Gender Operations Report Series No. 1

A Social Assessment

Family, Gender & Identity:
Influences & Opportunities for Children in Honduras

Gender Analysis for the Honduras Interactive Environmental Learning & Science Promotion Project - PROFUTURO

October 1999

by Héctor Lindo-Fuentes & Tania Salem

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The World Bank, Latin America & The Caribbean Region, 1818 H Street, NW, I-Building Washington, DC 20433
Gender Operations Report Series No. 1
LCSPG Gender Team

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Héctor Lindo-Fuentes
Tania Salem

The World Bank
Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Sector Management Unit
Latin America and the Caribbean Region
The Gender Operational Report Series

In FY99, the LAC Gender Team set up a pilot Gender Operational Support Fund with Norwegian and Danish trust funds. The objective of the fund is to help Task Managers identify the relevance of gender in projects and policy work, and to apply this information at different stages of Bank operations, in order to strengthen the links between gender analysis and the furthering of gender equity and efficiency goals. Under the fund, over US$400,000 was awarded to 21 proposals in different countries in the region. Work was carried out in the sectors of Cultural Heritage, Population, Health and Nutrition, Natural Resource Management, Education, Rural Development, Agriculture, Post-Disaster Reconstruction, Public Sector Management, and Transportation. Documents published under the Gender Operational Report Series present findings, recommendations and lessons learned from select funded activities.

The opinions expressed in this document are attributable to the author(s), and do not necessarily reflect the position or official policies of the World Bank.

The Gender Operations Report Series are produced by the Gender Team of the Poverty Reduction & Economic Management SMU of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office.

Additional copies may be obtained either from the author(s), or by contacting the LCSPG Gender Team (Tel. 202-473-4906, LCSPR-Gender@worldbank.org).
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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>COHCIT</td>
<td>Honduran Council of Science and Technology (<em>Consejo Hondureño de Ciencia y Tecnología</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOF</td>
<td>Gender Operational Fund</td>
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<td>ILC</td>
<td>Interactive Learning Center</td>
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<td>LAC</td>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean Region</td>
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<td>LCC2C</td>
<td>Central America Country Management Unit, Latin America and the Caribbean Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCSES</td>
<td>Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Sector Management Unit, Latin America and the Caribbean Region</td>
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<td>LCSPR</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Management Unit, Latin America and the Caribbean Region</td>
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<td>PROFUTURO</td>
<td>Honduras Interactive Environmental Learning and Science Promotion Project</td>
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<td>SA</td>
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Acknowledgments

This summary report is based on the background document “Participatory Assessment for the Honduras Interactive Environmental Learning and Science Promotion Project—PROFUTURO” produced by consultants, Tania Salem and Héctor Lindo-Fuentes in May 1999. The background document is available on request from Ms. Maria-Valéria Junho Pena at the World Bank.

The assessment was conducted with funds awarded by the Gender Operational Fund (GOF) managed by the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Management Unit in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region (LCSPG).

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The authors of the report acknowledge the support received from Honduran colleagues, including the teachers, principals, and students in the schools visited, the Office of the First Lady of Honduras, Mrs. Mary Flake de Flores, the Minister of Science and Technology, Mr. Gerardo Zepeda, and the staff of the Honduran Council of Science and Technology (COHCIT) and the Ministry of Education. They are particularly grateful to Ms. Victoria Díaz, Ms. Johanna Moreira, Ms. Reinelda Aguilar, Mr. Francisco Padilla, and Mr. Rene Córdoba.

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this report are entirely those of the authors and should not be attributed to the World Bank, members of its Board of Executive Directors, or the countries they represent.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Honduras Interactive Environmental Learning and Science Promotion Project—PROFUTURO will support the design and implementation of an Interactive Learning Center (ILC) in Tegucigalpa. The ILC is envisioned as a non-formal educational facility to be used by children (particularly the poorest), teachers, and parents. It will contain exhibits on topics such as sustainable development, science and technology, and pre-Hispanic culture and scientific practices.

As part of the monitoring and evaluation system established for the project, an assessment among children was carried out in April 1999 with resources from the Gender Operational Fund (GOF). The assessment will also help guide the design of the ILC, its exhibits, training activities, and outreach programs. The main data source is questionnaires filled out by 131 children (72 boys and 59 girls) in the sixth or seventh grades in five schools (both public and private) in the Tegucigalpa area, where the ILC will be located. The questionnaires were complemented by a focus group in each school composed of about eight students, and by a focus group of 11 children in a sixth school.

Findings

Focus on the Family. Honduran children, particularly in this age group, are extremely focused on their family, enjoying their daily life and leisure activities with their immediate and extended families. A strong family orientation is the crucial component in their identity. Attachment to their family and interdependency among family members are placed on a higher plane than individualistic fulfillment and self-sufficiency. Two factors likely influence this finding: (a) the 11 to 12-year-old age group is usually more focused on the family than on peer groups; and (b) the cultural context of “familism,” emphasizing obligations of nuclear and extended families, which seems to be predominant in Honduras.

Defined Gender Roles. Overall, boys and girls perceive the roles of men and women as based on the functions they are expected to carry out in the family. Boys emphasize their role as the “strong sex” and their “freedom.” Girls emphasize their “gift to procreate” and “moral superiority.” These qualities are perceived as ‘natural’ with their complementarity determining different social functions in and outside the family. Boys perceive a woman’s work outside the home as complementary to a man’s income and subordinate compared with the role she carries out at home. Most girls state that a woman’s main function is the one accomplished in the family. Some girls point to the traditional division of labor between genders as evidence of gender inequalities and express the desirability of a more egalitarian relationship, although this nascent egalitarian perspective is often pervaded by ambivalence, particularly as they describe education and professional work.

1 This perception exists despite the fact that Honduras has one of the highest numbers of women serving in Cabinet posts in Latin America, including: Ministers of Finance, Natural Resources and the Environment, National Security, Labor, and the Social Investment Fund and Central Bank President.
Equality of Educational Opportunities. There is a consensus between boys and girls that both should have the same educational opportunities. Some girls list the education of their children as the principal motivation for their own education, which suggests some ambivalence in the meaning that they attribute to formal education. Boys are less sensitive to the egalitarian perspective on genders. Although they are not immune to pressures for the equality of women, they vigorously adhere to the traditional division of labor between genders, regardless of household composition or whether or not their own mothers participate in the family income.

Inequality on Value of Work. In nearly every school, most students have professional aspirations, and with some exceptions, there are no clear distinctions between genders in terms of career choices. Yet, boys and girls differ on the meaning of professional work. For boys, work is not a choice, it is immediately related to the family's survival or well being. Girls attribute about four different meanings to women's work: (a) as a necessity; (b) to be independent of men; (c) secondary as compared to her role in the family; and (d) as a matter of personal choice.

School and Teachers. Next to home, school is the second focus of children's lives. For some students, particularly the less privileged, home is seen as a place of work, whereas for the more privileged students, it is seen as a domain of leisure. Children's role models are frequently found at home, in family members, not in school. Children value a teacher's personal characteristics, more than professional competence. They also appreciate kind, fun, and cheerful teachers who are willing to explain.

Inception of Honduras. For most children in the study, history begins with the Spanish conquest and they focus on three episodes: the conquest, independence, and the breakup of the Federation of Central American States. Students do not express any sense of connection to the pre-Hispanic Maya civilization. They view history as a series of unconnected heroic episodes, as it is presented in their textbooks, but this structure does not provide them with the tools needed to understand that the Honduras of today is the result of long-term historical processes. In one school, students gave markedly diverse answers to the question about their favorite historical figure compared to the other schools. This suggests that when history is taught in a different and more comprehensive way, children are receptive.

Honduran Identity. Children seem to draw their identity and pride as Hondurans from a variety of sources. The most frequently mentioned sources of pride are the love of nature and specific character traits, such as a work ethic and a sense of resiliency. On ethnicity, although they show disapproval of discrimination, on the rare occasions when they mention the indigenous peoples of Honduras, their attitude is ambivalent. They express admiration, but it is combined with signs of their ignorance and naiveté.

What Children Do Not Like. Children in the study do not like symptoms of poverty and are concerned about the issue of corruption. A substantial part of their concern is related to how public resources are spent and a feeling that their country is compared unfavorably to other countries. They also mention the problem of crime. However, their concern with these problems is matched by a sense of self-reliance and a desire to help their country.
Environment and Hurricane Mitch. Children express great love and respect for the environment and natural resources of Honduras, and they enjoy going out into the country. The great majority shows an understanding of the importance of forests for the environment. They are clearly aware of environmental problems such as deforestation, particularly after Hurricane Mitch, and pollution, but are less able to develop a diagnostic and a course of action to address the problems.

Recommendations

- The ILC should recognize the importance of family in children’s lives and design exhibits, concessions, rooms, and other attractions for the entire family. To the extent possible, the ILC should not view parents or other relatives as mere spectators, but rather should encourage participation by the entire family.

- The exhibits should consider including images that help children visualize the equality between genders in the workplace and legitimize equality of responsibilities in the household. It would also be valuable to present information on important or heroic women in Honduran history who could be role models and organize special events or exhibits dedicated to the importance of women in contemporary Honduran society.

- Exhibits on the environment should establish a direct connection between identifying problems and developing solutions and cover topics such as biodiversity, traditional knowledge, and sustainable development. It would be helpful to have an exhibit about the experimental method in order to establish a sharp distinction between scientific and non-scientific forms of understanding the natural world.

- An exhibit should be designed to explain natural disasters, including Hurricane Mitch. Children in the study lived through the hurricane and are very aware and proud of the way Hondurans worked together to overcome the destruction. An exhibit could help to make the consequences of environmental problems, such as deforestation, more concrete and relevant.

- Exhibits devoted to historical themes should show how historical processes have helped to shape the present reality of Honduras. Heroes could be put in a larger context for children to understand the relevance of their history.

