Feminist Media Studies

Gender and Development in Youth Media

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GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT IN YOUTH MEDIA

Chelsey Hauge and Mary K. Bryson

This article addresses the conditions of possibility for international youth who produce media in the context of the AMIGOS/IDA development program run by Amigos de las Americas (AMIGOS) and an International Development Agency (IDA) in rural Nicaragua. The authors examine the conditions within which youth make decisions to produce media about gender, in order to examine how media, gender, and hope intersect in the context of youth-led development programming. Gender emerges as a popular and significant focus for media production in the context of social change within this context. The authors draw on qualitative case study data to argue that modernist development norms and post-feminist sensibilities contribute to the assemblage of complex pedagogical spaces that animate and inform a cautionary analysis regarding marginalization, power, and the limits of pedagogical interventions and liberation discourses.

KEYWORDS   gender; development; media; feminism; Nicaragua; youth; transnationality

Introduction

Most youth media programs tie their visions to social justice narratives anchored in the hope that youth learn to critically analyze relations of power and representation and effect change relative to persistent inequities (Glynda Hull 2003; Elisabeth Soep 2006). These goals are typically discursively articulated in a story about hopefulness that critical pedagogy, media, and technology might make the world a better place, and that when youth come together, they can learn about each other and work across differences. Post-structural scholars have problematized totalizing accounts of progressive pedagogy by means of the deliberative articulation of tensions and persistent norms that lurk in the very spaces assembled so as to dismantle inequity (Elizabeth Ellsworth 1989). In the research described here, we advance an argument that examines the role of the development agency in civic endeavors in the global South, and explore the learning encounters sparked by youth engagement with media production, and the multiple ways in which those learning encounters are structured through modernist development norms and post-feminist sensibilities. Specifically, we provide an account of media programming in rural Nicaragua, in which teenagers produce videos about social issues, with a particular focus on gender. In the AMIGOS/IDA media program, youth from North and Central America work collaboratively on community development media initiatives. This article examines the post-feminist conditions and relationships of colonialism in development practice within which youth make decisions to produce media about gender, in order to understand how media, gender, and hope intersect in the context of youth-led development programming.

Critical Pedagogy

Youth programming, like the AMIGOS/IDA media program examined here, is firmly lodged within a version of critical pedagogy that has a political orientation rooted in hopefulness for a better world, and that encourages

> analysis and rejection of oppression, injustice, inequality, silencing of marginalized voices, and authoritarian social structures. The goal of critical pedagogy was a critical democracy, individual freedom, social justice and social change—a revitalized public sphere characterized by citizens capable of confronting public issues critically through ongoing forms of public debate and social action. (Ellsworth 1989, 300)

Critical pedagogy typically animates a belief that power relations can be overcome in critical spaces by educators who are sufficiently aware. Yet, as Ellsworth (1989) reminded us, "we cannot act as if our membership in or alliance with an oppressed group exempts us" (300) from needing to continuously re-examine how privilege and oppression play out in critical spaces. Interventionist work with youth and media can be particularly vulnerable to the modernist assumptions of critical pedagogy, and to the desire to control the critical outcomes of pedagogy. These seemingly progressive desires and intentions can become intensified in media pedagogy, given the multiple, historical discursive positioning of networked communications as crucial keys to freedom and liberation (Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell 1994). Media programming, like all interventionist projects, is designed in particular ways by their leaders, much in the same way online spaces are structured by designers. Talk back from participants may happen in these spaces, but they still function as a "rather lopsided hierarchy that … privilege those that designed and produced the content for" (Radhika Gajjala, Yahui Zhang, and Phyllis Dako-Gyeke 2010, 70). Nearly twenty-five years after Ellsworth's (1989) influential critique of critical pedagogy, her cautionary analysis regarding marginalization, power, and the limits of pedagogical interventions and liberation discourses continues to inform current research.

Youth Media Initiatives and Development Programming

Development interventions are frequently organized by means of an attachment to colonial metrics and narratives of "progress." These narratives are frequently embedded in hopeful orientations to shifting power relations so that communities become more autonomous. However, narratives of progress are hopelessly tied to Western rationales about the way time and progress interplay in order to move things forward in a progressive nature (Radhika Gajjala 2004). This way of thinking about how communities change obscures the ways in which Western values and rationales take precedence in development discourse and can occlude and marginalize other ways of thinking about progress, hope, and time that might better suit particular places, people, and communities.

Access to networked communications media has historically been a challenge for precarious populations including girls, people of color, rural communities, and other marginalized groups. Many youth programs take the form of interventionist projects that aim to provide experience and resources to use networked communications media, though they rarely directly address root causes of marginalization (Mary Bryson 2004; Jennifer Jenson, Suzanne de Castell, and Mary Bryson 2003). The potential for media spaces to be sites of "critical dialogue [about] … knowledge production, media representations, and

cultural critique" (Theresa Rogers, Kari-Lynn Winters, and Anne-Marie Lamonde 2010, 310) is perhaps one of the most enticing aspects of media programming, and it is this potential that drives the social justice missions of youth media initiatives (Kathleen Tyner 2009).

