

CONSTRUCTING A NEW VISION: UNDOING GENDER THROUGH SECONDARY EDUCATION IN HONDURAS

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Abstract – This article presents results from a qualitative study on how the Honduran secondary education programme, *Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial* (SAT), attempts to “undo gender” (Deutsch 2007: 122) by encouraging students to rethink gender relations in their everyday lives in a way that reflects their increased consciousness of gender equality. My findings suggest that SAT increased women’s gender consciousness and this heightened their desire for change in the domestic sphere. In some instances, women were able to negotiate a new sharing of responsibilities with their spouses. There are several features of SAT that make it a transformative innovation in education: (1) gender is mainstreamed into the curriculum; (2) gender is linked with the larger concept of justice; (3) students engage in reflection, dialogue and debate; (4) teachers are given the opportunity to reflect critically on their understanding of gender in professional development sessions; and (5) it emphasises that undoing gender requires change among individuals and in social structures such as the family.

Résumé – ÉLABORER UNE NOUVELLE VISION : DÉFAIRE LE GENRE À TRAVERS L’ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE AU HONDURAS – Cet article présente les résultats d’une étude qualitative sur l’effort du programme d’enseignement secondaire hondurien, *Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial* (SAT), de « défaire le genre » (Deutsch 2007: 122), en encourageant les élèves à repenser les relations entre les sexes dans leur vie quotidienne de manière à refléter leur conscience accrue pour l’égalité des sexes. Mes conclusions suggèrent que le SAT a renforcé la prise de conscience des femmes pour les questions de genre, ce qui a intensifié leur souhait de changement dans le milieu familial. Dans certains cas, les femmes ont été en mesure de négocier un nouveau partage des responsabilités avec leurs conjoints. Plusieurs caractéristiques du SAT en font une innovation transformatrice de l’éducation: (1) L’égalité des sexes est intégrée dans le programme. (2) L’égalité des sexes est reliée à la notion plus vaste de justice. (3) Les élèves engagent une démarche de réflexion, de dialogue et de débat. (4) Le corps enseignant a l’occasion de réfléchir dans un esprit critique à sa conception du genre lors de sessions de développement professionnel. (5) Enfin, ce programme souligne que la déconstruction du genre exige un changement chez les individus ainsi que dans les structures sociales telles que la famille.

Zusammenfassung – EIN NEUER BLICK: GESCHLECHTER ENTFALTEN DURCH SEKUNDARBILDUNG IN HONDURAS – In diesem Artikel werden Ergebnisse einer qualitativen Untersuchung vorgestellt, die sich mit dem honduranischen Sekundarbildungsprogramm *Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial* (SAT) befasst. Das Programm soll helfen, „Geschlechter abzubauen“ (Deutsch 2007: 122), indem Schülerinnen und Schüler angeregt werden, die Geschlechtsrollenbeziehungen in ihrem Alltag zu überdenken, und zwar so, dass ihre erhöhte Sensibilität für die Gleichberechtigung von Frauen und Männern zum Tragen kommt. Meine Erkenntnisse deuten darauf hin,

dass SAT das Gender-Bewusstsein von Frauen und damit auch ihren Wunsch nach Veränderung im häuslichen Bereich verstärkt. In einigen Fällen konnten Frauen mit ihren Ehepartnern eine neue Aufgabenverteilung aushandeln. Mehrere Besonderheiten machen SAT zu einer Bildungsinnovation, die den Wandel begünstigt: 1. Der Lehrplan wird einem Gender-Mainstreaming unterzogen, 2. Gender wird mit dem umfassenderen Konzept der Gerechtigkeit verknüpft, 3. Schülerinnen und Schüler werden zum Nachdenken, zum Dialog und zur Diskussion angeregt, 4. Lehrkräfte bekommen in beruflichen Fortbildungsveranstaltungen Gelegenheit zur kritischen Reflexion dessen, was sie unter Gender verstehen, und 5. es wird hervorgehoben, dass zur Beseitigung geschlechtsspezifischer Benachteiligungen Veränderungen im zwischenmenschlichen Bereich und in sozialen Strukturen erforderlich sind, beispielsweise in der Familie.

