Enactments of Youth Agency to Resist, Transgress, and Undo Traditional Gender Norms in Honduras

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Introduction

The plurality of how young people identify and negotiate their agency is shaped by internal and external factors to themselves. From the socio-cultural characteristics that construct the ways youth identify, to norms and behaviors youth observe within their homes, on the streets, in churches or community centers, there is a constant negotiation with the social norms and cultural traditions of their local and national communities in regard to who they are and what they feel they are able to do (Honwana & De Boeck, 2005; Maira & Soep, 2005). Gender norms and identities play a large role in these negotiations of agency. The nexus of gender and agency is a topic taken up by many education, gender, and development scholars interested in investigating the ways a significant socio-cultural construction, gender, influences the agency youth are able to express and enact. Bajaj and Pathmarajah's (2011) work on gender in educational settings in India and Zambia found agency "as differentially experienced, influenced, and acted upon by boys and girls" in relation to their educational access and opportunities based on gender (p. 63). Conceptually situated in Deutsch's (2007) framing of "undoing gender," Bajaj and Pathmarajah's "differentiated agency" speaks to the ways that girls and boys were able to "act upon new understandings of gender and gender relations" (p. 50). However, the question of whether, and how, girls and boys "differentiated agency" challenged, shifted or changed the traditional gender norms to alter those relations remains less explored.

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Gender plays a role in how a young person's agency is enacted vis-à-vis the relationships s/he has with family, peers, and their community. Investigating the "microtransformations" within gender relations, Arnot, Jeffery, Casely-Hayford, and Noronha (2012) identify the transitions in youth's lives where their knowledge and understanding of gender relations and agency shifts (p. 184). These shifts serve as critical junctures in order to understand how youth's gender identities "shape the possibilities of agency" and the ways they react and enact their agency as young women and men relative to the gender norms of their community (Husso & Hirvoenen, 2012, p. 41). Arnot et al. term this a "normative biography" that each young person brings in their role and relation to local gender norms that includes a story of acceptance, challenge, or shift to how they seek to engage with the norms around them.

The intent of this chapter is to examine the ways in which young women and young men from two peri-urban communities outside Tegulcigalpa employed their agency to "resist" (push back), "transgress" (push past), and undo (*desalambrar*) traditional gender norms to make change for themselves and others (Deutsch, 2007; Montoya, Frazier, & Hurtig, 2002; Stromquist & Fischman, 2009). To start, a discussion of themes pertaining to gender relations and youth challenges in Honduras is presented. The theoretical framing of agency as it relates to gender follows. From there, a brief overview of the qualitative methodology employed to conduct the study is explained. Vignettes from my fieldwork explored through the words and experiences of the youth illustrate the ways youth's agency impacted local gender norms and relations in home (private) and community (public) spaces. Lastly, a short discussion on the ways changes to gender norms take hold and the role that community groups play in those alterations closes the chapter.

Resisting and Transgressing Gender Norms Through Gender Relations

Research on gender relations has evolved over the past 25 years from a sole focus on overarching social structures, such as laws and policies framing women's rights, to addressing themes of power and privilege with and through relationships that speak to gender equality (Francis, 2006; Holter & Borchgrevink, 1995; Molyneux, 2001; Stromquist, 1992). Early scholarship on gender relations focused on power and structural dimensions of the relationship between men and women, including "interpersonal power" and how that played out in a larger societal context (Molyneux, 2001). The often binary focus on "male dominance" and "female subordination" in gender relations (McNay, 2000, p. 11) has given way to an examination of how unequal gender relations and the continuation of conventional gender constructs, which I refer to in this chapter as "gender norms," privileges one gender's contribution over another; such as men's work being more valuable or women's participation in community governance less necessary (Deutsch, 2007). Moving beyond this binary, the scholarship shifted to how we "do gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987),

and also "undo gender" (Deutsch, 2007), bringing attention to the interactional and relational aspects between women and men. Porter (2012) writes, "Institutionalizing new ideas of gender relations is a slow process, which needs to be addressed at multiple levels, including the rules and assumptions of behavior at the micro-level of people's lives and work" (pp. 301–302). Porter's thoughts also resonate with Butler (2004) when she frames relationships between men and women as "situated within the context of lives as they are lived" (p. 8). These scholars call attention to the need to examine how gender norms are lived on a quotidian basis, and therefore, how they can also be resisted and transgressed in specific relationships at specific times.

