

Honduran Political Culture and Ambivalent Experiences during the Outbreak and Immediate Aftermath of the 2009 Coup

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On July 3, 2009, three hours south of Tegucigalpa—away from the marches demanding restitution of democratic order, the military attacks and police oppression—in the costal lowlands of San Lorenzo, Valle, my neighbor Francisco complained of the dangers and annoyances he would encounter when travelling to Choluteca for a necessary errand. Six days after the military coup that ousted President Manuel “Mel” Zelaya from power, both coup-supporting military checkpoints and the anti-coup Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (FNRP) roadblocks made travel in Honduras very difficult for most people. But despite these complications, Francisco felt he still needed to run his errand during the daylight hours, before the mandatory nightly curfews would begin.

Just as the massive anti-coup movement emerged in the days following the ousting, and other research participants of mine made the sacrifice to travel to Tegucigalpa and protest the illegal *golpista* takeover, Francisco remained at home tending to his food stand. He was troubled by what he saw as a rupture in his country’s democracy, but he also had the immediate worry of what to do if he were to lose business because of the political crisis. In the months proceeding the coup Francisco became well known locally for his barbecued chicken wings, and this subsistence-oriented endeavor soon became his primary livelihood strategy. Francisco was convinced that while the armed forces were detaining and attacking protesters, since he planned to travel to Choluteca to buy chicken wings in bulk

quantities and thus had legitimate business, the soldiers would likely allow him to travel freely. As Francisco told me his plans, he also voiced his opinions about what a horrible leader coup-installed, de facto president Roberto Micheletti had been since before June 28, calling the former president of congress “el parásito del gobierno”. Francisco seemed to be against the coup itself, but when I asked him if he planned to become involved in the anti-coup social and political movement, the FNRP, he said: “Yo, irme hasta Tegus sólo para protestar no resuelve nada...igual tengo que cuidar a mi esposa y mis hijos, mejor me quedo aquí”. At the same time, Francisco worried about not being able to make ends meet, that his food stand would soon go bankrupt because of the mandatory nightly curfews imposed by the de facto regime. He complained, “esta crisis política no le va a afectar a Mel; él siempre puede volver a su casa en Olancho. Pero yo, ¿qué voy a hacer si por todo esto se me quiebra el negocio? Nosotros, el pueblo hondureño, somos los que vamos a sufrir por esto”—reminding me that Mel is from an elite land-owning family, and not exactly part of “el pueblo”.

As Francisco continued to tell me about how he and other Hondurans who work for a living would be the ones who ultimately suffer the consequences of the coup, I continued to attempt to figure out whether or not he supported what I initially saw as two diverging camps: those who supported the coup, and those who supported the FNRP. Francisco’s ideological positions vis-à-vis the coup were not easily categorized. He did not seem to care that Honduras had just lost its membership in the Organization of American States because of the coup (which, according to Micheletti and the *golpistas*, was “not a coup,” but rather a “constitutional succession of power”). Francisco asked me why Honduras couldn’t just get by without the OAS, like Cuba. At the same time, he was infuriated by the obvious falsification of the president’s resignation letter, which had been shown on national television. And yet when I asked him why the coup occurred, he said it was because Mel Zelaya wanted to stay in office, just like Hugo Chávez, and that this was an abuse of power—an argument the *golpistas* were making. He said, “un golpe de estado es simplemente lo que hacemos aquí en Latinoamérica; no es como cuando [Bill] Clinton se acostó con aquella muchacha. No. Aquí, si un presidente abusa del poder, hay un golpe”. At this point I thought Francisco believed that Mel was abusing power, and that he believed the coup was justified. But then he asked me: “¿Por qué nunca ha habido golpe en Estados Unidos?”, and before I was given a chance to respond, he shouted out: “¡Porque no hay embajada americana en Washington!” (interview, July 3, 2009). As Francisco’s comments and joke imply, he believed that Mel was

ousted because of an abuse of power—the crux of the *golpista* arguments for removing him from power. Yet the coup’s occurrence also cannot be divorced from the historical continuity of U.S. meddling with Honduran affairs, an argument that the emerging FNRP began to promote during this time. Both discourses seemed to resonate for a variety of people.

During this moment of sudden political change Hondurans’ interpretations of diverging discursive frameworks were quite wide ranging. Francisco’s understanding of Honduran foreign policy and trade agreements, for instance, were considerably more difficult to categorize into neat binaries than I had expected. In the months preceding the ousting, Francisco had voiced to me his support of Mel’s decision to enter Honduras into the Venezuela-initiated regional trade agreement, Petrocaribe, and the Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA). Gasoline prices did in fact lower with ALBA, and Francisco would tell me how it was good for Honduras, “un país pequeño que depende de los demás”, to be able to search for the best possible gas prices—from whomever could offer them. Francisco’s comments reflect his understanding of Honduras’ dependent economic relation with the US and how elites in his country have benefited from such arrangements. In the immediate aftermath of the coup, however, Francisco also seemed to have internalized the *golpista* discourse that removing Manuel Zelaya from power was necessary because of his close relationship with Hugo Chávez—that anything to do with Venezuela, even a regional trade agreement, would have adverse effects for Honduras given that it could jeopardize relations with the United States. He explained his opinions by saying that, “Los empresarios siempre se han beneficiado de nuestra relación con Estados Unidos, y no querían que Honduras se alejara. Por eso le dieron el golpe” (interview, July 3, 2009). I think Francisco was right.

As Latin Americans and Latin Americanist scholars are now well aware, a handful of elites in Honduras responded to the left-leaning policies in the latter half of Mel Zelaya’s administration by paying off some members of the Honduran Armed Forces to kidnap the democratically-elected president from his home in Tegucigalpa and fly him to Costa Rica (after stopping at the U.S.-controlled Palmerola military base). Since then we have seen considerable scholarly interest in understanding how Hondurans are navigating the post-coup political environment. This has resulted in valuable contributions to our understandings about why the coup occurred (Fasquelle 2011), the role of the international community in supporting the takeover and post-coup policies of governance (Pine 2011; Shipley 2017), the resilience of Hondurans amidst on-going state

violence (Menjívar and Walsh 2017; Phillips 2015), the disruption of various pre-coup social policy achievements (Euraque 2010), the intensification of neoliberal development policies and their impact on ethnic minority groups (Brondo 2013; Loperena 2016; Mollett 2014), and the cultivation of an unprecedented revolutionary spirit among those who continue to resist these post-coup governing policies and envision a fundamentally different path for the country (Anderson 2012; Shipley 2016). Such research has informed scholarly knowledge about the fragility of democratic regimes in Honduras, and the various ways in which people are challenging neoliberal globalization and contemporary imperialism through popular protest and cultures of resistance—processes which have a long history in Honduras, but have been augmented since the 2009 coup.

