The process of developing relationships is one of the most challenging yet most significant aspects of living in a nation that is amongst the two-thirds of the world that experiences extreme poverty. As a participant in a two-thirds world experience I formed two kinds of relationship with my host community in San Luis, Ecuador: relationships of the heart, which connected me with other individuals in my host community, and relationships of social and cultural agency, which facilitated my participation in Ecuadorian life. These two kinds of relationship represent two development schemes or avenues for the improvement of human life. Jean Vanier argues in *Becoming Human* that development will occur as human beings living in community build relationships of the heart and therefore recognize a common humanity. Amartya Sen in *Development as Freedom* argues development will occur as the individuals in a society form new relationships that create agency within social structures. Neither of these development schemes is completely adequate alone. Vanier's theory does not provide any concrete plan to deal with hunger or unemployment; Sen's plan does not consider the challenges that the human heart poses to people, even people who have been given the freedom to choose the thing that they have reason to value. These two schemes form complimentary halves of the same process: the process of building relationship. Development can therefore be understood as the process of building relationship, and in my experience the formation of a relationship moves through three stages: first there is a change in perspective, next there is a new understanding, and finally there is the formation of a relationship. As I built these kinds of relationships in Ecuador I, myself, underwent a kind of development. I say “a kind of development” because as I
formed relationships, my understanding of development changed. I am no longer only conscious of injustice from above, from my position as a privileged citizen of a wealthy nation. Instead, I am aware of injustice from the inside, from a place of equal relationship. I no longer see development as dramatic act of benevolence, made from a position of power in order to assist those in poverty; instead my desire to help people is a natural extension of my relationships. Therefore relationship is both a cause and a product of development.

To explain, building a new relationship almost certainly requires a changed perspective. Living in a different landscape, for instance, which for me was the mountains of Ecuador, literally entailed a different perspective from that which I am used to at home. Toronto is a big city, crowded with tall buildings, constantly noisy with traffic and full of people. Sitting in front of my house in the community of San Luis, I could see green hills that roll down and then up and away to where I knew a snow-capped mountain hid behind the clouds. The hills were not perfect, but patch-worked in a series of fields: some were cultivated; some were spotted with grazing cattle; and some held tiny distant homesteads. Like the hills that physically surrounded me, the community where I lived, San Luis, is pieced together in a way that is very different than my community at home. They hold regular reunions, where all the people come together to discuss the business of the group. After the meeting, the group went out to do a community work project, which involved cleaning the mud out of an aquifer. I did not have the proper clothing (or, probably, the strength) to participate in the work, however, I got to sit and watch the people work together.

An added benefit for me living in this community was that I learned what it was like to be a part of a disadvantaged group within society. To explain, one of the fruits of the community's organization is a night-school program, which is designed to teach the illiterate
members of the community to read. It is at this night school program where I spent many of my first evenings in Ecuador, and it is there that I experienced first-hand the effects of illiteracy. My host mother Mary, for example, who was 53 years old at the time, was one of the people who learned to read and write for the first time in this program. In fact, the class was made up mostly of older Señoras, who came to class dressed in traditional mountain clothing—knee length pleated skirts in a variety of bright colours like turquoise and fuchsia. Marco, who is the teacher, taught mostly the very basics of the language: how to form letters and numbers; however there was also one man there learning more complicated math. The effects of this class were a revelation to me because, while my Mary is the president of a bank and a successful farmer, it was only then that she learned to write her own name from memory. This is a revelation because she was able to accomplish so much while deprived of the ability to write, something that is taken for granted in Canada. Prior to this, Mary relied on her daughter to read and write for her. Mary always made the teacher include me in the lessons. I think she understood my struggle to learn Spanish because of her own struggle to learn to write. It became a bond between us. I read them first in English, and then Spanish, inviting the group to correct my pronunciation. As part of this class, I became one of the marginalized and began to see the world outside the privileged position that that my life in Canada provides to me. My understanding of what human development is began to change.

The night school classes in San Luis are part of a bigger education program: a development scheme, organized by the Ecuadorian government. The government provides all of the supplies for the classes in an effort to give its citizens the social agency provided by literacy. The plan, however, would have been ineffective without the willingness of the community to rally around it and put it into action in a rural part of the mountains. This willingness to support each other even extended to the inclusion of a Canadian girl who
could speak almost no Spanish. In these classes, I could see three things operating: the kindness of individual people who included me in their classes, how an organized community can work to improve situations of its members, and the social agency that language and literacy provide. In these night classes, relationships between individuals work together within the community to facilitate the creation of a new relationship of agency. My new perspective, inside an Ecuadorian community, allowed me to start to see those things working together.