Resumen – CONSTRUYENDO UNA NUEVA VISIÓN: DESHACER EL GÉNERO MEDIANTE LA ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA EN HONDURAS – Con este artículo, la autora presenta los resultados de un estudio cualitativo sobre cómo el programa hondureño de enseñanza secundaria titulado *Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial* (SAT), intenta “deshacer el género” alentando a los estudiantes a reconsiderar las relaciones entre los géneros en sus vidas cotidianas de una manera que refleje su mayor conciencia sobre la igualdad de géneros. Sus comprobaciones sugieren que el programa SAT incrementó la toma de conciencia de género en las mujeres y que esto aumentó su deseo de lograr cambios en el ámbito doméstico. En algunos casos, las mujeres fueron capaces de negociar un nuevo reparto de responsabilidades con sus esposos. Por varias características, SAT es una innovación transformadora en la educación: (1) el tema de género está integrado en el plan de estudios; (2) el género está enlazado con el concepto más amplio de justicia; (3) los estudiantes se comprometen con reflexión, diálogo y debate; (4) los docentes reciben la oportunidad de reflexionar críticamente sobre su concepto de género en sesiones de desarrollo profesional, y (5) enfatiza que deshacer el género exige un cambio en los individuos y en sus estructuras sociales; por ejemplo, en la familia.

Резюме – СОЗДАНИЕ НОВОГО ВИДЕНИЯ: УПРАЗДНЕНИЕ ГЕНДЕРНОГО ВОПРОСА ЧЕРЕЗ СРЕДНЕЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ В ГОНДУРАСЕ – В данной статье представлены результаты качественного исследования о том, каким образом образовательная программа средней школы в Гондурасе (SAT) пытается «упразднить гендерный вопрос» (немецкий 2007:122) и призывает учащихся переосмыслить свои гендерные отношения в повседневной жизни, и тем самым показать их возросшую сознательность относительно гендерного равенства. Полученные данные предполагают, что программа SAT повысила гендерную сознательность женщин, и, соответственно, усилило их желание измениться в домашней среде. В некоторых случаях женщины были готовы обсуждать новый тип разделения обязанностей со своими супругами. Вот несколько характеристик программы SAT, которые делают ее преобразующей инновацией в образовании: 1) гендер включен в основную учебную программу; 2) гендер связан с более широкой концепцией справедливости; 3) учащиеся принимают участие в размышлениях, диалоге и обсуждении; 4) учителя имеют возможность критически выразить свое мнение относительно своего понимания гендера на собраниях по профессиональному развитию; и 5) подчеркивается, что упразднение гендера требует перемен среди индивидов и в социальных структурах, например, в семье.

Oppressive gender norms: A persistent challenge in schools

Recent international development initiatives including Education for All¹ (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals² (MDGs) have encouraged millions of children and young adults to attend primary and secondary school in developing regions, including Latin America. These efforts also aim to ensure that an equal number of boys and girls are enrolled. For example, one of the eight MDGs is to “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015”.

While ensuring equal access to education for all children and adolescents is an important structural change, research on gender and education in industrialised and developing countries suggests that schools are sites of “doing” rather than “undoing” gender (Connell 1989; Thorne 1993; Pascoe 2007; Unterhalter 1999; Renold 2006). A number of empirical studies follow the lead of West and Zimmerman (1987) to argue that schools are sites where teachers, students and textbooks construct meanings of gender that disadvantage women (Harber 1998; Biraimah 1980; Lloyd et al. 2000; UNICEF 2002).

Despite the appeals of feminist scholars, an understanding of how schooling can challenge inequitable social norms and undo oppressive gender relations has advanced slowly. Here I present results from a qualitative study in Honduras on the ways in which the secondary education programme, *Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial* (Tutorial Learning System or SAT), attempts to “undo” gender.

Research context

This article follows the language of Deutsch where “doing gender” refers to social interactions that reproduce gender difference and “undoing gender” refers to social interactions that reduce gender difference (2007: 122). School is one, but not the only, social institution that influences how individuals learn gendered behaviour.³ Previous research on gender and schooling suggests that there are several pathways or authorities that reproduce gender inequality. Gilbert and Gilbert refer to these as the “bricks in the wall of the gendered institution of schooling” (1998: 119). These bricks include the organisational structure and symbolism of schools and the school management practices that constitute it, the formal curriculum (both how knowledge is organised and whether it has explicit gender content), peer group norms, and teachers through their beliefs, expectations and interactions with students. Strategies proposed to undo gender largely focus on teacher training and professional development around gender issues, reorganising and adding explicit gender content to the curriculum, and working with small groups of students to promote open discussion and critical reflection about gender (Gilbert and Gilbert 1998).

If they follow these strategies, schools could be settings for undoing gender. Influential gender theorists identify schools as *strategic* sites of influence because the education system is the place where an open debate about gender relations is most likely to happen (Connell 1989; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 2003). Yet we know little about educational interventions that fulfil this potential role, as previous research and policies have focused on issues of access. While increased enrolment in education represents an important structural change, it does not ensure that everyday interactions will be altered.