Global youth programs that address diverse youth focus on bridging difference and building community in response to increasing division and violence in the world. Like youth, new technologies are historically associated with a renewed hopefulness about progress (Jillian Enteen 2010; Gajjala 2004; Michael Hindman 2008; Frans Vollenbroek 2002). Hope and technology have long occupied each other's spaces, where hope drives innovation forward *and* blinds us to how innovative media practices may replicate patterns of marginalization (Daren Barney 2000). Media sites like YouTube are often posited as sites of international engagement that facilitate tolerance (Jean Burgess and Joshua Green 2009), though there is an acknowledgement that social inequities tend to replicate themselves in online spaces (Glynda Hull, Amy Stornaiuolo, and Urvashi Sahni 2010; Luc Pauwels and Patricia Hellriegel 2009). Media literacy as a liberatory practice is shrouded in hopefulness (Nancy Lesko and Susan Talburt 2012; Lori MacIntosh, Stuart Poyntz, and Mary Bryson 2012) that is invariably linked to historical notions of technology as a sign of progress (Barney 2000; Hindman 2008; Vollenbroek 2002). The hope that media can facilitate social justice learning is braided together with the belief that the Internet is "more democratic than previous media . . . [and] hous[es] the potential for community formation beyond national boundaries and identity construction freed from the material constraints of gender, race, and class" (Enteen 2010, 9). While media and communication resources certainly play a significant role in many activist and social justice circles, it is important to consider them as part of a broader political context.

Gender and Development

Development is a concept often applied to the global South. While language like "the developing world" and the "Third World" have their roots in economic development, Gustavo Esteva and Mahdu Suri Prakash (1998) suggest that language like "one third world/ two thirds world" would more accurately reflect the ways in which resources are divided and (in)accessible across the world. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2002) draws attention to the importance of making the colonial histories between North and South visible, and to how language like Western/Third and North/South, while coming from economic relations, makes colonial histories explicit (Mohanty 2002). In order to draw attention to the political implications of globalization that differently affect diverse communities, we will use global North/South language, in particular because North America and Latin America have a historical relationship of colonialism.

In Nicaragua, the United States played formative roles in the last several decades in providing support to certain political parties, notably removing power from socialist hands and turning it over to conservative reign in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Kenneth Roberts 1990). The United States participates heavily in Nicaragua's development, and Nicaragua is home to one of the largest Peace Corps programs in Latin America.[1] The relationship between these two countries is indebted to colonialism, and multiple political, developmental, and economic relationships continue to define how the countries relate to each other.

Global relationships continue to become more complex as communicative channels multiply and movement becomes more defined by the kinds of resources and systems available to folks with different economic resources. The resulting economic, social, and

cultural development manifests disparately, affecting the global North and South in diverse ways. Those most affected are:

> Girls and women around the world, especially in the Third World/South . . . [who] bear the brunt of globalization. Poor women and girls are the hardest hit by the degradation of environmental conditions, wars, famines, privatization of services and deregulation of governments, the dismantling of welfare states, the restructuring of paid and unpaid work, increasing surveillance and incarceration in prisons, and so on. (Mohanty 2002, 514)

In the global South, women's ability to access education and resources is directly linked to addressing issues of poverty and community development (Andrea Cornwall and Jenny Edwards 2010). Development agencies provide girls with school support and emphasize strengthening women's leadership and community-based organizations (Katarzyna Grabska 2011; Sally King, Hugo Sintes, and Maria Alemu 2012), yet rarely do they examine their own institutionalized discrimination practices (Grabska 2011; Joanna Sandler and Aruna Rao 2012). Gender is constructed as an issue in communities in the global South that must be dealt with to achieve "equality." "Gender" programs in the global South tend to focus on issues of empowerment, agency, and access to education, financial resources, and community leadership (Naila Kabeer 2005). These programs focus most of their attention on girls and women, obscuring the ways in which men and boys are implicated in and affected by gender relations and reinforcing a gender binary that designates people as either man or woman.

Gender is addressed by including women in decisions, meetings, and committees (Grabska 2011), yet this sort of *invited* participation is often *wished* upon rural people. The assumption is that everyone would participate if possible, yet

> [P]articipation cannot merely be reclaimed or wished upon rural people in the Third World; it must begin by recognizing the powerful, multi-dimensional, and in many instances, anti-participatory forces which dominate the lives of rural people. Centuries of domination and subservience will not disappear overnight just because we have "discovered" the concept of participation. (Andrea Cornwall 2008, 281)

While it is generally understood that people need ownership over their own processes of empowerment, "the fact that women's pathways of empowerment are pursued under conditions that are not of their own choosing" (Cornwall and Edwards 2010, 2) is overlooked. Instead, "development agencies often evoke images of empowered and autonomous subjects, able to choose, make and shape their own directions . . . . In reality, very few of us have the capacity to make independent choices and follow them through" (Cornwall and Edwards 2010, 2). Images of empowered women in the global South have replaced images of women who are pregnant and powerless (Chandra Talpade Mohanty 1991; Cornwall and Edwards 2010). Development discourse on gender is framed through rights language that consistently constructs gender as "women" and women as marginalized but happy subjects of good investment.

