

GENDER EQUITY AND HEALTH WITHIN FAIR TRADE CERTIFIED COFFEE
COOPERATIVES IN NICARAGUA: TENSIONS AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Although Fair Trade provides better trading mechanisms and a set of well-documented tangible benefits for small-scale coffee producers in the Global South, large inequities persist within Fair Trade certified cooperatives. In particular, gender equity and women's empowerment are considered to be integral considerations of this system but visible gender inequities within certified cooperatives persist. Responding to this apparent contradiction, local partners in Nicaragua articulated a need to better understand how gender equity is understood and acted upon and thus this research project—an exploration of implemented gender equity-promoting processes at three different organizational levels (a national association of small-scale coffee producers, a second-tier cooperative, and a base cooperative)—emerged. Drawing on feminist and social determinants of health approaches to research, the study was informed by semi-structured key informant interviews and document revision. Both the interviews and the documents revealed that although gender work is being considered at all three levels, each organization's approach and interpretation is unique, which exposes different challenges, tensions, and experiences.

Notably, results indicate that there is no clear definition of gender equity amongst the different organizational levels. As a result, these groups appear to be interpreting gender equity, and therefore initiating equity-promoting processes based on different criteria. Interviews also revealed that although there is no evidence of active discrimination or exclusion of women within cooperatives, gender equity work is nonetheless constrained by a constellation of socio-cultural and organizational challenges that women face. Examples of socio-cultural challenges revealed through the interviews include illiteracy, ascribed child-rearing responsibilities, household chores, machista culture, land tenure arrangements and gendered power relations in terms of decision-making, while organizational challenges include the attitudes and influence of leaders, a lack of gender mainstreaming in the cooperative's work and the fact that becoming a member requires an input of resources that most women do not have access to.

In eliciting experiences and perspectives from various levels of organizations in the Fair Trade coffee sector, the research revealed numerous tensions between rhetoric and practice. These tensions reflect blind spots in Fair Trade marketing and research wherein existing rhetoric does not reflect the experiences of the women, cooperatives, and organizations shared in this research. The three most predominant tensions that are explored in this study are: empowerment and organizational autonomy versus standardization; the subordination of gender work to commercial interests and; the concentration of power within democratically-organized cooperatives. The study acknowledges that it is not the primary role of Fair Trade to solve gender inequities, but does suggest that through some basic changes, including most notably a stronger consideration of local contexts, Fair Trade and local cooperatives can effectively support local gender work and contribute to women's empowerment and health.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
CECOCAFEN	Central de Cooperativas Cafetaleras del Norte
CLAC	Coordinadora Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Pequeños Productores de Comercio Justo
CSDH	Commission on the Social Determinants of Health
FLO	Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International
FSLN	Frente Sandinista Liberación Nacional
ICA	International Coffee Agreement
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMC	Instituto de Mujer y Comunidad
MMFC	Movimiento de Muejres Flores del Café
SGBA	Sex- and gender-based analysis
UCA	Union de Cooperativas
UNAG	Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) compiled evidence that point to the immediate need for action on the social determinants of health to achieve health equity for all. Health inequities are considered unfair when the systematic differences in health are judged to be avoidable by reasonable action; a shift in unfair health inequities is therefore a matter of social justice. Amongst the recommendations made by the CSDH was action on gender equity as a social determinant of health (1).

Gender inequities, of particular focus to this research, are pervasive in all societies. While the position of women has improved dramatically over the last century in many countries, gender inequities continue to exist (1-3). In particular, gender biases in power, resources, entitlements, norms and values—as well as poor organizational structures and program management—damage the health of millions of girls and women. Gender inequities further influence health through, among other routes, discriminatory feeding patterns, violence against women, lack of decision-making power, and unfair divisions of work, leisure, and possibilities for improving one's life (1-3). Despite this, the CSDH highlights an unfortunate lack of gender-disaggregated data and thus calls for immediate *gendered* action to reduce existing inequities (1).

Fair Trade¹, “an alternative approach to conventional trade based on a partnership between producers and consumers” (4) has emerged as a response to ever-shifting markets and globalization. Although Fair Trade seeks greater equity in international trade markets and market transactions, it also emphasizes factors other than commodity price—equitable payment, greater economic stability and security, long-term relationships between buyers and producers, advance credit, democratic organization by small farmers, and environmental sustainability (5-7). Advocates of Fair Trade assert that Fair Trade not only results in more just prices or living wages but that it also decreases rural poverty and empowers individuals living in poverty, particularly women (5). Therefore, Fair Trade affords a potential avenue for lessening gender inequities and consequently improving the health status of women. Additionally, through the above factors, Fair Trade, although not a panacea (7) is one piece of the action on the social determinants of health puzzle and can encompass multiple social determinants of health.

¹ Throughout this thesis, the term Fair Trade refers to coffee certified by the Fairtrade Labeling Organization (FLO).

In order to help guide such actions, the need for an exploration of processes² that promote gender equity within Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives was identified as part of a broader action-research program in Nicaragua (described below) examining the potential of Fair Trade to act on or promote change in social determinants of health. This thesis explores the influence that gender equity-promoting processes in Fair Trade coffee cooperatives have on gender equity, a key social determinant of health.

1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Within the Fair Trade literature, there seems to be a gap between the rhetoric of Fair Trade and lived experiences of producers. For example, Fair Trade has always placed emphasis on empowering producers but provides no clear definition of how it conceptualizes empowerment. The Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) has a new global strategy forthcoming which, in comparison to previous strategies, will place a stronger emphasis on empowering producers to increase agency, and actively promote gender equality (8). Although fostering gender equality has been marketed and described as a priority for Fair Trade, the limited participation of women in producer organizations is still the prevalent reality (6,7,9-11). As such, additional in-depth research is called for to fully assess the impact of Fair Trade on gender relations in producer communities and to identify specific avenues for improvement (12).

In Nicaragua, gender equity-promoting processes exist within certain cooperatives (13-15), but there is very little research that elucidates what those processes consist of, how they are interpreted and the challenges that hinder equity work from advancing. Moreover, there is little research on how gender inequities within cooperatives influence health. The purpose of this study is therefore twofold: first, to explore gender equity-promoting processes that exist within cooperatives, and second, to examine the challenges that women face in either joining or participating in cooperatives that ultimately hinder the advancement of gender work³. In identifying the challenges, I am able to provide actionable entry points—or “modifiable social determinants of health” (16)—to participating organizations so that they may strengthen their nascent gender equity-promoting processes.

² In this thesis, ‘processes’ refers to programs, projects, workshops trainings and positions within the cooperative that have been implemented to promote gender equity.

³ Gender work refers to all kinds of processes, thinking and awareness that includes a prioritization of gender or that is gender-conscious.

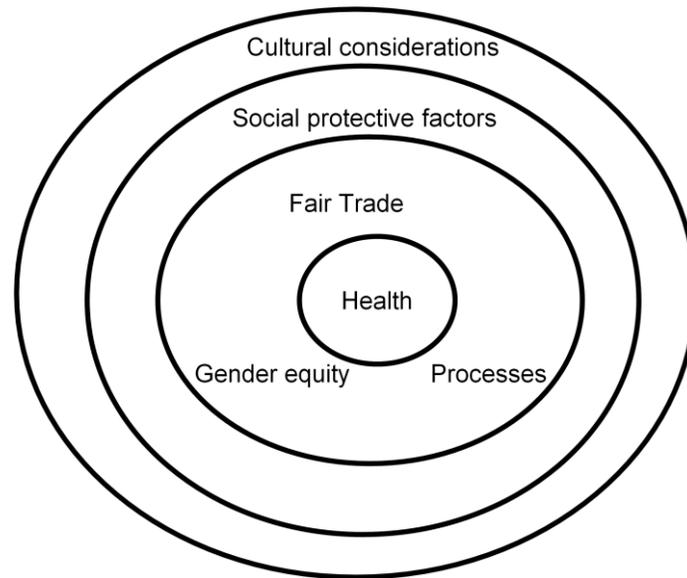
Three main research questions guided my research and are presented in Table 1.1. In order to gain a more complete understanding of gender-equity promoting processes and the relationships between different organizations within the Fair Trade system, I explored the questions with three organizations operating at three different levels of the Nicaraguan cooperative system: PROCOCER, a base cooperative, the Coffee Cooperatives Central in the Northern Regions (CECOCAFEN-Central de Cooperativas Cafetaleras del Norte) a second-tier cooperative, and Cafenica, the largest association of small-scale coffee producers, within which the Women’s Movement “Flowers of Coffee” (MMFC-Movimiento de Muejres Flores del Café) is embedded. These organizations and their relationships and connections will be defined later.

Table 1.1 Matrix of Research Questions

	Base Cooperative Leaders (PROCOCER)	Second-tier cooperative Leaders (CECOCAFEN)	Cafenica/MMFC Leaders
By what processes do Fair Trade coffee cooperatives intentionally promote gender equity?			
How do implemented gender-equity promoting processes reflect cooperative leaders’ understanding of gender equity?			
What challenges hinder equal opportunities within cooperatives for women and men?			

The figure below (Figure 1.1) illustrates the relationships between gender equity, Fair Trade, gender equity-promoting processes within Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives, and health, as well as the social protective factors and contexts that may influence any, some, or all of the other relationships.

Figure 1.1 Relationships between health, gender equity, Fair Trade, gender equity-promoting processes, social protective factors and cultural considerations



Through the exploration of my three research questions, the most significant finding was the incongruous nature of the rhetoric of gender equity presented by both FLO and local cooperatives and actual practices in the field. I suggest that differences in notions of gender equity and empowerment, the socio-cultural and organizational challenges women face, and tensions around autonomy and standardization, gender work and limited resources, democratic organizations and leadership of the cooperatives are significant contributors to the disconnect between rhetoric and practice. Moreover, marked silences around women's issues and the strong patriarchal culture that cooperatives operate under (6,17-19) hinder gender equity work from advancing. In the section below I provide a description of the broader partnership and a brief overview of the participating organizations in this research. In order to set the stage for the political sensitivities that emerged in this research, I also provide a review of the literature discussing the historical and political backgrounds that inform the context from which cooperatives emerged and I follow women's positioning throughout the period of agrarian reform and formation of cooperatives.

1.3 Context of Study

1.3.1 Broader Partnership

Upon entering the Fair Trade coffee market, leaders of one Nicaraguan feminist organization that had a long-term relationship with Dr. Lori Hanson, my thesis supervisor, perceived a troubling disconnect between women's lived experiences and the rhetoric of gender equity in Fair Trade. Women members of the organization—organized into several women-only cooperatives—expressed a desire to better understand and challenge this contradiction and negotiated the commencement of an action-research project to assist them. An initial environmental scan of stakeholders in areas of Fair Trade, health, and gender revealed that the lived contradictions identified by the organization resonated with other groups. The project has since broadened into a community-based participatory action research program in gender, health, and Fair Trade that has been evolving in Nicaragua since 2007. In 2009, interested stakeholders were invited to a workshop to establish a set of priorities and negotiate a participatory action research agenda. The partnership-building process continued from this point. One of the research priorities that was identified was this research project⁴. Other projects have included the creation of a research library and research database, publication of one peer-reviewed and several popular articles, a conference presentation, and the production of a promotional video. Although the partners have different interests and foci, each of their commitments to common values—values of respect, communication, trust, openness, gender equity and social justice—has allowed the partnership to develop.

Three interested stakeholder organizations, Cafenica and the MMFC, CECOCAFEN, and PROCOCER agreed to participate in this study. Below I present a broad overview of the organizations, what their overall roles are and how decisions are made. As a note of clarification, producers are organized at the base cooperative level. All certified cooperatives are autonomous from one another and operate under its own rules and regulations, even if they belong to second-tier cooperatives or associations. Details about specific programs within each of the three organizations are provided in Chapter 4.

⁴ Two other projects were initiated as a result of the priorities identified at the workshop. The first was an ethnographic study of women's unpaid/invisible labour undertaken by Nicaraguan counterparts. The second project, an elaboration of indicators to measure gender equity, was undertaken by Jannie Leung, a fellow Master's student who also worked closely with PROCOCER during overlapping periods of my fieldwork. Relatedly, prior to the identification of these three research projects (and occurring concurrently to the environmental scan), Vincent Terstappen carried out research to explore the concerns identified by the feminist organization and articulate the perceptions, experiences, and aspirations of women coffee producers with regards to Fair Trade.

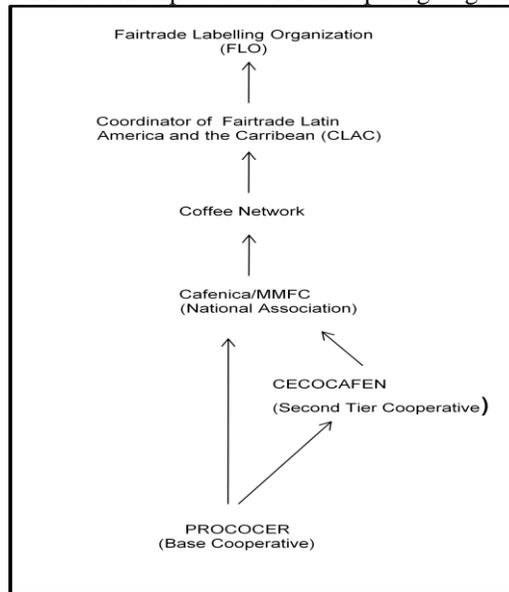
1.3.2 Relationships between Participating Organizations

Through their participation in the broader research agenda meetings, all three of the organizations and the MMFC expressed their willingness to act as research sites and to be informants of this research in spite of the evolving nature of the research program. As noted, these organizations are related to one another and figure 1.2 (below) provides a simplified representation of memberships between identified organizations. The figure also includes the Coordinator of Fairtrade Latin America and the Caribbean (CLAC-Coordinadora Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Pequeños Productores de Comercio Justo) (explained below) and FLO to illustrate how cooperatives, through CLAC, communicate with FLO. Moreover, the figure only represents three types of organizations (base cooperatives, second-tier cooperatives, and the national association), but other types exist, such as Unions of Cooperatives (UCA-Union de Cooperativas). For the purpose of this research, the types of organizations outlined in the figure will suffice.

PROCOCER is a member of CECOCAFEN and of Cafenica and the MMFC. CECOCAFEN is also a member organization of Cafenica and the MMFC. The relationship between PROCOCER and CECOCAFEN is one of mostly export; with the exception of the coffee sold to the local market⁵, CECOCAFEN exports all the coffee produced by PROCOCER members. Although the relationship between PROCOCER and CECOCAFEN is mostly export-related, PROCOCER does receive some funding from CECOCAFEN and is involved in a few of their programs.

⁵ PROCOCER has its own local coffee brand, called “el Doradito” which is sold in artisan markets and to certain organizations through established partnerships.

Figure 1.2 Relationships between Participating Organizations⁶



In order for producers to be delegates (a decision-making position) or hold leadership positions at the CECOCAFEN and Cafenica and the MMFC levels, they must be delegates within their own cooperative. Thus, individuals cannot hold decision-making positions at higher organizational levels unless they are delegates (and therefore hold a decision-making position) within their cooperative. A point worth noting for this study is that currently, all members of Cafenica’s board of directors are women and all are in full support of the MMFC. As well, in CECOCAFEN, half of the members of the board of directors are women. PROCOCER, however, has no women on the board of directors and only has three women delegates out of over 60. Below I provide a brief overview of each of the organizations and greater detail.

1.3.2.1 Cafenica

Cafenica is an umbrella association composed of 12 organizations, including base cooperatives, second-tier cooperatives, unions, and associations, representing over 6,500 Nicaraguan small-scale coffee producers (20). It is the largest association of small-scale Fair Trade certified coffee producers and represents the largest number of Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives in Nicaragua. Cafenica obtained its legal status in 2004 and functions as a civil organization in which cooperatives are integrated for the purposes of advocacy, coordination and representation (20).

⁶The Cooperative Law outlines the roles of each type of organization and relationships amongst them (118).

Cafenica's work has three major goals: to promote the organizational capacity-building and strengthening of Cafenica and its associated organizations, to successfully position member organizations in the specialty coffee market and to represent and advocate for policies related to the coffee sector. Cafenica has four fundamental principles and values: democratic participation, social and environmental responsibility, transparency and quality, and equal opportunity (20). For its advocacy work Cafenica wants member organizations to reach consensus on central themes of interest such as economics, marketing, and agriculture at the national level which Cafenica can then use to influence public policies. At the international level, Cafenica advocates for improved prices, markets, and Fair Trade. It also seeks funding to support both the organizational development of the cooperatives and small-scale coffee producers in gaining international recognition (personal communication).