For Jean Vanier, a change in perspective is the first step towards developing relationships of the heart. Vanier frames his understanding of relationship within his own life story—his perspective changed when he gave up his academic career in order to found L'Arche. This organization is a small network of homes and communities for individuals with intellectual and physical challenges and those who desire to share their lives with them. By moving away from the kind of society that favours the strong and belittles the weak, Vanier found himself free to discover "the 'way of the heart.'" This recognition that "[w]e all have wounded and broken hearts" is the key to becoming human and one of the essential elements of the book's argument. In *Becoming Human* Vanier tells several stories from his time spent living in L'Arche that illustrate this phenomenon. One example is the story of Claudia who joined L'Arche in Tegucigalpa, Honduras when she was seven years old. Her participation in the community allowed her to find the security necessary to move out of debilitating mental anguish—she found a place to belong. Relationships that are founded on the sharing of weakness are the basis of belonging. I experienced this phenomenon, when my host mother in her weakness was able to reach out to me in mine. She always insisted that the teacher gave me homework to complete before the next class. This small gesture made me feel as though I belonged to the group.
It is this communion with others that Vanier claims has the power to change society. Vanier argues that "[t]he birth of a good society comes when people start to trust each other, to share with each other, and to feel concerned for each other." Vanier believes that if people become more human by participating in relationships of the heart, society will be changed. He describes the connection between these two concepts:

A society that encourages us to break open the shell of selfishness and self-centeredness contains the seeds of a society where people are honest, truthful, and loving. A society can function well only if those within are concerned, not only with their own needs or the needs of those who immediately surround them, but the needs of all, that is to say, by the common good.

Vanier believes that where relationships of the heart flourish there will be a better society, because individuals who are becoming human cannot help but be concerned with the needs of others. It is evident that Vanier is speaking in normative language: his vision is of a new society.

This new society will exist outside of the political and social structures of the world. Vanier describes a conference where police officers and inmates and guards all met together-free from any "markers" that told them how to relate to each other (Vanier 38). The group slept, ate, and shared together. In that context of literal community, which was free from societal labels and structures, he argues that the group was able to be together as "persons" or to recognize a common humanity (Vanier 38). In this example, it is clearly necessary to move outside society's structures. Vanier cautions that he is "not suggesting… that each one of us must welcome into our homes all those who are marginalized" (Vanier 85), however, there is a tension between Vanier's practical call to action, which is grounded in his concrete life-choices, and his theoretical ideas, which both call for a move outside of social structures. Whether or nor Vanier believes that every individual should move to a L'Arche community,
his theory still requires individuals to move somehow away from the social and political structures of the world in order to experience belonging.

It is difficult to imagine how this development scheme can relate to traditional questions of development, which are wrapped up in political and social structures or phenomena like hunger or unemployment. My host community of San Luis, for instance, operated within the social and political framework of Ecuador and the issues that this town faces are intimately linked to these structures. This suggests that Vanier's theory is therefore not fully equipped on its own to address the larger issues of development, which are tied to social and political structures.

Like Vanier, Amartya Sen contends that relationships of agency start from a changed perspective; however, the responsibility for this changed perspective lies with the political and social structures of the world; it is not a changed perspective that can be chosen by an individual. Sen reveals his conviction that people in power can orchestrate development when he writes: "[a]ppropriate policies and actions can indeed eradicate the terrible problems of hunger in the world." (Sen 160) Sen defines development as "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy." (Sen 36) These freedoms are tied up in the political and social structures of the world and include: political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security. (Sen 37). Sen requires the people in power to facilitate the "removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states." (Sen 3).

Sen demonstrates that the individuals in positions of power within the world have the ability to orchestrate freedoms for their people. To return to the specific example of famines for instance, Sen outlines a number of factors which cause a specific portion of the
population to experience famine despite the fact their country is producing an adequate food supply. An example is the Bangladesh famine of 1974, which was a peak year of food production for the nation. One of the factors that contributed to that famine was unemployment—without an income individuals were unable to purchase food. Sen argues that in such a situation "[c]ompensatory government expenditure in creating employment can help avert a threatening famine very effectively." As an example, he uses the efforts made by the government of Maharashtra where in 1973 five million temporary jobs were created to compensate for the loss of employment due to a severe drought.

The night classes that I was attending in Ecuador are part of the kind of scheme that Sen imagines: the Ecuadorian government provides the supplies for the literacy classes to occur. The materials they used were specially designed for the community, featuring examples that would be familiar to members of the community. I could see Sen's plan interact with an individual as my host mother Mary (began to understand the power of literacy right in front of my eyes.