- The ILC should emphasize the knowledge and practices of pre-Hispanic cultures and the linkages to the living culture of the indigenous communities in Honduras. In addition to showing the historical accomplishments of the Maya civilization, exhibits could also illustrate how the Maya and other indigenous groups in contemporary Honduras continue making their own history.

- Images and exhibits should be inclusive and avoid ethnic stereotypes. *Mestizos*, indigenous communities, and blacks (men and women) could be shown working together inside and outside the home and contributing to a country that belongs to all of them.

- This assessment reinforces the justification for an ILC to complement the formal educational system. Children in an ILC learn at their own pace and no child is “left behind” since they
can spend as much time as they want at each exhibit. The ILC should include a room with contributions from the children themselves, such as items contributed from schools or selected through a regional contest. Communities could be incorporated into the ILC and its traveling exhibits in the same way as the schools. A small space could be devoted to objects chosen by the communities themselves.

- The ILC should be a fun place that incorporates the attitudes that children value, such as cheerfulness and approachability. The volunteer guides for the ILC, expected to be college students, should reflect this type of positive attitude with knowledge about the subject matter and the ability to present it in an interesting, entertaining, and patient manner.
A SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

Family, Gender & Identity: Influences & Opportunities for Children in Honduras

Gender Analysis for the Honduras Interactive
Environmental Learning & Science Promotion Project - PROFUTURO

INTRODUCTION

1. The Honduras Interactive Environmental Learning and Science Promotion Project—PROFUTURO will finance activities to encourage and expand scientific, environmental, and cultural knowledge in Honduras. This project will support the design and implementation of an Interactive Learning Center (ILC) as a non-formal educational facility to be used by children, teachers, and parents. The proposed ILC, to be built in Tegucigalpa, would complement education provided by the schools with its hands-on, interactive exhibits and programs on topics such as: (a) science and technology; (b) sustainable development and environmental management linkages with natural disasters; (c) the human body and communication; and (d) sustainable development practices and scientific knowledge of pre-Hispanic cultures.

2. The ILC will promote innovative teacher training and is expected have a positive educational impact on families by providing a dynamic and safe environment for learning, recreation, and leisure. The project will finance a capacity building program for the staff and volunteers of the ILC, as well as a communication and outreach strategy for the public. The building itself will be environmentally-friendly and will promote the use of non-conventional energy sources for educational purposes. PROFUTURO is also expected to promote awareness among the public about the diverse natural resources of Honduras and offer new learning opportunities for the poorest children through targeted outreach programs.

3. During preparation of the PROFUTURO Project in 1998, a pilot social assessment (SA) was conducted to obtain inputs from children and teachers, the main beneficiaries of PROFUTURO, and strengthen the project’s conceptual framework. The pilot SA consisted of eight focus group discussions with about three boys and three girls (50 children total, ranging in age from seven to 16) and informal interviews with five teachers from three urban and two rural schools in and around Tegucigalpa. The pilot SA provided recommendations for project design and for the ILC, particularly for monitoring and evaluation, as detailed in the PROFUTURO Project Appraisal Document dated May 25, 1999.

4. Although the pilot SA did not find gender disparities or differences, it recommended that additional research should analyze the demands and opportunities of both women and men, particularly regarding their roles in Honduran culture and their expectations about work and family life. As part of the monitoring and evaluation system and with resources awarded by the Gender Operational Fund (GOF) in 1999, an assessment was carried out to begin to understand these issues and help guide the design and preparation of the ILC, its exhibits, training activities, and outreach programs.
Objectives

5. The main objective of the assessment is to understand how children in Honduras build their identity and to determine the main characteristics of gender roles as performed and reflected in the educational and cultural systems. Specific objectives are to understand how children view: (a) the differences between boys and girls; (b) the differences between women and men as adults; (c) the value of education for boys and girls and for men and women; (d) family life; (e) gender roles in private and public life; and (f) how gender would and should be considered in the future. On national identity and environment, the objectives are to understand how children represent: (a) Honduras and its uniqueness; (b) what it means to be Honduran; (c) Honduran history and culture; (d) education and school; (e) how they learn; (f) perceptions of science; and (g) the environment and how to conserve it.

6. In April 1999, the fieldwork for the assessment was carried out with a sample of children from five different schools in the Tegucigalpa area. The main data source is the responses to questionnaires filled out by 131 children (72 boys and 59 girls) in either the sixth or seventh grades, mostly 11 or 12 year olds. Three of the schools are public (one uses advanced teaching methods) and two are private (one is bilingual). A sample of the questions includes (see complete questionnaire in Annex 1):

- What is the best thing about being a woman or man and what is the most difficult thing?
- What gives you the most pride and the least pride as a Honduran?
- Describe the part of Honduran history that you remember best and tell us who is your favorite Honduran historical character?
- When you grow up, what kind of work would you like to do?
- With some teachers one learns more. What do they do that other teachers do not do?
- What is the most important thing that can be done to protect the environment?

7. The questionnaires were complemented by a focus group in each school with six to eight volunteer students from the group that had filled out the questionnaire. Each group was equally divided by gender and on average, the interviews lasted about 45 minutes. A sixth school, the poorest of the public schools visited, experienced a tragedy the day before the visit was scheduled. The assessment was limited to a focus group with eleven children, selected by the president of the parent's association; no questionnaires were filled out. The focus groups were led by a facilitator who posed questions to the entire group and directed the discussion to make sure everyone had the opportunity to speak. The discussions were loosely structured with questions based on the main issues from the questionnaire, but formulated in different ways in order to further explore children's answers; for example, whether women should work outside of the home, whether girls should receive the same education as boys, and preferences children had between school and home. Each focus group developed its own dynamic: students engaged in discussions and debates, which sometimes resulted in specific questions not used in other groups.

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2 The day before the visit, the leader of the community and his brother were murdered in front of the school while school was in session. The president of the parent's association insisted that the assessment should continue as planned.
8. The assessment has a relatively good representation of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, including students from more upper class families in the private schools as well as quite poor families in one of the public schools, and a diverse mix of middle and lower class in the other two public schools. The public school that clearly serves a poorer population is located in a community with makeshift housing and many new inhabitants from the recent migration of people left homeless by Hurricane Mitch. Despite differences in their socioeconomic background, there is a significant homogeneity in children's views and representations, including those concerning gender and family life.

9. The questionnaire did not contain any specific questions on family income or parents' degree of education, but it did inquire about parents' occupations. The children's answers however, are often vague or imprecise, such as "my mother works in a school" or "my father works in a bank." In households where both parents are present (80 percent of sample), either both parents work or only the father works. Mothers' occupations included such diverse jobs as: secretary, nanny, street vendor, manicurist, school principal, lawyer, meat packer, business owner, agronomist, teacher or professor, and employee in an international organization; fathers' occupations included: taxi driver, car salesman, business manager, bakery owner, ophthalmologist, engineer, architect, employee in a security system company, university professor, and employee in an international organization.

10. This report is organized into sections based on the different "worlds" in which children live and interact, from the immediate world of their families, to their school, to the larger world of their country and its environment. It concludes with specific recommendations for how the ILC should: (a) deal with gender issues in a way that is fair, equitable and respectful of differences between the sexes; (b) be made responsive to children's needs, values, identity and self-esteem; and (c) improve children's understanding of sustainable development and its relationship with science and the environment.

HOME

Household Composition

11. Children's Families. Children express a strong sense of belonging to a larger family unit regardless of whether they live in a "conjugal nuclear configuration" (both parents and their children), extended family format (both parents and their children and other relatives), or a single-parent home. The majority (about 60 percent) live in conjugal nuclear households and about one-fifth have an extended format. Seventeen percent come from single-parent homes (mostly female-headed) and of these, almost all include some other relative. Although these units are also extended families, for the purposes of this assessment, they are referred to as single-parent to distinguish them from the extended family format.

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3 An analysis of the differences among students from low, middle, and upper classes requires additional research.
4 Although these units are also extended families, for the purposes of this assessment, they are referred to as single-parent to distinguish them from the extended family format.
12. **Role of Families as Supporters.** As shown by the high proportion of extended families, families are supposed to be, and actually are, a source of significant support for other family members in need. Although it is possible that Hurricane Mitch affected the way in which families supported other family members, we do know that this support does still exist. On the contrary, when in difficult situations, they first turn to families for help.

13. **Household Composition in Different Types of Schools.** The conjugal nuclear family configuration prevails among children from the private bilingual school. In contrast, children from one of the public schools present the highest percentages of different family arrangements: about a third live in extended families, about a fifth in single parent units, and a few with relatives other than their parents.

14. Even when the conjugal nuclear configuration prevails, there is evidence that the household members are not isolated from other family units. Parents and their children maintain quite frequent contact with relatives outside of the nuclear family; for example, “I enjoy going where my grandparents are and playing with my cousins.” These visits commonly involve going to villages outside of Tegucigalpa. Children extol these trips, not only because they enjoy “traveling through Honduras,” but it is also seen as an opportunity to leave the city and its problems, “to go out and breathe fresh air,” “bathe in the rivers,” and “it is pretty, safe, nobody steals, people leave the door unlocked.” The importance of relatives in children’s lives is also evident when they were asked who they admire the most. Besides their own parents, a significant number of children admire their grandmother, grandfather, or other relative (see Box 1).

15. **Division of Labor.** An analysis of the division of labor between genders inside and outside the home is restricted to nuclear and extended families (80 percent of the sample). In about two-thirds of these households, both parents are involved in a professional or, particularly the mothers, in a semi-professional activity. In about a third of the households, there is a more segregated or traditional division of labor, with women as homemakers and men as breadwinners. About a third of the households also have one or more domestic workers. Regardless of whether or not women work outside the home, men have no domestic obligations, except for a few references to cooking and cleaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1. Who Children Admire and Why</th>
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<tr>
<td>“I admire my grandfather because he bettered himself, that is, no one helped him, and he has factories and a supermarket.” (girl, private school)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I admire my uncle because he is very good to me. He gives me what he can.” (boy, private school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I admire my grandmother because she is a fighter. She worked to take care of her children because her husband had died.” (girl, public school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I admire my grandfather because he has had many adventures and he makes me laugh.” (boy, private school)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: social assessment

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5 “Semi-professional” is defined as a career that does not require a college degree and/or is attributed a lower rank in the occupational prestige scale.