Cafenica is a member of the Coffee Network as a representing body for its 12 member organizations. The Coffee Network is one of several other networks⁷ that the CLAC is composed of. The most efficient and direct way for producers to communicate their concerns to FLO is through CLAC. CLAC's mission is to be an organizational body of representation, coordination, exchange, and collaboration for cooperative organizations of small producers from Latin America and the Caribbean within the framework of Fair Trade (21).

1.3.2.2 MMFC

MMFC is the instrument for gender work for Cafenica. It emerged in September 2006, as a result of a need identified by members of Cafenica, when the first women's meeting took place to transfer and broaden the gender work experiences of two Cafenica member organizations to the rest of the organizations. Members of the movement are all women members of cooperatives and *co-productoras*⁸ who belong to Cafenica and who participate in the activities that the MMFC promotes. Emphasizing the support for personal growth of women, the central goal of the MMFC is to initiate processes that will transform women's conditions and positions within their cooperatives and make their role within coffee production visible (13). Currently the MMFC

⁷ Other Networks that form part of the CLAC are: the Honey Network, the Juice and Fruits Network, the Sugar Network, Cocoa Network and the Banana Network (120).

⁸ The MMFC uses the term *co-productora*, or 'co-producers' to refer to all the wives or partners of male members as well as the daughters, the women agricultural extension workers, and women with administrative positions or personnel within the organizations. The MMFC believes that gender equity within coffee production should not exist amongst those that harvest coffee but also amongst all involved in the production, from the producers on the ground and throughout the coffee chain. producers but also amongst all involved in

does not have a precise figure for how many women belong to the movement, but it is estimated that there are about 9,000 *co-productoras*.

All of the MMFC's work needs to be approved by the Board of Directors of Cafenica, as was the case for their 2008-2013 work strategy. Briefly, the strategy's four goals are: strengthening the organizational model for the MMFC; capacity-building towards gender equity; promotion of and capacity-building for productive and business skills for women producers and *co-productoras*, and the economic sustainability of the MMFC (13). It is important to note that the MMFC is not an autonomous women's movement. However, it does have its own structures, including a Board of Directors. Furthermore, the MMFC's financial resources are provided by Cafenica and one of the MMFC's efforts is to encourage cooperatives to allocate a small percentage of funding received (from coffee sales, social premiums, or other funds cooperatives receive) to fund gender work so that organizations have sufficient financial resources for sustainable gender work.

The MMFC uses a number of strategies to work towards their goal including capacity-building with women, raising awareness and educating men, and providing resources to women. Most cooperatives belonging to Cafenica have independently implemented gender work, each in different capacities. The MMFC is working to provide a space for cooperatives to come together and share ideas, implemented processes and experiences with one another so as to create a snowball effect and eventually have cooperatives approach gender work in the same way.

1.3.2.3 CECOCAFEN

CECOCAFEN is a second-tier cooperative that groups 11 organizations—9 base cooperatives and two UCAs involving over 2,600 producers, of which approximately 700 are women (22).

CECOCAFEN's major function is to market and coordinate the sale of coffee produced by base cooperatives – taking advantage of economies of scale to try to obtain a better deal for producers. As a response to coffee market instabilities and crises, CECOCAFEN was founded in 1997 by various coffee cooperatives in order to provide international market access and a variety of other services to small-scale farmers. Through CECOCAFEN, coffee exports are cheaper for cooperatives and cooperatives receive production support through better access to loans for the maintenance of coffee production and warehousing. CECOCAFEN has its own rules, regulations, and statutes that member cooperatives must comply with (particularly around

capitalization), but each member organization is autonomous and maintain its own ways of operating and organizing. Beyond commercial and export support, CECOCAFEN also offers services to its associated cooperatives including coffee drying services, credit, technical assistance, and management and implementation of productive and organizational development projects (23).

1.3.2.4 PROCOCER

PROCOCER is a base cooperative with over 600 members, around 150 of whom are women, and consists of members from 71 different communities (24). The cooperative was established in October 1999 with 150 members—138 men and 12 women—with financial support from the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG-Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos) — which arose during the Sandinista Revolution (25)—and was supported by UNAG until February 2002 (personal communication).

Through interviews with informants, I learned that in order to be able to maintain the cooperative and generate greater profit, PROCOCER sought better paying markets. The cooperative obtained its organic certification during the 1999-2000 coffee production cycles and Fair Trade certification was obtained in 2005. PROCOCER is a member of both Cafenica and CECOCAFEN and was one of the organizations that collaborated in the process of establishing Cafenica. PROCOCER is also directly connected to the MMFC; PROCOCER has a gender specialist who, among several other work responsibilities, acts as the liaison between PROCOCER and the MMFC.

Although PROCOCER is a multi-sectorial cooperative (members are not solely agricultural producers), the main crop is coffee. The cooperative has opened up to include members who own small convenience stores, grow basic grains, and have patio-sized vegetable plots. Most non-coffee producing members are women.

1.4 Political and Historical Considerations

1.4.1 Nicaragua- A brief History

Nicaragua's history has been a major influence in developing today's cooperative structure. In order to appreciate the emergence of cooperatives in Nicaragua, a brief summary of significant historical events is provided.

From 1936 to 1979 Nicaragua was under the dictatorship of the Somoza family. In 1979, the Sandinista revolution began, led by the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN).

The major goals of the Sandinistas were centred around meeting basic needs of the poor, social justice and popular participation. As one example, during the Somoza dictatorship, health services were mostly curative and doctor- or hospital-based, and private services were oriented towards serving the elite. It is estimated that 90% of health resources were consumed by 10% of the population. During the Sandinista period, the equity-based development that was practiced brought remarkable improvements to health. Health care was seen as part of a comprehensive multi-sectorial approach to improve the well-being and quality of life of all citizens through mass participation. Moreover, the Sandinistas promoted literacy and saw it as important to health. Illustrative of that commitment, they launched highly successful national literacy campaigns and “jornadas populares de salud”—massive popular mobilizations against specific health problems (26).

In 1981, the Contra (Counter-revolutionary) war began, with illegal and clandestine military aid from the United States government (25,27-30). Other ways in which the United States carried out a destabilization program were through CIA covert military and political operations, a trade embargo, an international credit boycott, a strident internal and external propaganda campaign and a diplomatic drive to isolate the Sandinista government (26,27,31). The trade embargo in particular undermined the Sandinistas’ health initiatives, while the Contras directly targeted the country’s health care system knowing that the revolutionary government’s health achievements were one of its major reasons for popularity (26-28).

The unpopularity of the war, military conscription and the dire economic situation in the country led to the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in 1990. From 1990 to 2006 successive right-wing governments presided. These governments, pressured by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), instituted structural adjustment policies that led to massive privatization of government services and enterprises and resulted in increased social inequity (26,27).

1.4.2 Agrarian Reform

Of particular importance to understanding the historical origin and context of this research were Sandinistas’ efforts in agrarian reforms. During the Somoza legacy, two out of three peasant farmers were completely landless or had plots too small to meet their basic needs; export crops took up 90% of agricultural credit and 22 times more arable land than the amount of land used to grow basic food crops (28). In practice, the agrarian reform got underway well

before the final victory over Somoza as land takeovers took place throughout the countryside in collaboration with the Sandinistas. Most of the land that was seized from Somoza was being used for export crops, such as cotton. Upon taking back the land, the peasants and landless farmworkers immediately set to ploughing and planting food crops for local consumption to meet basic needs (32).

In 1981, the Agrarian Reform Law passed with the objective of offering peasants and landless farmworkers access to land through the progressive elimination of unproductive estates and the creation and strengthening of a cooperative movement (32). Through the Law of Farming Cooperatives, more than 2,000 cooperatives were created benefitting 60,000 head of household peasants and landless farmworkers. The Sandinistas viewed cooperatives as an organizing tool and with the enticement of lower interest rates for cooperatives than for individuals (8% compared to 11%), the government hoped to encourage small producers to form cooperatives or credit associations (28).

From an administrative viewpoint, working with cooperatives was much easier than dealing with thousands of individuals; it was easier for government ministries to provide services, credit, technical know-how and agricultural inputs to organized cooperatives than to isolated peasant farmers (28). Sandinistas also tended to see cooperatives as facilitating social advancement—literacy, modernization of production, culture, public health and the production of food for local consumption (32). Overall the distribution of land and establishment of cooperatives faced many difficulties, but by 1984, 22% of peasant families had benefitted from the cooperative/state sector (25). In the period from August 1989 to April 1990 alone, 875,910 *manzanas*⁹ were given to 36,139 families. Of these, 369,328 *manzanas* were distributed to 22,533 families organized in cooperatives (33).

1.4.3 Women, Agrarian Reform, and Cooperatives

Through the Agrarian Reform Law and its Rules and Regulations, for the first time real conditions were established for the promotion of the integration of women in farming activities and in the country's development. This legal instrument, along with the Statute of Rights and Security of Nicaraguans, was to guarantee rural women equal access to land ownership (34). It was the first document in Latin America that recognized women as subjects and direct beneficiaries of agrarian policies (31,35). The Agrarian Reform and Cooperative Laws were also

⁹ One *manzana* is the equivalent of 1.73 acres of land.

the first laws to define women as cooperative members and landowners in their own right, regardless of whether or not they were heads of households or had adult male children to collect the benefits of agrarian reform (31). Paradoxically, however, while the agrarian reform was aimed at ‘the poor’ and was inclusive of women, women did not benefit to the extent that was promised (13,31,35,36). One study estimates that 90.5% of land distributed as part of the reform was titled to men (37).

Moreover, the women participating in cooperatives during the 1980s were significantly less in number than men (31,35). The first national census of cooperatives was carried out in 1982 and found that only 6% of cooperative members were women out of the total of 64, 891 (38). Another analysis carried out in 1985 to examine the impact of agrarian reform found that agrarian reform had not been enough to ensure the incorporation of women into the cooperative process (35). Another study notes that during the 1980s, approximately 3,800 women joined cooperatives, amounting to a 1 to 10 female to male ratio (36).

In a 1984 Ministry of Agriculture report, an analysis of the gendered nature of reforms found that despite having acquired few titles to land, additional economic, political, ideological and organizational factors drove women’s integration into cooperatives. Such factors included: women’s historic participation in the fight for land, the demand for labour by cooperatives due to the mobilization of male members for the war effort, the political-organizational work by the FSLN and of mass organization, the influence of women agrarian reform facilitators who promoted women joining cooperatives, and the political and ideological development of cooperatives (34).

The same report lists many limitations for women joining cooperatives. Paramount were three fundamental ideological conceptions held by men: the work of women was less valuable, that men should be the sole providers for the household, and that women were physically weaker than men and thus not capable of working on the land (34).

In 1983, the estimated number of beneficiaries from agrarian reform was estimated to be 72, 072 (38). From 1992 to 2000, only 3,788 women obtained individual land titles, while from 1997 to 2000, 3,548 women, with their husbands, received jointly-owned land titles. In total, it is estimated that 20,012 women have benefited with some form of land title (individual, jointly-owned with husbands, collectively owned, and through cooperatives) (36).

1.4.4 Coffee in Nicaragua

Coffee is the engine of development and a primary source of employment for many rural communities worldwide. Small-scale family farms produce over 70% of the world's coffee in 85 Latin American, Asian, and African countries (39). In Central America, an estimated 85% (250,000) of coffee farmers are micro and small-scale coffee producers. There are approximately 45,334 micro and small-scale coffee producers in Nicaragua (39). Nicaragua is the fifth most reliant country in the world on coffee exports (5), and coffee has become Nicaragua's most valuable agricultural crop, comprising 30% of total export income (6). In the 2008-09 cycle, 1,367, 000 quintals (100-pound bags) were exported and valued at US\$182, 217,000 (40).

The era of globalization has ushered in a number of well noted changes for coffee producers worldwide and caused a major coffee crisis in the early 1990s. Some of the changes have included: the disintegration of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) in 1989¹⁰, the liberalization of markets, large consolidation of power amongst corporations, and higher production and high supply, largely caused by the establishment of a new coffee industry in Vietnam and the expansion of coffee production in Brazil (6,39). Wilson (41) proposes that when farm-gate coffee prices dropped to a 30-year low in 2001, the coffee-dependent rural economy of Nicaragua experienced the most acute effects of the crisis in Central America. In 2000, the Nicaraguan coffee sector generated US\$171 million (41). One year later, Nicaragua's coffee exports dropped by 50% and an estimated 500 to 3000 farms faced foreclosure. Consequences of the coffee crisis were considerable, and included: lack of credit to the coffee sector (39), banks cutting lending to coffee producers by 80% from 1999-2001 and bankruptcy from private banks that included US\$100 million in outstanding loans (39,41). Declining investment led to rampant unemployment, forced foreclosures and food shortages where rural workers and peasant farmers depended on coffee wages or sales as a main source of household income (41). On a more individual level, the significant decline in coffee prices forced many small-scale producers to sell their coffee beans for much less than the cost of production, resulting in children being removed from school, a lack of sufficient economic resources to purchase essential medicines and food, and the inability to provide necessary inputs to their coffee farms. Loss of employment and increased rural-urban migration are also noteworthy consequences (6).

¹⁰For greater detail on the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) and the implications to coffee producers, see Chapter 2, *Coffee, Commodities, Crisis* in Jaffee D. *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival*. University of California Press: California; 2007(5).

Although not immune from the consequences, farmers operating under the rules of Fair Trade were less affected (6,39). Between 2000 and 2003, contracts for Fair Trade certified coffee from Nicaragua issued from European and North American coffee importers generated revenues more than double the conventional market price and helped protect more than 6,000 peasant coffee farmers from over-exposure to the price decline (41). In the midst of the coffee crisis, Fair Trade contracts in Nicaragua expanded opportunities for peasant farmers to gain access to credit, technical assistance, and to develop cooperative enterprises that could compete in the market for high quality coffees (41).

Despite Fair Trade certified products providing numerous advantages to producers, challenges within the system remain. In the last several years, world coffee prices have been noticeably low due to excess supply. Coffee producers are desperately searching for alternative markets, given the low prices and continued evaporation of state support under neo-liberal policies. Even though specialty, organic and fair trade coffee markets are still growing, demand for such products is still relatively low and cannot absorb the production of existing suppliers (39,42). As well, many farmers sell their coffee to multiple markets or to low-paying middle men to satisfy the immediate need for cash (39). On average, producer groups on the FLO register are currently selling only 20% of their eligible coffee with Fair Trade labels (42). Globally, Fair Trade producer capacity has been estimated to be 7 times higher than the current imported volume of Fair Trade (43). In Nicaragua, for example, cooperatives linked to organic and fair trade markets sell up to 60% of their coffee through conventional markets (39).

The 1979 Sandinista Revolution followed by agrarian reform have been a major influence in developing today's cooperative structure. The Revolution and agrarian reform held high promises for rural women and men, but of the promises made to women most were largely unfulfilled. Although overall, small-scale producers did benefit with many able to organize themselves into cooperatives, the number of women that benefitted from the reform in terms of obtaining land titles and participating in cooperatives were significantly less than men. These important historical precedents are vital to understanding how cooperatives were predisposed to the development of ongoing inequities, although as this research illustrates, they are not sole determining factors.

1.5 Feminist Approach

As part of a broader action-research agenda, this study aims to elucidate issues related to gender equity within Fair Trade. The broader agenda for the research also seeks to respond to the CSDH's call for action on the social determinants of health. As clearly highlighted by the CSDH, there is great need for gender-disaggregated data and for research specific for women using a plurality of research methodologies (1,2). Thus, this study applies a feminist approach to the research. Further, no particular methods need to be used but rather methods need to be selected that best fit the criterion: "Evidence needs to be judged on fitness for purpose...rather than on the basis of strict traditional hierarchies of evidence" (44)(p.178). In other words, the selected methods should convincingly answer the question asked. Thus, this study applies a feminist approach to the research.