This surge in scholarly interest in Honduras is notable in my field, sociocultural anthropology, given the relatively little amount of attention the country has received among academics in the Anglophone world (especially when compared to the amount of anthropological attention paid to neighboring Guatemala and Nicaragua). Since the coup, the majority of these efforts to understand contemporary political processes in Honduras have been geared toward understanding the anti-coup social and political movement, the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (FNRP). Initially the FNRP formed in the wake of the ousting by bringing together grassroots social movements from diverse sectors of the country (each of which was already organizing around its own set of local and national issues) to protest the coup d'état itself and to demand Mel's restitution. When these efforts failed, the movement boycotted the November 2010 presidential and congressional elections, and continued to organize around a host of progressive social policy initiatives. In late 2011, the FNRP then formed its own (left) political party, the Partido de Libertad y Refundación (LIBRE) to advance the goal of "re-founding" Honduran state and society by rewriting the constitution through a national constituent assembly—a project that the grassroots movements had been pushing since before the 2005 election of Mel Zelaya, the one president who supported their efforts.

Despite these rich avenues for researching post-coup political processes in Honduras, and the importance of following the leadership of the FNRP, LIBRE, and other broad institutionalized forms of resistance movements, we continue to know considerably less about how Hondurans experienced daily life during the actual outbreak and immediate aftermath of the ousting, and especially how these events unfolded in non-central regions of the country. Beyond studying the leadership of this nation-wide social and political movement as it emerged in

Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, La Ceiba, and other major Honduran cities, what else can be learned from the human experience of living through a sudden rupture in the democratic order? What is to be said of those Hondurans who—for various reasons—did not become formally politically active in the FNRP during this chaotic and uncertain historical moment? As a sociocultural anthropologist, I happened to be conducting ethnographic fieldwork in southern Honduras—doing research for another project—when the *golpistas* took over, prompting me to change research topics entirely and aim to understand people’s shifting alliances and understandings of what the coup meant for them. In this article, I draw upon that research, conducted between April–August, and in December 2009, to reflect on changes in Honduran political culture during these significantly turbulent times. By focusing on people’s everyday experiences as they navigated daily livelihood tasks under the de-facto regime, I demonstrate how contrary to much mainstream analysis of post-coup Honduras (which emphasizes clearly-defined divisions and clear paths toward a political future), in the days following the coup d’état, many Hondurans experienced ambivalence and confusion toward these national events, and much of their frustration with the coup itself had to do with how it would impact their abilities to meet daily needs. Clearly-defined political goals were thus not the only reason why people rejected the ousting itself—an understanding of these events that we miss if we only look at formalized protests and FNRP leadership. Rather than focus on how people joined the FNRP, I therefore examine some of the reasons why people who were adamantly against the coup, and who supported Mel Zelaya’s policies, did not become involved in the movement. In the process, I explore some of the ways in which Hondurans were coming to know more about how their state works—and the various ways they could subvert state goals, often in very finite and confined political spaces. Overall, I argue that Honduran political culture is far more complex than we might assume by only looking at grandiose events (such as major protests or elections), and that more ethnographic research among Hondurans who are not active in the FNRP is needed if we are to understand the multifaceted ways that Hondurans are pursuing social change.

My analysis is in conversation with Honduranist scholars who, like me, are in solidarity with the FNRP and do research among members of the movement. To be clear, I am not making a case against the importance of studying the FNRP or other popular resistance movements, nor am I discounting the obvious polarization we now see in contemporary Honduran society. Rather, I am suggesting that in the outbreak of the coup there were a series of immediate

concerns for a range of people, and that we would do well to better understand how these kinds of prosaic situations contribute to whether or not Hondurans become involved in formalized political movements. This point was brought home to me in anthropologist James Phillips' recent book, which examines more than 40 years of changes and continuities in Honduran popular resistance and cultures of human resilience. Phillips argues:

It is necessary to disabuse oneself of the idea that people guide their daily actions toward the actualization of fully developed ideals of societal change. How people envision change and work for it seems so often to be a gradual and almost imperceptible process. Daily life is pragmatic. How does one survive and make this here-and-now a bit easier or more secure? How to exercise some measure of control over the essentially uncontrollable? Yet in some fashion people do construct and are guided by larger dreams and visions of what is right and good and how their society should function. The relationship between daily action and larger visions is an enduring concern of human inquiry. (2015, 7)

The present endeavor is an exercise in studying Honduran “daily actions” and “larger visions” while living through sudden rupture in the democratic system. I aim to emphasize how different perceptions of the implications of the coup were rooted in unique social experiences, and wish to demonstrate the complexity of what it meant to take an active position during this period of considerable political uncertainty. In so doing, my analysis challenges temptations to conceive of Hondurans as either in complete resistance or in full support of the coup at the time of its occurrence. I believe that these are important conversations for Latin Americanist scholars to have, as we study local responses to this new form of coup d'états—where directly installing a military general seems no longer viable, yet elite economic goals are achieved nonetheless.

Historical Antecedents and Popular Memory During the Outbreak

Honduras became the regional lynchpin for US-led efforts to prevent the spread of “communism” in the region during the Cold War, culminating with the US military build-up in the 1980s through a national security doctrine and the criminalization of organized popular resistance. In this period, the Honduran state received funding from the US to strengthen the Honduran Armed Forces, train Nicaraguan Contrarevolucionarios (fighting against the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional and Sandinista government after 1979) and members of the Salvadoran Armed Forces (fighting against the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional) in the regional fight against communism. That these foreign soldiers were trained on Honduran soil was a violation of the Honduran constitution, but they were referred to as “students,” officially, to avoid any legal

consequences (Lapper 1985, 98; Ruhl 2000, 54). Meanwhile, the Honduran Armed Forces and the paramilitary group Batallón 316 sought to impede land tenure claims from the peasantry and suppress demands for better working conditions among organized urban labor, all under the national security doctrine, which viewed such organizing as necessarily in support of “communism” and linked to the peasant-led armed revolutions that were occurring in Central America (Euraque 1996; Lapper 1985; Ruhl 2000; Woodward 1985, 251). The decade of the 1980s was thus a significant period for the development of this fear in Honduras, as the regional political situation provided an opportunity for Honduran leaders to negotiate with the United States regarding what their country would receive for permitting U.S. military presence on Honduran soil (Lapper 1985, 98; Ruhl 2000, 54). Both countries justified increasing the size of the Honduran Armed Forces on the basis that Honduras could face an invasion from the Salvadoran FMLN or the Nicaraguan Sandinista government (despite how improbable such an occurrence really was).