6 Nearly all students from the private bilingual school and about a third of the students in the other private school have one or more maids. Very few students in one of the public schools mention a domestic worker at home.
taking care of smaller children. In all the families, home functions are rigidly defined as feminine, but with some qualifications as described below.

16. **Household Work.** There is significant participation of both boys and girls in domestic work and curiously, they even carry out similar tasks such as, cleaning, cooking, and taking care of smaller children. This suggests that domestic work is not differentiated according to gender until at least a certain age. In one focus group, some girls explicitly assert that boys should learn how to deal with housework “so that it serves them for the rest of their lives” and “for the boy not to be machista.” By contrast, according to some boys, there are certain tasks, particularly cooking, they should not engage in, for example, “the best part of being a man is that we do not have to cook” and “sometimes men are annoyed by having to do women’s work” (boy talking about cooking in a focus group).

17. Household work is seen to be the task of mothers, children, and domestic workers. The presence or absence of a domestic worker in a household appears to influence the organization of the division of labor in the household, since their presence liberates family members from housework. Indeed, mothers of the children attending the private bilingual school are the least involved in housework, even when not employed outside the home. Similarly, with just one exception (a boy who said that he helped his mother to take care of a younger sibling), children from this school have no obligations or responsibilities at home. The significant presence of maids among these families is likely to account for the strongest aversion to men’s participation in housework, as expressed by a boy in the focus group in this school, “men should not take part in housework, perhaps only washing the cars.”

**Focus on the Family**

18. **Family as Core Value.** One of the most significant findings of the assessment is a strong family orientation as the crucial component in the identity of Honduran children. First, parents and relatives are their main reference in life. Family members are frequently cited as the persons they most admire, and spending time with them is often mentioned as their preferred activity on weekends. Second, the most important roles for men and women in the world, in the view of both boys and girls, are to carry out their family-related duties. (see Box 2).7

19. According to children in the study, men and women are perceived as having different but complementary roles in the household; both involve self-sacrifice, obligations, and devotion to others. Marrying, having children, and forming a family is not a choice; it is seen as a destiny. Finally, the evidence that children are family- rather than public-oriented is also shown in the small number of spontaneous references to the public domain. Even questions that explicitly refer to the latter were sometimes reinterpreted to refer to family life. For instance, more than one child, when asked what makes them proud of being Honduran, wrote, “…my father and mother are Honduran.”

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7 This perception exists albeit the fact that Honduras has one of the highest numbers of women serving in Cabinet posts in Latin America, including as: Ministers of Finance, Natural Resources and the Environment, National Security, Labor, and the Social Investment Fund and Central Bank President.
20. The importance assigned to family life can be explained by several factors. The 11 to 12-year-old age group is generally supposed to have their families as their main reference in life. At this time, peer groups are just emerging as "significant others," and at this stage they still do not act as a competitive source of socialization to parents or families, as generally occurs during adolescence. Another reason is the cultural milieu in which the children are immersed. Some authors have labeled it as "familism," a phenomenon that has a long tradition in Latin American countries (Hernandez, 1982).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2. What is the Role of a Woman/Man in the World?</th>
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<td><strong>The role of a man is:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Bring money home, not allowing his wife to become stressed.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Bring money to the family and provide discipline.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;...to please women,&quot; &quot;...to make the wife happy and if he has a child, him too.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;...to be a responsible and faithful father.&quot; (boys, private and public schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;...is to advance the economy of the nation where he lives.&quot; (boy, public school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;...he must take care of the forest and not only men but also women.&quot; (boy, private school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The role of a woman is:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;To feed us and educate us.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Take care of the moral values of the family.&quot; (boys, public school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Be a mother and housewife.&quot; (girl, private school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;If married, only housewife, if single, work to support herself.&quot; (girl, public school)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Social assessment*

21. Familism is understood as a response to a hostile environment, to stresses of survival and/or to the absence of the "state" as an effective provider. It emphasizes the primary obligations and duties of members of both nuclear and extended families to help one another especially, but not only, in times of need and crisis. Loyalty, cooperation, and interdependence among family members are core values upon which family structure is based. The sense of belonging and the obligation to mutual assistance supersede the emphasis on individuation. The concept also emphasizes the preservation of family traditions and its hierarchical organization, and supports traditional family roles. All these characteristics pervade children's perceptions and constitute crucial elements of their daily experience. In sum, age group and "familism" are the underlying forces behind many of the findings of the assessment.

22. Children attach a strong value to family life, and the connection to family is essential for happiness, self-esteem, and moral worth. For one girl, the opportunity to talk with her mother is one of the highlights of the weekend; for another, she likes to "share what we did during the week with the members of my family." The family is a place of love and protection governed by

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8 The contrast with the typical American family life is interesting, "For highly individuated Americans, there is something anomalous about the relation between parents and children...We have already seen how children must leave home, find their own way religiously and ideologically, support themselves, and find their own peer group. This process leads to a considerable amnesia about what one owes to one's parents" (Bellah, 1983:82).

9 The assessment suggests that children's world view is permeated by traditional values. Religion also seems to play a significant role in their lives. Some boys cite the Pope as the person they most admire, and going to church with their families on the weekends is mentioned as an activity that boys and particularly girls enjoy.
rules of reciprocation: one can count on family members and one owes them significant obligations.

23. Boys and girls place attachment to family and interdependency on a higher plane than individualistic fulfillment and self-sufficiency. First, both motherhood and the “difficult” role of men as breadwinners demand self-sacrifice to others. Second, “self-sacrifice” for the well-being of other family members is often invoked as the justification for choosing their parents or other relatives as the people they admire the most. Finally, for boys, the achievement of personal success in life is subordinate to their moral obligation as a provider to their families and other relatives in need.

24. With a few exceptions (mainly from the private schools), boys rarely mention the search for profitable professions or personal accomplishments as goals in life. Rather, the justifications for their career choices emphasize “helping” people in need, especially family members; for instance, comments included: “It takes a lot of effort to succeed and not be mediocre, but the most important thing is the family”; “I’d like to be a lawyer because if someone in my family has problems I could help and do everything possible to assist that person”; and “I’d like to be a doctor because I like to help people, my family and friends in particular.” “Freedom,” expressed as a cherished quality possessed by men, is not opposed to duties and obligations toward others. Instead of announcing independence in relation to others, men’s “freedom” seems to pertain to their liberty of coming and going when compared with women.10

25. There is some evidence that boys are slightly more detached from their families than girls. Boys tend to emphasize activities such as sports (playing soccer, swimming), watching TV, playing with videos and, surprisingly often, “doing homework.” Although girls also mention that they enjoy interacting with friends, going to the movies or mall, watching TV and engaging in physical activities (riding bikes or horses, skating, and so on), the references to independent activities are much more frequent among boys. Boys do mention some family activities, such as: “I like to chat with my parents and spend all the time with my family” (boy, private bilingual school).

26. A greater number of girls cite going out with parents and other relatives during the weekends or for leisure activities. Besides visiting kin outside Tegucigalpa, other typical answers from girls are, “I like to go on outings with all my family, talk to my mom, go to church, always with the family”; “I like to be at home with my mom, my dad and my siblings”; and “I admire my mom and my sister because when I am sad, we go out and I come back happy.”

27. Additional evidence that girls are more connected to their families can be inferred from their answers regarding the person that they admire the most. Most girls cite their mothers, fathers (or both) and other relatives; for example, “I admire my parents and God because they are good, loving, and they take good care of me.” Boys, although also naming family members,

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10 This perception is in clear contrast with the typical middle-class American culture that emphasizes independence and encourages individuation and separation from the family. Consonant with a more individualistic worldview, the ideas of “personal choices,” “self-fulfillment,” and “autonomy” are also crucial in this cultural context (Bellah, 1985).
include public personages as well: famous soccer players, politicians (President Flores, Fidel Castro, el gordito\textsuperscript{11}), and successful people (famous actors and one mention of Bill Gates).

Perceptions of Gender Roles

28. Both boys and girls understand that men and women must accomplish very different roles in the family. Children tend to perceive the genders as having opposite although frequently complementary attributes, and both boys and girls demonstrate a strong adherence to traditional family values (see Box 3). When answering the questions in the box below, they tend to respond only about their own gender. However, through their answers, boys and girls reflect views on the opposite sex.

\begin{center}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3. Children’s Perceptions of Gender Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the best thing about being a woman?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The gift to procreate or to “give life to new beings.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “We [women] play an important role because it is thanks to us that we can be born.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moral superiority: “we are more honest than boys,” and “we are more generous.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical beauty: “[the woman] is more beautiful,” and “has a more beautiful body” (most often cited among girls in private bilingual school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exemption from hard things in life or socially privileged: “we do not have to carry heavy burdens,” “we do not have to work as much as men,” and “we are more pampered.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the most difficult thing about being a woman?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “The pain of bringing a child into the world.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Here in Honduras women have too much work at home.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “The most difficult thing is to have to ask for things.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Machismo is when men do not allow women to do things.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the best thing about being a man?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical strength: “the strong sex,” and “we can defend ourselves.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Freedom: “to be able to go anywhere,” and “we do not have to depend on anybody.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “We have privileges that women do not yet have,” and “we are the sex that gives orders.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Men’s physical and mental agility: “we are more agile,” and “we are more agile in order to think of better ideas.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the most difficult thing about being a man?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Role as a breadwinner: “the duty to feed a family,” “the daily sustenance for life,” “bring money home,” “we sweat a lot,” and “maintain women with food and money.” (This type of answer is given in all the schools, including from the boys whose mothers participate in the family income.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\end{center}

Source: Social assessment

\textsuperscript{11} Mayor Castellanos, known as “el gordito”, was the late mayor of Tegucigalpa who died in a helicopter crash in November 1998 while touring areas devastated by Hurricane Mitch.
Roles in the Family. The 'natural' qualities of each gender and the complementarity between them are the foundation of different social functions in and outside the family. Children believe that men are "naturally stronger," "more courageous," and "more able to defend themselves"; consequently, they are able to provide for their families materially in the "outer world," seen as permeated with hardness and dangers such as crime, immorality, and corruption. Men's role as breadwinner is a matter of personal honor, and their involvement in domestic work is seen as jeopardizing their self-esteem. The dialogue below shows this:

Facilitator: “Would it be possible for the father to stay at home and take care of the children?”
Boy: “No, because fathers do not like to stay at home so as to not appear as kept men.”

