerism**

One other point to make about this organization is that all of its members are voluntary. On my first visit to MCN, the members I met with strongly emphasized the fact that those who work for MCN volunteer for MCN – that there is no money involved. They believe of great importance is working for the organization not with self interests of gaining money, but with the interest of working towards a cause, such as improving one's own community. These members recognize that once money enters the picture, the organization's members may lose sight of what their initial goals and motivations were, making their roles as volunteers crucial to the functioning of MCN. When asked how the organization confronts financial problems, Negro replied:
Look, this is the unresolved part in the organization...many people start to laugh at this organization because they say we are crazy. We are crazy because...uh...we don't have salaries...uh...because we are in a country where there is no employment, to be doing something to create change for nothing, for many, is madness because this organization amazes you. We here don't have funding from anybody, no one gives us money...we work with the people without receiving a single córdoba [Nicaraguan currency], nothing more than with the enthusiasm of these people...these people are empowered...But in general this organization, it works without economic resources...The backbone of this organization has been volunteering...it is because of what volunteers have done that this organization is going to be 35 years old on September 9th, because without the people volunteering to work for the community, this organization already would have disappeared, just like more than a dozen other organizations that existed in Nicaragua. And it has been the only one that today is 35 years old and still we continue struggling for the people without one córdoba.

Negro suggests that the survival of this organization very much depends on its voluntary nature. The fact that members of the community are willing to volunteer in exchange for nothing (monetarily speaking), demonstrates the members' commitment to MCN's goals and principles and the fact that involvement with the organization is not about self interest.

In terms of external jobs, at least some of the MCN members I worked with had jobs outside of their involvement with MCN. Big, for example, worked at a paint store when not mobilizing youth in the community and organizing nursing activities. Some of the individuals who took part in the organization were also studying at universities. One of the volunteers at the reinforcement school, who was an international volunteer with a background in architecture, received a job as a professor in one of the universities while I was doing my fieldwork. The doctors that taught the nursing schools at MCN also had external jobs in the medical profession, and one had a second job as a lawyer. While these doctors were provided with a small supplement of money (mostly to cover travel expenses), their work was essentially volunteer work, and they both explained to me that volunteering was very important for them as an act of humanitarianism. They both desired to pass on their own knowledge for the benefit of others in the community who were in need. Though this was never confirmed, I was told that some of the national leaders may receive some form of compensation, but that in general, the members of
MCN are volunteers. The only confirmed salaries I learned about were those offered when large projects would be funded, which does not occur on a consistent basis. Some of the members did not have jobs outside of MCN and did not receive salaries; however, this was likely a consequence of issues of unemployment in the region.

The organization's willingness to volunteer for the good of the collective and its large emphasis on the community signify the existence of social capital within this organization, which, when circulated to others, can spread the ideals of social capital. Many volunteers expressed that, having been benefactors of the organization themselves at a younger age, they wanted to give back to MCN as a means of saying thank you, and continuing the tradition, by helping younger generations. This illustrates how MCN is an organization truly dedicated to improving the community and community members, and further, that involvement with MCN is much more than a “job” for volunteers. As Chela, a long-time MCN volunteer reveals:

With the MCN...they aren't people that are going to say “this is yours” “this is mine”, no, this they do for the well-being and good of the community, they never do this to say “this is going to stay with me”, “this is yours”, no, never ever, because we don't have anything.

Volunteering with MCN, then, is part of a broader goal of creating empowered members of the community and positive social change.

The volunteering of time further suggests the volunteers’ belief that change can be accomplished, and that their efforts put forward in the organization are vale la pena, or worthwhile. To demonstrate this point, El Loco described community member involvement in a housing program organized by MCN, where three national conferences were assembled with five thousand people in each congress. He goes on to explain how funding the transportation for so many people to attend was beyond MCN's capabilities, with their low level of resources. However, he then posits the question:

'Who made the difference?' The people. The people paid their fare, the people brought their food, the people brought their own cultural group. The Leonese moved 10 buses, I
believe, and we didn't pay for the people to come. Now, the people must believe [in MCN] to attend, must feel that it is fair, must know what goes on, above all, because if there is no manipulation, that makes your project sustainable and the principal resources are the own resources of the community that want to change their reality.

This situation demonstrates that MCN is as an organization with goals of empowering the community members, improving the community's situation, and further, it is an organization in which community members place their trust and faith. They are willing to invest their own personal resources into the organization in the hopes that those efforts will translate into positive social change for the community.

In addition to the voluntary nature of MCN, it is also an organization with very low levels of resources, as mentioned. Because MCN is not aligned with political parties, it receives no money from the government, which is a very important aspect of maintaining its autonomy. MCN does not receive funds from the government because, as Tabuka states, “we are a social autonomous movement [emphasis added]. We aren't a state of the government nor are we political parties, we are autonomous and we are a non-profit organization”. MCN receives some money from international organizations, however this amount is often very low and unstable. Furthermore, even less money is received from Nicaraguan organizations. The members recognize that often, with money, comes an agenda that will likely lead to the altering or deterioration of MCN's own agenda against its will. For example, when explaining that MCN only has the support of a few Nicaraguan organizations, El Loco mentioned the problem of the “terrible protagonist”, whose standpoint is: “I have the power. I have the money. I have the command.” Not many Nicaraguan organizations have supported them because he knows that with their money often comes an ulterior agenda. This exemplifies the fact that, despite its difficult economic situation, and the structural nature of funding, MCN refuses to surrender its agency, even though it means sacrificing potentially large sums of money. El Loco further explains that MCN does work with international organizations, but only on the condition that “the counterpart has the same nature, same visions more or less in common, in reality. Otherwise, [the partnership] becomes an
obstacle.” Therefore, MCN only accepts money under conditions in which both the donor and MCN have the same interests. For that reason, Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense operates on a very minimal budget, but maintains its own mission and vision, and its status as an organization of the community, in the community and for the community.

**Commitment to Youth**

An integral aspect of MCN is its emphasis on youth. For example, MCN members strive to incorporate the views of the youth into the mission and vision of the organization, to teach the youth that they can and should play an important role in the community, to guide them in doing so, and to guide them in making decisions for themselves. This emphasis on youth was very prevalent throughout the course of all my interviews and further reinforced the notion that MCN maintains a high degree of social consciousness in the domain of youth. The MCN members revealed two reasons as to why youth were an important population in which to invest. These include the demographic importance of focusing on youth, as they represent the largest sector of the Nicaraguan population, and the belief that youth are beings capable of change.

Nicaragua is highly populated by youth, with 52.5% of the population under the age of 24 (The World Factbook 2014). This fact alone automatically makes youth important potential contributors to society. If such a large sector of the population does not care about the community, is not educated, cannot find work, or turns to violence, the community is not likely to be a safe, prosperous place with conscious people. Negro, one of my key informants from León, reinforced the notion that the youth are in large part responsible for the state of society because they represent the “demographic bonus”. In other words, the youth are the biggest part of the population, making Nicaragua “a country of youth”. He goes on to say that, “We [the youth] should at least be prepared and above all be conscious that the society is in our hands.” The youth in Nicaragua, therefore, represent a potential means of improving (or worsening) societal conditions. This suggests the importance of investing in this particular
Tabuka, the coordinator of the Youth Commission in the León branch of MCN, emphasized to me the importance of law 392 passed in 2001 in Nicaragua. This law, drawing on the LBJ Journal of Public Affairs, emphasizes the growing demographic of youth (ages 18-30) and the importance of creating social and political opportunities for the youth (Carrión 2005:20). It further stresses the importance of youth's “employment and entrepreneurship; education, health recreation, culture, sports...and [youth's] participation and exercise of political rights, with the creation of space for youth engagement” (Carrión 2005:20). Tabuka expressed the importance of not violating the sector of youth in society, specifically in regard to respecting the rights and decisions of the youth. He went on to explain that, by implementing law 392-related policies, Nicaragua could stop the occurrence of violence, because the neglected youth are often the cause for such violence. He believes that enabling the youth to develop their abilities and take advantage of opportunities will lead to less violence and thus, a better, safer community. Therefore, there is a general awareness in this organization of the importance of youth with regard to the population demographic and its greater consequences for society. Moreover, there is also an awareness of youth's significance at a national, governmental level, reflected by law 392.

Second, is the notion that youth are indeed capable of having an impact on their society. Many interviewees were of the opinion that youth have more creativity, more energy, more drive, and thus, more capacity to create change in their societies, in comparison to older adults. Older generations, alternatively, may become “stuck in their old ways” and unable to envision a new way of life, or alternative possibilities to the existing order. This is not to say that youth will unquestionably have an impact, but rather, that they are capable of doing so. Maitexu expressed that,

The youth, the young people have the capacity, more capacity to change than the adult people. So, the youth should participate, because they have more strength, more ideas, and more possibilities. The mind is more open to the world, at least they should have an
open mind to the world and have more capacity to change and to do things for their community, because the older people are like, more tired, so the youth should do the activities in society in Nicaragua.

Maitexu insinuates that the youth, in contrast to older adults who are set in their ways, have not succumbed to high levels of self-righteousness, in a sense, and thus are willing to learn, to have their opinions and worldviews altered, and to experience new things. Their open-mindedness, in combination with their strength, then, makes them beings capable of change. El Loco, one of MCN's leaders, who has been with MCN since its founding 35 years ago, reiterated this point, revealing an undeniable truth...that the older you are, the more burdened your head, the less neurons you have functioning, the more schemes you have, more closed-minded you are, that is, in general. So we need to open ourselves to young people, necessarily, if not, we are dead...

Though this may have pained him to say, he could not deny (and be somewhat envious of) the youth's superior capabilities in the context of a communal movement, like MCN. He also stated the importance of having youth involved as a means of sustaining the movement, as the older generation will inevitably need to be replaced.

Additionally, in line with the previous statements, Erika, the coordinator of the youth commission revealed that the youth, those aged 14-30,

are the ones who are most active, they are the ones at the front of the struggles in the community problems...they mobilize the most...I consider that they are the ones who have the most energy, have the best vision and maybe, can create a revolution within systems and well, their participation is important...because the kids want to learn, they want to move forward, they want to change the model of life that they have led.

As we can see, there is a strong belief in the youth as energetic, strong, willing, motivated producers of change. Thus, a crucial finding that likely contributes to MCN's strong commitment to youth is the perspectives and attitudes MCN members hold toward youth.

MCN members are aware of the strength, creativity and capabilities that the youth possess, and the even greater potential they possess for impacting the community as the largest sector of the
population. Thus, by wanting to place their trust and faith in youth, and to invest in the youth, MCN members are also aiming to advance the community as a whole, demonstrating the qualities of bridging social capital. However, the members of MCN recognize that youth need to be fostered, and that they require certain conditions and certain motivators to enable them to accomplish goals, strive for better living conditions and to make them critically aware of their social, political and economic surroundings. This is a task that MCN aims to accomplish. Thus, below I will discuss the principal strategies MCN considers most important in creating healthy, positively developed youth who are empowered to be active, conscious, confident citizens in their communities.

**Working with Youth: MCN Strategies**

The various branches of Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense throughout Nicaragua carry out various activities with youth. As mentioned in the methods section, MCN takes part in many initiatives, which motivate and empower the youth to get involved with their community. Some of these activities include educational talks, health education and nursing courses, brainstorming sessions with youth, recreational activities and cultural activities. However, rather than discussing each of these activities in detail, I will discuss the three underlying strategies that the MCN volunteers utilize and explain why the volunteers believe that these strategies are important when working with youth. Though the activities themselves are important to the youth, my informants had much more to say about the broader underlying strategies that lead to the success of these activities. The first of the three strategies is to occupy the youth's time with productive activities so they are not left to their own (possibly more destructive) devices. The second strategy is to educate the youth, and even more importantly, educating them *beyond* concepts often taught in schools (e.g. math) by focusing on such themes as social skills, sexual education, and the dangers of being involved with gangs and drugs. The final strategy is to treat the youth well, which involves paying attention to the youth, caring for them, listening to them, empowering them, and making them feel like they belong and that they are loved by
As often noted, and as supported by the arguments of Lerner et al (2006), Holt and Jones (2008), Sandford et al (2008), and Riley and Anderson Butcher (2012), an idle mind and body can be a dangerous thing. This may especially be the case for energetic youth with no opportunities for educational or recreational activities or employment. My informants also expressed that youth who are not part of any sort of group to keep them occupied are at risk of taking part in more destructive activities. The youth are particularly in need of being stimulated as they are in their most energetic and creative stage of life. Or, to use Bebito's words, “the mind of the youth is a volatile mind, he lives inventing, he lives innovating, so the youth wants to experiment. So, as he is bored, because he doesn't have a place for recreation, he doesn't have fun. So, he goes to the city”. Going to the city implies that youth, desperate to in some way be active, are going to seek out something to keep themselves busy. However, going to the city in search of opportunity can often lead to joining youth groups and potentially, getting involved with criminal activity. Darwin, who was a benefactor of MCN and now a volunteer, echoes this idea, explaining: “if [the youth] don't have something to be occupied with, the first thing they look for is the street, another companion, the group, the violence, and later, the violence of the pandillas.”

Several of my informants expressed that too much leisure time can lead to violent, criminal or generally destructive behaviour. Youth need to put their energy and creativity to use in some form or another and for that reason, if their energy is not going toward positive activities, the youth's leisure time will likely lead to more violent behaviour. Along these lines, Erika said,

Give attention to the kids and keep them occupied...so that their mind and their body don't have too much leisure time, because the person who isn't investing his energy or his creative ideas in something positive, in fact, is going to invest it in something negative. So I consider that the main strategy is to keep the kids occupied in creative things and that their ideas are expressed, that they take on values, that their ideas are valued so that they have greater enthusiasm to continue expressing ideas in a positive way and not get involved in violence, or generate violence within their head and to
express it which then takes them to them next level of physical violence.

Beliefs such as these explain why MCN devotes much of their effort and time to the youth. While the organization is improving the individual lives of the youth by showing them alternative paths, it is also helping deter youth from violence, thereby creating a safer community. Bebito explains that by getting youth involved in a sports team, for example, where they feel motivated and involved, we are getting rid of the high incidences [of things] like stealing, pillaging, drug addiction, laziness, so...yes...it’s better to help them...to be involved with the youth because the youth need more support, as much from us, as from the society.

This again suggests that youth need to be occupied to avoid involvement with destructive behaviour, and further, that they need support from the society and organizations, like MCN, to keep away from more violent paths. In large part, it is the broader structures of society, in terms of the opportunities made available to the youth (or lack thereof), that effect the decisions the youth make at the local level. If those decisions lead to a violent path, then the community will experience the decisions/actions of the youth in a negative way. However, if efforts are made to direct the youth toward a safer, smarter path, then society can reap the benefits of an engaged, and positively developed youth.