These relationships between development, modernity, and media produce an understanding of gender difference as an issue particular to the global South (Trinh Minh-ha 1987; Mohanty 1991). Yet, advancements in gender parity in North America have produced a post-feminist climate in which girls in the modern/First World have access to resources in exchange for being content, thankful, and for abandoning a critique of patriarchy. A functional role for the contented North American girl in relation to her peers in the global

South becomes one of advocacy (Angela McRobbie 2009). That is to say, gender matters, *over there, for them*. "Helping" functions, then, as a dominant and constitutive mode of relationality, eliminating the need for anger or critique of capitalist patriarchy. Girls' involvement in public processes and helping becomes a symbol of social progress (Gayatri Spivak 1999). A celebratory culture around *helping* and a related vision of "the girl" as a good investment functions so that refusing to participate positions girls as "bad citizens."

Development agencies frequently run spaces for media literacy, however there is an absence of research on how youth take up particular issues in media production, and how decisions are shaped pedagogically and from within particular media pedagogy and development practice settings. Participatory development and youth media programming with a social justice framework share a desire that youth have agency over what they produce. However, there is a compelling political urgency for the reflexive analysis of youth media production in broader contexts and discourses concerning colonialism, gender, and development. In situating our analysis of media production experiences in broader political contexts, we consider how youth media production is articulated with both local and global publics. Our analysis here, of media production in the AMIGOS/IDA program (2011) about gender and *machismo*, is organized and animated by the following research questions:

(1) What experiences and relationships reinforce the emergence of gender as a topic youth wish to "change"?
(2) How are the relationships between youth media producers, development agencies, and media pedagogy shaped by ideologies of social change, development, and gender?
(3) How might media production serve as a site within which international youth groups articulate the multiple and conflicting ideologies of development and progress, specifically as related to gender?

Methodology

The methodological objective of the fieldwork reported here is to illustrate the complex mobilities enacted as international groups of youth collaborate on the production of videos in a context organized by a complex web of multiple global and local publics. Presupposing that the arts "have the distinct power to open our imagination toward the unimagined" (Stephanie Springgay, Rita Irwin, and Sylvia Wilson Kind 2005, 897), we draw on arts-based research practices to theorize how youth situate themselves as part of multiple local and global publics through their media production. In particular, we focus on the conditions of production that facilitate and organize the articulation of gender as a popular social issue, especially in relation to local connections between hope and development.

1. Context: Amigos de las Americas[2] and IDA[3]

Amigos de las Americas (AMIGOS) runs youth programming in partnership with development organizations throughout Latin America. AMIGOS recruits youth from North America to be AMIGOS volunteers on programs in rural Latin America, where youth are partnered with youth from rural communities, and live in those communities while they carry out small-scale development issues. One of the authors (Author1) was involved with this program for over twelve years, participating at various levels in the organization.

Author1 was the Project Director for the AMIGOS media program in Boaco, Nicaragua, which was executed in partnership with a major International Development Agency (IDA). AMIGOS defines its mission as follows: *AMIGOS inspires and builds young leaders through collaborative community development and immersion in cross-cultural experiences.*

2. Participant Demographics

Youth from the Nicaraguan community of Colipa participated in this media program from 2010 to 2012 (see Table 1). Volunteers from the United States and Nicaraguan youth from Colipa spent two months collaborating on media and community development projects each summer. During the summer of 2011, youth participants produced a video on *machisimo*.

TABLE 1
Participants in the program in the community of Colipa

Pseudonym	Age	Hometown	Role	Notes	Recruitment process
Carafina	21	Colipa, Boaco, Nicaragua	Local volunteer—AMIGOS; volunteer—IDA	Carafina is a strong leader in the community and played a major role in shaping the media project	Recruited by IDA leaders, worked with AMIGOS since 2009
Ana	14	Colipa, Boaco, Nicaragua	Local volunteer—AMIGOS	Ana is Carafina's younger sister, and very quiet. She becomes involved in most initiatives her sister works on	Recruited by Carafina, involved since 2010
Darlia	16	Colipa, Boaco, Nicaragua	Local volunteer—AMIGOS	Darlia worked with AMIGOS for the first time in 2011	Recruited by Carafina and Jaminah, with help from IDA representatives
Jorge	16	Colipa, Boaco, Nicaragua	Local volunteer—AMIGOS	Jorge is the only boy involved in the project from the community of Colipa	Recruited by IDA representatives, encouraged by Jaminah to participate
Ray	16	California, USA	International volunteer—AMIGOS	Ray has a high level of Spanish, is very outgoing, and has significant tech skills	Recruited in high school Spanish class
Manya	16	California, USA	International volunteer—AMIGOS	Manya has a high level of Spanish, and has experience with film and video production	Learned about AMIGOS from friends who had participated in the past
Jenna	17	Florida, USA	International volunteer—AMIGOS	Jenna has a beginner–intermediate level of Spanish	Was interested in participating in an international volunteer program, searched for one to fit her needs
Jaminah	20	Washington, DC, USA	Project supervisor—AMIGOS	Jaminah is highly proficient in Spanish. She is very interested in social justice, and works with a community radio station at her college	Recruited to be an international volunteer in high school Spanish class, encouraged to continue on as a project supervisor

