Education and Fatherhood in Argentina.

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Cita:

CHAPTER 8

EDUCATION AND FATHERHOOD IN ARGENTINA

Ana Inés Heras

PATRIARCHAL AND GENDER-BALANCED PERSPECTIVES IN LATIN AMERICA: A DYNAMIC TENSION

Scholars have documented that Latin American countries have been, and still are, patriarchal societies (Jelin, 2005; Olavarría, 2003; Rivera & Ceciliano, 2004). Jelin (2005), for example, noted that the

> father (*pater familiae*) used to have the right to decide over his family members' lives. It was the father who must be obeyed, and later in life [for married women], the husband. Women were not considered full citizens, nor did they have any legal independence, and they were instead defined as dependent and in need of tutelage and therefore, incapable of conducting public activities on their own (p. 6, author's translation)

In contemporary Argentina, different layers of context shape educational practices and fathers' involvement in their child's education. Historical normative frameworks, face-to-face daily interactions, organization of household chores, and present public policy are among the most important ones. These contexts need to be understood before any educa-

tional reform regarding father involvement in education can be implemented. Bogino Larrambebere's (2011) concept of *emergent* social practices is useful to compare fathers' new behavior with those that have been traditionally or historically accepted ways of doing things. This framework has been selected as a means to comment on recent change in the roles fathers seem willing to undertake.

This chapter will first examine fatherhood as a cultural practice within historically changing contexts by interrogating what kinds of meanings (social discourses, see Angenot, 1999) about male and female relationships have been at stake. Second, a summary of programs and research will identify emergent practices and discourses on fatherhood in present Argentina. Third, the results of two studies[1] will be presented in order to support the claim that fatherhood is a culturally oriented and situated practice that is subject to tension beyond the bounds of its definition. I will conclude by reflecting on the ways in which I see change in the roles of Argentine fathers as dynamic, specifically concerning the responsibilities of fathers in domestic duties, the education of children and gender inequities within the culture.

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS OF LATIN AMERICAN FATHERHOOD

Patriarchal practices, beliefs and orientations in Latin America originally related to Catholic norms and expectations (Faur, 2004, 2006; Jelin, 2005), a result of Spain's and Portugal's colonization of the continent. During several centuries (16th to mid 19th), religion and tradition were the normative frames at play. Both provided discretional power to specific groups (Halperin Donghi, 1972, 1980; Widuczynski, 1992). It was during the mid 19th century that civil law gained place in Latin America, and these laws supported differential power relations between the two sexes. Thus, the legal framework as well as customary cultural practices and discourses, continued to support a patriarchal view. A male-oriented, authoritarian perspective, by which nondemocratic practices were accepted, continues as valid today.[2]

While predominant in Latin America, patriarchal ideologies and practices have been contested at different moments. In Argentina, at the time the National State was consolidated circa 1880, several political groups, such as anarchists, socialists and libertarians, openly challenged sexist practices (e.g., they supported both men and women in public political and community participation). Between 1890 and 1930, they publicly expressed their ideas about the capacity of men and women to access money, to work, to become fathers and mothers with equal rights, and to make informed decisions on public matters. In particular, they promoted

different ways of being a family and of conceiving fatherhood and motherhood altogether (Suriano, 2001). These ideas also translated into the ways in which they viewed education, a practice not only restricted to school but to everyday interactions in the family and at the community level. These political groups also defined education as a tool for critically examining and transforming reality, not as a set of norms and values to be uncritically accepted, which defied the dominant discourse at that time. As a stance, this perspective clearly challenged what was accepted at the time.

These groups were active in participating at the community level by supporting alternative educational settings or by participating as members of parent associations in public schools (Carli, 1991). For example, the anarchist political position in Argentina was that the way in which women and men practiced day-to-day, face-to-face interactions was indeed a powerful educational experience for their children, and for that reason, some groups developed communal systems to organize everyday living responsibilities that included childcare, food, and health. Educational historians have identified that educational norms and regulations prescribed between 1880-1930 by the newly created Argentinean State established clearly what parents could or could not do in regard to schools and community-based educational settings. The interpretation they offer is that progressive, nonsexist perspectives were quite influential in Argentina (De Luca, 1991) and that groups in power wanted to limit their effect. As result, these orientations were crudely repressed in 1930 when a military regime took over, labeling them as *revolutionary and foreign*.[3]

During subsequent decades, authoritarian practices and discourses were held as hegemonic. They found their place in state-run official discourse once again. Thus, a traditional patriarchal view about family, parenthood, and what was considered *natural* for women and men, gained support. Nonetheless, several concurrent processes were at play, such as changes in the economy that included modifications in the work force (e.g., women entered the work force, generated income, and started to examine their role in society more fully). These innovations played an important part in a transformation that took place from 1930-1960 over education, parenting and family, and women's right to vote.

