The Poetics of Water Governance:  
Differential Language Use in Relation to Water in El Salvador

by  
Stephanie Ogden

MPP Essay

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Public Policy

Presented June 26, 2009
Commencement June 2010
The language of water policy both suggests and enforces the relationship that the public should have with water. Differences in language use between policy institutions and the public suggest that the understanding of water promoted through policy may be incongruent with the understanding of water held by the public. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents of two rural communities in El Salvador, local and regional government institutions, as well as local and international NGOs. A discourse analysis of these interviews demonstrates that there is a significant difference between the language utilized by community members and the language used by policy-making institutions with respect to water and water use. This difference in discourse may signify a difference in understanding regarding water and people’s relationship to water, which may ultimately compromise the effectiveness of water policy in rural areas of El Salvador. Furthermore, the introduction and prevalence of policy discourse at the community level may contribute to the elimination of the community discourse and subsequently the loss of the community’s particular understanding of water. This research suggests that, in order to create a policy discourse that more closely resembles community discourse and evokes a similar understanding of water, language must be used that connotes affection, that connotes ownership and obligation, and that is grounded in geographic context.
Acknowledgements

My sincere gratitude is extended to my very impressive committee. I am both honored and grateful that Drs. Denise Lach, Aaron Wolf, and Bryan Tilt would lend their time and expertise to this project. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Lach for her tireless guidance, her unfailing willingness to find time for her students, and for her encouragement of my work. I feel very fortunate to have had the continued mentorship of Dr. Wolf, who has taught me to see the many dimensions of water, and the thoughtful guidance of Dr. Tilt, who lent me time even at his busiest. In addition, I owe many thanks to Dr. Kathleen Dean Moore, who provided me with guidance during the early stages of this project as well as a stirring example of eloquence.

Many thanks is also owed to Todd Jarvis and the Institute for Water and Watersheds for their generous grant in support of my research in El Salvador, as well as Charles Goodrich and the Spring Creek Project for lending me a beautiful and inspiring location in which to write. I am grateful to the University Club Foundation of Portland and the Oregon State University system for their recognition and financial support, and Drs. Brent Steel and Denise Lach for their thorough and thoughtful efforts to keep me funded.

Finally, I would like to thank my thoughtful community of friends and family, who renew my conviction every day that we can do good in the world. My parents and my brother, Dan, are fine examples of that. At last, I am indebted to Elina Lin and Paris Edwards, remarkable people who have made me better from our first few minutes as students together, and to Jeff, who helped me to talk through many of the ideas presented here, and is a man that helps me to see the world differently every day.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Research</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Study Site</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The communities of Las Tunas and Loma Alta</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Social Constructionist Perspective</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse and the Environment</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCH METHODS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Approach</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Frequencies</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Discourse</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in Discourse</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for Disparate Discourses</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Significance of Disparate Discourses</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. List of Rural Community Members interviewed</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. List of Government Official interviewed</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. List of NGOs interviewed</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Example, Comparative frequencies of terms in the discourses of various speaker groups</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Comparative frequencies of words appearing in the aggregate discourse of different speaker groups</td>
<td>28-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Words characterizing group discourses</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Location of research site, Municipality of Lislique, La Union, El Salvador</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

At Blackwater Pond the tossed waters have settled after a night of rain. I dip my cupped hands. I drink a long time. It tastes like stone, leaves, fire. It falls cold into my body, waking the bones. I hear them deep inside me, whispering oh what is that beautiful thing that just happened?

-Mary Oliver, At Blackwater Pond

*Principle 1:* Freshwater is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment;

*Principle 4:* Water has an economic value in all its competing uses, and should be recognized as an economic good.


There are an infinite number of different understandings of water and the human relationship to it, and these understandings are both reflected and constructed by the language we use to describe them. The excerpts above evoke very different images of and attitudes towards water and implicitly prescribe vastly different interactions with it. The first, a poem by Mary Oliver, speaks of water as elemental; it is of the same essence as stone, leaves, and fire, and through the act of drinking, it connects us to the earth. It is also itself life-giving; it wakens even the bones of the body. Gratitude, awe, and joy are evident on the part of the narrator, whose bones whisper in the excitement of awakening. The second, an excerpt from the four principles defined at the 1992 International Conference for Water and the Environment in Dublin (known as the Dublin Principles), suggests that water is necessary and useful, that it is in need of protection, and that it should be treated like an economic good. These principles
allocate the power of control and creation to humans rather than to water. In each set of words, the notions of reverence, control, gratitude and joy are portrayed distinctly. Each has the power to create a distinct understanding of water, and to evoke different images, attitudes, and suggest particular behaviors.

When this creative power of language is considered with respect to policy, which itself is intended to formulate norms of appropriate behavior, these differences in discourse and the attitudes associated with them become more tangibly significant. Language is creative while policy is both formative and authoritative. Thus, policy language has both the power to formulate a particular understanding of the world and the authority to impose that understanding on the public.

The language of water policies, then, suggests and enforces a particular relationship that the public should, according to a governing body, have with water. If this relationship is to be amenable to the goals and values of the public, water policy must be invested with a language appropriate to creating such a relationship: a language that is both familiar to and reflective of the public, and a language that is inclusive of the values that the public associates with water and water use.

This attention to language is particularly relevant in places such as El Salvador, where a national water policy is in development, and the role of policy in rural water governance is emerging. According to the United Nations Development Program, El Salvador has one of the lowest rates of accessibility of potable water in Latin America. Since the introduction of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in 2000, the Salvadoran government, in conjunction with international NGOs, has concentrated regional efforts on improving water and sanitation infrastructure in order to drastically improve the country’s access to potable water by the year 2015. In addition, the government has attempted to formalize a more coherent water policy, and couple greater infrastructure access with a nationally recognized system of water rights and tariffs. Yet, a governmentally prescribed water policy has so far faced significant challenges to its successful implementation. A large portion of El Salvador’s communities, especially in rural areas, still struggles to gain access to potable water for subsistence needs, and the newly enacted policies seem to have defined priority users and
rights to the exclusion of the country’s many rural poor. According to the Salvadoran Center for Consumer Protection, the country’s water situation is worsening rather than improving despite changes in water policy.

It must be acknowledged that the lack of success in implementing water policies and improving water governance in rural areas of El Salvador may ultimately be attributable to a number of factors in the policy design and policy implementation processes including, inadequate funding, significant overlap of relevant government and non-governmental institutions, and the concentration of the political agenda on other issues of greater perceived importance, among others. However, that Salvadoran water policy address the value frames sustained by its rural populations regarding water and water use is indispensable towards an effective policy, regardless of improvements in any other area of policy design or implementation (Fischer 2003). These value frames may be reflected in, as well as maintained by, the language that is used by different people and groups of people to describe water and water use. A disparity in the language surrounding water and water use between policy makers and rural community members may suggest that a discrepancy of fundamental value frames must be overcome before water policy can be effectively implemented in rural areas of El Salvador.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

My research is an exploratory investigation of the language used by different policy relevant groups in El Salvador with respect to water and water sources. I investigate the types of language rural community members use to refer to water and water sources, as well as the language used by policy makers and policy implementers (including officials of non-governmental organizations) and within policy documents. I furthermore attempt to compare the language used by each group to determine what distinctions and similarities exist between them that might suggest potential disparities or similarities in the value frames and policy goals of each. As such, the guiding research question for this study is, “How does the language used by community members to refer to water differ from the language used within policy, and by policy makers and representatives of NGOs?
SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

While there appear to be a handful discourse analyses of water policies, and a handful of analyses of everyday language use with respect to water, there seems to be little study of the distinct differences between the two discourses that would allow for a greater understanding of gaps between water policy and the public.

Within this research, different vocabularies surrounding water and water use suggest that groups seem to have vastly different understandings of water, and have vastly different values, priorities, and activities associated with it. Furthermore, fundamental differences in the understanding of words that surround water and water use in El Salvador may create a conceptual miscommunication whereby the same words connote different meanings to rural community members than to policy makers. This difference in what is conceptually being referred to may suggest that what is truly being governed by each group is essentially a different entity.

This research aims to illustrate the specific differences in discourse between policies, policy-makers, and the public, that may present challenges to the success of water policies in rural areas of El Salvador. Furthermore, this research aims to make recommendations regarding how the language of water policy can more accurately reflect the understanding of the rural public in El Salvador, with implications toward the language of policy.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY SITE

El Salvador

The country of El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America, encompassing an area of 20,646 square kilometers on the Pacific Coast between Guatemala and Honduras. Within this land mass, roughly equivalent in area to the state of Massachusetts, lives a population of approximately 5.7 million people (CIA World Fact Book, 2009), more than half of which live in the capital city of San Salvador, and other urban areas.
In addition, an estimated 20 percent of the Salvadoran population, roughly 1.5 million people, lives outside of the country, many of them residing illegally in the U.S. and Canada.

El Salvador has a tropical climate, with a wet season that extends from May to October, and a dry season that extends from November to April. Average yearly precipitation is roughly 200 cm, almost all of which falls in the form of rain during the months of the wet season. Precipitation is rare during the months of the dry season, and the months of March and April are particularly arid.

Though it has the third highest GDP per capita in Central America, El Salvador is one of the ten poorest countries in Latin America. Gross domestic product per capita in El Salvador is approximately $6,200, though there is a marked disparity between incomes in urban areas and rural areas. While the national minimum wage is $5 per day, rural livelihoods are largely agriculturally based, and the average daily wage ranges from $1-4 per day.

Access to water and sanitation in El Salvador is notably low. While 84% of households in El Salvador have access to potable water, this percentage is markedly less in rural areas. Seventy percent of rural households have access to potable water in some form, though only an estimated 38% have household connections to public water system infrastructure (WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program, 2006). Most rural families access water from nearby springs, creeks, or rivers, or from public water faucets.

Though the National Water Carrier and Sewerage Administration (ANDA) is the government agency charged with providing water system services to all households in El Salvador since its inception in 1961, ANDA’s coverage has historically been limited outside of San Salvador and other large urban areas. The disruption of the civil war from 1980 to 1992, and later charges of corruption within the agency are partly responsible for past institutional failures. However, current limitations to the expansion of ANDA’s services are at least partly attributable to the lack of government funding allocated to the organization. This lack of funding is particularly acute considering that ANDA subsidizes public access to water at a cost that is only half of the actual cost incurred by the institution to filter and transport it. Regardless of the reasons for the institution’s inefficiencies, the fact remains that only a small portion of rural families have
access to water administered by ANDA. Some rural water systems do exist outside of the jurisdiction of ANDA however, many of which are financed directly by municipalities or NGOs, and are regulated by the communities themselves.

Though ANDA, by its constitution, is nationally responsible for providing potable water access to the communities of El Salvador, there are more than 10 federal laws that govern the use and allocation of water throughout the country, and at least 4 federal government agencies charged with responsibility in enforcing these laws. The Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) is responsible for the protection of surface and groundwater as an environmental resource, and enforces regulatory environmental standards in industry, pollution laws, and deforestation laws in major watersheds. The Ministry of Agriculture (MAG) is charged with irrigation laws and the regulation of agrochemicals and effluents, and the Ministry of Public Health (MSPAS) is charged with ensuring water quality in public water sources. In addition, the National Investment Fund for Local Development (FISDL), the nation’s social welfare program, is currently endowed with the responsibility to help El Salvador reach the Millennium Development Goals, including increasing rural access to potable water and sanitation nationwide. However, where the respective responsibilities of these organizations may overlap is often ambiguous.

The involvement of non-governmental aid organizations in El Salvador increased precipitously after 1992, when the signing of the Peace Accords officially ended El Salvador’s 12 year civil war. Aid organizations helped to rebuild infrastructure in areas devastated by the war, and to introduce infrastructure in rural areas that had previously been undeveloped. Water and sanitation has been an area of particular concentration of development work in El Salvador since the year 2001, motivated by the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals in the year 2000, and a series of major earthquakes in January and February of 2001 that killed over 1,000 people, affected half a million houses and buildings, and damaged much of the country’s existing water and sanitation infrastructure. As a result, many international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) such as CARE, Project Concern International, UNICEF, Plan International, and the Pan American Health Organization, as well as intergovernmental aid programs such as USAID and the Swiss Development Cooperation still work in water and sanitation projects in El
Salvador. In addition, several Salvadoran NGOs work specifically in water and sanitation, both on a national scale and at a regional or local scale.

Many of these organizations, cooperating under the auspices of the Water and Sanitation Network of El Salvador (RASES), an organization founded in 1997, and in collaboration with civil society organizations, have asserted the need for integrated water resources management in El Salvador, and have lobbied for the passage of a General Water Law. The General Water Law would consolidate all legislation relevant to the protection, use, and allocation of water, and specify the respective roles of government institutions and civil society organizations in enacting that legislation. Though a draft of the General Water Law was presented in 2006, it is still under revision by the Office of the Secretary of State of El Salvador, and as of yet has not been considered for ratification by the Legislative Assembly.

The communities of Las Tunas and Loma Alta

The rural communities of Las Tunas and Loma Alta are situated within the municipality of Lislique in the northeastern corner of El Salvador, near the border of Honduras. (See Figure 1). This area of El Salvador is one of the most remote areas of the country, as well as one of the most impoverished (FISDL, poverty map 2006). Families within the region rely almost exclusively on rain-fed agriculture, primarily corn, beans, and squash that are planted and harvested during the rainy season in sufficient quantities to supply families with food throughout the months of the dry season. Average adult education is no greater than second grade and illiteracy is prevalent among older adults, especially women (personal communication, secretary of Las Tunas Committee, December 23, 2008). Though education levels have risen in the last decade with the inception of rural schools, there is little local employment outside of agriculture, and men are largely left without work during the dry season. Women are primarily responsible for tasks in the home, including the collection of water and the household chores that utilize it.
The communities of Las Tunas and Loma Alta are each comprised of approximately 85 households. Both communities have limited road access, electricity newly implemented by the municipality of Lislique as of 2008, and schools that teach to sixth grade. The nearest health facility is in the town of Lislique, accessible by bus or by car during the dry season, or on foot during the rainy season. Though Las Tunas has a small community initiated and financed water system that consists of 8 public faucets, the system is unreliable during the months of the dry season, during which most community members rely on the local springs for water. The community of Loma Alta has no formal water infrastructure, and most households access water from local springs year round. Women collect water for household use in cantaros, or plastic urns, sometimes walking up to half an hour each way to do so. Additionally, community members bathe, and wash clothes, corn, and dishes at the springs. During the driest months, when the flow of the springs is minimal, community members often wash and bathe at the river, located approximately a mile from the community via steep footpaths.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The Social-Constructionist Perspective

Central to this thesis is the idea that people have different perceptions of reality. While positivists and those that subscribe to rational models of the world might contend that people simply have different vantage points or ways of making sense of the same objective reality, social constructionists contend that multiple realities are created and perpetuated through our ways of ordering and creating meaning of the events we observe around us (Murphy 1989, Gergen 1998). From a political perspective, these perceived realities are the context in which political problems are understood and solutions approached (Edelman 1988).

In order to demonstrate the social construction of political problems, Maarten Hajer (1993: 44) poses an example of a stand of dead trees. The trees themselves are not the construct in question, but rather the sense that is made of them is important; the many potential narratives that might explain why the trees have died - drought, wind, extreme weather, acid rain - all represent separate realities. Each potential cause of death presents a separate political problem, each of which calls for a distinct policy solution.