The research presented here responds to Deutsch's call to spotlight the social processes that underlie resistance to conventional gender relations and focus on how to change the power dynamics and inequities between men and women (2007: 107). The SAT programme provides an example of how education can be a strategic site of influence in undoing gender by mainstreaming gender into the curriculum, linking gender with the larger concept of justice, engaging students and tutors in critical reflection and dialogue, and emphasising the need for change among both individuals and social structures.

The SAT programme

SAT is a coeducational lower and upper secondary education programme (grades 7–12) that operates in rural and peri-urban areas. The programme's goal is to help students develop capabilities that enable them to take charge of their own intellectual and spiritual growth, and at the same time to contribute to the building of better communities and the transformation of society (FUNDAEC 2007). The SAT programme was designed in the early 1970s by the *Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias* (FUNDAEC), a Colombian non-governmental organisation (NGO). SAT now operates under the auspices of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in several Central American countries, including Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras. The first 2 years of the programme are also offered in some African countries (Kenya, Zambia and Uganda). Colombia has the largest SAT programme (approximately 30,000 current students), and Honduras the second largest (approximately 6,000 current students). In Honduras, the programme is jointly sponsored and funded by a Honduran NGO, *Asociación Bayán*, and the Honduran Ministry of Education (which pays the majority of operating costs).⁴

There are four key components of the SAT programme: textbooks, tutors, the study group, and the community. A brief summary of each is included below (adapted from FUNDAEC 2007).

*The text*⁵

In total, SAT draws upon more than 70 educational texts written by FUNDAEC specifically for use in SAT classrooms. Each of these texts is the fruit

of action-research efforts carried out with rural communities since FUNDAEC launched its initiative back in the 1970s. The texts are written in the form of a conversation with students, inviting questioning and investigation. They integrate theory with practice; contain knowledge from both traditional and modern sources; combine abstract ideas with concrete activities; integrate different disciplines and areas of knowledge; and consider the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of the human being as part of a single whole.

The tutor

The tutor is an educator trained by FUNDAEC and other sponsoring NGOs, ideally guiding a SAT group within his or her own home community or local region. As well as assisting with the formation and consolidation of a group of students, the tutor guides the students in the study of their texts; formulates questions and helps the students to find answers; encourages reflection on experience; connects themes studied to the practical realities of daily life; and supervises experiments and projects of social action. The tutor does not lecture or teach the classes in the traditional sense, but rather guides and facilitates the study, reflection and discussion of the group.

The study group

The study group is usually composed of 15 to 25 adolescents who meet during the week according to a schedule that they have designed together with their tutor, which permits them to complete all of their study requirements while still being able to attend to their family and economic responsibilities. The methodology of the programme encourages students to become the protagonists of their own learning process.

The community

Service to the community is an essential component of the SAT programme, and it motivates students to interact and share what they are learning with their friends, family, neighbours and other residents of the place where students reside. The texts invite reflection on the circumstances of the students' community, and guide them to initiate activities of investigation and service within it. With their tutor, the students participate in a wide variety of educational, productive and organisational activities in their communities. Parents, relatives, friends and other community members lend assistance to the SAT groups by sharing knowledge and facilitating access to learning opportunities. In many cases, community members provide economic support to the groups by subsidising the texts, making venues available for group meetings, helping in the construction of classrooms and providing other assistance as required.

After finishing all of the SAT textbooks and practical activities (after approximately 6 years in Honduras' case), students receive the equivalent of a secondary school diploma.

How does SAT undo gender?

A distinguishing feature of SAT is that the principle of gender equality is mainstreamed into the curriculum, emphasising that such equality requires change at the individual and structural levels. Furthermore, the struggle for gender equality is linked with the broader goal of social justice. This approach is consistent with current research and theory on undoing gender, which highlights the need to analyse the links between social interaction and structural change, and to emphasise justice (Deutsch 2007; Sullivan 2004; Lorber 2000; Connell 1996). The following excerpt from a textbook used to train tutors and programme coordinators provides an insight into FUNDAECs approach:

Many feminist thinkers recognize, for example, that oppression will remain in society even if action is taken against discriminatory practices. They take "feminist praxis," then, beyond questions of law, norms, and regulations for the elimination of discrimination to a profound examination of the fundamental elements of social theory and methodology in the context of the status of women... Some of this discourse clearly indicates that the challenge is not to simply open room for women in the present social order but to create a new one which embodies among other things the equality of women and men... One of the reasons we insist on relating the status of women with the principles of justice is that we are not satisfied to see some women liberated from that form of oppression that is based on sex only to join the institutions of oppression operating in the context of class, race, nationality and political and economic power. The challenge for us is to bring about the kind of change, both in people and in social structures, that turns relationships of domination into relationships of collaboration, cooperation, and reciprocity. We hope that, in the process of achieving the equality of women and men, humanity will be able to eliminate oppression and create a society that embodies the principles of justice (FUNDAEC 2007).