3. Fieldwork

During the summer months of 2011, Author1 conducted qualitative research in the AMIGOS/IDA program. The research reported here was carried out as a case study and takes up ethnographic methods including participant observation, interviewing, and video recordings of youth as they engage in media production (Robert Stake 2005; Robert Yin 1981, 2009). The case study is structured around *Untitled 2011*.

Following the youth and their work through the three sites of production, data were collected during the *Planning* and *Production* stages of working on the artifact, and also about the artifact itself. During the planning and production stages, audio and video recordings were made of working sessions. Field notes were created about the workshops in which youth and program staff participated. Author1 personally led most of the regional workshops they participated in. As they were planning and producing their pieces, Author1 conducted interviews with small groups of youth. In order to understand the broader context of the AMIGOS/IDA program, audio recordings were made of programming meetings, to supplement the production of field notes and documents from these meetings between IDA and AMIGOS.

Untitled 2011 grew out of a programmatic focus on social issues. *Untitled 2011* was planned by youth from Colipa at regional workshops, and was subsequently produced in Colipa in the summer of 2011. Regional workshops involved youth from multiple communities, and were a laboratory for sharing ideas, receiving feedback, viewing media, and discussing successes and challenges. The youth came up with the following definition of a social issue:

> A social issue can be something of great importance that interests the population of a community, that probably calls attention to most of the community . . . . A tendency in our community that we think should be different, a problem we wish did not exist. (Field Notes, June 29, 2011: Regional meeting in which participants were tasked to come up with a definition of a social issue)

Youth were frequently engaged by this program to share instances of social in/justice in their own lives. Our intention was to brainstorm a cluster of issues from their own lives that youth could draw from for their videos. We hoped that youth would use their own personal experience in order to craft media pieces, an approach others have taken to facilitate learning about social in/justice (Theresa Rogers, Elizabeth Marshall, and Cynthia Tyson 2006). The belief that through the telling of personal stories youth can gain a deeper understanding of justice is situated in pedagogy that links liberation and storytelling (Nicole Fleetwood 2005; Soep 2006). This belief is manifest in numerous media programs that rely on youths' experiences in their communities and in the world to build video stories in and about their own communities (John Broughton 2012; Steven Goodman 2003). While all youth were encouraged to share social issues affecting their lives, most of their videos directly addressed the Nicaraguan communities.

4. Data and Analysis

This article includes data from the fieldwork as indicated in Table 2.

Drawing on arts-based methodologies, we focus on how youth navigate the production process and narrate particular kinds of stories, and on how beliefs about youth, change, and development shape media pedagogy. Through the production of *Untitled 2011*,

TABLE 2

Data	Date	Description	People involved
Field notes	June 29, 2011	Tech and storytelling training/workshop	Carafina, Ana, Darlia, Jorge, Ray, Manya, Jenna, Jaminah, Author1
Field notes	July 16, 2011	Regional group meeting, early production phase	Carafina, Ana, Darlia, Jorge, Ray, Manya, Jenna, Jaminah, Author1
Storyboarding session	July 16, 2011	Regional group workshop, early production phase	Carafina, Ana, Darlia, Jorge, Ray, Manya, Jenna, Jaminah, Author1
Group interview	July 18, 2011	Interview with the international volunteers	Ray, Manya, Jenna, Author1
Group interview	July 18, 2011	Interview with the local volunteers	Carafina, Ana, Darlia, Jorge, Author1
Interview	July 27, 2011	Interview with local volunteer	Carafina, Author1
Video	Produced July 2011	*Untitled 2011*—final video project produced by this group of youth as part of the program URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93Zt9n2ve24&feature = feedu.	Carafina, Ana, Darlia, Jorge, Ray, Manya, Jenna

youth weave together beliefs and stories to form a narrative about gender. Attending to how youth engage these modern beliefs in their own media productions is a popular approach taken by those working with youth in the media arts (Rogers, Marshall, and Tyson 2006).

