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Multi-level Research on Youth Participation in the Haitian Reconstruction

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ABSTRACT Research in comparative and international education routinely encounters exceptional research conditions. In this article, the author explores the particular issues he faced in his research on multi-level youth programs of the Haitian reconstruction. Through a vertical analysis of internationally sponsored programs, this study required special attention to working in a cross-cultural, politically fragile environment. In this article, he highlights connections with several other multi-level studies in fragile states which are also featured in this issue of RCIE. However, his focus is upon those issues that are particular to conducting research in post-earthquake Haiti. These issues include the roles of researcher and participants, the impact of discourses of security, and negotiating cross-cultural issues such as language, power, and notions of participation. This article also positions his research by including an overview, a theoretical framework, the socio-political context, and a detailed description of methodology and methods.

Introduction

My recent research on youth participation in Haiti's reconstruction has required significant attention to theoretical and methodological concerns. Issues such as the application of theoretical paradigms from various disciplines, employing a multi-level analysis, drawing on various methods of data collection, cross-cultural fieldwork, and the location of this research in a fragile setting have all required careful consideration. But engaging in these issues allows for useful comparisons with similar academic studies, such as those from the research of my colleagues Edwards, Eschenbacher and Komatsu, whose articles also appear in this issue.

The following article reflects upon the issues that I faced during the course of my research, which involves a five-level vertical analysis of international, youth-focused programs operating in the context of Haiti's reconstruction. At the time of writing, I am in the midst of data collection. Though all research strategies presented here have been carefully designed, some have yet to be implemented. However, it is my hope that all of the ideas in this article will contribute to a discussion on research with similar phenomena. As I shall describe in this article, the methodological issues of research in Haiti highlight the importance of relationships, of attention to research preparation, and of the rights of research participants in a cross-cultural, politically fragile setting.

Research Overview: youth participation in three distinct multi-level programs

A prominent critique of the Haitian reconstruction is the lack of local participation in an aid arena replete with normative discourses prioritizing this very notion. Yet in practice, citizen participation is one of the most heavily invoked ideals of international organizations (IOs) in the reconstruction

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of Haiti. Thus its central paradox: it is cited both as a priority, and as a shortcoming. It is an extraordinary irony to me that the single greatest critique of the reconstruction is the often-stated organizational priority of many IOs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Haiti. My research interrogates the various meanings, interpretations, expressions and conceptualizations of participation by examining the participation of youth in multi-level programs of the reconstruction. In this investigation, not only is youth participation in international programs seen as important to legitimize processes of social development, but youth are also a subset of citizens who are regarded as benefiting from experiential, democratic education that will enable their future participation in an increasingly developed Haiti.

While my colleagues Edwards and Komatsu also examine the notion of participation in this issue, we each have different entry points to the phenomenon. The purpose of my study is to better discern various interpretations of participation, primarily between youth recipients of international aid and those planning the participatory programs of the Haitian reconstruction. Additionally, I am specifically interested in how IOs are enabling youth to participate in the reconstruction of their own country. In this research, I examine three programs of IOs for which enabling the participation of youth is their central goal. The first is a livelihood-oriented NGO that provides training in agricultural and entrepreneurial skills for youth ('enterprise training'); the second is a literacy-focused NGO that organizes debate clubs throughout the country ('debate clubs'); and the third is a rights-oriented NGO that conducts radio broadcast training for youth ('radio program').

The goal of this research is to provide a specific, contemporary typology to better understand various meanings of participation in a multifaceted situation, using the example of Haiti. It will contribute to a better understanding of how participation is perceived in aid contexts, will result in more realistic policies for the aid community, and will present new possibilities for democratic outcomes in development settings. It is hoped that the articulation of this phenomenon, on behalf of numerous subsets of individuals involved in Haiti's reconstruction, will be beneficial for all groups of participants in this research.

Theoretical Framework: depth and purposes of participation

The central problem with the notion of participation is that it is notoriously vague. Researchers of participation in international aid have described it as a seductive ideal, a catch-all notion, and essentially anything that involves people (Cornwall, 2008; Rahnema, 2010; Edwards & Klees, 2012). To give substance to the phenomenon of participation, I propose that it must be connected to issues of culture, context, history, location, power and space (Cornwall, 2002; Kabeer, 2005). By this I mean that participation cannot be understood as a neutral phenomenon, absent of meaning, context, and inquiry into the interests of both those who construct the spaces to participate, and those who participate in those spaces. Instead, it must be seen through a critical perspective that views participation through a lens of power. With an overarching goal of social justice, a critical approach to research includes paying attention to expressions of participation where recipients, practitioners and observers of programs highlight issues of power and justice in Haiti's reconstruction in ways that address potentialities for Haitian liberation and sovereignty. For this study I propose that the central factors in understanding participation relate to structures that lie behind it, the spaces where it occurs, and the processes, actions and actors that constitute it. For example, I would wonder who stands to gain and who stands to lose in the programs that I research, based on how participation is framed, perceived and enacted. Thus, I believe that participation is often constructed to suit the conscious or unconscious goals of those with the power and resources to create spaces for participation.

In the case of the Haitian reconstruction, the very fact that the programs in my study are set in motion through the impetus of international organizations already indicates a locus of power in the hands of the funders, policy-writers and program designers – and this therefore places limitations on the depth of participation of local actors. External (or *invited*) spaces of participation have been theorized to have limitations in their ability to genuinely deepen democracy and enrich society (Cornwall, 2004), as opposed to those social spaces *claimed* by Haitian citizens. Claimed spaces are developed locally, while participation in international initiatives is often more externally driven by implementing organizations.