This strategy – to link the equality of men and women with a broader vision of society that is governed by the principle of justice – echoes one of Stromquist's observations. She argues that the task facing feminist educators is to construct a new vision of society, one that requires changes in the processes, structures and content of education (Stromquist 1995: 446–447). FUNDAECs approach to gender recognises the need for such deep and radical changes.

The SAT curriculum does this by encouraging participants to engage in a discourse that emphasises equality. According to two of the programme's developers:

the main instrument of our pedagogy is an ongoing dialogue pursued by the student – with us [staff at FUNDAEC], with the tutor, with other students, and increasingly with the community and the institutions of society... Our textbooks are records of this dialogue (Arbab and Correa 2001: 8).

The explicit gender content thus attempts to promote discussion about gender, while at the same time convey the principle of gender equality. This strategy is consistent with Sullivan's observation that new or altered discourses on gender are an important step towards gender consciousness⁶ (2004: 208, 210).

A lesson on the digestive system illustrates this approach. It asks students to "Think of one of your convictions, for example, your belief in the equality of men and women... Can you describe what you thought and did until it became part of your systems of beliefs?"⁷ Students are expected to respond individually to this prompt (in writing), and then share what they have written with their classmates. This approach opens space for the dialogue about gender that, as many feminist scholars have argued, is most likely to happen in schools (Connell 1989; Stromquist 1995; Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003). Discussing gender allows SAT students to think through their assumptions and recognise instances of inequality in their own lives and communities.

Another feature of SAT that challenges oppressive gender relations is that tutors are given the opportunity (in training sessions) to reflect on their own beliefs and daily interactions, and to analyse social structures that perpetuate inequality. The role of the tutor as a change agent is critical because it facilitates educational reform (Connell 1996). In training sessions, tutors discuss questions that are intended to allow them to identify their assumptions about gender as well as engage a process of critical reflection. Here are some questions that the tutors discuss during training:

We have mentioned that one type of knowledge, mainly, one's understanding of one's own human nature, is of special importance in the struggle against oppression. Consider then the question of human identity in general. In this respect, both men and women are offered entirely false definitions and are bombarded by harmful images of what a human being actually is. How are these false definitions and images propagated? How are they transmitted from generation to generation?

The structure most affected by the relationship between men and women is the family... Discuss in your group the profound changes that the unit of the family as a basic structure of society must undergo in order to reflect the principle of the equality of women and men (FUNDAEC 2007).

Questions such as these are intended to allow tutors to identify and reflect on their assumptions about gender.

Finally, SAT places emphasis on the family as a "basic structure of society," as illustrated in the excerpt from the tutor training materials above. Through narratives in the text that portray family life and pose discussion questions, tutors and students start a process of critical reflection on the domestic division of labour and daily interactive processes in the family. In short, SAT introduces the family as a social structure that requires "profound" transformation in order to reflect gender equality. This emphasis is crucial, particularly in light of overwhelming evidence that gender relations

in the domestic sphere remain unchanged (Sullivan 2004; Benjamin and Sullivan 1999; Hochschild 1989, 1996; Lorber 2000).

These features of the SAT programme make it a transformative innovation in secondary education. The results of my study suggest that SAT increased women's gender consciousness and this heightened their desire for change in the domestic sphere. In some instances, women were able to successfully negotiate a new sharing of responsibilities with their spouses.

Research site and design

SAT was first implemented in Honduras in 1996 in approximately ten villages along the north coast. After an initial trial period, the programme received the full support of the Honduran Ministry of Education.⁸ The communities in which this research was conducted did not have any secondary education programmes on offer prior to the implementation of the SAT programme. When the programme began, it attracted both adults who did not have the opportunity to study beyond the sixth grade and adolescents who had just completed primary school. Youth and adults studied side by side, as participants were eager to have the opportunity to further their education (Murphy-Graham 2005).