Although there is no specific feminist methodology or specific feminist research method, there are three main points that are common to most feminist research that distinguish this kind of research from traditional research (45). First, feminist research is politically motivated and connected to social change (46). A feminist perspective means not only recognizing and analyzing gender politics and gender conflict but also attempting to transform gender relations and the societies in which we live. It is grounded by a political movement that challenges women's subordination and is derived from changes in women's experiences and situations (47). In an attempt to make women's experiences a basis for legitimate knowledge, feminists coined the phrase 'the personal is political' (47). This phrase referred to the understanding that women's experiences at the micro and domestic level reflected and interacted with their subordination at a macro level of society; their individual experiences were grounded in the collective social and cultural experiences of other women and by politicizing these experiences, change could be brought about in women's personal and social situations (48). In recognition of the necessity for change, this research study was carried out using principles of action-based research¹¹.

Second, feminist research is a voice-centered approach to research based on women's experiences and listening to their stories (46). While feminist research aims to enable and

¹¹ Bradbury and Reason (101) provide a comprehensive working definition of action research. They define action research as a "participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview. It seeks to reconnect action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people. More generally, it grows out of a concern for the flourishing of individuals and their communities" (121)(p.201).

promote women's voices, it does not claim that there is one single feminist voice (47,49). Of important consideration is that Western feminists have been extensively criticized for relying on an undifferentiated category of "woman." This implies that differences between women do not exist and therefore knowledge was produced as if women were a unified category of being throughout history and all over the world (49-51). Challenging this, Mohanty (52) provides a thorough description of women's identities, of which I remained cognizant throughout this research:

Women are constituted as women through the complex interaction between class, culture, religion, and other ideological frameworks. They are not "women"—a coherent group—solely on the basis of a particular economic system or policy. Such reductive cross-cultural comparisons result in the colonization of the specifics of daily existence and the complexities of political interests that women of different social classes and cultures represent and mobilize (52)(p.30).

Mohanty's notion of intersecting identities and the importance of local contexts speaks to women's different and diverse needs; the category "woman" cannot be interpreted to mean that all women have the same interests and needs.

I am seeking to gain a holistic understating of how gender equity is understood in a specific context and how gender work is being carried out in participating organizations. Central to feminist research is to carry out research to reveal women's experiences, including an understanding of how women's lives are "contextualized" and "framed" (53,53). In order to reveal women's stories, an understanding of power relations, central to feminist research, is necessary. Further, in order to fully understand women's lives, it may be necessary to understand what men are thinking and expecting (45,49). Thus, given my research questions, it was most fitting to interview cooperative leaders—most of which are male—in order to understand how their positions and power influence women's lives.

The third unifying consideration of a feminist approach is that feminist researchers try to alleviate the power imbalances and minimize the distance between the researcher and the researched (46), promoting a shift from vertical relationships between researcher and informants to more horizontal relationships. Moreover, feminist research rejects the knower/non-knower binary; women as subjects can be knowers, their experience constitutes the basis of knowledge, and their voices should be heard above that of the researcher (48). To alleviate power imbalances, reflexivity—the tendency to reflect on, critically examine, and analytically explore

the nature of the research throughout the research process (54)—is crucial. Reflexivity is a tool whereby researchers can include our “selves” at any stage, making transparent the values and beliefs we hold that certainly influence the research process and its outcomes (55).

As part of a broader action-based research agenda, horizontal research relationships were promoted throughout the study. I applied the principle of conscious partiality, which stands against traditional research that argues for value-free research (48). I designed the research with thoughts about how it could improve women’s lives and what information could assist it in having such impact. Accordingly, I practiced both reflexivity and reciprocity throughout the study. Below, I locate my researcher position, state my assumptions, and describe my efforts toward practicing reciprocity throughout the research.

1.5.1 Positionality and Reciprocity

As a Latin American woman and a feminist, gender equity, specifically in the South, is of particular interest to me. I was born and raised in Mexico until I was eight, at which time I moved to Canada. Having spent part of my childhood in Mexico, I identify with Mexican and Latin American culture while also having a thorough understanding of Western culture as well as proficiency levels for both Spanish (my mother tongue) and English. Knowing the situation of women in Mexico and in Nicaragua and having previously undertaken work in both countries, I am familiar with the cultural roles that influence women’s positions within society.

Historically, women’s voices have not been given much attention by researchers (45), and thus I am adopting a position which does not “add” women in but instead begins from their perspective. Moreover, in seeking to practice mindful, non-coercive solidarity, I recognize that power is an ever-present dynamic in research, just as it is for women who live their lives in a patriarchal society, and thus undertook this project from a feminist position (46).

As a feminist researcher, I am committed to producing useful knowledge that will make a difference to women’s lives through individual and social change. I am seeking to challenge the silences in mainstream research both in relation to the issues studied and the way in which the study is undertaken (45). Accordingly, part of my commitment in this research project was to ensure reciprocity and ongoing knowledge translation and exchange. Since the organizations I was working with are not of an academic orientation, I was able to reciprocate through supporting PROCOCER, the base cooperative I worked with, in developing an extensive questionnaire and database to be able to gather basic socio-economic information from all of its

members. I also submitted a two-page report of actionable recommendations to each of the three organizations. Finally, in terms of more traditional knowledge translation activities, the final results and conclusions of this thesis will also be translated and submitted to participating organizations. One of my aims, which is consistent with the participating organizations' desire, is to be able to disseminate results not just to the participating organizations but to other cooperatives as well and to strengthen gender equity practices within Fair Trade in the future. I am hopeful that the results of this research will be useful in informing future policy to make the required changes in Fair Trade practices leading to increases in equal participation in Fair Trade cooperatives.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

I have organized this thesis into five chapters. In this first chapter, I introduce the research and provide information on the context of the study, participating organizations, the historical and political backgrounds that inform the context from which cooperatives emerged and women's positioning throughout the period of agrarian reform and formation of cooperatives. In Chapter 2, I review the related literature on issues of gender and health, Fair Trade, social protective factors, and cooperatives as a mechanism to facilitate social protective factors. In Chapter 3, I present the research methodology and methods used for this study. Chapter 4, the results chapter, is divided into the three main sections: notions of gender equity, processes that promote gender equity within the organizations, and socio-cultural and organizational challenges that hinder women's participation within their cooperatives. In Chapter 5, I discuss my results and in Chapter 6 provide conclusions with actionable entry points for organizations and FLO to modify current gender equity-promoting processes to reach tangible and desired advances.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study stems from the premise that Fair Trade holds significant potential to affect the social determinants of health and gender equity in particular. In contrast to biomedical approaches to health, a growing body of evidence has shown that massive differences in health are predominantly caused by social determinants of health. The social determinants of health include the everyday conditions in which we live, work, grow, and age as well as the structural forces, such as economic policies, political power and social programs that shape these conditions (1). It follows, therefore, that actions affecting change on these social conditions offer the greatest hope for reducing the massive health inequities that have come to characterize our global population (1).

However, the CSDH report also states that much research remains gender biased—both in terms of what is studied, as well as in terms of how the research is done (1)—and calls for research to be carried out using gender-specific analyses. Similarly, what is not explicit in most of the social determinants of health literature is that both daily living conditions and the broader structural forces are *gendered* phenomena that therefore demand *gendered* actions in order to successfully reduce inequities (2). Thus, it is important to explore the contexts, processes and experiences around Fair Trade as gendered phenomena, which I begin to introduce here through an examination of the relevant literature.

This chapter is divided into three sections: gender equity and health, Fair Trade and gender equity within Fair Trade, and social protective factors. In the first section, gender equity and health, I review literature that supports gender equity as a determinant of health. The second section provides a brief description of Fair Trade and situates gender equity within Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives. Lastly, I provide a review of the literature on empowerment and participation as social protective factors, and propose cooperatives as one potential mechanism for facilitating empowerment and participation.

2.2 Gender Equity and Health

It has long been understood that sickness is caused by more than individual physical weaknesses, and that social and economic conditions play major contributing roles (56). This observation is reflected in one of the more commonly accepted definitions of health: “a state of

complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (57)(p.1). Recently, increased attention has been given to the social determinants of health, the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, which are themselves influenced by policy choices. Gender relations of power also constitute the root causes of gender inequities and are among the most influential of the social determinants of health (2,56). These power relations determine whether people’s health needs are acknowledged, whether they have voices in their lives and their health, and whether they are aware of their rights (2,56).

Taking into consideration the biological and social differences between women and men and analyzing how they relate to health is at the core of sex- and gender-based analysis (SGBA)(50); understanding the roles that biological difference and social bias play is important to understanding differential exposure and vulnerability (58). While sex refers to biologically recognized differences between women and men—chromosomes, internal and external sex organs, hormonal make up and secondary sex characteristics, the concept of gender is related to how people are perceived and expected to think and act as women and men because of the way society is organized (2,50). All cultures assign specific characteristics to women and to men and these social differences are important in shaping patterns of health and well-being. As a result, women and men in the same communities or households often lead quite different lives, exposing them to different risks and conditions (59), and ultimately resulting in different health outcomes. Importantly, difference is not the same as inequity. Inequities—*unfair* and *avoidable* differences—are socially generated and thus gender inequities can be changed (2,3,50,57)

Addressing the problem of gender inequity is essential for the health of all people and requires actions both outside and within the health sector, as gender power relations operate across a wide spectrum of human life in inter-related ways (58). Health does not arise from actions solely in the health sector or by socio-cultural beliefs and practices. Rather, health also arises as the result of all public policies and how they individually, or in interaction with each other, promote or damage health. Thus, socio-cultural beliefs, practices, and structural inequalities—if they are gender-biased—can act to maintain and accentuate gender inequities (60,61). Taken together, it becomes clear that a narrow focus on the health sector alone obscures

the socially constructed gender roles and expectations that may exacerbate health inequalities along gender lines (60).

Vulnerability and resiliency—influenced by gender relations, or “how we interact with or are treated by people in the world around us, based on our ascribed gender” (50)(p.13)—vary among individuals as well as groups and result in varying health outcomes (50,62). Women and men’s health are affected differently depending on the positions they occupy in society, the different roles they perform, and the variety of social and cultural expectations and constraints placed upon them (60). In most societies, women are less likely than men to have access to benefits and resources, such as wealth and power, and women are more likely to suffer hardships such as violence and discrimination (50). Unequal power relations are frequently harmful to women and can also be harmful to men’s health despite the many tangible benefits they give men through resources, power, authority and control (2,50,59).

Moreover, gender inequities act on health through, among other routes, lack of decision-making power, unfair division of work, leisure, and a decrease in the possibilities of improving one’s life (1). Gender equity, including equity in health, is contingent on fairness in the distribution of resources, benefits and responsibilities between women and men (60). Equity, therefore, envisions health as being located within the larger realm of societal well-being and within overarching social and political contexts (60).

In order to challenge gender inequities and reduce existing health gaps, the essential structural and social dimensions of gender inequality need to be addressed. Sen, Östlin and George (2) report that this can be achieved by increasing women’s participation in political and other decision-making processes from household, national and international levels so as to increase their voice and agency. The empowerment of women is thus crucial to health equity (1,63). Similarly, the CSDH recommends that all individuals and communities should be empowered through fair representation and participation in health decision-making as an integral feature of the right to health. Effective interventions for women’s empowerment need to build on and reinforce *authentic* participation, ensuring autonomy in decision-making, a sense of community and local bonding (2), as well as representation in policy-related agenda-setting and decision making(1,2). As noted, if these interventions are weaved throughout economic, educational, and/or political sectors, they can result in greater empowerment, autonomy and authority and they can substantially affect a range of health outcomes (1,2). Gender-sensitive

policies in other sectors, such as trade, can therefore serve as a potential tool in tackling gender equity to result in better health status.

It is in this way, then, that Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives hold potential for action on gender as a social determinant of health to positively impact women's health. FLO's promotion of participation and empowerment is consistent with the CSDH's recommendations and can be considered one potential mechanism for shifting gender relations and actively promoting gender equity.

2.3 Fair Trade

Fair Trade coffee can provide a means to actively support social, economic and environmental development through the consumption of coffee, a commodity that millions of people enjoy worldwide. Further, the fair trade¹² movement seeks to challenge historically unequal international market relations, transforming global North-South trade into an avenue of producer empowerment and poverty alleviation through a strategy of "trade not aid" (64)(p.1109). Hence, Fair Trade is simultaneously a development tool, a social movement, an alternative market structure and, as posited here, an action on the social determinants of health.

Coffee is the backbone of the Fair Trade market; it is well-suited for alternative trade as it is one of the few internationally traded commodities that is still produced primarily on smallholdings farmed by peasant households. Almost 70% of coffee production comes from producers who farm less than ten acres of land (6). To access the certified Fair Trade market, small-scale producers must form democratic organizations (usually cooperatives) that are able to engage in commercial activities, contribute to the social and economic development of their members and of their communities and respect environmental standards and practices (65).

2.3.1 Fair Trade Standards

FLO—a non-profit, multi-stakeholder association—develops and reviews Fair Trade standards and is one of the organizations that grants Fair Trade certification and provides support to Fair Trade certified producers. FLO's vision is:

[a] world in which all producers can enjoy secure and sustainable livelihoods, fulfill their potential and decide on their future. [Fair Trade] believe[s] that trade can be a fundamental driver of poverty reduction and greater sustainable development, but only if it is managed for that purpose, with greater equity and transparency than is currently the norm. [Fair Trade] believe[s] that people can overcome disadvantage and marginalization if they are empowered to take more control over their work and their lives, if they are

¹²In this case, fair trade refers to the broader fair trade movement and not just FLO-certified Fair Trade products.

better organized, resourced and supported, and can secure access to mainstream markets under fair trading conditions(66).

In order to receive and maintain Fair Trade certification, producers and traders must meet standards set out by FLO. FLO has both generic standards as well as product-specific standards, though coffee requires no additional “specific” standards (67). The generic standards for small producers’¹³ organizations are:

Social development

- Producers must be organized in producer organizations to advance their interests (65).
- Fair Trade should “lead to demonstrable empowerment and environmentally-sustainable social and economic development of the producer organization and its members...” (65)(p.6).

Socioeconomic development

- The social premium is for the organization and its members and through them, their families, workers, and the surrounding community (65).
- Organizations and members analyze and evaluate how to spend the social premium. Choices should be made and priorities set depending on the specific situation of the organization (65).
- Decisions on the use of the social premium must be taken democratically by members, following principles of transparency and participation (65).

Environmental Development

- The producers’ organizations ensure that its members protect the natural environment and uptake environmental protection as part of farm management (65).
- The organization ensures that its members minimize the use of synthetic and other off-farm fertilizers and pesticides, gradually replacing them with non-synthetic and on-farm fertilizers and other biological methods of disease control (65).
- FLO encourages small producers to work toward organic practices where socially and economically practical (65).

¹³ Fair trade describes small producers thus: “the producers’ labour and that of their family members constitutes a significant proportion of the total agricultural labour undertaken on their farm; most of the producers’ working time is spent undertaking agricultural work on their own farm; revenues from the producers’ agricultural activities constitute the major part of their total income, and; the capital, assets and infrastructures required for agriculture are such that collective marketing is necessary in order to sell to the target market” (65)(p.4).

Labour Conditions

- FLO regards the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions as the authority on working conditions and expects all producers to meet the ILO requirements as far as possible (65).
- Fair Trade should lead to the demonstrable empowerment and environmentally-sustainable social and economic development of the organization and its members, and through them the workers employed by the organization or by members (65).

As a sub-point of the social development requirement, and pivotal to this research, is a “non-discrimination” clause which states that FLO follows the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on ending discrimination. Specifically, FLO (65) acknowledges the declaration’s rejection of “distinction of any kind such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (p.9), and FLO expects producer organizations to apply these principles within their own stated rules and regulations (65).

Fair Trade certified coffee producer cooperatives receive a floor price of US \$1.25/lb of green beans that is guaranteed by FLO, regardless of the market price (68). If the coffee is considered organic, an additional US\$0.20/lb is paid. In addition to this, cooperatives receive a social premium of US\$0.10/lb (68) which is intended for community development purposes. As noted in the standards, decisions about what the social premium should be used for are democratically voted upon by cooperative leaders. If the world price exceeds that of the floor price (US\$1.25/lb), Fair Trade certified organizations are required to pay farmers the higher world price as well as the premiums. If coffee prices fall below the floor price, the organizations must continue paying US \$1.25/lb and the additional social premiums (68).