To engage the notion of power in participation, I have developed a two-dimensional theoretical model for my research. The first dimension probes the *depth* to which youth are actually participating in these programs. Participation typologies have traditionally focused on the intentions and outcomes of the participation, represented on a scale ranging from non-participation (i.e. control by authorities) to ideal participation (control by citizens). Sheryl Arnstein's landmark 1969 framework, for example, focused on the intentionality and approach of those who initiate participation (Cornwall, 2008). Within the field of international education, by extension, Pauline Rose (2003) analyzed aid to education in Malawi using a similar conceptual rubric dichotomizing genuine and pseudo-participation through a tool that evaluates degrees of participation. In 1992, Roger Hart devised a similar rung-like model for UNICEF to examine youth participation in its programs. It is Hart's model that I draw on in the analysis of my research data. However, my research will also require an understanding of the intentions behind organizing and creating spaces for youth participation, and of the ideologies supporting the construction of these spaces.

Thus, the second dimension in my theory examines the specific meanings of participation for each program – their purposes, practices and organizational structures (Shugurensky, 2009). Using a framework developed by my colleague Edwards (see his article in this issue), the intent of participation is theorized across a conventional western political spectrum (Edwards & Klees, 2012). At one end of the continuum, a neo-liberal perspective on participation characterizes the facilitation and enabling of citizens to participate more fully in development through market-based relationships. Next, a liberal orientation envisions participation through representation, and looks for ways to 'bring individuals and groups into the state'. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a progressive position on participation has the flavour of Frierien 'conscientization' – a deepening of the attitude of awareness of one's (structural) situation, through activities such as rights-awareness, empowerment, transformation, meaningful decision-making and alternative forms of development. This perspective regards current political and economic structures as problematic and part of a larger system of oppression. The Edwards and Klees model enables a way of tying vastly different ways of envisioning participation in with political motives.

Depth	**Motive**		
	Progressive	*Liberal*	*Neo-liberal*
Shared			
Initiate			
Direct			
Consulted			
Informed			
Tokens			
Decoration			
Manipulated			

Findings from data collected will be inserted into this rubric based on the depth of the youths' participation in the three programs, and the ideology underlying the motive for their participation.

Figure 1. Depth of vs. motivation for participation.
Adapted from Hart (1992), and Edwards and Klees (2012).

The conceptual framework created for this study aids an analysis of youth participation along these two dimensions. First, an inquiry into the depth of participation experienced and perceived by program recipients will draw on an adaptation of Arnstein's participation rung. Second, an investigation into the intent and ideological underpinning of participation for each program will use the framework developed by Edwards and Klees (see Figure 1).

The three youth programs in my study were largely selected because of their perceived alignment along the spectrum of political ideology, from neo-liberal through liberal to progressive perspectives of participation. The youth enterprise training was selected as a neo-liberal program

for its focus on bolstering the capacity of youth to develop prosperous livelihoods within their communities through formal and informal markets; the youth debate clubs were chosen as a liberal program for their facilitation of skill development to enable youth to work within the political structures of their state; and the youth radio program was chosen as a progressive initiative that focuses on elevating human rights concerns in response and resistance to the reality of the existing state and market structures. The conceptual model outlined above will be used in my study to plot the actual depths and purposes of youth participation for each of the three programs in my research.

Research Context: citizen participation in a fragile state

The fact that the participation of Haitians in their own affairs is such a contentious issue is wrapped in a complex history full of celebrated and tragic moments. The significance of Haiti's origin as being the result of the world's only successful slave revolution is at the heart of both its national identity and its ongoing instability. At the time of Haiti's independence in 1804, individuals of African heritage were not recognized as citizens, whereas immediately upon Haiti's declaration as sovereign, the rights associated with freedom were granted to all individuals living in Haiti. This event is significant for Haitians as a collective memory of their mass participation in a revolution that enabled the determination of their own future.

But when the reaction of other slave-employing nations to the possibility of revolt spreading through the region was one of caution and containment, Haiti was immediately ostracized in North America and Europe, economically through trade embargoes, and politically through non-recognition as a legitimate state. Declining from a very stable economy (the gross inequities and injustices resulting from slavery notwithstanding) as the world's leader of tropical produce, Haiti immediately slipped into great instability, in large part due to the massive reparations insisted upon by France for the condition of official political recognition. This severe economic weakening has had permanent effects in determining Haiti's current fragility, as well as its ongoing susceptibility to international influence.

Since the revolution, numerous types of domination, both international and domestic (under heavy influence of international), have contributed to further constraints to meaningful participation in Haiti. The US occupation beginning during the First World War was among the most prominent of these, and set the stage for ongoing US imperialism in Haiti, most directly as a result of strategic constitutional changes made during the period of occupation. Corralling anti-imperialist popular energy, the brutal Duvalier dictatorships (1957-86) that followed have been described as the 'salvadorization of Haiti' (Massing, 1988, cited in Farmer, 2006, p. 421); these regimes relied on direct and structural violence to maintain order, similar to that described for El Salvador by Edwards (this issue). The resulting dysfunction was directly due to the erosion of social programs, civil society, reasonable wealth distribution, individual freedoms and citizen participation (Wilentz, 1990). The containment of liberation theologian and former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide (1990-91; 2000-04) through military coups (1991, 2004), exile, and the banning of his political party Fanmi Lavalas has restricted the development of the participatory democratic policy aimed at large-scale involvement of Haitians. With a political economy noted for its comparative advantages of 'low labor costs and tariff-free access to the US' (CIA, 2011), it was hoped that Haiti would serve as the 'Taiwan of the West', and thousands of Haitians have worked at multi-national assembly plants in exchange for very low wages and other forms of economic exploitation (with subsequent citizenship infringements).[1] Finally, due to Haiti's label as a conflict state, the foreign-led recovery apparatus is similar to 'the close supervision by the international community of Bosnia and Herzegovina' as described by Komatsu (this issue), in its disproportionate ability to influence domestic politics. Indeed, it has been argued that Haiti's long history of international containment on domestic participation is the major cause of its current political, economic and social fragility (Farmer, 2006; Hallward, 2007).