Data for this study were gathered between 2003 and 2004 in four geographically remote Garifuna villages on the north coast of Honduras. Three (treatment) villages in which the SAT programme had been running for 5 years or more were selected, along with one comparison village where there had once been a SAT group. One limitation of my study is that I was initially interested in exploring the impact of the programme on women's empowerment, and so my sample includes more females than males.⁹ In the SAT villages, twelve women (ranging in age from 18 to 48) were randomly selected from the original student roster. In the comparison village, the SAT programme had been implemented; however it was discontinued after just 3 months due to the unreliability of the tutor. From this defunct SAT group, six women were randomly selected from an original roster of students. Women chosen from this village served as an appropriate comparison group because they shared similar characteristics with programme participants from the other sites (all had finished primary school but not secondary, lived in poverty and were of the same ethnic group) and they had all elected to participate in the SAT programme, although they were ultimately unable to do so. This feature of my sampling strategy helps address the important issue of selection bias.

I conducted over 120 interviews with this group of women, their relatives, spouses, tutors and programme coordinators. I interviewed students' male partners (where applicable) and several male participants in the programme (including students, tutors and staff). I also interviewed five additional female students as part of a study on gender relations in Garifuna communities that I conducted in 2003. In addition to interviews, I conducted over 200 hours of

observation in participants' homes and communities. I conducted all of the interviews in Spanish.

Data from these interviews and observations were analysed using the qualitative data analysis software programme AtlasTi. To help address issues of interpretive validity and researcher bias, initial findings were discussed with interviewees as well as with other researchers and practitioners familiar with the context. All quotations have been translated from Spanish by the author (see Murphy-Graham 2005 for Spanish original). To protect the identities of participants, pseudonyms are used throughout.

Findings

Below I use data from interviews and observation of SAT students to describe the “processes, negotiations, and struggles that have led to *change*” (Sullivan 2004: 220, my emphasis). My findings do not suggest that all SAT participants experienced change in gender relations, and my intention is not to convey a rather unproblematic set of positive results. My goal here is to respond to Deutsch's plea to “shift our inquiry about ongoing social reactions to focus on change” (2007: 114). I have therefore selected data that illustrates instances of “undoing” gender by increasing gender consciousness and the desire for change in the distribution of domestic duties.

Increased gender consciousness

In the course of my in-depth interviews with women, I asked them a series of ten questions intended to investigate their level of awareness of gender and allow for a direct comparison of women who participated in SAT and the comparison group. The questions were informed by a study that I conducted in 2003 in order to gain a better understanding of the domestic division of labour and gender attitudes in these communities (Murphy-Graham 2003). Participants' descriptions of the gendered division of labour in Garifuna communities were consistent with previous ethnographic studies of the Garifuna in Belize and Honduras (Kerns 1983; Gonzalez 1988; McCauley 1981). Women are the primary caregivers for children, and men earn income for the family.

Based on this research, I asked women to agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. Women can offer children better care than men.
2. Cooking is a woman's job.
3. Men shouldn't cook because it is a woman's job.
4. Men shouldn't clean clothes because it is a woman's job.
5. Men are more intelligent than women.
6. Men are physically stronger than women.
7. Men are spiritually stronger than women.

8. It is okay if men hit women from time to time.
9. Women should be part of the village council and other community activities.
10. Earning money for the family is a man's responsibility, not a woman's.

Women in both groups unanimously agreed that women offer better care for children than men (question 1). They also agreed that women should be part of the village council and participate in other activities (question 9). They all believed that it was not acceptable for men to hit women from time to time. Their answers to questions 2–7 and 10 showed interesting variation and, overall, women in the comparison group tended to have more traditional views about gender roles and capacities. I compiled their answers and calculated the percentage of gender-conscious responses by group. Women in the comparison group scored 38%. Those in the SAT group scored 71%. The raw difference in scores (33%) again suggests that women in the comparison group have more traditional views about the roles and capabilities of men and women.¹⁰

I also investigated women's gender consciousness by asking them if they were familiar with the term *machismo* and, if so, what it meant.¹¹ In contrast with the SAT group, half of the women in the comparison group could not define *machismo*. Definitions¹² included:

SAT students

Juanita: It is when a man doesn't want to do what a woman does; he only wants to tell a woman what to do. For example, if a woman says, "cook me this" then he says, "no, I am not a woman!"

Leticia: To me this means that a man, just because he is a man, can't do chores at home that are women's chores. That is why we use the word *machista*. He thinks that because he is a man he is in charge; that a woman can't give her opinion at home, only the man.

Women in comparison group

Dulcinea: I have heard it before, but it has slipped my mind.

Maria Josefina: No. I don't understand this.

These measures provide a somewhat crude picture of women's level of gender consciousness. Nevertheless, they do permit a direct comparison of those who participated in SAT with a similar group of women who did not. This, combined with women's statements during interviews, strongly suggests that SAT has positively influenced women's gender consciousness.