How groups collectively make sense of events, or how they share constructed realities, is thus the basis for how problems and solutions are identified, and what action is taken to connect the two (Stone 1997). Policies, according to Stone, must establish shared meaning in order to motivate action. As such, she argues that policy making is a “constant struggle over the criteria for classification, the boundaries of categories, and the definition of ideals that guide the way people behave (Stone 1997: 11).

The perspective that political problems and everyday realities are socially constructed is now commonplace in a variety of academic disciplines, from sociology to anthropology, linguistics and literary criticism to political science (Hajer 1993). Referring to the now widespread application of the constructionist perspective, Murray Edelman (1988:1) asserts, “[w]e are acutely aware that observers and what they observe construct one another.”
Language plays a particularly crucial role in the social constructionist understanding of reality as it is the medium through which we categorize, order, and assign meaning to the world. While according to the positivist doctrine, language is considered simply as a tool that reflects true nature and our perceptions of it, constructionists avow that language, as the only access that individuals have with the world, not only reflects how we interpret reality, but also helps to construct our understanding of it (Gergen 1998).

That language acts as a constructive force is a central tenet of the social-constructionist ideology. Edelman (1998:103) asserts that “the most incisive twentieth-century students of language converge from different premises on the conclusion that language is the key creator of the social worlds people experience.” In tracing the social-constructionist genealogy, Murphy (1989:40) furthermore asserts that, “instead of embellishing reality, language pervades everything that is known.” He decisively declares that to constructionists, “to a certain extent, reality is a linguistic habit (Murphy 1989:40).”

In her explication of problem definition, Stone (1997) adamantly asserts that linguistic devices such as symbols, metaphor, and hyperbole are often utilized, both deliberately and habitually, to present a political problem in an emotional context that fits within the frame of the intended audience. Furthermore, language accrues a particular value with repeated use, such that the word becomes a symbol, evocative of pre-existing emotional responses and calling for already common solutions. Words such as welfare, discrimination, teen-pregnancy, and illiteracy, are examples of terms that have become value-laden, though each is embedded with a distinct meaning depending upon one’s frame of reference (Edelman 1988, Stone 1997). As Edelman (1988:16) explains, “every instance of language and action resonates with the memory, the fear, or the anticipation of other signifiers, so that there are radiating networks of meaning that vary with the situations of spectators and actors.”

The implication of social-constructionism in a political context, according to Stone, Edelman, and others, is that, because realities are created and perpetuated through social interactions and language use, individuals and groups are apt to create and perpetuate realities in which they benefit. Thus, a deliberate and strategic use of language is employed in order to convince others that a particular definition of a societal problem is the correct one, and that a particular
solution is the most effective one (Edelman 1988; Fischer and Forester 1993; Stone 1997; Birkland 2005). Edelman in particular adamantly suggests that all political language is strategic language, and is intended to preserve existing power structures as well as protect benefits of those who are already benefiting.

Fischer and Forester (1993), Shon and Rein (1994), and Zahariadis (2003) view this strategic use of language as an element of framing; a way of selecting aspects of a perceived reality and making them seem more salient, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or action recommendation. (Entman, as cited by Zahariadis 2003: 89-90).

Schön and Rein (1994) further assert that policy conflicts are ultimately frame controversies, instances in which the reality perceived by one group of people does not match the realities perceived by others. These controversies are often intractable because the parties’ conflicting frames determine what counts as fact and what arguments are taken to be relevant and credible. Each party will necessarily argue that their frame of reference is reflective of the truth. It is precisely in this context that the function of political language is most powerful, says Edelman: when it is presented by policy makers under the guise of a tool for objective description, and appealing to a sense of objective truth (Edelman 1988).

However, the constructive power of language is not relegated to purposive or strategic uses of language. The language used by individuals in their every-day context, language that is incidental rather than deliberate, also reflects and simultaneously constructs the realities of the speakers. Apart from political problems, Edelman (1988: 110) contends that “aspirations [and] social conditions, are also subject to interpretation; they are constructions of language as well.” It follows, he argues, that people in similar social situations should use similar language.

In his ethnographic study of the Cibeque community of eastern New Mexico, Keith Basso (1996) considers how place names and metaphors used by the Western Apache are integral to their understanding of the world and their interpersonal relations. To the Apache, place names are fundamentally constructive; they conjure up images of places that allow both the
speaker and the listener to “travel in their minds,” reconstruct the landscape in front of which their own ancestors stood and place it in the present-day, troublesome context, as an anchor. He contends that ordinary language is “a window onto the structure and significance of other people’s worlds (Basso 1996: 73),” and that language cannot be separated from our particular ways of understanding the world.

The study of “discourse,” understood as both the language and meanings utilized by individuals and groups, either deliberately or as a matter of habit, has thus come to play a pivotal role in many disciplines. In light of this, as we approach policy analysis, it is elemental that we study not only the context of policies but the language in which that context is expressed. As Fischer and Forester (1993: 6) argue in one example, if we are to truly understand a report from an economic policy analyst, it is essential that we examine “not only the economic policy analyst’s findings, but the rhetoric of the economic analysis as well.”

**Discourse and the Environment**

Though not all language and discourse analysis is conducted from a social-constructionist perspective, there are a number of applications of discourse analysis that have provided guidance to the framework through which this study is approached.

Much attention has been given in recent decades to the need to mobilize civic and political action with respect to the environment, and the need to create a rhetoric that can do so. As such, scholars from various disciplines have begun to examine the types of discourse that have emerged with the growth of American environmentalism. Though much of the language that surrounds the environment is powerful and compelling, many scholars have attested that the current environmental discourse is diffuse, widely variable, and ambiguous.

Dryzek (2005), for example, identifies four separate discourses within the current environmental movement. He examines the distinct causal narrative that each implies and determines that each reveals different motivation and different understanding of appropriate action. Similarly, linguist George Lakoff examines the many different cognitive frames through
which the issue of the environment is perceived, and suggests that, at the heart of the environmental debate, is a fundamental frame controversy. Lakoff, an advisor to the Democratic party, contends that environmentalists have adopted a frame and a language (indeed, to Lakoff these are inseparable entities) that fails to reflect the vital importance and interdependence of all things on Earth. Even the term ‘the environment,’ suggests a separation between man and his surroundings, and the environment as separate from other everyday issues of human life. Such a distinction, in Lakoff’s view, is ultimately detrimental to the tenets of the environmental movement (Butler 2004).

While diffuse rhetoric and multiple cognitive frames may provide shaky ground for environmental discourse particularly at the political level, the language that surrounds the environment and our relationship to it is also plagued by terms that are notoriously ambiguous. In his examination of 21st century water governance, Castro (2007) notes that terms such as ‘civil society,’ ‘water sector,’ and ‘governance,’ have amorphous definitions or none at all, and thus provide little definitional guidance as to how water can be managed.

Similarly, Bentrupperbaumer et al. (2006) find that the meaning of ‘world heritage values,’ though defined in various World Heritage and UNESCO documents and conventions, are nevertheless ambiguous in practice. Interviews with resource managers and visitors to a World Heritage site in Australia showed that the groups tended to define the term ‘world heritage values’ differently, and that there was no common referent for the term at all. They conclude that this disconnect may compromise the effectiveness of policy implementation with respect to World Heritage sites, as groups don’t equivalently define the terms upon which the policy goals are contingent.

In relation to the ambiguity of terms utilized within environmental discourse, several authors point to the social construction of key concepts, particularly within the amorphous notion of water governance. Mukhartov (2007) points to the ongoing construction of and the emerging legitimacy of the language of integrated water resources management. Blatter and Ingram (2009) point to the prevalence of the language of economics, and the constructed importance of the notion of efficiency in global water governance. The language of efficiency, they point out, has an audience limited to societies in which markets are well established, and excludes
notions of equity and sense of place, both of which must be considered in order for water governance to be effective. Castro (2007) likewise argues that current global water policies employ a language of “commodification” and “entitlement” which reflects a set of values and principles that are simply not resonant in all global contexts. Interestingly, he notes that water is referred to as a “resource” 1400 times in the 2006 UNESCO World Water Report. Washbourne and Dicke (2001) further contend, in their narrative analysis of water management in England and Wales, that the narrative of water as a commodity that can be bought and sold is counter to and irreconcilable with the narrative of water as a God given right.

Discourses are neither impenetrable nor permanent (Dryzek 1995, Schneider and Ingram 1997). However, current discourse surrounding global environmental and water management may be contributing to the policy’s own failure. Castro (2007) notes that the notion of ‘water crises,’ is one that has been constructed by the conceptual frame that has been built around water governance, one in which sectors and boundaries are created, in which water is referred to most often as a resource, and in which a juxtaposition exists between this vocabulary and the explicit recognition that water is more than just an economic resource. This helps to frame an understanding of water in crisis and muddle the term governance such that no common reference for it can be made across political and intellectual boundaries.

Hull and Robertson (2000) argue that, in addition to being simply imprecise, many of the words used to describe nature are inherently biased. Embedded within the definitions of the terms commonly used to describe nature and its components, are values, though we perceive of these definitions to be scientific and objective. Hull and Robertson (2000) actively advocate for a different language to refer to the environment, language that is both honest of its inherent value and publicly accessible.

In an examination of the everyday language of water and place, Burenhult (2008), Basso (1996), and Cordova (2007) suggest that an understanding of our kinship to the environment is interdependent and contingent upon our language. Burenhult’s ethnographic study of the water lexicon within the Jahai dialect of Malaysian peoples and their use of metaphor of the human body, suggests that the way that we refer to water and water sources is deeply
intertwined and ultimately inseparable from our understanding of how we relate to our environment. Finally, Native American philosopher Viola Cordova contends that a language of place, a language that recognizes the boundaries of the space we inhabit, creates an incentive for people to use the resources of their place with care.

Summary

Collectively, this literature attests that language has both interpretive and formative power and that the realities that we each perceive through our interactions with the world around us are indelibly intertwined with the type of language we use. The words we speak both reflect and re-create the world around us.

Language is also instrumental to the way we define policy problems and the solutions we seek to them, including the way we understand problems and solutions with respect to the environment and collectively used resources, such as water. How groups collectively make sense of events, or how they share constructed realities, is thus the basis for how problems and solutions are identified, and what action is taken to connect the two (Stone 1997). Common definition of the problem is an essential impulsion to collective action. Policies that do not define problems in such a way as to encompass the values and constructed realities of relevant stakeholder groups are, according to Fischer, “bound to be rejected” (Fischer 2003: 13).”

This literature further suggests that the language that thus far predominates within environmental policy discourse does not match the language used by the people that such policy intends to govern. While the language of place and nature is fundamental to and formative of many people’s greater understanding of the world, these authors suggest that the language of environmental policy is so far ambiguous, biased towards efficiency and control, and bereft of the cultural, spiritual, and worldly values attributed to the environment through the use of community language. Such a disparity of language may compromise the effectiveness of environmental policy. More importantly, if such language prevails within environmental policy it may, with widespread use, create a reality in which we perceive of the
environment as ambiguous, as necessitating greater efficiency and control, and as bereft of cultural, spiritual, and worldly value.
RESEARCH METHODS

Methodological Approach

My research question compares types of language used across speaker groups as indications of multiple perspectives and realities. The literature points to the collection of qualitative data in the form of narratives obtained through participant interviews, as the most appropriate. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative analysis allows for greater richness than does quantitative analysis, and is often used to help identify the meanings that people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives, and to connect these meanings to the social world around them. Participant interviews are a particularly relevant method of gathering such data when the focus of research is the meaning that participants ascribe to certain phenomena, and are often used within constructionist frameworks because they allow for the accumulation of multiple perspectives as windows into multiple realities (Robson, 2002).

Robson (2002) furthermore suggests that, because constructionists perceive of multiple created realities, the research questions cannot be fully established in advance of the research, but will rather be informed by the data collection itself. In this case, semi-structured or unstructured interview questions are most appropriate, as they allow for flexibility within the interview process to change the wording or order of the questions to accommodate a more natural narrative flow, and ground the research as much as possible, as Miles and Huberman suggest, in ordinary events in natural settings. In contrast to a fully structured interview, a semi-structured interview design furthermore allows the researcher to clarify or explain questions as well as omit questions when they are inappropriate (Robson 2002).

Discourse analysis is at best an ambiguous term, but refers to a type of evaluative framework that falls generally into the realm of content analysis and encompasses a variety of techniques. Content analysis, and discourse analysis in particular, are commonly used within a constructionist framework in order to explore the relationship between language use and broader social and cultural developments and structures (Robson 2002). The underlying premise, according to Phillips and Jorgenson (2002), is that discursive practice both reflects,
and actively contributes to, social and cultural change. Potter and Wetherell (1994) also suggest that, though there are many techniques that fall within the realm of discourse analysis, a primary shared feature of the different approaches is that they are concerned with talk and texts as social practices. As such, discourse analysis explores both linguistic content and linguistic form, recognizing them as interdependent and foundational in the construction of meaning within a social context.

How is discourse analysis used to connect language and meaning? Phillips and Jorgenson (2002, 83) summarize Fairclough's framework for discourse analysis, in which he advocates observation of the following characteristics within text or dialogue as potentially effective in examining the relationship between language use and social practice:

- interactional control, the relationships between speakers and how those relationships are expressed or perpetuated through conversation
- ethos, how identities are constructed through language
- metaphors
- wording

Examining any one of these aspects provides insight into the ways in which words are related to events and social relations and thereby construct particular versions of reality. Use of these different linguistic aspects, either intentionally or unintentionally, creates a particular discourse, or a “particular way of talking about and understanding the world (Phillip and Jorgenson 2002, p. 1).”

As examples, Phillip and Jorgenson (2002, 83-84) provide analyses of sentences such as, “Fifty nurses were sacked yesterday,” where the use of passive voice absolves anyone in particular of responsibility by omitting the responsible agent, and “hardening of the arteries attacks arteries all over the body,” which makes a committed knowledge claim where the sentence “hardening of the arteries may attack arteries all over the body” does not.
Of the ‘tools’ in Fairclough’s framework, I chose to concentrate exclusively on wording and metaphor within my own analysis, since these tools could be most readily attained through participant interviews.

One final concept informed my research methodology. Relationships in El Salvador, and much of Latin America, are based upon the notion of “confianza,” a word that has connotations of trust, confidence, and familiarity. Without confianza, Salvadorans, especially rural community members, are often unwilling to speak openly or honestly to others, particularly regarding topics of any emotional or delicate matter. The need to maintain confianza influenced my study design in two ways. Firstly, it reinforced the necessity of a semi-structured interview design, the flexibility of which allowed for an appropriate ordering and phrasing of questions, as well as the omission and addition of questions that promoted a dialogue responsive to participants’ behavior.

Secondly, in order to assure that I obtained honest discourse, especially from rural community members for whom confianza is traditionally more important, I chose to conduct rural interviews in a community in which I was already familiar, and had already gained confianza. I had served for two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in a community in northeastern El Salvador, and had continued to visit the community and the surrounding area on a monthly basis for several years afterwards. Furthermore, conducting interviews in a community in which I was already well known, helped to guard against strategic bias, whereby participants, believing that a particular answer may influence a policy change or decision, respond to questions untruthfully (Whittington, et al. 1990). Had rural community members believed that their answers to my questions regarding water would influence whether or not community water access was improved, the nature of their discourse may have changed.