In reviewing the literature that summarizes other Latin American countries, similar patterns emerge (Batres, 2006; Camacho, 2005; Gargallo, 2004) yet it seems that there are some key aspects that distinguish Argentina. Fuller (2007) for example points out that for Argentina in particular, the extended presence of psychoanalysis after 1950 was key in opening up reflection on parenting and on "natural" ways of conceiving woman- and manhood, especially in regard to caretaking family practices, education and the expression of public affection.

Jelin (2005) has pointed out that concurrently there were several international laws, treaties and agreements to which the majority of Latin American countries adhered; these normative frameworks had the value of local law and in turn, challenged patriarchal ideologies. Such was the case for Argentina as well. To be highlighted as seemingly contradictory is the fact that the Argentinean State adhered to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women even during the military de facto regime (it was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly[4]). Recent changes in public policies[5] (Faur, 2006; Programa Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2008, 2011), including marriage for people of the same sex (a law passed in July, 2010), provided additional questioning of what counts as *parenting* (mother and fatherhood) in 21st century Argentina.

As a corollary of what has been presented in this section, I argue that Argentina has historically been a terrain of contested ideological positions toward what counts as fatherhood, what is to be considered natural for women and men, and whether fathers should be involved in daily child-related activities at home or at school.

EMERGING SOCIAL PATTERNS REGARDING FATHERHOOD

In the last two decades a consistent pattern toward balancing women and men in the public and domestic spheres in Latin America has emerged, a pattern that has played out in favor of the engagement of fathers in their children's education (Bogino Larrambebere, 2011; Olavarría, 2003; Proyecto América Latina Genera, 2007). However, research is scarce documenting what counts as fatherhood and how it relates to day-to-day educational practices. What has been studied mostly focuses on curriculum change at schools in favor of nonsexist education or the participation of men in favor of gender-balanced educational, cultural and policy change at large.

For example, the compilation of recent conference papers will be presented. These research papers were delivered at the historic 2011 Ibero American Conference on Masculinity and Equity: Research and Activism, Barcelona, Spain. The main goals of this conference were: to disseminate research on *masculinities* being conducted in Spain and Latin America; to analyze and debate public policy regarding the inclusion of men in pursuing gender equity; to establish links between research, practice and intervention through an international Spain-Latin America network; and to make visible public policy that currently is addressing the inclusion of men in the pursuit of gender equity. It is noteworthy that there were no presentations addressing fatherhood and education as a day-to-day,

interactional practice, or the effects of father involvement in schools. At the same time, however, this topic was indirectly addressed as one of the most important ones in establishing a sustainable agenda for egalitarian gender relations. A close examination of the papers presented shows an identification of emergent perspectives in different social domains (e.g., the work force, the household, education). For example, it is reported that as women have more fully accessed the work force and schooling and have started to gain some independence in Latin America and Spain, intrafamily relations have started to change as the result of the greater presence of the father within the home, school and community. These data constitute indirect evidence of some transformations of fatherhood. Some presentations and papers reported policy changes that allowed men to play a more present role in being fathers, such as legislation that provides men with leaves from work when their children are born.[6] However, to date, there are no areas of public policy reinforcing the presence of men in *schools* specifically or favoring a more balanced gendered perspective on *domestic* responsibilities as an item of policy or of research agendas. Therefore, as a primary conclusion of this review, it becomes evident that is necessary to further discuss what questions may provide a framework to construct research agendas more aligned with documenting the changes that seem to be taking place on multiple levels in Latin America.

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES THAT REDEFINE FATHERHOOD IN ARGENTINA

Three Contemporary Programs

In this section, I will review three contemporary programs in Argentina that reveal emergent social practices by fathers. These educational experiences occurred during the last two decades. I will also discuss data from two research studies commented below (namely, *Exploratory study on the capacity of women and men of diverse socioeconomic groups to access justice as rightful subjects and learning and creativity in self-managed, diverse groups* (see Note 1 for some details on these). Both the programs and the studies provide evidence revealing that patriarchal and egalitarian perspectives are still at play in a dynamic and tense relationship. However, specific groups today (e.g., *groups autogestionados,* self-managed groups) seem to be breaking ground in egalitarian ways of conceiving parenthood. This trend seems to be influencing the ways in which fathers see themselves and act toward their children's education. These preliminary findings may indicate that specific groups are creating dramatically different notions of

family and thus, of fatherhood, which needs to be interpreted as a political decision (Arendt, 1997).