2.3.2 Gender Equity within Fair Trade

An exploration of gender equity within Fair Trade is essential for several reasons. First, gender equity is part of the standards for obtaining and maintaining certification, yet very few cooperatives have endorsed actions that promote gender equity and very few studies have examined Fair Trade in Latin America through a gendered lens (6,7,9,10,19,69); where studies do differentiate between women’s and men’s experiences within Fair Trade coffee cooperatives, gender inequities remain (7,9,10,18).

As stated previously, challenging gender inequities involves working towards empowerment for women—a concept that resonates with FLO. With the exception of the 2004-

2005 annual report, empowerment is consistently mentioned in FLO's annual reports (8,70-75) and in their 2008-2009 annual report FLO (8) recognizes that "striving for gender equality must form an integral part of any empowerment strategy" (p.18). That report further states that gender equity is becoming more central to FLO's agenda and mentions that gender policy development is ongoing. The 2009-2010 annual report mentions that FLO has started to work on a new "empowerment model" (75), as part of its new global strategy that "emphasizes even more strongly the aim of empowering producers to improve their own lives" (8,75)(p.18). The main intention behind the new global strategy is "a major overhaul of existing Fair Trade standards and the addition of new elements to strengthen and deepen producer impact" (75)(p.3). Though encouraging given its focus on empowerment and equity, the empowerment model had not been released before the completion of this thesis and, despite promising trends, most of the available Fair Trade data is not disaggregated by gender, highlighting the fact that women have not been given a space to share their experiences *as* women within Fair Trade.

As part of the valuable first steps to assess gender equity within Fair Trade certified cooperatives, numerous Nicaraguan organizations took part in a major FLO-sponsored research study in 2008 to explore the impact of Fair Trade certification on gender (8). The study was carried out by the Institute of Women and Community (IMC-Instituto de Mujer y Comunidad)¹⁴ with the support of FLO. In total, 18 organizations, which together encompassed 180 base cooperatives and over 13,000 producers (25% of whom were women), participated in the study. The study's conclusions identified several major obstacles to women's participation. Among identified obstacles were that most of the women do not have access to land, have low literacy levels, a lack of gender equity policies within cooperatives, and a lack of gender-disaggregated data to be able to analyze women's situations (14). Another study that assessed the socio-economic conditions of small-scale women producers is also indicative of a shift towards a greater gender focus in Fair Trade (15). The study was carried out by Cafenica and one of the major findings was that the most notable difference between women and men in the coffee sector was the level of participation, where women participated significantly less than men in the cooperatives and in decision-making positions, and men held most of the higher decision-making

¹⁴ IMC is a non-profit organization is based out of Estelí and focuses on work to change the positions and conditions of women. Over the last 19 years, it has worked on facilitating processes so that entrepreneurial women can actively participate in the local and national economy and has worked on ensuring that empowerment processes are in place and can be used to improve women's quality of life (122).

positions in comparison to women (15). Both of these studies lead to the conclusions that women's access to roles of higher responsibility in the board of directors within their cooperatives remains low and that although women have been incorporated in some areas (such as accounting and administration, considered to be of lower responsibility), they remain highly underrepresented (14,15). The undertakings of these studies and the commitments being made by Fair Trade certified cooperatives to advance gender equity, including initiatives such as the MMFC strategy mentioned in Chapter 1, speak to the importance that gender equity is taking within Fair Trade in Nicaragua. Evidently, FLO is also prioritizing gender equity. However, as Lyon (12) concludes, although fostering gender equality has become a priority for Fair Trade, women's current participation in producer associations is at insignificant levels to challenge traditional gender bias in Latin America's agricultural sector. Two major studies and a few smaller ones provide in-depth research assessing some of the impacts of Fair Trade on gender relations in producer organizations.

2.3.2.1 The Feminization of Agriculture and Women in Coffee Production

Globalization is a gendered process has therefore had uneven effects on women and men (76). The gendered process of globalization has resulted in a growing dominance of women in agricultural production globally and a simultaneous decline of men in the sector over the last few decades. In Mesoamerica, this trend is highly attributable to "male-out" migration and/or the abandonment of family by men for more lucrative options in urban centres (18), resulting in an increase in the number of female-headed households (18). According to the ILO (61), one of the most obvious reasons for conducting gender analyses is that first, women workers make up the overwhelming majority of the labour-intensive workforces and second, women and men are positioned differently, and often unequally, in the economy. Additionally, there is a marked economic devalorization of women's work throughout (76). In the case of coffee, the sharp decline in coffee prices and the subsequent drop in producer incomes has been followed by a heavy rural out-migration, particularly of young men (18). As a result, an increasing number of women have come to be employed in or otherwise reliant on poorly remunerated agricultural sectors, leading at least in some instances to an increase in women's "self-exploitation" as they exploit their own potential inputs in an attempt to secure the biggest possible part of a volatile and diminishing income (18).

More generally, however, coffee production remains primarily a male sphere of economic activity and gendered divisions of labour in coffee production are not uncommon, particularly in the sector's more visible and public aspects (5,18,77). Jaffee (5) illustrates this division of labour in coffee production. In his case study community of El Rincón (in Oaxaca, Mexico), participants who are members of the local cooperative shared that everyone in the household participates in the harvest and the initial wet processing. However, several women asserted that “the men would say they do most of the harvesting, but it is really women who work the hardest in the harvest” (5)(p.117). After harvesting, the division of labour becomes more pronounced: tasks that are related to quality control—principally drying and, for members of this particular group, the laborious hand selection of export-grade beans—take place in the home patio and are considered principally women's work. Although this division of labour in coffee production comes from a case study in El Rincón, there are many cultural and national similarities in amongst some expected variation. The Cafenica study (13) as well as Lyon (18) also reflect a division of labour in coffee production and Lyon (18) adds two important considerations: the “quality control” tasks are higher in specialty markets like Fair Trade, therefore increasing women's work, and the evaluation of quality is still done by men (18). The recognition by FLO that most of the coffee production is done by the family implicitly acknowledges that women do play a significant role, but up until now, their contributions remain by and large omitted from analyses and thus largely unrecognized. As a result, women do not benefit from Fair Trade in the same ways as men.

However, women's contributions to coffee production are slowly being recognized (5,14,15), especially because women are taking on additional farming tasks and assuming agricultural responsibilities traditionally performed by men (9,18). Women's participation within cooperatives' activities and decision-making positions is also slowly increasing (14,15,37). A critical point of consideration is whether this increased participation and increased responsibility represents the empowerment of women or whether it is simply another face of the feminization of agriculture in which “women are left on the farm to engage in undercapitalized activities while men undertake better paying off-farm labour or migrate in search of urban opportunities” (18)(p.97).

Women's participation in agriculture and production work—which may be linked to a broader feminization of agriculture—must also be considered in light of women's relatively low

access to administrative and decision-making roles, particularly in cooperatives. Frequently, the number of women that hold decision-making positions is far less than men, and the positions women hold are considered to be of lower status (15). In Cafenica's study, 24.9% of women in the study have held lower-ranking decision-making positions (such as treasurer) compared to 42.9% of men, who tend to hold the higher-ranking positions (president, vice-president, secretary) (15). Several studies, including two large-scale endeavours, suggest various reasons for this lack of female participation in the democratic processes of Fair Trade cooperatives (5,6,9,11,18).

First, women may not actively participate in the Fair Trade coffee cooperative because of patriarchal relations characterizing the cooperative's organizational space that "subtly discriminate against female participation" (9)(p.266). An example from Lyon's (9) study illustrates the dynamic between women and men members during one cooperative meeting:

Juana stood to comment on a matter under dispute. . .she was almost immediately quieted by a booming male voice. Juana immediately exclaimed that . . . the men were discriminating against her by not allowing her to speak. [Juana] continued to speak for approximately three minutes, [but] eventually sat down after her own elderly father, the most senior cooperative member who sat in position of honour at the front and center of the assembly, told her to be quiet. Juana was the only woman that spoke publicly that day (p.259).

Other studies have also found that women repeatedly expressed a desire to be more involved in the cooperatives, but do not feel welcome to do so (11,37). One member of a rural agricultural organization shared: "women are welcome in the cooperative as long as they don't question power relations or take leadership positions. When women begin to grow and defend themselves more, that's no longer acceptable" (37)(p. 377). The type of socialization of women and men in Nicaragua demonstrated in the quote is influenced by *machismo* (described below), which as an ideology exaggerates the differences between women and men, emphasizing male moral, economic, and social superiority over women (78). *Machista* behaviour is common in rural Nicaraguan settings and influences how women participate in agricultural activities (31). In the context of Fair Trade coffee cooperatives, male control and disruption, including *machismo*, were also found to be limiting factors in women's participation (6,9,17,19). Controlled or limited participation of women by men was also evident in Jaffee's study (5), where women participate as equals in coffee harvesting—an endeavour that traditionally has been a male sphere—but are

often excluded from both key production and marketing decisions (5). In the community of El Rincón, women participants spoke of problems of discrimination by some male members, but participants from that study and from Cafenica's study also stated that the organization helps women to develop leadership skills (5,13), proving that although limited, women's participation in the cooperative has provided some advantages.

Aside from direct patriarchal relations present in the cooperatives—including those expressed through divisions of labour—another factor that limits women's participation in decision-making positions is limited education and literacy skills (9), likely a result of broader gender discrimination (1-3). Participation in the cooperative's board of directors requires basic literacy and knowledge of accounting and administration, skills that women in many rural Mesoamerican communities often do not possess (18). This again speaks to how historical inequities can act through well-intentioned development and social change endeavours and thereby continue contributing to present-day inequities.

Exploring such historical patriarchal relations more broadly, considerations of inequities present in coffee production must acknowledge the fact that gender oppression has been central to the historical development of the coffee industry, an industry in which women have earned lower pay and faced overt gender discrimination in plantation settings (18). Patriarchal social relations also significantly shape aspects of coffee production in the context of smallholder coffee production in Latin America. Men frequently have privileged access to property and income while women are required to work both in the field and in the home (18). Land tenure, which is essential to joining the cooperative, is one example of an area where such inequitable relations shape production and opportunities. In Nicaragua, while there have been apparent advances, women remain much less likely than men to own land; cultural attitudes and traditions that do not see women as producers prevail and women continue to be perceived as "helping out" their husbands (79). It is these types of patriarchal relations and ideas that exist both within and outside of cooperatives that therefore influence women's participation—itsself a problematic concept as it must be considered separately from empowerment.

Further, women do not actively seek leadership roles within the cooperative due to responsibilities within the household and reproductive work which makes attending and participating in cooperative activities difficult; together with responsibilities during coffee harvesting, women typically perform all of the household work including cooking, cleaning,

washing of clothes, and child rearing, which ultimately results in limited time for involvement in other activities, including cooperative activities (9,15). When women are invited to participate in the activities of the cooperatives, no consideration of their overload and other work is taken into account (37). Although measuring time spent in certain activities can be challenging, Cafenica's study approximated that women spent 74.5% of their time on household work in comparison to 25.5% of the time men spend on such activities, and women spent 39.9% of their time on productive activities while men spend 60.1% of their time on productive activities (15). Further exacerbating women's "triple burden" of work is the implicit understanding of FLO certification that Fair Trade certified coffee producers make primary use of family labour—of which women's labour often provides the largest share (18,37)—to maintain and harvest their coffee (65). This contribution—or rather potential for contribution—is assumed as FLO does not acknowledge women's household and reproductive work.

Women's lack of participation in the democratic processes of Fair Trade (such as the board of directors) should not be interpreted as a lack of will or a lack of capacity to organize, however, as women frequently participate in and belong to one of the many different groups that exist in their communities, such as weaving associations or other groups (9,80). These groups are often all-female and therefore demonstrate the power of patriarchal barriers to participation in mixed settings (discussed earlier) as the safer spaces afforded by all-women groups do generate participation.

Women clearly understand how the cooperative, and by extension Fair Trade, can help improve their economic situation which in turn would contribute to higher standard of living for the household as a whole and promote gender equity within families (9). However, their agenda to date has not been identified by Fair Trade certifiers or adequately supported by the cooperative itself (9,81). In other words, it is not women's lack of interest that limit women's participation within Fair Trade certified cooperatives. Rather, cultural norms around reproductive and household work, the patriarchal and often *machista* structures of the society and cooperatives, and a lack of recognition of women's contributions to coffee production limit if and *how* they participate within cooperatives. Below I describe some of the intricacies of *machismo* to highlight how it influences women's participation.

2.3.3 Machismo

There are factors that suggest that the status of women is improving within rural communities, giving them a greater sense of self-esteem and security. Nevertheless, *machismo* still prevails in many communities, further restricting the participation of women in Fair Trade (6). *Machismo* has been described as “a heady mixture of paternalism, aggression, systematic subordination of women, fetishism of women’s bodies, and idolization of their reproductive and nurturing capacities” (82)(p.91). In its most characteristic *machista* configuration, the hegemonic gender order emphasizes heterosexuality and a double standard of sexual conduct: male sexual superiority, liberty, aggressiveness and dominance, and female purity, inferiority, passivity, and submission. With relatively minor local variations, one author describes *machismo* as “an idealized, binary sexual ethics that sanctions men’s compulsive philandering and ritualized competition for sexual dominance while demanding women’s absolute fidelity” (83)(p.397).

In order to explore masculinity in Nicaragua as reflected at the level of the individual, Weibe (84) studied a group of male community leaders from impoverished neighbourhoods in León, Nicaragua. Throughout his research, *machismo* was never presented as positive; themes of what informants said about *machismo* were similar to other negative conceptions presented in the literature: *Machista* men practice male dominance/authoritarianism, violence/aggressiveness and self-centredness. In terms of relationships both within and without the family, *machistas* are authoritarian; they are *the* voice in decision-making in the home. Alcoholism and violence are common *machista* behaviours and *machistas* hold self-centred notions around money-spending and decision-making. With regards to health, *machismo* was perceived to affect the health of both the *machistas* as well as others (84).

Although women and men alike hold a disdain toward extreme manifestations of it, *machismo* permeates structures, organizational and personal relationships in Nicaragua. The cooperative system is not immune to these effects.

2.4 Social Protective Factors

Through its focus on capacity-building, organization, and stability, Fair Trade can be considered one mechanism that may provide social protective factors to vulnerable rural coffee producers. Green (85) defines social protective factors as “initiatives or [factors] that protect vulnerable people against livelihood risks and that enhance the social status and rights of those who are marginalized” (p.207). Essentially, social protective factors are those that will protect

vulnerable individuals during times of crises or emergencies (85). Green (85) further argues that the state in particular has a duty to reduce vulnerability by guaranteeing the basic rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Conceptualized in this way, social protection encompasses a range of other social services and social equity issues, such as providing decent education, health care, redistributing land to vulnerable farmers, guaranteeing property rights for women, and combating gender-based violence, amongst others (85,86). However, social protection need not be confined to the state alone and a significant amount of social protection-related activity takes place ‘below the radar’ at the community level, through family support networks or other organizations. I propose that empowerment and participation, active components of Fair Trade, serve as social protective factors. Cooperatives, also a critical component to Fair Trade, are explored as a mechanism through which empowerment and participation can be employed.

I explore the role of empowerment and participation in this research for a number of converging reasons. First, there is extensive literature connecting empowerment and participation to health which, as noted, I have proposed as a core concept in order to make Fair Trade more equitable. Second, empowerment and participation are actively promoted by FLO and are integral to the principles of Fair Trade. For example, empowerment is now being included as a central part of FLO’s new global strategy (75). Empowerment and participation are also linked to equity. Studies emerging from Nicaragua consider women’s empowerment and participation as two major components for increasing gender equity. Moreover, these two concepts also resonate with a feminist approach to research which supports examining power in the context of empowerment, health, and social change. Lastly, both empowerment and participation permeate all levels of the systemic, societal, community, and organizational connections previously outlined in Figure 1.1.

2.4.1 Empowerment

Based on recent studies of Fair Trade, it seems that gender equity is being equated with increasing women’s participation in cooperatives, in terms of increasing both women members and women in decision-making positions (14,15). Consistent with the health and equity literature outlined at the beginning of this chapter, however, I argue that increased participation alone is not sufficient because it could potentially be tokenistic, add to an already over-burdened

workload, and make women more vulnerable to men in decision-making positions. Instead, I propose that participation be explored as one component of empowerment.

The latter approach is valuable as empowerment is consistently mentioned in the health literature in reference to people gaining control over situations that determine their health (2,63,86-88). The CSDH (57) report states this clearly: “[the] empowerment of women is key to achieving fair distribution of health” (p.16). Thus, the shift that FLO is undergoing to more strongly emphasize their aim of empowering producers (8,75) holds considerable potential for impacting health inequities.