Women's criticisms of the gender division of labour and hegemonic masculinity¹³ provide a fuller picture of this consciousness. As one SAT student, Juanita, explained:

There are some men who don't help because they are *machistas*, they go up to the hills [to work in the fields], then they get back, lie down in a hammock and wait for the women to prepare their food, and he'll say, 'I want my food and make it fast!' even though she goes up to the fields with him. There are some men that don't help.

Juanita's statement – that men don't help with domestic labour – was echoed by other women in SAT. For example, Alejandra said that men very rarely help women with their work in the fields: "No, men don't help. Most stay here [in the village.] The women go up to the fields but the men stay here."

Students in SAT, including Alejandra, thought that men should relieve some of women's "burden." As she explained "men should help women so that women can rest a little bit". Irina likewise explained that a woman's heavy workload in the home "shouldn't be like this because both men and women should work equally". Sonia made a similar comment: "It shouldn't be like this, work should be shared equally between the two [men and women]. But the problem is that we've become used to this". These remarks illustrate that Sonia is conscious of the fact that gender can be undone and that these roles are not fixed but socially constructed.

One student, Josefina, described how her gender consciousness evolved because of information presented in the SAT textbooks:

Josefina: There is a text that talks about the role of women within the community... it said that the two [men and women] have equal rights. If a woman cooks, he can also cook. In another text is said that there are no differences between men and women, that God created us equal and that the only difference is the sex.

Erin: Before, did you think this?

Josefina: I thought the same as older folks, that washing, taking care of the kids and doing these jobs was only women's work, that men couldn't do this. But now I realise that no, that we should all have the same right. Just like women can work, men can also work.

Josefina conceptualises male involvement in the domestic sphere as a "right" to which men are entitled. This implies a feminist understanding of gender equity that recognises the restrictions that hegemonic masculinity places on men as well as women. In other words, culturally acceptable forms of masculinity, often expressed as *machismo*, limit men from participating in domestic life. In addition to critiquing the traditional gender division of labour in their communities, SAT students critiqued expressions of *machismo*.

As well as referring to men's lack of involvement in the domestic sphere, women described further instances of *machismo*, such as alcohol abuse, men abandoning their partners and children, and men enjoying much more leisure time than women. SAT students identified these issues as serious problems facing the community, whereas women in the comparison group were,

for the most part, unable to identify community problems and did not critique these behaviours (see Murphy-Graham 2005, 2008). I present these findings not to illustrate examples of “doing gender”, but rather to argue that, in this context, women’s critique of hegemonic masculinity was part of their growing gender consciousness. These findings also illustrate how women were able to link several behaviours to social expectations about masculinity.

Teodora, for example, explained that “men shouldn’t act so *macho*. He always wants to be the one in charge! It doesn’t have to be this way”. Part of acting *macho*, according to several students I spoke with, involves the consumption of alcohol. When men are under the influence of alcohol, they are more likely to be aggressive, and verbally or physically abuse their partners. Teodora explained that “when a man has a little money, he looks for booze, and that’s when his bad behaviour starts”. Sonia, referring to her own husband’s behaviour, explained that there were times when her husband was *macho*: “There are times when he is *machista*, when he is drunk”.

Women’s critique of *machismo* linked men’s alcohol use with their lack of involvement in child rearing and other domestic chores. Another interviewee explained that “instead of helping women, he looks for drinks on the street; he comes back drunk and then he orders women to serve him food, and serve him other things – and this [drinking] is the source of many problems in the home. You come home from work tired and you have to take care of the kids, and the man doesn’t cooperate, he doesn’t help”.

Several students believed that drinking, slacking off and not helping women were demonstrations of men’s lack of responsibility for their families. An extreme, but not uncommon, manifestation of this behaviour was men’s abandonment of their partners and children. One interviewee explained that “there are some men who like to give a woman children and then take off”. Also, according to Leticia, there are some men who will have more than one girlfriend at a time: “some men will have two partners and then they’ll abandon one of them, and this is a huge problem”.

Two male students I interviewed offered similar critiques of *machismo*, and described how SAT had influenced their own understanding of gender. Arturo, for example, explained that “*machismo* involves male attitudes in the home, for example, if I were to get home and yell at my wife, shouting at her and telling her what to do, maybe even push her around. This is *machismo*”. Arturo believed that fighting between men and women (both physical and verbal) was caused by *machismo* and that this limited men’s development. “It doesn’t take anything away from a man to be involved in domestic work. Actually, it would be a step forward, an advancement of his character.” Samuel explained that his own domestic involvement had changed since he started studying in the SAT programme. Prior to commencing the programme, he had had little involvement in domestic life. “I think that household duties should be shared. I do these [domestic] jobs. Before I didn’t, but now I think that this work is not only for women, but also for men.”