**Data Collection**

In December of 2008, I traveled to El Salvador and conducted interviews with rural community members, government officials, and officers of local and international NGOs.

I chose to conduct interviews in rural communities in Northeastern El Salvador where I had lived as a Peace Corps Volunteer and a member of the community for several years. After my
departure from the community, I maintained friendships with many of the families there, and continued to visit on a monthly basis for several years while I was working in the larger development sector in El Salvador. I had gained advanced proficiency in Spanish during my time in the community, and could communicate both verbally and in written format with ease. Though I may not have gained confianza with all of the families within the community, I do have evidence of having confianza with many of them, and with the community as a whole; I gathered and attended community meetings, visited houses and was allowed to help women to break corn and make tortillas, was trusted to take children to camps and educational events away from home and to keep them in my care, and was privy to gossip, dirty jokes, and tall-tales.

The purpose of choosing these communities in particular was two fold. As a researcher, I already understood many of the challenges facing rural water users in the surrounding communities, and so the time necessary to educate myself with respect to the situation was much shorter. More importantly, I had already gained the confianza of the rural community members in the area, a notion essential to relations in much of rural Latin America. Without confianza I could not have expected many of the rural people to speak to me openly and honestly about their situation, a lesson I had learned as a Peace Corps volunteer years earlier.

Within these communities I conducted a purposive sample, seeking to interview both men and women, younger and older, and those involved in community governance as well as those not directly involved. Thus, I proposed to speak to at least 8 women and 8 men, half of whom were uninvolved in community governance, and the other half involved in some form of community governance, particularly local water committees and ADESCOs (local community development councils akin to a village council). As is the case in Las Tunas and the surrounding communities, women’s involvement in community governance in many rural areas of El Salvador is still much less frequent than men’s, and is most observable in local school committees and active church councils rather than ADESCOs, development councils, or water committees. As a result, in seeking a sample of women active in community governance, I was forced to seek out not only women who were involved in water councils and ADESCOs, but also those involved in church groups and school committees. A table of community members interviewed is listed below in Table 1.
Table 1: A complete list of rural community members interviewed and their respective affiliations with community governance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Participant #</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age (approximate)</th>
<th>Active in Community Governance?</th>
<th>Community Governance Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>ADESCO, joint village water committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>AESCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>ADESCO, water committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>ADESCO, Local Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>School committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>School committee, church committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>ADESCO, church committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>ADESCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (joint interview)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 (joint interview)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 (joint interview)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A combination sample of government officials, both purposive and snowball, was conducted with five government agencies at the national level, and one local official within the municipal government of Lislique, under the authority of which the rural communities of Las Tunas, Guajiniuil, and Loma Alta reside. I chose the government agencies based on their involvement or potential authority in water governance in El Salvador. As noted in the introduction, responsibility for water governance in El Salvador is currently dispersed across many government agencies, most notably ANDA (the national water carrier), the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Health, and FISDL (the national inversion fund for local
development). In addition, SNET, the national statistics bureau is largely responsible for collecting and analyzing data with regard to water and other natural resources. In the case of the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Health, and FISDL, I called to request an interview and briefly explained my research, and was scheduled to meet with the most relevant official. I could not contact ANDA to schedule an interview, and so scheduled an interview in person, and was shuffled through offices until I landed, again, at the person with knowledge deemed most relevant to my research. In the case of SNET, I was referred by the Ministry of the Environment, who recommended the agency as relevant to the gathering and organizing of statistics related to water in El Salvador. Lastly, I sought out the mayor of Lislique, as the most relevant official of the local government in the region in which the chosen rural communities were situated. A list of government officials interviewed is included below, though their exact job description cannot be included here for reasons of confidentiality (Table 2).

Table 2: List of Government Official interviewed and level of government at which they participate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Office</th>
<th>Level of government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNET (National Statistics Bureau)</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FISDL (Investment Fund for Local Development)</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANDA (National Water and Sewage Agency)</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality of Lislique (Mayor’s office)</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar sample of NGOs, both purposive and snowball was conducted, with the intention of gathering perspectives of NGOs working at international, national, and local scales. Each of the NGOs that comprise the sample works in water and sanitation at the rural community level in El Salvador, and each is directed at the national level by a Salvadoran. Though it is common for expatriates to head regional offices of international organizations, all interview participants were Salvadoran and native Spanish speakers. I chose to speak to CARE and Catholic Relief
Services as representatives of international organizations working regionally, because each has worked extensively in water and sanitation in El Salvador and profess commitment to improving potable water access and sanitation in El Salvador as institutional objectives. PROCOSAL is a Salvadoran NGO of large scale, and its director is the president of RASES, a network of NGOs working in water and sanitation in El Salvador, and a forum for institutional sharing. ANDAR is a small Salvadoran NGO that serves roughly half of the nation’s territory, and is a member of RASES, and ASSA is a small, local organization that works principally in 2 of the 14 departments of El Salvador. A list of NGOs interviewed is included below (Table 3). For purposes of confidentiality, I cannot provide the job titles of interview participants, though each participant was either the director or sub-director of the local office, or the director of the water and sanitation program.

Table 3: List of NGOs interviewed, and the respective geo-political scope of each institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NGO</th>
<th>Scope of work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARE</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Relief Services</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCOSAL</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANDAR</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSA</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews with participants in each of the three groups were semi-structured, and consisted of broad questions intended to provoke unguided, or relatively spontaneous, discourses from individuals regarding water in the context most relevant to them. I used prompts where necessary to trigger more extensive dialogue, and these prompts were largely consistent across groups. Both the questions and the prompts were approved by the university’s Institutional Review Board. All interviews were audio recorded using a small digital recorder. (A list of semi-structured interview questions is attached as Appendix I).

Interviews with government officials, NGO workers, and most community members were conducted individually. However, in the case of some community members, joint interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted within respondents’ homes and others were
often either present or entered out of curiosity, and were compelled to respond to the questions asked, though the importance of obtaining individual interviews was explained prior to each interview. Robson suggests that interviews may take place in a group context, especially in less structured interviews where the normal format of alternating question and answer is more flexible, but that such group interviews necessarily explore collective phenomena rather than individual ones (Robson 2002).

Finally, I obtained an electronic copy of the 2007 draft of the Salvadoran General Water Law document, as it was submitted for revision to the Salvadoran national legislature.

Data analysis

Once the interviews were complete, I transcribed them into a simple word-processing program, noting themes, motifs, and any vocabulary used repeatedly. In order to compare vocabularies and thematic content particular to speakers and speaker groups, I first looked for the frequency with which certain words were used within each speaker group. In order to conduct word frequency counts, I compiled a list of vocabulary used repeatedly throughout the interviews as a whole. The list was comprised of approximately 30 words and was a mixture of colloquialisms and more technical terms, and reflected a range of values, perspectives, and etymologies. I then divided the interviews into three separate text files, one for community members, government officials, and members of NGOs respectively. I removed my own dialogue from the transcriptions so that only the words of the interview participants remained, such that I had a type of ‘discourse bank’ for each speaker group. I then ran a simple word count within each of the text files, recording how many times each of the words on the list appeared in the discourse bank for each group.

Some speakers were more verbose than others. In order to compare word frequencies across speakers and speaker groups, I obtained a total word count for each text file, and divided the tallies for each individual word by the total number of words in the document, and then multiplied by 1000 to obtain a frequency/1000 words. Table 4 shows a small excerpt of the vocabulary list, as well as the comparative frequencies across the respective speaker groups.
The final column refers to the frequency with which terms appear in the text of the 2007 draft of the General Water Law.

Table 4: Excerpt of results; comparison of frequencies with which terms appear in the discourses of various speaker groups. (Frequencies calculated and reported per 1000 words).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Spanish Word</th>
<th>Frequency in community discourse</th>
<th>Frequency in government discourse</th>
<th>Frequency in NGO discourse</th>
<th>Frequency in General Water Law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Agua</td>
<td>31.04</td>
<td>18.10</td>
<td>21.02</td>
<td>12.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hydrologic resource</td>
<td>Recurso hidrico</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient/efficiency management</td>
<td>Eficiente/cia</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“eye of water”</td>
<td>Ojo de agua</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well (or spring)</td>
<td>Pozo</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring (connotation: spill out of)</td>
<td>Vertiente</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, during my initial transcription as well as my re-reading of the interviews, I coded the dialogue according to relevant and recurring descriptive themes, so that I could compare statements across speakers and speaker groups. Codes are labels attached to snippets of discourse that assign it a meaning or significance within a certain context (Miles and Huberman 1994), and organize dialogue and texts according to a series of relevant categories. Though some codes are created theoretically, the majority of the codes I chose emerged during the data collection and organization (Miles and Huberman 1994). Thus, as an example, I coded all statements that referred directly or indirectly to water rights with a similar code (Rights), then extracted the coded statements from the remaining dialogue, and grouped them according to the speaker groups from which they were drawn. Discourse of like categories could then be compared to distinguish similarities or differences in perspective between speaker groups. In the initial comparison of the coded discourse, it became obvious that not all of the codes produced relevant findings (Miles and Huberman 1994). Of the 18 codes, 7 that showed relevant differences or similarities across speakers were compared in more detail, including: quantity, hardship, future generations, water rights, caring for water, institutional gaps, and water as life.
Finally, in order to understand the difference between spoken discourses and the written policy discourse, I chose to further compare the use vocabulary and themes within the interviews to the vocabulary and themes embedded in the written text of El Salvador’s emerging “Ley General de Agua,” the General Water Law. Though the final version of the legislation has not yet been passed, I obtained a digital copy of a fully written draft and have analyzed the document as it stands as of May 2009. In an analysis similar to that conducted with the interview transcripts, I performed a word search for each of the words on the list and converted the word counts into frequencies per 1000 words. Though the document does not have a narrative structure as the interviews did, I coded the document according to the 18 codes already established in the coding of the interviews. None of the seven codes relevant to the interviews were relevant to the document.
RESULTS

Word Frequencies

Though all of the interviews were similarly structured, and surrounded the topic of water, community members used the word *agua* with a notably greater frequency than did NGO workers or government officials. Community members as a whole used the word water with a frequency of approximately 31 times per 1000 words, while NGO officials used the word 21 times, and government officials 18 times per 1000 words. The frequency with which the word *agua* appeared in the draft of the General Water Law is notably less still, at less than 13 times per 1000 words. In addition, community members occasionally use the diminutive *aguita*, which connotes familiarity or affection, though the frequency of use is small (0.55 times per 1000 words). The word aguita does not appear in the NGO or government discourse, or in the General Water Law.

On the other hand, the terms *hydrologic resource* (recurso hídrico), *resource* (recurso), and *hydrologic* (hídrico) are used with a relatively high frequency in draft of the General Water Law; “*hydrologic resource*” appears more than 7 times per 1000 words in the document, while “*resource*” appears more than 10 times per 1000 words, and the adjective “*hydrologic*” appears more than 14 times per 1000 words. None of these terms is used a single time in the community discourse. Government officials use the words with some frequency, though to a far lesser extent than the written document does, and as a whole, members of NGOs use the term with slightly less frequency still. With the exception of one government official interviewed, and one NGO member, all others used the term *hydrologic resource* at least once to refer to water. Table 5 (on subsequent page) summarizes the results of the word frequency analysis, and demonstrates the relative frequencies with which all words inventoried appear in each group’s discourse.
Table 5: Comparative frequencies of words appearing in the aggregate discourse of different speaker groups. (All frequencies calculated per 1000 words).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Spanish Word</th>
<th>Frequency in community discourse</th>
<th>Frequency in NGO discourse</th>
<th>Frequency in government discourse</th>
<th>Frequency in Gen Water Law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>Agua</td>
<td>31.04</td>
<td>21.02</td>
<td>18.10</td>
<td>12.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water (diminutive)</td>
<td>Aguita</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resource (s)</td>
<td>recurso (s)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>10.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hydrologic</td>
<td>Hídrico (a)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>14.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hydrologic resource</td>
<td>recurso(s) hídrico(s)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural resource</td>
<td>recurso(s) natural(es)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potable water</td>
<td>agua potable</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clean water</td>
<td>agua limpa</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>productive/ productivity</td>
<td>productivo (a)/ productividad</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economic</td>
<td>económico (a)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>efficient/ efficiency</td>
<td>eficiente/ eficiencia</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sustainable/ sustainability</td>
<td>sostenible/ sostenibilidad</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td>Desarrollo</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health</td>
<td>Salud</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management</td>
<td>Manejo</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administration</td>
<td>administración/ administrar</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irrigation</td>
<td>Riego</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watershed</td>
<td>Cuenca</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>6.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservation (to conserve)</td>
<td>conservación/ conservar</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regulation (regulate)</td>
<td>regulación (derivatives)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>Pobreza</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor</td>
<td>pobre</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to care for</td>
<td>cuidar</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happiness</td>
<td>alegría/ alegre</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>Dios</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life</td>
<td>Vida</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality of life</td>
<td>calidad de vida</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scarce/ scarcity</td>
<td>escaso/ escasez</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack</td>
<td>Falta</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suffering (to suffer)</td>
<td>sufrimiento / sufrir</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family</td>
<td>Familia</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (cont.): Comparative frequencies of words appearing in the aggregate discourse of different speaker groups. (All frequencies calculated per 1000 words).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Spanish Word</th>
<th>Frequency in community discourse</th>
<th>Frequency in NGO discourse</th>
<th>Frequency in government discourse</th>
<th>Frequency in Gen Water Law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>comunidad</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future</td>
<td>Futuro</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child/children</td>
<td>hijo/s</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benefit/to benefit</td>
<td>beneficio/beneficiar</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>risk</td>
<td>Riesgo</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be stingy</td>
<td>mezquinar</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blessing/gift</td>
<td>bendición</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treasure/gold</td>
<td>Tesoro</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Names</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;eye of water&quot;</td>
<td>ojo de agua</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;eye of water&quot; (dimin)</td>
<td>ojito de agua</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;eye of water&quot; (plural)</td>
<td>ojos de agua</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL &quot;eye of water&quot;</td>
<td>ALL OJO DE AGUA</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well (or spring)</td>
<td>Pozo (s)</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well (dimin: small)</td>
<td>Pozito</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well (dimin: large)</td>
<td>Pozóna</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL pozo</td>
<td>All POZO</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>source</td>
<td>fuente (s)</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring (connotation:</td>
<td>vertiente (s)</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spill out of)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring (diminutive)</td>
<td>vertientillo</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL Vertiente</td>
<td>All VERTIENTE</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring (etym: Birth)</td>
<td>Nacimiento (s)</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring (dimin: small)</td>
<td>nacimietillo</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total &quot;Nacimiento&quot;</td>
<td>All NACIMIENTO</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring (etym: origin)</td>
<td>manantial (es)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined source names</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.22</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An additional area of notable difference is the respective breadth of vocabulary that each group uses to refer to water and water sources. While government officials and NGO members use relatively few words with notable frequency to describe water sources, community members have a wealth of words and variations to describe both the water sources within their communities and water sources in a more abstract sense.
As described in the introduction, most of the community members of Las Tunas and the surrounding communities access water for cooking and drinking from local springs, born at the base of shade-bearing trees. Few community members, but particularly those from the communities of Loma Alta and Guajiniquil, also obtain water from nearby creeks or rivers.