Beyond a change of perspective, however, there is a second phase in developing a relationship: the growth of understanding. As time passed during my stay in Ecuador, I began to understand the ebb and flow of life there. My day started with the light at 6am and I made my way to my work placement for 7:30am. The Escuela David Managong consists of two classrooms and about thirty students. At the school there is a morning ritual called "formation": the children run to line up according to grade when a small bell rings. The professor calls out for the students to ensure that their formation is correct and then cries "todas escuela descanse." Suddenly, the rag-tag, variously attired, and mud-covered bunch of students snap to military attention. This is followed quickly by another command: "attention firmise," which has the students sharply put their hands at their sides. Sometimes this ritual
is followed by some exercises; other times the professora uses this time to make some announcements.

One day, while Señorita Monica made a long series of announcements, I had a moment of understanding. Usually I would get my information about school happenings from the kids, who had the patience to explain things to me. However, that day I was able to follow the teacher as she explained that one day we would be traveling to Cayambe (the local town) and that another day there would be no classes. As I stood there, I felt as though I was part of the school. The very practical ability to understand the words that were being spoken translated into an ability to participate in school events. I could become an active part in the life of the school. I could choose to participate in the school events that I had reason to value.

However, the agency that language provides, does not supply all of the elements that are necessary to integrate into a community. There is another kind of understanding that is essential: an understanding of the heart. In Ecuador, most days after lunch we would all head por arriba or up the mountain to my host family's other plot of land. A week before the San Pedro festival, my host mother's son David, who lives in one of the houses on the mountain, asked me if I would like to come and ride a horse. There had previously been much discussion with me surrounding San Pedro, which is a large festival that takes place over the month of June, culminating in a large parade in Cayambe, in which all of the mountain communities participate. My family had asked me if I would like to dance for San Pedro or if I would like to ride a horse. I chose the first option; however, my family continued to ask me if I would like to ride a horse and that day, a week before the festival, they were still trying to get me to ride.
I did try riding a short distance up the road. I must confess that I am slightly afraid of horses, particularly ones without a saddle. After I tried riding, I went up to the house with the family. There were nine or ten people sitting around outside the house. We ate some delicious sugar cane and I listened as the family talked. I became increasingly unable to follow the conversation, drifting off into my own thoughts in the corner. However, there were moments when I was aware that the family was talking about me. They would ask me to display my multiple bug bites or they would send one of the kids over to ask me if I would like to try riding the horse again. I could not understand why they were asking me to ride so I tried to piece together what I did know. They had previously told me that the skirts for dancing would be too short for me and made some comments that I am a little fat. So I decided that I must be too fat to dance in the parade and that’s why they wanted me to ride the horse.

I sat in the sun with my host family and started to cry over an explanation that I had made up myself. I didn’t quite sob, but I certainly sniffed very noisily into my handkerchief. My family was, of course, very confused by my sudden tears. They tried to ask me what was the matter, but I was too overwhelmed and embarrassed to explain. So the family simply gathered around me to cheer me up: my host mother took me down the hill to get a chance to gather myself; I played volleyball with my host brother Lucio; and they put one of my CDs on the main CD player in the house. My complete lack of understanding in a situation was met by kindness and respect. I learned several weeks later that the family wanted me to ride because they would have earned money from the community. I really wish that I could have understood that earlier. I probably would have tried to overcome my fear of horses. I did dance in the San Pedro parade: my skirt came to my knees, which was long enough for...
me. It amazes me how easily I filled my lack of understanding in with something that stems from my own personal insecurities.

For Vanier, the second step in developing relationships is developing an understanding of the things that create blockages in our hearts. Fear is one of the main hindrances to the development of a common understanding of what it means to be human. Vanier argues that loneliness is an essential human condition; this condition is coupled with an essential human need to belong to a group. However, groups often practice exclusion. In his writing, Vanier explains that "[f]ear is at the root of all forms of exclusion, just as trust is at the root of all forms of inclusion." I wrote in my journal the night of my horse riding incident in Ecuador: "what fear can do: it can grab hold of a life and constrict it… fear constricts perspective." I believe that fear can be a point of view. If I choose to live my life out of fear, then every situation will speak to them. My family in Ecuador did not exclude me. However, when I viewed the situation through the lens of my insecurity I could not participate in community with them. I chose to exclude myself from belonging to the group because of my fear that they were rejecting me.