Murphy-Graham's (2009, 2012) study serves as an example of fostering positive gender relations between women and men through education within a local community context, specifically within Garifuna communities of northern Honduras. Murphy-Graham (2009, 2012) found that the mainstreaming of gender equality content in a curriculum for an alternative education program, *Sistema de Aprendizaje* (SAT), raised awareness of gender-based inequalities faced by women in their communities. She asserts, "Education can promote more equitable gender relations; it can mine gems of inestimable value inherent in both males and females" (2012, p. 149). An increase in awareness and consciousness of gender equality can, according to Murphy-Graham (2009), be fostered through the exploration of gender relations in everyday life. Her work prompts and further explores the question of how education fosters agency through awareness and alters the gender norms that affect young women and men's daily lives.

Agency Vis-à-vis Acts of Resistance, Transgression, and Undoing of Gender Norms

Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) theorization of habitus and field offer ways to understand agency in our daily practices. Bourdieu states that we carry out our daily practices within different fields in our society. For the young people who took part in this study, the fields they traversed regularly included their schools, jobs, home life, and community spaces such as churches and soccer fields. Within these fields, how we act and what we do is negotiated by what Bourdieu terms the habitus. Habitus is the practices we think and act on which are influenced by both social structures and cultural practices. The field serves as the site of negotiation and practice of habitus, which in turn impacts our own perceptions and attitudes of our lived realities (Swartz, 1997). In Swartz's writing on Bourdieu, he explains:

> Bourdieu's idea that action is generated by the *interaction* of the opportunities and constraints of situations with actor dispositions – the repository of past experiences, tradition, and habit – seems to constitute a considerable advance over these alternative views.
>
> While habitus calls attention to the dynamics of self-selection in competitive social processes, the internationalization of objective chances into expectations and the adaptation of aspiration to actual opportunities are often more complex and contradictory processes than the concept suggests. (p. 291)

The interaction between habitus and field in the ways that they are both constrictive and permeable raises the question as to the role that agency plays. Agency can alter and be altered by habitus depending on the field and social structures that are known from "past experiences and traditions" (Swartz, 1997, p. 291). So within the field, what are the ways that agency is enacted that alters habitus? And in what ways is one's agency differentiated in that negotiation?

Stromquist and Fischman (2009) attend to these questions in their introduction to a special issue of the *International Review of Education* that calls for a greater investigation of gender in educational practices and programs. Their article serves as a call to understand gender in education in new ways that (1) address the intersectionality of gender and other socio-cultural factors, (2) takes into account not only the ways that gender is expressed through the binary of masculinity and femininity, but also through how gender is "produced and reproduced;" (3) seek to understand the role agency has in making change through "resistance (refusing to act in conventional ways) and for transgression (acting in new ways and toward new realities)" (p. 468), and (4) investigates how Deutsch's (2007) work on "undoing gender" speaks to the "oppressive structures" that maintain gender gaps and inequalities in education (p. 471). The latter two points made by Stromquist and Fischman (2009) on agency as acts of resistance, transgression, and the undoing of gender roles serves as a framework of analysis in this chapter. Resistance and transgression to traditional gender norms speaks to the plurality of agency as looking to moments of both action and inaction in making change. It is not only about what individuals are doing, but also what they are choosing not to do that is significant.

As a way to better situate these ideas in the context of Latin America, I sought to combine Stromquist and Fischman's (2009) use of "undoing gender" (Deutsch, 2007) with the notion of "*desalambrar*" [to undo fences] used by feminist anthropologists Montoya et al. (2002). Montoya et al. (2002) re-envisioned the concept *desalambrar* from the land-rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Latin America that speaks to the untethering of gender roles and norms in contemporary Latin America. The term gained popularity during the liberation theology movement when Uruguayan singer Daniel Viglietti wrote it as an anthem for landowners to *desalambrar* [tear down the fences] that shut out local communities to spaces owned by foreigners and the elite of the country. In Montoya, Frazier, and Hurtig's use of *desalambrar*, the concept "allows us to see the emancipator potential of ordinary people's gendered practices" but also remain "keenly aware of the hegemonic force of gender ideologies in legitimizing and naturalizing structures of power" (p. 4). Within this concept is a sentiment of people working together to make change. This mirrors Stromquist and Fischman's (2009) emphasis on working together against gender injustice and towards "purposeful change" (2009, p. 469). The use of *desalambrar* in this chapter speaks to the call to "undo gender" (Deutsch, 2007) with and through acts of resistance or transgression. In the Honduran context where this study was carried out, *desalambrar* means to undo those barriers that divide girls from boys, young women from young men, and to challenge and change the gendering of community spaces within which young women and young men interact and inhabit. It is about challenging the perceived roles of both genders, and shifting gender norms in ways that advocate for gender equality.