Distractions such as recreational, educational or cultural activities are important simply because they occupy our time. However, perhaps equally important, are the individuals’ sense that they are part of a group, or working towards a goal, where they feel that they are being noticed, and that they are being productive. Negro reinforces the importance of being part of a group where others can recognize one's contributions, explaining that, youth need attention and often “feel that no one sees them, that no one knows them. Then they try to call attention to themselves”. This, he explains, ultimately leads them to the “violent sphere”. Additionally, sometimes it is difficult for youth to form relationships in the first place, but by holding cultural events and the like for a community, the youth are provided with the opportunity to come out and meet new people and form relationships. Negro explains:

It has been noticed that the kids, the young kids, the adolescents of the community, that
live in the same sector...[the] level of relationship between them is usually very limited...and their level of leisure or games isn't the most satisfactory. But this is a place where they can meet, where they can stay, where they have affection. Therefore they are important activities.

Thus, not only does being involved in other activities fill a mental and physical void for the youth, but it also helps to fill an emotional, social void that the youth may be experiencing.

Several informants also suggested a “healing nature” of recreational, educational and labour-related activities for youth. Bebito, for example, expressed the belief that recreational and cultural activities serve “to clear your mind, in times of countless problems that you can have as a youth”. Not having an escape from the difficult realities of life can be draining on any person, but having recreational or educational activities that enable the youth to think about something else can be therapeutic. Tabuka similarly expressed that “recreational sports activities...help as therapy...like therapy to the youth to be able to get away from bad paths.” Indeed, these activities can serve as a chance for youth to forget about other problems they may be facing, and focus on something positive, collaborative, and fun, and to give them something to look forward to.

Furthermore, Fohle expressed that productive activities, such as employment, also assist in creating a sense of responsibility among the youth. She explains that,

because you have the idle mind, you aren't being occupied with anything productive, so you lack the responsibility...So you come and go to the street to do nothing, to do the same silly things...to be rid of the boredom, but of course any person that has employment has to focus on that because it is for their own progress, for the progress of their community.

Along similar lines, Güiricero, pointed to the ways in which recreation psychologically and physically develops the youth. In addition to being productive with their time, by being involved with other activities, the youth are acquiring additional skills and developing themselves in ways that can help them in other aspects of life that may also be beneficial for the community at large.

Interestingly, some informants stressed the importance of educating youth about the value and
function of the recreational activities. Some of the MCN volunteers noted that an individual will not really appreciate a recreational event, will not understand how it works, and will not continue with the activity after the coordinator leaves, unless they are taught how to play the game and taught the value of the activity. In other words, the youth must be educated, in addition to being supplied with the opportunity to play, in order to have the capacity to continue the activity into the future. Bebito described this idea with a hypothetical scenario:

If I go and I get a bag of balls and give them to the youth, only because I feel like giving it to them, the youth don't appreciate it, the youth don't use it right? The gift, they sell it, they pop it, anything...but if I teach the youth that you must take care of the game, that that game has value, I am creating a consciousness and a culture for the youth so that they are going to multiply the values within their community. So the support is very important, the finances are very important, but at the same time to educate, to educate the youth that not everything is free.

Appreciation is a very important aspect of youth's involvement with activities, as Bebito clearly states. The informants, thus far, have shown that such activities can be very valuable and can have great impacts on the youth. However, if they are not also educated on the significance of these opportunities, the opportunities may in fact pass them by. Negro expresses a similar notion, though he refers to financial, rather than recreational opportunities:

The problem is that if we put the financial support first without educating them, without training them, you are going to create dependence for them because they are careless [lacking responsibility]. If you arrive at my house...and you say to me “Here I brought you 1000 dollars”, the first thing I am going to do is not move from my place because you are delivering [money] to me, but if you are dedicated to me, if you train me, if you train me as a person, I am going to be able to...I am going to have the capacity to get that money without needing you to bring it to me...so creating capacity in the people before generating dependence. I believe that bringing money to a community is creating dependency.

He draws attention to the importance of education as a means of capacitating the youth. Examples of this can be seen all over the world, with governments, for example, providing handouts to the poor. However, such actions that neglect to provide people with employment or other opportunities that will enable them to be self-sustainable will only create continuous reliance on authorities for survival.
These ideas suggest that though providing youth with opportunities may serve to fill a current void in their life, these opportunities should be accompanied with education that raises the consciousness of the youth and creates capacities within them to carry out similar projects in the future.

Continuing on the theme of education, there was a widely held belief that ignorance provokes violence. In general, without being educated on the negative consequences of sex, drugs, violence, and so on, youth may enter these spheres unaware of the destructive behaviour they are approaching. However, by teaching them about safe sex, and about what drugs and gang/youth group involvement might lead to, they can proceed with caution, knowledge, and a more critical perspective. Güiricero reflected on the way in which education can make youth more aware of their own actions:

The more educated they are, the lower levels of violence there are, because they know the risks that this provokes, as much psychological as physical, and social...[because those who are educated] know different laws that could punish them when they commit an act of crime or harm different people.

It is of Güiricero's opinion that education can ultimately prevent youth from hurting themselves and society as a whole.

MCN, in particular, carries out and supports educational talks on a variety of themes with the youth. Some of the themes on which the youth are educated include sexually transmitted infections (particularly HIV), contraceptive methods, drug abuse, cultural and recreational activities, and more.

Big revealed that,

We are going to do a meeting at the end of this month and we are going to coordinate with the ministry of health and it's going to be about unwanted pregnancy among adolescents...in helping so many youth at such a young age who are having children. Also [we are going to have a meeting] about drugs. We are going to be doing these workshops with the Ministry of health and the police.

Briana, the national youth coordinator also revealed some of the initiatives she was part of:

I remember that at the age of 15, also with the MCN, we began to give talks about the contraceptive methods with these types of kids at risk, because what happens, some of them already were parents of families...others maybe already 15-16 years old and wanted to experiment with other things like alcohol abuse, sniffing glue sticks that can
bring even greater consequences. So we speak also of, of consuming alcohol.

Briana also mentioned that she personally coordinates such talks with the police. This demonstrates that MCN is very supportive of educating youth, even on uncomfortable themes. The volunteers recognize that some youth will inevitably be experimenting with such activities, and thus, informative talks are essential in helping the youth to more critically understand what they are getting involved in and the potential consequences.

In addition to steering the youth away from more dangerous or harmful paths, education can also assist in providing alternative, more positive paths for the youth. This is especially the case for training opportunities MCN provides, such as nursing courses. These help youth by providing them with skills that they may be able to utilize in the workforce. Reinforcing this point, Pereira León, who is a teacher of one of the nursing courses, revealed that,

Well, here in the course, it is helping so that they know a better way of getting out of drugs, if they take drugs. You are teaching a way to get a job soon, a technical program, a humanitarian program, because this is humanitarian action, it is helping them develop relationships with the communities. It is helping them in a way that they understand that life is beautiful and that the youth are the ones who should take advantage of this life in a healthy way.

In addition to this though, by learning about the ways that they can be involved in their community, and the ways in which they should be critical of their community, the youth can think beyond the confines of their previously more rigid minds, and explore new possibilities. Negro articulates that when youth are not brought out of their confined environments, and taught to be critical of what they know and to see beyond what is directly in front of them, they are never going to ask for more, or strive for more. He says:

You aren't educating these people, I mean, you are momentarily giving them a necessity...you are giving them things so that their needs are just met and you aren't teaching them to look for a solution to their necessities...Almost all the projects are formed to create dependency...not getting the people out of where they are.

However, the volunteers suggest that when you push them, when you educate them, the youth will
strive for more and may be able to attain a better life. Taken together, these points suggest that education can serve to make youth aware of the consequences they face and to be more conscious of their decisions and where they might lead. Further, education can create a safer environment in the community at large, and can provide youth with alternative possibilities and life paths of which they may have otherwise been ignorant.

Another important aspect of education that will serve to empower the youth is educating youth on their human rights, so that they can further be critical of aspects of society that they may have accepted, unquestioned, in the past. By learning more about the political, social or economic state of their society, they can feel more confident and justified in organizing in their communities. In a sense, this education can provide them with the tools to be critical of and debate their reality, thus helping to form a social consciousness. In Erika's explanation of what it means to help youth, she says that,

It's that he learns, it's that he obtains knowledge, to have a consciousness, to learn to define what he wants and well, to give a path to his dreams, to his vision, to his objectives, that he continues and tries to achieve them, that is to help a youth. It isn't to put them in a school nor put them in a university, because, while he can do that, he can't take advantage of that...But if you touch the consciousness, if you give him a voice, if you give him an alternative, you give knowledge, he is going to have everything.

As previously discussed, the quality of education is as important as the quantity of education.

Additionally, quality seems to be particularly important to the members of MCN, who want to have a large impact on the social consciousness of the youth with whom they work. Thus, they aim to provide quality education alongside the space to debate what they are learning and what they already know.

Negro also reinforces the importance of making youth aware of their rights in society:

For me to help youth is...to help enable the youth to be empowered of their human rights, because that is one of our objectives, that the youth are empowered of their right, that they can defend themselves, that they can make demands to the authorities of the municipality, of the department, of the nation, that they are the same.

In addition to teaching youth about the dangers of certain forms of behaviour, and providing them with technical training, youth can also greatly benefit from being educated on their rights as socially,
politically engaged citizens.

With regard to education, some of the volunteers also expressed the importance of educating not just youth, but parents as well. This idea, in large part, came from the belief that acts of violence are learned behaviour. If children witness violence in the home, they will likely reproduce that violent behaviour in their own lives. However, if parents are educated on how to treat their children, and how their own behaviour affects the actions of their children, then perhaps the cycle of violent behaviour can be prevented. Bebito, for example, explains that when youth are raised in violent environments, they are going to reproduce that behaviour, but when they are raised in peaceful environments, they are likely to reproduce peaceful behaviour. Drawing attention to the f”irst educators”, Sabroso states, “For me, the family is the fundamental factor of all society and the first education comes from the family”. Maitexu suggests that, “if your parents try to give you an education and give you values, that helps the youth not get involved with violent situations and not have a violent network”. If we are to accept these assertions, then resources should be placed into educating adults so that they can assist in raising their children in positive ways and in preventing the cycle of violence. To reinforce this point, when asked what she thought was the most important strategy for preventing violence in the community, Briana stated:

The work with the family; school for moms and dads of the families, because the teaching happens from very young, since childhood, from how you raise a child, so that when I arrived at the stage of adolescence, or I arrived at the stage of youth, I didn't arrive with a circle of violence lived since childhood, because if the kid leaves from a violent home and goes to the streets, he is going to reproduce the violence, so the work with the mothers and with the fathers is a very important thing and the work with the children from very early on.

Education is thus very important in terms of teaching social skills that will deter youth or family members from violence. El Loco also was a strong supporter of this idea and commented on his own experiences with trying to educate both children and parents as a means of preventing violent behaviour. He reveals:
With children and adolescents, we have done schools for parents, right? Topics in these schools are mistreatment, the violence against women, the gender violence, the physical maltreatment, the psychological maltreatment and exercises that allow the parents, with their children, to interact in controlled spaces, you could say, right? When we evaluate them, the families feel they have improved, but that is like a control group, that is to say, of a thousand families, we could serve 4, 8, 10, 20, 100, but 90% of these families, in reality, are beyond our capacity to be part of this process. Therefore we need state policies, state policies that allow the facilitation of these processes and I believe that the first process begins in the school, that is to say, from a public perspective in the school, ensuring the relationship between the professor and the student is not a violent relationship, that recognizes that both sides have capabilities, that recognizes that both have knowledge, from the smallest kid to the biggest, and the teacher, that both must know that there are different knowledges and to set some level of respect among them as human beings and as individuals, that physical punishment is avoided, but that apart from that, avoiding a penalty is ridiculous.

Not only does El Loco note the importance of educational activities for families, but he also calls for state policies to further invest in educating whole families as a means of creating respectful relationships between all people (both young and old). This, he hopes, will ultimately lead to a less violent, more supportive, and safer community.

Before proceeding to the final principal strategy, I would like to stress the importance of the idea expressed by MCN members that violence is cyclical in nature, and that preventative methods are far superior to methods of punishment. As volunteers of an organization that works principally with youth, many of the MCN members have been exposed to youth living in difficult, sometimes violent conditions, or they may have experienced violence first hand (though personal experiences with violence were not discussed in the interviews). Thus, they have acquired much knowledge on this particular theme.

Continuing with the above discussion, a message I heard repeated several times over the course of the interviews was that violence begins in the family. If a mother or father uses harsh punishment toward their child or is physically violent with their child, that child is going to learn and adopt that behaviour and reproduce it in his or her own life. Furthermore, as Negro explains, once the parents begin to use violence as a means of raising their child, they will never think to stop using it. Instead,
the violence will likely continue to grow in force:

The abuse begins from infancy...Then there is an adaptability from the child, the child is raised within an environment of abuse. When they reach adolescence, they are still being abused because if [the parents] strongly scold the child, they are going to scold with even more force when they are adolescents and when they become youths they will scold them much more strongly...Then many times the child adapts this way of life and he reproduces it...with his generation.

Using violent behaviour toward youth will likely serve to push them away, potentially resulting in youth moving to the streets where they feel more supported and appreciated. However, this too can lead to further violence as the youth may join a youth group, or gang, where violent behaviour is encouraged. Thus, in both scenarios, the child of a violent family will likely learn violent behaviour from their surroundings and reproduce it.

While violence is often generated and reproduced in the home, it is not restricted to this area. It extends to the streets, the community at large, the political system, and so on. For example, Briana explains that violence in Nicaragua was more common in the 1990s because of the lingering effects of the Contra War, which recruited children as military soldiers. She suggests that, “[t]he context of the 90s, during the Neoliberal period, this period managed to increase the level of violence because of the burden of violence from the 80s, and for that reason, the youth were involved in gangs or youth groups.” The root of the violence, then, can come from a myriad of sources. What is important is that exposure to violence in any scenario can serve to recreate the violence in those who have observed and learned it. Bebito speaks to this issue as well:

The violence begins from and in the home, from and in the neighbourhood, from and in the community...[Theoretically speaking.] I was at home and I saw the violence, the maltreatment, so that is what moulds me, that is what I am creating for my children, that is what I am creating for the youth, that is what I am expressing and the youth are going to multiply this evil, because the youth learn the evil and multiply it rapidly, then the violence is virtually what we inherit from whoever provides us with education, but if we inherit good examples, good habits, good behaviour, we have the capacity to eradicate the violence and if I teach peace, I have to receive peace, then in that way we are going to foster the youth, going to stop the violence and going to find the brotherhood and unity.
As Bebito indicates, it is not only violence and negative behaviour that can be reproduced once learned, but peaceful, nurturing behaviour as well. For that reason, of much importance is promoting preventative measures that serve to support the youth, provide alternatives for the youth, and produce kind, peaceful behaviour among the youth. This concept can be exemplified by Negro. When I asked him why he chose to volunteer with MCN, he explained that he was part of the “golden age” of the MCN intervention done in Walter Ferreti, León that aimed to help the children of families with scarce resources. He explained that the project supported him, helped finance him throughout university, and thus helped him achieve his degree in Agroecology. Negro revealed that, “I felt that I had to give something back to be able to remedy the support that they gave me so I decided to join the MCN to give back by helping other young people, like they supported me”. The support he was shown at the age of 12 and throughout much of his youth was essentially what led him to reproduce that same supportive behaviour toward other children in need of it. On the topic of violence, the overarching message from my informants was that using violence to fix violence simply does not work, and that preventative, re-integrative tactics that focus on providing youth with the right conditions to flourish is the best way to put an end to violence.