The home is seen as a peaceful and protected realm. Women's capacity for procreation, associated with her moral superiority, makes them not only more apt to play the role of caretaker, but also more responsible for the nurturing and passing on of family mores. As one boy states, "women should protect the moral values of the family." Therefore, children tend to justify the association of the "outer world" to men and the "inner world" to women on sex determinants rather than on gender constraints.

Neither girls nor boys mention or recognize the role of men in reproduction. For example, some boys evoke the same quality in their answers to a different question, by stating, "The person I admire the most is my mother because she gave me life." The "best" and the "most difficult" things in gender roles are not always perceived as opposites. For instance, one of the boys gave the same answer to both of these questions, "the best and the most difficult thing [of being a man] is to be the strong sex."

Girls tend to perceive their gender roles as anchored in "nature" or "biology", and they see a wide range of difficulties, ranging from biological to cultural forces. It is somewhat complicated to interpret whether their perceptions of the difficulties emanate from natural or social constraints. The hardships implied by their gender are organized below, starting with one clearly attributed to nature or biology and ending with one imputed to the cultural setting:

(a) Difficulties stemming from their biological condition as women. A significant number of girls cite not only childbirth, but menstruation and physical maturation as the most difficult part of being a woman; for instance, "it is when menstruation begins" and "the changes of growing up."

(b) Physical fragility and the inability to defend themselves against men. "When one wants to defend oneself one almost cannot do it because women are weaker and men are stronger than women."

(c) Overwhelmed by housework. "Women are overburdened with family-related work."

(d) Having to be a superwoman. Women are seen to carry the responsibilities and burdens of work both inside and outside the house: "it is very complex to be a woman because some women have to work and have to go home to tidy up, clean and take care of the children."

(e) Being dependent on men for survival. "Most times we have to depend on men."
(f) Machismo. This issue is more clearly attributed to the cultural environment. Although invariably defined as “the power of men,” some girls stress different forms of machismo both in the public and private domains. In a focus group, a girl refers to the private domain by saying, “machismo is that in discussions men normally have the last word.” Domestic violence is also invoked as evidence or a result of machismo; for example, “men take very seriously the business of being men. They are machistas, they believe that only they can be strong, and sometimes beat women up.”

33. Machismo is also manifested in the public domain. It can refer either to the fact that women are refrained by men from doing things they are able to do or, more often, that they are more exposed to be morally or sexually molested in the streets. In both of these perceptions, women are seen as less free than men; for instance, “women can do the same things as men, only men do not allow women to do things” (focus group, private school); “the worst is that they [men] say things to us in the streets only because we have a bosom” (girl, private bilingual school); “the most difficult is that we have to watch out for ourselves from some men because they are dangerous. If I was a man I would not hurt women” (girl, public school); and “the most difficult thing is that women are exposed to rape” (girl, public school).

34. The concern with machismo pervades the girls’ statements in all the schools. Specific references to domestic violence are for the most part made by children in the public schools, perhaps from the poorer families. For instance, the mother of one of the girls who stresses domestic violence supports the family as a street vendor. It is noteworthy that the theme of discrimination against women and/or machismo shows up spontaneously in the writings of some girls, but never in boys’ answers. Nevertheless, it is also noticeable that children (including some boys) are more emphatic when criticizing machismo in the focus groups when instigated to speak about the subject. Even in these situations, however, girls are more fluent and radical than boys. Although they seem to be aware of the prevalence of machismo in Honduran society, boys are more timid in their censures. The dialogue below, between the facilitator and a boy from the experimental public school, is somewhat atypical:

Boy: “There are men who think that they are the ones who give orders at home.”
Facilitator: “Is that wrong?”
Boy: “Yes, because men and women have the same rights.”

35. As a general tendency, girls, when compared with boys, are more inclined to explain the inferior position ascribed to women by referring to cultural factors (but also to “natural” determinations, as noted above). In contrast, boys tend to emphasize feminine nature. Thus, while the girls’ perception allows for change, boys’ understandings imply immutability in gender relationships (see Box 4). The criticism of discrimination against women points to the emergence of a dialogue of equality between men and women, particularly emanating from girls.
Box 4. Natural and Cultural Constraints to Female Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>“I believe that women are inferior [sounds of girls reacting strongly] because they cannot become president, and even if they get to be vice-president, men do not take them seriously.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>“Is he right that here in Honduras women do not become president? Why?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same boy</td>
<td>“Because they are dumb.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>[speaking at the same time] “No! That is racism [sic]....They are not [president] because of the lack of opportunity, women could also help their country.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: focus group in the private bilingual school, Social assessment

Nascent Egalitarian Perspective

36. Although children reveal a strong commitment to traditional family values, there is some evidence pointing to an awareness of unfairness concerning the way the division of labor between genders inside and outside the home is shaped in Honduran society, and specifically the subordinate role of women. An analysis of this topic leads to two central ideas. First, only a few girls articulate the desirableness of a more egalitarian arrangement, whereas other girls and boys express a clear endorsement of the traditional division of labor between the genders. Second, even among girls who criticize the traditional arrangement, their uneasiness with it is far from being clear-cut since ambiguities and ambivalence often pervade most of their dialogue on this matter.

37. Boys’ Perceptions of the Division of Labor. Some boys recognize the presence of machismo in Honduran society and even condemn it, particularly when incited to speak about it in the focus groups. However, it appears as if they are more aware of the evident aspects of machismo, rather than its more subtle ones, since what some girls understand as a symptom of machismo, boys do not. For example, some girls point to the traditional division of labor as representing gender inequities, while boys express no antagonism or ambivalence regarding this arrangement (see Box 5).
Box 5. Boys’ Responses about the Division of Labor Between Genders

The following quotes are typical responses from boys regardless of the type of school they attend, household composition, or whether or not their own mothers are engaged in a professional (or semi-professional) activity.

“Women must do everything at home and men are the ones who work.”

“The role of a woman is to be positive and take care of children. She should bring children into the world and educate them. Men should be the breadwinners and provide a good example to their children.”

“The role of a woman is to cook, clean the house, take children to school. The role of a man is to manage the household money and take care of the family.”

Source: Social assessment

38. Since about two-thirds of the children’s mothers work outside the home, the boys’ answers seem to refer to an ideal division of labor between genders. According to them, women should work only if necessary: that is, when the father’s income is insufficient or when there is no adult man in the household. In a private school focus group, a boy states “If the father’s money is enough, the woman should not work. She should take care of the children.” Hence, boys perceive women’s work outside the home as complementary to men’s income and clearly as a subordinate role compared with the one she must accomplish at home. It is noteworthy that the boys in the focus group held in the poorer public school also view this segregated division of labor between genders as a legitimate and cherished arrangement.

39. Boys do not perceive home and household activities as an inferior place for women, although it is for men. They reject the idea put forward by some girls that women’s confinement at home reflects their inferior role in Honduran society. Some boys refer to the “power” of women at home, suggesting that, at least for some of them, power is equally distributed between genders, though in different domains. For example, a boy from one public school states that, “the woman should be the one that gives orders at home.” Therefore, for boys, a more segregated division of labor, rather than being an unfair socially imposed constraint, is perceived as a “natural” arrangement. Although they are not immune to pressures for the equality of women, boys, as compared to girls, tend to maintain a more conservative attitude emphasizing the continuity of traditional values.

40. Girls’ Perceptions of the Division of Labor. In contrast to the boys, some girls point to the traditional division of labor between genders as evidence of gender inequalities, and express the desirability of a more egalitarian relationship (see Box 6).
Box 6. Girls’ Statements on Gender Inequities

“A woman deserves the opportunity to accomplish things in the world like a man.”
(focus group, experimental public school, girl living in a female-headed household; no specification of mother’s work)

“We should have the same rights and duties as men.”
(focus group, experimental public school, both parents are teachers)

“Generally, here in Honduras, I do not know about other countries, women are the ones who have to do the housework, take care of children, cook, and so on. For me this is not the right thing to do. The two genders should share the work without exceptions. There is no reason why a man cannot iron or do the laundry.”
(written answer, experimental public school; both parents work at a university)

“The woman should be an independent person; she should be free but not careless with her children; she can be the same as men without abandoning being a woman.”
(written answer, private school, both parents work for international development organizations, mother works on women’s issues; emphasis added)

Source: Social assessment

41. As shown in the last two quotes in Box 6, only a few girls express opposition to gender inequities in the written responses. In the focus groups, however, not only do more girls explicitly condemn the traditional division of labor between genders, but many also radicalize their criticism toward inequities. They stress that the responsibilities for running a home should be equally shared by both genders; for example, “all a woman does in the home, a man can do” and “men are part of the household and should do housework.” Some girls criticize women’s confinement to the home: “It is not fair for a woman who has studied a lot to stay at home.” They also complain that they have fewer “choices” or “alternatives” in life as compared to men.

42. Most of the girls’ written answers to the question about the most difficult aspect of being a woman depict them as the “weak” sex. In contrast, in the focus groups, some girls even emphasize physical equality between genders; for example, “Women have the same physical capacity as men and then can practice the same sports.” In the questionnaires, girls tend to explain differences between genders based on “nature”; in the collective discussions, “culture” is more clearly pointed out as being responsible for the “inferior” place women occupy in Honduran society. For example, in the focus group at the private bilingual school, two girls mention with scorn that their gym teacher gave different activities to boys and girls, assuming that the latter are “superweak.” “Culture,” as embodied in the attitude of the teacher, rather than “nature,” is blamed for gender inequalities. It is possible that when instigated to talk collectively about inequalities, girls show a tendency to radicalize their positions or to become more aware of these disparities.