Educational Rural Centers[7]

These educational centers were established in 1988 in the Province of Buenos Aires, in rural areas of the Argentinean Pampas. Their mission was to provide good quality education for all rural families, for whom accessing middle- and high-school quality education was a challenge. These schools are comanaged between the state and the families of each local community where the schools are located. They constitute a unique educational context for rural families as a whole, since it is not only the students who access education, but adults do so as well by participating in school management. In these schools, the pedagogical authority is the principal, yet s/he works collaboratively with adults representing families at each local family association. It is fathers and mothers who participate in these family associations; thus the experience provides first-hand involvement for parents who want to make decisions over their children's education. Research on these educational centers (e.g., Ferraris & Baccalini, 2001; Heras & Burin, 2002) has shown that it is their unique pedagogical and management strategies that provide opportunities for developing participatory frameworks that simultaneously address students and their families. These schools provide learning opportunities where teachers, principals, local workers, families, and local institutions integrate educational councils. As a public and state funded educational strategy, it has been innovative; the fact that the number of schools under this policy grew from 10 (in 1988) to 34 (in 2011) seems to show a consistent pattern toward a sustainable project. Even though *father* involvement in education was not specifically studied at these educational centers, some indirect results suggest that it provides an atmosphere of democratic family-teacher-student-community involvement, which allows greater father participation.

Mothers and Fathers as Caregivers

This was an initiative taken up by the National Ministry of Health during the 1990s, and initially, it involved only women. It was designed as a state-supported program to establish a structure by which caregiving services were provided for families who lacked the economic resources to hire caretaking services for their children, a practice commonly held in Argentinean middle-class families. While this program was discontinued

in 2001, it provided a model for other caretaking public services in designing new lines of public policy. What was distinctive about this program was that when it was implemented, it was only geared toward women's participation. However, male community participants asked to be a part of it, suggesting that the program would be better implemented if they could act as caregivers, equal to women. The National Ministry of Health agreed to this request and the program included men, and therefore, it changed its name from *Mothers as Caregivers* to *Fathers and Mothers as Caregivers*. Given that this program was implemented from 1997 to 2000, it could be considered groundbreaking, since at the time, there were no other state-funded lines of work that included men in similar roles. No research or program evaluation was conducted, so the results of its actions remain unexplored.

Families in Support of State-Funded Public Schools (Buenos Aires)

This is a self-organized group of families who send their children to state, public-funded schools in the city of Buenos Aires. The group was funded in 2009 when the city government implemented changes in public policy that were detrimental to state-funded schools. For example, state-funded schools suffered severe budget cuts, while private schools had their state-funded resources increased. Additionally, the government decided to close state-funded teacher-education programs for continuing teacher education. A group of families decided to participate by demanding changes in the orientation of public policy and government accountability with the goal of quality state-funded education for all. Since its foundation, it has been observed that mothers as well as fathers have participated and continue to participate (see Heras Monner Sans, 2012a, for an analysis of families' agency toward meaningful educational policy). Since this is a group directly involved with schooling processes, K-12, it is important to highlight efforts to create gender-balanced participation because typically at these school levels, it is mothers who participate.

In addition to the three programs reviewed in the prior sections, I conducted an exploratory study and present a summary of the results on the capacity of women and men of diverse socioeconomic groups to access justice as rightful subjects (Heras Monner Sans, 2010), and on a study currently being conducted on learning and creativity in self-managed, diverse groups in which self-managed groups learn about how to do their work (Heras Monner Sans, 2012b).

Fatherhood and Gender Relations: Emergent Patterns

The focus of the first study was on gender relationships in different geographical areas of Argentina. For this study, people of different socio-economic strata were interviewed.[8] Results seem to indicate that while a patriarchal perspective is still very strong, an egalitarian tendency is emerging. For example:

> Sometimes, my wife travels for work and I am the one who takes care of my kids for 1 or 2 weeks. Some people comment when they see me around, for example, "oh, you're baby sitting today" and I respond (bluntly) that I am not *sitting* but performing my role, (which is) being a father. It seems as if people think that, as a man, I am not supposed to take care of my sons. (Father of two children, professional entrepreneur)

The quote above illustrates the belief, still very much instilled in Argentina, that when a man is taking care of his children, he is replacing momentarily the one who is the real caregiver, namely, the mother (and other female family members).