These various forms of containment have led to Haiti's status today as a fragile state. Like the case of Southern Sudan described by Eschenbacher in her article in this issue, Haiti has received a status level of 'critical' on the 2011 Failed State Index, as both countries rank within the top five on measures such as 'delegitimization of the state', 'human rights', and 'international intervention'.

Ongoing signs and symbols of fragility and violence result in present concerns regarding the re-emergence of conflict. These fears prohibit of the realization of full citizenship and participation in various spheres of society.

Imposed on this fragile environment was the catastrophic earthquake of 12 January 2010, drastically affecting the lives of over two million Haitians. In a fragile environment, the capacity to debilitate many aspects of society is evident, putting great stress on individuals and institutions. Today an estimated 12,000 NGOs are presently working in Haiti, aiming to fill the various social gaps not being met by the state, while also fulfilling their own organizational mandate. Haiti relies heavily on diplomacy to negotiate international agreements and foreign aid, the latter comprising an estimated 5% of its national income.[2] Thus, Haiti's historical circumstances involving external pressure and natural disaster have led to the current weakness of the economy, the state and civil society, and, by extension, to the lack of ability of citizens to participate in the affairs most affecting their lives.

Location of the Study

An apt illustration of the impact of the inability of the state to serve its people is provided by the disarray of the education system in Haiti. After years of political and economic neglect, less than 2% of Haiti's gross domestic product (GDP) is devoted to public education.[3] Only 20% of all enrollments are at public schools, the balance of students attending private schools, all with varying quality and pass/success rates. The earthquake of 2010 was described as causing 'the total collapse of the Haitian education system' by Haiti's then minister of education. As a result of the absence of proper checks and balances in the government, the National Fund for Education run by the president's office is currently alleged to suffer from major corruption and mismanagement.

As noted by Eschenbacher in this issue, 'IOs often serve as educational recovery and reconstruction practitioners in post-conflict countries.' Haiti, as with the case of El Salvador as described by Edwards, lends priority to international actors in domestic education in the context of globalization. Today, as the past two decades, actors from many levels and regions have been 'intimately involved in education reform' in Haiti (Edwards, this issue). The rush of the international community has, in many ways, exacerbated this situation by taking over a responsibility that should typically fall to the state. On one hand, this massive influx of IOs, for example, has resulted in new schools (i.e. NGO schools, church schools, etc.), curricula, and evaluation tools outside of the formal system. Yet on the other hand, other IOs offer programs for youth that may ultimately lead to a greater sovereignty and deeper democracy within Haiti. These programs aim to develop citizenship in a number of ways, through skill development, advocacy workshops, and citizenship training. While these programs do not (necessarily) aim to replace programs and schools in the formal system, they do aim to enrich citizenship qualities in youth in ways that may not be present in other spheres of involvement of Haitian youth. These programs are the central focus of my research.

The three programs that I have selected as case studies all involve a nuanced curriculum geared to enable the participation of youth. First, the youth enterprise training is a pilot project for 30 students who are typically unable to complete the school year owing to annual harvest obligations. This program is geared to enhance the participation of these youth in their own livelihoods and communities. With a three-stage program with specific modules for farming, financial literacy and business skills, this program seeks youth participation in the reconstruction through entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise training.

Second, the youth debate clubs meet bi-weekly, but also come together annually for a four-day conference, in which members from the fourteen clubs around the country square off against each other in competition. Youth from each club debate with others on pre-established resolutions and other current affairs. The overall goal of this program is to promote free expression, and to develop the skills and abilities needed by young people to think and act critically.

Finally, the youth radio program is an intensive one-week journalism training session in which ten youth from the largest tent camp in Haiti were selected to produce broadcasts for live airplay. These spots emphasized the rights for children, all part of a broader goal of using media as a tool for advocacy, and for teaching youth to speak out on issues that affect their lives.

Research Questions

As previously stated, the primary goal of my research is to understand how international organizations are enabling youth participation in Haiti's reconstruction. The central objective is to understand how this participation is perceived by various actors on the aid chain, and subsequently, how any differences in these perceptions might be explained. Thus, by situating this research in the specific context of three selected programs created explicitly for the participation of Haitian youth in reconstruction efforts, I seek to answer four questions:

(1) How is the *rationale* for participation constructed by international practitioners, both generally and specifically, in the design of creative programs for citizen participation in Haiti?
(2) How is citizen participation *enacted* in the programs of these contemporary created spaces?
(3) How do recipients of these programs *react* to the spaces created by international actors?
(4) How might the different rationales, enactments and reactions to citizen participation that exist between program practitioners and recipients be explained?

In sum, these questions aim to uncover how participation is mobilized in the context of international aid, through the perspectives of: the practitioners who coordinated programs (1); the researcher who observes the programs and their outcomes (2); and the youth who engage in these programs (3). These perspectives will then be compared and contrasted in my analysis, in addressing question number (4).

Research Methodology: a critical qualitative study

Like Eschenbacher, I found that employing Vavrus and Bartlett's (2009) critical comparative education methodology of vertical case studies was appropriate for this research. A vertical analysis facilitates the examination of a phenomenon throughout the entire aid delivery and implementation chain, from the beneficiaries of a policy or program, through its implementers, planners and funders. According to Vavrus and Bartlett (2009), 'the goal of vertical studies is to develop a thorough understanding of the particular at each level and to analyze how these understandings produce similar and different interpretations of the policy, problem, or phenomenon under study' (p. 11). Consistent with the highlighted importance of context, 'scholars using qualitative case study approaches should prioritize the pursuit of historical, cultural, linguistic, political, and economic knowledge that comes with in-depth area studies of a region' (p.14). In a vertical study the site cannot be taken in itself without understanding the macro conditions. Therefore, '[t]he "local" cannot be divorced from national and transnational forces but neither can it be conceptualized as determined by these forces (Piot, 1999, cited in Bartlett & Vavrus, p. 10).