Gender Norms and Relations Confronting Honduran Youth

Youth living in urban areas of Honduras occupy a vulnerable space where youth recruitment into gangs and gang violence (El Heraldo, 2015; Programa Nacional de Prevención, Rehabilitación, y Exclusión Social, 2010; Wolseth & Babb, 2008), the highest homicide rate per capita in the world with 90.4 murders per 100,000 habitants (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013), the highest adolescent birth rate in Central America (Guttmacher Institute, 2006), and the sixth highest rate of gender-based violence in the world are all part of their daily lives (University of California-Hastings, 2011). While there is considerable vulnerability for young people, there is also a narrative of empowerment in national policies and discourse. *La juventud* [youth], defined by the Law for the Integral Development of Youth in Honduras (Republic of Honduras, 2006), are individuals between the ages of 12 and 30. This law is an acknowledgement by the Honduran government of the pivotal role that youth play in the development of the country.

Following the implementation of the law, the *Instituto Nacional de La Juventud* [National Youth Institute] put a 15 year plan in place that seeks to increase youth citizenship, lessen legal and socio-cultural discrimination that prevents youth from exercising their rights, create a democracy inclusive of youth voices, and lessen social inequities for women, indigenous groups and those of African descent (e.g., Garifuna communities) (Instituto Nacional de La Juventud, 2007). The *Instituto Nacional de La Juventud's* attention to issues addressing specific social inequalities for women raises the question of how and where gender inequalities exist in the Honduran context. Educational attainment is often a site to examine gender inequalities; however, the educational data shows attendance rates that are equal for primary education, and in favor of young women at the secondary level (World Bank, 2012). If not in educational access, what is fueling continued gender inequalities in Honduras?

Gender-based violence for young women and the effects of gang involvement for young men are two structural concerns that continue to fuel gender inequities at a broader social level in Honduras. Domestic violence remains one of the worst threats to young women's well-being. The *Centro de Derechos de Mujeres* [The Center for Women's Rights] reports that within the first 6 month, January through June, of 2015 there were 438 assaults against women in Honduras. Out of the 438 assaults, 189 resulted in the homicide of the victims (Centro de Derechos de Mujeres, 2015). Honduras has passed two laws, the *Ley de Igualdad de Oportunidades para la Mujer* [2000 Law of Equal Opportunity for Women] and the *Ley Contra la Violencia Domestica* [1997 Law Against Domestic Violence], seeking to offer protections to women (Republic of Honduras, 1997, 2000). Yet finding ways to alter the cultural view of gender-based violence, and the view of women from within the "gender regime" (Connell, 2002), not only takes enforcing existing legislation and new judicial practices in response to the violence but a deeper understanding of the gender relations within families and peer groups.

The "aggressive or machismo masculinity" (Preito-Carrón, Thomson, & Macdonald, 2007) discussed by researchers as a threat to women is also a threat to young men as they negotiate their own identity and respond to the pressures they

feel to behave and act in certain ways (see Barker, 2006; Gutmann, 1996; Wolseth, 2008a). Within the Honduran context, gang affiliation is leading to an infiltration of violence into young men's lives. Pine (2008) identifies neoliberal economic policies in Honduras, the lack of employment opportunities, and ongoing issues of structural violence as contributing factors to the rise in young men's involvement in gangs. Estimating gang membership in Honduras is problematic but of those involved with gangs it is estimated that 80 % are young men (Programa Nacional de Prevención, Rehabilitación y Reinserción Social de Honduras, 2010), and 35 % of gangs members in the country are thought to be younger than 18 years of age (El Heraldo, 2015). While young men are not often portrayed as victims within a cultural tradition where men hold more social power and privilege, there is a vulnerability for young men who choose not to be involved with, or want to opt out of, gang life and select what young people identify as "the good path" (McCleary, 2013; Wolseth, 2008a). Peer pressure within the larger cities such as San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa make avoiding gang affiliation problematic, and leaving a gang for a reason other than finding religion is unlikely for most young men as it could mean death (Pine, 2008; Wolseth, 2008b). The norm around gang participation in urban areas, in addition to the protector/breadwinner role that many young men esteem to, makes any alteration to gender relations complicated (Steans, 2006). The ways in which young women and young men in this study sought to alter these roles and relationships through their agency is explored in the *Findings* section.