Frequently, initiatives, particularly those focused on women, rely on the term empowerment without providing a clear definition of the concept. FLO is no exception to this problem as they consistently mention empowerment without clarifying how it is being conceptualized. This is of concern because without a clear understanding of what empowerment means, it becomes very difficult to measure and gauge changes. Importantly, I do not argue nor suggest that there should be one single universal definition of empowerment for all, including FLO; as Zimmerman (89) points out; “a universal measure may confuse our understanding of empowerment by constructing its effects as static outcomes rather than as dynamic experiences” (p. 587). Moreover, the use of a universal measure or definition of empowerment is not appropriate because the concept inherently means different things for every person, organization, or community; likewise, individuals involved in any type of empowerment hold multiple different intersecting identities and cannot be assumed to be homogeneous (1,50,62). It follows, then, that the key to effective empowerment is that initiatives “must be created within or adapted to local contexts (e.g., culture and gender appropriateness)” (90)(p.4). Therefore, a universal definition of empowerment is not needed in order to evaluate change. Instead, what is necessary is that each initiative clearly defines empowerment according to the relevant local context in which it operates.

Applying this argument to my own research, the definition of empowerment that guides this research is that proposed by Wallerstein (87) who defines empowerment as “a social-action process that promotes participation of people, organizations and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life, and social justice” (p.198). An important component of this definition is that

empowerment does not only involve individual change but also holds relevance for community and political levels as well.

This definition also resonates with the health literature, wherein the concepts of control and power are noted as having to be central to any definition of empowerment (87,91). The health literature also addresses the concept of powerlessness¹⁵—being poor, low in the established social hierarchy, living in chronic hardship, and with little or no political and economic power to be able to gain greater control and resources in one’s life—and many have found that this makes one susceptible to disease (1,87,88,90). As one example, Wallerstein (87) reviews a wide array of studies of socioeconomic status, occupational health, and stress in which findings demonstrate that experiencing powerlessness is itself a broad risk factor for higher morbidity and mortality rates. Linking this back to the idea of equity, therefore, “health equity requires empowering people, particularly socially disadvantaged groups, to exercise increased collective control over the factors that shape their health” (58)(p.7).

In the context of Fair Trade, where individuals from the same communities belong to the same cooperatives, it is also necessary to explore community empowerment as a social protective factor. Wallerstein (86) defines community empowerment as “a social action process by which individuals, communities, and organizations gain mastery over their lives in the context of changing their social and political environment to improve equity and quality of life” (p.73). Community empowerment applies the ethical basis of social justice and reduction of inequities and emphasizes partnership and collaboration rather than a top-down approach (86), which is very consistent with the rhetoric and ideals of Fair Trade.

Moreover, community empowerment is multi-levelled, encompassing both processes and outcomes for individuals, the organizations they work with, and their community settings. Of closest relevance to this study are the roles of organizations in facilitating empowerment and individual empowerment. The roles of organizations are influential in promoting empowerment (86). Below I consider six areas that *organizations* can facilitate to influence empowerment and

¹⁵Power is central to the idea of empowerment, and in this research, power will be discussed in relevance to empowerment (86). The concept of power is extremely broad: “Theories of power range from a pluralist liberal democratic view of equal competing agendas to a view that power over others is represented by hegemonic and political-economic structures that favour certain interests or classes of people over others”(86)(p.74). These “power-over” structures are reproduced by ideology that reinforces power through excluding people from societal processes. Additionally, being powerless, or lacking control over one’s own destiny, becomes a core social determinant. For this research project, power is discussed within the boundaries of the health promotion literature.

equity utilizing a framework by Rifkin (94). At the level of the individual, empowerment goes beyond self-esteem to include people's perceived control in their lives, their critical awareness of their social context, and their participation in change (86). I thus also use a framework proposed by Longwe (92) to explore different levels of *individual* empowerment and in the Discussion chapter, I relate these frameworks to my research findings.

2.4.1.1 Organizational Empowerment and Five Levels of Equality

Rifkin (93) argues that the major reason why people's potential is limited is because of inequities in distribution of resources and opportunities and weak or non-existing mechanisms to ensure that consensual decisions are transparent and carried out (93). Her framework focuses on the interaction between personal choice and organizational aspects that influence participation, which appeared critical in examining the influence of empowerment and equity on health outcomes in the context of Fair Trade-certified coffee cooperatives.

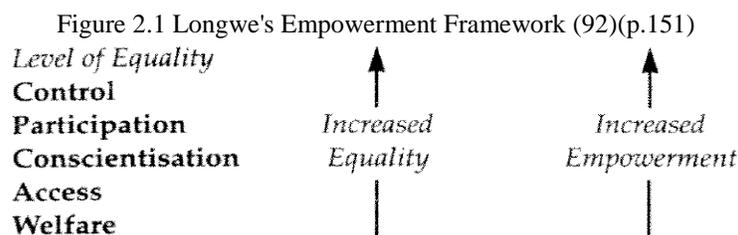
Rifkin notes six areas that are critical to examining the influence of empowerment and equity on health and development. Together, they form the acronym CHOICE: capacity-building, human rights, organizational sustainability, institutional accountability, contribution, and enabling environment (93). Below is Table 2.1 which provides a brief description of each concept and how the concept was useful in forming guided questions for my research.

Table 2.1 CHOICE: The influence of organizational aspects on participation and empowerment

Concept	Explanation	Relationship to this research
<i>Capacity-building</i>	Capacity-building is a process by which people gain knowledge, skills and confidence to improve their own lives. Capacity-building is not merely acquiring new skills and knowledge, it also involves an adjustment and application of these new insights into the political, social and economic environment and is a necessary step for empowerment in both individual improvement and in ensuring that issues of health equity are identified and addressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Where are the knowledge and skills-training coming from (locally versus externally)? ●What processes exist that count as capacity-building? ●Do women and men participate equally/have equal access to/equal opportunities to attend capacity-building workshops/trainings? ●How are women being invited to participate in the cooperative's activities that promote knowledge and skills-building?
<i>Human Rights</i>	Democracy is a process where people are able to exercise choice. It matters that people are not coerced into accepting decisions made of those more powerful or with more resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Do women have a choice in participating or are there factors that constrict their choice-making? ●Are women able to participate in the democratic decision-making processes of cooperatives?
<i>Organizational sustainability</i>	Successful health and development improvements depend on long-term organizations and structures that ensure continuity and not upon a single intervention. Often, there are difficulties in maintaining policy commitments to address the needs of individuals and involve lay people in decision-making. The establishment of a policy or processes without attention to how they are designed and maintained is not sufficient to ensure its objectives will be met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●How do policies, rules and regulations, and committees currently play out? ●What are the long-term desired outcomes of policies, rules and regulations? ●What has been established to ensure the sustainability of gender work? ●Has gender work been mainstreamed in the organizations?
<i>Institutional accountability</i>	Meeting the needs of women can prove to be illusionary if there are no mechanisms for accountability and transparency in place with regards to resource allocation. Without accountability, policies that claim to address equity and empowerment generate little confidence or credibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Do women have equal access to all of the positions of the board of directors? ●Do women have influence or power to make decisions on how to spend the social premiums that cooperatives receive as part of their coffee production? ●Is gender work receiving adequate resources for its maintenance and continuity? ●What is FLO's role vis-à-vis gender equity?
<i>Contribution</i>	This concept refers to the contribution the intended beneficiaries make to the program they are a part of, either through the contribution of resources or time and energy, to ensure that people can have some influence in the direction of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●How do members contribute financially to the cooperative? (disaggregated by gender) ●What is the time and energy commitment required by the cooperative to ensure its sustainability? How do women and men contribute to this? ●How do members guide the direction of the cooperative? (disaggregated by gender)
<i>Enabling environment</i>	The existence of an enabling environment is key. It is an essential ingredient for issues around equity and empowerment to be acted upon and sustained. At a local level, an enabling environment means that actions for empowerment and equity are reflected in program structures, and the concepts are institutionalized. An enabling environment can also be created through changes in attitudes and behaviours of those who have resources and power to make decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●How is gender equity understood? ●How is empowerment understood? ●Is the structure of the organization good enough to support gender work? ●What work has been done around shifting attitudes of current decision-makers within cooperatives? ●In what ways has FLO provided an enabling environment?

A second useful framework, proposed by Longwe (92), is intended to critically assess the extent to which a development intervention supports women’s empowerment. Longwe’s empowerment framework was used by the MMFC to develop the proposed empowerment indicators in its 2009-2013 strategy (13). This framework resonates with both action on the social determinants of health as well as Fair Trade and suggests a step-wise process of empowerment. One of its strengths is the importance the framework places on gaining control over decisions and resources that determine the quality of one’s life.

Longwe (92) proposes five different levels of equality as the basis for criteria to assess the level of women’s development in any area of social or economic life (Figure 3.1). The levels of equality presented in the framework are in a hierarchical relationship, so that equality of control is more important for women’s development than equality in welfare, and needs at the bottom of the hierarchy need to be met before ascending the hierarchy. The framework also suggests that higher levels of equality automatically ensure higher levels of development and empowerment (92). This assumption, and limitation, is particular to this framework and should not be assumed to exist in other settings; increased equality does not inherently lead to increased empowerment.



The first level of equality, *welfare*, refers to equality in accessibility of products and services to meet both women and men’s basic needs. *Access*, the second level, refers to women’s access to the factors of production such as land, labour, training, credit, marketing facilities, and all publically available services and benefits on an equal basis with men. *Conscientisation* implies an understanding of the difference between sex roles and gender roles, and an awareness that gender roles are cultural and therefore can be changed. *Participation* refers to women’s equal participation in the decision-making process, policy making, planning and administration, which entails involving the women of the community affected by the decisions taken. Lastly, *control* refers to the participation of women in the decision-making process (through

conscientisation and mobilisation) to achieve equality of control over the factors of production and the distribution of benefits. In this case, equality of control means a balance of control between women and men, so that neither side is put into a position of dominance (92). The Longwe framework proved useful to understanding the nature of empowerment inherent in the discourse used by participants of the study.

2.4.2 Participation

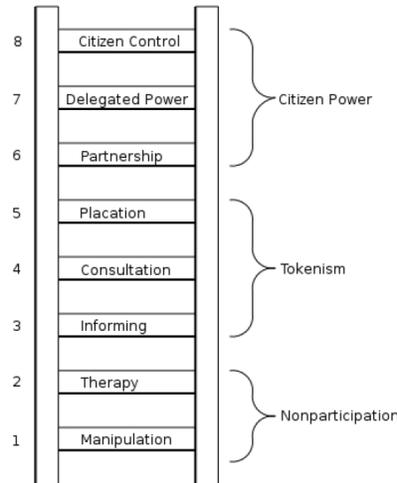
In the health literature, participation is frequently used as synonymous with empowerment. Participatory processes make up the base of empowerment but participation alone is insufficient if strategies do not also build capacity of community organizations and individuals in decision-making, advocacy, redistribution of resources and redress of power imbalances (58,90,93). In designing a conceptual framework for action on the social determinant of health, Solar & Irwin (58) question whether participation alone can be considered genuinely empowering without attention to the redistribution of resources and power over political processes. Based on their conclusions, the authors endorse the call to “mov[e] beyond mere participation in decision-making to an emphasis on *control*” (58)(p.60).

Different models and ideas of participation have been presented in varied disciplines and by numerous authors: Arnstein (94), Pretty (95), Cohen and Uphoff (96), Cornwall (97), Rifkin (98) and Rifkin, Muller and Bichmann (99), among others. Like empowerment, no uniform definition of participation exists; an “infinitely malleable concept, participation can be used to evoke—and to signify—almost anything that involves people” (97)(p.269). Therefore participation has come to carry many meanings and is frequently endorsed without a clear empirical basis (96).

Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation (Figure 3.2), developed in the 1960s retains considerable relevance. The framework explores participation from the perspective of those on the ‘receiving end’ and thus can be used to consider individual empowerment. She draws distinctions between *citizen power* which includes control, delegated power and participation, and *tokenism* in which she includes consultation, informing and placation (94). Similar to Longwe, Arnstein’s framework describes a spectrum defined by a shift from control by authorities to control by people or citizens. The strengths of Arnstein’s (94) framework are the inclusion of citizen control and the acknowledgement that participation is ultimately about power and control: “citizen participation is . . . citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that

enables the have-not citizens presently excluded from the political and economic processes to be deliberately included in the future” (p.216). Essentially, participation without the redistribution of power is considered to be ‘empty participation’ (94).

Figure 3.2 Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen (94)(p.217)



One criticism of the framework is that it is simplistic. When contextualized, the distinctions Arnstein’s typology makes become ambiguous; once applied to a ‘real’ situation, there may be more rungs with less sharp and ‘pure’ distinctions among them (94,100). Other critiques point out that the framework “uncritically embrace[s] citizen control as the pinnacle of involvement” (100)(p.158), and fails to consider the process as well as the outcomes, or the importance of feedback systems (100). As well, there is a lack of complexity in the conceptualization of protagonists in Arnstein’s (100) framework, which assumes that individuals without power are a homogeneous group. Furthermore, Arnstein’s model assumes that increased participation is necessarily better. This viewpoint can be deceptive as, for example, more participation may only contribute to increasing the workload of women without meaningfully altering the conditions that would bring about more equitable gender relations (97). Mindful of these shortcomings, and acknowledging that participants in any program, including Fair Trade, are by no means homogeneous, Arnstein’s framework is highly useful in exploring Fair Trade’s notions of participation.

In considering participation as a social protective factor, it is necessary to examine the relationship between gender equity-promoting processes, participation, and health implications. Health outcomes for participation may be direct or indirect. Direct health outcomes may result from, for example, cooperative members working together to reduce pesticide use and therefore

decrease respiratory problems. Indirectly, as a result of participation, social isolation may be diminished leading to improved health (86). Being included in the society in which one lives is vital to the material, psychological and political empowerment that underpins social well-being and equitable health. Inclusion, agency and control are each important for social development, health and well-being; having the freedom to participate in economic, social, political, and cultural relationships has intrinsic value (1). On the other hand, restricted participation can result in deprivation of human capabilities, setting the context for inequities in, for example, education and employment (1,101).

Participation that emphasizes the distribution of power and citizen control is integral to empowerment as defined in the health field. Within Fair Trade, cooperatives are the main vehicle for providing a space where individuals can share and identify needs and establish mechanisms to meet these needs. Thus, the benefits of belonging to a cooperative are worth exploring.

2.4.3 Cooperatives

Participation and empowerment can be facilitated through the mechanism of cooperatives. Broadly, cooperatives espouse ethical values such as self-help, democracy, equity, and solidarity (102,103). They also embrace principles of openness, autonomy and independence, education, cooperation among cooperatives and members, and concern for community (102). Moreover, and as a result of its values, principles, and democratic organization, cooperatives are one place for trust building (104) and for striving to achieve equity (103,105). A critical element of cooperatives is that citizens who work together develop a level of trust for and awareness of one another that facilitates the flow of information (104).

Aside from the impacts on health previously mentioned, working together offers both practical and strategic advantages, such as lowering costs for members and easing dilemmas of collective action (104). In contrast to individual workers who belong to cooperatives, isolated and marginalized workers often remain powerless in making decisions that affect their working conditions. Cooperatives also strengthen civil society which has considerable economic as well as social impact within a community (102). Cooperative principles and values, when fully observed, benefit both members and the community at large (104).

An additional advantage that cooperatives frequently offer is the opportunity to accumulate skills that are valued in a specific labour market (104). Usually such skills are acquired either through direct training or as a by-product of participation in social activities of

the cooperatives. Both hard and soft skills learned from cooperative activities may be transferred to other areas of civic life. Lastly, social connectedness reduces anxiety (104), improving overall well-being.

Within the Fair Trade literature coming out of Nicaragua, the contributions cooperatives make to producers are frequently mentioned. First, cooperatives provide greater financial stability to producers. The cooperative system makes small producers less vulnerable to crisis, particularly by ensuring access to Fair Trade export markets and credit (6,106,107). Utting-Chamorro (6) argues that the stability cooperatives provide is a significant factor: during economic difficulties and periods of climatic stress, the higher price paid to Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives can mean the difference between survival and bankruptcy for many small producers in Nicaragua.