The final main strategy revolves around providing positive social conditions for the youth. Specifically, the children/youth should be provided with encouragement, empowerment, and a caring, supportive environment, where they feel safe and that they belong. Maitexu, when asked what was the most important violence prevention strategy, revealed that education is the most important aspect. However, she went on to explain that she was not referring to education in the typical sense:

I am not referring to academic education, I am not referring to teaching math, algebra, I am referring to teaching the child to laugh, to play, to read, to think, to feel important as a person, to teach them their rights and what their duties are for the community, for the entire world.

This concept of emphasizing social skills in education was a crucial aspect of my findings. During my
participant observation, for example, I observed the children in a reinforcement school where they were supervised/guided by the volunteers who helped them with homework, and provided them with various games and various activities. Additionally, the reinforcement school was a place where volunteers would listen to, pay attention to, and provide an assuring smile for the children. During these times, I observed such kind, well behaved children. These were children aged 6-12, on average, an age range which, in my experience, typically consists of very hyperactive, and not always well-behaved children. These children, however, appeared to me to be calm, respectful, happy, motivated children. I observed them quietly doing homework, asking for help from the volunteers, reading books for an hour straight with great interest and dedication, sharing the books with their friends, and even bringing mangoes to all the volunteers in the room as a gift for no particular reason. Furthermore, I saw their faces light up when they spoke with the volunteers who always responded with smiles and encouragement. The respectful and encouraging attitude toward these children appeared to lead to very happy, well-behaved children. This, of course, was just one experience with one group of children that I interpreted, and cannot be proven to be a result of encouraging volunteers/role models/educators. It is, nevertheless, a possibility.

Above are my own interpretations of the interactions I observed between children and MCN volunteers, which I perceived as respectful, caring, and positive in general. However, Negro, in his interview, was kind enough to provide a concrete example of a child that was positively affected by his experiences with MCN volunteers. He spoke of a child with whom he did not previously have much of a relationship:

[When he began to arrive at the reinforcement school he was a very isolated child...but when we began to work with him, little by little he was around us more, he felt more comfortable in the environment, then when we created this leather handicraft workshop, he was the first to arrive and noted, “I want to be here in the leather workshop with you, I want to work with you”. But I asked him, “Why do you want to be here?” “It’s because I feel good”. So, when a child tells you he feels good to be with you, for us it’s a big deal. So we feel that we have helped the people to get out of their isolation, to be
able to make a child come to you is a big deal. There are many children that are isolated because no one pays attention to them, because no one listens to them and to manage to get at least one child to come to you...already that is a reward.

Here, MCN made a difference in one person's life. Negro himself, also expressed his appreciation of and dedication to MCN for providing that supportive space for him when he was a 12 year old child, as did Tabuka and Darwin, who were also previous benefactors of MCN. Thus, the importance of that emotionally supportive and comfortable environment has, at least in some cases, proven to be crucial to those individuals who may have otherwise had no one to turn to for support.

One of the main strategies indicated by the MCN members to empower youth to become active, conscious members of society with the confidence to make their own decisions is to provide them with the space, encouragement, and respect to do so. Rather than imposing ideas on them, or telling them how to think, MCN aims to give them the space to decide for themselves what their problems are, and what improvements they personally would like to see in their lives. This “space” was something I witnessed on numerous occasions in brain-storming sessions hosted by MCN, which principally targeted youth. On this topic, El Loco who, before stating the upcoming quote, looked at me with a very wise, confident, all-knowing look, then explained that:

We, uh, what we do, it's more to accompany [the youth] in that decision process and to suggest, but the decision is theirs. In all cases the will of Movimiento is to contribute space to find, space to debate, space to make collective decisions.

He subsequently emphasized the importance of youth being conscious of their reality and being able to “diagnose it” for themselves. This is very much in line with the arguments of Durand and Lykes (2006), who argue for the importance of giving youth the space to make their own decisions, and trusting them to reflect and act on the issues they deal with in daily life, thereby challenging the traditional patriarchal relationship between adults and youth. Negro, also demonstrating this point, expressed that, “to participate effectively means they can make decisions...so that he can be a protagonist of his life, that he can demand his rights, that he can make decisions about his life and no
one can make them for him.” In this way, by being empowered to think and make decisions on their own, the youth will have the confidence to take matters into their own hands, even outside the MCN space. They will be able to decide for themselves how they feel about issues, and can then act accordingly. This strategy will enable them to begin to take steps toward finding their own solutions to their problems. Sabroso articulates this notion as well, drawing attention also to the importance of respecting youth as capable individuals:

I speak of opportunities, I speak of initiatives...To organize them so that they are part of the solution to their problems, to help...To help [youth] isn't to give them things, if you give them a part, you make them feel dignified. They also deserve not to be manipulated. To help isn't to manipulate them...it's to make them realize they are important, right? To give them opportunities, to give them spaces, that is to help the youth.

This indicates that, if youth are just told what to do, or the adults' opinions are simply passed on to them, they will not grow as thinkers, and they will not gain confidence in themselves. They need to be empowered as individuals, again supporting the international perspective brought forth by Durand and Lykes (2006).

Failing to treat troubled youth with respect and neglecting to listen to their point of view or their problems will likely only further entrench violent or troublesome behaviour. To use Maitexu's words: “If you see a youth with drug problems, you have to treat them with respect, with education and treat them well; treat them like a person, don't treat them as if they were the trash of society. You have to give them the opportunity.” In fact, some of the informants described violence as a lack of respect, or when one's rights, in particular, are not respected. Sabroso, for example, expressed: “Look, for me, violence...independent of its forms, whether physical, verbal, psychological...is when rights are not respected, that is also violence, when you don't respect the rights of other people”. Further, for those who are not respected, not only are they enduring violence, they will likely also never learn to respect others, thus continuing the cycle of violence. Pereira León makes this point, accentuating the fact that
we must be open to listening to and partaking in dialogue with other people, including youth:

The violence isn't more than...lack of respect, lack of principles, lack of morals and...of communication, of truth, and sincerity. If there isn't sincerity, there isn't truth, there isn't communication, there isn't respect between one another, this will lead to generate violence and violence generates other violence. So I support that violence should not be responded to with violence, it must be responded to with a smile, with a hug, with an invitation, with a dialogue.

This point also suggests the importance of listening to what the individual has to say, and actually taking their point of view into consideration. Not only should we respect that youth have an opinion, we should be willing to hear what they have to say and to take it seriously.

El Loco was able to offer some indication of the effectiveness of MCN's attempt to empower the youth. He reveals that,

There is an evaluation that was done on the youth program, of the last year, they say that the youth's self-esteem has improved, that the activities of the Movimiento Comunal improve their self-esteem, that the activities of the Movimiento Comunal give them, therefore, prestige in their community, that makes them feel useful to the community, that they open space to access some possibilities in the management of public governmental institutions, that they have helped to raise levels of knowledge, in some cases, political, in others, academic.

I do not have a copy of the study myself, but the findings he refers to suggest that MCN's strategies are in fact achieving some of the goals they set out to achieve. Through MCN, youth are being given the space to consider, question, debate, and make decisions on their realities. By being educated on their rights as humans, they can become more confident in their own opinions and abilities. In this way, they can begin to enter the public sphere as active, participating citizens of society.

The need to pay attention to, and listen to youth was mentioned again and again throughout the course of my interviews. Some people drew this conclusion based on what they have seen with troubled youth they have encountered, and others spoke directly from personal experience. My informants explained that the youth are people who need to talk, who need to be heard, who need to ask questions, and who need to have people pay attention to them. Erika articulates that,
The youth, we are expressive...in one way or another, of what we think or what we feel. For the most part, when no one pays attention, we try to call attention in many ways and always our families don't listen to us, don't see that we are calling attention. On the contrary, they fight us with violence because the family, the parent of families tends to think the same as professors, psychologists: 'Ah, this is the most vulnerable stage, it's the toughest stage, it's the stage of rebellion'. It isn't true. It isn't the stage of rebellion. It's the stage of curiosity, of changes, where the youth want to try how it is to have autonomy in their lives, how it feels to make their own decisions. It isn't rebellion, it's autonomy, it is a little independence of thought...So, I consider that when the family doesn't see it that way it tends to generate violence for the youth and they tend to look for violence.

In other words, we have to allow youth to be youth and not punish them for it. This means listening to what they have to say and not writing them off as rebels who are not worth the time or effort. Because this type of attitude toward youth is common (particularly among those of scarce resources, according to my informants), MCN members strive to be the people who youth can go to when no one else will listen to their problems, their needs, or support them emotionally. Some members stated that the youth do not even necessarily require that one resolves their problems, because sometimes they just need to vent, they need to know that someone cares about what they have to say. MCN opens its doors to those individuals and offers its support. As Briana explains, her idea of helping a person is: “to come and receive the person and say 'pass through, come, we can talk, we can do something, I can collaborate with you.' From that moment there is an emotional support because you make the person feel important”. She further explains that it does not matter what the person looks like, who they are and whether or not they are wearing shoes. Regardless, she will let them know they are welcome and that people are willing to listen to what they have to say and show them that they are important, as she believes such behaviour helps the youth emotionally. Erika also revealed the ways in which she interacts with youth, demonstrating an urgency to let the youth know that there is a support system available to them. She explains to them:

'If you have a problem, look for me, if you need something, if you have doubts, if you want we can do something together so that we can create a solution for your problem' or 'we talk, what is happening to you, in what way we can help your family, in what way
can we help you, we think together’, I mean, that type of support is what the kids need, that you say to them ‘I am here, it's for you, we are going to help you, my problem is your problem, we are going to resolve it together. Yes, we provide that type of support because it helps them, it motivates them, because there are youth that look for us, in the communities.

Without that support, the youth with negligent, careless families would be alone and would likely go to the streets to be noticed, or to find a social support network, because they need that attention in some form. Having someone to listen to them, notice them, and care about them is an essential need that the youth have, according to the MCN members. Drawing from a personal experience, and further demonstrating this point, Negro explained how his four year old child craves attention from his father and at times will stop at nothing to achieve it:

I am going to give you the example of my child...He is a 4 year old child ...when I arrive at the house after work, at least at mid-day at lunch time, I arrive at the house and if I do not speak to him, if I get tired, if I arrive asking to eat and if I don't even give him a glance, if I don't turn to see what he is doing in the house, he looks for a way to be seen. He can put himself in front of me or call me, he can do something...jump or...or...stand on a chair, he looks for something to do that I will notice. Then those same characteristics exist in adolescence and the youth, the youth look for something so that the world...so that the society will see them.

When he explained this to me, he was very passionate about this point, his eye contact was intense and I could sense his strong desire for me to understand how important it is that these children be noticed. The children and the youth are desperate to be seen and heard and will likely take the steps necessary to make that happen.

In addition to their need to be heard, according to my informants, is the youth’s need to belong to a group. If the youth's family is not fulfilling that need, then it is likely that the youth will find his/her own group to belong to, which may very well be a youth group or gang. Maitexu discusses how she believes youth cope with the void they experience in the absence of a family:

I think that the youth...need to be part of a family. When they don't have one, they look for one in a pandilla, and that is the only way that they feel loved, feel comforted, feel they belong to someone, feel that there are people that are interested in them, because they don't have a family.
A widespread belief revealed in the interviews was that the need to belong was simply a natural part of being a youth, or of being human for that matter. That strong desire to belong is inherent in people, and for that reason, a youth without a supportive family, or group, or without a family at all, will take steps to find one. This idea is in line with that of Granger (2002), who explains that one of the assets common to most lists on PYD is the meaningful relationships youth share with other youth, as well as adults. Thus, being part of a group where a youth can form strong bonds with other people is a very important part of healthy, positive development. Elaborating on this idea, Negro states that,

Naturally, humans are gregarious, humans are made to belong in groups and not alone. Human's don't live alone, so they are always going to look for the company of someone and many times these youth are youth that have been abused, youth who have been tired of living with families, families that have mistreated them, so what they often do is run away from home to live on the streets...What they do is join a pandilla because they don't have to live, because they can't bear to live with their families anymore, so they look for a group where they can be. First, to look for protection from feeling alone, they feel unprotected, they feel afraid. Then they look for a group to feel accompanied and to feel protected. Another is the effect of affection, to be with a group they feel noticed, people take them into account, they are part of a group that is going to accept them or reject them. They want someone to say something...something that takes them into account, and that is why they want to join a gang.

Several interviewees reinforced this notion of the protection or strength the youth feel when they are part of a group, which they like. When youth are alone, there is no one to look out for them, to protect them, they must defend themselves alone. In a group, however, they are fearless, they can accomplish anything. Erika illustrates this point:

[The youth] feel they can't do anything else other than 'join a group to make myself feel strong', because if you work with them alone, you are going to realize that they are very weak, they are people who don't feel the same way when they walk in groups and so 'in groups we attack, in groups we can steal and in groups we are made strong'.

People who may otherwise feel powerless and incapable suddenly become strong, capable and accomplished when they are in groups, even if this means accomplished in the criminal sense.

In addition to this sense of strength and accomplishment, the youth's actions also become
noticed when they are part of a group. In this case, there are people around to observe their actions, which can make the youth feel important as they receive the attention they were deprived of at home. When they are noticed by a group, suddenly they matter – they have an identity. El Loco articulates that,

The *pandilla* calls to you not only for money, but for other personal deficiencies...of self-esteem, of identity, eh, of pertinence, of usefulness, I am going to say, although it sounds ugly, right? “*I am someone*” in the *pandilla* “*I am*”. In the neighbourhood, nobody knows me...[Being in a *pandilla*] develops precisely the process that allows identification.

El Loco strongly emphasized the “I am” part of this statement, very determined to get the point across that being part of a *pandilla* really makes a youth feel important. The youth's need to belong, to be heard, to be noticed, was a central theme in the interviewees' responses. This suggests that MCN's strategy to be a group to which the youth can belong may be a crucial means of deterring youth from youth violence. Organizations like MCN can make a drastic difference in the lives of youth by providing a space where youth can share their problems, their general thoughts, and have their voices heard by people who care about what they have to say. Ultimately, these efforts can serve to prevent violence in the communities. El Loco's point also demonstrates the youth's sense of agency, as he suggests that oppressed or maltreated youth will act to change their own circumstances. Specifically, when they feel personally deficient, they will join a *pandilla* as a means of establishing an identity.

Finally, another important subject expressed by some of the informants was the need to treat youth as youth and children as children. This was touched on previously, with regard to the volunteers' acceptance of the fact that the curious and experimental stage in a youth's life is natural. This concept also applies to children as well, as there are many adults who may not have the patience for overly energetic children. My informants suggest that by punishing a child for acting like a child, we are only harming them and oppressing them, and possibly planting the seeds for violent behaviour in the future.