Methodology

In what ways are constructions and enactments of agency different or similar between young women and young men? That is one of the original questions that I posed going into the study, and the starting point for examining the ways agency was resisted, transgressed, and undone, or *desalambrado*, by the young women and men who were involved in the study. The findings documented in this chapter are from a 6-month qualitative case study I conducted in cooperation with the Honduran CARE Education Unit in the El Valle and El Pino communities (pseudonyms are used to protect anonymity) outside of Tegucigalpa, Honduras[1]. The research study allowed me to carry out two semi-formal interviews with each of the young women

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[1] The study was conducted in collaboration with the former Education Unit of CARE Honduras and CARE USA. From 2008–2010 I served as a graduate student researcher with the Minnesota International Development Education Consortium (MIDEC) on the Patsy Collins Trust Fund Initiative project. Dr. Joan DeJaeghere (PI) and Dr. Chris Johnstone (co-PI) led the project, and Nancy Pellowski Wiger, fellow contributor to this manuscript, was a close collaborator on the MIDEC work in Honduras. Having worked remotely with the Education Unit from 2008–2010, I partnered with them on this research and served as a fellow in their office from February until August 2010. The Education Unit had a large portfolio of projects across the country. The four-person Education Unit staff provided an impressive amount of support, training, and program development and implementation across the many communities with which they collaborated (see Moll & Renault (2014) for additional information on the project).

and men, to spend approximately 360 hours within the communities and conducting participant observations, and to spend 42 hours in the CARE Honduras office, the NGO implementing the youth non-formal education program, working with participants (CARE, Republic of Honduras, n.d., 2008 and 2010). In addition to this 6-month period, I returned to Honduras in March of 2011 for 1 week to meet with participants and conduct a participant member check (Johnson & Christensen, 2010) and I remain in touch with many of my participants and the former employees of the CARE Honduras Education Unit.

The findings in this chapter chronicle the experiences of a small subset of the 19 focal participants from my original study. The experiences of and interviews from my time with Arianna and Juan, both from the El Pino community, and Milton, David, Jordi, Jessica, Lisa, and other members of the CARE Youth Program, in the El Valle community, were selected to provide a depth of understanding as to the acts of gendered agency in how youth resisted, transgressed, and undid conventional gender norms held for them. Details on the lives of these key informants are woven into the "Findings" section as their life details inform the interplay between their agency and gender.

As I focus on a subset of participants, it is important to note that the larger population of youth I worked with included five young women and four young men from the El Valle community, and five young women and five young men from the El Pino community. This group of 19 participated in at least two semi-structured interviews, and I spent time conducting participant observations in the different venues (e.g., church, schools, soccer games, youth groups) in which they were active. Purposeful sampling was used in the recruitment of participants (Cresswell, 2007). The focal participants in El Valle were selected first and foremost based on their participation in the CARE Youth Group. After that, the participants were selected based on their (1) willingness to participate and be interviewed, (2) their friend/family affiliation in order to have a range of thoughts and opinions from within the group, and (3) their age. The El Pino youth were selected based on their involvement in at least one non-formal education program within their community, and their interest in improving their communities. For the purposes of this chapter and analysis, vignettes from only a few participants were selected to provide a depth of understanding as to the acts of gendered agency in how the youth resisted, transgressed, and undid conventional gender norms held for them.

Ethical considerations and my own positionality in this research as a White, United States woman in my thirties, working in an area identified by CARE Honduras as marginalized, were informed by a feminist epistemological approach. Olesen (2005) reminds us of a few central questions when undertaking research in contexts where power differences exist. Oleson advocates asking: "Whose knowledge? Where and how obtained, and by whom; from whom and for what purposes?" (2005, p. 238). The questions were beacons in the ways I conducted my work and interactions with the youth. In addition, Watts (2006) notion of reciprocity was also central to how I sought to engage with these young people.

Another consideration was the translation of my work from English into Spanish, and Spanish into English. Having studied the Spanish language for 10 years and having lived for 2 years in Spanish speaking countries, I was self-reliant in writing

the interview questions and protocols. However, I used "decentering," a translation technique that allows for "an ongoing process of revisions in both languages as often as needed until a similar but culturally relevant instrument is validated" (Sperber, Devellis, & Boehlecke, 1994, p. 502), in the editing of my work. This included meeting with the CARE Education Unit personnel to ensure shared understanding of the questions I posed, and that the consent forms used with the youth and families would be understood within the local communities. Upon initial analysis in the fall of 2010, I returned to Honduras in March of 2011 to meet with the participants and the CARE Education Unit to further ensure clarity of ideas, and that my interpretation of findings held resonance with the group and within the Honduran context. I translated the quotes throughout this text, and they were reviewed by a Spanish-speaking colleague. For purposes of space in this chapter, I include only the English translations from the interviews with the youth.