Second, the local dynamics created through processes of training and mutual support among members encourage greater solidarity among members and their communities (107). Although current conditions are difficult for most small-scale farmers in Nicaragua, Bacon (106) notes several advantages members belonging to Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives have, such as being more educated, having better access to credit and investments, as well as members being supported by the cooperative with technical assistance, access to scholarships, and even support, albeit limited, for housing and health care expenses (106). In addition, Pirotte and colleagues (107) found that members of Nicaraguan cooperatives expressed pride in their collective achievement, palpable improvement in living conditions despite the adverse regional context, and the development of export-related activities. The feeling of belonging was reinforced by the capital investment required of members and the campaigns that aim to build a sense of ownership (107).

Third, cooperatives have also provided valuable economic, political, and legal support to small-scale farmers seeking to defend their land against speculators, large landholders, and high debts (106). Therefore, a core strategy to improve small-scale farmer livelihood and promote empowerment is through the development and maintenance of representative, efficient, accountable, and productive producer cooperatives (106). In this way, cooperatives can act as social protective factors when producers are faced with adversity.

Initiatives that are designed and implemented to promote empowerment through authentic participation can be a pathway to changing gendered norms and promoting gender

equity and health. Fair trade certified cooperatives appear to be a promising in the implementation of such initiatives.

2.5 Conclusion

This study applies a gender-lens to Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives in Nicaragua. In this chapter, I presented literature on gender equity as a social determinant of health, Fair Trade and women's current position within Fair Trade, and empowerment and participation, framed as social protective factors, that Fair Trade actively promotes. Despite Fair Trade's promotion of empowerment and participation, women and men are participating differently which in turn results in differential health outcomes. I argue that inequities between women and men are largely a result of *unfair* differences. These unfair differences are socially generated and therefore can be changed (1,2). Cooperatives can be a mechanism for promoting gender equity through facilitating processes that promote empowerment and participation, thus impacting health.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This study used a basic interpretive qualitative design to address three research questions: *By what processes do Fair Trade coffee cooperatives intentionally promote gender equity?*, *How do implemented gender-equity promoting processes reflect cooperative leaders' understanding of gender equity?*, and *What challenges hinder equal opportunities within cooperatives for women and men?* The data gathered included documents and semi-structured key informant interviews. In this section I describe my methodological choices followed by specific data-gathering methods and knowledge translation activities.

3.1 Social Determinants of Health and Feminist Approaches

In order to deepen an understanding of the social determinants of health, the CSDH lays out a number of methodological considerations for more interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. Clearly, social determinants of health are context-dependent and their study demands a rich evidence-base that includes qualitative research. Further, social determinants of health research should be designed not based on the strict traditional hierarchies of evidence of the majority of health research, but rather methods should be chosen that best answer the research question (178). Moreover, the extent to which a study's own methodological principles are considered to be well executed should be indicative of the study's validity (44). Marmot & Friel (108) acknowledge the importance of having to broaden the scope of what constituted evidence used in the CSDH report to include both "a variety of types of evidence . . . and chains of plausible reasoning. Failure to broaden in this way would have been a recipe for doing nothing" (p.1097).

The CSDH also recognizes that most health research remains gender biased—both in terms of what is studied as well as in terms of how the research is done (1). This study, which uses a feminist approach described in Chapter 1, is therefore consistent with the CSDH call for multi-disciplinary, context-specific, qualitative and gender-sensitive research.

3.2 Interpretive Qualitative Design

There are several factors that led to the selection of what Merriam and colleagues (109) define as a basic interpretive qualitative research design for this project. Basic interpretive qualitative research seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and world views of the people involved, or a combination thereof; constructivism underlies this

research approach. In other words, the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon. Data is collected or created through document analysis, observations, and/or interviews and is inductively analyzed to identify the recurring patterns or common themes that cut across the data. Lastly, a rich descriptive account of the findings is presented and discussed using references to the literature that framed the study (109).

Basic interpretive qualitative research is informed by phenomenology and symbolic interaction. Phenomenology operates under the assumption that people interpret everyday experiences from the perspective of the meaning it has for them; it emphasizes the subjective aspects of people's experiences (109). Symbolic interaction focuses on interpretation but within the context of the larger society; the meaning of an experience is constructed by an individual interacting with other people and society (109). Both of these perspectives are essential for this research since I explore how gender equity and processes to promote gender equity are constructed and interpreted not only at the individual level but also interpreted within Nicaraguan cultural, historical, and political contexts.

A basic interpretive qualitative research design is fitting for a social determinants of health investigation using a feminist approach. The use of documents and interviews as data gathering methods to explore gender equity policies in Fair Trade cooperatives in Nicaragua allowed me to explore my research questions while considering the cultural, historical and political contexts to obtain a more thorough understanding of the research environment.

3.3 Making Data

To speak of data as being “collected” or “gathered” is to imply that data pre-exists. Clearly in interviewing it does not. At times, reports or published documents are available for use as data, but the way we use and make sense of them can once again transform them. Hence the idea of “making” or re-creating data seems more apt. “Making data” is a collaborative, ongoing process in which data are interactively negotiated and created by the researcher and participants (110). This study relied on the selection of the most appropriate methods of making data that would answer the research questions. This study utilizes field notes, document analysis and key-informant semi-structured interviews.

3.3.1 Site and dates of Research

I gathered data from January to June 2010. The first two months were centred around “learning the ropes” (111), gathering and analyzing documents around gender equity policies,

Fair Trade coffee, cooperative structure and history, and other relevant documents. However, I continued gathering documents throughout the duration of my research. The duration of my stay and data-making in Nicaragua was determined by saturation—the point in the research study when new themes no longer emerged (111).

Although I was based out of the relatively ‘modern’ Northern Nicaraguan city of Estelí, I travelled frequently to El Jicaro and surrounding communities that are sites where PROCOCER works. El Jicaro is a small, extremely hot and humid town between mountains, about a 5-hour tightly packed bus ride from Estelí along a winding road. The road from Estelí to El Jicaro passes along very small picturesque communities, and a few meters from the road emerge more humble communities. I also spent time in the city of Matagalpa, a quaint small-sized mountainous city, where the offices of CECOCAFEN and Cafenica are located, and in the capital city Managua where national libraries and numerous gender and health NGOs are located. In total I visited El Jicaro 5 times, Matagalpa 6 times, and Managua 4 times. My first in-depth interview occurred in March 2010 and the final one at the end of May 2010.

3.3.2 Data Creation

Documents that were collected and sifted through included several statutes, strategies, reports, and rules and regulations of the base cooperative I worked with, as well as other documents relating to coffee, Nicaragua’s historical context, and other related topics. In total there were approximately 300 pages of documents, although little of that data was of an analytical nature.

Semi-structured interviews—useful when the researcher knows enough about the phenomenon or the domain of inquiry to develop questions about the topic in advance of interviewing, but not enough to be able to anticipate the answers (110)—were the primary source of data for this study. All 16 interviews were conducted in Spanish and lasted approximately one hour. An audio recorder was used in each interview and some notes were taken during interviews.

Open-ended questions, a key component of semi-structured interviews, were constructed based on preliminary document revision from participating organizations. Three different sets of open-ended questions were drafted for each level (see Appendix I for guiding interview questions). Within each level, informants varied in terms of position, responsibilities, and time with the organization. Therefore, drafted open-ended questions were tailored to suit the expertise

of the informant. Open-ended questions were designed and arranged in a logical order to address the required topics of research and all interviews were conducted in Spanish. Both planned and unplanned probes were used throughout interviews.

Strengths of employing open-ended questions include the exploration of highly sensitive issues, capture and analysis of nonverbal behaviours, and clarity of interviewee’s position regarding salient issues. Although one of the limitations of open-ended questions is that respondents may not want to address sensitive or other issues directly (111), I attempted to establish trust with informants and provide a comfortable and safe environment, as well as ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Table 3.1 provides a breakdown of informants by organization and gender. The limitations attributed to the interview process are addressed under the ‘Limitations and Delimitations’ section.

Table 3.1 Breakdown of Informants by Organization and Gender

Organization	Number of Interviews	Gender breakdown of Informants
Cafenica	4	3 women (1 informant interviewed twice)
CECOCAFEN	3	1 woman, 2 men
PROCOCER	7	3 women, 4 men (one woman informant was interviewed twice, and two women informants were interviewed together)
Other	2	2 women

Informants

The process of sampling, regardless of the study and sampling design, should result in a group of documents and/or participants that are able to accurately represent what the researcher is looking to uncover (111,112). For this thesis, I have chosen to use the term ‘informant’ instead of ‘participant’ to better reflect the type of interview and information I gathered. Individuals that participated in my study are considered to be ‘information-rich’ leaders from PROCOCER, CECOCAFEN and Cafenica and the MMFC and were selected to elucidate experiences with gender equity processes in Fair Trade cooperatives. While many methods exist, purposive sampling allows the researcher to select individuals based on predefined criteria (111), including individuals that know the information required, are willing to reflect on the phenomena of interest, have the time, and are willing to participate (110). Informants were selected based on these criteria.

Informants for the study were contacted through leaders of their own organizations. I mostly worked with the gender specialist from PROCOCER and she helped in the coordination

of contacting leaders within the cooperative to participate in interviews and scheduling interviews. For Cafenica, MMFC and CECOCAFEN informants, contact was made through an MMFC leader. Other interviews were set up on my own initiative.

For PROCOCER informants, a brief summary of the purpose of the study was given to the gender specialist to circulate among potential informants that she and I determined together. The gender specialist designated a time and place most suitable to those that expressed interest in participating in the study and then informed me. For CECOCAFEN and Cafenica/MMFC informants, the MMFC leader provided me with contact information of suitable informants. A five-page summary of the proposed research had been circulated to leaders of the two organizations. I contacted each of the potential informants, offered a verbal invitation to participate in the study and established meeting times at their convenience. Upon meeting with each informant, I offered another verbal invitation to participate in the study, presented and reviewed the consent form and provided a space for informants to ask questions, and obtained written consent for all informants.

3.4 Analysis

The process of analysis in naturalistic inquiry is iterative and is practiced throughout the research study. Data analysis begins when the researcher enters the field. Analysis is the basis from which all subsequent field decisions are made. Throughout the time in the field, the process of reading, interviewing, coding, and interpretation occur and help to guide the research (111).

Access to documents was often difficult (further described in the Limitations and Delimitations section) and most of the gathered documents were descriptive in nature. While reading organizational information and relevant existing research, I coded emerging themes and patterns within the text. This coding was useful for exposing contradictions, themes, patterns, gaps, topics not adequately addressed and ones that have emerged unexpectedly in the observed documents. These observations were particularly useful in guiding other searches and formulating interview questions.

Shortly after an interview was completed, it was transcribed by a Nicaraguan colleague to allow me to evaluate the data and make subsequent decisions to further the data collection efforts. Once an interview was transcribed, I listened and read over the interview simultaneously in order to check the transcription and familiarize myself with the transcript. I then read over each transcript twice, topic-coding and drafting preliminary themes in the process.

A sex- and gender-based analysis (SGBA) was used for the analysis of transcripts. SGBA is not a checklist but rather a *process* of integrating sex and gender considerations into research, policy and practice. SGBA process is *iterative*, which means regularly reflecting on content and process in order to address gaps, inconsistencies and oversights as well as to accommodate new knowledge or insights. SGBA entails asking questions that illuminate the assumptions, evidence and interpretations of an issue and often leads to a different way of understanding a problem and the potential solution (50). New questions and interpretations served in modifying remaining interviews.

The preliminary themes obtained from the transcripts, as well as from my interactions in the field and revision of documents, became tools to sort and classify subsequent information as it was received. These categories remained flexible throughout the research process. This preliminary type of analysis occurred throughout my time in the field in which coding and defining themes became more analytical with each iteration.

By the time I completed my fieldwork, I had reviewed and read over each transcript several times. Shortly after finishing my field work, I developed a taxonomy—a system of categories and relationships—using an Excel spreadsheet before beginning a more detailed coding process. Taxonomic analysis involves two processes: i) organizing or grouping similar or related categories into larger categories, and ii) identifying differences between sets of subcategories and larger or overarching categories. Related subcategories are grouped together in the taxonomic process and sets of categories are grouped on the basis of similarities. The idea is to uncover the threads or inclusionary criteria that link categories. Taxonomic analysis is therefore an analytical procedure that results in an organization of categories and that describes their relationships (111).

Once my taxonomy was complete, I imported all transcripts into Atlas Ti which I used mostly as an organizational tool for coding. Using Atlas Ti, I first coded all transcripts for contextual information about the organizations to further familiarize myself with the data. I then coded the transcripts while listening to the interview recordings using the taxonomy I had developed and adapted it throughout the process. Afterwards, I re-read the transcripts with all the highlighted quotations. Throughout the coding process, preliminary codes and themes were adapted, re-arranged, and refined to suit the data. I made analytic notes and memos referring to codes, quotations, and emerging ideas throughout my coding. Moreover, I continued to maintain

my research journal to keep track of analytic processes and changes. A qualitative research project is a “process of informed choice, reflection, flexibility, planning, and decision-making” (110)(p.107). I therefore had to make decisions about which data to prioritize. All data was coded and interpreted in Spanish to minimize the potential for incongruities resulting from translation. Once excerpts and quotations included in this thesis were selected, I translated them into English. All quotations used in this document are included in Appendix2 in both the original Spanish version and the translations used.

3.5 Reflexivity and Culturally competent scholarship

Influenced by feminist postmodern, poststructural, and postcolonial sensibilities, reflexivity has quickly developed within the theory and practice of research (113). Etherington (55) provides a complete description of reflexivity:

Reflexivity is an ability to notice our responses to the world around us, to stories and to other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform and direct our actions, communications, and understandings. In the practice of reflexive research, we need to be aware of the personal, social, and cultural in contexts in which we (and others) live and work to understand how these affect our conduct, interpretations, and representations of research stories (p.601).

Reflexive practices throughout the research entail an acknowledgement that the personal biography of the researcher and the roles she takes influence the research. Reflexivity therefore is a tool whereby we can include our “selves” at any stage, making transparent the values and beliefs we hold that almost certainly influence the research process and its outcomes (55). As Lipson, cited in Richards & Morse (110), states, reflexivity “[takes] a lot of exposure and a lot of self-explorations to find out where your own values are coming from, what your own behaviour is, [and] what you’re not seeing” (p.125). I maintained reflexive practices throughout my research, analysis, and writing stages through frequent journaling and communication with my supervisor.

Furthering the practice of reflexivity, I also applied the eight criteria Meleis (114) suggests for obtaining culturally competent knowledge that ensures rigor and credibility. The eight criteria are: contextuality, relevance, communication styles, awareness of identity and power differentials, disclosure, reciprocation, empowerment, and time (114). In the left-hand side of the table below (Table 3.2) I provide a description of the criteria as proposed by the

author and on the right-hand column, I provide the steps that were taken in this research to address the criterion.