During the outbreak of the 2009 coup, many of my Honduran research participants made connections between the 1980s and the emerging *golpista* discourse that “Mel Zelaya was a communist.” Some put this narrative into question on the basis that Mel Zelaya is a land-owning *terrateniente* from Olancho; they reminded me that regardless of policies, Mel is simply one of numerous elites in control of the state, when they were fighting amongst each other. Others recalled the last military coup stirring up such debates in Honduras: the 1963 coup against Ramón Villeda Morales, which was justified discursively for his “communist leanings.” Then the *golpistas* claimed that Villeda, a social democrat, was supportive of the Cuban revolution—despite the fact that he had cut ties with Castro’s government in April 1961 (Euraque 1996, 114; Woodward 1985, 256). Honduran capitalist elites who did not agree with Villeda’s plans for land tenure reform justified their takeover through a discourse about the president’s supposed left policies. As Honduran historian Darío Euraque writes, “...by the time López Arellano ousted Villeda Morales, it was a foregone conclusion that the new regime would justify the coup at least partly because of ‘the communist menace’ to local civilization, property, and so forth” (Euraque, 1996: 114). My aim in describing this history is to show that there are historical continuities with this fear of communism, an “internalization of the external” (Roseberry 1989, 85), primarily U.S. concern, which remains engrained in Honduran society and manifests in concrete ways. This internalized fear of communism was especially apparent in the campaign against Mel that emerged during the months prior to the coup. This

discourse grouped together Chavez's project of "21st century socialism" with the peasant-led revolutions that elites feared during the 1980s, conflating these two very different political projects into a single danger to all Hondurans. The combination of this lived history and the anti-Mel propaganda machine had implications when people attempted to make sense of the coup.

Mel's decision to sign the Venezuela-initiated energy cooperation agreement Petrocaribe in December 2007 was controversial, but the move that brought Mel's government into the discursive realm of "leftist" and "supporter of communism" came in July 2008 when he committed Honduras to ALBA. Despite the economic benefits for a poor country under this agreement (including access to cheap gasoline and manufactured goods such as tractors and energy-efficient light bulbs, in exchange for Honduran beef and dairy exports), committing Honduras to ALBA had important symbolic effects in the months prior to Mel's ousting. With this recent history omnipresent in popular memory, the mainstream Honduran news sources began a campaign against Mel Zelaya's non-binding referendum set for June 28. The president was asking citizens if they wanted to vote for a constituent assembly in the November 2009 presidential and congressional elections by means of a "cuarta urna" (fourth ballot box)—that is, one more vote in addition to the usual three votes for presidential, departmental, and regional candidates. With these constitutional reforms, popular sectors that had already been organizing for land rights, workers' rights, and ethnic and gender equality were promised a new kind of society in which the common person could live well. Meanwhile Honduran business elites feared economic loss with such proposals, and were already upset with how Mel had supported the peasantry and working class—raising the minimum wage by 60 percent, granting land titles, and placing a moratorium on mining contracts. Despite the actual differences between the revolutionary movements in Central America of the 1980s, Chávez's "21st century socialism," and Mel's policy proposals for Honduras, the anti-Mel political environment before the coup had cast his government into the discursive realm of "leftist"—and thus inappropriate for Honduras. While a president's tenure in office was one item proposed for change, the media campaign¹ sought to equate the referendum itself with an illegal attempt to remaining in power indefinitely, influenced by Hugo Chávez's brand of socialism and constitutional reform—all of which was on people's minds in June 2009.

¹ Here I am referring to the overall political climate around the referendum, not just a few news articles (but see *El Heraldo* 2009 and *La Prensa* 2009 as representative examples).

Theorizing Competing Hegemonic Frameworks and Resistance Beyond “The FNRP”

To illuminate the everyday effects of these processes, as Hondurans attempted to make sense and act upon the coup in everyday contexts, here I am guided by theoretical insights in anthropology on how we understand the nature of resistance, and what it means to question a hegemonic narrative. Two anthropologists, James Scott (1985) and William Roseberry (1994), are particularly useful to this end. In his now famous articulation of how subordinate groups engage in small acts of subversion to make their situation a little more manageable in the moment, while not attempting to revolutionize an oppressive regime all at once, Scott has theorized “everyday forms of resistance” that:

...make no headlines. Just as millions of anthozoan polyps create willy-nilly, a coral reef, so do thousands upon thousands of individual acts of insubordination and evasion create a political or economic barrier reef of their own. There is rarely any dramatic confrontation, any moment that is particularly newsworthy. And whenever, to pursue the simile, the ship of state runs aground on such a reef, attention is typically directed to the shipwreck itself and not to the vast aggregation of petty acts that made it possible. It is only rarely that the perpetrators of these petty acts seek to call attention to themselves. Their safety lies in their anonymity. (1985, 36)

Such a theoretical perspective is useful here in order to comprehend the various ways that Hondurans have been resisting the coup beyond “the headlines,” and why so many who were frustrated with the coup and the Micheletti regime did not become involved in the FNRP. For some Hondurans against the ousting itself, the summer of 2009 was about more immediate needs; their informal and often clandestine forms of resistance in the outbreak of the coup consisted of contesting the *golpista* discourse of why the ousting occurred—a narrative that the newly installed leaders were attempting to make dominant. But lessons from the writings of Antonio Gramsci (1971) can also allow us to imagine the various ways that people can question dominant ideologies when hegemonic narratives of reality do not meet up with people’s own lived experiences.

In an influential discussion of how state power works, Roseberry (1994) explains that Gramsci himself did not assume that the subaltern simply accept their subordination, but instead actively challenge the existing economic and political structures and ideologies that support them. Given the potential fragility of hegemonic structures, and areas of contradiction between the lived reality of the masses and what dominant ideologies claim to create, those in power need to constantly revise their strategies for creating narratives that resonate with subordinate populations—individuals whose lived experiences may lead them to reject the ideologies of the elites and create counter-narratives that more closely

match their economic and political realities (Roseberry 1994). Roseberry suggests that Gramsci understood the construction of dominant ideas as a continuous process, and that we should therefore use the concept of “hegemony”:

not to understand consent but to understand struggle; the ways in which the words, images, symbols, forms, organizations, institutions, and movements used by subordinate populations to talk about, understand, confront, accommodate themselves to, or resist their domination are shaped by the process of domination itself. What hegemony constructs, then, is not a shared ideology but a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterized by domination. That common material and meaningful framework is, in part, discursive: a common language or way of talking about social relationships that sets out the central terms around which and in terms of which contestation and struggles can occur. (Roseberry, 1994, 360-361)

These are useful theoretical orientations for analyzing the post-June 28, 2009 projects of both the *golpistas* and the FNRP, given that each group was attempting to forge its own hegemonic interpretations of events that summer. In the process, they established what William Roseberry refers to as a “language of contention” (1994)—or, in the present case, common ways of talking about the possible reasons for and potential outcomes of the June 2009 coup.