A total of 10 words, including 5 root words and 5 diminutives, were inventoried among community members as referring to local springs. One word plus its diminutive was ascribed to the nearby river, two words and one diminutive to local creeks, and two words to the public faucets that comprise the small water system infrastructure present in the community of Las Tunas.

The abundance of words used by community members to describe the local springs is particularly notable. The words pozo, ojo de agua, nacimiento, fuente, and vertiente were all used synonymously and with notable frequency to refer to the community’s natural springs. According to the Larousse and Oxford Spanish-English dictionaries, the word fuente can be translated as “fountain” or “source.” Each of the other words can be translated to the English word, “spring,” though the etymologies of the words suggest slightly different connotations. In addition, variations of each of these words were used at least once by community members; diminutives such as pozito, ojito de agua, and vertientillo connote small size, familiarity, or affection depending on the context, while use of the variation pozona denotes a large or copious spring. While the words pozo, nacimiento, fuente, and vertiente are used by government officials and/or NGO workers, the term ojo de agua, literally meaning “eye of water,” is only present in the community discourse.

In addition, community members also refer to the different springs by name, differentiating them with names that connect them either to the person that owns the property on which they are located, or, most commonly, to a defining ecological characteristic of the spring. Thus, one community member collects water from the “pozo del aguacate,” or “spring of the avocado,” thusly named because the spring surfaces at the roots of an avocado tree; another community member collects water from the “Pozo del Tío Chano,” or Uncle Chano’s spring, named for the man who ‘owns’ the spring, or on whose property the spring is located. One
woman in the community of Loma Alta refers to a series of three springs, each of which has a different name, and from which water is used for different purposes. In the excerpt below, she refers to two of the sources and explains their uses.

Para tomar allá vamos a traer del zarzal porque es un agua especial. Está largo, pero es un agua limpio de nacimiento, que nosotros para llenarlo vamos al pozo, esperamos que llene y traemos el agua limpia. Allí no lavamos ropa, ni bañamos. Solo es para tomar, ese pozo. De allí, el pozo del mango, lo tenemos para bañar, y lavar maíz y trastes. El agua es abundante. El pozo del mango lo tenemos para lavar ropa, porque hay piedras grandes, hay...el agua pues es más.

We bring drinking water from the spring of the brambles because it’s special water. It’s far away, but the water is clean and direct from the ground. To collect it, we go to the spring, wait until it gets full, and bring home the clean water. We don’t wash clothes there, or bathe. That spring is only for drinking water. The spring of the mango is for bathing, and for washing corn and dishes. Water is abundant there. We wash clothes there too because there are large rocks [on which we can wash]; there’s just more water there.

The names assigned to specific springs help to ground them in both a geographical and social context. The name of the spring refers to the environment in which it is located, but also connotes a particular use agreed upon by social convention. When asked whether everyone in the community observed the same distinctions between the uses of the springs, the woman replied, “Todos hacemos iguales;” “we all do the same.”

In greatest contrast to the community discourse, the draft of the General Water law utilizes a small and precise vocabulary with respect to water and water sources. Water is most often referred to by the words, “water,” “resource,” or “hydrologic resource,” which connote both abstractness and utility. The word fuente, used to refer to any source of water, is also used, but with much less frequency. Only two words inventoried within the document suggest specific water sources within any geographical context and are referred to with relatively little frequency. The word pozo as it is utilized in the General Water Law denotes a perforated “well.” It is important to note that this meaning of pozo is different than the meaning engendered by community members, who use the word pozo to denote a spring or any pool (such as a pool or eddy in a river) in which water accumulates and can be drawn, in addition to denoting a perforated well which is more formally called a pozo real. The word nacimiento,
which denotes a spring, and is used often in the community discourse, is used once in the document.

As expected, government officials and NGO workers utilize language characterized by significantly more precision and limitation than the language used by community members, but less precision and limitation than the written water law. Interestingly, the language of NGO workers, considered as a group, is slightly less rich than the language used by government officials. While government officials use no diminutives, they do use four of the five root words used by community members to refer to water sources, though they use each with significantly less frequency than do community members. Of those same five root words, NGO workers use only three, and use them with even less frequency than do government officials. Table 5 (p.27) includes a list of root words and diminutives used to refer to water sources, and the relative frequency with which they are used within each group’s discourse. It is interesting to note that community members use the combined total of source names at a frequency nearly twice that of government officials and four times that of NGO workers.

Because interview questions pertained directly to water and water use, the words that appeared with most frequency throughout the discourses were often words that referred to source names or to water in a general sense. However, many words not directly pertaining to water or water sources appeared with notable frequency in one or several of the discourses. The words that appear most frequently within each discourse reflect a particular character to each discourse, and may suggest what words and constructs each group associates with water. The ten words most frequently used by each group are listed below in Table 6.

The disparity between community dialogue and the document discourse is evident throughout the results. Of the words that comprise the document discourse with most frequency, only the words natural, watershed, and regulation were used by community members at all, and were used no more than 4 times throughout the 16 interviews, with a maximum frequency of 0.16 times per 1000 words. Likewise, the majority of the words most commonly used in the community discourse never appear in the text of the General Water Law. Notable exceptions are the words benefit and to benefit, which occasionally appear in the document, and the word community which appears a total of 6 times in the document, at a fraction the frequency with which it appeared in the community discourse.
Table 6: Words, other than source names, that appeared with most frequency in each of the discourses (words ranked in order of highest to lowest frequency within each discourse).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Discourse</th>
<th>NGO discourse</th>
<th>Government discourse</th>
<th>Document discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>community</td>
<td>resource</td>
<td>hydrologic resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to care for</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>community</td>
<td>hydrologic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benefit/ to benefit</td>
<td>potable water</td>
<td>watershed</td>
<td>watershed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack</td>
<td>watershed</td>
<td>Potable water</td>
<td>resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family</td>
<td>resource</td>
<td>health</td>
<td>natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suffering (to suffer)</td>
<td>management</td>
<td>administration</td>
<td>management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child/children</td>
<td>poor</td>
<td>management</td>
<td>conservation / to conserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>natural</td>
<td>Regulation / to regulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potable water</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>hydrologic</td>
<td>Natural resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>regulation/to regulate</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>economic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The discourses of government officials and NGO members appear to share common characteristics, and have significantly more overlap with community discourse than does the written discourse of the General Water Law. The words “family” and “community,” and “potable water” appear as dominant words in all three of the discourses, though none of the words appear with notable frequency in the General Water Law. Additionally, of the words inventoried, NGO workers and government officials share 7 of ten words used most frequently by each. Both the words shared and those not shared are telling. NGO’s and government offices seem to share a management discourse, dominated by words that connote both utility and measurement. The words that are not shared between them may suggest different justification or mission: NGO’s frequently use the words “poor,” “development,” and “regulation,” which seem to contain a more human element, while government officials frequently use the words “administration,” “natural,” and “hydrologic,” which seem to suggest reasoning justified by use of the physical environment.

**Thematic Discourse**

Themes evident within the coded interviews provide additional insight into the content and connotation of each discourse, and help to capture important discourses that may not have
been apparent in the word frequency counts. Of the 18 themes coded within the interviews, six in particular appeared with notable frequency, and seemed to indicate the most relevant differences in discourse between the groups. The findings within each of these six themes are briefly explored below.

NGO workers and government officials have a similar discourse with respect to water and water sources, and so are largely grouped together here. Where there are notable differences between the discourses of the two groups, such differences are specified. The General Water Law is excluded from the discussion below for several reasons. Though it was coded according to the same themes, the majority of the themes were irrelevant to the document. In addition, because the General Water Law is a text rather than a personal interaction, the tone and audience of the article is sufficiently different as to make comparison of themes difficult.

Quantity: scarcity vs. sufficiency

A discourse of scarcity predominates the community dialogue, and all community members refer to an insufficient quantity of water to sustain their families and the greater community. When asked to explain the water situation in Las Tunas, one male resident replied,

*Sí, el agua es algo escaso aquí en el caserío Las Tunas. No tenemos suficiente agua, verdad. (Heriberto)*

Water is scarce in Las Tunas. We don’t have enough water, to be honest.

In describing a nearby spring, one woman from Las Tunas said,

*...[T]oditos vamos a este posito que hay, que es un pequeño nacimiento digamos. No nos alcanzamos. A veces que un cantarito cada uno hallamos, y veces no hallamos nada. (Paula)*

We all go to the same spring, which is just a small spring. It can’t sustain us all. Sometimes we can only fill one small cantaro, and sometimes we don’t find anything at all.
This scarcity, according to community members, inhibits other activities and overall development. Echoing other community members, one veteran member of the community council said,

...[E]s que hace falta el agua para poderse beneficiar a todo lo que es el núcleo familiar del cantón El Derrumbado, Caserío Las Tunas... No es equivalente el agua ni para subsanarnos, vamos a decir humanamente, ya para el asunto de hortalizas, otros haberes y para ver para ganadería o jardines, no hay. Entonces solo está para el consumo humano. Ese es lo único que tenemos. (Miguel).

There isn’t enough water to benefit the entire nuclear family of Las Tunas... There isn’t enough water to subsist, let’s say, in a humane way, and for things like gardens, or cattle, or other chores, there isn’t enough. There’s only enough for human consumption. That’s all we have.

However, while community members refer to water as scarce, NGO workers and government officials depict water as sufficient. When asked if there was enough water to sustain Salvadoran rural communities, the director of the national, water-oriented NGO, PROCOSAL, replied:

Sí, hay. El Salvador tiene una disponibilidad de agua suficiente... si lo vemos en términos globales... Hay zonas que tienen más agua, y zonas que tienen menos agua. Pero aún en las zonas que tienen menos agua, hay forma de abastecer a esas familias. Porque en El Salvador, llueve un promedio del 1800 milímetros al año, y aún en una zona donde no haya nacimientos, ni posibilidades de perforación de pozos, se puede trabajar con aprovechamiento de aguas lluvias.

Yes, there is. El Salvador has a sufficient availability of water, if we look at it in global terms... There are zones that have more water, and those that have less. But even in the zones that have less water, there is a way to sustain the families that live there. Because, in El Salvador, it rains an average of 1800 millimeters a year, and even in zones where there are no springs and no possibility of drilling wells, rain water catchment systems can be used.

Many NGO workers and government officials responded similarly, and several cited the tropical rainy season as a potential water source. None of the participants from the NGO and government groups responded that water was inherently insufficient in rural communities.
What hinders rural access to water, according to the NGO and government discourses, is not scarcity, but poor exploitation and administration. In response to the same question about sufficiency, the head of the federal development fund, FISDL, replied:

*En el país hay agua. O sea, agua existe. Lo que no existe es, como que políticas adecuadas o recursos adecuados como para entubarla.*

There’s water in this country. That is, water exists. What doesn’t exist are adequate policies and financial resources to get it into pipes...

**Hardship**

A second theme predominant in the community discourse is that of the suffering caused or exacerbated by lack of water, as well as the distances traveled and the difficult foot paths that must be navigated to collect it. Though many community men indirectly alluded to hardship, direct reference to it was almost exclusive to women, who often referred to how they and their families “suffer.” That this discourse is more dominant among women may be partly attributable to the fact that women are primarily responsible for collecting water, and may do so several times a day.

In describing the spring from which she and her family collect water, one young mother from Loma Alta said:

*[H]a sido dura la situación aquí, porque todavía mi mamá, ella hasta operada es porque tanto ... si usted supiera estos posos, algún día puede ir a verlos, que es abajo, y ya cuando veníamos aquí, seca la boca, y nos íbamos a bañar y aquí veníamos chorreando sudor ya de regreso. ... Sí es triste... El camino es feo, es bien peñascoso. Horrible el camino. Mi mamá cuando fuimos pequeños, ella fue sufrida...*  

The situation has been hard here; because my mother, she’s even been operated on because of so much...if you were only familiar with these springs, one day you can go and see them, they’re far down [the hill], and when we would come uphill, our mouths dry, and we had gone down to bathe and on the way up we’d be streaming sweat...It’s sad...the path is steep and hard, it’s horrible. When we were young, my mother suffered...

Another woman, a community member from Las Tunas, refers directly to hardship as well as alludes to it indirectly by referring to the respite she would have if she had access to water in
her home. The woman also refers to water in the diminutive form, *aguita*, which here seems to connote affection, or a type of longing.

\[
\text{Ya uno con el agua pues, otra cosa más no haya pero ya con el aguita uno en la casa ya uno descansa...Descansa. En el verano es una vida triste. Andar buscando el aguita.}” Community Member, Las Tunas.
\]

With water, even if someone didn’t have anything else, with water in the house, one can rest. One can rest. It’s a sad life here in the summer [dry season], to be always looking for water.

While government officials and NGO members acknowledge the distances that people must travel and the time spent to obtain water, they don’t refer to either as inherent hardship or causes of suffering. Rather, they frame these obstacles in terms of trade-offs such as loss of productive time. Several NGO workers and government officials depict time spent collecting water as loss of income potentially earned and loss of time children could spend on education. The head of FISDL described how rural community members access water during the dry season:

\[
[\text{En el verano}, \text{ tienen que buscar otro nacimiento que no se secan pero están más lejos...O sea, la gente busca donde encontrar el agua. Pero si, para llegar a traer agua, tiene que estarse dos, tres horas, para ir a traer un barril o una catarada de agua, se invierten tres horas. Esto le da recta porque resta tiempo que ellos pueden dedicar a otras cosas.}]
\]

In the summer, they’ve got to look for another spring that doesn’t dry up, but it’s farther away. That is, the people look to where they can find water. But, to go and bring back water, they’ve got to spend two, three hours...to collect one barrel or one *cantaro*, they invest three hours. This is disadvantageous, because it takes away from time that they could dedicate to other things.

*Future Generations: the specific vs. the abstract*

One unanticipated difference between community discourse and that of NGO workers and government officials is the manner in which each makes reference to future generations. Community members refer to future generations in a very personal sense, identifying their own children or grandchildren. Furthermore, they refer to their children as justification for their present actions, and for their present concern regarding water and other necessities.
This is embodied in the two testimonies below, one from a father in Las Tunas, and the other from a mother in Loma Alta.

La meta de nosotros y los que platicamos siempre...es de al haber agua suficiente...tenemos la ventaja o la seguridad de que tal vez estos niños que vienen atrás de nosotros por lo menos yo tengo aquí dos varoncitos que sé ya, que vayan creciendo. Ellos van a tener ese líquido también pues.

Our goal, between those of us who talk about it, is that if we have enough water, we have the advantage or the security that maybe these children that come after us, and I myself have two young boys, will go on growing, that they’ll have water too.

- (A father, resident of Las Tunas).

...[L]os hijos son los que también vienen ya...uno a veces por escaso de recursos, a veces no tiene posibilidades para poder darle a los hijos...como le voy a decir, hijo hacé tu casa y te voy a dar un pegue de agua yo, como se lo voy a hacer? No se lo puedo dar, porque es medido lo que yo tengo

Our children are the ones that are coming after us...sometimes, for lack of money, one doesn’t have the possibility to be able to give to one’s kids...how can I say, “Son, build your house and I’ll give you water?” How can I? I can’t give it to him because the water I have is already too little.