In my study there are five levels. The first two are local, the third national, and the fourth and fifth international. The first level includes *local recipients*, the youth participating in each program. Members of this group are between the ages of 15 and 25, a range that captures an accepted definition of 'youth' [4] and specifically includes young people in transition from dependence to independence with respect to their livelihoods and family dynamics. In this sense, this research is similar to that of my colleague Komatsu, whose study focuses on the level of education targeting youth in a fragile state – although his study examines formal systems of education. I have interviewed ten participants per program, with an even gender distribution.

The second level involves *local programmers*, such as trainers, technicians, facilitators and teachers who work in the field and implement the programs for or together with the youth. The third level includes *national managers*, who are also Haitian citizens and are generally working at the country office in Port-au-Prince or its suburbs, and are involved in organizational planning, fundraising, grant-seeking and proposal-writing, and other strategic priorities. This level of practitioner is most apt to feel responsibility for 'balanc[ing] local and global interests when executing programs', as described by Eschenbacher in this issue.

The fourth level includes *international directors* who are generally non-Haitians; it includes international liaisons and partners, and international NGO directors charged with regional responsibilities. Normally located at IO headquarters in the high(er)-income partner country, these stakeholders will have provided insight, depth, and even critiques on the nature and rollout of the

particular programs implemented. With this group I anticipate obtaining the rationale for the specific links between the programs that I am studying and the impact on beneficiaries, specifically in terms of citizenship development.

The fifth and final level that I am interrogating includes *other international actors* invested in the programs in this study, including policy-makers, funders and observers of these programs of the reconstruction. At this level, policy formation, international programming decisions and funding arrangements are the organization's priorities. Stakeholders at this level will be useful in providing a rationale, theoretical connections, and comparative examples of the usefulness of the programs being implemented. These informants will provide a general perspective on the importance and role of citizen participation in the reconstruction. I aim to interview two policy-drivers aligned with each case, and, where distinct, two representatives of a funding body for each.

Richard Elmore's methodology of backward mapping is also applicable for the structure of this research. Backward mapping contrasts with the more dominant approach to policy formulation in organizations, that which begins with objective-setting and follows a process of increasingly specific steps towards implementation, including program monitoring and evaluation processes. This type of policy development might be seen as forward mapping (although rarely termed as such). Backward mapping, by contrast, begins with the perspectives of those closest to the implementation phase of organizational programs, where

> administrative actions intersect private choices. It begins not with a statement of intent, but with a statement of the specific behavior at the lowest level of the implementation process that generates the need for a policy. Only after the behavior is described does the analysis presume to state an objective; the objective is first stated as a set of organizational operations and then as a set of effects, or outcomes, that will result from these operations. Having established a relatively precise target at the lowest level of the system, the analysis then *backs up* through the structure of implementing agencies … (Elmore, 1979, p. 604, emphasis added)

Thus, the choice of entry into this vertical study at the bottom is deliberate. While the three cases in themselves are selected for their specific approach to enabling citizen participation, the entry into the vertical axis of the policy-program chain will be at the front-line level. This is the level where I will solicit the perspectives of actual youth beneficiaries of created spaces for participation, and then back up to collect further perspectives of participation through the aid chain.

Finally, to deepen the analysis of the phenomenon of participation, a horizontal analysis will also be undertaken. The horizontal component of this research will involve collecting and analyzing perspectives of participation from 'horizontal' actors: selected practitioners from other organizations; critics, observers, analysts and researchers of the reconstruction; and members of the Haitian diaspora and/or other advocates of Haiti's democratic development. These actors' perspectives can be characterized for their particular interest in issues such as a democratic underpinning of, solidarity with, social justice for, national sovereignty of, independence of, and self-sufficiency of Haiti. It will be important in this research to solicit perspectives of both 'internal' and 'external' voices, critical and supportive perspectives, and broad interpretations of how citizens are best enabled to participate in the reconstruction. I hope to interview between ten and twenty representatives of the broader community on the basis of their relevance and ability to comment specifically and generally on the programs of my study.

Data Collection Methods: drawing on ethnographic methods

Because the focus of this research begins with those citizens for whom participation is 'projected-upon', I will draw on ethnography both as a central set of methods and as an analytical technique to support the framing, collection and analysis of the research. While the majority of my own international work experience has not been in Haiti, I hope that my five years working with similar youth programs elsewhere in the Caribbean, East Africa and the South Pacific will provide insight and context on those I am examining in Haiti. As with the work of Eschenbacher in this issue, I hope that my comparable international experience, on-the-ground fieldwork, and external perspective will allow elements of both an emic and an etic perspective to permeate this research. From an ethnographic analytical perspective, I hope 'not only to collect information from the emic

or insider's perspective, but also to make sense of all the data from an etic or external social scientific perspective' (Fetterman, 1989, p. 21).

The ethnographic tools most useful for this research include three methods: the observation of programs in action; individual interviews; and document analysis of program approaches/philosophies. The observation of programs in action focused on the central elements of spaces of participation, such as the depth of participation, the goal of participation, which youth are participating and how. The observation of these programs focused largely on the processes of participation: the roles of the participants, and the steps towards the program or project outcome. I am particularly interested in understanding what is actually happening in these programs, who is participating in them, how decisions are made, and who makes the decisions for these programs. I hope to use the information that I glean to add specificity to the questions that I will use in one-on-one interviews.

Second, interviews with youth participants in each program have been used to clarify insights from the observation of each program and better understand the knowledge, skills and attitudes they feel they gained from the program. Semi-structured individual interviews with program practitioners along and across the aid chain are used to understand deeper questions around participation, such as the motives for and rationale of participation in the particular context of the programs. I am digitally recording the interviews to ensure that the collection of the perspectives of research participants is thorough and complete. Each of the groups noted above have a different interview protocol, in order to ensure that interviews are meaningful and engaging, based on their role and context in the program. In general, I hope to gain an understanding of the variety of perspectives on citizen participation and on the actual programs administered, and a measure of the individual participants' identities.