In July and August 2009, in addition to daily acts of subversion in resistance to the *golpista* regime, I also observed people of a variety of political opinions talking about the coup in surprisingly similar ways, through what can be identified as a common discursive realm for understanding the nature of governing officials. Regardless of how they felt about the coup itself, their “language of contention” (Roseberry 1994) revolved around the idea that “Mel Zelaya had become too close to Hugo Chávez,” that Mel “wanted to bring socialism to Honduras,” and that he “wanted to remain in power indefinitely”—a growing knowledge of what was at stake for the oligarchy, as Francisco’s comments demonstrate. Mel’s ousting thus forged and reinforced the hegemonic understanding that any political project linked to socialism or Chávez (even an economically favorable trade agreement with Venezuela) would not be tolerated by the political elite in Honduras. What both supporters and resisters of the coup seemed to internalize was that politically, such a project was not possible, given dominant ideologies—or at least not in the summer of 2009. All of this, in turn, was drawn upon as a way of making sense of June 28: a justification for the ousting among those who agreed with the coup, and even as a widely-accepted truth among those who did not agree with these actions, but who speculated nonetheless why elites instigated a coup. Here I show how this hegemonic framework established the limits of possible interpretations for the reasons why

the coup occurred: the *golpistas* continued to use the idea of Mel's alliance with Chávez (and by extension, the cuarta urna) to justify the ousting, while the emerging FNRP argued that Chávez and constitutional reform did not present a threat to Honduras, and that even if they did, it was not grounds for a coup. With these processes at work, Hondurans went about their daily lives—attempting to make sense of the ousting and life under the de facto regime.

From Migration to Golpe: Research Site, Positionality, and Methods

As a sociocultural anthropologist I am interested in understanding how Hondurans imagine political possibilities based on situated knowledge and lived experiences. I study this by observing and taking part in people's quotidian lives. Survey results and news reports on Hondurans' opinions, while illuminating, can also be misleading when seen in the context of everyday actions that contradict grand narratives. One major advantage to the ethnographic method for understanding the implications of the military coup is that it can reveal what people said and did in prosaic contexts. Thus, while protests and marches on the streets are important to study, they are not a focus of mine here. Rather than point to extraordinary moments, here I am choosing to instead focus on how people's daily routines were affected and influenced by broader political processes under the de facto regime. While limited in scope, I believe this focus on the everyday can illuminate the human experience of living through sudden rupture to the existing political system, and contribute to our overall understanding of Honduran political culture in the contemporary era of *golpismo*—the continuation of governing policies made possible because of the coup, and the three different, highly-contested presidential and congressional elections (in November 2009; 2013; 2017).

Months before the June 28, 2009 coup I had begun a research project about the impacts of international labor migration in San Lorenzo, Valle. With the ousting of President Zelaya my project changed from a study about migration to one that aimed to understand people's wide-ranging experiences with the coup, from the perspective of this relatively marginalized region of the country. Historically most government revenues have depended more upon the export of silver ores from the central regions and bananas from the north coast. In addition to subsistence farming, today the Honduran south specializes in exporting primarily industrially-farmed shrimp, cashews, sugarcane and cantaloupe melons to the world market. Other livelihood strategies revolve around the informal economy, and people sell foodstuffs, clothing, and souvenirs along the Pan-

American highway to travelers coming from Tegucigalpa, El Salvador, or Nicaragua. The two major cities—Choluteca and San Lorenzo—provide other employment opportunities in businesses, and in recent years more people in Valle have considered commuting for work to Tegucigalpa as viable. The livelihood strategies of most families include working in these sectors, and sending at least one family member to work abroad. In 2009, all the families I knew had at least one person working abroad, or had done so in the past. The impact of migration is visibly notable among households that receive remittances. Inquiry into these dynamics are what initially drove my research. Like other areas of Honduras, the regional economy of the south is both subsidized by, and subsidizing, international Honduran migration patterns. That is, migrants send remittances and create visible hierarchies in household wealth and people's abilities to start small businesses; at the same time, local caregiving, childrearing efforts, and success stories of families achieving their goals help to convince Honduran migrants in Spain, Canada, and the US, that their sacrifices of living abroad (generally without paperwork, and for only meager earnings) are somehow worthwhile. The 22 different individuals I engaged as research participants included people who had either migrated internationally, planned to leave, or who had family members abroad. At the time of my study their livelihood strategies included running household businesses, engaging in subsistence agriculture, selling their labor in export processing factories, working in construction (or as security guards), while others were schoolteachers at private and public primary and secondary institutions. As we will see, this diverse group of people had a variety of understandings and opinions about the coup and of post-coup governing policies.²

Politically, southern Honduras has elected mostly right-wing National Party congressional representatives (*diputados*), though support for centrist Liberal Party *diputados* was growing in the years preceding the 2009 military coup, actions which subsequently divided the Liberal Party. José Alfredo Saavedra was one *diputado* who created a particular sense of resentment among anti-coup resisters after Micheletti appointed him as the President of the National Congress and he accepted. Saavedra ran as a Liberal Party candidate for Valle and conjured support

² In this article, I use the term “post-coup” to refer to all governing processes after the coup-installed Micheletti regime—from the government of Pepe Lobo (2010-2013) and the government of Juan Orlando Hernández (2014-present). This is merely for clarity in chronology. There has yet to actually be any “post-coup” political environment in Honduras, given the continuities in coup-imposed policies (as the term “golpismo” implies).

from people in his home town of Nacaome, but also many in the more populous San Lorenzo. Valle itself is small enough such that many people who voted for Saavedra also knew him personally; they were especially upset to see him “traicionar a Mel”, and become “vendido al regimen” as they commonly put it. Another significant *golpista* figure to come from Valle was Rosario “Chayo” Fernandez, who accepted Micheletti’s nomination as the de-facto Minister of Education. Chayo was already a well-known public figure as a long-time high school principal, and someone who many considered a good candidate for mayor of San Lorenzo. It was a surprise for many families to see this seemingly progressive teacher side with the *golpistas*. These two examples serve to remind us that the *golpe de estado* did not just replace the president, but other ministers and officials in his government (e.g. Euraque 2010). When individuals who aspire to a political career—and who had been supported previously under different pretenses—filled these positions, the fact that they worked directly for the *golpista* regime was astonishing for some, and created considerable resentment and frustration locally.

The south is also a region where I have had previous experience, which produced the network of differently-positioned individuals with whom I conducted this research. In 2001 and 2004 I worked for a non-governmental organization (NGO) whose public health projects in rural communities often sought the approval of teachers and other community leaders, many of whom I befriended. While I no longer work for that NGO, I remain in communication with many of the *campesinos* who were once recipients of its projects. And it was through working with teachers and NGO officials that I met my partner, a Honduran woman from the region. This means that I have long-standing professional and personal relationships with a range of people in the area. When I arrived in April 2009, people I already knew invited me into their homes, and to a range of informal social gatherings, where we would discuss international labor migration, initially, and later, their preoccupations about national political events. Yet even before the ousting itself, I realized that Mel Zelaya’s strengthening of Honduran-Venezuelan relations was already a pervasive and controversial political topic locally. In response to my questions about migrant illegality and deportability in the United States, I would receive comments that highlighted the urgency of what people understood as a shift in geopolitical regional power. During one occasion, for instance, I was interviewing a *campesino* man whose son was in the process of getting deported from Houston. And in response to my questions about how their family planned to cope with this change, he paused to

offer the following reflection: “Estados Unidos va a seguir deportando migrantes hondureños porque Mel es un gran amigo de Chávez, y a Estados Unidos no le gusta el socialismo”. While perhaps not something many academics studying migration policies would see as relevant, the idea that Chávez and socialist policies somehow present a danger to Honduran-US relations is not without historical precedents. As we will see, Hondurans’ deeply rooted understandings of their country’s dependent relationship with the US were reinforced with the coup d’état.