43. Nevertheless, it is clear that all girls do not unanimously express a desire for a more egalitarian arrangement between genders. First, although with exceptions, they insist that a woman’s main function in the world is the one accomplished in the family realm. Second, it seems that the egalitarian perspective is sharper among girls from a particular socio-cultural
stratum: families in which both parents are well established liberal professionals working either in universities or in international development organizations. Perhaps these girls are exposed to a more modern ideology concerning genders in their own homes. Finally, the egalitarian perspective expressed by girls is often pervaded by ambivalence. These ambiguities are particularly noticeable in the meanings that girls impute to women's formal education and professional work as described below.

44. **Education.** In all the focus groups, there was a consensus that both girls and boys should have the same educational opportunities, and girls in particular tend to justify their answers by stating that they are “equal.” Nevertheless, a different reason emerges, as exemplified in one girl’s statement, “Women must have education to educate their children.” This assertion suggests some ambivalence in the meaning that girls attribute to formal education. Rather than preparation for a professional career, education can be interpreted as an instrument to become a better or more competent mother. The fact that their studies can be translated into a domestic quality reconfirms that girls tend to perceive the domestic domain as the main reference for their personal identity. Women’s formal education can be also regarded as an end in itself, as insinuated in the writing of a girl attending a public school, “The role of a woman is to achieve a title, and have children and an understanding spouse.”

45. **Professional Work.** Both boys and girls express professional aspirations and with some exceptions, there are no clear distinctions between genders in terms of career choices; both mention that they want to be lawyers, doctors, engineers, and so forth. Boys have a slightly greater inclination than girls for professional rather than semi-professional careers. In one public school, every single boy wants to have a university degree. In the poorest school however, only four out of eleven students have professional aspirations.

46. The reasons for children’s professional choices are also similar, and in a significant number of cases invoke altruistic justifications. For instance, “I’d like to be a doctor to take care of people’s illnesses and keep Honduran society healthy.” This statement is quite exceptional since in most cases, altruistic justifications have a different meaning as suggested in the quotations from a boy and a girl attending public schools:

   Boy: “I want to be a lawyer because if someone in my family has problems, I could help them and do everything possible to assist that person.”
   Girl: “I want to be a doctor to cure my family and others.”

Although “others” (more distant people) are also included in the responses, family members come first. In other words, “altruism” is translated into familism.

47. In conclusion, what distinguishes boys and girls on professional work is neither professional aspirations nor the professions they choose, nor even the justifications they give for their choices. Rather, it is the meaning that professional work has for each of them. For boys, work is not a choice, but almost a “destiny”; and, it is immediately related to the family’s

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12 However, even when boys had parents with these types of professions, they were more resistant than girls to embrace modern values concerning gender.

13 The aspiration to become an astronaut or soccer player was exclusively masculine, whereas the ambition to work as a secretary was mentioned only by girls.
survival or well being. Girls, instead, attribute four different meanings to women's work as described below:

(a) *Women's work as a necessity.* This idea is expressed by a girl in a focus group in a public school, "Both spouses should work since the man cannot afford the household expenses all by himself." In some cases, working outside the home is seen by both girls and boys not as an ideal arrangement, but rather as an imposition.

(b) *Women should work to become independent of men.* This idea conveys two meanings. First, a woman should earn her own money so she does not have to account for expenses to her husband. Her work is seen as generating not only a surplus of money, but also an increase in freedom. As expressed by one girl, "Women should not have to rely on men, they should earn their own money to have fun." Second, women must be prepared if men abandon them. One girl states, "the worst part of being a woman is that sometimes the responsibility is heavy because some men are irresponsible. For that reason, a woman should be educated to be independent, to fight for herself, to be ready to be abandoned by a man." This same girl however, who lives in a female-headed household, says later, "I would like to stay at home to take care of my children instead of hiring a maid who may not take good care of them."

Perhaps a woman's independence is, in this case, a sort of an anticipated reactive behavior to men's inconstancy. Dependency on men is seen as inauspicious when, and especially when, they do not comply (or comply in an unsatisfactory way) with the role they are expected to do. Thus, the negative view of dependency does not necessarily mean a questioning of the traditional division of labor between genders. On the contrary, it can confirm that, at least ideally, the "outside" and "inside" worlds are respectively men and women's proper domain.

(c) *Women's professional work as subordinated to the family life cycle.* Despite the lack of agreement on how long children need their mother's constant presence, there was a consensus among boys and girls that women should not work outside the home while the children are small. Women's professional work is therefore understood as secondary compared with her role as a mother.

(d) *Women's work as a matter of personal choice.* "The role of a woman is to take care of children and if she wants, she can work." "Women can work but at the same time, they take care of children and home." These statements show that working outside the home may be not only a matter of choice, but also a source of personal fulfillment and growth. However, as clearly expressed in the last quote, a woman's profession is still subordinate to her role as a mother and homemaker. Although this meaning is particularly emphasized in the private schools, it also emerges in the focus groups held in two public schools.\(^{14}\)

\(^{14}\) Women's work as a matter of personal choice appears mainly, although not exclusively, among girls from the private schools. These girls may not perceive as much pressure to contribute to the household income, or they have not really started thinking seriously about careers attributable to their age or social background.
48. The idea that men should have equal participation in domestic tasks is more strongly advocated by some girls in the focus group in the private bilingual school, “Men are part of the home and must do housework.” This is ironic since as already noted, these same girls come from families in which men, children and even mothers are spared from domestic tasks—at least from the more manual ones—thanks to the presence of one or more maids at home. In this context, therefore, the quest for equality in the household, rather than anchored on a concrete experience, is a matter of ideological principle. There is another ambivalence underlying their speech, since the same girls who favor a more egalitarian division of genders in the household, insist that women should work “only if they want to.” Thus, they claim equality in their own domain, but at the same time reserve for themselves the right to choose whether to take part in men’s sphere. Table 7 presents the different perceptions of boys and girls on issues such as family, gender roles and work.

49. **Ambivalence.** The ambivalence that pervades girls’ stance on gender roles has to do with, at least in part, the way in which they define feminine identity. They identify feminine identity with the ability to procreate and take care of children; at the same time, aware of their inferior position in society, girls find themselves in the difficult position of trying to be, as one girl wrote, “the same as men without abandoning being women.”

50. What is surprising about this result is not their ambivalence, but rather that at the age of 11 or 12 they are able to express so transparently the conflicts that typically affect women. *Girls are clearly subject to a double pressure: on the one hand, a more traditional orientation that has a long history and powerful roots in Honduras and, on the other, a more modern perspective that advocates a reshaping of values and behaviors that inform gender relationships.* Girls are thus in the middle of the road: although they express an intellectual interest in more egalitarian gender roles, their affective values seem to remain consistent with the traditional values.

51. In spite of the fact that some boys are aware of machismo, they are undoubtedly less sensitive than girls to the egalitarian perspective on gender, regardless of the type of school they attend or whether or not their mothers work outside of the home. Therefore, it seems that women’s work outside of the home, which is sometimes stressed as a crucial means to raise women to equal rights and status, is perhaps necessary, but not enough, to incite changes in the perceptions concerning genders. Indeed, even with working mothers, boys still advocated, at least as an ideal, a more traditional division of labor between women and men.

**Table 7: Summary of Children’s Gender-related Perceptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Roles</strong></td>
<td>Men’s roles are to provide for the family, be the “breadwinner,”</td>
<td>Women’s roles are to be a mother and homemaker, caretaker, to feed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>earn and manage money, be a responsible and faithful father, and</td>
<td>the family, clean the house, educate, and take care of moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>provide discipline.</td>
<td>values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Gender Traits</strong></td>
<td>Physical strength, freedom, physical and mental agility.</td>
<td>Gift to procreate, honesty, generosity, beauty, women do not have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative Gender Traits</strong></td>
<td>The duty to feed and provide for a family, bring money home.</td>
<td>to work hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Biological conditions, the pain of having children, housework.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
work hard. physical frailty, depending on men, machismo.

Household Work
Men should not take part in housework, particularly tasks like cooking. Men do not do women's work. Boys should learn about housework and both genders should share household work.

Education
It is important for a career and work. It is important to be educated in order to educate your children.

Meaning of Professional Work
*Both boys and girls have professional aspirations and their career choices are often altruistic.

Work is a destiny, immediately related to the survival and well being of the family.

Work can be a necessity to support the household. It can allow women to become independent of men and it can be a matter of personal choice and personally fulfilling. Work can be done after children are old enough to be in school.

Source: Social assessment

52. It is interesting to note that some students (including girls), while answering that their mother does participate in the family income, ‘forgot’ to write down the profession. There are indications that a woman’s contribution to family income has not been able to provoke a real change in power relationships in the household. For example, one boy states that “the management of money in the family is a man’s role,” and with few exceptions, adult men are spared from domestic tasks. Boys are undoubtedly internalizing these implicit rules as part of their world-view.

53. Since girls are exposed to the same cultural norms, it is pertinent to ask why they are more ambivalent than boys regarding gender relationships or why boys are less sensitive to the egalitarian viewpoint. One possible explanation is that perhaps boys feel that they are on the privileged side of the traditional arrangement. Although their role as a family provider is far from being an easy one, it is still preferable to participating in domestic work, which is ultimately perceived as derogatory and a disgrace to masculine honor. This world-view seems to be creating a gap between girls and boys, and most likely between men and women, in Honduran society.