Findings

The analysis focuses on three vignettes from the study that feature youth's acts of resistance, transgression, and *desalambrando* [undoing fences]. Each section introduces a pivotal conversation or event that demonstrates the gendering of youth's agency as they resisted, transgressed, and "undid" the conventional gender norms that bound them. The ethnographically informed nature of my research relies on a narrative story that tells how Arianna, Milton, and the Sport and Culture Committee of the CARE Youth Program demonstrated their agency in addressing conventional gender norms that constricted the ways they themselves, or members of their community, could act and engage within their homes and community spaces. A discussion of the vignettes, and implications for community organizations, will follow the sharing of these key findings.

Resistance

I met Arianna through her brother Juan, a university student studying Sociology at the time, who had helped with the demographic mapping of youth in El Pino in 2009. He was one of the first young men from El Pino who agreed to talk with me for this study. Arianna, who was 2 years younger than her brother, and 19 at the time when we met, was also enrolled in university as a Journalism and Communications major. Both Arianna and Juan were thoughtful and articulate young people who had a pulse on the contemporary challenges they and their generation faced; they also had strong opinions about Honduran politics and the reasons their country was struggling. In trying to set up a time to talk, Arianna had been challenging to meet. During my time in Honduras, she visited an aunt who lived outside of the Tegucigalpa region perdiodically. Arianna and Juan's mother, an education consultant, typically

left Arianna to care for the house and her two younger siblings. However, due to Arianna's visits to her aunt, Juan had taken on the household responsibilities when she was away. The tension around household responsibilities had not been outwardly present in my talks with Arianna and Juan individually, but when I met with them together, the resentment and *choque* [clash] over their roles and responsibilities within their household became evident. Arianna was clearly resisting gender norms held within her home space by choosing to spend time at her aunt's home rather than remain as the caretaker.

As we talked, I posed a question I had asked others in my study: "Are there different spaces for men and women inside of your community?" While all 19 young women and men had agreed that there were different spaces for them in the two communities, the male-female sibling relationship between Juan and Arianna elicited a response in which they challenged each other. Arianna immediately responded that there were more spaces for men. She shared that a woman is almost always at home while men hang out with friends or play soccer or basketball. Juan quickly jumped in and said, "Sure, but there is the exception to the rule. For example, sometimes there are girls, daughters even, that travel and that are lost for months." Juan laughed as he said this, looking at his sister for a response as she had just spent the last month visiting her aunt. Arianna had left her home for an extended stay and household chores had been re-appropriated to Juan. Juan shared that he thought everything in the house was going to fall apart when she first left because she had always been in charge of everything. Now, he explained, he had given his other two siblings chores at home so everyone did their part.

"But why was she in charge of the household and not you?" I posed to Juan. His reply was that she knew how to cook and organize everything in the house; Arianna added she knew how to clean the house too. "But why?" I queried. Arianna replied that when she was asked to do things by her Mother she did them nicely; whereas some "other people," referring to her brother, would complain about doing them. I pushed further. "But your mom, who did she teach to do things in the home?" "Me," replied Arianna. "Well yeah, her," said Juan. "But why only her?" Arianna and Juan's thoughtfulness, intelligence, and disagreement over the responsibilities within the home space spurred me to pursue this and the following conversation unfolded.

Juan: Ah, because this is the mentality people have - the women in the home.
Arianna: It's machismo.
Juan: No, because it's also feminism – because everything should be equal, yes or no?
Kate: Explain this to me. Explain how this is feminism to me.
Juan: If she [Mom] had taught me to cook from when I was very young I would do it, but …
Arianna: [she cut Juan off] No, but it's never too late to learn something. Every day we learn new things.
Juan: And what happened when you left? I learned to do all of it.
Kate: And now do you still do it [housework]?
Ariana: No, no he doesn't
Juan: Of course not.

Arianna: Right there, see?
Kate: If you are talking about equality shouldn't you both help at home?
Juan: No … Well yes of course. But right now everyone in the house is doing their own
            thing. For example, in the house right now, everyone makes their own food, every-
            one does what needs done ….
Arianna: I am in charge of the food, sweeping the house, caring for my younger brother and
            sister, to make sure everything is good at home, and once in a while helping out my
            Mom as well (Arianna and Juan, personal communication, 2010).

There are multiple layers to what Arianna and Juan shared in their dispute over women's (and men's, or the absence of their) roles within the home. Juan, the burgeoning sociologist and eldest son/brother within the household, misappropriated feminism to explain why women were culturally assigned housework within the Honduran context. Juan conceded that in order to have equality within the home, the woman should not be the only one responsible for household chores. His disclaimer to this issue was that he distributed the chores evenly among the siblings, which did not leave the burden to any one individual. But Arianna contended that in returning home, she had reassumed that sole responsibility. It remained a contested issue for her and her role as the eldest daughter and sister within the family. Arianna was quick to identify women's work within the family space as "machismo," an explanation that the majority of other focal participants offered when discussing women's work within the home.