For analysis purposes, data are presented as vignettes (Jenson, de Castell, and Bryson 2003) from the case study on *Untitled 2011* and related production processes. Vignettes provide an articulatory method of assembling data sources used in this research which affords the capacity to consider multimodal artifacts, including interviews, field notes, and video. Taken as an ensemble, the vignettes provide a means, then, to map media production practices in the AMIGOS/IDA context. In the process of textualization we recognize the multiple and ongoing ways in which meaning is transformed: from Spanish to English, from conversation to transcription, from transcription into text. We understand the data to provide multiple means of encoding and decoding particular kinds of interactions that are socially constructed by all participants, and the relations of power they each bring to the situation (Charles Briggs 2003), which in this case includes the relationships the youth and organizations had with Author1. In the case of *Untitled 2011*, we are interested in how transnational ideologies of gender, development, and progress shape how youth participate and what they produce; we read their media piece and their participation in the program as maps to how their mobilities are constructed and how they negotiate the world.

Youth Media Case Study Findings

Youth from the community of Colipa identified *machismo* as a social issue about which they wanted to make media in the AMIGOS/IDA program. Led by Carafina, a young

FIGURE 1

(a) Opening scene of *Untitled 2011,* Ricardo sharpens machete. (b) A human rights worker offers a job to Margo, and is chased out of town by Eligio. (c) Eligio asks for forgiveness from his family for having acted *machista.* (d) Margo discusses her new job with her boss

woman well known for her community leadership, they produced a piece about one family's struggle around gendered expectations about work and school (see Figure 1). The video can be accessed at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93Zt9n2ve24&feature = feedu.

While our primary concern is an analysis of the varied and complex events of media production that led to *Untitled 2011,* here we will describe the video to provide clarity about the artifact that represents an end-point of the media making events that are described in the following pages. After this redaction concerning the artifact, we will move into a discussion of the media making events that led to the production of *Untitled 2011.*

Untitled 2011 is about a family—mother (Margo), father (Eligio), and teenage children (girl Raquel and boy Ricardo). The video opens with an image of Ricardo and his dog, the sun illuminating their bodies. It cuts to Eligio, resting in a hammock. Ricardo and his sister Raquel want to go to school but their *machista* father won't allow it. He refuses to change his mind, sending the boy to the fields and the daughter and mother into the kitchen. Secretly, Margo teaches Raquel to read and write. In the next scene, Eligio comes home, asking Margo to prepare him a bucket of water and soap to shower. He gets angry because the soap is pink, and demands Margo purchase not-pink soap, but she has no money.

An opportunity arises for Margo when she is offered a job working on women's rights. Eligio comes home and chases the human rights worker offering the job out of town. Next, Raquel writes a letter to her father Eligio, asking him to love his family. Eligio cannot read, and his eyes fill with tears as he listens to a little boy read the letter aloud. Eligio repents, pulls his family together, and apologizes. Margo begins the job and Ricardo and Raquel go to school. The story ends as the mother interviews community leaders about *machisimo,* part of her new job.

Progress and Social Issues

The youth who produced *Untitled 2011* participated in numerous media workshops during which they refined their ideas and received feedback. During an interview, we discussed why they produced the video and how they came to settle on *machismo* as a central issue for their video.

> *Author1*: I want to talk a bit about this last video you guys made about *machismo*. How did that topic come up?
>
> *Ana*: This theme came up, a few times, mostly because of the fathers who do not let their sons and daughters study. Or, sometimes the wife … wants to work. The men do not give that opportunity. Because they believe they alone are the kings of the home.
>
> *Carafina*: In Colipa there are very few women who do any kind of work outside the home. So because of that, we focused a lot on *machismo*. And we went to talk with the other youth, and we all thought it was really important to talk about *machismo*, change things. So we decided to make the video. (July 18, 2011: Interview excerpt, with Nicaraguan youth from Colipa who played leadership roles in the production of *Untitled 2011*)
>
> The youth identify gender as a social issue and intend to use media as a tool for intervening in their community. They reflect back the AMIGOS/IDA belief that links production and social justice by taking up discourses of progress and change. They discuss *Untitled 2011* as a piece that will intervene in the popular discourse around gender. It is not insignificant that they produce about gender as a social issue, and it is important to note that gender is rarely a central point of discussion in rural Nicaragua, among American teenage volunteers, or within the AMIGOS/IDA programs, who mostly understand their participation in gender marginalization as historical.

FIGURE 2
June 29, 2011. Regional workshop: participants work on a computer issue

FIGURE 3
July 16, 2011. Participants storyboarding

However, they are discussing gender in a rural community in the global South, where popular media and development discourse reinforce gender marginalization as a compelling issue.