SCHOOL

Children and School

54. School Versus Home. Next to home, school is the other main focal point of children’s lives. The less privileged children prefer to be in school, since home is seen as a place of work; the more socially favored, on the other hand, prefer home, since it is seen as a domain of leisure. There do not seem to be any gender differences in their responses. In the private bilingual school, nearly all students in the study prefer home to school. Home is seen as a place for relaxation with fewer rules, “more freedom,” “less control,” and more opportunities for amusement, such as playing, watching TV and using the Internet. In the poorer public school, all students in the study prefer school, since it is a place to learn how to read and do “different things,” while at home they get bored. For many children in the study, home is not seen as a
place for relaxation; rather, they are overburdened with domestic tasks such as cleaning up, cooking, and taking care of younger siblings.

55. In one of the public schools, most children prefer home, where "...one does what one wants" and "because they help one with homework." One girl who prefers school is attracted to its social aspects because "at school one spends time with girlfriends and one learns from strangers." The school as a place to meet friends is a common theme. A boy in another school likes the fact that he can get up at 11 am at home. There are varied responses about the choice between home and school in the school with children from mixed socioeconomic backgrounds.

56. The interaction between home and school is apparent since children in all the schools, except for one, receive help from family members on their homework. This help comes from grandmothers, mothers, brothers, or sisters, but seldom from fathers. Only students from the private bilingual school observe they do not receive help with their homework. In the focus group, a girl states, "We do not need help anymore," and a boy completes the thought: "rather, we are the ones who help."

57. Family members, rather than teachers, are more important figures in children's lives. In some schools, not a single child mentions a teacher as the most admired living person and no school has more than one response indicating admiration for a teacher. Some exceptions include one girl who admires her teacher because "she teaches me what I do not know and also to see the world with good eyes and to help improve it." Several other students say, "the teacher is like a mother," and "with my teacher I feel that I will be a professional or a secretary or a president."

58. School and Teachers. Children value a teacher's personal characteristics, more than professional competence. Among personal traits, there is an overwhelming predominance of characteristics related to personal attitude, demeanor, and kindness. Most prefer fun, cheerful teachers; for example, "...some [teachers] explain while making it fun and others yell, they teach everything as it is rather than with a touch of humor and seriousness" (girl, private school). Students favor teachers who are dynamic in class: "some are more dynamic than others and teach more cheerfully." In a focus group, this idea is further elaborated with a suggestion that a certain degree of "hipness" is desirable. They prefer teachers who have the ability to relate to them and connect class material to things they understand as compared with teachers who are "...dull and sad."

59. Children specifically mention teachers that treat them with respect, provide personal attention, and have a caring attitude. They like a teacher "who treats us well"; "[is] always there when you need them"; is "understanding"; and is "able to understand what is going on at home." They appear to respond positively when they are addressed as valid interlocutors. This interpretation may be somewhat speculative, but it is reinforced by the focus groups themselves since they were eager to take part and were receptive when treated as valid conversation partners. Students prefer teachers who are non-threatening and approachable, even with a nurturing attitude. Some students indicate that they like female teachers because they are "kind" and "gentle."

60. In a few cases, strictness is also mentioned as a positive characteristic of a good or responsible teacher. In one particular school that has a reputation for being run in a strict
fashion, five out of 25 students mention strict teachers as desirable, for example, “they scold us when we misbehave and explain the topics that we do not understand”; and “[some teachers] are stricter and more responsible than other teachers.”

61. In addition to specific attitudes of teachers, students also value a teacher’s willingness to explain (see Box 7). This attribute might seem to be redundant since teachers are employed to explain concepts, but children’s comments reveal the relevance of this topic and why it has a pedagogical dimension. Some teachers simply dictate the lecture and expect students to take notes, while others deliver the material without encouraging feedback in order to measure comprehension. This style of teaching is not exclusive to the public schools; for example, a boy in one of the private schools states that some teachers “give us all the information and explain it, others just provide us with outlines and tell us to study for the exam.”

62. **Learning.** Even when teachers explain class material, some students are left behind. Students value teachers who are sensitive to different paces of learning and make an effort to ensure that everyone understands. Research shows that some students learn at a pace that is up to five times slower than that of the fastest learners; children seem to have an intuitive understanding of this problem. For example, “Some teachers explain slowly at the rhythm of the class while others explain fast, using strange words”; and “they explain again to those who do not understand” (boy and girl, different public schools). The frustration felt by those left behind can be inferred from this statement: “some teachers only try to teach to those who understand and not to those who do not understand much” (boy, private school).

63. Other more complex pedagogical techniques that can be characteristics of good teaching are seldom mentioned, perhaps because students find it too difficult to express them, or because they are beyond their experience. In the school that has a reputation for implementing pedagogical innovations, one girl mentions the advantages of interaction and class projects: “with some teachers one learns more indeed, they have projects, activities, they make the class more active.” In a different public school, two students like the fact that teachers challenge them: “my teacher taught us many things that we could study in high school,” and “she teaches junior high school topics and sincerely she is good.”

### Box 8. What Children Value in Teachers

**Good Teachers:**

“...know how to explain, do not confuse us, are understanding”

“...explain in detail, explain many times,” and “are patient.” (focus group discussions)

“One understands more with some [teachers] because they explain better, share their ideas whereas with others not because the only thing they do is dictate.” (girl, public school)

“...are fun, amusing, and modern.”

**Source:** Social assessment

64. A public school student also explicitly mentions the idea that children are more easily able to handle a concrete topic by saying that the best teachers do not give “abstract” lessons. Two girls from the experimental public school summarize the basics of good teaching with the following: good teachers explain “the topic when we do not understand, connect it to real life,

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15 Direct observation by the consultants confirmed this reputation.
respond to our concerns, and they are interested in teaching us with joy.” The other student notes that some teachers “have a creative method and do not treat us like little children, they are not scolding and do not put pressure on us.”

65. Children mention watching TV, including news programs. Some students say that they watch TV all day or six hours a day (obviously an exaggeration since they mention in detail many other activities), but it is an indication of the prominence of this medium in their free time. Another student warned about its dangers: “children should not watch TV because it has too much violence.”

66. Children learn from the complex environment surrounding them and the messages that they remember best are reinforced by more than one source. An interesting contrast is seen in their understanding of the importance of the forests, a subject that appears even in a very poorly filled out questionnaire, compared with their sense of connection to the Maya culture. When asked how they learned about the environment, students in a public school mention a variety of sources ranging from teachers and parents to newscasts and magazines. In contrast, the sources for learning about the Maya civilization - a topic that, as the next section shows, registers rather weakly in their minds - are all based on the formal system of education, school, teachers and parents.

67. Self Esteem. Educational researchers often link self-esteem to the capacity to learn. It is believed that some children with poor self-esteem and low aspirations are less motivated or able to learn. Children in the study do not appear to have limited aspirations, since most are able to identify professional goals. In general, a healthy self-image shows through even when their chosen profession may be a fantasy; for example, “I want to be many things, soccer player, actor, singer, but I haven’t decided. I want to have a lot of money and have a good family for me to help, but if I have to choose now I would choose soccer because I love it and I am good.” Children in the study do not show any symptoms of low self-esteem that could be an obstacle to learning. The conditions of self-esteem as described in social science literature seem to be present, particularly a sense of identity, a sense of belonging (in this case to a caring family), and a sense of purpose and personal competence, as reflected in their career goals (Reasoner, 1982).

HONDURAS

Children and Their Country

68. Honduran History and Culture. Children’s understanding of history is concentrated in three episodes: the conquest, independence, and the breakup of the Federation of Central American States. This view of history, as a series of unconnected heroic episodes, is present in the structure of the textbooks used at the sixth grade level. The textbooks contain information presented in a didactic fashion, and they emphasize episodes and heroes rather than processes and long trends. This presentation of history does not provide students with the tools to understand that the Honduras of today is the result of long-term historical processes.

16 Undoubtedly, children also learned a great deal about the importance of the environment following Hurricane Mitch.
69. Most students in the study select one of the main heroes of the episodes mentioned above as their favorite historical character. Specifically, they cite Lempira, the leader of the Indian resistance against the Spanish conquest or Francisco Morazán, the Honduran President of the Central American Federation in the 1830s. In all of the schools except for one, more than half of the students select either Lempira or Morazán. José Cecilio del Valle, the writer of the Act of Independence is also mentioned, but he is a distant third.

70. An interesting departure from the norm is found in a public school where the responses are much more varied, with only 12 out of 41 choosing the two heroes Lempira and Morazán. This is the only school where a girl selects a woman as her favorite hero (Lucila Gamero). Among the other heroes selected in this school are the indigenous peoples (as a group), the Maya civilization, Marco Aurelio Soto, José Cecilio del Valle, José Trinidad Cabañas, President Flores, the late mayor of Tegucigalpa, and Ramón Rosa. The variety of responses in this school, including mention of intellectuals linked to the liberal reforms (late nineteenth century) and contemporary figures suggests that history is taught in a different and more comprehensive way in this school. The way responses are detailed in this school shows that the teacher is able to tell vivid stories that stick in the student's imagination (even if there are some inaccuracies). Based on the results from this school, it appears that even at this early age, it is possible to teach history as more than memorization, and connect it to current events.

71. **Pre-Hispanic Culture.** Children in the study lack a sense of connection to pre-Hispanic history, and it seems that for most of them, history begins with the arrival of the Spanish. Very few students even mention the Maya. Two examples of when students did mention the Maya include, "[Honduran history] started with the Maya"; "Indigenous peoples built beautiful monuments, the Mayas made an almost perfect calendar and studied astronomy with the sun and the moon".

72. When the Maya are mentioned, although it is rare, it is usually in relation to nature and the environment; for instance, they express pride in "...[Honduras'] ecological resources and Copán ruins" and the fact that they"...can see monuments from ancient times in Honduras." In both of these responses, their pride is expressed about the archeological remains, not the Maya's achievements; and in the second quote, the Maya as people are not mentioned by name. However, in one of the focus groups in a public school, one student mentioned Copán Ruins as a source of pride and a well-informed discussion of Mayan achievements followed. This exchange indicates that children do learn about the Maya civilization, but they do not seem to connect it to Honduran identity or pride.