Vanier’s solution to the problem of fear is the "way of the heart" that he experienced through his involvement with L'Arche. Vanier believes that our fears begin during childhood, and he suggests that fear is a lack of freedom, which can be overcome through "the freedom of truth." He argues that there are hidden wounds deep within the human heart. Vanier explains that "[f]reedom is the liberation from all those inner fears that make us hide from people and from reality." The path to freedom leads through the process of forgiveness and involves a recognition that the truth humankind seeks is ultimately found in the Spirit of God. Whether or not I agree that the recognition of God is essential, the process of recognizing that my personal fears was essential to developing
relationships with the members of my host community. My greatest struggle in integrating into my community in San Luis, even greater than the challenge of learning language, was overcoming the fears and insecurities in my heart. There was one Intercordian who left Ecuador during the very first week that we were there. If I had let fear drive all of my decisions while I was in Ecuador, then I might not have stayed in the country long enough to develop relationships of agency within my Ecuadorian community.

Sen's development theory, is concerned with the kinds of understanding that improve the capabilities of individuals. He argues that organization of power should strive to enhance the relationships of agency that people possess or "capabilities of people to do things—and the freedom to lead lives—that they have reason to value." (Sen 85). Human capabilities thus facilitate relationships of agency. My growing language skills, for example, which gave me the agency to participate in the life of my school highlights an increased capability. To explain, my lack of language skills represented a capability deprivation, which I overcame with the help of host sister, Marianna and my Spanish-English dictionary. Once I could understand the language I was free to choose which aspects of school life that I would like to participate in. Similarly, once my language skills developed, I was able to understand why my host family desired for me to ride in the San Pedro parade. Understanding the financial gain for my family would have given me another element to have a reason to value. This begins to demonstrate the connection between relationships of agency and relationships of the heart; these two kinds of relationship are co-dependent. In this instance, the agency provided by language would have helped me overcome the insecurity in my heart.

Sen develops the relationship between capabilities and agency is his discussion of population. A reduction in birth rate is a traditional goal of development because this, for example, reduces the strain on nations that are already struggling to provide food for all of
their inhabitants. Sen shows birthrate can be addressed through the "enhancement of women's status and power."\textsuperscript{25} (Sen 198). Sen argues that one way to increase the power of women is to provide them with better education. Sen demonstrates how increased education amongst women corresponds with a lowered birthrate, citing specifically the Indian state Kerala.\textsuperscript{26} He argues that education therefore enables women to choose the thing they have a reason to value. This suggests that free women will choose to value the thing that will benefit all of society. I do not disagree with the value of a decreased birthrate, however, Sen's theory is dependent on the choices of individuals, and a society composed of multiple individuals is driven by many different values. Sen acknowledges this aspect of society by suggesting that the "capability perspective is inescapably pluralist."\textsuperscript{27}

Sen's perspective has many advantages, while being open to critique. Sen's perspective allows development to be evaluated by a diverse array of factors, rather than a single criterion like income.\textsuperscript{28} It is this diverse approach that enables him to build his argument regarding population from the perspective of women's agency instead of their "well-being" alone. Understanding the position of women in terms of well-being alone does not allow women to be participants in the development process. In Sen's system, women can be understood as "dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of both women and men."\textsuperscript{29} While this approach to development has obvious advantages, it is still dependent on the choices of individuals. Sen's theory depends on individuals to make use of the capabilities that people in power have provided them. This draws Sen's theory into a closer relationship with Vanier's than there appears to be on the surface. Vanier's concern for how and why individuals make decisions in relationship to each other is therefore an essential compliment to Sen's individual agency.
These relationships of the heart that I developed with my host family and community in Ecuador changed the way that I relate to people who are in a position of power. Furthermore, they changed the way that I understand human development. I went to stay on a plantation with Tania, one of the grown-up daughters of Mary. They grow coco beans and black pepper. Members of my host family live in what are essentially the servant's quarters, off to the side of the property. While I was there, the brother of the owner of the property arrived with his wife and daughter. They immediately took up residence in the large house that dominates the property. The next day while the Señora was out walking, she happened upon me sitting outside. She spoke to me in very good English and asked me to come back to the main house to visit. I really didn't feel like I had any choice in the matter. So I went, conscious that earlier in the day I had been sitting in the mud while helping to pick coco beans and now my backside was covered in mud. The Señora and her daughter asked all the standard questions about why that I am in Ecuador.