- (A mother, resident of Loma Alta).

On the other hand, government officials and NGO workers refer to the future and future generations with notably less frequency, and always in the abstract context suggested by the words “future” and “future generations,” rather than any specific context that approximates the personal discourse of community members. Government officials and NGO workers do speak of “children,” but don’t refer to them as justification for present action. The two excerpts included below are representative of the few instances of NGO and government discourse regarding the future:

Es la Ley General del Recurso Hídrico, la cual contempla que es el manejo del recurso... como un estrategia para el mantenimiento de ese vital recurso para las presentes y futuras generaciones.

The General Water Law, that defines what the management of the resource should be...as a strategy for the maintenance of this vital resource for present and future generations.

- Ministry of the Environment
Hay que pensar si en el futuro, y hay que comenzar a hacer la obras de conservación y protección del recurso hídrico para que esta disponibilidad no vaya cayendo tan rápidamente. Y pensar un poco en 25 años, tendremos dificultades serios con acceso al agua.

We must think about the future, and we must begin to make efforts towards conservation and protection of the hydrológic resource so that its availability doesn’t deteriorate so rapidly. And think a bit about how, 25 years from now, we’re going to have serious difficulties with water access.

- Director of PROCOSAL (NGO)

In all, the word future is used 6 times among NGOs (frequency = 0.24), 4 times among government officials (frequency = 0.17), and 1 time among community members (frequency = 0.24). Community members, however, refer to their children approx 40 times (frequency = 1.16).

**Water rights: ubiquitous vs. ambiguous**

One astounding characteristic of the community discourse is the ubiquitous insistence that all are equally entitled to water and water access. The community’s few local springs are located within several landholdings owned by various community members. When I asked community members who had the right to access water from the springs located on someone else’s property, the unanimous response was that everyone had the right to do so. Of the community members interviewed, three were owners of land on which a spring or other water source was located; their responses to the question of water rights were equivalent to those of other community members. One owner, on whose property one of the largest community springs is located, said,

*Mire, en ese caso aquí...este...todos tienen derecho, porque si aquí, vaya, aquí está este y dice, yo necesito una cantarrada de agua, se la lleva. Puede venir uno de allá de Las Maradiagas, y dice él, puchica pero aquí hay agua, yo me voy a llevar mi cantarrada de agua. También se la lleva, y nadie le va a decir, Mira, porque me lleva esa agua pues?*

In this case, everyone has the right, because if someone comes and says, I need a cantaro of water, he takes it. He might come from over there, from the community of Maradiagas and say, “there’s water here, I’m going to take
a cantaro of water.” And he takes it, and no one would ever say to him, “Why are you taking this water from me?”

Interestingly community members seem to express a causal link between ubiquitous need for water and ubiquitous rights to water access. Several community members refer to both need and rights simultaneously, as does this man from Las Tunas:

Aquí todos tenemos derecho. Todos. Todos. Porque somos seres vivientes y todos necesitamos el agua, entonces el derecho es de todos.

Here, we all have the right [to water access]. All of us. All of us. Because we’re all living beings and we all need water, so the right belongs to everyone.

The theme of equal rights to water access is so omnipresent at the community level that many community members responded to questions regarding water rights with some variation of the same local idiom, “El agua no se mezquina,” or “one cannot be stingy with water.”

However, while the widespread use of moralistic idiom within the community discourse suggests a community consensus regarding the allocation of water rights, government and NGO discourses seem to suggest that water rights, at least at the political level, are ambiguous.

Fíjese que ahorrita, la prioridad, nadie la define...eta nivel nacional, nadie lo define.

To be honest, right now, no one has defined who has priority...at the national level, no one has defined it.
- Director of environmental program, ANDA.

The El Salvador country-director of CARE, Int., as well as other NGO workers, acknowledged that, while the right to water should be a universal human right, the reality of water rights is defined economically.

La verdad es que todos tenemos el derecho al agua. Pero, prácticamente, lo define quien tiene derecho del agua quien puede pagarse un sistema de agua.

The truth is that we all have the right to water. But, at the practical level, those who can define water rights are those that can pay for a water system.
Caring for water vs. Conservation

A theme integrally related to water rights and the universal need for water within the community discourse, is the understanding that water must be used in a conscious manner. Community members most often refer to such a use of water with the verb, “cuidar,” meaning “to care for” or “to take care of.” While the word “cuidar” is present within the NGO and government discourses as well, it is often substituted by words such as “conservar” and “preservar,” meaning “to conserve” and “to preserve” respectively, both of which are absent in the community discourse. The verbs “conservar” and “preservar,” which are derived from the same Latin roots as the English “to conserve” and “to preserve,” have meanings that suggest maintenance, the keeping of something intact or invulnerable to change. The verb “cuidar,” on the other hand, suggests a more personal interest or concern for something.

It is unsurprising that some NGO workers and government officials seem to express doubt that rural communities are using water in a conscious manner both with respect to quality and quantity, and express the need for a greater focus on educational efforts.

Los mayores desafíos como te decía yo es, primero es que a nivel de estado, y a nivel local, la gente comprende de que debe de ser un uso adecuado del recurso.

The greatest challenges, as I said before, first is that, at the national level, and at the local level, the people understand that there must be an adequate use of the resource.
- FISDL

... porque ahora tiene un problema de que si le llegue el agua la gente la desperdicia. Hay que educar.

...Because now [the municipality] has a problem; if water comes, the people waste it. We must educate.
- ANDA

However, as a measure of how dominant the theme is within the community discourse, community members use the word “cuidar” with approximately twice the frequency that NGO workers or government officials use the combination of all three words, regardless of their
differences in connotation. Furthermore, responses from community members suggest that they are both conscious of the need to use water deliberately and feel a moral imperative to do so based on an empathy and understanding of their neighbor’s mutual need. When I asked one resident of Loma Alta to explain what she meant by “cuidar el agua,” she replied,

_Cuidar el agua yo entiendo de que, vaya si yo tengo una llave verdad, y dejo el agua que esté botando, no lo estoy cuidando. Allí lo que estoy haciendo es destruyéndola porque tal vez otra gente lo está necesitando para otra cosa y yo la estoy botando._

To care for water, I understand it as, if I have a faucet for example and I leave the water on so that it’s spilling away, that’s not caring for it. What I’m doing is destroying it because maybe somebody else needs it for something, and I’m throwing it away.

A man from Las Tunas responded in a manner that similarly captured “caring for water” as a responsibility to others. What is particularly interesting about his response, however, is that he also suggests that having the right to water also implies responsibility, that such rights must be executed with understanding of and obligation towards others.

_Allí lo que se trata únicamente es de compartir. Hacer un compartimiento, porque sentir en el corazón la necesidad mía, y la necesidad del otro. Porque si el agua es poco, no la puedo traer yo solo para llenar el barril. Porque si lleno el barril, entonces se va todo el agua. Eso quiere decir que a las otras casas estoy dejando sin agua. Entonces, yo lo que tengo que hacer de ese pozo únicamente llenar una cantarrada, y una cantarrada a otro, otra cantarradita al otro, para que todos beban si quiera el agua de tomar. Para lavar, aunque nos vayamos al río. Pero significa que el agua para tomar tenemos aseada. Entonces, allí es dónde se puede decir que uno tiene el derecho pues. Y no hay quien diga pues, esta agua es mía, yo lo voy a mandar y ... no, todos tenemos derecho._

The only thing we can do is try to share. To share because I feel in my heart my own necessity, someone else’s necessity. Because, if there is only a little water, I can’t bring it home and fill my own barrel. Because if I fill my barrel, all of the water will be gone, and that means that I’m leaving the others without water. So, what I have to do is just fill a cantaro, and someone can fill their cantaro, and someone else theirs as well, so that everybody at least has water to drink. And to wash, we’ll have to go to the river. But it means that at least we’ll have clean water to drink. That’s what it means to say that someone has rights. And there’s no one that will say, this water is all mine, I’m going to be in charge of it. No, we all have the same right.
Institutional Gaps

Much of the government discourse relates to the lack of water system services in rural communities as attributable to gaps in the authority of governing institutions, as well as a lack of the financial resources necessary for each institution to achieve its objectives. The discourse of ANDA in particular seems to be largely one of self-justification and defense of responsibilities unfulfilled, while other government institutions point to other agencies as responsible for action with respect to potable water access in rural communities. The first excerpt below is representative of the defensive discourse that characterized the interview with ANDA, while the second excerpt, from the Ministry of the Environment, is an example of the absolution or diffusion of responsibility suggested by the discourse of several government institutions.

Lo que pasa es que la ANDA, se le dieron tantas atribuciones a la institución pero no se desarrollaron un montón de cosas que tenían que desarrollar desde punto de vista legal...yo siempre he pensado, que es lo que espera el gobierno o que cree el gobierno que debe de hacer con esas áreas rurales desprotegidas? Que la ANDA lo va a retomar, tiene que fortalecer muchísimo, muchísimo a la ANDA...

With respect to ANDA, so many responsibilities were given to the institution, but left undeveloped were a ton of things that should have been developed from a legal standpoint...I have always thought to myself, what is it that the government hopes, or what does the government think it should do with these unprotected rural areas? If ANDA is supposed to take responsibility for them, [the institution] must be made much, much stronger.”

- ANDA

Traslapes, hay en todas las instituciones...Agricultura no se mete con áreas naturales protegidas, dentro de su ley...dónde no es área natural protegida, o sea afuera de las áreas naturales protegidas, el Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería tiene que ver...Esos son los tres niveles...A nivel de cuencas y riego, Agricultura, con su ley de riego y avenamiento. A nivel de manejo del recurso, del Ministerio de Medio Ambiente con la ley de Medio Ambiente y los reglamentos...Y, a nivel municipal, algunas ordenanzas, que tienen que ver con el manejo de recursos.
There is overlap in every institution. [The Ministry of] Agriculture doesn’t get involved with protected natural areas, within its own law...where it isn’t protected, that is to say, outside of the protected natural areas, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cattle gets involved. There are three levels. At the level of watersheds and irrigation, [the Ministry of] Agriculture with its law of irrigation and pesticides. With respect to management of the resource, the Ministry of the Environment with the law of the Environment and its rules. And at the municipal level, various ordinances that have to do with the management of resources.

- Ministry of the Environment

While each government institution negated its own responsibility in certain sectors of water governance, and often attributed institutional gaps to the failures of other institutions, NGO workers attributed institutional gaps to an overall ambiguity of authority within the national government with respect to water governance. NGOs furthermore identified this ambiguity as one of the greatest obstacles hindering water-system services development in El Salvador, particularly in rural communities, where economic incentives to provide water system services are absent. Interestingly, both NGO workers and government officials, aware of the forthcoming General Water Law, commented that the lack of a single coherent water law both creates and perpetuates the potential for such gaps.

A quien le compete fiscalizar, auditar, y sancionizar en un caso por mal manejo del recurso hídrico, por explotación debida por mal uso, entonces, resulta que la competencia no se si es de este o de este otro o de ambos, pero si es de ambos, quien va a ser el responsable de aplicar, entonces hay una traslape de funciones, no hay claridad sobre quien es el responsable de cada cosa y de esa falta de claridad, y traslape de funciones, es difícil poder ordenar el sector. Aparte de que hay falta de voluntad política de aplicar, porque...aún por eso se podría tener algún nivel de avance que ni siquiera ha podido llegar porque hay falta de voluntad. Falta de compromiso.

Who is responsible for financing, auditing, and sanctioning in a case of poor management of the hydrologic resource, for exploitation due to poor use, then, what happens is that the responsibility ‘I don’t know if it belongs to this one or to that one or if it belongs to both,’ but if it belongs to both, who will be responsible for applying those rules? There’s an overlap of functions; there’s no clarity with respect to who is responsible for each thing, and because of this lack of clarity and overlap of functions, it’s difficult to organize the sector. This is apart from the fact that there is a lack
of political will to apply it, because, even with [such lack of organization] there could be some level of advancement that hasn’t been able to take place because there is a lack of will, a lack of commitment.

- PROCOSAL

Community members, on the other hand, are largely unaware of the various laws and institutions relevant to the use and management of water at the national and local levels. When asked about the role of the government in providing access to potable water in rural communities, community members responded with a discourse of abandonment. Many community members recognized a responsibility on the part of the government to provide water and other basic services to all citizens, but expressed that the government has not fulfilled such obligation. The government seems to be an ambiguous entity to community members however, several of whom interpreted the word ‘government’ to mean the mayor, or the nation’s President. As a whole, community members appear to be largely unaware of existing institutions responsible for water governance outside of local water committees. Thus, rather than attribute the lack of rural water system services to any institutional gaps, they attribute it to a general abandonment by a paternal government entity, which they often synecdochize as a recognizable, individual government representative.

Sí. Sí, el tiene la responsabilidad de ayudarnos pero no, nos deja por un lado.

Yes, [the government] has the responsibility to help us but no, it leaves us to the side.

- Community Member of Las Tunas

Porque realmente no lo está haciendo...a nosotros nos han abandonado, si aquí, imaginense estamos gestionando proyectos pero por las iniciativas nuestras. [S]egún la constitución, el gobierno deberá...deberá tener un rubro para que todos los habitantes del país tenga una vida excelente pues, gozan de los beneficios de los servicios pues que puede prestar el estado. Energía eléctrica, agua potable, acceso a una calle, acceso a telefonía...entonces, aquí, en esa área, no nos ha ayudado nada...

Because, in reality, [the government] isn’t doing it. They’ve abandoned us. Here, imagine it, we’re soliciting projects but we’re doing it by way of our own initiative. According to the Constitution, the government should have a rubric so that all of the country’s inhabitants have an excellent life, so that they benefit from the services that the government can provide: electricity,
potable water, access to a road, access to phone service…but here, in these areas, it hasn’t helped us at all.

- Community Member of Las Tunas, president of the village committee

Water as Life

Finally, though the themes chosen here are intended to elucidate various differences in discourse between rural community members, government officials, and NGO workers, there is one theme in particular that is common to all discourses. The final two questions of the interview were open-ended questions regarding the importance of water and the imagery or words that each participant associated with water. A list of representative responses to these interview questions is available in Appendix II. Though the responses did vary significantly, what was heard most often from all groups was a response that paid deference to water as vital to all things. In this respect, the discourse of government officials, NGO workers, and community members converged most.

La agua es vida. Porque si una va por un camino y le seque la garganta, se siente que sin agua no vive. Se siente corta la vida mientras no hay de tomar agua y dice Gracias a Dios porque me ha dado el agua. Se baña y dice Gracias al Señor por esta agua.

Water is life. Water is life. Because if one walks down a path his throat dries up, he feels that without water, he won’t live. He feels that life is short while there is no water, and says ‘Thank God’ because he has given me water. When one bathes, one says ‘Thanks to God for this water.’

- community member, Loma Alta


Water, life. Water is life. Water is cleanliness, purification. Water is like a self-purification as well, because when we cry, we purify ourselves and when a river runs, it purifies itself as well.

- Ministry of Health
DISCUSSION

“When language that once was familiar is gone, when the rituals that created meaning and continuity are no longer practiced, what is left?”