This person adds:

> A while ago, my wife practiced sports, she was a soccer player, and we used to participate in regular community meetings (for neighborhood matters). The meetings were scheduled on a different weekday at one point and my wife stopped participating because the meetings conflicted with her soccer practice day. People started asking and making negative comments such as "what, is she playing soccer and you are washing dishes at home?" In the context of increasingly negative comments, we decided to make a flyer with pictures of me washing dishes and my wife in her soccer practice outfit. The caption read: "all of us can do it! Women, it is fun to practice sports! Men, it is great to wash dishes or do chores at home! Movement For Gender Equity." We distributed the flyer via email and it was provocative to see the reactions.

From his experience, many individuals do not easily tolerate that women and men have an equal right to sports and recreation, and thus other persons' reactions toward his flyer with the pictures. His final reflections point to the fact that, even though some changes are at play, these changes are not sufficient in terms of gender balance. As noted from the following, the accepted societal changes do not seem to cover all areas of domestic chores and responsibilities:

> At the same time, I think it is true that more and more men take care of domestic chores or play a role as a father different than how it used to be. Some of them even see cooking as a viable activity, perhaps, in part,

inspired by a burgeoning gourmet trend here in Argentina. I find it more difficult to consider that things would change to the extent that men would start doing *all* the work implied in care taking, such as washing, ironing, cleaning, mending clothes and the like. (Father)

Other testimonies showed that for women to reconcile work in the public sphere (e.g., if they run and win office at the House of Representatives) with what is still expected from women at home is almost impossible:

It is a very hard sacrifice to have run for the House since the interpersonal relationships in the family have changed very much and it has not been easy for me to adapt, as a woman. I have managed to organize the domestic chores differently, but my relationship with my husband and kids has been strained. This happened in spite of us agreeing that it would be good for me to run for office, and we were all very happy when I got in. It is accepted by society that men can be out of the house, and that house chores or family chores are not their responsibility; it is not the same with women. Motherhood is based on the whole idea that we'll be at home, or taking responsibility for domestic chores and family relationships. Fatherhood is not based on the same assumption. (Woman, mother of two children, elected for the House of Representatives of the City of Buenos Aires)

Our study highlighted several different day-to-day strategies that women and men are using to support change in regard to sharing more fully what it takes to support their households in egalitarian ways (where both act as caregivers and as providers as well). However, these strategies seem to be contradictory since they show that women still cannot rely on their partners in the same way as perhaps their partners are relying on them. One of the strategies we identified was that women made detailed lists for men:

Because of my work schedule, I sometimes stay out of the house for very many hours, so I worry and make "What To Do Lists," very detailed, and stick them on the fridge. If I don't do it, my husband does not remember what to do and when, every step of the way. For example, when they come home after school, there are several things to pay attention to, such as homework, or whether there are any communications from school to respond to.… And even if I do make the list, it may be the case that still he does not read it all or does not pay enough attention to the details. It seems as if it is not part of fatherhood. (Mother of two children, working professional woman)

Thus, it seems, a research agenda that wants to specifically understand the changes currently taking place should look carefully at microinteractions because interview data is revealing that it is in these contexts where

gender balance is negotiated, enacted and (potentially) challenged and/or transformed.

Summarizing Results From Self-Managed Groups

I am currently conducting a study called "learning and creativity in self-managed, diverse groups" on the ways in which several self-managed (*autogestionados)* groups learn about how to do their work. Even though our study is not focusing on families or fatherhood,[9] we have once and again found indirect evidence that is pointing to the creative ways in which these groups, as collective endeavors, are questioning traditional gender relationships and presenting opportunities for men to be present as fathers in their children's day-to-day education.

The practices more commonly observed and reported also in interviews are:

- Extending a leave or permission for a leave when a child is born in their family. A member of a cooperative of workers stated in an interview: "Our cooperative has decided to provide men with a paternity leave of 30 days when a baby is born in the family."
- Providing equal opportunities for both men and women to take care of their family members for health and educational reasons. According to interview data, this is because "(our cooperative) puts male and female figures both as role models, in equal rights, and therefore supports concrete organizational structures to allow that both can take care of domestic, day-to-day chores."
- Allowing children to accompany their fathers to work, if it is necessary, and designing on-site, spontaneous caretaking activities, when needed.
- Making agreements and revising them when necessary about work-schedule, hours at work, or on-site/out-of-site work activities (a more flexible approach toward work responsibilities which are redistributed among coworkers and coassociates, since in these collective self-managed groups all participants share the same associate, cooperative status).
- Discussing gender relationships openly, identifying patterns which urgently need to be changed, such as violence against women or children. Interview data surfaces statements such as:

    We are trying to have our sons and daughters see that males can do work at home as well as outside (the household), and thus we are educating the young in seeing concretely that if both men and

women are equal in this way, sexist ideologies that support the idea
that there are certain chores only for women can be overturned.