Negro illustrates this point well in a passionate statement on the need to allow the children to
release their energy, and to follow their child-like instincts: “Many times there are children that for their own characteristic of being children play, are silly, jump, yell, hit, but it's because they are children, they are hyperactive, they are active, they keep playing, this is the only way they feel well.” In explaining this point, I sensed sadness in his voice and his eyes, and almost a desperate desire for the situation to improve. He went on to explain:

So it is such a pity...there are many families where the first thing they do is scold and hit their child. So what they do is put fear in the family, and so the child becomes more sedentary, but a child can't be quiet. From there, from the physical health, from the mental health, you create violence... The...the...fear is injected into that child. And the child is going to reproduce that fear. Therefore, the family is important in each one of the characteristics of violence.

Again, when explaining the way in which the fear is injected into the child, he seemed to be experiencing pain simply from understanding the truth of the matter. It was his strongly held belief that children need to be allowed to be themselves, but that the families often do not allow this to take place. Maitexu also reinforces this same notion, explaining that we have to let children imagine things, dream things...or to draw...express their creativity or...have space where they play, relate and feel like children and don't feel like they are a problem. A problem that many children have in Nicaragua is that they have to help (well, as in all developing countries) their parents. Well, many children are little – they are the age to be playing and they have to help you work. When you take all the play time away from the child, he is not going to recover again, because children are children.

She also explained that in pre-schools, she observed teachers yelling at children or walking behind them with a wooden stick, which left her in complete disbelief. She found that the people she was observing did not make a distinction between adults and children, that the children were expected to act like adults, and, if they failed to, they would be punished. She further expressed the belief and the hope that “other ways of educating a child have to exist without threatening them with being hit because education is not fear, you educate children so that they think, so that they play, so that they have an opinion, so that they are little persons.”

Briana was able to share a story of a troubled youth who spoke with her one time about where
some of his problems stemmed from. This story reinforces the point that children and youth need to be noticed, respected, and allowed to be the children and youth who they instinctively are. She shared that the troubled youth she spoke with had been in prison at least 20 times, by the age of 17, for getting in fights with people and for stealing things. He told her:

'When you have kids, let them go out and play. When you have kids, let them go out, let them talk. My mom and my dad repressed me, didn't let me get together with the kids from the street, and angered me. And when I grew up I left to the streets, I never paid attention to my mom. My mom grabbed on to me and hit me, beat me, but that wasn't important to me because I wanted to walk with the kids on the street...because if my, my mom would have let me play with those kids, then I wouldn't have felt the urge to go out and run away behind them'.

This was the story of a boy who knew exactly what pushed him into a violent, destructive path. The story also demonstrates the importance of the final strategy employed and suggested by MCN: the need for parents and adults to respect youth and children, the child's/youth's need to be noticed, to be listened to, to be loved, accepted, empowered, respected, to feel like they belong, and to be allowed to be the energetic, creative, curious youth and children they are.

**Conclusion: PYD Literature, Social Capital, and Local Actors**

In conclusion, the informants provided detailed ideas, explanations, and examples of the important ways to deter youth from youth violence. These include occupying the youth's leisure time, formally educating youth and even more importantly, informally educating youth (and parents) on social skills and social issues, treating the youth with love and respect, trusting and empowering them to be active citizens of society and agents of change, paying attention to them and providing them with a sense of belonging. Furthermore, as each of these strategies demonstrates, a preventative, re-integrative approach that focuses on the positive aspects and assets of the youth is far preferable, and considered far more effective when working with youth than is violence or other forms of punishment. MCN's commitment to these strategies that foster positive youth development suggest three important points. The first is that the strategies MCN members suggest to positively develop the youth are very
much in line with those suggested in the PYD literature. As revealed in the literature review, current theories on PYD are against punishment-oriented methods, instead supporting methods that strive to reintegrate the youth into society. Further, they focus on the aspects of which the youth are capable, and not the aspects for which they should be punished. In these ways, PYD strategies and those advocated by MCN members aim to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. Additionally, in line with the activities carried out in MCN and the opinions of its members, both recreational and educational activities are supported in the literature (including both formal and informal education). Furthermore, the most prevalent argument in the PYD literature is that, to achieve positive youth development, youth need to be provided with a socially supportive, encouraging, and empowering environment. They need to be given an opportunity to build meaningful relationships with others they can trust, and they need to be given the space to develop on their own, make their own decisions, and be their own agents of change. These were also the most common notions expressed by MCN members. Thus, given that the literature supports the strategies MCN members employ to deter youth from violent paths and to encourage them to be confident, socially conscious, empowered members of society, they are very likely helping youth in Nicaragua in practical ways. Moreover, such activities and attitudes may in fact be responsible for contributing to the comparatively lower levels of youth violence in Nicaragua.

The second point is that MCN members are committed to the principles of supporting development of social capital (as discussed by Putnam 1995, Field 2003, Williams et al 2007, and Anderson 2010) that were fostered during the Revolution. The members of MCN volunteer their time and effort as a means of providing a support system for youth, and more broadly, improving the community as a whole. Furthermore, MCN members do not look down on the youth or attempt to foster vertical relationships with the youth, but rather, respect them as individuals and as youth, and believe in their capabilities as leaders. The characteristics of social capital, such as mutual trust,
coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit, and respect, are all present within the relationship between MCN members and youth. These qualities found in MCN that have been passed on from the Revolution are a likely explanation for MCN's implementation of the positive youth development strategies that are perfectly aligned with those in academic literature.

The third point is that community members' involvement with MCN indicates initiative and a sense of agency, on the part of community members. Due to deeper social, political or economic structural issues, sometimes Nicaraguan youth are unable to experience their childhood and youth in a healthy manner. They may be forced to work from a young age and miss out on educational opportunities, they may have no activities to keep them occupied, may face violent situations in their homes, may be ignored, and may even join gangs. Though state policies have begun to address some of these issues, all of these problems still exist in Nicaragua. Thus, MCN has attempted to address these issues in any feasible ways that it can. By attempting to provide opportunities and important social networks for youth that they otherwise lack, the members of MCN are exercising their agency as local actors to improve local communities. These local actions are important. Drawing on the work of Brosius and Tsing (1997), and Tsing (2005), Stewart (2007), and Philo and Swanson (2008) the interactions that occur at the local level are capable of having important impacts, whether at a local or global level. Though spending time with youth, and building relationships with youth, and helping youth develop their own identities may not seem like actions that will result in drastic change or impact, they are interactions that could have a drastic effect on the lives of the individual youth, as Philo and Swanson suggest. Furthermore, the impact could stretch farther than that, if the youth learn from their experiences and pass those lessons on to others, or become leaders in their own communities, which was the case with my informants Negro and Tabuka. Both received that support at a young age, and are now committed to giving back to their communities by helping a new generation of youth. My research suggests that the actions of MCN volunteers are effective in aiding the youth of
the community. Though this study does not proclaim to investigate the full extent of MCN's impact on Nicaraguan youth, it nevertheless does offer first-hand accounts from beneficiaries and volunteers of the organization that speak to what is and is not effective when working with youth. The MCN members have seen with their own eyes the positive effects of their interactions with youth, and equally important, have seen what impedes the positive development of the youth and what pushes youth closer to violence. To summarize, MCN members saw a gap in the community, and made the decision to fill it in whatever way they could, and are thus important local actors with valuable morals that serve to improve the lives of the youth and ultimately, the safety of the Nicaraguan community.
The Nicaraguan Revolution: Promoting Social Consciousness and Creating Social Capital

According to my informants, the Revolution served to encourage community values and create a social consciousness among its participants. The Revolution marked a time when members from various sectors of society (who would not otherwise be united) came together and fought against their common enemy who was depriving them of their freedom. Despite their seemingly weak positions, regular members of society, including students, the business sector, the church, urban and rural poor, and youth, all organized and fought against the Somoza rule, and a socially just and equal society was envisioned. Unhappy in their current oppressed states, they decided to take matters into their own hands, and a collective movement began. Negro expressed this sense of solidarity created by the Revolution: “Despite the fact that the Revolution was in a context of war, the change in Nicaragua was very strong...the Revolution generated harmony, solidarity, and united the people of Nicaragua.” Here, Negro reinforces Anderson’s (2010) argument (see thesis, pages 29-31) that the people who joined the Revolution were united by a cause, forming a community of revolutionaries who cared for one another, thereby creating a community rich in social capital. This form of solidarity was also witnessed by Bayard de Volo (2001) in her observations of the mothers of heroes and martyrs during the Contra War, and by Lancaster (1992), who observed the norms of reciprocity, sharing, and caring that took place between members of the Nicaraguan community.

The volunteers also recognized the lingering effect that the ideals of the Revolution left on the minds and behaviour of those who took part in it. One MCN volunteer, Pereira León, explained his definition of a “revolutionary” based on his own personal experiences as a man born out of the Revolution:

The revolutionary is he who desires the best for his people, for his community...for his neighbourhood. So, I consider that principally, it gave birth to me and I believe it is in
my blood to serve the community without seeing the distinguished political colours, nor race, nor creed, nothing of the style, but that I have the spirit to help, to support, when I see the need and that I should give a relevant contribution.

Pereira León suggests that his current involvement in the community today is very much a result of his involvement in the community-oriented Revolution. This notion was also put forth by Sabroso, another participant in the Revolution. He shared the belief that “the Revolution has contributed to promoting and influencing this group of social beneficiaries. I mean, the Revolution has played a fundamental role in the impulse of values and social principles”. These beliefs expressed by the MCN members suggest that the nature of MCN is very much intertwined with the ideals created by the Revolution. MCN promotes community values, volunteerism, solidarity and a non-hierarchical organization, which Anderson explains are all values that were a product of the way in which the Revolution developed.

Maitexu, an MCN member who holds an “outsider's” perspective, as she is not from Nicaragua and is there as a volunteer, shared similar beliefs as those mentioned above. Demonstrating an awareness of the effect of the Revolution on the people, she stated her opinion as to why Nicaragua was not as violent as surrounding countries: “In Nicaragua, the people who still have a longing for the Revolution, or the desire for the Revolution, or with the history of the Revolution, they still have a thread of social consciousness”. Based on her few years of experience in Nicaragua, she attributed the relatively lower levels of violence to the social consciousness formed out of the Revolution.

Some volunteers who were active participants in the Revolution were able to shed some light on the effect the Revolution had on their own consciousness. Sabroso, the departmental coordinator of León, is one such example. He details the various stages of his life during the Revolution and the initiatives he took on after its triumph:

I have lived through all those stages and I have been able to analyze them...I have participated, I have been part of that history. For me it has been a great school, right, in my life. And actually, well, well when I was young I went directly from the Sandinista youth, I participated in the literacy teaching, I participated in the war, I participated in the defence of the Revolution...And all that motivated me to build up my ideology as
well, right, my values, right?...So I am telling you that I have a trajectory since I was integrated very young, right, with much sacrifice, right? As I told you I participated in very important tasks of the Revolution, like the literacy teaching, the production, the defence, right? And actually, here, working with the organization of the Movimiento Comunal that is practically a sequence, well, of all that struggle.

Here, Sabroso illustrates that he is very much a product of his history, his personal trajectory. His experiences with the Revolution and the events that followed were an educational experience for him. His ideals and values have been formed by his experiences and for those reasons he continues to volunteer with MCN. During that socially dynamic time in Nicaragua's history, Sabroso came to recognize the importance of contributing to the community and continues to do so, decades later. Sabroso's experiences in the Revolution parallel Anderson's findings that the Sandinistas in Nicaragua are more likely to be members of a club or organization than are non-Sandinistas. Sabroso, a member of the community who did fight for and contribute to the Revolution and that which followed, carried the values he learned forward. While Anderson's findings suggest that the consciousness of the Sandinistas were affected, Sabroso provides a case in point of how an individual can be affected by such powerful experiences. For that reason, being an active contributor to the community remains an important aspect of Sabroso's (and likely many other Sandinistas') life to this day.

Another contribution of the Revolution expressed by MCN members was education. As mentioned, with the victory of the Revolution came the National Crusade of Alphabetization campaign that strove to drastically improve the literacy rate in Nicaragua. The campaign began in August, 1980, and in a period of five months, illiteracy dropped from 50.3% to 12.9% (Walker 2003:124; Hanemann 2005:2). This campaign was initially promoted by Fonseca and carried out principally by youth. Briana explains that the youth involved in this campaign “were convinced that all the people need to read and write, to follow the principles of the Carlos Fonseca: ‘and also, teach them to read’.” She continued to explain that “the education is the factor that is going to develop the country.” The Revolution also implemented popular education methods, which take on a participatory approach that
aims to achieve a more classless, egalitarian society where justice is achieved for the majority (La Belle 1987:205-206). It also strives to enable the oppressed to exercise their power to their own advantage in an organized way, attempts to raise the consciousness of the community, and encourages community involvement (La Belle, 1987, p. 208-210). Negro refers to popular education as an approach with “principles and values that infuse tranquility into the society.” This method is highly representative of the qualities of social capital, and was also likely responsible for further adding to the sense of community and sense of solidarity in Nicaragua. It also provides an illustration of the ways in which members of the community took it upon themselves to create change in their community, and have a far-reaching impact.

In addition to the campaign and popular education approach, the government made education free in the country, another profound development aimed at improving the community as a whole. Several informants also expressed the belief that education leads to lower levels of violence. Negro, for example, stated that “Free education is the principal factor to maintaining a low level of violence, because an educated person is more conscious of preventing violence, and people having free access to education see and understand what the violence is.” Sabroso, reinforcing this point, went so far as to say: “One of the key achievements that Nicaragua is the safest country in Latin America and the Caribbean [comes from the fact that] education is free and there are different opportunities for young people.” Youth's education in schools, their ability to read and access newspapers, and the encouragement given to them to learn in general, serve to expand their opportunities and their minds. Furthermore, with more accessible education, those who might have otherwise spent their spare time on the streets could have structure in their lives, and activities to keep them occupied. One MCN member raised the question, “So, in the 90s, the education was privatized and the youth could not have access to studying, what could they do? Hang in the streets? And start youth groups? But when there is a government that provides free education, this reduces the level of violence.” As mentioned in the
previous chapter, it is believed that too much spare time can lead to adopting violent behaviour learned on the streets, as a means of filling one's time. For that reason, providing youth with education to keep them occupied and aware of the consequences of violent behaviour will lead to a decrease in violence.

Another positive feature of free education in Nicaragua is that it challenged the existing structure in which only the higher classes could afford to attend school. This structure serves to keep the rich rich and the poor poor, as only the rich classes are educated and thus are more likely to receive jobs (and money) as a result. To break the cycle of inequality, the revolutionaries strove to counter that structure and achieve equal opportunities for all classes. As Fohle states, “the Nicaraguan people began to [benefit from] the alphabetization because a high level of poverty existed and [previously] only the privileged ones had access to education, they were the classes who had economic resources.” The free education was promoting ideals of a classless society with equal access to education for all. This provides another example of the way in which horizontal ties were fostered in Nicaraguan society, as suggested by Anderson.

