

ACS Interdisciplinary Mini-Grant Interim Report

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Project Title: **The Women of San Luis, Costa Rica: Sharing Life Experiences through Oral History and Photography**

Project Dates: Spring 2007 – Spring 2008

Amount Awarded: \$5,238.93

Original Goals and Objectives

Our project unites methods from the social sciences and the humanities to create a product in collaboration with, and desired by, a small community in the highlands of Costa Rica. We planned to use photography and life history interviews to illustrate the lives of women who have lived in the rural community of San Luis for over 50 years, producing a product that is meaningful for the participants and the community. We hoped to engage a small group of students in a project that demonstrated the relevance and usefulness of anthropology and photography, especially when used synthetically. We aimed to show how anthropology is enriched by the visual and how photography can benefit from in-depth participant observation. Our final product may take the form of an interactive website, a museum exhibit, a book, or all of the above.

Changes to Original Goals

While almost all of the women we photographed and interviewed had lived in the area of San Luis for over 50 years, we were also fortunate enough to interview younger women who were seen as influential by their community. These women had been identified by others as important in some way to the community of San Luis and their stories and images will add an interesting temporal component to our final products. We were also able to interview and photograph more women than we had anticipated, due to the help and cooperation of many members of the community who supported this project.

Activities Underway and Completed

Our faculty/student team (Goldberg and Payne and four students, two of whom focused on photography and two of whom emphasize anthropology) began meeting in the Spring 2007 semester in preparation for travel to Costa Rica in June 2007. The pre-travel meetings discussed literature reviewed, established a mutual framework for working with Costa Rican consultants, and evaluated previously collected oral histories. We also worked to break down disciplinary barriers, emphasizing the overlap of our methods and theories. The group met again in Costa Rica in mid-June and photographed and interviewed women there for ten days in a period of two weeks (we did not work on weekends in order to allow our students time to get to know the community in a broader sense). Because each interview required us to hike together through mountainous terrain, we used the travel time to discuss what we had learned, and to translate some of the

Spanish conversation for those members who were not proficient in the language. The travel time allowed us to “debrief” as a group and to discuss our ideas for the next meeting.

Currently, Payne and three or the four students are processing their film at the photography studio at Hendrix College, as there are no photographic facilities close to San Luis. Two of the four students and Goldberg are beginning the work of transcribing the Spanish interviews using a transcription machine. They will follow this effort by translating the interviews into English for the exhibit in the U.S.

Unanticipated Delays and Snags

Goldberg is currently on maternity leave, expecting a child in October. While her pregnancy did not impact the collection of data (and, in fact, it may have helped to prompt interesting discussions about gender in San Luis), her oversight of the transcription and translation has been reduced. Thus, we anticipate that the translation will be completed in the spring semester of 2008 rather than the fall of 2007, as originally planned.

Approved Budget

ACS funds	\$5,238.93
Hendrix College Odyssey program funds	\$5,180.00

Financial Accounting

See attached statement