Changes in domestic relationships

Students' abilities to identify *machismo* and critique the gender division of labour in their communities represent an important step towards undoing gender. My findings suggest that some students' domestic behaviour also changed. Saul's comment that he now does household chores is one example. Several women also described altered male behaviour.¹⁴

Wilma, for example, explained that "my husband comes from a family that has the idea that a woman's place is at home and a man's is in the street (*la mujer es de la casa y el hombre es de la calle*)". When they first started living together, she explained, "I had to cook, change the babies' nappies and do just about everything. Even if I was washing clothes maybe, he [her husband] would call me to change the baby's nappy. He would call me to make a bottle!" Wilma decided to speak to her husband about this situation. She found segments of the SAT textbooks that confront traditional gender roles. Her husband read them, and she would ask him what he thought about the lessons. Wilma explained that her husband "realised that he said that things really didn't need to be that way, the way things were before in our home. And, little by little, because of these lessons, I saw that he changed. And he changed in a surprising way!" She explained that now, if she is cooking and he is with one of their children, he will change their nappies. He cleans them, he changes, them, he bathes them, "without any problem". Wilma attributes her husband's behavioural changes to the lessons they studied together in the SAT texts. He came to realise that "things really didn't need to be that way". With relatively little prodding by Wilma, her spouse became more collaborative in the household.

Sonia also said that her husband had, at her request, become more helpful around the home during the course of her studies. When I asked her to describe what her husband did around the house, she explained that he assisted her in taking care of the children, cooked and cleaned, and was, in general, very helpful. I asked her if this had always been the case, and she explained:

Before, he hardly ever helped. When I said to him, "Why don't you help me to do this?" – for example to go get some water – he would say, "Ah, people will think that you have me as your mule, as your worker!" That is what he thought. But I would tell him that no, we have to mutually help each other. So, I saw that he began to reason, and now he helps me.

Sonia thinks that dialogue with her husband encouraged him to be more involved at home. Another SAT student, Ana, shared a similar experience. She recently confronted her husband, Mauro, by sitting him down and calmly explaining to him that she was not happy with their home life. One of the things about Mauro that bothered Ana the most was that he spent more time with his friends or in the street than he did at home with his family. She was also frustrated about the money he spent on his "vices", such as cigarettes. I asked her if they talked about these issues:

Erin: Do you talk about these things, or not really?

Ana: Look, before, this was my problem. But now I see that everything is changing, because I recently had to talk to him because I couldn't stand it anymore... I told him that it might be better for us to separate because there was no dialogue or understanding between us. I saw that he spent his money badly in the *calle* (street) and at home we have many needs. I told him this calmly, I said, "You have to decide. If you like being on the street, then it was better that you stay there because it is better for our children to think that they have a father who is on the street that doesn't help than for them to have one who is living with us who doesn't help!"

Ana also told Mauro that she wanted him to be at home to set a good example for their children. "I told him that I would like him to be at home during his free time, to see how the kids are doing, so that he can help me educate the children because education is not just in school but also at home. That is where education begins." Following this exchange, Mauro told Ana that he did not want to separate and that he would think about what she had said to him. A few weeks after this conversation, Ana was optimistic that Mauro would become more involved in domestic life. She explained, "I see a change in him because now when he comes home he leaves his bicycle and he sits down to think or read. He talks with his kids and before he never did that".

Discussion and conclusion

The findings presented here suggest that SAT students are participating in a process of undoing gender by reorganising gender relations in their everyday lives in a way that reflects their increased consciousness of gender equality. A direct comparison on the survey and definitions of *machismo* between women in SAT and women in the control group, while somewhat crude, suggests a higher level of gender consciousness on the part of SAT participants. Data from open-ended interviews furthermore suggest that students have reflected critically on the injustice of hegemonic masculinity as enacted in their communities. Their critique of hegemonic masculinity and expressed desire for a more equal sharing of domestic duties are important preliminary steps in the process of shifting responsibilities (Benjamin and Sullivan 1999).