Table 3.2 Cultural Competencies

<p>Contextuality Knowledge of research participants' lifestyles and situations is essential for developing the research questions and for understanding the meaning of the results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prior to my research, I had spent time in Nicaragua (I completed a 6-month internship and a 6-week graduate course), which exposed me to rural and urban realities, Nicaraguan culture and customs, language, and history ● Once in the field, I spent time “hanging out” at PROCOCER, observing and socializing with support staff, cooperative members, agricultural extension workers, and the gender specialist, expressing my genuine interest in learning about local context and lifestyles ● Extensive reading on the history and political situation
<p>Relevance Relevance refers to whether the research questions can serve a population’s issues and interests in improving their lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As described earlier, this thesis forms part of a larger research program in which issues in need of further research were identified by local partners ● Results of the research will be shared with participating organizations as well as the broader partnership to identify actionable entry points to improve gender work within cooperatives
<p>Communication Styles Researcher demonstrates adequate communication styles with participants and uses the most congruent design for the population’s communication style. Moreover, evidence of understanding of the use of language throughout the research process and ways by which the language use may have facilitated or constrained the research process need to be given.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spanish is my mother tongue ● I enrolled in a one-week immersion course to learn rural expressions and vocabulary ● Remained respectful of language use and how informants spoke (for example, if grammatical errors were made, I did not correct them; my transcripts are verbatim) ● Adapted my terminology to use words informants and community members used, for example, around coffee harvest ● Carried out verbal interviews since they were most congruent with informants
<p>Awareness of identity and power differential Evidence should be provided regarding how the researcher was able to establish more horizontal relationships and develop shared authority and shared ownership of the data. It may not be possible to demonstrate that the researcher was able to eliminate the vertical power structure and rigid separation of identities. However, there should be evidence of a movement toward fluidity in boundaries and evidence of a process to decrease vertical differentiation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Met with participating organizations to get feedback from them on the research proposal and discuss goals they had for the research ● Actively worked at establishing a relationship and trust with the local counterpart to receive feedback from her as often as possible and to ensure that my research remained respectful of the organization

<p>Disclosure Among the goals and tasks for the culturally competent researcher of marginalized populations is to uncover the marginalized populations' experiences in ways that are authentic to the narrators and understandable to the audience. Researchers then must demonstrate evidence of trust-building.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tried to make informants feel as comfortable as possible in interviews, highlighting confidentiality. During interviews, I offered informants space to share what they wanted to share with me, and debriefed the interview with each interviewee once interview was completed
<p>Reciprocation One of the goals of a culturally competent research process is to ensure that all parties involved meet their own goals from the research process and through the research findings. A researcher's goal is to gain understanding related to the area of investigation, to answer research questions, and to identify patterns or processes. A participant goal may be to have their own questions answered, to get to know the researcher, or to gain more insight into their own situation. Reciprocation is achieved when the goals of the research collaborators and the participants are identified and when every attempt is made to ensure that these goals are addressed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At PROCOCER's request, I along with a fellow student developed a questionnaire to be used for gathering information about members and developing a database. We trained individuals who will administer questionnaire and designed the database to be used by the cooperative ● Provided the cooperative with a list of actionable recommendations upon the completion of the study ● A final summary copy in Spanish of the thesis will be provided to participating organizations and will offer a presentation ● This study is part of a long-term ongoing partnership among several organizations that have a say in what they want from the partnership. For example, at the request of one of the organizations, a video was created by fellow students participating in the partnership
<p>Empowerment One of the tasks of a researcher with marginalized populations is to construct credible descriptions of ways in which the research process has made contributions or will make a contribution to empowering members of the group being studied.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This research utilizes a feminist approach and has empowerment as one of its central goals
<p>Time A flexible approach to time is one of the tools used by culturally competent researchers to establish trust, to identify reciprocal goals, to develop maps of action, and to complete the research process. Research reports that are culturally competent must have evidence of a time frame and the dimensions of time that allow the researchers to meet their own as well as the participants' goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I was respectful of how time is used in Nicaragua, which meant that often I had to wait several hours for interviewees to arrive (I waited anywhere from 4 to over 11 hours) and for meetings to begin. Interviews had to be rescheduled often and I remained flexible and interviews were established according to times most convenient to informants ● I designed this study with my time frame in mind to allow me to successfully gather necessary data

3.6 Ethics

This study follows the procedures and guidelines for ethical approval outlined by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan, which makes use of the standards of the Tri-Council Policy on Ethical Conduct. This research project was considered to

be of minimal risk to the informants. To ensure ethical conduct during the research, letters of consent including descriptions of the research process and purpose, risks and benefits of the research, right to withdrawal from the study, and methods for storing and using the data gathered were provided to the informants. Letters were originally drafted in English and then translated into Spanish and reviewed by my thesis supervisor prior to use with any study informant. An example of consent forms are provided in Appendix 3. Pseudonyms are used in this text in order to protect the informants' anonymity in the research.

3.7 Limitations and Delimitations

The most obvious limitation in this project is the amount of time spent in the field. Familiarizing myself with the organizations and different local contexts I worked in was time-intensive, and this resulted in less time actively making data.

The study was done with one organization from three different levels and within a set timeline to suit the level of this research. The use of one organization from each level is of particular concern for the base cooperative level as only one of the hundreds of base cooperatives that exist in Nicaragua participated in this study, and therefore cannot be considered representative. However, I hope to address this limitation by providing the cultural context, historical context and commonalities between PROCOCER and other Nicaraguan cooperatives. Moreover, processes that promote gender equity that exist within PROCOCER are also common to other base cooperatives, particularly those belonging to CECOCAFEN and Cafenica. This means that PROCOCER is not so unique that results cannot be adapted to other cooperatives.

The original goal of the research project was to explore gender equity policies within Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives in Nicaragua. I had proposed to carry out an extensive document search and analysis—as a primary source of data for the research—of historical documents, meetings from minutes, letters, research documents, documents written by cooperatives, laws, reports, and implemented gender equity policies. The complexities of this proposed search were not clear in Canada and became evident upon my arrival in Nicaragua. One of the major difficulties upon my arrival in Nicaragua was the difficulty in gathering documents. Accessing documents was challenging for numerous reasons including: hierarchical structures that exist with information-holders (gate keepers), difficulties in coordinating with librarians, limited access to one central place for information due to ongoing change to the catalogue system (and subsequently all relevant resources were packed away in boxes), limited

photocopier and/or resource-loan access, and short permitted duration in facilities with useful resources. Moreover, there was limited data on the topics I had proposed as part of the original search. These significant challenges led to a shift in the project's methods. Despite these challenges, I was able to gather a sufficient volume of documents to substantially contribute to this project.

Another limitation worth noting is a lack of detailed information on some topics as a result of how the field research progressed. The nature of the evolving partnership influenced the nature of the research process. Interviews were established on the availability of informants at the three different levels and therefore I was not able to interview all the informants from one organization before moving on to the next. This influenced the depth of results, since I did not have sufficient information for deeper probing.

3.8 Trustworthiness

There are many ways for researchers to ensure that their study is methodologically rigorous and accurate in both research design and in analysis design. Guba (115) refers to rigor and accuracy in terms of research "trustworthiness," which is used to ensure that the information gathered and synthesized from the research is an accurate representation of what happens in the field.

Strategies that were used to ensure consistency and dependability/reliability were triangulation, an audit trail, investigator's position, and peer examination. The use of multiple methods, in this case documents, interviews, and field notes, can be considered a strategy for obtaining consistent and dependable data as well as data that are most congruent with reality as understood by informants. An audit trail, which describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry (109) was maintained in my field notes. In my field notes, I also recorded my reflections, questions and decisions on the problems, issues and ideas I encountered in collecting data to keep track of decisions made. I maintained constant communication with my supervisor through email and telephone conversations, and was visited by her during my field work. Lastly, transcripts were sent to all interviewers when possible. Only one informant returned the transcript with some modifications.

The quality of the gathered data was mostly of a descriptive nature; informants spoke at length about how the cooperative is organized and implemented processes, and information

about their interpretations and understandings was less frequent. The quality of the data reflects the anticipated versus actual stage of work on gender equity that participating organizations are at. Thus, the results of this study remain somewhat descriptive.

3.9 Reciprocity and Knowledge Translation

As mentioned in Chapter 1 and the table that examines criteria for culturally competent knowledge in this chapter, several reciprocity and knowledge translation activities have taken place. Jannie Leung, a Master's student who conducted the second research project of the action-research agenda introduced in Chapter 1, also worked closely with PROCOCER during overlapping periods of my fieldwork. Together, we were able to reciprocate to PROCOCER by developing an extensive questionnaire and database for PROCOCER to gather basic socio-economic information from all its members. We also developed and conducted a full-day training session for the promoters (daughters and sons of cooperative members) who would be in charge of administering the questionnaire to cooperative members. A training manual for the workshop was left with the gender specialist who is responsible for the promoters program. Moreover, we developed the database for data entry and trained the cooperative leader who would be overseeing data entry.

As part of knowledge translation of results emerging from this specific research, I submitted a preliminary list of actionable recommendations to PROCOCER within the first month of having left the field. The recommendations included indications of how the database can be used in implementing the recommendations. I have plans for returning a summary of my study in Spanish to all three of the organizations and will partake in ongoing feedback and reciprocation through workshops, informal meetings, consultations and updates with partnership members and other collaborators who were not part of the study.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Three main research questions guided my research: *By what processes do Fair Trade coffee cooperatives intentionally promote gender equity?*, *How do implemented gender-equity promoting processes reflect cooperative leaders' understanding of gender equity?* and, *What challenges hinder equal opportunities within cooperatives for women and men?*

The primary source of data used to answer the questions was semi-structured interviews with key informants from each of the three participating organizations. Additional documents served as complements to information shared in interviews and were analyzed using a sex and gender-based analysis to present the background information provided in Chapters one and two. In this chapter, I present the results of the analysis of interview data, relying on documents only where context is required. Unless otherwise specified, quotes included in this section are from interviews. The quotes have been translated from the original Spanish version and pseudonyms are used.

I present the findings under three themes: notions of gender equity, processes that exist within participating organizations that promote gender equity, and socio-cultural and organizational challenges that hinder gender work¹⁶ from advancing. Under each of the themes I present information on the three participating organizations: Cafenica, the largest association of small-scale Fair-Trade certified coffee producers and the MMFC—the women's movement embedded within Cafenica; CECOCAFEN, a second-tier cooperative, and; PROCOCER, a base cooperative with over 600 members. Notions of gender equity are presented first to understand how each organization is framing gender equity and to identify where each organization is situated in terms of gender work. Existing implemented processes that aim to promote gender equity are then presented, which build on the organizations' understandings of gender equity. Lastly, socio-cultural and organizational challenges that women are confronted with are presented.

4.1 Theme 1: Notions of Gender Equity

The objective of this section is to expose how gender equity is understood at each of the three organizational levels. Throughout the interviews, understandings and interpretations of

¹⁶ As mentioned in Chapter I, I use gender work to refer to all kinds of processes, thinking, awareness at all levels that includes a prioritization or a consciousness of gender.

gender equity and the work required to achieve it became clear. Understandings of gender equity provided by informants from the same organization were very similar, but there were noticeable variations between the different organizations. Despite the variations, informants from each of the three organizations commonly expressed three points. First, gender equity defined in terms of the family needs to include both women and men; second, gender work in the cooperatives is centrally about increasing women's participation, with internal differences regarding whether participation is authentically empowering and; third, the role of external influences as well as financial constraints lead to tensions about 'who decides' the true meaning of gender work.

4.1.1 Cafenica: The Who and How of Gender Equity

One predominant point that repeatedly came up in all three of the participating organizations was around the importance of the family, or in other words, that gender work is about working with the family. The emphasis placed on the family is a likely reflection of the reality that producers are small-scale and dependent on the family for most of the farm labour. As recognized in FLO's standards (67), one is considered a small-scale producer if "the producer's labour and that of the family members constitutes a significant proportion of the total agricultural labour undertaken on their farm" (p.4). As expressed by an informant from Cafenica:

There are men and women that are poor, and that are a family. For me what is basic is working with the family . . . working with the family is fundamental. And working to overcome the gaps.

While focus on the family was central to notions of gender, overcoming gender inequities was specified as being based on principles and values, requiring a whole-person development approach and authentic empowerment¹⁷. For Cafenica informants, gender equity-promoting processes need to be developed starting with the people involved in order for changes to occur. Extending the idea further, informants noted that gender work cannot be about fulfilling certification criteria. As Meyling shared:

I believe that equity needs to be more about the principles and values of the organizations within the [Fair Trade] system. [However it needs to occur through] self-monitoring and not so much within standards because when it gets turned into standards it turns into a straitjacket and it becomes unreal . . . It becomes unreal because then people will put

¹⁷ I use the term 'authentic empowerment' to represent Wallerstein's definition of empowerment presented in Chapter 2, "a social-action process that promotes participation of people, organizations and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life, and social justice"(87)(p.198), and to distinguish this type of empowerment to other types of empowerment that informants mentioned(87).

women into the associations or into the cooperatives to fulfil the required number. They place them in the Board of Directors to meet the required number, and women get converted to a number. And equity is very linked to empowerment, it's about transformation and a change in values, so it should be focused on from another perspective, from the principles and values *of* the organizations. And you measure it, I believe, not so much with numbers but instead by the change in people's lives through improvements in the conditions of people's lives.

As a national coordinating body, Cafenica is well-informed about Fair Trade and Fair Trade certification. I was thus also able to discuss gender in the Fair Trade context at length with informants. In general, informants agreed that gender work should not be seen as a requirement for certification but rather as development criteria. Gender work is considered to be part of the internal processes of the organizations and informants pointedly expressed that FLO's role is in motivating and promoting organizations to continue gender work, but not to regulate it. One informant expressed the following when I asked her if gender work falls within FLO's role:

no, the topic of gender equity and FLO is not that, it's not the role of FLO. FLO can create incentives for it, it can motivate it through its certification structure and through resources so that equity processes are initiated. But FLO is not going to do it, the standards are not going to do it because those are changes in the people.

4.1.1.1 Ongoing tensions: Organizational Autonomy and Standardization

The comments related to FLO additionally reflect the ongoing tensions regarding organizational autonomy that were further reflected in the concept of empowerment employed by Meyling. Illustratively, Meyling stated that for Cafenica, "empowerment is that we be the directors of our own destiny." The emphasis is clearly about local control, but as related to Fair Trade and cooperatives is ambiguous:

Empowerment is a foreign word, beginning from there . . .and for that reason it has different interpretations, that is, and the topic is not, there is no clear concept of what empowerment is within the Fair Trade system. The fact that it is very broad and ambiguous allows for each person to interpret it and measure it in whatever way they feel like, and, for us empowerment goes beyond making decisions in a determined space, but rather it is about having access to resources, having access to an equitable distribution, it is about having the possibility to contribute your ideas, be heard. . .

While the term empowerment is thus both used as a synonym for autonomy and critiqued as foreign, it is clear that token empowerment is not acceptable. It also appeared that both

empowerment and whole-person development also seem to “butt heads” with those within the organizations that put commercial interest first. As Dolores noted:

My main effort is directed to women’s whole-person development. For me the marketing [of coffee] is secondary. It’s completely secondary because when women become empowered and developed, *then* marketing has value. [But that] is a *very* personal criterion that I know butts heads with tons of people. The experiences are there: coffee [is] produced by women, sold for a better price; [but] you arrive at the house of the women and the person that has the control and power over *everything* is the man.

As noted above, Cafenica highly values organizational autonomy, expressed as the idea that gender work needs to be defined by each of its member organizations to suit each of their unique agendas. As Hazel said, “[a]t Cafenica, we work from a bottom-up process,” and in fact, existing gender work in the cooperatives has emerged from the cooperatives themselves—from their internal development processes—and not from imposed criteria.

Informants also emphasized that the historical dynamics that have existed in Nicaragua as well as the nature, structure, and principles of cooperatives are influential factors that have facilitated the progress of gender work. Moreover, as Meyling expressed, cooperatives have been carrying out gender work to change society from the household and community levels as “...part of their social commitment stemming from the acceptance of the universal [declaration of human rights] and cooperative principles and values, which permit you to think about equity and try to transform society starting at the bottom...”. Hence, gender equity is considered to be something broader than a standard imposed by FLO since all organizations, although at different levels and capacities, have been carrying out gender work. In order to reflect local realities and respect organizational autonomy, Cafenica’s gender work in turn entails supporting its member organizations in developing their own gender equity strategies and policies and in obtaining necessary resources.

Overall, Cafenica values control as part of individual empowerment and also values organizational autonomy in defining and implementing context-specific gender work. Yet, as demonstrated by Dolores’ quote, not all of Cafenica’s members agree that whole-person development and empowerment should be prioritized. The tensions and contradictions within Cafenica became evident as discussions progressed, and became particularly evident when I was informed that Cafenica is also developing a gender equity policy to standardize gender equity processes and serve as a reference point for member organizations. These pervasive tensions

which I class as empowerment and organizational autonomy versus standardization, and empowerment versus commercial interests, are further elaborated in my discussion of ‘Processes that Promote Gender Equity.’

4.1.1.2 MMFC

The MMFC is responsible for the strategy that Cafenica uses to carry out gender work. Dolores, adamant about whole-person development, shared with me why personal development is necessary for gender equity and how processes for change must stem from the household level. When I asked her how the MMFC intends to improve gender relations, she passionately answered:

It is a process. First, the work in helping the personal development of women is fundamental, because you can give economic resources to a woman but that does not mean that she has developed as a person. It doesn't even mean that she has control over the resources. She was only the channel for the resources to get to the family, and it turned out that the person that has control over those resources is the man. So, that [personal] work is very important and it is long-term. . .
[and later she continued:]

You can give a loan to a woman, the woman buys the land, but the man can have the power over that and the control over that land. . . it is true that there are women that have land, and that you see that it makes a difference. But there are also women that have land and they have given men legal power so that he can even sell her [land]. That is to say, it's not the land that leads to change—[though] that helps a lot—it's the personal development that women have and therefore start to feel “this is mine and I control it.” Evidently, as women love themselves, become more economically independent, it will be helping us. But it is not just the economic part, the development of women is what's fundamental.