- Designing and implementing workshops on themes related to gender relationships, policies and politics, as a way to deepen participants' understanding on the ways the larger context is influencing their views and actions. For example, women who participate as workers in a cooperative also voluntarily participate in conducting Gender Relationships Workshops. They also document the local changes (at the community level) of these actions. They have participated in 2010 and 2011 in National Women's Conferences, showing the day-to-day results of their work. They are finding two concrete changes to be very important: (1) the decrease of domestic violence against women and children; (2) the acknowledgement by men that women also may have free time to conduct cultural, artistic or sports-related activities.[10]

To date there is no study that has specifically addressed father involvement in education for participants in these kinds of self-managed programs.

SUMMARY

As I have shown in prior sections of this chapter, there is no doubt that more open discussion and interrogation of maleness and fatherhood in the public sphere is taking place currently in Argentina and in Latin America. Some examples in Latin America include research on what counts as responsible fatherhood in Central America (Proyecto América Latina Genera for example), and designing state funded programs that acknowledge the value of providing opportunities for women and men to equally participate in caregiving programs designed for children whose families need help in accessing child-care in Argentina. Also, laws have emerged acknowledging different family styles and public policies supporting the presence of fathers at birth (during labor and in the first four weeks of the baby). Castro García and Pazos Morán (2011) have stated that, like other cultural changes, transformations regarding equal gender rights should be a public policy matter, open for discussion and supported by state laws, funding and media discourse. These changes should include providing opportunities to publicly discuss a totally different framework concerning who takes care of children or the elderly in families, why and how (Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género, 2011; Seiz, 2011). Since 2005, an initiative called Equal and Non Transferrable

Rights for Birth and Adoption Platform (PPIINA, 2011) is seeking to create a worldwide network to participate in the public sphere so that these issues become international public policy themes of different countries' agendas. Therefore, the patriarchal trend is being currently questioned; nonetheless, the tension between what was in place and what emerges is still at play at the larger society level.

Second, and from the perspective presented in this chapter (i.e., fatherhood as a socially constructed notion) I suggest that school experiences where father and mother participation is balanced constitute an *emergent* pattern as well (see for example the programs and experiences reviewed in the prior section). Involvement in education, at least at the level of participation in management or voluntary association structures, is becoming more of a father *and* mother caring practice. It would be important to pursue research to further investigate whether this participation, in day-to-day involvement and interactions, supports democratic gender-balanced sharing, or whether within these structures, any patterns of male domination are still prevalent. Closer study would be needed to determine whether father involvement in education might still reproduce patriarchal practices or offer opportunities for dynamic transformation.

Thirdly, and in terms of a research agenda, a line of inquiry focusing on emergent change also needs to explore tensions *within* the household in light of the results shared for the current research studies (i.e., the exploratory study on gender relations and the study on self managed groups). It seems important because, even though both partners seem to *want* to work toward egalitarian ways of doing things, still it is not easy to agree on *how* exactly to do it. Conflict surfaces about *how to do things* and about *what counts as fatherhood* in particular (e.g., feeding children with fast food is seen as not healthy, and it is challenged by mothers who want to share domestic responsibilities with their partners). Therefore, a worthwhile line of research would be to study day-to-day household interactions from an ethnographic perspective to document how this emergent pattern is being constructed by members of families who are trying to create gendered-balanced relationships. Additionally, this type of research would prove useful in identifying specific *father-guided* educational patterns.

I conclude by stressing that change in the roles of Argentina's fathers is dynamic and related to the interaction between two seemingly contradictory trends being a constitutive part of Argentina's history (i.e., patriarchal and egalitarian perspectives). The contested terrain seems to be located in gender inequities within the culture. In turn, and specifically related to fatherhood and education, there seems to be an ongoing debate about the responsibilities of fathers in domestic duties, the education of children and their involvement in schooling, and their participation in social change in regards to gender equity.