My findings also confirm the hypothesis of Sullivan (2004) that we should expect changes in household gender relations to be slow. The accounts of change included here were not consistent across all of the married participants in the study sample. All of the women who described negotiating different roles with their partners had spent 4 years or more in the SAT programme. In addition to being slow, change is not automatic or necessarily sustainable. In fact, in two cases, students' husbands verbally abused and physically threatened them because they did not approve of their participation in the

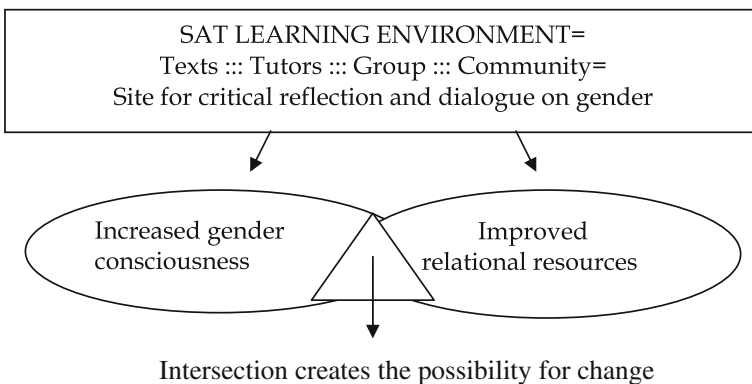
programme (see Murphy-Graham 2005). Future research should investigate the conditions that foster altered male behaviour, and whether changes in household gender relations, once initiated, are sustained or whether men and women slip back into conventional roles.

My analysis suggests that participation in SAT enabled women to use “underground” and “direct confrontation” strategies (Pesquera 1997) to negotiate new roles with their partners. For example, two women shared SAT textbooks with their partners to encourage them to think about gender, which could be considered an underground approach. Sonia and Ana had frank and direct discussions with their spouses, telling them that they desired a more equitable division of labour. They were able to do this because their relational resources, or the interpersonal skills that they use in relationships, were strengthened through SAT. According to Benjamin and Sullivan (1999), “therapeutic discourse” – which encompasses a range of practices such as individual therapy and counselling, group or family therapy, and self-enhancing workshops – augments relational resources. Formal education programmes are not included in Benjamin and Sullivan’s list of practices, but my findings suggest that the SAT group may serve as a site where therapeutic discourse takes place. Elsewhere, I discuss how students’ attributed improved communication skills to participation in SAT (Murphy-Graham 2005, 2008). In short, SAT students learned how to express their ideas and communicate their feelings, in keeping with the programme’s stated goal of engaging students in dialogue.

Figure 1 summarises my findings and illustrates how SAT contributes to a process of undoing gender.

The SAT learning environment offers students the opportunity to engage in critical reflection and discourse about gender. This in turn contributes to increased gender consciousness and improved relational resources, the intersection or combination of which result in opportunities for change.

Figure 1. Working model demonstrating how SAT undoes gender



While this study offers insight into how SAT contributes towards a process of undoing gender, many questions remain. Future investigations should focus in particular on the process by which boys' and men's attitudes and actions change. Men, after all, must be equal partners with women in our efforts to turn relationships of domination into relationships of collaboration, cooperation and reciprocity.

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Notes

1. Education for All is an initiative coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults (see <http://www.unesco.org/education/efa>).
2. The Millennium Development Goals "are eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges. The MDGs are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration that was adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of state and governments during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000" (<http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml>).
3. The family, religion and the mass media are other key contributors.
4. SAT has also received funding from the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the Gates Foundation, the Pestalozzi Foundation, the Canadian International Development Association, the British Department for International Development, the United States Agency for International Development, the Inter American Development Bank and the Baha'i International Community.
5. See appendix at <https://files.nyu.edu/emg12/public>, which includes textbook lessons that illustrate these features.
6. I follow Gerson and Peiss (1985: 317) description whereby "gender consciousness assumes various forms ranging from gender awareness to feminist/anti-feminist consciousness, and is conceived as a process which develops dialectically in the social relations of the sexes".
7. An appendix containing the full text of this lesson is available at <https://files.nyu.edu/emg12/public>.
8. Expanding secondary education is a priority of the Honduran Ministry of Education.
9. I am currently conducting a follow-up study that will include more male participants.
10. A full report of scores is available in a web appendix to this article at <https://files.nyu.edu/emg12/public>.
11. *Macho* is the Spanish word for male. The term *machismo* refers to a strong or exaggerated sense of masculinity that stresses attributes such as virility, domination of women and aggressiveness.
12. All of the definitions are provided in the author's web appendix at <https://files.nyu.edu/emg12/public>.

13. The form of masculinity that is culturally dominant. Hegemonic masculinity often reinforces the privileged position of men and the subordination of women (Connell 1996).
14. More elaborate accounts of the ways in which women's intimate relationships changed during the course of their studies are included in Murphy-Graham (2005).

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