- Native American Philosopher, Viola Cordova

It is evident from the results of this research that there exists a significant difference between the discourse of community members, government officials, NGO workers, and the language of the policy document itself. The following chapter will first discuss the differences in discourse, will explore the possible explanations for these differences, and then posit the potential consequences of the use of disparate discourses within water governance in El Salvador.

Differences in Discourse

The community has a richer language with respect to its water sources; community members use words that locate their sources in a geographical context, and connote size, importance, familiarity, and affection. There are furthermore a wide variety of synonyms for water sources, which suggests the perception of subtle differences, or an attention to various different characteristics of the source. Of the words that denote a spring, for example, a vertiente suggests that water is spilling out of somewhere while a nacimiento suggests that water is ‘born’ of somewhere, as if appearing suddenly or miraculously. Collectively, the various words community members use to refer to springs mean: birth, source, origin, and eye. These words, and the language that surrounds water at the community level invoke images of creation, and suggests an understanding of the world in which all things, including humans, begin in water; in which all things are of the same essence of creation, are each a part of creation.

The frame that this language of creation constructs is evident in the testimonies of community members. Community members portray water in a personal sense, as vital to their daily lives,
the sources of which are familiar and dear to them, and something that should be taken care of. Water is perceived of as scarce, too little to maintain all of the families within the community. Furthermore, lack of water access presents significant hardship in the daily lives of community members, particularly women, who are often responsible for collecting water, and for the household chores that utilize water, such as washing clothes, corn, and dishes, and bathing children.

In addition, community members associate water with happiness, joy, and blessing and perceive of water and water access as something owed to their children, as well as to others around them. From this perception of obligation to present and future generations, as well as to everyone’s equivalent need, stems an understanding of water access as a ubiquitous right. In the community’s reality, all have equal need, therefore all have equal rights.

In a related sense, community members feel that they have the obligation to take care of water. This sense of obligation may be explained, in part, by a perceived uncertainty in local water sources; narratives of community members suggest that springs have shifted with time and earthquakes, and that the springs are more copious or less copious than they were generations ago. However, to take care of water is defined by community members in a wider sense; to use it responsibly, to ensure that they do not leave others without, and to use it only for what is vital. Interestingly, this understanding of taking care of water does not seem to encompass altering the environment or protecting the watershed, which is suggested by NGO and government discourse, but rather seems to encompass only the responsibility of personal and collective use within the existing and autonomous environment. There is little mention of managing the environment itself, but rather managing one’s own use. This understanding of personal responsibility with respect to water use, and a sense of equality with water and other natural systems, rather than a hierarchical relationship as suggested by government discourse, is intrinsic to the community’s language of creation. This language of creation is intertwined with the understanding that both community members and water are an integral part of creation, and indivisible from it. As many community members commented, “water is life; without it, we are nothing.”
According to the word frequency counts, the discourse utilized within the text of the General Water Law is most diametrically opposed to community discourse. The language used is one of commodification, in which the notions of utility and property rights are inherent, as is the implication that water can be managed and controlled. Water is referred to as a resource 218 times in the document, while the word resource it is not used once at the community level. Other words used to refer to water sources are often abstract, do not place the source in any geographic context, and are bereft of any suggestion of non-use value. Though the words that refer to water sources such as wells and springs are used precisely, and exclusively, they lack the rich connotation evident in the community discourse. Though access to potable water is defined as an inalienable human right on the third page of the document, the actual rights allocated within the document are specified according to property rights.

The language used by government officials tends toward the same language of commodification evident in the General Water Law, though it occasionally has elements of community language. The words resource, hydrologic, watershed, management, and administration are predominant within the group’s discourse. Though many of the same words used by the community to refer to its water sources and to fix them within a geographic and social context are used by government officials, they are not used as often, nor are the variations and diminutives that denote size, familiarity, and affection used at all. Instead, the more ambiguous term ‘hydrologic resource’ is substituted. The term denotes no geographic setting, physical form, properties or characteristics; its singular connotation is one of utility. Similarly, other words commonly used by policy makers are abstract in place of the more tangible, and personal discourse of community members. The future, for example, is referred to only in the abstract sense that the very term implies, rather than in the personal sense invoked by the community’s references to their own children. The notion of the hardship confronted by community members with respect to lack of access to water is presented in terms of loss of time that could be more productively spent doing other things, rather than the physical hardship of collecting water or making do with limited water, as referred to by community members.

The frame constructed by this language of commodification is evident in the difference between the testimonies of the government officials and community members. Government
officials perceive of water as sufficient to sustain rural families rather than inherently scarce. They perceive of water rights as ambiguously defined and socially and legally insecure though, like the General Water Law, they express the normative claim that water rights should belong to everyone. Furthermore, they perceive of water as an object of conservation and preservation and express distrust that community members are engaged in practices that do so. Rather, they perceive that rural communities are in need of education, or re-education, in order to understand the importance of conservation and of using water consciously. Community members, on the other hand, express the need to take care of their water, and though they don’t use terms such as to conserve and to preserve, the understanding that water must and should be used judiciously is implicit within each of their testimonies. Is the government overlooking conservation values inherent within rural community practices simply because the vocabulary they use to express those values, and the frame they have constructed surrounding those values, is different?

It seems reasonable to expect that the discourse of NGOs, as boundary organizations that link government institutions and the public, lies somewhere between the government and community discourses. There is indeed evidence that this is the case. Word frequency counts show that NGOs use community words such as cuidar with more frequency than do government officials, and policy words such as management, administration, and hydrologic resource, with less frequency than government officials do. In addition, of the words inventoried, there are few that NGOs use with more frequency than either of the other two groups; the words poor, life, and development are examples of these few.

However, it is apparent that the language of NGOs is much more closely aligned with the government discourse than with the community discourse. Word frequency counts show that NGO workers use language of commodification slightly less than government officials do, but much more than community members do. Testimonies from NGO workers likewise suggest that the frame constructed by the NGO discourse is more analogous to the frames of government officials than to that of community members. However, while the language of commodification is more prominent in NGO discourse than the language of creation, testimonies suggest that NGO workers recognize that rural community members value and care for water. Furthermore, NGOs seem to recognize the existence of a separate community
discourse, and recognize that caring for water achieves the same objective as conservation. Though the NGO discourse does advocate further education in rural communities, it seems to recognize that the language already utilized is the most appropriate basis upon which to build continued education.

**Reasons for Disparate Discourses**

There are several factors that might account for the disparate discourses between community members and other groups, as well as the similarities between the NGO and government discourses. These factors include differences in average levels of education, the audience with which each group seeks legitimacy, and the institutionalization of borrowed discourse.

There is an acute difference between the average levels of education in rural Salvadoran communities and government or NGO positions. In the rural communities of the municipality of Lislique, the average adult education is second grade, the highest grade taught informally outside of the town of Lislique until the end of the civil war in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s (personal communication, member of community council, Las Tunas). With the construction of schools and efforts to extend education into rural areas, current generations within the municipality of Lislique have now reached an average education level of approximately seventh grade. On the other hand, those occupying government posts are most often college graduates from one of the country’s several universities, or doctors of medicine in the case of the Ministry of Health. The average education of directors of international NGOs and programs is perhaps higher still; the heads of PROCOSAL, CARE, and Catholic Relief Services all have higher degrees in engineering.

That many of the terms utilized within the discourse of commodification are terms correlated with higher education suggests that the educational system in El Salvador is partially responsible for instilling such a language in its students. In particular, this may be a function of the fields of study completed by those that occupy government and NGO posts; engineering, business administration, and other technical careers are the most popular fields in El Salvador’s universities and are overwhelmingly represented in the workforce. These technical fields are more likely to contain a language of quantification.
Additionally, the push towards rapid economic development in El Salvador may influence the dominant discourse in several ways. The expansion of services, industries, and government are goals that require participants to be well versed in technical fields and technical vocabularies, which increases the demand for technical experts and graduates of technical programs within the nation’s universities. Increased employment of technical fields in government and other occupations contributes to a homogenization of perspectives within those occupations, and may perpetuate the use of specialized vocabulary. This vocabulary becomes increasingly specialized and ultimately institutionalized as individuals seek legitimacy or belonging within those institutions, and as institutions seek legitimacy within groups of other relevant institutions (Mukhartov 2007).

As such, government institutions might seek legitimacy with other government institutions, primarily at the national level, but also at the international level, as governments collaborate over issues of trans-boundary importance. Because they depend on funding, local NGOs might seek legitimacy from national and local governmental institutions, in addition to larger international NGOs and donating agencies, whereas international NGOs might seek legitimacy among other international development institutions, inter-governmental institutions such as the UN, and large donors and donating agencies that may be governmental or private in nature.

This search for legitimacy may also help to explain the similarity between the government and NGO discourses. NGOs of various sizes and authorities are resident in the wide gap between communities and government institutions. We might expect that small, community born NGOs speak a language more aligned with the language of community members, just as we might expect the same of local government officials such as mayors who originate from the area they govern. Contrarily, large NGOs that must find legitimacy within national policy, as well as internationally among other development organizations and government institutions worldwide, might speak a language that overlaps with these other institutions. Of the 5 NGOs interviewed, three were the directors of large national and international NGOs that interact significantly with government and intergovernmental agencies. Had NGO interviews focused
on smaller, local NGOs, the overall NGO discourse may have been more aligned with community discourse and the language of creation may have been more prevalent.

Finally, the process of economic development is often copied from models of successful past development, namely from already developed countries. As such, the country may adopt a specialized vocabulary of economic development already refined through successful development elsewhere. Thus, much of the vocabulary may not be built from the bottom up, but rather adopted from elsewhere.

**The Significance of Disparate Discourses**

Each of these factors may contribute significantly to the development or perpetuation of different discourses between the groups of this study, and may point to areas that must be addressed if the discourses are to be equilibrated. However, the question still unaddressed is, what does such a disparity between the discourses of community members that rely on water, and the policies that govern water suggest? What might a difference in language across these sectors really affect?

First, a substantial disconnect between the discourse of rural communities and the discourse of policy makers and documents may compromise the effectiveness of the intended policy. The terms and referents used by policy makers and documents may not have meaning at the community level, or may have meanings with different connotations than the terms used by community members. The use of the term hydrologic resource is a notable example. Government officials’ use of the term *hydrologic resource* assumes a utilitarian purpose to water, and a utilitarian motivation for all subsequent action regarding water. Thus, water is to be used, its use can be managed, and its reserve can be protected for future use. However, community members don’t use the word *hydrologic resource* at all, and may associate no definite referent to the word at all. They may not understand the boundaries or lack of boundaries of the term; and may not be able to perceive of water in such a manner that does not refer to any particular form or geographical context. On the other hand, community members endow water and water sources with meanings unaddressed by the language of commodification. While the term *hydrologic resource* is unable to place water in any spatial
context understandable to community members, it is also bereft of ability to connote what community words for water sources do; that water precedes all things, is needed by all things, and we are all equally entitled to use it, as long as we do so with a consciousness towards others. The difference between these referents, or what is understood as being referred to, suggests that what is governed by each group is essentially a different entity.

Several authors note that when discourse differences exist between policy and those governed by it, the effectiveness of policy is compromised. Hull and Robertson (2000:115) suggest that, "poorly constructed terms are a problem because agreement is superficial and confusion results if people using the same term mean different things or nothing at all." In reference to the 2006 UNESCO World Water Report, in which water is referred to as a resource 1400 times, Castro (2007) notes that a language of commodification and entitlement reflects a set of values that may be irreconcilable across contexts. From a perspective of frames, Fischer (2003, 13) further argues that, "no matter how efficient a program might be, if it fails to confront the basic value frames that shape our understandings of the problem, it is bound to be rejected." Drastic differences in discourse may cause groups to conceptually define the same problem in radically different ways, as well as help to form each group’s understanding of what solutions are available or desirable. By creating such discursive and conceptual gaps between governors and those governed, differences in discourse may be able to render policy ineffective.

Furthermore, this research suggests that the language of commodification and the implicit utilitarian values that assume that water can be controlled in such a way as to maximize the benefits derived from it, may engender a separate management discourse. Terms such as administration and regulation are predominant and suggest that communities must have explicit regulatory documents and administrative bodies in order to effectively use water and preserve it for future use. Terms such as to conserve and to preserve suggest keeping water in its current state, which also implies a hierarchical power structure in which water can be conserved. Furthermore, water is conserved by way of best management practices, which implies that actions outside of best management practices are inferior or ineffective. As suggested earlier, this discourse constructs a frame in which governments may be blinded to practices of community members that lie outside of this vocabulary and may insist that
community members must be educated. The contrast of between management discourse and community discourse may persuade government institutions and NGOs that community members use water irresponsibly, that they must be taught to give greater value to water. Community discourse, however, suggests that the value of water, though not couched in terms of conservation or preservation, pervades all water use.

In his discourse analysis, Giltrow (1998) finds that management discourse is dominated by nominalization, a process by which active verbs are converted to nouns. As nouns, the terms can be assigned neither subject nor object. Thus, in transforming verbs to nouns, all agents are removed from the grammatical structure of the discourse, and any particular responsibility is absolved through the omission of any agent to whom to ascribe responsibility. This indirect absolution of responsibility, according to Giltrow, is fundamental to the management discourse as a whole.

The rhetorical omission of responsibility employed by management discourse is in direct contrast to the community’s use of the word cuidar, to take care of or to care for. As illustrated earlier, the use of cuidar implies not only responsibility, but also familiarity and affection. Used in reference to water and water sources, cuidar implicates each speaker with responsibility to take care of water, an obligation borne of affection and familiarity, and in return for the benefits derived from its use. It is ironic then, that government officials and policy documents may construct a frame in which community water use is perceived as irresponsible while both the rhetorical structures of each discourse, as well as the testimonies of each group, suggest that it is community members that perceive more tangibly of responsibility.

Perhaps more importantly from a constructionist perspective, what happens as one discourse is imposed on another? If language is indelibly intertwined with our understanding of the world, if it has a formative power to create and then perpetuate a particular understanding of the world, how are potential realities limited as a language is altered or eradicated? As Native American philosopher Cordova (2007,192) writes, “when language that once was familiar is gone, when the rituals that created meaning and continuity are no longer practiced, what is left?”
In particular, what is lost if the language of creation is replaced by a language of commodification? According to the constructionist perspective, the understanding of the world engendered by the language of creation, an understanding in which water is an extension of our very selves, is lost with the words that help call it into being. Gergen (1998, 45) wrote, “[B]ecause discursive practices are embedded within forms of life, to obliterate a language would be to threaten a form of humanity.” With the obliteration of a language and the construction of reality that is embedded within it, is also eradicated the formative and creative potential of that language. The ability to create and recreate a rich reality is diminished in a depauperate vocabulary that has less creative force.