Third, analyses of program objectives, policies and plans are being used to ascertain the ideologies underlying the rationale for participation at the top of the vertical chain of aid. A critical document analysis enables a better understanding of how local participation is framed, envisioned and problematized in each circumstance. This document analysis concentrates on the following four types of documents. *Overarching development frameworks* guiding the reconstruction will be pulled from major actors in the reconstruction for general and dominant reconstruction posturing. *Organizational policy documents* of the specific organizations involved in this study will be used to understanding each NGO's position on participation. *Commentaries and critiques* from 'reconstruction watch'-type organizations will be sought for their specific analyses and options on citizen participation. Finally, *articles, letters and editorials* from media that focus on the participation of Haitian citizens will also be used. Within these documents I will search specifically for sections in which themes such as citizen participation, local involvement, ownership, empowerment or voice are clearly articulated. I will analyze the extent to which these themes are developed, the level of specificity of these themes, and the trends of language and phrasing in these documents as they may, in my analysis, have potential links to purposes and ideologies of participation.

There are two further methods that I am using to situate my study in a particular context. The first is a historical analysis of citizen participation in Haiti. This is essentially a literature review targeted at meanings of citizen participation over time, with a focus on contemporary understandings of citizen participation. Second, in order to locate the three cases in the context of the reconstruction, I am conducting a sector survey to contextualize the subset of youth programs in the overall international intervention in Haiti.

In sum, this research is a qualitative vertical case study, drawing on ethnographic methods to 'backward map' the perceptions of citizen participation. This methodology serves first to understand how participation is perceived in the context of the selected contemporary participatory programs, and then to compare and analyze these perspectives with others in vertical and horizontal spheres. The chain of aid for the three cases runs from the local recipients of the aid, to the local programmers, the national managers, to the international directors, and, finally, to other international actors who generate policies and strategies and provide the funding for the selected programs in Haiti. This research also draws on horizontal perspectives of participation, a historical analysis of citizenship in Haiti, and a sector survey of all youth programs operating in Haiti.

Data Analysis Techniques: analyzing spaces of participation

In accordance with the way in which Edwards (this issue) describes the iterative process of data collection and analysis, my preliminary analysis will take shape as ideas, themes and inconsistencies surface from the information I collect. I plan to analyze my data by drawing on the conceptual framework for this research (Figure 1). First, I will look for measures of depth of participation using Hart's model of youth participation. Second, I will look for alignment between my data and a neo-liberal, liberal, or progressive perspective of participation. It will be esssential to recall that the importance of understanding processes of participation lies in its connection with broader societal goals. For example, the development of participatory habits and skills is theorized to create citizens (in the sense of the devotion of individuals to their societies) and, in turn, deepen democracy (in a sense in which citizens participate broadly and deeply in both the direction of their society and its operations).

In the context of an aid-recipient state with heavy international intervention, such as Haiti, the significance of the deepening of citizenship and democracy is in their promise to lead to forms of sustainable, self-determined development. Thus, in my analyses I will pay particular attention to elements in which interviews, observations or document analyses may enable youth to work to strenghten their communities through initiatives and involvement in market economies (neo-liberal participation), through active engagement in political and civil structures (liberal participation), or through critical responses to injustice (progressive participation). More specifically, I will be attentive to qualities and habits that the programs might foster, such as those theorized by Putnam (1995), like trust, confidence to participate or be vocal, a greater propensity for involvement or volunteerism elsewhere, a likelihood to organize elsewhere, increased skills in articulation or public speaking, propensity to vote, propensity for other public involvement, respect for others, respect for the rule of law and the development of other skills useful for participating in life in Haiti. Where appropriate, I will probe these issues directly; where it might be a source of bias, I will let these themes emerge naturally in the interviews.

This analysis will be conducted separately for each group of respondents (i.e. youth recipients; each group of practitioners; each group of funders; etc.). As my data come together I will be attentive to the meanings and interpretations of the perceptions of participation, with a particular eye on the effect of the created space, issues of power, the perceived relative and overall benefits of the particular program, and the risks and consequences of the program. I will then cluster responses on the basis of their positioning in this conceptual framework. I will use descriptors to tabulate expressions, characteristics and specific phrases to illustrate the processes and conceptualizations of participation. Using a tree coding method with overarching concepts and their associated subset of codes (parent and child nodes), I will use an open model of coding, drawing on theoretical constructs. Using case-study methods, this research aims to generalize analytically rather than statistically (Yin, 1994). Thus, my analysis will synthesize the data from these questions and look for themes, patterns, re-emerging ideas, commonalities and differences in perspectives of citizen participation.

Once the data have been segregated, I plan to triangulate the responses according to organizational group. In this research, three main perspectives are identified (see Figure 2). I will create a typology of notions of participation based on the positioning of these clusters. This typology will include appropriate titles for various notions of participation in the particular, contemporary context of post-earthquake Haiti.

The program level primarily targets program recipients, to gather data through (i) youth interviews and (ii) researcher observation. The practitioner level focuses on the organization through analyses of the discourses of (i) the program, (ii) the policy and (iii) the funders. And the observer level focuses on outside perspectives, including interviews with close observers, analysts, experts, etc. of the reconstruction. Each of these notions will include examples of who espouses these particular beliefs of participation, and how participation is described by these individuals, represented in documents, and illustrated by the artifacts of the programs in the reconstruction.