Nicaragua's not-so-distant history also provides the perfect example of the youth's capacity to create social and political change, by breaking down the previous structures oppressing them. The youth were very much involved in the Revolution, and demonstrated strong dedication to social justice and the improvement of their communities. The youth who were motivated to take part in that movement were strongly and negatively affected by their social and political surroundings at that time and, as a result, became conscious, critical and active members of society. They acted against the national and transnational forces affecting their livelihoods for the greater good of Nicaraguan society. Sabroso, also a long-time MCN member who personally contributed to the Revolution as a youth, stated:

The youth play a very important, very fundamental role in Nicaragua, because they are the base of development in the country. And in Nicaragua, the youth have played a role, leading in all the processes, in all the stages, since the Revolution, right? This was a
Revolution that was made with the youth, right?...We were youth, who were integrated into the struggle, we were youth who were in the great tasks, of the literacy teaching, of the production, in the defence, so this is a country of youth.

Sabroso explains that the youth were the people in society who had such a strong impact. Their capabilities during this time demonstrate all the points made by the MCN members on the characteristics of youth. The youth are the people in society with energy, with ideas, with open, malleable and creative minds, and with the motivation to alter the current state of society. In general, the Nicaraguan youth are perceived as potential agents of change.

Furthermore, not only did the Revolution demonstrate the strength of the youth, but also the way in which the youth can be transformed, as Negro reveals:

Of course the Revolution played an important role in that moment and after that, creating and moulding the mind set of the people for the fight for their rights. In actuality, these *banderas de lucha* [Nicaraguan term reminiscent of the Revolution, meaning “struggles”] continue in the hands of the adults.

Negro goes on to explain that though these “*banderas de lucha*” are still continuing in the hands of the adults, they *should* be passed over to the newer generations, who can offer their strength, innovative ideas and creativity. He believes in the power of the youth and the need to “pass the torch”, so to speak. The informants reveal the impressive contributions of the youth, in addition to the strong and lasting effects of the Revolution on the youth involved and on the society they strove to change.

This section has revealed the MCN members' opinions on the ways in which the Revolution promoted ideals of unity, solidarity, volunteerism, and the desire to advance and contribute to the community as a whole, all of which are in line with Anderson's arguments. Furthermore, those with first hand experience participating in the Revolution revealed that such ideals had a strong impact on them that stayed with them decades later. The experiences of the Revolution were powerful, and appear to have taught the citizens of Nicaragua at that time the importance of coming together when fighting for a cause. The experiences of the Revolution, then, provide an explanation for the perceived
high degree of social capital present in MCN today. Additionally, education, popularized in Nicaragua by the Revolution, has been suggested to create alternative pathways for youth, to lower levels of violence in society, and promote a more egalitarian society with access to education for all. Thus, it is likely to have contributed to the relatively higher levels of social capital and lower levels of violence in Nicaragua today, in comparison to its northern neighbours. This section has also demonstrated the ways in which the Revolution proved youth to be the creative, driven, conscious individuals capable of having an impact on their own society. This provides a likely explanation as to why MCN perceives them as such today.

**Nicaragua's “Revolutionary” Police Force**

I would now like to take some time to discuss the nature of the police force drawing from the perspectives of MCN members and from existing literature on the Nicaraguan police force. Both of these sources suggested that, in general, the Nicaraguan police are interested in working hand-in-hand with the youth as opposed to applying a “mano dura”, or firm hand. Nicaraguan police use far less repressive tactics toward the youth in comparison to surrounding countries. Furthermore, in line with the previous discussion on the cyclical nature of violence, the Nicaraguan police's preventative approach toward the youth is considered more effective than repressive tactics seen in northern (Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala) Central American countries. In this section, I explore a possible explanation for Nicaragua's unique behavioural tendencies, again drawing on the influence of the Nicaragua Revolution.

    When discussing the relationship between police and youth with the members of MCN, this particular relationship was regarded by some to be inherently problematic, as one side acts as the law enforcer, and the other tends to act as a rebel. Therefore, this can be a difficult pairing, as El Loco points out:

    Youth...and police don't get along immediately...in my opinion. It's like water and oil.
To be young is almost a sin. That is to say, Who are [the people] in the streets protesting? The youth. Who has to repress them when they do crime or politics? The police. I believe that it is a permanent contradiction.

Furthermore, because youth do tend to carry a reputation for being mischievous, or up to no good, police may develop the inclination to suspect the worst of them. Erika articulates the idea that, in general, if the police see a group of youth gathered together, already they are considered to be planning something bad, [the police] can't imagine that they are planning on doing an activity at some community or that they are planning to help some person or simply meet up to talk with each other.

Thus, by nature, creating a positive relationship between these two seemingly opposing sides is a challenge. However, there has been a great effort in Nicaragua to address this issue. As mentioned, the MCN members, and the country as a whole (as indicated by law 392), recognize the importance of emphasizing the capabilities of youth and the importance of providing them with support. Moreover, this emphasis also reaches the realm of police, as seen with the addition of an entire department in the police force specifically dedicated to Youth Affairs. El Loco speaks to both the positive and negative aspects of the relationship between the youth and the police:

If you walk with messy, shaggy hair, you are a delinquent, if you walk with ripped pants, you are a homeless person...there are stereotypes from the police that in many cases provoke unfair punishment....they punish the youth. Now we must recognize that there are some efforts of the police...there is an entire police program to work with youth [the department of Youth Affairs], but the stigma continues and we must contribute to breaking it, to create another type of relationship.

He further explains that,

We are actually doing research on what legal resources the youth need from this country to understand their rights, and one of the themes that we are questioning is precisely that, I mean, that the youth need to deepen their understanding of those laws that protect against the abuses of the police.

His statements again draw attention to MCN's strong desire to invest in the Nicaraguan youth, and empower them to take advantage of their opportunities. Overall, MCN members demonstrate that the Nicaraguan police are taking steps to improve their relationship with youth, though they have not yet
perfected their approach, as youth stereotypes still exist.

I also found a strong consensus on the fact that, in some areas in Nicaragua (particularly in the department of León), the relationship between the police and the youth was problematic, as the police were not willing to work with the youth or create a cooperative relationship with them. Maitexu, for example, has experience working in León in a Casona where a Youth Affairs police department was also stationed. The police here, she explained, were not actively trying to improve the problems of the particularly troubled, or “at risk” youth:

Those police are dedicated more to doing activities with the youth who do not have problems, rather than worry about those youth who do have problems and that really are at risk of social exclusion. Why? Because some members of the police have prejudices like the rest of the people and it is always easier to work with a person that doesn’t have problems.

Negro, also from León, expressed similar feelings on the Youth Affairs in this region, however, he also acknowledged the more functional youth-police relationship at a national level:

In Nicaragua in general, the police with our organization, with the different departments...the department of Youth Affairs have excellent relationships with the MCN. It’s the municipality of León that hasn’t been able to resolve to work together with the department in the case of this particular municipality of León.

I wanted to include these critiques so as to demonstrate that the situation of the youth and police in Nicaragua is not perfect, and should not be sugar-coated. Having said that, there were various MCN members who were quite proud of the Nicaraguan police force's interest and effort in developing a relationship with the youth. Furthermore, my informants were able to provide examples of various initiatives carried out in a joint effort by the police and MCN. Tita, one of the younger MCN volunteers, spoke very highly of the police force in Nicaragua. She states:

Yes, here in Nicaragua, by the grace of God, so to speak, the police undertake a great role with the youth. There is much of a relationship; there are many ways we get along...Here our police do not harm the youth. They try to educate them, to give them talks, here the police are always on hand because here we always look for a way to negotiate, to be good with them, to make things better.
Bebito, who initially acknowledges the contradictory nature of the youth and police, goes on to say that,

the police are trying to introduce youth to doing nice things for society, social integration, also providing that same type of support that we provide...intending for them to be integrated in different activities so much in the area of sports, in culture, in studies, in the technical areas, in professional areas, to evade those confrontations between youth and police...This youth can be a good public servant, he could be a good member of the national police, but only when the behaviour of youth is guided in an educated way, not a repressive way.

He demonstrates that the police are making a substantial effort to create a better environment for the youth. Not only does this include refraining from using a mano dura approach, but they are also providing youth with opportunities and activities to keep them engaged, much like MCN. These activities are seen as preventative, as they will discourage youth from getting involved in more violent, destructive behaviour. Chela provided some of the specifics on the activities the police do to help the youth:

In Nicaragua...long ago there was violence but not now. If you see, the police takes hands with the youth, they go to schools, they give educational talks, they go to the health centres, there is a relationship, a link: MECD [Ministerio Nicaragüense de Salud]. MECD means when they give public classes...they give orientations of what the sicknesses are, about the domestic violence, about abuse, all of that they reveal to you.

In general, and as Güiricero will point out, the police force is more interested in reintegrating the youth into society, as opposed to locking them up in jail, which is more common in surrounding countries. He also explains that it is in the government's interest to use these preventative mechanisms as a means of keeping incarcerated persons to a minimum. Specifically, he says:

The police have said that they have come up with a “coraza” plan that consists of giving workshops to the youth from different neighbourhoods, communities to avoid falling into illicit events, because the objective of the police is not to put them in jail. It is to involve the youth in recreational activities so that they are integrated into society. Because the offices and jails are overcrowded with prisoners and for that reason, for the nutrition given to them, the prisoner costs [money]...It isn't convenient for the government to spend on these cases. Better to reintegrate the youth into the society because corrupted youth are also lacking in values in the country.
All of these points demonstrate that various efforts are being put forth in Nicaragua to help the youth, prevent violence, and by doing so, improve the security and well-being of the communities. And, as Güiricero suggests, these are potentially economically beneficial mechanisms.

I was fortunate enough to interview one MCN member who has personally coordinated with the police in her municipality to give talks to the youth she was working with in MCN. Briana, head of the national youth commission, was able to provide a personal account of her experiences working with both youth and police:

I coordinate with the police. I remember that in one occasion when it happened...we met with about 50 kids of the kids at risk and the 50 kids arrived at the meeting. But that day, it occurred to me to invite the boss of the sector of police. Then, when I hadn't advised [the kids] that the police were going to come...to speak with the kids... it was that moment that the kids, all of them, became nervous. The majority of the kids said to me “what you want is to throw us in prison”. “No” - and everyone was already going to leave, running when they looked at the police. Then he explained to the kids that no, what we want as an organization, as MCN, is to help the youth of this sector to communicate with the police and tell them what their needs were or what they hope of the police, because as youth they said “we like to be on the corner” and maybe we aren't thieves. “We like it because we are young” and you know that on a corner, you meet with the kids, and talk about everything, and there you learn about everything also. So, they were afraid of being thrown into prison, but we managed in that meeting that these kids managed to talk with the police and that was something very, very beautiful, because they achieved something that is not so easy, that the kids could openly say to the police some things that for them, aren't what they seem.

MCN, in combination with the police, was able to provide a space for the youth to tell their side of the story and a chance to help break down the stereotypes and show the police that they do not always have bad intentions. And the police were willing to listen. This point reinforces the notion expressed in the literature that Nicaragua's police force takes on a non-criminalizing attitude (Rocha 2008; Rodger and Muggah 2009; Rocha 2011). Rocha explained that Nicaraguan police tend to view youth as young experimenting rebels, and try to understand the broader context of the youth's actions. The police's collaboration with the youth provides a concrete example of the police's willingness to look at the broader picture of the youth, rather than jump to conclusions without first investigating the situation,
which is often done in neighbouring countries (Pine 2008:57-58; Wolf 2011:58). By listening to the youth and breaking down stereotypes, the police will better understand that these youth are in fact experimenting rebels with certain needs, and not dangerous criminals.

Briana also recounted a story in which the police (in a joint effort with MCN) intervened in a conflict between two neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods were often fighting with rocks and stones, and were posing danger for community members. However, by bringing the different groups together with MCN and the national police, and by giving talks to the groups on self-esteem, values, companionship, and leadership, they were able to arrive at a peaceful agreement between the two groups. The general consensus among my informants was that the police were making an effort to improve the conditions of the youth, provide them with the support they need, and work with them in order to do so. Thus, although the “inherent” nature and structure of the relationship between police and youth seems contradictory, the actions of the police demonstrate that this negative relationship is not absolutely necessary and that local actors can oppose and reconstruct it if they so choose.

Furthermore, the collaboration between MCN members, the police force, and gangs of the community marks an exceptional example of bridging social capital, to which Anderson (2010) refers. In this particular case, each group was able to put differences aside, listen to the seemingly opposing side, learn to trust each other, and improve upon a community problem collaboratively.

As touched on previously, the MCN members support the preventative tactics often employed by Nicaraguan police because, in the same way that violence and punishment in the domestic realm serves to create more violence, so too does repressive tactics employed by the police. Maitexu, for example, states:

I think that the punishment is always the last, last resort before anything...The society doesn't change based on punishment. The societies that have, for example, a penitentiary system or some harder punishments for crime are not better societies and don't have less crime...because of the punishment. The only way, the only path to prevent the youth violence is prevention and the only path is education. I don't believe
that it is punishment. Punishment is the last resource when maybe you haven't done good prevention work before, or the people haven't achieved a certain level of education. Their lives are so, so, so conditioned that it is very difficult to take out violence from the situation and the only way is punishment. But even with the punishment and with the jail, the purpose of the punishment must be to reintegrate them, provide education and to give an opportunity, a second, third, a fourth opportunity to the people who haven't had it in infancy or youth. I think that the only path is prevention, punishment is a failure.

Maitexu particularly emphasized the fact that punishment was the absolute last option. Most members were aware of the fact that some youth do become completely out of control. In certain cases, Bebito explained, no matter what one tries to do with a troubled youth, no matter how one tries to help and guide them, they will always take the opposite (or rebellious) point of view. However, this is only in severe cases – cases that can be prevented if integrative tactics and supportive environments are provided for youth in the first place. Erika also made an important point about the ineffectiveness of punishment approaches, such as incarceration. She explains that carrying out a sentence in jail is not going to alter the perspective and behaviour of one who engages in criminal behaviour:

"To take a kid from the street because he did something bad and put him in jail and you carry out your sentence already and leave, and you are going to continue doing bad things, because it is the psychology that the kids still bring. But if the system provided an alternative of correction, or change of the personality within, well it would be different because the kid is leaving with a different vision, he leaves with an alternative"

For Erika, the problem with using a jail sentence to solve a youth's problem is that the youth will not alter their opinions (and ultimately, behaviour) while in jail. Once they are released, they have not learned any lessons that will prevent them from engaging in the same harmful activities in the future. Therefore, re-integrative tactics that function as a means of changing the attitudes and mind sets of the youth, she would argue, are favourable. Additionally, spending time with criminals in jail would likely serve to further reinforce and develop inmates' criminal behaviour and ways of thinking. And as discussed, all of these ideas on prevention and re-integration are completely aligned with the literature on positive youth development, and thus are supported by both academia and the local actors in MCN.
I also inquired about the MCN members' opinions on police in surrounding countries, many of which are known for their mano dura approach. Such an approach tends to be far less considerate of the youth's social or economic situation and is less likely to employ preventative methods to advance the youth in society. This approach is more common in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Similarity in the tactics of these countries can be explained by the collaborative planning that transpires at an international level with regards to policing methods. Negro draws attention to this collaboration that occurs in Central America. He explains:

They have had meetings inside the Central American Public Safety System in which each country of Central America participates and they meet with these objectives of being able to unite only one model and to be all in synchronicity to the effect of violence in each of these countries. But obviously each country has their own internal characteristics: The way of treating, the way that the police try to reach the youth or have an intervention with the youth maybe hasn't been very effective because sometimes they implement repression or neutralization of the youth and not prevention.