Machismo? It Doesn't Affect Me: Transitional Learning Spaces and Media Programming

The AMIGOS/IDA media program was set up so youth could produce media about their own lives, following popular media literacy pedagogy (Goodman 2003). Even so, youth often chose gender as a topic to produce about *and also* kept their distance from gender as personal. This raises questions about how youth relate to social change programs, and about whether the telling of personal story is actually liberatory:

Author1: So write down *machisimo*. What is the story that goes along with *machisimo*?
Carafina: That in our community a lot of years ago . . . people were really afraid. Like, for example, of men. Fathers of families were afraid to let their daughters leave to study. And also, they did not allow women to work. Only them. And they only worked the fields. Women were supposed to be at home. Always at home. The women do not have liberty. There exists terrible *machismo* in the community.
Author1: And how do you feel about that?
Carafina: I feel like it is hurting the families, and also the women. There are many girls who want to study. But men, they are the ones that decide, and they do not want their daughters to study. The moms want them to, but the dads don't. So, this exists and it is damaging the whole education system, a lot.
Author1: And you, personally, how is it affecting you?
Carafina: ***Machisimo*? Not at all**. (July 16, 2011: Youth leaders from Nicaragua and North America participate in a storyboarding session with Author1)

Carafina distances herself from the stories of gender injustice. She shares a story about how gender plays out in her community Colipa, but when pressed for her relationship with gender, she says *machismo* is not affecting her at all. Following Carafina's lead, most of the youth agreed they *personally* were not affected, though others were affected. Likewise, when asked to recount their own relationships with gender, their American peers recounted stories of their lives while living in Nicaragua—they talked about watching their Nicaraguan host mothers and sisters do all of the housework, as opposed to discussing gender in their own contexts and lives. In refusing the invitation to narrate their own personal experiences, they situate themselves as having overcome gendered marginalization. For these youth, *other* people are affected by gender, and their role is to support education about gender. They draw on discourses of progress, situating themselves as enlightened subjects who can help others move beyond the "gender issue." Their refusal to be implicated shows they are "in the know" as modern girls and that they have "overcome" any kind of gender discrimination.

Knowing How to Know About Machismo

As we continue to discuss what their production will look like, the youth begin to articulate their story as a learning experience for girls who are being affected by *machismo.* The youth participants allude to how *Untitled 2011* could serve as a learning space for others in Colipa during the planning phase of *Untitled 2011*:

> *Author1*: So, what kind of story do you want to tell in the video to change this? A story that people can relate to.
> Ana: About machismo?
> *Author1*: Yep. This conversation we've had.
> *Carafina*: It could be about family . . . . We need to do workshops with women. Because there are women who are shut in and no one helps them, no one. So, we need to educate them. Do a workshop and talk clearly. Tell them their rights, because they don't know them.
> *Author1*: So what kind of story could we tell to begin this process?
> *Carafina*: We could tell a story about women in the community who are not even aware of the cause of their oppression as *machismo*. So, we can make a story about a girl who is being affected by *machisimo*, her and her mom. Her mom is affected because she cannot work, she cannot go anywhere. She is stuck in the house. She can't leave.
> *Jaminah*: What will you do? Are you going to let other women know?
> Ana: No. What we can do is like a soap opera. Where we can focus on what *machismo* is, what it looks like. And after this we can have a workshop with the people. (July 16, 2011: At a workshop, youth brainstorm ideas for their video on gender, with support from Author1, and Project Supervisor, Jaminah)

In this excerpt from a planning meeting, youth discuss teaching other young women how to know what *machismo* is on a meta-level. They discuss the need to educate others, and their video is didactic in this way. In situating themselves as teachers, they perform their expertise as participants, showing they know how to know and they know how to help others overcome gendered marginalization.

The video that resulted from this storyboarding session, *Untitled 2011*, makes one family's struggle with *machismo* visible in a particular kind of way that is logical from within the development programming on gender. The youth say they are interested in focusing

on *machismo*, "on what it looks like," and on having workshops about *machismo*—expressing a need to make *machismo* visible by exaggerating it so it can be recognized and so that others can engage with their idea, and in doing so, learn.

As Nicaraguan youth performed in particular ways as part of their participation with the AMIGOS/IDA program so did their North American peers. The North American youth were very hesitant to participate in the brainstorming sessions and in the production of the video, and shared many concerns about what their participation should look like. Despite these concerns, during the production phase of *Untitled 2011* the North American youth shot all of the video while their Nicaraguan peers acted. The North American youth expressed they would not want to *appear* in the video because the story belongs to the Nicaraguan youth. However, they were doing the filming, and North American youth were consistently and literally framing the scenes. They expressed that their Nicaraguan peers were more interested in acting, and the Nicaraguan youth said they were better at acting and less adept than their North American peers at handling cameras. A similar situation arose with the editing of the video, in which the North American youth most often manipulated the computer under the direction of Carafina. Sometimes, Carafina and other participants from Colipa sat at the computer and received direction from Manya, Ray, and Jenna; however because of their unfamiliarity with computers this was a very slow process.

Discussion and Concluding Thoughts: Gender and Media in Development Programming

Untitled 2011 focused on *machismo* as an issue affecting youth, children, and women in the community of Colipa. The youth who made this video situated themselves as unaffected by *machismo*, though they hoped to help others. They untangled their personal stories from those that need "changing" and gender emerged as affecting others. In this process, gender became an issue affecting some girls in rural Nicaraguan communities as opposed to an issue affecting youth globally. Because of their continuous work with AMIGOS/IDA, these youth knew how to tell particular stories, and did so in ways that evidence post-feminist sensibilities and awareness of enmeshment with the colonial patterns that plague development agencies.