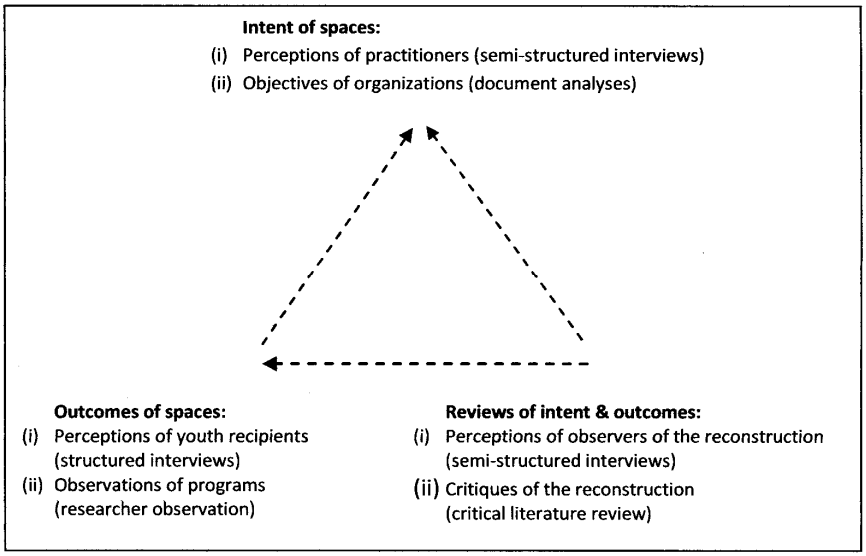

Figure 2. Standpoints on participatory spaces: a triangulation of findings.

Issues Arising from Methods

Given the stage of my research, the primary issues that I have encountered relate to my fieldwork. Thus, like Eschenbacher (this issue), I will focus largely on data-collection issues in this article. In what follows, I will examine organizational access, ethical issues, cross-border research and language complications.

Accessing the Organizations in this Study

Unlike my three colleagues writing in this issue, I chose to select as the site of my research a country in which I had not previously worked and of which I had no research experience. I chose Haiti because of the prevalence of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) operating in the country, specifically those with connections to Canada (my nation of citizenship). Thus, for my research, the initiation, development and maintenance of relationships were critical.

While my research begins with perspectives of participation from the bottom of the aid chain, my entry point to the chain is at the organization level. I began by networking in Canada with academic colleagues, family, and previous networks in the NGO community to scour any connections they might have in Haiti. I met people with connections in Haiti at various Haitian associations, solidarity groups and research panels in Canada. I also made 'cold calls', initiating contact with various organizations with which I had no previous connection, some of which proved to be my most valuable leads. From there I planned my first visits to Haiti, and again, through email, in-country phone calls and drop-in visits, I connected with many organizational representatives to discuss my research. Since I began, I have met with practitioners from over fifty organizations in order to establish the necessary relationships to be in a position to conduct my fieldwork. It took two visits to Haiti, each of two weeks, and approximately 18 months of total planning, from the beginning of laying the foundation for my research to commencing my on-the-ground fieldwork.

I eventually secured relationships with three NGOs, each of which held a different perspective on how youth might best be enabled to participate in a future Haitian society. I developed a relationship with one key partner at each NGO that enabled access to the programs of the organization. Concurring with Eschenbacher, the access to my organizations was also highly contingent on the willingness of each organization to open itself to scrutiny, a characteristic that is not necessarily that common. The relationships I formed with the NGOs were negotiated to benefit both the researcher and the organization, or, as one partner put it, each one was 'un vrai

partenariat' (a true partnership). Thus, a condition for my access to observing the various programs unfold was that I make a contribution to the NGO program. For the three NGOs with which I aligned, this contribution involved either a direct intervention in the youth program itself (logistical support, coaching the youth with their tasks and objectives), an indirect intervention of delivering a leadership workshop during program orientation, or a summative intervention involving using the data I gathered to produce an internal monitoring and evaluation report of the program.

Access to youth involved in the program was obtained through staff from the organization requesting participation by both staff and youth. Once I had secured the organizational permission and access to youth, I then spoke to the youth themselves to gain their approval. All other interviews for this research were requested of the participants directly.

Ethical Consent and the Rights of My Research Participants

Like the approach used by Edwards (this issue), I dealt with issues of participant rights and consent on a case-by-case situation. I began the consent process by providing my key partner (the national manager) at each of the three NGOs with both a written and an oral background of the study, its purpose, the reason why I requested their participation, and their rights as a participant. I provided an overview of the research via email, and then explained and responded to questions about the research in person, and issued a formal consent form to the parties involved in the study. The national managers were notified in writing and orally that their participation was completely voluntary, and at any time they could opt out of the study. I also explained to national managers that they had the right to go off record at any time during the interview process. This was understood to mean that I would not use the details of the account provided in the research, but the facts provided would enable a richer background and context of the discussion at hand. (In these situations I did not necessarily terminate my audio recording of the interview.) I will use a similar approach with international directors and actors in this study, as well as with horizontal interviewees, to the one I used with national managers.

I ensured the consent of the local recipients and programmers in my study by providing similar background information to that which I provided to the managers; however, the processes were adjusted to suit the context. First, I asked NGO managers who regularly work with programmers and youth to communicate the general background of the study, what would be expected of them through their participation, and the broader benefits of this study. At that point the programmers and youth were to be given time to consider the study and their participation in it, as well as time to return to NGO managers with questions, for clarification, and to give their approval to participate. When I arrived in Haiti to work directly with the local programmers and recipients, I repeated the study details, and let all participants know in person that this study was voluntary, anonymous and confidential.

All the data I obtain are restricted to me alone. The audio tapes of my interviews remain in my private possession after they have been used to collect information. The list of codes of participants will be kept in a separate computer from the actual data. All files will be password protected, and stored on my computer alone. Hard copies of files, including audio recordings, will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office in Canada.

This research was also approved by the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Toronto. I consulted with other researchers operating in Haiti and searched extensively for an equivalent national or regional ethical review office in Haiti or the Caribbean, but found none.