Though many of the other countries have settled on repressive approaches toward youth, Negro explains that not all countries will conform to the same model (as is the case with Nicaragua), as they have their own distinct interests and perspectives. Individual countries are indeed capable of opposing models suggested at the international level. Güiricero brings forth an example of Nicaragua's initiative to deviate from the more violent, coercive measures more common in other Central American countries. He draws attention to Nicaragua's implementation of the “Coraza” plan that aims to re-establish the relationship between youth and police through education and re-integration projects. The fact that Nicaragua was the only one to implement this plan reinforces the notion that, in comparison to the neighbouring countries, Nicaragua is more interested in preventative methods that avoid violence and repression and that better nurture the youth in society.

There was a general understanding that police in neighbouring countries (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) employed a more violent relationship with the youth. Fohle expressed that police in surrounding countries are likely to exercise violent coercion because she believed that the people in
other countries tend to be more violent and uncontrollable. Tita also acknowledged that the youth in other countries are more violent; however, she provided insight as to why this might be:

In Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, the police don't have integration with the youth of those countries, because, we could say that that youth, it is a violent youth in the way that that youth hasn't had the opportunity to be trained, to be integrated by the previous government...[in these countries] there is a violent youth, there are young people that are in maras and the few youth who are healthy are youth who run the risk in that society. And, the police of these countries make it difficult to have a relationship with these type of youth, dangerous youth, that in part are not guilty of being dangerous. They have been guilty according to the previous government because they didn't give attention to the youth...while in Nicaragua, yes! The police try to play a role that maybe is not 100%, but they try to play a role of integrating the youth of different sectors...with recreational sports activities that help as therapy, like therapy to the youth to be able to get away from bad paths...Out of the police in all of Central America, the only one that has more integral work is Nicaragua.

Indeed, there was recognition among MCN members that Nicaragua is more attentive to and understanding of youth than surrounding countries. Supporting this idea, Pine's (2008) work in Honduras, for example, addresses the police's exceedingly harsh behaviour toward youth and the violent and punishment-oriented approaches they utilize. Pine further elaborates on the corrupt nature of the police, as seen with the examples of street cleansing, and favouring of certain gangs. Rodgers and Muggah (2009), Wolf (2011), and Robert and Chen (2013) all argue that the danger of gangs in the more repressive countries is exaggerated (Rodgers and Muggah 2009; Wolf 2011; Robert and Chen 2013), more youth are incarcerated (Bruneau 2011; Roberts & Chen 2013) – even if their only crime was to look like a delinquent (Wolf 2011) – and overall, attempts to improve the behaviour of youth using preventative techniques are absent. These more violent, dangerous countries, in contrast to Nicaragua, embrace the seemingly inherent notion that youth are delinquents that need to be punished by police. As Tita suggests, unlike Nicaragua, governments (or other local institutions) in these countries have failed to take the initiative to effectively integrate youth into society. Instead they treat them like criminals who can only learn from punishment, which, as the positive youth development literature and literature on repressive police tactics suggest, only serves to exacerbate issues of
The next critical question, then, is why is the Nicaraguan police force different? This particular question was not explored in-depth during my fieldwork, but there were some references to the Revolution throughout the interviews, particularly from the older MCN members. A significant feature of the current Nicaraguan police force is that it is essentially a continuation of the Sandinista police force that was born out of the Revolution, as was mentioned by two of my informants. Sabroso was particularly adamant on the fact that the police and the Revolution are very much connected. Segueing from a comparison between the Nicaraguan police system and that of other Central American countries, he states:

I dare to say and I dare to assure that the police in Nicaragua are the less repressive police of the Central American region and the Caribbean. The Nicaraguan police... still need to improve many things, but in comparison, comparing the police of Nicaragua, for example, with the police from the rest of Central America, it is the police, above all, that has more trust, it is a police where the levels of repression, right, or of torture, they don't have it in this country. They have it in other places, even the police in these places kill or assassinate, right? There is hatred toward youth because of the problem of maras, of pandillas and in Nicaragua, we don't have that problem because the police here were formed, right, and born with the Revolution, with values, of respect for rights. There are problems, there is their inappropriate conduct, but they are isolated conducts of institutional police, or rather, it isn't a strategy, it isn't the job, but it is a matter that they must continue working on. I personally believe that MCN values that it is one of the better police in relation to the respect of human rights.

Sabroso, who was active in the Revolution, and the transitional process that occurred after the Revolution was won, connects the less repressive and more humane attitude in the Nicaraguan police, comparatively speaking, to the values born out of the Revolution. He also believes that respect is an important aspect of the relationship between the youth and the police, which was mentioned by several other MCN members. A similar idea is expressed by Rocha (2011), who suggests that the police who side with the FSLN government are the ones in favour of re-integrative, preventative approaches toward the youth, whereas non-FSLN supporting police are more likely to side with repressive tactics. Furthermore, the respect for rights that Sabroso refers to, and the overall preventative approach of the
Nicaraguan police force strongly demonstrate the presence of social capital in Nicaragua, outside of the MCN context. The police are willing to work with others collaboratively, are willing to educate the youth, (thereby demonstrating their faith in the youth), they respect the youth and further, are striving to improve the community without repressing certain sectors of the population. All of these features are characteristic of social capital, and again, are likely a consequence of the Revolution.

In accordance with MCN members' opinion on the cyclical nature of violence and the importance of preventative techniques when working with youth, the Nicaraguan police force have also demonstrated a tendency toward preventative, and less confrontational approaches with youth. Though some departments are more effective than others, MCN members were of the opinion that the Nicaraguan police force is much more dedicated to integrating the youth into the community as a means of preventing youth violence than surrounding countries. Furthermore, some suggested this tendency could be tied to the principles born out of the Revolution that have created a level of respect and understanding among the police force toward youth and all citizens of the community.

**Conclusion: Local Actors Having an Impact**

This section has discussed the Nicaraguan Revolution in more detail and its connection to social capital, the youth's role in the Revolution, which illustrated their powerful capacity as individuals, and Nicaragua's prevention-oriented police force, which stands in stark contrast to the police forces in the northern Central American countries that employ repressive and punishment-oriented techniques. The changes society took on during the Revolution, including the upsurge in community involvement, the desire to improve the society collectively, and the mutual respect and faith members of society had for one another, all transpired at the local level. This happened despite dominant national and global forces (i.e. the Somoza dictatorship and U.S. interference in support of the Contra War) that were striving to repress the agency and interests of the local people. As Perla (2005) indicates, the Sandinistas demonstrated their agency in their resistance to the U.S. forces attempting to bring down the FSLN.
government in the post-Revolutionary context, despite their seemingly weaker position. Though global forces can be very powerful and influential, Tsing's (2005) critique of the idea that local stories are “nothing more than an exemplification of a self-fulfilling global scheme” (Tsing 2005:266) is reinforced in the Nicaraguan story. It was the local actors, beginning with Sandino, and later Fonseca, who were critical of the national and international forces that were negatively affecting the local lives of the people, and who ultimately created a national and international level impact when Somoza was finally overthrown and the U.S.’s attempt to control Nicaraguan leadership was derailed.

In line with the arguments of Gille and Ó Riaín (2002), Fisher (1997) and Sklair (1998), the Revolution demonstrated the key role collective action played in the success of local actors. This collective action is illustrated by the fact that all sectors of society came together to oppose the seemingly indestructible dictatorship. In the Nicaraguan Revolution, collective action was likely the only way to success, and thus, the power of relationships, and the “productive confusion” to which Tsing refers, is revealed. Only through bridging social capital could the Nicaraguan locals access resources extensively that could provide them with enough strength to prevail. Though relationships formed and connections made at the local level may seem insignificant, or mundane (Stewart 2007), they can ultimately lead to drastic changes at the global level, which was proven to be the case in Nicaragua.

Moving forward several decades, the impact of the revolutionary actors is still having an effect. When social capital was created out of the Revolution during the 1970s, it had a powerful influence on those who experienced it first-hand. As demonstrated by Anderson's findings on organizational membership of Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and by personal accounts of MCN volunteers who experienced the Revolution, the desire to serve and improve the community still lingers on. Furthermore, the belief in the capabilities of the youth are still persistent, as the youth were powerful and influential local actors during and after the Revolution. Kelly's (2008) argument that youth are
located in the intersection of the local and the global is demonstrated in the case of Nicaragua. After the Revolution, for example, during the campaign of alphabetization, though youth were simply teaching people to read – very much a small, local-level event – together, they had the power to decrease illiteracy by 37.4% at the national level. They are indeed capable of widespread change, and their potential for creating change should not be underestimated. In the case of the Nicaraguan police, the impacts of the Revolution continue to affect the perspectives of members of the police force (particularly those aligned with the Revolutionary party), and their behaviour toward the youth, which ultimately has resulted in a more effective, prevention-oriented police force. All of these positive unique qualities in Nicaragua can be traced to the local efforts that initiated the Revolution.

Certainly, the Nicaraguan Revolution provides an exceptional example of impacts created by local actors, and the social capital and other unique circumstances that emerged at this time cannot be expected to be replicated in other areas. It is for this reason that studying the local is so important, as suggested by Brosius and Tsing (1997), Tsing (2005), Bunty and Merry (2007), Muncie (2007), and Stewart (2007). Each local interaction is entirely unique and will create different products, and lead to different outcomes, as was seen in the comparison between the Nicaraguan Revolution, and the rise of Peronism in Argentina (Anderson 2010). Nicaragua provides a unique story of the ways in which local actors can create social capital, can help communities come together to create vast social and political change, and can lead to an affected community decades later that continues to attempt to improve society with local efforts.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Two stories are told in this thesis. One is of the Nicaraguan Revolution, which created widespread mobilization across all sectors of society, the development of social capital, and immense social and political change at a nation-wide level. The second is a story of one of the positive outcomes of the Revolution: the social autonomous movement, MCN, that, to this day, strives to improve the livelihoods of Nicaraguan youth using strategies aimed at better integrating youth into the society and based on principles of social capital. Both of these stories provide two important lessons.

The first is that social capital (bridging social capital, in particular) can make a tremendous difference in the lives of locals. Many strategies and perspectives regarding the positive development of youth and society were touched on throughout the course of this thesis, most of which were rooted in the principles of social capital. The volunteerism, the fostering of horizontal relationships, the emphasis on the quality of relationships, the mutual faith, respect, and trust between community members (youth included), the willingness to collaborate with people from different sectors of society, and the willingness to invest and trust in youth and the community at large were all present in the functioning of the Revolution and Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense. These are in large part factors that respondents suggested have advanced each of these movements and made them successful. All of the strategies suggested by MCN members to deter youth from involvement with violence were also promoted by the PYD literature, suggesting that MCN is currently functioning in an effective manner. Thus, the core principles of MCN which are based on the ideals of social capital, and which emerged out of the Revolution, should be regarded as an appropriate starting point for addressing issues of youth violence. More specifically, this thesis has demonstrated that socially nurturing, physically and mentally stimulating, encouraging, empowering, safe environments, where meaningful social relationships are fostered, where youth are treated as capable agents of change, and where the use of punishment or violence is not acceptable, are the types of environments where youth can develop to be
confident, socially conscious, engaged youth who can connect with others.

As mentioned, a crucial part of achieving the development of social capital in a community is through the creation of positive social environments. Completely transforming a society to function in such a way is naturally a great undertaking. However, small actions can have large impacts. Bebito, one of the MCN volunteers brought forth a rather brilliant, yet simple concept in his discussion of the cyclical nature of violence. He said that, though violence can be easily reproduced, so too can positive, peaceful behaviour. By providing even one youth with an environment rich in social capital, he or she is going to be able take the knowledge and love provided, and turn it into more knowledge and love for other members of the community, thereby gradually spreading the positive social environment. Rather than a vicious cycle of violence, these efforts will create a virtuous cycle of social capital and community development that will spread gradually over time. MCN is a special case whose unique success can be attributed to the Revolution, and which would likely be difficult to replicate. Nevertheless, the practices of MCN provide a small glimpse into the way in which an organization, or a community, can function, and how this can lead to the positive development of youth and a safer community. Creating a positive social environment with the fundamental principles of social capital can help to achieve these goals.

The second lesson to take away from this is that the local actor is, without question, significant and capable of having an impact. Though Nicaraguan citizens in the 20th century had few resources and were principally driven by ideals of social justice, liberation, and national sovereignty, their own determination, willingness to collaborate, and their faith in the collective movement pushed them forward. They achieved remarkable goals, overthrowing the dictatorship, decreasing rates of illiteracy drastically, and persistently battling U.S. attempts at invasion. They were successful in their efforts during the Revolution, and years later, they continue to use the lessons learned at that time to continue to advance society. Members of the community continue to volunteer, continue to work together to
achieve positive social change, and continue to use successful strategies to help the youth find safer, healthier paths in which they become the contributors to society. The members of MCN are agents of change because, everyday that they invest their time and effort to help youth, to show them they are not alone, and to show them better options in life, they are having a large impact at the local level, and with time, a large impact on the whole of the community. Furthermore, they believe that youth, as well, are capable of having an impact on their own community. The lessons learned during the Revolution that live on in MCN today have helped Nicaraguan citizens foster collaboration between community members, positive youth development, and community development. If the model that MCN employs to date is recognized for its effectiveness, and replicated in regions around the world that currently use repressive strategies, which only intensify the prevalence of violence, then the efforts of the revolutionary actors and engaged citizens, such as MCN volunteers, will have even farther reaching, positive effects. Even in a world that seems almost too large and complex to fathom, people at the local level can be very wise and have much knowledge to offer. People at the local level are making a difference.

This thesis has aimed to contribute to Public Issues Anthropology, first by addressing the issue of youth violence from an international perspective. This is an issue that affects people all over the world in their everyday lives that can benefit from ethnographic works that reveal what is and is not effective when working with youth. By drawing on the perspectives and wisdom of the members of MCN, and supporting their ideas with the leading arguments in the positive youth development literature, I demonstrate how the local voices can be important contributors to issues of youth violence facing people all over the world. Not only do I demonstrate how the voices of members of a community-based organization are insightful and worthy of ethnographic study, but I also suggest that the voices of the youth should be brought into the spotlight when dealing with issues of youth violence, or youth affairs in general. An important argument made in this thesis is that youth need to be provided
with the space to develop their own perspectives and ideas on issues affecting their lives, so that they
are enabled to be at the forefront of the dialogue on positive youth development. The paternalistic
attitude often employed toward youth does not serve to develop the youth's confidence or self-esteem,
and may not get at the crux of the issue. Public Issues Anthropology, then, represents an appropriate
vehicle for better understanding the perspectives and insights of the youth and making their voices
heard.