In return, I could not resist asking her about the new constitution that was being written by the government. This ignited a long speech about the faults and virtues of President Rafael Correa. It was when she started to list his faults that I started to have difficulties. She said that Correa "hates rich people and that's not right." That is not necessarily an inaccurate statement, however, she supported it by explaining that Correa was a poor man who worked his way through rich people's schools on scholarships and never really fit in. Therefore, Correa does not like rich people. This well-bred Ecuadorian woman, sitting in her air-conditioned house, took the President's policies as an indication that he has a personal problem with the rich instead of acknowledging the wide disparity in wealth that exists in her nation or stopping to consider the consequences they have for the people who are not wealthy. I felt an overwhelming surge of hatred for the woman in that moment. She
had no idea what amazing people she has living in the house behind hers. I know those people and I wish that they didn't have to work as servants in order to be able to afford schooling for their children. The passing ignorant comments of a woman that I did not know became personal because I knew the people that she was talking about.

It is here that the bond between relationships of the heart and relationships of agency takes on a new dimension. It changes the way that I, as a person with a position of privilege in a wealthy nation understand how development or the improvement of human life should be accomplished. I understand development as the process of building relationships, because that is what I have experienced. When I was faced with the Señora, an individual who has a position of power in the world that is comparable to mine, I saw even more clearly the tangible differences that existed between my position and the people that I cared about in Ecuador. The first part of my time in Ecuador was spent learning how much I have in common with the people there. Through this discovery, I developed relationships of the heart. The latter part of my visit was marked with a heightened sense of the disparity between Canada and Ecuador. For example, I have access to free education beyond the seventh grade. I never have to worry about where I will get my food. The people with whom I shared my life in Ecuador deserve the same opportunities, deserve to have the same capabilities that I do. The love I have for the people of Ecuador changes the way that I want to use the extra portion of free agency I possess.

First, I will change the way that I offer practical help to the people of Ecuador. I have insight into how to help them: the school needs books and the community needs healthcare. I can share these needs with the people in Canada. However, I believe the most powerful thing that I can do is share my relationships with you. I can facilitate relationships of the heart with the people who are not able to be here in Canada. I can become a
relationship proxy. Moreover, by facilitating relationships between the people in Canada and
the people in Ecuador, I am promoting the development of the Canadian people. Therefore,
you are being developed. I hope that this development of the heart will cause you to
consider the position of power that is afforded to you by the extra portion of free agency
that you possess, and once considered, cause you to act on behalf of the people that you
have encountered through me. Therefore, relationship is both the means and end of
development.

In formulating my argument this way, I echo Sen's "cause and product" phrasing. Understanding development as both a process and a goal is an effective strategy. Thinking of development in these terms gives development an extra level of sustainability, because the gap between plan and result is never insurmountable. This is yet another way of understanding that life is composed of multiple types of relationship, including the relationship between being and becoming. It also provides space to allow two very different kinds of relationship to work together, both aimed at development.

Vanier and Sen have different, yet related, development schemes. For Vanier, development is a product of changed hearts, for Sen it is a product of increased social agency. I do not believe that either of those men would reduce their development schemes so to such simplistic terms. It is fruitful to imagine Vanier's scheme as focused on the development of the individual and Sen's scheme as concerned with the placement of that individual within society; or it can be understood as the development of micro and macro types of relationship. Sen's theory provides an individual with the space to experience the kind of individual development that Vanier envisions. The two theories thus form complimentary halves of the same process. I argued how these schemes are related: the practical concerns of an economist can be understood as enriched and fuller when coupled
with the spiritual concerns of a philosopher. It becomes a way of interrelating two aspects of what it means to be alive and to have an experience. I saw this during my stay in Ecuador: my experience is not easily reducible to a single thesis, a single statement to sum up what I have learned. If anything, I feel that my time in Ecuador has drawn me more deeply into the complexities and interconnectedness of life. For me, relationship is life.

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1 I participated in the Intercordia program that is offered by St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto. Jean Vanier, who desires that students learn to see the world through the eyes of their heart, founded this program. It consists of an academic seminar and a three-month placement in a developing nation. For more information, visit www.intercordia.ca.


4 Vanier, 37.

5 Ibid., 31.

6 Ibid., 34.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., 38.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 85.

11 Sen, 160.

12 Ibid., 36.

13 Ibid., 37.

14 Ibid., 3.

15 Ibid., 169.

16 Ibid.

17 Vanier, 6.

18 Ibid., 71.

19 Ibid., 81.

20 Ibid., 116.

21 Ibid., 136.

22 Ibid., 118.

23 Ibid., 133.
24 Sen, 85.
25 Ibid., 198.
26 Ibid., 199.
27 Ibid., 76.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 189.
30 Ibid., 35.

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