73. Recent sixth grade social studies textbooks provide a fair amount of information about the Maya civilization by putting it in the proper context of pre-Hispanic cultures, showing the geographical area where Mayan cities were located. Books do not make an effort to connect the Mayan past to contemporary Honduras, or to present it as a source of pride or identity. Perhaps, students normally think of the Maya civilization as pre-history (a technical mistake since the Maya rulers recorded their deeds in hieroglyphic writing), but in general, they do not appear to make any connections to the Mayan achievements as a source of pride as Hondurans.

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17 The questionnaire did not specifically mention the Maya since the emphasis was on prompting children to think about the first image that came into their mind when the word history was mentioned.
74. **Honduran Identity.** Students' positions as citizens are complex, often contradictory, and there do not seem to be any gender differences in their responses. Children seem to draw their identity and pride as Hondurans from a variety of sources. Many find it difficult to verbalize their feelings, and they provide general expressions of love and patriotism for their country. For those who are more precise, love of nature and character traits are by far the most frequent sources of pride. Other themes mentioned include the family, "my father and mother are from Honduras," culture, freedom, agricultural production, Christopher Columbus, Lempira and the national soccer team. These can be difficult topics for an 11 or 12 year old to expand upon, but most students do try to be more explicit.

75. **Pride in Natural Beauty.** In all but one of the schools, one-third of the students express their pride in terms related to the landscape and nature. Their love of nature and natural beauty is articulated in many ways, "It gives me pride to be Honduran because it is a beautiful country" or "It is beautiful when one looks at Tegucigalpa at night from a distance." Some describe beaches or forests, for example, "What makes me most proud of being Honduran is to live in a country in which forests can still be seen." A combination of two favorites, family and traveling in Honduras is found in this statement: "At vacation time I like to visit my relatives and get to know every corner of Honduras which for me is a magnificent place" (girl, public school).

76. **Pride in Work Ethic.** A second prominent theme that evokes pride is specific character traits attributed to the Honduran people, including a work ethic and a sense of resiliency, particularly after Hurricane Mitch (see Box 8). This issue is mentioned in every school. In two institutions, it is mentioned by a third of the students whereas in the others, it appears less frequently (from one sixth of the class to a single student).

77. Children make frequent references to hard work and responsibility both inside and outside of the home in order to provide for the family. One girl mentions hard work in general: "What makes me most proud is that people are hard working, very polite and we have [what it takes] to get the country ahead". Another says, "What makes me most proud of being Honduran is that Hondurans are hard workers." Yet, when referring to the abstract, there are frequent expressions of regret for allegedly bad work habits: "I am not proud of [Honduras] having lazy people who do not fight to get their families ahead" (boy, public school). On more than one occasion, a student who is proud of Hondurans for being hard workers regretted them not being so.
Children refer to Hurricane Mitch with expressions of regret and pride in a variety of contexts, including when they are asked to think about being Honduran.

"Honduras makes me proud because despite the hurricane they keep working to improve Honduras." (girl, private school)

"I have pity for what happened in our native country."

"Mitch came and left many people homeless."

"What makes me most proud is that even though the hurricane passed through, we keep on going." (boy, public school)

"Hurricane Mitch could not destroy us." (proudly stated in a focus group)

Source: Social assessment

78. Although Honduran children express pride in their country, particularly its fighting spirit, they are aware of its poverty. One girl states, "I feel very proud to be Honduran and not because the country is rich or poor, I feel proud but because it is a great country even though it is poor but I know that united it will get ahead." Several children explain that there is nothing not to be proud of as a Honduran; for example, "I am very proud of being an Honduran and there is nothing not to be proud of."

79. What Children Do Not Like. Children are aware of poverty and underdevelopment, and they show concern about the issue of corruption. They do not like the symptoms of poverty such as unemployment, lack of education, dirty streets, or "dirty people." One student mentions "the bad organization of our economic resources to defend ourselves."

80. There is a contradiction between the pride in the hard work that children see as a Honduran characteristic and the belief that there are many people who do not work hard. This contradiction may be related to their awareness of the poverty of their country. Many of the answers that focus on poverty seem to be attempts to understand why, although they see hardworking people, they frequently mention laziness. For example, one response connects laziness to the strong sense of family: "It does not make me proud to have lazy people who do not fight to get their family ahead." Perhaps, although they see hard working people, but mention laziness as a character trait, they are attributing this to "other" people such as poor people or minorities.

81. Corruption. Many children express concern about how public resources are spent, and particularly show impatience with the results of foreign aid in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch. When results from this assistance were not immediately visible, they think it was misused. The following statement from a focus group summarizes the general thrust of their concerns: "The form of government is not equal for everyone, there is theft, corruption." In a private bilingual school, one boy connects poverty and corruption by saying, "[Honduras] does not prosper and too much money is stolen from the government."
82. Children are also concerned that their country is compared unfavorably to other countries. "There are other countries," states a child, "that speak derogatorily about Honduras. In the news they say that Honduras ranks second in corruption." Others express a similar concern about dependency: "We are not independent, we depend on the United States", and "[Honduras] is a poor country that has needy people and we depend on other countries."

83. **Crime.** A small number of students in every school mention the issue of crime. Although crime is seen as a problem, they do not stress it as one of their foremost concerns. However, as noted above, girls do mention sexual assault as a frequent preoccupation when asked about what is most difficult about being a woman. A sense of vulnerability to sexual predators permeates many answers to that question, yet when crime is mentioned later, sex-related crimes do not appear explicitly.

84. **Self-reliance.** Children’s concerns about poverty and dependency are matched by a sense of self-reliance and a strong will to help their country overcome obstacles. Honduran children seem to have a strong reservoir of idealism and desire to improve themselves and their country. A girl in a private school states, "I know I will never reject [Honduras]"; another responds, "we are responsible for our actions," illustrating that one reaction to a feeling of dependence is a desire to take charge. Others comment, "we are a poor country and because of that we have to work hard" (boy, private school). Only a minority responded that they sometimes contemplated the idea of migrating to the United States, generally only those who already have relatives living there or those in the private bilingual school who use the United States as a frame of reference.

85. **Perceptions of Ethnic Groups.** Children in the study are ambiguous on ethnicity. In general, they respond with stereotypes about the ethnic minorities in their country, but their responses also reflect an understanding of equality and an awareness and disapproval of discrimination.\(^{18}\)

86. On the rare occasions when they mention the indigenous peoples of Honduras, their attitude is ambivalent. They express admiration, but it is combined with stereotypes and explanations of their ignorance and naiveté; for example, "When the Indians did not know anything and there were many gold mines and the Spanish traded mirrors for gold with them. My favorite characters are the Indians". (girl, public school). This is echoed by another girl who states, "The Spanish discovered Honduras. Of course, back then we were Indians and we let them fool us, exchanging mirrors for gold, and so on." Even the heroic Lempira is seen to be ignorant: "Chief Lempira was murdered by the Spanish, but it was not so easy because he was surrounded in the hills but he had reserves of food. This is surprising to me because he was an almost ignorant Indian."

87. Children’s ambiguity is shown both in their own discrimination against ethnic minorities and in their awareness of discrimination in the Honduran society. When asked to consider the descendants of Lempira, one girl responded, "the Pech, Lencas, Maya, they do nothing for independence." When a hypothetical Lenca president was discussed, students appeared doubtful.

\(^{18}\) The issue of ethnic difference does not appear spontaneously in the questionnaires; however, that may be understandable, since about nine tenths of the population of Honduras is *mestizo* and none of the students in the sample appeared to be of black or indigenous heritage.
and they looked at each other. One student remarked that a Lenca candidate could not be elected, and another explained that, “the one who works for the country would win.”

88. When students were presented with the choice between two presidential candidates, one a Garifuna and one from Tegucigalpa, the candidate from Tegucigalpa won. When asked why he had won, they responded, “because he is Honduran” or “a professional.” These responses implicitly indicate that children in the study feel that the Garifuna is not likely to have those characteristics and that there may be some ambivalence about them as full, respected Hondurans. In a different school, a student explains that “there are people who do not like to say that they are Honduran.” Another student, referring to the loss of the Garifuna candidate, asserts that he is an ignorant fisherman. Students express doubts about the election of a Garifuna candidate by saying, “It would be difficult because they have to be educated.” Students’ reactions also indicate an awareness of discrimination; for example, the Garifuna candidate would not be elected “because the candidate would be criticized a great deal.” Another student states, disapprovingly, “Because of their color, we discriminate against people who are not white.”

Children and the Environment

89. Students are sensitive to environmental issues, particularly after Hurricane Mitch, but for the most part, they have trouble explaining the consequences of environmental degradation or identifying a course of action to reverse it. Most students do not appear to have developed the capacity to identify a problem, comprehend the scientific reasons why it is a problem, and advance to the stage of offering solutions.

90. Importance of the Forests. Next to families, one of the mobilizing themes that emerges is an understanding of the importance of forests for the environment. An overwhelming majority of students shows an awareness and understanding of the importance of forests for the environment. Numerous references to forests are perhaps the result of Hurricane Mitch, a catastrophe that directed everyone’s attention to environmental problems. In Box 9, two students establish a direct connection between deforestation and the devastating effects of Hurricane Mitch. In only one school (the bilingual private school) is the issue mentioned by less than half of the students; in another private school, nearly all students mention the forests.

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19 Garifuna are a minority ethnic group generally believed to be descendents of former slave populations and indigenous peoples. They live along the Caribbean coast in northern Honduras.

20 The issue of ethnic relations was raised in the focus groups, although a special effort was made to create a neutral atmosphere so that the students would not feel that any particular response was expected. This example is drawn from an exercise in one of the poorer public schools where the Garifuna and Tegucigalpa candidates were drawn on the blackboard, given male names, and nothing else was said about them.
91. Some students just state the environmental problem, while others actually offer solutions, suggesting a variety of levels of understanding about this complex problem. Most of the answers are phrased in terms of what not to do. The most frequent suggestion is to not burn the forest (nearly half of the responses) and the next is to not cut trees (31 percent). Frequently, these two responses are combined together.