Moreover, this research speaks to people in the public realm. Not only should the strategies for
youth development suggested here be shared with policy makers in police, government and education
systems, but (in the case that these larger and seemingly more powerful forces are not going to take the
first step toward more effective youth policies), community-based organizations, like MCN, can also
learn from the principal arguments of this thesis. If youth are not being provided with support and
education from their homes, their government, their police force, or their schools, then perhaps people
at the local level can make a difference for them, by providing a healthier alternative for youth. Rather
than seeking solace with a gang or youth group, perhaps the youth can instead turn to organizations in
the community that provide them with the social support, meaningful relationships, empowerment,
trust, respect, and education that they need in order to flourish.
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APPENDIX 1

Written Consent Form

English Consent Form with Confidentiality

UNIVERSITY of GUELPH

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

“An Examination of Civil Society Organization Volunteers’ Perspectives on Youth Violence in Nicaragua”

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jenny Edwards, from the Sociology and Anthropology Department at the University of Guelph. The results will contribute to a Master’s Thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Sally Humphries: Faculty Supervisor at shumphri@uoguelph.ca or 519-824-4120x53542.

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The aim of this research project is to explore how the volunteers of the civil society organization, Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense, in León, Nicaragua view youth in society and what they consider to be important strategies to deter youth from youth violence in their community. Specifically, the proposed project will examine the ways in which the volunteers of this civil society organization provide emotional, social, financial and physical support, and will also examine the recreational, cultural and educational activities carried out by the organization for youth in the community.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Take part in an interview that could range from 30 minutes to an hour and a half, depending on the participant’s responses. The interviews will be informal and the questions may be answered in any way the participant sees fit. The interviews will be audio-recorded, if the participant is comfortable with this.

If follow up research or clarification is required, the researcher may return to the Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense. At that time, the researcher will approach the participants for clarification, and may conduct follow-up interviews while at the organization.

After the research is complete, a summary of the results will be available to Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense in Spanish.
POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There may be minimal psychological or social risks. There is no more than minimal psychological risk. At most, upon reflecting on youth and youth violence, the participants may feel very passionate about these topics and thus, discussion of them may lead to emotional reactions. However, this reflection, on the contrary, may lead to positive feelings such as pride and a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment from the fact that the volunteers are actively trying to prevent youth violence in their community.

There is no more than minimal risk. The interview questions in large part focus on strategies carried out in the organization, which is already public information. However, if, in their responses, the volunteers express perspectives that are opposed by the organization in general, this could potentially pose a social risk.

To deal with potential psychological risk, the participants will be told at the onset of the interview that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and are not obligated to respond to all questions if they feel uncomfortable answering them.

If the information provided in the interviews did provide social risk, the informants who provide such information in the interviews will remain anonymous, and no indicators of their identities will be revealed. If the information is particularly controversial, the researcher will omit it from the final work.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The direct benefit of the participant is that, by sharing their perspectives, they will potentially be promoting their own organization and demonstrating the potentially positive impact their particular organization has on the relatively low level of youth violence in Nicaragua. Contributions to the scientific community include a potentially broader, more multi-dimensional understanding of the factors that contribute to the low level of violence in Nicaragua. Certain theories already exist with regard to this trend, however, ethnographic research has yet to be carried out with civil society organizations in terms of their contributions to the current level of youth violence in Nicaragua.

This project contributes to society by potentially providing insight into an important contributing factor to low levels of youth violence. If this organization is found to positively contribute to the lower levels of youth violence, then its strategies can be used as a model for other neighbouring Central American countries with much higher levels of youth violence.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There is no payment for participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.
The interview will take place in a room in the Movimiento Comunal Nicaraguense headquarters, separate from other members of the organization, so that their interview will not be overheard. Further, pseudonyms will be provided for the interviewees and no indicators that could otherwise reveal participants’ identities will be included in the write-up.

The interviews, if agreed to by the participant, will be audio recorded. The participant has the right to review this audio-recording if they desire. Immediately after the interview is conducted, the audio recorded version of their interview will be transferred onto a computer and stored in a locked file that can only be accessed by me. The data on the recording device itself will be deleted. The field notes taken during the interview will be typed up on the computer and stored on a locked document on the computer. After the fieldwork is complete, the field notes will remain in a locked drawer where they cannot be accessed by anyone other than me.

The only other person who will listen to the audio-recorded versions of the interviews is the translator, who will assist the researcher in writing up the audio recordings.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Director, Research Ethics
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: (519) 821-5236

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I have read the information provided for the study “[insert title]” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

____________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)
Signature of Participant or Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

____________________________________
Name of Witness (please print)

____________________________________
Signature of Witness

Date
COLEGIO DE SOCIAL Y APLICADA CIENCIAS HUMANAS
Departamento de Sociología y Antropología

CONSENTIMIENTO PARA PARTICIPAR EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN

“Un Examen de las Perspectivas de los Voluntarios de la Organización de la Sociedad Civil en Cuanto a la Violencia Juvenil en Nicaragua”

Se le pide que participe en un estudio de investigación realizado por Jenny Edwards, del Departamento de Sociología y Antropología de la Universidad de Guelph. Los resultados contribuirán a su tesis de maestría.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud sobre la investigación, puede contactar a Sally Humphries, supervisor de la facultad: shumphri@uoguelph.ca o (519) 824-4120, ext. 53542.

PROPÓSITO DEL ESTUDIO

El objetivo de este proyecto de investigación es explorar cómo los voluntarios de la organización de la sociedad civil, el Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense, en León, Nicaragua ven a los jóvenes en la sociedad y que estrategias usan para disuadir a los jóvenes de la violencia juvenil en su comunidad. Específicamente, el proyecto propuesto examinará las formas en que los voluntarios ofrecen apoyo emocional, social, físico y financiero, también examinará las actividades recreativas, culturales y educativas que la organización ofrece a los jóvenes en la comunidad.

PROCEDIMIENTOS

Si usted participa en el estudio, nos gustaría pedirle que haga lo siguiente:

Participar en una entrevista (entre 30 y 90 minutos). Las entrevistas serán informales. Sin embargo, los participantes se advertirán no hablar de actividades ilegales o abuso durante el curso de la entrevista, evitar poner al investigador en una posición éticamente cuestionable donde tiene obligaciones tanto a sus participantes como a la ley. Las entrevistas serán grabadas en audio, si el participante se siente cómodo con esto.

Después que la investigación se haya completado, un resumen de los resultados estará disponible para el Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense en español.

POSIBLES RIESGOS Y MOLESTIAS

Puede haber riesgos psicológicos o sociales mínimos. No hay más que un riesgo psicológico mínimo. A lo sumo, al reflexionar sobre la juventud y la violencia juvenil, los participantes pueden sentirse muy...
apasionados sobre estos temas y por lo tanto, la discusión de ellos puede generar reacciones emocionales. Sin embargo, esta reflexión, por el contrario, puede crear sentimientos positivos como el orgullo y un sentido de logro y satisfacción por el hecho de que los voluntarios están activamente tratando de prevenir la violencia juvenil en su comunidad.

No hay más que un riesgo mínimo social. Las preguntas de la entrevista, en gran medida se centran en las estrategias llevadas a cabo en la organización que ya es una información pública. Sin embargo, si, en sus respuestas, los voluntarios expresan puntos de vista que se oponen a la organización en general, esto podría suponer un riesgo social.

Para evitar el riesgo psicológico, los participantes serán informados al comienzo de la entrevista de que tienen el derecho de retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento y no están obligados a responder a todas las preguntas si se sienten incómodos al responderlas.

Si la información proporcionada en las entrevistas es polémica, así proporcionando el riesgo social para el informador, el investigador lo omitirá del trabajo final.

POSIBLES BENEFICIOS PARA LOS PARTICIPANTES Y / O CON LA SOCIEDAD

El posible beneficio directo de los participantes es que si comparten sus puntos de vista, pueden ayudar a promover su organización y sus opiniones sobre juventud y violencia juvenil en Nicaragua.

Las contribuciones a la comunidad científica incluyen un conocimiento multidimensional de los factores que contribuyen al bajo nivel de violencia en Nicaragua. Ciertas teorías ya existen con respecto a esta tendencia; sin embargo, no hay una investigación etnográfica con organizaciones de la sociedad civil y sus contribuciones al nivel actual de la violencia en Nicaragua.

Este proyecto contribuye a la sociedad, entendiendo cómo un aspecto de la sociedad nicaragüense (organizaciones de la sociedad civil) percibe y responde a la violencia juvenil y juventud.

PAGO DE PARTICIPACIÓN

No hay pago por la participación.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD

Se hará todo lo posible para asegurar la confidencialidad de cualquier información de identificación que se obtenga en relación con este estudio.

Veinte entrevistados van a pasar por separado a una sala en la sede de Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense, separados de los otros miembros de la organización, para que la entrevista no sea escuchada. Además, la investigadora usará seudónimos de los entrevistados e indicadores de las identidades de los participantes no serán incluidos en la obra final o notas por lo que las identidades de los entrevistados son confidenciales. Los nombres reales de los entrevistados se encuentran sólo en las formas de consentimiento informado, que serán numeradas (1-20). Los seudónimos serán correspondientemente enumerados de 1 a 20. Además, los datos e informaciones sobre las identidades de participantes, estando en Nicaragua, se almacenarán en un gabinete cerrado que sólo el investigador
puede tener acceso. Estando en Canadá, estos datos se almacenarán en un cajón cerrado al que sólo puede acceder el investigador. Sin embargo, la Comisión Consultiva también puede tener acceso a estos datos. La grabación de audio y notas de las entrevistas se almacenarán en un documento bloqueado en un ordenador cifrado al que sólo se puede acceder el investigador.

Las entrevistas, por acuerdo con los participantes, serán grabadas en audio. El participante tiene el derecho de revisar esta grabación de audio si lo desea. Si el participante desea escuchar su entrevista, el investigador traerá un dispositivo de reproducción de audio a la sede MCN con la grabación del entrevistado que haya solicitado para escuchar la entrevista. El entrevistado tendrá unas horas (mientras que él/ella y el investigador están en el edificio) para revisar la grabación de audio. Es aceptable para el entrevistado o bien borrar puntos que ya hizo en la entrevista (si él/ella está incómodo con ellos por cualquier motivo) o puede añadir otros puntos a la entrevista. Específicamente, pequeños cambios (como texto) no serán necesarios cambiar, pero el deseo de los entrevistados para aclarar o explicar algunos puntos es aceptable. Se proporcionará a los participantes esta oportunidad hasta una semana después de la entrevista para dar tiempo a la reflexión por parte del participante. Inmediatamente después de la entrevista, la versión audio grabada de la entrevista se transfiere a un ordenador y se almacena en un archivo bloqueado al que sólo puede acceder el investigador. Se borrarán los datos del dispositivo de grabación. Las notas de la entrevista serán escritas y almacenadas en un documento bloqueado en la computadora. Además, el ordenador se codificará para asegurar que los datos estén completamente asegurados y sean inaccesibles a cualquiera aparte del investigador. Después de que el trabajo esté completo, las notas seguirán en el cajón cerrado donde se puede acceder a ellos por cualquier persona que no sea el investigador y permanecerá allí por un período de dos años, momento en el que se destruirán.

La única persona que va a escuchar las versiones grabadas en audio de las entrevistas es el traductor, que ayudará al investigador en la traducción de las grabaciones de audio. El traductor firmará un acuerdo de confidencialidad para asegurar que la información del participante sigue siendo confidencial.

**PARTICIPACIÓN Y RETIRO**

Usted puede elegir si desea estar en este estudio o no. Si usted participa en este estudio, puede retirarse en cualquier momento sin ningún tipo de consecuencias. Usted podrá elegir a eliminar los datos del estudio. También puede negarse a contestar cualquier pregunta que no quiera contestar y seguir en el estudio. El investigador puede retirar al participante de esta investigación si surgen circunstancias que justifiquen hacerlo.

**DERECHOS DE LOS PARTICIPANTES DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

Usted puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento y dejar de participar sin cargo. Usted no renuncia a cualquier reclamación legal, derechos o recursos a causa de su participación en este estudio de investigación. Este estudio ha sido revisado y ha recibido la aprobación de la ética a través de la Universidad de Guelph, Junta de Ética de la Investigación. Si usted tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación, póngase en contacto con:

Director de Ética de la Investigación
FIRMA DE INVESTIGACIÓN PARTICIPANTES / REPRESENTANTE LEGAL

He leído la información proporcionada para el estudio "[título]" tal como se describe en este documento. Mis preguntas han sido contestadas a mi satisfacción, y estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio. Me han dado una copia de este formulario.

____________________________________
Nombre del Participante (Escriba su nombre)

____________________________________     ________
Firma de Participante                      Fecha

FIRMA DE TESTIGO

____________________________________     ________
Nombre de Testigo (Escriba su nombre)       Fecha
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If the information provided in the interviews did provide social risk, the informants who provide such information in the interviews will remain anonymous, and no indicators of their identities will be revealed. If the information is particularly controversial, the researcher will omit it from the final work.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The direct benefit of the participant is that, by sharing their perspectives, they will potentially be promoting their own organization and demonstrating the potentially positive impact their particular organization has on the relatively low level of youth violence in Nicaragua. Contributions to the scientific community include a potentially broader, more multi-dimensional understanding of the factors that contribute to the low level of violence in Nicaragua. Certain theories already exist with regard to this trend, however, ethnographic research has yet to be carried out with civil society organizations in terms of their contributions to the current level of youth violence in Nicaragua. This project contributes to society by potentially providing insight into an important contributing factor to low levels of youth violence. If this organization is found to positively contribute to the lower levels of youth violence, then its strategies can be used as a model for other neighbouring Central American countries with much higher levels of youth violence.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There is no payment for participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your real name and/or identifiers can be used in this project. Your name and/or other identifiers (that is to say, your position in MCN) can be linked with your responses in the interview.

The interview will take place in a room in the Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense headquarters, separate from other members of the organization, so that their interview will not be overheard. Further,
pseudonyms will be provided for the interviewees and no indicators that could otherwise reveal participants’ identities will be included in the write-up.

The interviews, if agreed to by the participant, will be audio recorded. The participant has the right to review this audio-recording if they desire. Immediately after the interview is conducted, the audio recorded version of their interview will be transferred onto a computer and stored in a locked file that can only be accessed by me. The data on the recording device itself will be deleted. The field notes taken during the interview will be typed up on the computer and stored on a locked document on the computer. After the fieldwork is complete, the field notes will remain in a locked drawer where they cannot be accessed by anyone other than me.