Thus, the reality in which equal rights to water access are inherent, where our obligation to secure water for our children is universally recognized, and where water has a value regardless of the utility we invoke from it, is lost until the words that connote this type of familiarity, obligation, and appreciation are used again with regularity. The reality that stands in its place, constructed by a language of commodification, is one in which water rights allocation may no longer be based on need, but on property rights; water sources may be perceived of as having utilitarian value, but are not perceived of as familiar or dear to the user, and water is to be preserved only as much or as little as it is needed for future use, rather than being cared for or taken care of with the intention of bequeathing it to our children; and in which the future is perceived only abstractly rather than tangibly and personally, which absolves us of direct responsibility.
LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Like all research methods, qualitative research has inherent limitations. Interviews are potentially influenced by the relationship or perceived relationship between the interviewer and participant, as well as the researcher’s skill in designing and posing appropriate, objective questions. Furthermore, the interpretation of interview responses during data analysis is potentially subject to the values and biases of the researcher. In addition, case studies and qualitative research conducted at the community level are not often generalizable to a greater population since responses are contingent upon unique factors within the community context (Bryman 2001; Robson 2002). However, though conclusions from one case study cannot be transplanted to another community, case studies do provide valuable insight as to phenomena in other communities with similar characteristics.

While the vocabulary used by individuals and groups is vastly informative with respect to the realities perceived by each, the vocabularies I analyzed were aggregated group vocabularies that could not take sufficient account of individual differences in language. This is particularly relevant to the discourses attributed to government officials and NGO members, where the diversity of language and perspective is not fully accounted for by such an aggregate analysis. Language used by some government officials and some NGO members was a very personal language; indeed, one government official who spoke at first in an institutional discourse changed her tone mid-interview, and said that she would begin to speak from a personal perspective that could not be accounted for in discourse appropriate in speaking on behalf of the institution.

Additionally, the discourses used by NGOs, and the men and women that work within them, vary widely. The political space occupied by NGOs is a vast one, and many organizations of different sizes, origins, and missions are working in some capacity in water and sanitation in El Salvador. Even in the small sample surveyed in this project, it was evident that the language used by small, local, community-based organizations differed greatly from the discourse used by the subsidiary offices of international NGOs. As noted in the discussion, there are many different audiences to which these NGOs must relate, and larger NGOs in particular must seek legitimacy among other international institutions, the language of which is necessarily
separate from any community language. As such, the observations made with regard to the language of NGOs, is preliminary.

However, the role of NGOs and the discourses developed within them is a topic for future research. Does the discourse of NGOs suggest that they are truly successful boundary organizations? Do the discourses of NGOs truly reside within the gap between government institutions and people? If NGOs are to be successful boundary organizations, the language of NGOs must effectively relate to both government and people, if not simultaneously, then at least separately. Are NGOs accomplishing such a task, a task that requires such tremendous eloquence and adaptability? And, if they are not, how can they do so more effectively?

Additionally, and in a related sense, some investigation into the implementation of policy, and whether implementation, and the institutions responsible, employ a language aligned with community discourse, with policy discourse, at some point in between, or whether they employ a different type of language all together.

Furthermore, the effectiveness and success of a policy are often determined by measuring the extent to which the policy achieved the goals established by the policy maker, rather than the goals established by the public. In this sense, the effectiveness or success of a policy is largely determined from the perspective of the policy maker. How effectiveness and success can be more accurately defined and measured is, I believe, an important question for further research.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If the effectiveness of a policy is at least partially contingent upon the language used by policy documents and policy makers and its potential for creating a common frame with the public it intends to govern, then we as policy makers must invest particular attention to the type of language we use. The question then becomes, what type of language can be utilized by policy and by policy makers to frame an issue in a way that preserves the realities created and cultivated by the language of the public, and allows for a greater consensus of problem definition?

There is, at the same time, a paradox inherent within policy documents: the need to be both abstract and ambiguous enough to apply as widely as possible, and the need to be specific enough that regulation is not impractical (Hajer 1993). Furthermore, the public is often a vast and diverse group, with distinct discourses and understandings of reality, and so, to find a common frame that encompasses each presents a particular challenge.

The type of reality that we want to perpetuate through policy is a normative question, and history can attest to the fact that governments have often perceived as desirable the replacement of certain understandings of the world with others. But, if we want policy goals to accomplish objectives within the reality held by the public, or if we want to preserve pieces of these non-political realities because they are also advantageous, then we must invest in the language appropriate to do so. This research suggests that while policy makers, and policy documents in particular, speak of water using a language of commodification, rural community members speak of water using a more holistic language, a language of creation and living things, in which terms and concepts of commodification are conspicuously absent.

If the language of commodification dominant in policy discourse supplants other vocabularies, the words we have to express the value of water will be limited to words that express the values inherent within commodification. Thus, the actual perceived value of water will likewise be limited to its use-value as it fits within the frame constructed by this narrowed vocabulary. While the frame that this language constructs may be convenient for regulation, it
may present unintended consequences. There may be little incentive to conserve and protect water that has no evident or immediate use, and while water rights may be most efficiently allocated according to property rights, considerations of equity or water as an inalienable human right will no longer have rhetorical footing.

There is evidence of some recognition of these dangers within the sphere of global environmental policy and water governance. Many recent documents and declarations worldwide, such as those that emerged from the 2001 Water Watch Summit, have incorporated and promoted the use of a language that acknowledges the vital nature of water, directly establishes our relationship to it, and establishes the extent of our obligation to take action. Each of these points are addressed directly, but also indirectly through the use of words such as: to care for, to protect, to respect, powerful, sacred, gift, lifeblood, and creation, as well as words such as public trust, inalienable right, and basic needs. While the 1992 Dublin Principles defined water as a “finite and valuable resource,” and as an “economic good,” recent documents, produced by both grassroots groups and international political institutions, demonstrate a shift in the vocabulary of water policy to one that incorporates a language of creation, a language that depicts water as vital, as an inalienable right, as the responsibility of all world citizens. This shift in language is illustrated by title chosen for the 2003 UN World Water Forum, “Water is Life” (2003, UN World Water Forum).

The recommendations that follow as a result of this research are particularly intended for El Salvador as it reviews the General Water Law for ratification, and continues to seek improved potable water access for its people. However, these recommendations are also, I believe, relevant to water policy at every scale, and the sentiment of these recommendations relevant to policy as a whole.

In order to create a water policy that is effective in its rural communities, the government of El Salvador may first have to consider a language use that is familiar to rural communities, and expresses vital aspects of the reality known to rural people. In order to do so, the General Water Law must incorporate a language that recognizes in some way the vitality of water for all living things, the common origin of all living things, the universal right to water, the moral
obligation to ensure water in plenty for our collective children, and the moral obligation to use water responsibly in respect for others’ need.

Water policy in general and the Salvadoran General Water Law in particular, can, I believe, accomplish this by using a language that attends to three points. It can use a language that connotes affection, that connotes both ownership and obligation, and is grounded in geographic context.

Language that connotes familiarity and affection for water sources inculcates a sense of interconnectedness and inspires us to take care of water as we take care of things that are dear to us. Verbs such as to take care of, to protect, to respect, imply value and affection, and any adjective that describes qualities of water not associated with use, such as cool, abundant, fresh, clear, rushing, all connote familiarity and an understanding of water in a personal sense.

Language that frames water as ‘ours,’ and future generations as ‘our children,’ imply an obligation to use it responsibly for our individual sakes, and for the sake of future generations. This is often lost in the abstractness of terms such as posterity and future generations. Our children is a phrase that signifies our collective children, those that will proceed after us regardless of whether we each, as individuals, have children. Furthermore, rivers, lakes, springs, aquifers, and public water systems are ours, and that ownership bestows upon us both right and obligation. This tangible ownership, and the sense of obligation that accompanies it, is lost even in well meaning terms such as public trust, until we each identify ourselves as an inseparable part of the public.

Finally, language that places water in a geographical context allows us to picture water as we are most familiar with it, and within a set of boundaries that we recognize and understand. Recognizing the boundaries of our water sources helps us to recognize their limits. As Cordova (2007, 195) writes, existing within known boundaries gives us an incentive to use the resources within that space with care. We are all acquainted with some form of natural water source. If we call rivers, streams, creeks, brooks, springs, ponds, lakes, puddles, bayous, wetlands by these names, we allow the richness and diversity of language to construct images of each,
rather than abandon understanding of the limitations of water resources in the abstractness of the term.

Is creating good policy as simple as replacing a few words within an entire discourse? No, of course not. Language is both reflective and creative, and so our understanding of water and the words we use to describe it must evolve together. But even at its most basic level, language is formative, and we can begin to change the world by changing the words we use to refer to it. If we make a deliberate effort for our policies to speak the same language as our people, then policies may ultimately be more effective, and may allow for organic solutions to be born out of the richness of community language.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANDA. (2009). [cited 3\15\09 – 5\27\09]. Available at www.anda.gob.sv


Ministry of Health, El Salvador. (2009). [cited 3\15\09 – 5\27\09]. Available at www.mspas.gob.sv


APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview questions (English translation):

Audience:
community members of Lislique, La Unión,
local government officials,
and employees of NGOs that are working in water/sanitation in rural communities.

Questions:
1. How’s the water situation in (name of community)?
   
   [prompts]
   * access to potable water? In home? from nearby source?
   * where do you obtain water for drinking and for household use?
   * is the water sufficient?
   * is there conflict over use?

2. How is the use of water governed in the community?
   
   * who is influential?
   * water council? Community ADESCO?
   * know of any policies or regulations that affect water use in the area?
   - are these regulations well known?
   - do community members heed them?
   - what are these policies?

3. What are the challenges facing a greater rural access to water?

4. From your perspective, what is the importance of water? At a national level, and within rural communities in El Salvador?

5. When you think of water, what are the first words (or images) that come to mind?

   * How would you describe water in general?
   * What words would you use to refer to water and water sources?
Appendix II: Selected answers to final interview questions

The responses included here are intended to be representative of the aggregate sample of responses. All responses that directly address the question asked are included and organized by speaker groups. These responses are provided in order to provide a better understanding of the depth of discourse of each speaker group.

Questions:
What, to you, is the importance of water?
When you think of water, what are the first words (or images) that come to mind?

NGOs

A la mente? Bueno, cuidarla verdad. En primer lugar cuidarla porque uno quiere darle a sus hijos verdad, esos generaciones, un ambiente más sano verdad. Cuidarla. Y tenerla verdad. Porque si no la cuidamos, conl la vamos a tener si no hacemos nada por mantenerla y preservar el recurso hídrico. Cuidarla y enseñarles a los niños que lo cuiden también.

Care for it. Most importantly, care for it because we want to give to our children, those generations [ahead], a healthy environment. Care for it. And keep it, right? Because if we don’t care for it, how are we going to have it [water] if we do nothing to maintain and preserve our hydrologic resources?

-Balbina Panameño, ANDAR

Yo diría que los más pobres de los pobres tienen sed.
Tienen sed. Necesitan agua y muchas veces no hacemos mucho por darles el agua que necesitan ellos.

I would say that the poorest of the poor are thirsty. They are thirsty. They need water and many times we don’t do much to give them the water that they need.

-Jose Angel Cruz, Catholic Relief Services


-Roberto Avelar, PROCOSAL
La importancia de, para mí, desde mi perspectiva, es que el agua ayuda a sacar gente de la pobreza o que la gente entre en la pobreza. Porque ya con eso prevenimos enfermedades, se deja de gastar, no incrementa los ingresos de la familia, sino que dejan de gastar recursos en el obtener el agua, ya pueden, los pocos recursos que tienen orientarlos para otra cosa.

The importance, from my perspectiva, is that water helps to pull people out of poverty, or that people enter into poverty. Because, with this [water], we prevent illness, we stop spending – household income doesn’t increase but rather families stop spending on obtaining water, and they can dedicate the little earnings that they do have on other things.

-Ricardo Mancia, CARE

Government Officials

Contaminación, y cambio climático.

Contamination, and climate change.

-Celia de Mena, ANDA

El mejor recurso que existe. El mejor recurso natural que nos ha dado Dios y que debemos de aprovecharlo y cuidarlo al máximo. No solo aprovecharlo a beber sino cuidarlo porque cuidarlo significa hacer obras de nítidación de riesgos, hacer obras de mantenimiento de recursos ambientales, hacer obras de mantenimiento de cuencas y micro cuencas, o sea, es un recurso divino que tenemos, que hay que aprovecharlo al máximo y protegerla a la medida que podamos. Si no, dentro de que? 30, 40 años, tendríamos que estar tomando agua salada.

The best resource that we have. The most valuable natural resource that God has given us, and we should take advantage of it and care for it to the maximum. Not just take advantage of drinking it, but rather care for it, because to care for it means working towards mitigating risk, working towards maintaining environmental resources, working towards maintaining watersheds and sub-watersheds. That is, it’s a divine resource that we have, that we must take advantage of and care for the best we can. If not, in what, 30 or 40 years, we’ll have to drink salt water.

-Freddy Cañas, FISDL (Investment Fund for Local Development)

Water, life. Water is life. Water is cleanliness, purification. Water is like a self-purification as well, because when we cry, we purify ourselves and when a river runs, it purifies itself as well.

-Evelyn Castro, Ministry of Health, El Salvador

Conservación, manejo, y preservación de ecosistemas.

Conservation, management, preservation of ecosystems.

-Walter Rojas, Ministry of the Environment

Es que el agua, de eso hay mucho de... imagínese que del agua hay mucho que hablar porque, primero, si yo tengo apetito de sed de agua, hay que pensar en que hay que tomar el agua. Para poder cocinar nuestros alimentos, sin el agua, no se puede hacer nada. Incluso para todo, todo aquel empresario, empresa grande que tienen, verdad, por ejemplo, estamos hablando de un lugar turístico, para bañarse pues, echarse de, limpiarse el cuerpo, tiene que ver el agua verdad. Luego los lugares turísticos, ellos buscan adonde hay agua verdad, porque para un lugar turístico, si no hay agua, no hay negocio pues. Verdad? Y los mismo es las empresas grandes, que son tal vez ya internacionales o mundiales, como sea, tenemos la Coca-Cola, la Pepsi, bueno de todo lo...empresas internacionales que laboran bebidas verdad, incluso que alcohólicas, y toda pues, pero siempre tienen que usar el líquido del agua porque...Han de preparar otros recursos para poder hacer las bebidas pero sin el agua, no se puede hacer todo lo que es necesario. Así es que si un día ya, bueno nosotros acá creemos en Dios y todo eso, si un día pues, Dios nos castiga quizás a nivel mundial que el agua se seca, ya hasta allí llegaríamos también quizás, verdad.

There is so much to say about water. Imagine, there is so much to talk about with respect to water because, first of all, if I’m thirsty, I have to think that I need to drink water. In order to cook our food, without water, one can do nothing. Including, for everything. Every entrepreneur, every large business...

And so it is that if one day, here we believe in God and all of that, if one day God punishes us at the global level and all of the water dries up, we wouldn’t be able to go any further perhaps.

-Margarito Perez, Mayor of Lislique, La Union
Community Members

La agua es vida. La agua es vida. Porque si una va por un camino y le seque la garganta, se siente que sin agua no vive. Se siente corta la vida mientras no hay de tomar agua y dice Gracias a Dios porque me ha dado el agua. Se baña y dice Gracias al Señor por esta agua.

Water is life. Water is life. Because if one walks down a path and his throat dries up, he feels that without water, he won’t live. He feels that life is short while there is no water, and says Thank God because he has given me water. When one bathes, and says Thanks to God for this water.

-Anna Irma Hernandez, Loma Alta

Es que hay bastante necesidad le digo, por el agua, y por cuantas...pero en principal el agua. Sí, porque vaya, como estamos aquí. Entonces, pobremente, pero uno...está más tranquilo que tenga el agua, un uno tal vez más avanzado a la vez, y en una enfermedad. Le digo a mi esposo, uno, como va a hacer. Tal vez enfermo y va a ir a traer el agua lejos. Y más todos los hijos que se van tal vez para otros lugares, a uno lo dejan solo.