92. Few students elaborate on the consequences of deforestation, and none of the students who seem to have a deeper understanding of environmental problems suggest reforestation as a solution. In many responses, having a sense of the importance of forests is not connected to action. These responses vary from references to air quality to global warming, such as, “the most important thing for me are trees because without them we would not be able to breathe and we would die”, and “the other thing is to stop cutting trees and stop migratory agriculture because the climate would become hot and people would not want to live here.”

93. Pollution. The second most commonly mentioned environmental concern, after forests, is litter. This response is connected to children’s dislike for the symptoms of poverty, particularly pollution in the urban context. Litter is mentioned more frequently than the forests only in the private bilingual school (with one exception, when garbage disposal is linked to river pollution). In this school, a boy and girl suggest recycling to deal with the garbage problem. A possible explanation for the lower importance given to the forest in this school is that this group has the city as a reference to a greater degree than students in other schools. In fact, their weekend activities are exclusively urban.

94. Litter as an environmental problem is also expressed by relating it to the forests, reflecting their concern and respect for the natural world. Two girls write, “Do not burn the forests, do not cut trees, do not pollute it, take care of it”; and “Do not cut trees that are the fountain of life, do not litter because it contaminates.” Litter in an urban environment is frequently mentioned in tandem with air pollution; for example, the environment can be preserved by “not littering and discharging smoke because they contaminate the environment” (boy, private school). Other students solve the problem by “telling our parents to try not to use cars very much to not pollute the air and to not throw garbage in the streets” (girl, public school) and stating that “garbage accumulates and it takes a long time before it disappears.”

95. Urban pollution is also linked to the degradation of the forests, shown by comments such as “Do not cut down the forests or pollute them with the smoke of cars and factories”, and “People should stop buying or using those great tractors that expel too much smoke.” One girl explains a solution: “Do not allow rich people from other countries to install factories that pollute the environment and do not use products that destroy the ozone layer.”
In addition, river pollution and the protection of water resources are mentioned in almost every school. Childrens concerns range from “not contaminating the rivers,” to “not wasting water because it is our life.” Another common topic is animal protection; one student writes that “protecting animals in danger of extinction” is important. One boy in a bilingual school suggests that “an effort has to be made to enforce the law to scold those who destroy our plants and animals.” This is the only instance when a student offers a solution based on the legal system (the father of this boy works for a “security systems” company).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To the extent possible, the design of the ILC and its exhibits should draw on some of the findings of this assessment. Several topics that should be considered are described below:

- **Importance of the Family.** Children in Honduras, particularly this age group, are extremely focused on their family, and they enjoy leisure activities with their immediate and extended families during the weekends or vacations. The ILC should take advantage of the importance of family in children’s lives and design exhibits, concessions, rooms, sitting areas and other attractions for the entire family of different age ranges, since it is likely a family will attend together. To the extent possible, the ILC should not view parents or other relatives as mere spectators, but rather should encourage participation by the entire family. The facilities may also include rooms that can be used for family gatherings, such as birthdays or other occasions, to provide a weekend leisure alternative. The marketing and outreach programs should target the entire family.

- **Roles of Men and Women in Society.** Most children are aware of their professional career opportunities, but their statements are permeated with expressions of traditional gender roles focusing on their responsibilities in family life, including raising children for girls and providing for their family for boys. The ILC exhibits should consider including images that help children visualize the equality between genders in the workplace and legitimize equality of responsibilities in the household. It would also be interesting to see information on important or heroic women in Honduran history who could be role models, as well as special events or exhibits dedicated to the importance of women in contemporary Honduran society.

- **Importance and Love of the Environment.** Children express great love and respect for the environment and natural resources of Honduras, and they enjoy taking trips out into the country. They are aware of environmental problems such as deforestation and pollution, but are less well able to develop a diagnostic and a solution to the problems. Exhibits dealing with the environment should establish a direct connection between identifying problems and developing proactive solutions. An exhibit on conservation and reforestation practices, perhaps with contributions from schools in order to incorporate parents and teachers, could also help to establish a connection between environmental problems and solutions. The exhibits could highlight the biodiversity of Honduras, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor as a conservation alternative, traditional knowledge about conservation (from indigenous communities), and examples of sustainable development. The ILC will be designed to be
environmentally-friendly and promote the use of non-conventional energy sources for educational purposes. This will provide a great learning opportunity, since children in the study do not appear to be knowledgeable about these alternatives. It would also be helpful to have an exhibit about the experimental method and why it is relevant to establish a sharp distinction between scientific and non-scientific forms of understanding the natural world.

- **Linkages between the Past and Present.** Exhibits devoted to historical themes should show how historical processes have helped to shape the present reality of Honduras. Heroes could be put in a larger context for children to understand the relevance of their history. For example, it could be shown how an important intellectual such as José Cecilio del Valle struggled to apply the ideas of the enlightenment to improve the lives of the people of Central America. The contribution of women to Honduran history could also be presented (both that of remarkable individual women and as a group).

- **Pre-Hispanic Cultures.** Children in the study do not make any connections with the pre-Hispanic civilizations and the living indigenous populations in their country. The ILC should highlight the knowledge and practices of pre-Hispanic cultures and the linkages to the living culture of the indigenous communities in Honduras. In addition to showing the historical accomplishments of the Maya civilization, exhibits could also illustrate how the Maya and other indigenous groups continue making their own history. Maya accomplishments could also demonstrate that the people of Honduras are capable of doing great things.

- **Ethnic Diversity.** Images and exhibits should be inclusive and avoid ethnic stereotypes. Mestizos, indigenous communities, and blacks (men and women) could be shown working together inside and outside the home and contributing to a country that belongs to all of them.

- **Natural Disasters.** Natural disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes, are common in Honduras and Central America, and an exhibit should be designed to explain natural disasters, particularly describing the severe hurricanes that have hit Honduras, including Hurricane Mitch. Children in the study lived through the hurricane and they are very sensitized to it and proud of the way Hondurans worked together to overcome the destruction. An exhibit on the devastation brought by Hurricane Mitch could help to make the consequences of environmental problems, such as deforestation, more concrete and relevant.

- **Teaching Methods and Learning.** This assessment reinforces the justification for an ILC in Honduras to complement the formal educational system. Students value nice, cheerful teachers who provide concrete examples, not abstract lectures. Children learn through multiple sources of information with very concrete examples. The entire basis of an ILC is to provide real-life displays and tactile objects so children can really experience things that are discussed in the classroom. Children in an ILC learn at their own pace and no child is "left behind", since they can spend as much time as they want at each exhibit. The ILC may also provide ideas for the teachers to introduce interactive teaching methods in their classes as a way to foster interest in science, technology, or history. In addition, one way of making
the ILC more interactive and lively could be to hold regular discussions on specific exhibits and events.

- **Relating to Children.** Children value teachers who treat them with respect, and they like to be considered valid interlocutors. The ILC should capitalize on this idea through exhibits targeted directly to children, without being patronizing. The ILC could include a room with contributions from children themselves, such as items contributed from schools, or selected through a regional contest. During the organization of this type of exhibit, the ILC could develop a stronger relationship with the schools.

- **Fun and Positive Atmosphere.** The ILC should be a fun place that incorporates the attitudes that children value, such as cheerfulness and approachability. The design should incorporate a light or humorous approach to make children more receptive to the message of the ILC. The outreach and marketing programs could emphasize this approach. The volunteer guides for the ILC, expected to be college students, should reflect this type of positive attitude with knowledge about the subject matter and the ability to present it in an interesting, entertaining, and patient manner.

- **Community Involvement.** Communities should be incorporated into the ILC and its traveling exhibits in the same way as the schools. A small space could be devoted to objects chosen by the communities themselves. Exhibits could be a mirror of living communities, rather than a frozen image of the past. For example, before reaching the community, the schools (teachers, parents and children) and local authorities may be invited to choose an artifact or photographs of whatever the community feels represents them.
Annex 1: Questionnaire passed to Honduran students.

INVESTIGACIÓN INTERNACIONAL SOBRE LAS OPINIONES DE LOS ESTUDIANTES HONDUREÑOS

Este no es un examen, no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Por favor escribe tu opinión, no escribas tu nombre para poder escribir con libertad, no te preocupes por la ortografía porque hay poco tiempo.

INFORMACIÓN GENERAL

Edad________
Sexo (encierra en circulo) hombre mujer
Nivel escolar (grado)

¿Con quiénes vives en tu casa?

¿Quién trae el dinero en la casa?
¿En qué trabaja esa o esas personas que traen el dinero?

¿Quién cocina en tu casa?

¿Quién limpia la casa?

¿Quién cuida de los niños pequeños?

PREGUNTAS

1. ¿Qué es lo mejor de ser mujer y qué es lo más difícil?
¿Qué es lo mejor de ser hombre y qué es lo más difícil?

2. ¿Qué crees tú que debe ser el papel de la mujer en el mundo?
¿Qué crees tú que debe ser el papel del hombre en el mundo?

3. Cuando tú seas mayor, ¿de qué te gustaría trabajar? Escribe un párrafo explicando tu respuesta.
4. Escribe un par de párrafos explicando qué te da más orgullo de ser de Honduras y qué te da menos orgullo.

5. Describe la parte de la historia de Honduras de la que te acuerdas mejor y cuéntanos quién es tu personaje favorito de la historia de Honduras.

6. Cuéntanos lo que más te gusta hacer en los fines de semana.

7. Con algunos maestros se aprende más, ¿qué hacen ellos que los otros no hacen? Escribe un párrafo explicando tu respuesta.

8. ¿Cuál es la cosa más importante que se puede hacer para proteger el medio ambiente? Escribe un párrafo explicando tu respuesta.

9. Escribe el nombre de una persona todavía viva que tú admires. ¿Por qué admiras esas esa persona?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Gender Operations Report Series

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