Social justice media production in the AMIGOS/IDA program is pedagogically crafted around the organizing logic which affirms that international youth can collaborate on the telling of personal stories through media, and that this process is liberatory. Participation is understood to act as an important conduit for the materialization of liberatory pedagogy. What became clear in the production of *Untitled 2011* is that: (a) successful participation in liberatory pedagogy approximates what is often termed "agency"; and (b) the production of conditions for "agency" as a development outcome requires knowing how to help others overcome marginalization and doing so through the production of particular personal narratives. There is, here, an organizational or pedagogical logic that values personal storytelling and its ability to move social relationships forward in progressive ways. However, this logic does not organically manifest when youth are given storyboards, cameras, and partnerships with international peers and provided the opportunity to produce stories from their own lives.

Carafina's insistence that *machismo* does not affect her life functions so she can slip outside of critical pedagogies' insistence on interpolating her as a subject with a story to tell about her own personal marginalization. There is a tension between recognizing how—and

if—*machisimo* structures the experiences of (some) girls in Colipa, and AMIGOS/IDA's pedagogical call to personalize that story through media production, a common trope in youth media that uses personal stories as a springboard for mediated civic engagement that is close to the lives and cultural worlds of participants (Fleetwood 2005; Goodman 2003; Rogers, Marshal, and Tyson 2006; Soep 2006). While they easily tell the story of *machismo*, they don't take up the *personal* narrative that is linked to social justice learning in youth media pedagogy.

Instead, Carafina and her peers engage with learning about how to navigate non-profits from within colonial histories, acknowledging that those programs provide civic resources and foster public spaces when and where the state does not. In managing civic engagement and public spaces, development agencies also gain the power to demarcate gender and rights language about equality, some of the structures that Carafina and her peers deal with in this program. Civic engagement and participation in social justice media, then, become experiences that, as opposed to supporting youth in understanding global flows and colonial relations of power, teach youth to participate in a colonial system that values progress as it approximates capitalism. We need to reconsider the assumptions about progress that underlie critical pedagogy's affair with voice and progressive development's undying affiliation with participation.

At issue with the uncritical deployment of "voice and participation" as necessarily liberatory are the ways in which these tropes are framed through modernist notions of progress and development that assume a progressive, linear relationship over time as communities become further developed and therefore, better. Jacques Ranciere's (2010) political argument concerning what he terms, the "distribution of the sensible"—how knowledge is distributed along political lines so that particular stories become possible in particular spaces—gives us another way to think about how interactions around development and media between Nicaraguan and North American youth bodies make certain kinds of learning possible, and other kinds of learning impossible.

Ranciere's concept of the "distribution of the sensible" provides a descriptive analytical framework for thinking about what can be sensed and felt through popular discourses, which allow only some bodies and experiences to be felt, while others are marginalized. When the North American youth express such concern over how much to participate in *Untitled 2011*, they engage the way "the sensible" is distributed and organized by AMIGOS/IDA's concern over participation and the production of Nicaraguan youth voices. This set of interactions shapes how Nicaraguan youth are framed as those who need to change something in their communities, their North American peers become "supporters," and the Nicaraguan youth voice becomes romanticized. While youth engage these roles, these relationships are most available from within the AMIGOS/IDA pedagogy and program structure. This pedagogical and programmatic structure is built through the various movements and relationships in the program: for example, the North American youth participants travel to other countries and in this way and in countless others the bare bones of pedagogy are thickened with knowledge about who's voice should be heard, realities about who can move, and beliefs about how to attain resources.

In the production experiences and the video which the youth from Colipa produced, gender is articulated and represented as a one-directional issue that affects rural communities in the global South. Patterned on colonial relationships between North and South and popular discourses that hold that gender is an issue only in the global South (Minh-ha 1987), and working from within the context of AMIGOS/IDA, the youth addressed gender locally and through a modernist frame throughout the process of media

production. While the youth were asked to all share stories about gender in their own lives, both North American and Nicaraguan youth shared stories of *others*. The modernist framing of gender takes as an assumption that progress and development facilitated through education will eventually resolve gender marginalization, and this framework shapes IDA's gender programs and AMIGOS' treatment of gender as an issue youth can collaborate on. The modernist development narrative sets up progress as intertwined with education where individuals who are more progressive can help others along the way. The role of the young person from the global North is one of helping her peers along the road of personal education to development. It will be quite challenging to disrupt these kinds of colonial flows until the ideas about development as temporal progress are deconstructed, and as part of that, the idea that the presence of technology constitutes progress in the lives of the non-technological other (Gajjala, Zhang, and Dako-Gyeke 2010).