Navigating the Immediate Ousting: Disruptions to Work and Family Life

On the morning of Sunday, June 28, 2009, Hondurans woke up without electricity, in what was later recognized as a deliberate black-out by the coup instigators. But late June is well into the rainy season, when power outages are commonplace, and at first, my closest research participants thought nothing of the outage. They found out about the kidnapping—that a military coup was underway—because they happened to be listening to battery-powered radios that were transmitting music from a Salvadoran radio station. San Lorenzo’s close proximity to the southern international borders meant that they had the advantage of hearing about the coup before other regions of the country. Both Salvadoran and Nicaraguan stations announced that their countries would be closing their borders to commerce with Honduras to protest the coup d’état. In response to news about the ousting, most people had immediate concerns of how to purchase bottled water and basic food items. It was not until that evening that *pulperías* (house-run convenience stores) began to operate again. People rushed to stock up on basic supplies, commenting that they were taking the same necessary precautions as they did with Hurricane Mitch (the last real national disaster, in 1998). Those who were alive during the coup against Villeda began to recall the political uncertainty of that moment, when the question of who was in power was on people’s minds. Yet for younger Hondurans without any memory of the 1963 coup, the very idea of ousting their president seemed surreal. As one woman put it: “Todo esto parece como algo surreal, como que fuera de película” (interview, June 28, 2009).

Once the country’s electricity was restored, people’s most pressing concern was that no Honduran journalists were discussing what had happened. My research participants were well-accustomed to following current events, but during the first few days after Mel’s ousting there was no critical news coverage locally. People continued to rely upon Salvadoran and Nicaraguan radio stations

for news about Honduras. They suspected that *golpista* censorship of national news outlets was a strategic maneuver, commenting that: “The *golpistas* don’t want us to see anything; they want us to think that everything is fine in Honduras” (interview, June 28, 2009). Some people continued to listen to the same Salvadoran radio stations even once the Honduran radio stations began to operate again, because they had heard about protests underway in Tegucigalpa to demand Mel’s return to power, yet few Honduran stations were broadcasting any relevant information. Thus before people were aware of the “FNRP” they were already resisting in informal ways, through “everyday forms” (Scott 1985)—by voicing their criticism of the regime’s attempts to censor information about the ousting, as they worried about the consequences of such censorship.

Foreign and national coup-opposing news media did begin to refer to those who were demanding Mel’s restitution as “the FNRP,” but reported that the armed forces and national police were retaliating violently against their peaceful protests in Tegucigalpa and other major cities throughout the country. Meanwhile the coup-supporting news media reported that these protests were unnecessary because no “golpe de estado” had occurred; rather what had happened was a “constitutional succession of power” and that “everything is normal in Honduras.” Such *golpista* media outlets contrasted stories of the FNRP’s demands that Mel return to power with images of people dressed in white shirts marching for “peace” and “rule of law” and in support of Micheletti. Coup-supporting news agencies ran stories about “vandalizing” and “anti-Honduran” protesters (the FNRP, in their view) who had put up roadblocks on major highways to prevent commerce and to cause “disorder”—arguing that any calls for foreign intervention for Mel’s return would constitute a violation of national sovereignty.

On the one hand, none of this “disorder” was occurring in San Lorenzo, and some people said that it did seem as though “everything was normal in Honduras.” On the other hand, before *Telesur* and other foreign stations were censored, my closest research participants and I watched Hugo Chávez’s response to the coup. What worried everyone was his statement that Venezuela “no va a permitir esto, y estamos listos para responder, incluso militarmente”. Most of the Hondurans I knew wanted Mel to be reinstated, but did not want a Venezuelan military intervention to make that happen. They especially feared retaliation by the Honduran Armed Forces, or even the United States, if Chávez’s threat was taken seriously. They commented, “San Lorenzo, siendo tan cerca a la frontera [con Nicaragua] fijo que habría violencia aquí si Chávez viniera” (interview, June 28,

2009). Not knowing where others stood on these issues, I cautiously sought their opinions as they returned to their daily routines.

Most people in San Lorenzo went back to work on Monday June 29, albeit with caution. Honduran schoolteachers were the exception. As a group, teachers were among the first to travel to Tegucigalpa in protest of the coup and in support of the emerging FNRP. Partly because of their positions as local intellectuals and individuals who are expected to comment and take action on a wide range of current events, and partly because they are middle class professionals whose labor organizations called for a *paro* (work stoppage) out of protest against the ousting, Honduran teachers were in a position to become active in the movement. At FNRP marches they would frequently chant: “How can we be expected to teach Honduran children what it means to live in a democracy, when a coup d’état has occurred and our democracy has been broken?” This became a discursive justification for the teacher *paro*, and the reasons school principal Esdras gave to his friends and loved ones for his participation in the initial protests. Yet from the perspective of Esdras’s mother, Susana, her son should never have become involved.

Like many Hondurans at the time, Susana’s political opinions about the coup were difficult to place into clear categories. As a schoolteacher, her labor organizations have historically been involved with demanding more state investment in public services (something Mel’s policies supported), yet she is also a member of the right-wing National Party, and as such never voted for Mel Zelaya (then of the Liberal Party). Susana likewise questioned the logic of Mel’s policies to raise the minimum wage his engagement with the land claims of peasant groups, the moratorium he placed on mining contracts, and especially the trade agreements with Venezuela. When I asked her why she believed the coup occurred, she was quick to answer that “Mel había llegado a ser muy amigo de ese Chávez, y a la gente aquí no le gustó; la gente no quiere eso, el socialismo” (interview, July 5, 2009). Susana thought that Chávez posed a threat to Honduran national sovereignty and claimed that people in Honduras “sólo quiere vivir en paz” (something the de-facto regime was claiming, which implied that Mel and the FNRP wanted something else). Yet, interestingly, Susana was against the coup itself and despised Micheletti; she wanted Mel to be reinstated, even though she disagreed with most of his policies. She also supported the general efforts of the FNRP, and said the group was demanding a return to democracy. At the same time, Susana could not bear the idea of her son becoming involved with the movement, given that its members were at risk of state violence.

During July and August 2009 Susana would come by my house to discuss her concerns about how the armed forces had been attacking FNRP members. Every time Esdras participated in a protest or a march she worried about his safety. She and I were watching the news together when a 12-year-old boy was shot at the Tegucigalpa international airport on July 5, 2009.³ Susana frantically called her son, who was there with a group of FNRP supporters awaiting the president, and she broke into tears when her son didn't respond right away. Later that month Esdras joined a group of FNRP members and travelled clandestinely to Nicaragua to support Mel while he remained in that country gaining international support for his return. When the president tried to enter Honduras via Las Manos, Nicaragua,⁴ and Susana heard that a fellow schoolteacher had been murdered by the Honduran Armed Forces at the border, she rushed to an internet café and made an expensive call to her son's cell phone to see if he was alive and well in Nicaragua. Troubled by his close encounter with these events, she explained: "Mire ve, una cosa es apoyar a Mel, pero otra es poner su vida en peligro. Eso no. Así le digo yo" (interview, August 2, 2009).