Researching across Borders

As I am a Canadian researcher of non-Haitian origin, the possibility of this research being a colonizing endeavor in itself is a very real concern for me, as it risks reinforcing the very power relations it sets out to better understand. Because of Haiti's historical and political complexities involving slavery, foreign occupation and militarization, this research draws on post-colonial theory ascribed to decolonizing methodologies (Carnoy, 1974; Altbach & Kelly, 1984; Smith, 1988). While there is much history of various types of exploitation in Haiti, I am not aware of cases in which mistreatment by researchers has been documented. In my case, structural demographics and

conditions such as wealth, race, language, and social and political access, to name a few, would tend to place me in a privileged position relative to my interviewees. I have strived to mitigate these issues by conducting my fieldwork on the terms of my research participants as much as possible: in their setting, their language, their time frame.

In my role as an international practitioner I must also consider how I am perceived; the positional power due to gender and citizenship that I wield and that I am both aware and unconscious of; resistance to me as a foreign researcher; and my relatively short commitment to communities. I see these risks being offset, however, by the intent of this research: by interrogating citizen participation specifically, the study aims to give voice in program planning to those who might not have it otherwise. I have been clear with my participants that the goal of this study is to provide clearer notions of citizen participation in Haiti, an outcome with intended favourable benefits for my participants.

Language Issues

Conducting interviews in the first language of each participant presented some challenges. A minority of interviews were conducted in English in order to effectively probe the research topics and develop a discussion that addresses my central research questions. These interviews were generally restricted to practitioners in the top levels of the aid chain. In the case of French, my second language, some difficulties surfaced as a result of the conceptual depth of my research topic, the nuances of the language in general, and confusion arising due to the particular dialect and figures of speech of Haitian French. As a precaution, I took much care in speaking and understanding when operating in French, and in preparing for the fieldwork I needed to become well versed in the conceptual language of my research and the conventional usages of the terms that I employ. For the benefit of my research participants, I translated all my English documents into French.

Kreyòl, the lingua franca of Haiti, bears many similarities to French. While Kreyòl is widely thought to have developed as a creole by the slave population during the period of French colonization, it is a distinct and official language in Haiti (a point also made by Komatsu in his synopsis of elements of the three languages of Bosnia and Herzegovina). As I learn this language, I am relying on an interpreter to facilitate necessary translations.

Discussion

Throughout my fieldwork observing the multi-level youth programs of the Haitian reconstruction and interviewing participants of these programs, several themes have emerged as important considerations. In this section I will highlight three specific themes that have surfaced due to international research in a fragile, post-colonial state. These factors, that intersect with the research on the ground, include the perception of my role as researcher, issues of security, and cross-cultural tensions.

Perception of Role of Researcher

Because my access to the three youth programs was negotiated to include reciprocal benefit, my presence at each NGO included my involvement in the program itself. Thus, assuming a position as participant observer certainly complicated my role in the program. While in all cases my goal was to be as non-intrusive as possible, it is hard to imagine that my various motives were not confusing. For example, after a week of assisting the implementation of the youth radio program, I interviewed each youth participant to get their perspective on what they had learned. Just as the youth audio-recorded their interviews with Haitian citizens to be broadcast on the radio, so did I audio-record my interviews with them, but I had to reassure them several times that my recording was not for national broadcast, but for my research purposes only.

With the youth debate clubs I served as a speaker, facilitating activities during the orientation workshops. Yet, as an observer of the program, I would frequently interrupt our discussions to scribble down important interactions and sequences taking place throughout the training. With the

youth enterprise training, rather than being simply an observer of the program, I also was asked to evaluate the program. In all cases, through my choices of language, demeanor and attitude, I attempted to be as non-disruptive and non-judgmental as possible, yet I would suspect that the very arrival of a foreigner on the training site would provoke curiosity. For example, even after several interviews with numerous youth and practitioners in one program, a local programmer asked me if I could clarify once again what my role was with the NGO.

Fragility, Violence and Impressions of Security

The issue of security in Haiti is an ongoing concern, one with paradoxical indicators. On one hand, rates of homicide in Haiti are well below those of other countries in the region [5], and Haiti is reported to be much safer since the 2004 arrival of the 10,000-troop UN military mission (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haita, 2011), even though it is not the subject of a peace-keeping or post-conflict agreement, nor is it in the midst of a civil war to justify such a military presence (Seitenfus, 2010). A process of 'national reconciliation' is under way between current president, Martelly, and six previous presidents, two having recently returned from exile, and all but one living in Haiti. Yet on the other hand, the discourse of security is ubiquitous in Haiti. The government of Canada's reports that the 'security situation is hazardous and unpredictable' in Haiti, drawing specific attention to the threat of gangs and kidnappings (Foreign Affairs Canada, 2011). A key international actor informant for my study was the target of an assassination attempt in the fall of 2011. And security policies for international organizations in Haiti have very strict codes of behavior regarding travel arrangements and living quarters. Like Bosnia and Herzegovina, as described by Komatsu in this issue, Haiti remains a deeply divided society as a result of its history of conflict. Housing subdivisions around Port-au-Prince are segregated, with wealthy gated communities immediately across the street from slums and tent camps. It is perhaps because this threat of conflict is a much greater reality than the ongoing demonstration of conflict that Haiti is characterized as a fragile state.