Arianna's resistance to this gendered role was a source of stress. During a meeting in April, 3 months prior to a conversation with Juan, Arianna mentioned the stress that caring for her siblings and the household caused her, and the loss of educational opportunities that helping out at home caused other young women in her community. Her self-described daily schedule involved a long commute to and from the university where she studied, preparing a midday meal for herself and her siblings, an afternoon language class, and then an evening of cooking and cleaning up at home. "It's a lot of stress," is how she characterized her daily routine. While Juan sought ways to delegate chores to his younger siblings in her absence, Arianna felt the weight of those responsibilities when she returned home.

Her frustration with her brother and her household responsibilities extended to how she viewed the situations of other *muchachas* [young women] in her community. Arianna said, "Girls almost always are in the kitchen. Moms put them to work" (Arianna, personal communication, 2010). Her solution to this, and something she sought to teach Juan, was that girls and boys should not have "egoísmo" [egoism] in helping each other. She stated that young women and young men alike need to take responsibility and compromise in what they are doing at home and in their community (Arianna, personal communication, 2010). Arianna's resistance to the gender norms assigned to her by others was to retreat to her aunt's home to avoid it, and was demonstrative of how agency was deployed in a subtle way through acts of resistance. Other youth participants involved in this project sought to not only resist

(push back), but transgress (push past) the gender binaries within their communities. Milton is one of those individuals who transgressed gender roles held for young men in his community.

Transgression

Milton was 20 at the time of our conversations together. Married to Ines, who gave birth to a healthy baby boy in May 2010, Milton was working with his father, not his biological father but the man who raised him and who he called "Papa," at an automotive store during the 2 years that we were in ongoing communication. He was lauded by CARE staff, his parents, his brother, and his wife as *un buen hombre* [a good man/a good guy]. Growing up the eldest of three boys, Milton's mother, a seamstress, called on him to help around the home and care for his brothers when she was out or with clients. "My Mom taught me to do everything in the house because I was the oldest and I had to take care of the two younger ones (brothers). I also did housework" (Milton, Personal Communication, 2010). Milton went on to say, "My mom said to me, 'Always walk helping and when you can, you should.' Because I know that someone will help me when I need it." (Milton, personal communication, 2010). The strong family relationship within Milton's childhood home, and perhaps the absence of sisters in the household, shaped the responsibilities he was both assigned by his mother and that he took on.

The close-knit relationship that Milton had with his Mom, who was a single parent for part of Milton's childhood as his biological father left when his middle brother Tomas was born, spurred him to care for his Mom, siblings, and family home in a way that fell outside the scope of traditional gender roles in Honduras. Milton shared how he wanted to lighten his Mom's workload; he explained, "I had friends that saw me washing dishes in my house [and] sweeping, and they said to me, 'Hey stop that. That's women's work. [And I would reply] So? I have to do it. There isn't a woman here" (Milton, personal communication, 2010). Milton was agentic in the way he stood up to and confronted the taunts of his peers as he conducted what they identified as "women's work." He transgressed the passive role of men within home spaces and supported his mother in the care for their home and his siblings.

His role as a caretaker extended beyond his parents' home to the family he started with his wife Ines. Milton explained,

> Women come over to the house to visit my wife and they say to me, 'How good that you help. Oh, how I wish my husband would help me.' And it is true, it's not every man that helps at home. So I hear this a lot that they [the women's husbands] only go home to bed or watch television. (Milton, personal communication, 2010)

Ines, who was present for one of our discussions, confirmed that Milton's involvement at home surpassed that of other young men in her community. She was

quick to add that while he helped at home, he still spent some free time on the soccer field. She shared how meaningful it was to have a husband who cared for and was there for his family beyond the traditional role as breadwinner and protector.

In addition to his Mother, Milton shared that others, including the staff of the CARE Education Unit's youth program and Milton's Papa, validated his actions as a caring and engaged young man in ways that encouraged his behaviors (Milton, personal communication, 2010). In many ways, he and his family promoted what Gutmann (1996) terms "contradictory consciousness." "Contradictory consciousness" is the way that men, and women, may not adhere to the "monochromatic image' of the gender stereotypes held within their society. Contradictory consciousness pushes people past "dominant understandings, identities, and practices in relation to" how gender is negotiated and acted on (Gutmann, 1996, p. 14). The ways in which Milton used his agency to transgress the traditional role that many in his community had for him as a young man was fostered by adults who supported him constructing another narrative of what it means to be a Honduran young man. Milton said that the staff of the CARE Education Unit helped all the youth see themselves in different ways as to what they could do and what they could bring to their work with the community (Milton, personal communication, 2010).