While Susana supported the political efforts of the FNRP to demand that Mel return to power, she would vehemently argue against her son's own involvement. In fact, Susana was right to worry: As Esdras himself revealed to me years later, during fieldwork in 2012, he had been temporarily blacklisted by a special unit of the armed forces because of his involvement with the FNRP in 2009, "todo por estar defendiendo la democracia hondureña" (interview, March 30, 2012). During that time, he feared that he would be arrested and taken away for questioning, possibly to be disappeared. Esdras told me this was the result of his presence in the Brazilian Embassy in September 2009, where he spent more than a week alongside Mel, as the president sought refuge there in another attempt to return to power (interview, March 30, 2012). While in the end nothing happened to Esdras during this time, and he believes that he is no longer on the list, the fact that Susana discouraged her son from attending FNRP events points toward the complicated process of supporting the FNRP in the months following the coup. Under what circumstances then, was it common for Hondurans not active in the FNRP to nevertheless become involved in this anti-coup movement?

During the summer of 2009 there were several individuals who passionately supported the FNRP movement and travelled to Tegucigalpa, while

³ This was when Mel Zelaya attempted to return to Honduras by plane following the Organization of American States' resolution in Washington that he could return to office.

⁴ This was the president's second attempt to return to Honduras.

others chose not to for a variety of reasons. For some people this was indeed due to a fear of violence, while for others the very ability to become active, and travel all the way to Tegucigalpa, was considered a privileged position, given the expenses of travel, childcare, and time off work. The ability to do so was somewhat easier for professionals whose labor organizations endorsed the resistance efforts. Schoolteachers were the main guild to do this, another was public healthcare workers.

Defying the Orders of the de facto Regime

On several occasions during the summer of 2009 nurses and allied public health workers closed down the public hospital in San Lorenzo, following the nurse's unions call to hold *paros* in protest of the Micheletti government. In response to their locking the front gate and protesting the coup in of the hospital's main entrance, the de-facto regime was usually quick to send in the armed forces with orders to re-open the hospital, reminding everyone that it is state property. Yet on one occasion in July 2009, as the soldiers lined the gate to the hospital and the nurses refused to comply with their orders to re-open the facility, several of the workers realized that they recognized some of the soldiers, whose families were also residents of San Lorenzo, and the surrounding countryside. While the military usually avoids sending soldiers to regions where they have family, in this instance nurses took advantage of the encounter to emphasize that they knew the soldiers' own families—how their mothers would be ashamed to know that their sons were threatening to harm fellow Hondurans. In their successful defiance of the military's orders, the nurses told the soldiers that they would refuse to open the hospital for a *golpista* regime, but that rest assured, if fellow Hondurans were in need of emergency medical attention, then they would attend to their needs on an emergency-only basis. The experience produced reflexive dialogue throughout San Lorenzo about how the Micheletti regime was not capable of controlling everyone's actions, and convinced even some people who supported the ousting itself that the de-facto regime was resorting to violent tactics to silence peaceful resistance.

The main source of frustration for everyone, regardless of their opinions on the ousting itself, was the de facto regime's insistence upon nightly curfews. It was an economic disadvantage, a nuisance, and symbolic of how Honduran democracy had indeed been broken. Some people asked, "Si todo está 'normal' entonces ¿por qué tiene que haber toque de queda?" These processes coalesced on July 24, 2009, when residents throughout southern Honduras were advised via

radio that since Mel planned to return to Honduras by land, a day-time curfew would be issued for all municipalities bordering Nicaragua. People in San Lorenzo commented that morning about how difficult this must be for residents of border towns who were prohibited from leaving their homes since the previous evening: they had to remain inside throughout the entire next day and then again that night. Reflecting on their own experiences of struggling to meet household needs under the de-facto regime, I heard comments such as: “Esa gente allá, ¿cómo va a comprar agua y comida durante el toque de queda?” and “¡La gente en Choluteca and San Marcos de Colon está presa en su propia casa!” (field notes, July 24, 2009).

Such solidarity was paradoxically met with the harsh reality that by lunchtime, all of the Department of Valle was suddenly included in the list of places under a day-time curfew, which would last until at least 7 am the next day. I happened to be conducting an interview with a coup-supporting research participant when we heard this news on the radio only ten minutes before the curfew would take effect. Both of us were both puzzled by the announcement, given that none of Valle’s municipalities bordered Nicaragua. Despite her general support for Mel’s ousting, this small business owner opined that it was ridiculous to place a day-time curfew on San Lorenzo, and that Micheletti’s policies were becoming detrimental to hard working Hondurans. I made it home just before the curfew took effect, rushing through the market, where I could see people hurrying to get inside, closing businesses, and clearing the streets as quickly as they could. I heard people shouting, “¡Apúrense, métense pa dentro o si no, se les van a llevar preso!” (field notes, July 24, 2009). A few hours later, still during daylight, I was surprised to see many people out on the streets. Despite the fact that the *golpistas* had not lifted the curfew, residents continued to run errands. With some hesitation, I went outside myself to inquire about the situation. Many people commented that since they didn’t see the military or police patrolling the street or arresting anyone, the armed forces must have only been deployed elsewhere. This was the end result despite the fact that the announcement specifically listed San Lorenzo as one of the municipalities under curfew. One person went on to say that: “Tuvo que haber sido un error, pues no tiene sentido poner un toque de queda a todo San Lorenzo... ¡a menos que los *golpistas* son tan pendejos de pensar que Mel iba a venir nadando por el mar!” (interview, July 24, 2009).

With this experience people learned that so long as there were no soldiers in sight and nobody was being arrested, there was no sense in obeying such a silly thing as a day-time curfew. Asking them to also stay inside during the day—

simply because Mel announced he would be coming back via land—was rejected, even by coup supporters, as ridiculous. Hondurans of diverse political opinions on the coup thus agreed that it was not necessary to stay inside—not only because they figured Mel would not be coming near San Lorenzo that day, but also because of empirical evidence that no soldiers were patrolling the streets to enforce the curfew, let alone arresting anyone. Given this reality, people in San Lorenzo were asking, why obey an order from a de-facto regime in distant Tegucigalpa?

These experiences of defying the day-time curfew and orders to re-open the hospital in San Lorenzo illuminate how people were assessing what the Honduran state was actually capable of doing, as they were also learning about the effectiveness of the strategies of the *golpista* regime. For my research participants, enforcing a day-time curfew for municipalities bordering Nicaragua made sense there, but not in San Lorenzo; violent confrontations between soldiers and nurses were probable when they were strangers, but not when the protesters recognized these young men in the army—many of whom were *campesinos* from the surrounding communities that these same healthcare workers aimed to serve.