At issue here is the tendency to address gender locally. It is not immediately apparent how one might animate a more complex and distributed political analysis concerning how local and global communities are linked through issues of gender and *machismo* and how transnational relationships produce situations in which gender emerges as something *to be changed* through the intercultural production of media by rural Nicaraguan youth with the support of North American peers. McRobbie (2009) argues that the forces of disarticulation in post-feminist modernity make the very basis of coming together around gender unthinkable. In the AMIGOS/IDA program, there are not opportunities to interact with artifacts or bodies that might challenge the idea that gender is an individualizing force. Rather, ideas about gender as an issue affecting girls in the global South, while girls in the global North are liberated and can take up positions as helpful subjects, are reinforced precisely because there is no scaffolding for youth to consider why relations of power are both local and global.

The AMIGOS/IDA program is located within a post-feminist context and relationships between pedagogy and the development organizations structure the work so that the story that can be told individualizes gendered marginalization and makes transnational organizing that rejects the progression around helping narratives difficult to imagine. There are invariably moments in the production process where youth producers venture outside of what is made possible to know and feel through the distribution of the sensible, though this mobility beyond knowledge can be fleeting and unmoored from actual change agents. Part of the complication in understanding what is happening in *Untitled 2011* is a desire, common in youth studies, to read politics from youth engagement and participation (Lesko and Talburt 2012). Reading politics from the production process and from the artifact *Untitled 2011*, obscures the ways in which participation is shaped by development agencies who have broad concerns to consider and who may not be invested in political action around gender at all.

In their participation in the AMIGOS/IDA media program, youth encounter many spaces, learners, and artifacts, and for Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) these encounters are constitutive of the space of pedagogy—where bodies learn. Ellsworth refers to this encounter between bodies as "transitional space," and she argues that in transitional spaces learning is unpredictable and occurs in the encounter between bodies, inclusive of material and non-living bodies as well as human bodies and programs. In this case, the transitional spaces include youth bodies, the living rooms and porches where workshops were held, the computers and cameras we worked on, and the AMIGOS/IDA organizational structure.

Carafina's learning encounter as she participated in the storyboarding workshop is limited and shaped by the organizations that provide the funding and their ongoing development work concerning gender and youth; and also by the porch she sits on, from which she can watch the woman who owns the home tending to a pot of food over an open fire in a smoke-stained kitchen. Carafina's peers sat in a circle with her as she responded to Author1's question about how gender affected her own life with "Not at all." The modernist practices of (even progressive) development agencies ask youth to believe in a model of change that individualizes marginalization instead of orchestrating consideration of transnational relations of power. It is, as others have put it, "a re-coding of familiar liberal feminist discourses interweaved with a capitalist, consumerist, rhetoric of individual choice" (Gajjala, Zhang, and Dako-Gyeke 2010, 69).

In these transitional learning spaces youth practice performing the kinds of mobilities that enable them to engage and access resources. In a society in which development agencies provide significant access to resources and in which particular kinds of bodies are situated as needing help and others as being able to help, these are necessary skills. In these spaces, youth learn where resources are situated and the kinds of language that will open access to particular spaces—all valuable skills. These skills allow youth to be in and participate in their worlds. These skills, though, are not constitutive of political action around some of the root causes of injustice, or of fostering transitional learning about why the world is "as it is," which remains a valid focus for change initiatives.

In their media productions, youth take up and navigate knowledge in particular ways, working from within what is knowable. In her work on media, learning, and space, Ellsworth (2005) discusses knowledge that is situated in movement and sensation, where articulating how one knows is outside of the limits of knowledge. We suggest that in the relationships and programs that youth engage, there is at work a kind of knowledge like this, where because of the privileges of movement ascribed to certain bodies and not others, along the lines of race, class, location, gender, etc., certain kinds of knowledge about others are available. This kind of limiting is at work as youth interact with the development agencies and produce around issues only relevant to Nicaraguan communities; though there was a pedagogical effort to have youth produce media about global issues, a knowledge about what kinds of media are acceptable seems to lie in the bodies of participants and in the programmatic structures and patterns. At issue here is not that the international youth media production is problematic and, therefore, not valuable, but rather that we are emphasizing that youth media production is typically attached to modernist notions of progress and hopefulness about lasting material change that make invisible the actual conditions for politically attuned interventions in conditions of serious and persistent inequality.

NOTES

1. For more information on the Peace Corps see: http://www.peacecorps.gov/learn/wherepc/centralamerica/nicaragua. In Boaco, Nicaragua, where this study took place, there were four Peace Corps volunteers during the period from 2009 to 2011. They collaborated with AMIGOS occasionally. Peace Corps is very well-known in the region.
2. Information about AMIGOS can be found at: www.amigoslink.org.
3. IDA will be used as an abbreviation for the International Development Agency, in order to protect the privacy of the major international development group that runs development

programming in Colipa, Boaco, Nicaragua. IDA is a major agency that runs development programming in most of the global South, all around the world.

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