Desalambrar *[To undo fences]*

This final section explores the notion of *desalambrar* [to undo fences] (Montoya et al., 2002) in relation to ways the Sport and Culture Committee of the CARE Youth Group used their collective agency to create access for girls and young women to participate in a soccer match in the El Valle community. Public fieldnotes and personal reflections from meetings of the CARE Youth Group leading up to and the day of the community soccer tournament held on May 8, 2010 were used in documenting the ways there was an undoing of the barriers that girls confronted in playing soccer in El Valle.

In mid-March of 2010, the Sport and Culture Committee shared with the CARE Education Unit (CEU) that they wanted to sponsor a soccer tournament in El Valle. While the group originally wanted to invite boys from community churches and schools to participate, Doña Pilar, the head of the CARE Education Unit, shared with the committee that if they wanted to host the soccer tournament with CARE's support the event had to be inclusive of young men and young women players. On April 22, 2010, Javier, a staff member with the CEU, and I met with Jordi and David, two focal participants, and Daniel, a member of the youth group, who were all part of the Sport and Culture Committee of the CARE Youth Group to plan the tournament. Javier helped them with writing invitations to the school principals and ministers of the churches, putting together an agenda, and to-do list; while I helped them make flyers and talked to them about why they initially did not want to invite girls.

The young men did not think that girls had any real interest in soccer. David explained that for boys soccer is really important, but for girls they do not really care. At the time, David did not see any connection between girls not being permitted to play soccer, and having *access* to a soccer field, and their perceived interest in the game. David's perception did not also hold true to what he knew of the girls' interests. A few of the young women from the CARE Youth Group were avid soccer players. Lisa and Jessica both played in an all girls/women's league in Tegucigalpa. During an interview with Lisa and Jessica on June 14, 2010, Lisa explained that the soccer field in El Valle was for *los chavos* [the guys]. She shared, "It's not everyone who likes *the idea* of girls playing soccer, and for this reason there are more community spaces for guys to be out in than girls" (Lisa, personal communication, 2010). Over the course of planning the tournament; and in conversations with Doña Pilar, Javier, their peers in the Youth Group and myself; the young men's changed perspectives of who *should* be on the soccer field and who *wanted* to be on the soccer field started the undoing of the traditional gender trope within the community that soccer was for boys.

Getting others in El Valle to endorse girls' involvement in the tournament was the next "fence" that the youth and CEU staff confronted. Below is a section from my Public Fieldnotes that provides insight into the response the youth got from the school principals:

> About a week prior to the event David called me to tell me that the school principals in two El Valle schools were not going to send teams of girls. The one school director told David that they did not have a soccer team for girls, girls do not know how to play, and she did not know how parents would respond. The other director told David that there was no girls' team and she wasn't going to organize one. The reaction of the school directors was not surprising to David. He said he had tried to explain to me that girls do not play here like boys do. He asked if we should cancel the event. I said no and told him we could talk to Javier to see what could be done about the situation.
>
> Javier spoke to the school principals. The one principal told him that she wants girls to participate; she just didn't know how to get them organized in such a short amount of time. It was determined that the Parent Association (P.A.) could help get the group organized, and the vice president of the P.A. decided to help organize a group of girls. (Public Fieldnotes, May 8, 2010)

The Sport and Education Committee reached out to other members of the Youth Group to help promote having girls participate in the soccer tournament. Mariela, Angela, and their friends were encouraged to talk with the minister at one of the largest evangelical churches in the community. Laura, Hilda and Janet were asked to talk with the school director near their homes northeast of the El Valle community. In the end, with outreach from the Youth Program, the CARE staff, and the one Parent Association, the schools and churches sent equal teams of girls and boys to participate in the soccer tournament. The Youth Group, with the help of adult advocates, was agentic in beginning to undo both the physical and mental fences to having girls play in a community tournament. All the girls who participated that day shared that it was the first time they had been permitted to play on the field, which was privately owned but used weekly by teams of boys and men (Public Fieldnotes, May 8, 2010). While teams of girls played in the tournament, other occurrences

throughout the day indicated that there was more work to do in continuing to dismantle the barriers to girls' access and participation. The lack of parental support for the girls in relation to the boys at the event, access to soccer uniforms, and places to practice between community events were all things that had to be continuously worked on. But the symbolism in having two trophies, one for the girls team and one for the boys team, set a strong precedent that day as to the needed inclusion of girls and young women in future soccer events.