NOTES

1. One of these studies (*Exploratory Study on the Capacity of Women and Men of Diverse Socioeconomic Groups to Access Justice as Rightful Subjects)* was conducted during 2009-2010. The study was based on interviews and focus groups, as well as on a review of literature concerning gender relationships in Argentina. Twenty-three focus groups in three different regions of Argentina (North West, Center rural area and the City of Buenos Aires) were undertaken. Fifteen in-depth interviews were conducted as well. Additionally, as the study evolved, specific-topic interviews were held with professionals who worked in key roles (e.g., Gender Relations Area in the Secretary of Rural Affairs). A complete technical report was written and presented to the Equipo Lationamericano de Justicia y Género, the non-governmental who financed the study. The other study (*Learning and Creativity in Self-Managed, Diverse Groups)* focuses on the ways self-managed groups (*autogestionados)* learn how to do their work collectively, and on the ways in which they perceive difference among group members. Several published papers and chapters in Spanish and English have been recently published; see for example Heras Monner Sans 2012 cited in the reference list. All translations of interview excerpts provided in this chapter are mine.

2. Literature and film have presented several examples of how patriarchal relationships have been enacted in most Latin American countries. See for example Vargas Llosa's novel "La fiesta del Chivo" or Marcela Serrano's "Nosotras que nos queremos tanto." See also "Las mujeres verdaderas tienen curvas," a film by Patricia Cardoso.

Au: Add both the novel and movie to the refs.

3. These adjectives were used to characterize anarchist, libertarian, and socialist views by nationalist, traditional views.

4. See http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/.

5. For example, the national law supporting responsible procreation and sexual health, passed in 2002; the national law prescribing Comprehensive sex education at all levels of mandatory schooling, passed in 2006; the national law regulating media and mass communication programs, passed in 2009.

6. Changes in normative aspects ruling gender relations in favor of more democratic, less patriarchal standards are very recent in Latin America. For example, Jelin (2005) shows that shared parental custody was as recent as 1985 in Argentina, shared administrative household responsibilities have been very recently acknowledged in Brazil (by 2001), and divorce was established by law in 2004 in Chile.

7. These educational centers are called Centros Educativos para la Producción Total in Spanish. They are rural schools and are part of a community-school-familiy partnership initiative, which started in the 1990s with a few schools. Currently there are 34 schools (called "educational centers"). See http://www.facept.org.ar/intitucion/ListadoCEPTs.html .

8. For this study, all interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Coding of data was then undertaken to surface issues regarding: democracy and

women participation; access to information on health issues, specifically on sexual and reproductive health; domestic work and specifically the care of children and the elderly; social and economic women's rights and violence against women in face-to-face interactions. Participants in the 23 focus groups shared socioeconomic and cultural characteristics; we interviewed men and women from different socioeconomic and cultural groups in three different regions of Argentina. The issues discussed in these groups followed a protocol. For the rest of the interviews a similar procedure was followed. However, the topics discussed were specific according to the vantage point of the interviewees (e.g., nongovernmental organizatoins participants; public servants; professionals in key roles of the administration, etc.).

9.   See Note 1 for information on the main theme of the study. Data reported in this section came out of a larger data set. The study on *autogestionados* (self-managed egalitarian groups) was designed in two phases. Phase 1 was exploratory, mostly interview based, looking at several different groups that qualified for the criteria originally set by the study and to decide about participation in the ethnographic phase (Phase 2). The criteria were that they saw themselves as self-managed, egalitarian groups; that they had been together as a group for 3 years; that their members acknowledged difference among themselves, which they saw as a challenge to work on, which led to interesting interactions among them; and that they were willing to reflect on their experiences in an action-participatory research study. Phase 2 (currently taking place) entails carrying out ethnographies in several self-managed groups with clear objectives for data sets. For example, it includes participant and nonparticipant observation, interviews, discussion groups, e-mail, and virtual forum interactions, and focus groups. Since the design is based on action-research and participatory frameworks, the research team has invited members of the self-managed groups to be a part of a larger research team in order to discuss ongoing analysis of these groups. Research methods and data collection techniques are not exactly the same for all ethnographic-based studies because each group organizes itself differently. Data transcribed for this section are part of follow-up interviews designed to explore issues on gender relationships more specifically. All translations are mine since original data are in Spanish.

10.   Free recreational time for women has been found to be a very crucial yet problematic issue according to research on gender relations in Latin American countries, see Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género, 2009, as one example.

Au: 2009 does not match 2011 in refs.

children with whom I have worked in the studies cited in this chapter. They have helped me understand once again why research is important, and what can our studies modestly contribute to make meaningful change possible. Last yet not least, to David, Javier, and Matías: gracias!

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