Peasant Decisions to not Support the FNRP

Many of the land-poor subsistence farmers in the outskirts of San Lorenzo have considered temporary employment in the Honduran Armed Forces and National Police as a livelihood strategy. Similar to international migration, most view such work as a temporary sacrifice—a way to save money, or a resource when subsistence farming does not provide. Many of these families also support governing policies that afford peasants access to credit, state-subsidized agriculture inputs, and legal land titles (all projects that Mel Zelaya supported while in office). Yet when I visited one community in the aftermath of the coup, I was surprised not to see more support for the FNRP from my friend Don Elvin and other *campesinos* whom I had known since 2001. Based on our previous conversations, I would have expected him to have had more enthusiasm for reinstating the president. Don Elvin had voted for Mel, believed that ALBA and the raise in the minimum wage would help “los pobres” (as he self-identifies), yet initially he showed support for the ousting. When I questioned him about his opinions, in the presence of other *campesinos* whom I knew also supported Mel while he was in power, Don Elvin said: “Yo creo que fue necesario sacarle a Mel porque lo que él quería hacer es ilegal, el continuísmo...y aquí respetamos la ley. En Honduras nadie está encima de la ley. Y lo que Mel quería hacer es

exactamente lo que hace Chávez, quedarse en el poder. Pero aquí la gente no quiso eso” (interview, July 13, 2009).

The *golpista* discourse on “continuismo”, which was promoted during the campaign against the cuarta urna, could have influenced Don Elvin’s opinions. That is, his comments may reflect some success by the *golpistas* in misleading those whom Mel’s policies were designed to benefit. His perceptions could also reflect having had less exposure to the messages coming from Mel, which in the outbreak of the coup were covered more in foreign media than locally. Yet Don Elvin also maintained that “La cosa de Mel es que fue un buen presidente. Un muy buen presidente. Quería ayudar a los pobres”. The day I visited he also told me that the FNRP seemed to him “como una guerrilla, así como los de Salvador, los del FMLN”, telling me how he could never support a civil war. At the same time, he revealed to me how he and others had family members from El Salvador (interview, July 13, 2009).

In proceeding to analyze why someone like Don Elvin might not want to openly support the FNRP, we should recall that historically, *campesinos* in both Honduras and neighboring countries have been violently targeted by the military whenever their opinions and actions have not supported the governments in power. And Honduran peasants have found it strategic to appear in support of elite interests in order to achieve at least some of their more immediate goals (cf. Boyer & Peñalva 2013). As James Phillips puts it, they have “learned from perhaps centuries of experience the cost of resistance, and how to survive in a world dominated by others deploying power and force” (Phillips 2015: 20). In other words, they see the benefit of remaining anonymous, while engaging in “everyday forms of resistance” nonetheless (Scott 1985). In this sense, the fact that Don Elvin and others like him chose not to (or did not have the economic means to) become actively involved in the FNRP during July and August 2009 should not be so surprising. Instead Don Elvin seemed interested in demonstrating to those around him that he was an upstanding Honduran citizen. At the same time, he seemed sincerely worried that civil war was looming and that he or his loved ones could be recruited to fight on either side (something several men feared during the immediate outbreak of the coup as the armed forces resorted to its reserves and new recruits). That possibility was brought home to me when Don Elvin mentioned how he feared Hugo Chávez’s statement on Telesur that Venezuela is prepared to respond, even militarily. What would happen to his community, he wondered, if that came true?

Later that summer, Don Elvin surprised me by saying that he wanted Mel to come back and finish his term in office “Porque es hondureño”—a statement that seemed to contradict his initial opinion on the coup. Yet this was exactly what the FNRP was demanding in response to the Michelletti’s claim that Mel and his supporters were not “hondureños de verdad”. Don Elvin went on to explain that: “Mel puede volver. Yo sólo no quiero que haga la cuarta urna. Iba bien hasta que le hizo caso a ese Chávez. Se enamoró del socialismo” (interview, August 20, 2009). Chávez’s brand of socialism continued to pose a threat—even in the minds of those Hondurans who had supported Mel, and who recognized him as a good president.

Comments such as these illuminate how individual opinions shifted drastically with the sudden political change that the Honduran coup produced. Simultaneously, people’s perceptions of the meaning of these events were shaped by hegemonic discursive realms that limited all the possible interpretations and instead emphasized that Mel’s socialist policies and his alliance with Hugo Chávez were the reasons for his ousting. Yet even within this framework we see instances where the *golpista* discourse and the regime’s responses to FNRP activists were interpreted and acted upon in ways that go against the interests and goals of the *golpistas* themselves. Their hegemonic project was thus never complete. Rather, there were instances where some but not all of the official messages were internalized.

Conclusion

As Latin Americanist scholars continue to study this new form of coup d’états in the region we would do well to consider how the multiple, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory meanings that individuals forge while living through such sudden political changes do not always make sense at the time, even to them. People do not necessarily recognize clear political ideologies in the moment. In the case of the Honduran coup, there was a host of bewildering messages amidst media censorship about what was happening at the level of the national government, and in the streets throughout the country—creating a myriad of confusing circumstances. From Ecuador in 2010, to Paraguay in 2012, to Brazil in 2016, we continue to see people in the region actively seek out new information amidst media censorship and competing hegemonic interpretations of events. As differently-positioned individuals live with such circumstances and work through the question of “if a coup occurred,” the significance of their varied experiences can be informed by those of Hondurans in 2009.

By approaching the coup with a historical lens, it becomes evident that the fear of communism penetrating Central America has persisted in Honduran society, and it remains internalized by citizens of diverse social backgrounds. Since before the ousting, we saw that Mel's alliance with Chávez and the perception that it would imply a socialist project for Honduras was linked to a weakening of U.S.-Honduran relations, which, ideologically, could not be supported by the elites who later instigated (or supported) the coup. Yet even among those who supported Mel's policies, there seemed to be a common recognition that one of the reasons for his ousting was because "Mel got too close to Hugo Chávez." Indeed, there was a shared understanding, or a "language of contention" (Roseberry 1994) among Hondurans that Chávez's policies for 21st-century socialism would have continued to influence Honduran policies with Mel in power. The coup forged and reinforced the hegemonic understanding that anything linked to such a project (even signing a trade agreement with Venezuela) would not be tolerated by the political elite in Honduras. Even with these hegemonic forces at work there was, however, considerable heterogeneity to the ways that differently-situated individuals navigated through the emerging political polarization. The examples shown here problematize the oppositional divisions that could otherwise be drawn between "supporters of Mel" and "supporters of Micheletti" as the coup occurred. We have seen that in some cases these differences were very clear—that is, some people ascribed clearly to one group or the other—but that in many other cases support for one group over the other was not so easy to determine.