Discussion

Arianna, Milton, and the Youth Group's enactments of agency by resisting, transgressing and undoing conventional gender norms within their Honduran communities altered gender relations in everyday practices. These examples illustrate two points that need to be problematized in how the youth's agency towards challenging and shifting gender norms was perceived and received. First, the response of family, friends, and the broader community to a young man's attempt to alter gender norms was more positively received than when a young woman advocated for changing the same gender norms. Other scholars, such as Bajaj and Pathmarajah (2011), noted this finding in their research with youth. They write, "… structural inequalities tend to privilege boys in many countries … and enable them to experience more transformative agency and efficacy when asserting new understandings of gender and gender relations in households, workplaces, and other settings" (p. 50). Milton, in his willingness to take on household responsibilities, and David, Jordi, and Daniel, in their openness to having gender parity in the soccer tournament, were all lauded for the ways they were open to and willing to go against the traditional gender norms. However, Arianna's resistance to her role as caretaker and Lisa and Jessica's interest in playing soccer were perceived negatively by those around them. Juan described Arianna as "deserting her family" (Arianna and Juan, personal communication, 2010), and Jessica's father would not talk to her when she went out to play soccer as he strongly disapproved of her participation (Jessica, personal communication, 2010).

Second, young women's advocacy for more equitable gender relations challenged the locus of power in those relationships. Their stances, which were often taken in private home spaces, need to be recognized and supported. Helping young women link their experiences to broader national efforts and policies (e.g., The Law for Integral Development of Youth or The Law of Equal Opportunity for Women) that promote gender equality can situate their individual efforts within a larger, national calling. Future research on how organizations and community groups in Honduras find ways to validate the stand young women take in confronting gender norms that subordinate them in private and public spaces is needed. A key barrier to this call is the invisibility of young women within their home space as there is more visibility to public acts than private ones.

Another point of note is that the Youth Group would not have been able to mobilize the El Valle community to host a soccer tournament inclusive of girls and boys teams on its own. While the young people were agentic in advocating for the event, their age influenced how community leaders perceived and responded to them. The CARE Education Unit played an instrumental role in promoting changes in gender relations in El Valle and the other communities in which they worked. The role they played as a local non-governmental organization (NGO) implementing an international gender program positioned them to take "… local discourses to make claims for justice" that elevated the issue of gender equality in new and culturally relevant ways (DeJaeghere & Pellowski Wiger, 2013, p. 557). For example, the CARE Education Team employed children's rights and human rights dialog to elevate issues and concerns pertaining to girls and young women in the community (Public Fieldnotes, March 2, 2010). Asking a question such as: "Don't you want your sons and daughters to be successful?" attracted community participants to engage in discussions that in the end focused more on girls' and young women's educational and community experiences. Lastly, the CARE Education Unit's and Youth Group's broad-based efforts in addressing traditional gender norms in El Valle is an example of how acting agentically as a group through collective action can promote a change in attitudes towards gender relations (Monkman, Miles, & Easton, 2008).

Conclusion

This chapter explores the ways that acts of resistance, transgression, and *desalambrar* [the undoing of fences] demonstrate how agency is being used to challenge and shift gender norms and the gender relations within families, friends, and communities. It is not a question of whether gender norms can be changed, but how they are changing, and how to raise the consciousness of change agents to see, support, and advocate for ongoing change. Young women and young men's ability and willingness to address gender norms that were restrictive to themselves or peers is influential in recognizing how gender relations are negotiated within the home and community spaces of El Valle and El Pino, Honduras. The narratives from within home and community spaces, or as Butler states, the "context of lives as they are lived" (2004, p. 8), draws attention to the "micro-transformations" (Arnot et al., 2012) that occurred as young women and men employed their agency for change. The experiences of Arianna, Milton, and the Sport and Culture Committee of the Youth Group do not represent large shifts in social structures, but they do represent a shift. Many of the issues around gender and agency in Honduras need to be addressed at multiple levels. Young women and young men benefit from having adults and community change agents mentor them and draw attention to the gendered social inequalities that exist within their homes and communities. The CARE Education Unit's work with the Sport and Culture Committee on understanding why girls should be included in a community-wide soccer tournament is a tangible example of how they enacted a shift in traditional gender norms. The receptivity of

the young people in El Valle and El Pino to take in another point of view speaks to the fluidity of their life stage. Partnering with these young people in challenging and shifting traditional gender norms and practices that subordinated one gender to another was, and is, an opportunity for broad base change in gender relations.

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