The only other person who will listen to the audio-recorded versions of the interviews is the translator, who will assist the researcher in writing up the audio recordings.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Director, Research Ethics
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: (519) 821-5236

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided for the study “An Examination of Civil Society Organization Volunteers’ Perspectives on Youth Violence in Nicaragua” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

____________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

___________________________________                _________
Signature of Participant                Date
SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

_________________________ ____________________________
Name of Witness (please print) Signature of Witness Date

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Spanish Consent Form without Confidentiality

COLEGIO DE SOCIAL Y APLICADA CIENCIAS HUMANAS
Departamento de Sociología y Antropología

CONSENTIMIENTO PARA PARTICIPAR EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN

“Un Examen de las Perspectivas de los Voluntarios de la Organización de la Sociedad Civil en Cuanto a la Violencia Juvenil en Nicaragua”

Se le pide que participe en un estudio de investigación realizado por Jenny Edwards, del Departamento de Sociología y Antropología de la Universidad de Guelph. Los resultados contribuirán a su tesis de maestría.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud sobre la investigación, puede contactar a Sally Humphries, facultad supervisor: shumphri@uoguelph.ca o 519 a 824-4120x53542.

PROPÓSITO DEL ESTUDIO

El objetivo de este proyecto de investigación es explorar cómo los voluntarios de la organización de la sociedad civil, el Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense, en León, Nicaragua ven a los jóvenes en la sociedad y lo que estrategias usan para disuadir a los jóvenes de la violencia juvenil en su comunidad. Specificamente, el proyecto propuesto examinar las formas en que los voluntarios ofrecen apoyo emocional, social, físico y financiero, y también examinará las actividades recreativas, culturales y educativas que la organización ofrece a los jóvenes en la comunidad.

PROCEDIMIENTOS

Si usted participa en el estudio, nos gustaría pedirle que haga lo siguiente:

Participar en una entrevista (entre 30 y 90 minutos). Las entrevistas serán informales. Sin embargo, los participantes se advertirán no hablar de actividades ilegales o abuso durante el curso de la entrevista, evitar poner al investigador en una posición éticamente cuestionable donde tiene obligaciones tanto a sus participantes como a la ley. Las entrevistas serán grabadas en audio, si el participante se siente cómodo con esto.

Después de la investigación se ha completado, un resumen de los resultados estará disponible para Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense en español.

Posibles riesgos y molestias
Puede haber riesgos psicológicos o sociales mínimos. No hay más que un riesgo psicológico mínimo. A lo más, al reflexionar sobre la juventud y la violencia juvenil, los participantes pueden sentirse muy apasionado sobre estos temas y por lo tanto, la discusión de ellos puede generar reacciones.
emocionales. Sin embargo, esta reflexión, por el contrario, puede crear sentimientos positivos como el orgullo y un sentido de logro y satisfacción por el hecho de que los voluntarios están activamente tratando de prevenir la violencia juvenil en su comunidad.

No hay más que un riesgo mínimo social. Las preguntas de la entrevista, en gran medida se centran en las estrategias llevadas a cabo en la organización que ya es una información pública. Sin embargo, si, en sus respuestas, los voluntarios expresan puntos de vista que se oponen por la organización en general, esto podría suponer un riesgo social.

Para evitar el riesgo psicológicos, los participantes serán informados al comienzo de la entrevista de que tienen el derecho de retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento y no están obligados a responder a todas las preguntas si se sienten incómodos responderlas.

Si la información proporcionada en las entrevistas es polémica, así proporcionando el riesgo social para el informador, el investigador lo omitirá del trabajo final.

**POSSIBLES BENEFICIOS PARA LOS PARTICIPANTES Y / O CON LA SOCIEDAD**

El posible beneficio directo de los participantes es que si comparten sus puntos de vista, pueden ayudar a promover su organización y sus opiniones sobre juventud y violencia juvenil en Nicaragua. Las contribuciones a la comunidad científica incluya un conocimiento multidimensional de los factores que contribuyen al bajo nivel de violencia en Nicaragua. Ciertas teorías ya existen con respecto a esta tendencia; sin embargo, no hay una investigación etnográfica con organizaciones de la sociedad civil y sus contribuciones al nivel actual de que la violencia en Nicaragua. Este proyecto contribuye a la sociedad por entendiendo cómo un aspecto de la sociedad nicaragüense (organizaciones de la sociedad civil) percibe y responde a la violencia juvenil y juvenil.

**PAGO DE PARTICIPACIÓN**

No hay pago por la participación.

**CONFIDENCIALIDAD**

Su nombre real y/o identificadores pueden ser utilizados en este proyecto.

Su nombre y/u otros identificadores (es decir, en su posición de MCN) puede estar vinculado con sus respuestas en la entrevista.

Las entrevistas, por acuerdo de los participantes, serán de audio grabadas. El participante tiene el derecho de revisar esta grabación de audio si lo desean. Si el participante desea escuchar su entrevista, el investigador traerá un dispositivo de salto a la sede MCN con la grabación del entrevistado que haya solicitado para escuchar la entrevista. El entrevistado tendrá unas horas (mientras que él/ella y el investigador están en el edificio) para revisar la grabación de audio. Es aceptable para el entrevistado o bien borrar puntos ya hizo en la entrevista (si él/ella es incómodo con ellos por cualquier motivo) o puede añadir otros puntos a la entrevista. Específicos, pequeños cambios (como texto) no será necesarios cambiar, pero el deseo de los entrevistados para aclarar o explicar algunos puntos es aceptable. Proporcionará a los participantes con esta oportunidad para una semana después de la entrevista para dar tiempo a la reflexión por parte del participante. Inmediatamente después de la
entrevista, la versión audio grabado de la entrevista se transfiere a un ordenador y se almacena en un archivo bloqueado que sólo se puede acceder por la investigador. Se borrarán los datos del dispositivo de grabación. Las notas de la entrevista será escrita y almacena en un documento bloqueado en la computadora. Además, el ordenador se codificará para asegurar que los datos completamente se aseguren e inaccesibles a cualquiera aparte del investigador. Después de que el trabajo esté completo, las notas seguirán en el investigador de cajón cerrado donde se puede acceder a ellos por cualquier persona que no sea el investigador y permanecerá allí por un período de dos años, momento en el que se destruyeron.

La única persona que va a escuchar las versiones grabadas en audio de las entrevistas es el traductor, que ayudará al investigador en la traducción de las grabaciones de audio. El traductor firmará un acuerdo de confidencialidad para asegurar que la información del participante siga siendo confidencial.

**PARTICIPACIÓN Y RETIRO**

Usted puede elegir si desea estar en este estudio o no. Si usted participa en este estudio, puede retirarse en cualquier momento sin ningún tipo de consecuencias. Usted podrá elegir a eliminar los datos del estudio. También puede negarse a contestar cualquier pregunta que no quiera contestar y ser en el estudio todavía. El investigador puede retirarse la participante de esta investigación si surgen circunstancias que justifiquen hacerlo.

**DERECHOS DE LOS PARTICIPANTES DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

Usted puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento y dejar de participar sin cargo. Usted no renuncia a cualquier reclamación legal, derechos o recursos a causa de su participación en este estudio de investigación. Este estudio ha sido revisado y recibido la aprobación de la ética a través de la Universidad de Guelph Junta de Ética de la Investigación. Si usted tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación, póngase en contacto con:

Director de Ética de la Investigación Teléfono: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
Universidad de Guelph E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
437 Centro Universitario Fax: (519) 821 a 5236
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

**FIRMA DE INVESTIGACIÓN PARTICIPANTES / REPRESENTANTE LEGAL**

He leído la información proporcionada por el estudio "[título]" tal como se describe en este documento. Mis preguntas han sido contestadas a mi satisfacción, y estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio. Me han dado una copia de este formulario.

__________

Nombre del Participante (Escriba su nombre)

__________

Firma de Participante  Fecha

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FIRMA DE TESTIGO

______________________________     ___________
Nombre de Testigo (Escriba su nombre)

______________________________           ___________
Firma de Testigo                     Fecha
APPENDIX 2

Translator Confidentiality Agreement

I, ________________________, as a translator, will be permitted to have access to participant information in order to perform translation and transcription work related to the University of Guelph Study, *An Anthropological Examination of Civil Society Organization Volunteers’ Perspectives on Youth Violence in Nicaragua.*

I agree to keep all information that I learn about the participants confidential. I understand that I may not discuss or disclose any information related to any member of the organization Movimiento Comunal Nicaraguense or to anyone outside this organization. I understand that it is my duty and responsibility to preserve and protect this privacy and confidentiality. I will at no point reveal any identifying factors of the participants that could link them to the study. I understand that this duty will extend after I am no longer working on the project. By placing my signature below, I hereby indicate that I understand and agree to maintain the privacy of the participants’ information.

Translator and Witness Signatures:

Translator:____________________   Witness:___________________________

Date:____________________   Date:____________________
APPENDIX 3

Interview Guide

Interview Questions in English

1) Can you describe the role you play in Movimiento Comunal Nicaraguense?
2) Can you provide examples of the type of activities you carry out in this organization?
3) What made you decide to join MCN?

4) What ages of youth do you work with here?
5) a) Do you think that participation of the youth in the communities is important? Why or why not?
b) If so, what are the activities you think youth should carry out in society?

6) a) What are common characteristics of the youth with whom you work in terms of their familial background?

7) What are the common socio-economic conditions of the youth you work with?
8) Do you think the activities you carry out in this organization are important for youth? Why/Why not?

9) When did this organization begin to place such an emphasis on youth?
10) Why do you think this organization started to recognize the importance of youth in society and take steps to improve the lives of youth and get them involved in their communities?
11) Do you think the Revolution played a role in the current emphasis on youth in society?
12) In what ways is education tied to the Revolution?
13) Do you think having free education has contributed to the lower levels of violence in Nicaragua?
14) What effect do you think the Revolution has had on youth violence, overall?
15) a) Can you comment on the police's relationship with youth in Nicaragua?
b) Do you think police in Nicaragua treat youth differently than in other Central American countries? If so, in what ways?

16) Personally, for you, what does it mean to support youth?

17) What is your definition of violence?
18) What forms of violence exist in the Nicaraguan community?
19) Why do you think youth tend to join gangs/take part in youth violence in the first place?
20) Do you think urban unemployment is a key factor in urban violence? Why or why not?
21) Do you think youth's family plays a role in their involvement with youth violence? If so, how?
22) Do you think youth join pandillas as a means of making money? Why or why not?
23) Do you think youth violence is affected by migration from rural to urban settings? If so, in what ways?
24) Do you think Nicaraguan's tendency to migrate to Costa Rica instead of the States has an effect on youth violence? If so, what effect do you think this has?

25) What do you think are the most important strategies to deter youth from youth violence in their
26) Do you think providing support (in the form of activities, or social, emotional, financial, educational support) is important for youth? Why or why not?
27) a) In addition to the activities you do here, do you provide emotional support for the youth?
   b) If so, can you provide examples of this?
28) What is your opinion on prevention strategies versus punishment strategies with regard to youth violence?
29) Do you face issues of funding in this organization?
30) a) Do you/have you ever received funding from the government?
   b) Do you/have you ever received funding from other Nicaraguan organizations?
31) Do you think international relationships are an important part of moving forward/achieving goals in this organization?
32) a) How do you think Nicaragua's economy is helped or hindered by free trade agreements?
   b) Do you think this has any effect on youth in Nicaragua? Why or why not?
33) Do you think it is important to depend on your own community and local markets in the process of development?
34) What do you think is/would be an effective economic strategy, moving forward?
35) Do you have any closing thoughts on the topic of youth, youth violence or MCN that you would like to express?
1) Puedes describir tu papel en Movimiento Comunal Nicaraguense?
2) Puedes proveer ejemplos de los tipos de las actividades haces en esta organización?
3) Que te motivó a participar con el MCN?
4) Cuál es la edad de los jóvenes con los que trabajas en MCN?
5) a) Piensas que la participación de la juventud en las comunidades es importante? Por que o por que no?
   b) Que tipos de actividades piensas que la juventud debería hacer en sociedad?
6) a) Cuáles son las características de los jóvenes con quienes trabajas en terminos de su entorno familiar?
   b) Cuáles son las condiciones socio-economicas de los jóvenes con los que trabajas?
7) Piensas que las actividades haces en MCN son importantes para los jóvenes? Por qué o por qué no?
8) Cuando esta organización comenzó a enfatizarse en la juventud en la sociedad?
9) Por qué piensas que esta organización comenzó a reconocer la importancia de la juventud en la sociedad y tomó los pasos para mejorar las vidas de la juventud e involucrarlos en las actividades de la comunidad?
10) Piensas que la Revolución jugó un papel importante en el énfasis que se tiene sobre la juventud en la sociedad de hoy?
11) En que maneras es la educación vinculado a la Revolución?
12) Piensas que tener la educación gratis ha contribuido a los niveles más bajo de violencia en Nicaragua?
13) Piensas que la Revolución he tenido un efecto en la violencia juvenil, en general?
14) a) Puedes comentar sobre la relación entre la policía y la juventud en Nicaragua?
   b) Piensas que la policía en Nicaragua trata la juventud aquí en una manera distinta de la policia en otros países de Centroamerica? Si es así, de que manera?
15) Personalmente, para ti, que significa ayudar a la juventud?
16) Qué es tu definición de la violencia?
17) Por qué crees la juventud tiende a unirse a pandillas o tomar parte en la violencia en primer lugar?
18) Piensas que el desempleo urbano es un factor clave en la violencia urbana? Por qué o por qué no?
19) Crees que la familia de la juventud juega un papel en su participación con la violencia juvenil? Si es así, cómo?
20) Piensas que la juventud entra a las pandillas como una manera de hacer dinero? Por qué o por qué no?
21) Piensas que la violencia juvenil esta afectada por la migración de la zona rural a la zona urbana? Si es así, de que manera?
22) Crees que la tendencia de los Nicaraguense de migrar a Costa Rica en lugar de Los Estados Unidos tiene un efecto en la violencia juvenil? Si es así, que efectos crees que ha tenido?
23) Cuáles crees son las mas importantes estrategias para prevenir la violencia juvenil en las comunidades?
26) Piensas que proveer apoyo (en la forma de actividades deportivas, apoyo social, emocional, financiero o educacional) es importante para la juventud? Por qué bo por qué no?
27) a) En adición a las actividades que realizas aquí, brindas apoyo emocional para los jóvenes?
b) Si es así, puedas proveer ejemplos de esos?
28) Cuál es tu opinión sobre las estrategias de prevención versus estrategias de castigo respecto a la violencia juvenil?
29) Cómo enfrentan los problemas de financiamiento en esta organización?
30) a) Alguna vez han recibido fondos del gobierno?
b) Han recibido fondos de otras organizaciones nicaragüenses?
31) Crees que las relaciones internacionales son parte importante para lograr las metas en esta organización?
32) a) Cómo piensas la economía de Nicaragua es beneficiada o perjudicada por los acuerdos de libre comercio?
b) Piensas que esto tiene algún efecto en la juventud en Nicaragua? Por qué o por qué no?
33) Crees que es importante depender de su propia comunidad y de los mercados locales para proceso de desarrollo? Por qué o por qué no?
34) Cual piensas sería una efectiva estrategia económica, para salir adelante?
35) Tienes algunas ideas finales en el tema de juventud, violencia juvenil or MCN que te gustaría expresar?