It’s that there is so much need, I tell you, for water, and for so many things, but principally water. Yes, because, the situation that we’re in. Poor, but one is calmer, more comfortable when he has water, and one is perhaps more advanced at the same time, and when he’s sick. I tell my husband, how can it be? Perhaps one is sick and has to go to get water from far away. And maybe all of one’s children move away to somewhere else and leave one to be alone.

-Saturnina Granado, Loma Alta

Cuando yo hablo de agua? Bueno, para mi verdad, cuando yo estoy hablando de agua, es algo muy significativo, porque si tenemos agua en abundancia también tenemos, sabemos que el agua es un vital líquido que, de suma importancia para el ser humano, verdad, y para los seres vivos. Entonces, cuando hablo de agua, estoy hablando de vida.

When I speak of water? For me, when I speak of water, its something very meaningful, because if we have water in abundance, we also have...we know that water is a vital liquid, of utmost importance to human beings, and for living things. So, when I speak of water, I’m speaking about life.

-Antonio Gomez, Las Tunas
La importancia para nosotros? Mire, el agua para nosotros, el más importante que el maíz, que los frijoles, que todo pues, porque yo pueda aguantar un día sin comer tortilla, pero sin beber agua, quizás no, no aguanto ni medio día. Porque si yo me toca a ir por todos lados, me puedo ir aquí mire para donde Lislique, pero quizás bebiendo agua, llegamos a la casa tranquilo. Pero que tal si no hay agua, me quedo a medio andar pues. Así que para mi, la importancia del agua es más que todo pues. Más que el maíz, más que los frijoles. Sí, importantísimo. Sin agua, estamos perdidos. No tenemos vida.

The importance [of water] for us? Look, water for us is more important than corn, more important than beans, more important than everything. Because we can bear a day without eating even tortilla, but without water? Perhaps I couldn’t even bear half a day. Because if I have things to do, if I have to go from here to there or to Lislique [nearest pueblo], drinking water, we arrive home safe and sound. But what happens if there’s no water? I can’t make it, and I’m left in the middle of the journey. So, for me, the importance of water is greater than anything. Greater than the importance of corn, or beans. Without water, we’re lost; we don’t have life.

-Emiliano Ruiz, Las Tunas

Es líquido que nosotros consumimos. Sí. Es un líquido que debemos de cuidar porque nosotros con eso vivimos digamos...
Es lo único que yo puedo decirte que sufrimos bastante por el agua nosotros. Porque ya ve, este nacimiento de aquí arriba, somos bastantes las casas que llegamos allí. Y así es aquí pues...

It’s a liquid that we consume. It’s a liquid that we should take care of because with it, we live...This is the only thing I can tell you, that we suffer for water. Because, you see, the spring [birth] of water up there, there’s a lot of us [households] that get our water there...

-Paula Bonilla, Las Tunas

MV: Para mí, a nivel de El Salvador, de nuestro país, si a nivel de todo el mundo, el agua es un vital líquido, importante. Uno de los puntos prioritarios es el agua. Es la condición a cuidar las fuentes de agua para que podamos subsistir en este mundo. Porque, sin agua, no somos nada. Es el agua la prioridad para que nuestros cuerpos humanos puedan existir. Hay muchas condiciones para existir, pero el agua es un punto importante, dónde hay que cuidar la fuente, y los responsables de todos los encargados de leyes y habidos y para ver, son los que tienen que velar, y todos nosotros porque es un líquido vital para poder subsistir en esta faz de la tierra. (10:26)

MV: Lo que yo pienso es que, es el punto principal de nuestras vidas, y el punto que me conmueve ver como está el planeta, como se deteriora, que ya no tenemos aquellas condiciones cuando nosotros empezamos a crecer, que estamos hablando de 40 años hacia atrás, donde había mucha nubosidad, muchas bosques, y tantas cosas, lo que ya no tenemos, que todo la añoramos. Entonces, eso es el punto a partir que nos conmueve del agua, porque cada día más se va consumiendo en la tierra. Y ya nuestra planeta tierra ya no es capaz de absorber humedad para poder ver que hayan fuentes de agua para
beneficiarnos más cómodo. Hoy tenemos que pensar más en el agua, reforestando. Es el punto de abatimiento para el pueblo humano, para el planeta mundo, la planeta tierra que nosotros llamamos porque cada día más el agua es más escasa. Entonces, eso me viene a meditar y a pensar de que, cada día más es muy diferente, es muy tremendo. Si nosotros no nos educamos, como que vamos a decir como de salir. Porque cada día más, más deforeestado, más calor, más hielo derritiéndose, hay más agua, pero agua salado. Agua dulce para consumo humano ya es menos. Cada día más es menos.

For me, at the national level, at the global level, water is a vital liquid, important. One of the main points is water. It is the condition to take care of water sources so that we can subsist in this world. Because, without water, we are nothing. It is water that is the priority for our bodies, so that we can exist. There are many conditions for existence, but water is the most important, where we must take care of the water source, and those responsible for laws, and doings and watching, they’re the ones that must be vigilant, and all of us, because it is a liquid vital to our existence on the face of the earth...

What I think is that, [water] is the principal point of our lives, and the point that hurts me to see how our planet is, how its deteriorating, that we don’t have the same conditions that we had 40 years ago, when there were clouds, forests, and so many things, things we no longer have. So, this is the point around which we are moved by water, because every day, it is being consumed by the earth. And our planet earth is no longer capable of absorbing humidity so that, for example, there are water sources from which we can benefit more comfortably. Today, we have to think more about water, have to reforest. It is a point of frustration for the human race, for the planet earth, because every day, water is more scarce. So, this makes me think, every day is different, every day is difficult. If we don’t educate ourselves, how are we going to be able to say we know how to get out of this. Because every day, more deforestation, more heat, more ice melting, there’s more water, but its salt water. And there’s less fresh water for human consumption. Every day, less.

-Miguel Ventura, Las Tunas, ADESCO member

Bueno, la importancia es porque, para mí es importante. Porque es un líquido que no lo podemos rechazar. Es decir, sin el agua, yo me voy a pasar. Porque el agua es un líquido que todos lo consumimos. Y entonces, por eso, entonces, para mí es importante esa agua. Es importante porque, sin ella, me muero pues. Porque si no tomo agua todo una semana, y creo que ni duro la semana quizás, ahogándome de la sed. Entonces, es una gran importancia para mí. Y creo que para todos, y mi familia también. Porque, como le digo, de esa misma forma, de ese mismo organismo, somos todos, que sin tomar el agua, pues, no vivimos. Entonces, es un líquido bien importante.

...Bueno, cuando yo pienso en el agua, me estoy refiriendo ya a la bendición de Dios. Porque ya si vamos a tratar de agua, pensar en agua, puede ser un agua del mar, un agua del río, cualquier agua que sea. Si vamos a hablar del agua, nosotros, la alegría de nosotros, el pensamiento de nosotros cuando y oímos los primeros truenos, que es el anuncio del agua, nos ponemos en el ambiente, nos sentimos más alegres, porque viene la temporada donde vamos a sembrar las verduras, el tomate, el chile, frijolitos, donde decimos nosotros, y ay, luego los motatitos también van a salir al otro lado. Ya vamos a tener que comer. Ya viene la mantención para la familia. Porque ya con un par de motates fritados con
huevitos, ya es otro con que se siente bien rico pues. Entonces, eso es lo primero que pensamos nosotros en el agua cuando oímos los primero truenos.

Y luego decimos también a sembrar las parritas de elote, pipianes, para que hayan pipiancitos, ayotillos.

Entonces, es una alegría pues, allí pensamos en el agua nosotros que sin ella, somos nada y otra vez, ya vienen los anuncios del agua, es una alegría. Es como que yo pensara en un proyecto, va. Si yo dijera, ya...por ejemplo, un ejemplo, si ya ahorrita viniera un ingeniero y dijera, miren muchachos, alístense, vamos a trabajar al proyecto del agua porque ya...en ello vamos, y ya vamos entrando a ello, o Buscase gente allí, Vea quienes van a trabajar, para mi va a ser una alegría. Porque sea, si llego a echar esa chorrito de agua hasta acá, nombre, me voy a bañar tranquilo y voy a pensar mi pila, hacer hasta un baño adonde voy a estar encerradito y, no va a ser como antes pues, que cualquiera me va a ver cuando estoy bañando. Ya con un chorrito de agua, ya hay una facilidad de hacer un baño, protegerse más uno, puede bañar a la hora que uno quiere, como allí tiene el agua. No dice, solo me voy a bañar en la mañana porque en la mañana hay agua en el pozo. Ya en la tarde no me puedo bañar porque no tengo agua. Entonces, ya es una alegría. Entonces, es lo que pienso yo de a través del agua.

For me, [water] is important. Because it is a liquid that we cannot refuse...And so, because of that, water is very important. It’s important, because without it, I’ll die. Because if I don’t drink water for a week, I don’t think I could even last a week perhaps without drowning in thirst. So, it’s of great importance to me, and I think to everyone, to my family as well. Because, we are all of this same form, of this same organism, and without water, we don’t live. So it is a liquid of great importance...

When I think of water, I’m referring to God’s blessing. Because if we’re going to think about water, be it water from the sea, from the river, or whatever type, if we’re going to speak of water, our happiness...when we hear the first sounds of thunder that is the announcement of the [rainy season], we feel happier, because the season is coming in which we plant vegetables, tomatoes, chiles, beans, and soon the motates. Soon, we’ll have something to eat. Soon, the maintenance of our families is coming...So, this is the first thing we think of when we hear the thunder, when we think of water. And then, we plant the corn, the squash, pumpkins. And so, it is happiness. When we think of water, we think that without it, we are nothing and again, when the announcement of the water [rainy season] comes, it is a joy.

If I said, for example, that an engineer was coming and he said, “All of you, get yourselves ready, we’re going to work on a water project, look for those who will work”...for me, it would be a joy. Because, if I’m able to get this little bit of water here [to my home], I’ll bathe without a worry, I’ll make a pila, even make an enclosed bathing area. It won’t be like before, that everyone sees me when I’m bathing. And with this little bit of water, there’s a possibility to make a bathing area, to better protect oneself, and we can bathe whenever we want to because the water will be right there. No one will say, I only bathe in the morning, because that’s when there’s water in the spring, and I can’t bathe in the afternoon, because I don’t have water. So, it is a joy. That’s what I think about water.

-Herriberto Ruiz, Las Tunas, ADESCO member
La importancia que le tomo al agua es que es un líquido principal para sobrevivir. La importancia que tiene el agua es elemental, vamos a decir, que es... Es mayor cuerpo digamos que se necesita pues, para sobrevivir, que vivan nuestros cuerpos. La tomo yo pues como un espíritu el agua pues...
Como un espíritu que le da vida a todo ser humano y ya todo árbol, a todo animal, le da vida a toda naturaleza que existe en la tierra, entonces, lo identifico yo con un espíritu. Y valorándole a su precio, como a mejor que el oro, a algo así pues.

The important that I give to water is that it is a liquid principal to survival. The importance that water has is elemental...
It is necessary in order to survive, in order for our bodies to live. I think of [water] like a spirit...
Like a spirit that gives life to all human beings and to all trees and animals. It gives life to all of nature that exists on earth, and so, I think of it like a spirit. And value it at its price, greater than gold, or something like.

-Fermin Perez, Las Tunas

El alimento más grande es el agua. Con el agua tienen todo...

Water is the greatest sustenance. With water, we have everything.
-Raimunda Ruiz, Las Tunas

Mire, la importancia del agua, para cada casa es muy grande. Porque uno con el agua en la casa, puede sembrar una parrita de sandía, puede sembrar sus matas de frijol, puede sembrar maíz, puede sembrar malanga, puede sembrar camotes, puede sembrar yuca, y puede sembrar este que llamamos, nosotros aquí le llamamos aquí patata. Sí, el patata en otras partes le llaman, guisquil. Es el mismo...
En el agua? Bueno, la primera belleza del agua es que nosotros nos favorece porque nos bañamos verdad. Uno se siente bien excelente cuando se eche el agua y se baña con agua limpia. Se siente bien. Porque las cuencas de agua, hay que cuidarla. Primer lugar, no cortar los árboles del agua. Para que el agua se mantenga fresca, que no le da el sol para que no la consume. Esto es lo más reglamento del agua.

The importance of water is great for every house. Because with water in the house, one can plant watermelon, can plant rows of beans, squash, sweet potatoes, yucca...
The first beauty of water is that we can bathe with it. It feels so good to pour water over oneself, to bathe with clean water. It feels good. Because watersheds, we must take care of them. Firstly, don’t cut the trees, so that the water stays fresh and cool, so that the sun doesn’t strike it and consume it. This is the greatest rule of water.

-Lucila Joya, Loma Alta
Uno con el agua, pues, como le digo, se siente alegre y...porque cualquier cosa se hace. Puede tener uno hasta una hortaliza, no? ... Y sin el agua aquí, no se puede hacer nada.

One who has water feels happy, because he/she can do anything. He/she can have a garden...and without water here, nothing can be done.

-Santos Lidia, Loma Alta

Ah, para mi para todo usted. Que no todos unos necesitamos agua, para mi para todo. Uno no hay que hacer verdad, pero hay de todo. Para mi para todo. Porque todos ocupamos el agua. Así es. Para todo. A pues, para mi que haya, que sí nos ayudaran pues, que mejor sería para todos. Que haya aguita para todos, que hay aguita para tener uno su, cada quien sus animalitos, como le repito. Hacer hasta su regadía, tener sus palitos de tomate, de chile. Pero uno está que con miedito riega una plantita, que lo van a regañar a uno. Sí. Bonito que todos tuviéramos agua. Todos, pues, que tuviéramos pedacito de regadía, sus palitos de chile, que sea poquito, pero tener algo.

For me, everything. We all need water; for me, for everything...because we all use use water. That’s right. For everything...there should be water for everyone, so that everyone can raise animals, can water plants, their stems of tomatoes, of chilis. But we are all afraid to water plants now, that others will chastise us. It would be beautiful if we all had water. Everyone, that we all had a little piece of land to water, all had chilis, something small, but something.

-Pastora Ventura, Guajiniquil

Pues sí, la importancia del agua es que lo beneficia a nosotros pues, y que del agua es vivimos.

The importance of water is that it benefits us, that from water, we live.

- Moises Morales, Las Tunas

Porque con el agua no hacemos nada. Vaya, lo importante es que el agua, teniéndola nosotros aquí en la casa, aquí hacemos todo. Aquí se lava, se usa el agua para tomar, para lavar trastes, para bañar. Ya no tiene uno que andarla buscando en otras partes, o sí, a fletarla en el homo, en cántaro, a otros pozos allá largo. Si no más teniendo el agua aquí, es más diferente.

Because, without water, we can’t do anything. The importance is that, having water here in the house, we could do anything. We could wash here, would use it to drink, to wash dishes, to bathe. We wouldn’t have to go looking for it elsewhere, carry it
home on our shoulders, in cantaro, from other springs far away. Having water here, it’s different.

-Hector Morales, Las Tunas