The fragility of the public structures in Haiti may present political risks that are relevant to the methods of this research. Because the topic of democracy can be one that is very sensitive in Haiti, there have been very serious and personal consequences for Haitians resulting from political leanings. For instance, there are many examples in which supporters of participatory democracy in Haiti – particularly under the organization of the now-banned Fanmi Lavalas political party – have been threatened or injured, or have simply disappeared, most notably following the coups of 1991 and 2004 (Farmer, 2006; Hallward, 2007). A deepening of democracy in the context of Haiti would require a significant redistribution of the power and property of the small but wealthy elite population, given the enormous wealth gap and high rate of poverty per capita of the country. In the past, such efforts and reforms have been met with rapid, often violent resistance. I consider these risks most salient for program participants who may have prior allegiances unknown to me; who may have an existing structural vulnerability to power and access in Haiti; or who may have less structural (i.e. cultural, social or financial) capital to rely on for protection. The implications of even being seen as being involved in a political process may be risky. I take this potential vulnerability very seriously. Therefore, where it may implicate my participants, I am keeping my study low profile and de-emphasizing any political implications throughout the course of my data collection. I am ensuring that the responses of my individual participants remain confidential and anonymous, through use of pseudonyms, codes and other descriptors. For those who may be personally identifiable on the basis of these descriptors, I am deliberately manipulating identifiers such as age and gender, where possible.

Cross-cultural Understandings of Participation

In my research I am constantly reminded of the degree to which cultural factors impact theoretical and everyday understandings of participation beyond the conceptual paradigms that I have drawn upon for this research. Notions of participation and citizenship take on different meanings across the borders of my research. As Casimir (1992) proposes, 'in the Caribbean, the concepts of country, nation and state do not correspond to those held in other regions of the world' (p. 9). Concepts of

progressive, liberal and neo-liberal, for example, have different meanings in a state with a tradition of non-formal economies, where radical politics are threatened by violence, and where an incredibly weak state means that formal politics and social programs have little real meaning for its citizens. Haiti's formation as a nation – its political struggles, unique customs and religion, and its distinct forms of occupation – will surely influence its people's understandings of democracy, citizenship and national identity. Notions of citizenship are surely impacted by communal values associated with the widespread religious influences of Vodou, Rastafarianism and liberation theology; the traditions passed on from Dahomey and Yoruba, the ancestral origin of Haitian slaves that have transcended generations of cultural teaching; and the regional influences of Indigenism (Price-Mars, 1919), Négritude, twenty-first-century socialism and anti(-US)-imperialist movements. Thus, the relevance of western models of participation in light of the specific cultural and historical realities of Haitian society will need to be heavily scrutinized against domestic understandings of participation. Already in my fieldwork the wide breadth in which the concept of participation is invoked is apparent. Thus, the conceptual model created for this research will require adaptation for its use in Haiti.

Yet the impact, particularly on youth, of globalization – in the specific sense in which citizens have increasing contact with others around the globe – also means that notions of participation are more complex than they were for earlier generations of Haitians. Given the transnational aspects of the youth programs of this study, many of my research participants represent a multitude of global spheres, beyond the simple local–national–international spectrum in which they are portrayed. For example, several of the Haitian participants in my research completed university degrees abroad; the 3-million-strong Haitian diaspora in the Americas maintains strong connections with Haitian nationals [6]; and social media use in Haiti – Facebook, for instance - includes over 200,000 Haitian users (approximately 2% of the population) [7], enabling many ongoing virtual international relationships. Elements of the perspectives of youth participants may be informed by global and/or international perspectives on aid. These blurred perspectives are also true for other participants in this research: local programmers, through their perspectives, will be able to further articulate or share some other experiences of youth participants, and international actors who have had past experience in Haiti (or even abroad) will have perspectives that are informed by local-level realities.

But these conceptualizations are further complicated by the fragility of Haiti's social situation, where participation and citizenship may be seen as secondary ideals to instincts of survival. Issues of sovereignty, self-governance and national fortitude in the presence of the international community might appear too idealistic in the face of imminent needs and security concerns. In the context of fragility, pragmatic solutions might trump all other issues. Basic needs to provide for oneself and family take precedence over concerns for citizen participation in programs or involvement in social change, and everyday needs for sustenance might be at the forefront of shaping understandings and articulations of participation.

Conclusion

In this article I have presented some of the central issues I am encountering in my research on youth participation in the internationally constructed programs in the Haitian reconstruction. Conducting research in Haiti is an experience that has similarities with research in other fragile contexts, such as those discussed in this issue, but it also presents some of its own unique circumstances. In using a qualitative vertical methodology, the issues that have been most relevant for me have included my access to international organizations for research purposes, the rights of my research participants, negotiating cross-cultural barriers, and dealing with language issues.

In reflecting on the issues of this research, it is clear that many circumstances are related to the resulting dynamic of the researcher's identity and the specific cultural context of Haiti. Specifically, as a foreign researcher without Haitian roots who is examining the international reconstruction in Haiti, I am acutely aware of the irony that my research too is an international intervention. However, by concentrating on the specific issues resulting from my research location and methodology, it is hoped that the challenges and negative consequences of my research intervention might be mitigated. This article has attempted to speak to some of these concerns, by addressing research issues such as the perceived role of the researcher; the importance of

relationship development; the considerations involved in conducting fieldwork in a fragile environment; and the complexities of a normative phenomenon such as participation in a cross-cultural context.

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Notes

[1] 'Haiti is a free market economy that enjoys the advantages of low labor costs and tariff-free access to the US for many of its exports' (CIA Factbook, 2011).

[2] See http://www.nationmaster.com/country/ha-haiti/eco-economy

[3] Haiti devotes 1.97% of its annual GDP to education, much less than the international average of about 5%, and far below that of neighbouring Cuba at 13.6% (CIA, 2011; NationMaster.com, 2011).

[4] The age bracket for youth has been defined variably as 15-24 (Statistics Canada), 15-29 (EU, 2009), and 18-35 (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada).

[5] The homicide rate for Haiti is 6.9 per 100 000, compared to 52.1 for Jamaica, 26.2 for Puerto Rico, and 24.9 for the Dominican Republic. The rate for El Salvador, the research location for Edwards (this issue), reports a rate of 66 (UNODC, 2011).

[6] The 2011 population estimate for Haiti is approximately ten million (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011).

[7] See http://www.internetworldstats.com/carib.htm

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