In the immediate aftermath of the coup, there were aspects of the *golpista* discourse that resonated with Hondurans of diverse backgrounds. Some were concerned about the formation of new centers of political power in Latin America, and specifically called into question what a close alliance with Venezuela under Chávez would imply for Honduras—fearing what a weakened relationship with the US could imply. And many sincerely desired politicians who respected the law, a country at peace, and protected Honduran national sovereignty. However, most people's experiences were more ambivalent and did not connect with the ways the coup-installed government claimed these concepts existed under their rule. Aspects of the *golpista* discourse simply were not consistent with people's lived experiences. Several individuals consciously rejected notions with which they disagreed and found common interests with the emerging FNRP, a process that Roseberry's reading of Gramsci leads us to see (Roseberry 1994). Hondurans were thus not passive recipients of the incoming de-facto government

and its discourse on the events of June 28, 2009. Instead they interpreted the *golpista* narrative in light of their own readings of recent regional history and their own everyday economic realities, which sometimes altered the dominant narrative of the *golpistas*. This was a gradual, contradictory, and varied process as people navigated their own localized daily struggles while imagining the range of political possibilities in the immediate future.

The stories recounted in this article are not about a heroic moment in Honduras. Rather, they are about a confusing and uncertain time, when a range of people who did not necessarily join the FNRP movement struggled to understand what was happening at the level of the state. While its initial goal of reinstating Mel was not achieved, the FNRP has since organized around a host of progressive issues such as the rights of vulnerable groups, decreasing political violence, creating mechanisms to hold politicians and elite entrepreneurs accountable for their actions, and redesigning a series of previously-achieved policies that were overturned with the ousting of Mel and rule under post-coup governments. In a more recent project of mine among FNRP members and LIBRE supporters, one prominent schoolteacher reflected on this recent history, on Hondurans' experiences with the coup, in terms of the push that they all needed in order to advance a broader political project:

Mira ve, la FNRP nunca trató sólo de Mel. Ha sido en respuesta a todas las injusticias contra el pueblo. Lo que pasó con el golpe de estado fue que el pueblo se despertó. Ahora somos más unidos. Dicen que a veces algo malo tiene que pasar para que pase algo bueno. Si nunca secuestrarán a Mel, quien sabe dónde estaríamos. Pero ahora la gente está despierta. Por fin, el pueblo se despertó y está viendo la luz. (interview, San Lorenzo, July 9, 2012)

I would add to this member's statement the idea that the FNRP would also probably not be in the position it is in now (and perhaps would not even exist) had Mel actually come back to finish his term. This "awakening" was therefore neither inevitable nor predictable.

These are important insights for future research on Honduran political processes among scholars who continue to study the dynamics of the anti-coup resistance movement. The positions people took on the ousting, when it occurred, were more varied than we might expect if we only look at the more clearly polarized contemporary political environment. And the varied ways that ordinary people came to support the FNRP can inform our engagement with how the movement is attempting to turn political inertia into rich sources of support for a revolutionary spirit that is still being forged, now over a decade since the coup. Today Honduranist scholars have the advantage of reflection upon the

results of the ousting. We can consider the ongoing struggles of the FNRP to influence governing policies and win control of the state through the LIBRE Party in 2013 and the Alianza de Oposición Contra la Dictadura (left coalition party) in 2017, both of which institutionalized aspects of the movement's goals, while marginalizing some leaders of grassroots campaigns that existed before their consolidation into the FNRP (cf. Shipley 2016). We can study the movement's strategies to alter the *golpista* status quo upheld by the current government of Juan Orlando Hernández (2013-present). During the period examined here, however, most Hondurans themselves did not envision any such possibilities in their political future. On the contrary, everyday experiences with the actual outbreak of the coup in and around this medium-sized town were more focused on navigating the contours of daily life, away from most FNRP public protests.

In the immediate aftermath of the ousting, most people who chose to resist formally in the movement did so because they supported and benefited from Mel's government, because they sought to defend democratic order, or because they mistrusted or disapproved of the de facto regime—all commendable positions to take. But we also need to understand what was happening among people who did not formally take part in the emerging FNRP if we are to understand the evolution of Honduran political culture. As I have attempted to demonstrate here, many people engaged in “everyday resistance” (Scott 1985) by subtly criticizing the ousting, Micheletti, or some aspect of life during the immediate aftermath of the coup. Not all of my research participants had the desire, means, or privilege of travelling to Tegucigalpa to take part in a formal FNRP protest. But all were involved in processing what had happened—amidst heightened levels of media censorship—and many began to challenge the *golpista* discourse that the ousting was “not a coup.” In summer 2009, using the term “golpe de estado” to refer to what happened on June 28, 2009 involved “everyday resistance” by questioning the dominant narratives of the new ruling class, and identifying fissures in their hegemonic narrative of reality. Writing independently from, yet still congruent with, Roseberry's reading of Gramsci, James Phillips has argued that the internalization of hegemonic discourses in Honduran society is:

...partial, incomplete, and contested. Under certain conditions, resistance may take the form of using the ideologies presented by the powerful as standards against which to measure and critique the gap between the reality presented and the reality that people lived every day...This may occur when people are acutely aware of the contradictions between the reality portrayed by those in control and the daily reality of people's lives. (2015, 26)

My research participants in 2009 were becoming aware of the contradictions of the de-facto regime, and their shortcomings in achieving their own goals—how they used violence against certain protesters in distant areas, but at the same time failed to implement their own threats in San Lorenzo (as seen, for instance, when individuals ignored the day-time curfew, and when public health employees defied military orders to reopen the hospital). People interpreted the political landscape through the filter of their own lived experiences as well as their understandings of Honduran collective experiences (especially during the Cold War). Most people were sorting through their ideas and articulating their concerns primarily in face-to-face discussions, often in private spaces—whether or not they formally supported the coup or the then emerging FNRP movement.

The anti-coup FNRP movement is of course not the same today as it was during the summer of 2009. Now the struggle against *golpismo* is no longer only among those who would otherwise protest neoliberal policies, or the specific setbacks to the social reforms made possible under the Mel Zelaya government. Given the immense state violence, along with the impunity awarded to Honduran government officials since the June 2009 coup, many of the movement's goals have become more mainstream. In contemporary Honduras, there is increasingly more support for a national constituent assembly around a host of progressive initiatives; at the same time, more people are protesting the realities of *golpismo* and the illegal re-election of the Juan Orlando Hernández government in November 2017—ironically, by changing the Honduran constitution without any referendum or national constituent assembly (see also, Kinoshian 2017). Demonstrations against the Hernández regime are happening in not just in the streets, like we have seen since summer 2009, but in places otherwise known locally as frequented by conservative and/or wealthy Hondurans—such as resorts, expensive shopping malls, and fancy restaurants. These protests sometimes make news headlines. But Hondurans' various informal or covert forms of resisting *golpismo* also continue to occur, often in confined political spaces. I believe we can only thoroughly study these “everyday forms” of resistance (Scott 1985) through ethnographic research that captures the complexity of daily lived realities on-the-ground, since the diverse ways Hondurans confront *golpismo* often go beyond the FNRP movement.

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