Therefore, the MMFC proposes to work towards women's development through training and workshops (including themes from self-esteem to technical knowledge) so that women are able to use and maintain acquired resources and have better control over their lives.

Supporting the notion that gender work needs to originate from the cooperatives themselves, the MMFC also proposes that changes need to be promoted at the household level. One of the problems that has emerged in promoting women to join cooperatives is that women have taken on more organizational activities but are still responsible for all the domestic and reproductive work. This results in women being over-loaded and over-worked, as Dolores has often heard, “ah, no more, better I stay in this and only this and forget about political activities, organizational activities because I am simply loading myself with more work.” With

determination and confidence, Dolores echoes women's concerns and shared how the MMFC proposes to change household dynamics,

. . .you just keep piling up and piling up and piling up women with work. *No!* It's time to start sharing, that process of change, that between the two of them they begin to look for a change . . . [we have it proposed as sensitization] to both, to men and women, but with women [we] go beyond that to processes of personal development. For men, sensitize them so they begin to deconstruct their own paradigms. . .

In spite of the explicit commitment to gender equity that MMFC informants share, a disconnect was also evident within the MMFC. The MMFC has a five-year strategic plan—from 2009-2013—outlining four major goals with indicators to evaluate them. In spite of the passionate way that Dolores explained the meaning of gender equity in the context of whole-person development, the strategic plan is highly oriented towards organizational strengthening and financial stability and less towards women's empowerment. While I certainly do not discredit the need for resources (in fact, I argue for the need of resources in the Discussion Chapter), there is a disconnect between the indicators included in the strategy and the whole-person development approach that emerged from interviews.

4.1.2 CECOCAFEN: Family, Increasing Numbers and External Influences

The views that were expressed during interviews indicated that CECOCAFEN's understanding of gender equity revolves around two aspects: the family, and women's participation within the cooperatives. As Carla confidently stated, “[r]emember that the topic of gender is not the woman as such, it's the family.” Marvin further elaborated on this point, explaining why gender work is a family affair, reflecting the importance of family labour:

You were asking about how gender work is done in the cooperatives. The first thing is that in CECOCAFEN, the families integrated into the different cooperatives in principle are *small* producers, so a large part of the work is done with the family and when we speak about families it is women, sons and daughters; in other words the labour is family labour to a great extent.

Leaders at CECOCAFEN also consider gender work to be about increasing women's participation in decision-making positions. All three informants spoke enthusiastically about all the women with decision-making positions within the second-tier cooperative and within member cooperatives and now, as Carla expressed, they feel there is “. . .equity and an equilibrium, because before there were more men.” One informant spoke about the impact

CECOCAFEN wants to have at the cooperative level in terms of increasing women's participation,

...to bring about that women also have access and can be elected into responsibilities within their cooperatives as members of the Board of Directors, as members of the Work Commissions, and also that they can have the opportunity to be in charge of tasks, the right to receive trainings, the right to be able to have the opportunity to work the same as men.

Although implicit, the notion of participation for CECOCAFEN includes some form of political empowerment. However, CECOCAFEN's strategy for implementing changes is unclear, and no mention was made of how they in practice approach women to hear their concerns.

4.1.2.1 Balancing External Influences in Gender Work

CECOCAFEN was one of the participating organizations in FLO's study on the impact of certification on gender equity that was carried out with the support of the IMC in 2008. As part of the study, an assessment of families from certain member cooperatives of CECOCAFEN was carried out, setting the path for CECOCAFEN's gender work. Before the assessment, it appears that there was little to no gender focus in CECOCAFEN's work. However, after the assessment, the GMAS program (details below), as well as the Scholarship Program were established and continue to be considered exemplary gender equity-promoting programs. Clearly the shift towards greater gender focus is fairly recent within the organizations, and was catalyzed by the external influence of the study, but in this case, the agenda of the external organization was a welcome addition.

Likewise, the perceptions CECOCAFEN has about FLO's influence on gender work can be attributed to the particular relationship that exists between the two organizations. In contrast to Cafenica—which believes FLO's role is to *motivate* organizations to promote gender equity—and PROCOCER—which feels pushed by FLO to integrate more women into the cooperative—CECOCAFEN believes that FLO is and should be active in promoting gender work. Marvin felt that one of FLO's roles is to contribute to the organizations' gender work by directly strengthening structural parts of cooperatives themselves, with the cooperatives then responsible for carrying out gender work to the household level. CECOCAFEN is also implementing a gender equity policy, created with support from FLO. In my interview with Carla, at times it felt that the policy and FLO were considered as synonymous. Compared to the two other

organizations in this research, CECOCAFEN appears to welcome FLO's role in strengthening the structural aspects of the organizations for sustaining gender work.

Although Marvin was the only interviewee from CECOCAFEN that spoke about empowerment, his ideas of empowerment as a necessary component for gender equity were also similar to those shared by Cafenica:

when people in a conscientious manner act, and not because they have told them "this has to be worked in this way" that is, as long as people are waiting to be told what to do, there is no empowerment and in that case the cooperative is not going to have the strength, in that case the work is not going to be sustainable and here we talk a lot about sustainability . . .

He further expressed that empowerment and gender work need to emerge from the cooperatives and not from certification criteria. Marvin mentioned that setting certain standards could help to serve as a reference point, but setting standards would not be the solution. Instead,

I believe that empowerment needs to be more from the part of the cooperative, from the cooperative and the people. That is, if the cooperative and the people are empowered all of a sudden...it may be that FLO has an interest in contributing to all that is being carried out, but if we all of a sudden say "well, what's most important is what FLO says," FLO can fall into being something strictly academic, and strictly academic is something that does not apply to systems like ours.

Marvin certainly speaks to the importance of organizational autonomy in establishing empowerment strategies. However, his enthusiasm about organizational autonomy is somewhat contradictory to his considerations of FLO's role *vis-à-vis* gender work.

4.1.3 PROCOCER: Women are part of the Family and Increasing Participation

Based on my interviews with PROCOCER leaders, it appears that the GMAS program (described under 'Processes') has played a key role in promoting gender work within the cooperative. Through the women involved in the GMAS program, leaders of the cooperative took notice of women's expressed interest in joining the cooperative; as Carlos shared, delegates of the cooperative and members of the Board of Directors realized that women "had the will to organize themselves and that women's interest in joining the cooperative had been awakened." Leaders decided that women should be given the opportunity to integrate themselves into the cooperative and began to encourage women who are part of the GMAS program to join the cooperative. The recognition of women's interest in becoming members led to the decision of

hiring a gender specialist to facilitate the integration of women into the cooperative and the implementation of other gender equity-promoting processes.

Aside from leaders noticing women's interest in becoming cooperative members, when I asked PROCOCER leaders the reasons for having initiated gender work, responses—similar to those given by informants from Cafenica—revolved around notions of family. Informants expressed that PROCOCER is composed of families and not just individuals. Families are seen as an integral part of the cooperative to ensure the cooperative's sustainability, and women are considered to be one component of the family. Therefore, to work with women, work needs to be done with the family;

Well in the first place because PROCOCER is directly integrated by families of producers and in the family, there are men and women, and so, we also took into consideration that part and that we should also give women participation considering that if it is the family that is organized and it is the family that produces, then the woman should also be involved, not isolated. . .

As with CECOCAFEN, PROCOCER's notions of gender equity are expressed in terms of equal participation by women and men within the cooperative. Specifically, this equality extends into women and men being required to meet the same criteria to become and remain members and receiving the same benefits and opportunities from the cooperative. Informants also mentioned increasing women in decision-making positions, but provided no concrete examples of how the cooperative plans to do this. Moreover, all informants frequently mentioned the few women that are currently delegates. It became evident that these women were the cooperative's 'token women' by the recurrence of their mention combined with a more thorough understanding of the notions of gender equity held by leaders. PROCOCER's main concern is about increasing the number of women within the cooperative and does not seem to place emphasis on empowerment and whole-person development that Cafenica and the MMFC discussed. The focus on increasing membership by involving women could be considered reflective of the cooperative's priority of marketing and sales.

In order to better understand PROCOCER's notion of increasing women's participation and what that would entail, I explored how leaders interpret empowerment. The cooperative leaders' notion of empowerment was not clearly decipherable from responses given in the interviews. In one interview where I asked Chepito what he thought empowerment meant, he seemed confused by my question. He spoke about a wide array of things and after a few minutes,

he stopped and said he did not understand my question. I paraphrased the question for him, and he answered that cooperative members saying “I am PROCOCER” means they are empowered and receiving all the services of the cooperative; additionally, women feeling like they are a part of the cooperative’s structure is also empowerment. In the other instance where empowerment was mentioned, Carlos briefly stated that one of the things they would like to do in two to three years time is to “. . .empower women so that 10% can be land owners.” Although the important issue of land ownership for women was mentioned in passing, the connotation of Cafenica, the MMFC and CECOCAFEN’s notions of empowerment were dissimilar to those shared by PROCOCER.

4.1.3.1 External Pressures from FLO and the influence of Leaders

In exploring the influence of Fair Trade certification on the cooperative, it seems that PROCOCER’s understanding of gender equity is influenced by its relationship with FLO. When I asked informants whether FLO had any gender criteria for certification, they mentioned women participating in the cooperative’s activities and holding decision-making positions as part of the criteria. Carlos shared that when FLO auditors arrive to the cooperative, they inquire about how many women members they have, how many women are producing coffee, and how many women have decision-making positions. When I asked Carlos where the cooperative wants to be in two to three years, efforts are mostly focused on having more women join as members and take on decision-making positions, but again, there was no mention of planned actions to carry this through. Despite the pressure the cooperative feels from FLO to have more women involved in the cooperative, one informant noted nonchalantly that a lack of women’s participation within decision-making positions in the cooperative is not a basis for FLO removing the certification, demonstrating a disconnect between rhetoric, attitudes and action.

I sense that this attitude can partially be attributed to the fact that some of the current leaders are founding members of the cooperative that feel entitled and have always had power within the cooperative. Therefore, notions of gender equity are still limited because leaders have not internalized the imperativeness of equity, in part, because their reality and positions of power does not require it.

More telling perhaps is that empowerment was not mentioned at all in my interviews with the gender specialist. Central to what she shared about her responsibilities was her role in increasing women memberships, reflecting the work cooperative leaders want her to fulfill, and

the limited autonomy she has. It was only in the later stages of my relationship with her that she discussed her ideas about increasing women's access to land and about ways to facilitate women attending the cooperative's activities, such as establishing meetings at times most convenient for women and providing child care during meetings. She shared these ideas with me in an interview that took place outside of the cooperative in a more relaxed environment, and throughout the interview her face brightened as she expressed the wishes and desires she has for women members and *co-productoras*. But, it was very clear that those were her personal desires and not those of the cooperative, and that her efforts need to be centered around the cooperative's interest in recruiting women into the cooperative.

4.2 Theme 2: Processes that Promote Gender Equity

Within the last few years, the three organizations have implemented processes to promote gender equity. Within each level, the implemented processes reflect the organizations' notions of gender equity and related interpretations of gender work. I use 'processes' to refer to programs, projects, workshops, trainings, and positions within the cooperative that have been implemented to promote gender equity. In this section I include processes that were mentioned by the three organizations during interviews regardless of whether the processes are considered effective or not. Cooperatives have typically had limited resources since their formation during the revolution (41). The amount of limited resources influences what and how processes are implemented. A lack of information on funding for processes is a result of how the research on the ground progressed which influenced the sequence of interviews and the difficulties in obtaining documents. Where available, I provide information on sources of funding.

4.2.1 Cafenica and the MMFC: Policies and Trainings

Over the last few years, Cafenica has placed gender work at the forefront. Since Cafenica values autonomy, efforts have been centred on supporting member organizations in developing their own gender equity processes. Much of the work it is involved in includes sensitization processes directed at the Board of Directors of member organizations and it has also facilitated gender assessments of its member organizations. Although Cafenica firmly believes that gender work should stem from the organizations themselves, they have recently implemented a gender equity policy, approved in June 2010 at Cafenica's Annual Assembly. The aim of the policy, according to Hazel, is to serve as a reference point and assist in standardizing gender work in member cooperatives. The gender policy emerged from Cafenica's 2008-2012 strategic plan,

which has as its aim the promotion of gender equity within Cafenica and its associated organizations. Among the strategy's proposed actions are to: facilitate the establishment of gender policies in member organizations; develop a leadership training program for women, and; develop an exchange program to share experiences at the national and international level (116). As previously pointed out, there is a marked tension between the autonomy Cafenica wants organizations to have and the standardization process it feels is necessary through the establishment of a policy.

The MMFC is considered to be in charge of Cafenica's gender strategy and has the overarching goal of developing a gender focus within cooperatives to reduce inequities and increase the recognition of women's work within coffee production. A five-year strategy for 2009-2013 was developed with the goal of improving the conditions and positions of women members and co-producers, technical staff, management and administration staff of Cafenica's member organizations (13). One example of the work the MMFC is implementing is the training of women from cooperatives to become leaders. Azucena from PROCOCER, who is participating in the training program, explained that twenty women were selected from the 12 member organizations to complete a learning needs assessment and prioritization exercise. The ensuing trainings consisted of 7 sessions and include topics of cooperativism, women's rights, and, if implemented, how to evaluate and monitor gender policies within their organizations. After each session women are expected to replicate the material from the workshops to at least 20 women from their own organizations. Any resources the MMFC currently has are from Cafenica, limiting the extent and consistency of its work. This was all the information I was able to obtain from informants but it seems that the themes of the workshops are reflective of the strategic plan and focus on organizational strengthening and not the notions of whole-person development that Cafenica and MMFC informants discussed.

Another effort Cafenica is involved in—through the MMFC—is with the Rural Women's Committee (Coordinadora de las Mujeres Rurales) which advocates for improving women's access to land. The Committee pressed for the implementation of a law to create an economic fund to purchase land with a gender equity focus which was approved by the national government on May 5th, 2010. Cafenica feels very strongly about this law and is currently working alongside the Committee in the development of rules and regulations for the execution of the law. No further information was available as to its effectiveness.

4.2.2 CECOCAFEN: Gender Equity Policy, GMAS and Scholarships

In June 2010, CECOCAFEN's gender equity policy came into effect after being approved by the General Assembly. Informants' enthusiasm about the approval of the policy was palpable. The development of the policy was funded by FLO with the technical support of the IMC. In an effort to distribute the policy to CECOCAFEN's member organizations more effectively, a popular version of the policy has been developed and was being revised when I visited CECOCAFEN. The general goal of the policy, as Marvin shared, is "...to break injustices that exist between women and men" and about "breaking the barriers that women have come to consider as 'normal'."

Two other processes that aim to promote gender equity that CECOCAFEN speaks proudly of are the GMAS and scholarships programs. The GMAS program—a small and short-term (six months to one year) loans program—aims to create an enabling environment with new alternatives and methods that will allow women to have access to credit, improve self-esteem and economically empower women through short-term loans (117). The program is oriented towards supporting women's economic undertakings, which in practice remain fairly traditional. The GMAS program has been implemented in various member organizations of CECOCAFEN, including PROCOCER. Women from PROCOCER participating in the program are using funds for raising chickens, maintaining small vegetable gardens in the patio, and to set up irrigation systems to maintain crops during the dry season. The program remains relatively small and as stated in one report, CECOCAFEN is trying to widen funding support to be able to pay off accumulated debt and expand the program (117).

Additionally, CECOCAFEN offers scholarships to sons or daughters of cooperative members to facilitate the completion of their studies and to try to integrate them to work at CECOCAFEN as agricultural specialists or as support staff within the office. All three of my informants spoke fondly of the staff members in the office that are now there as a result of the scholarship program and introduced me to the individuals whose stories reflect the tangible results of this program. In spite of all the enthusiasm around the program, I was unable to secure a gender breakdown of scholarship recipients, sources of funding for the program, and the criteria CECOCAFEN uses to determine scholarship recipients.

4.2.3 PROCOCER: Gender specialist, Gender Equity Committee and Workshops

PROCOCER was the organization I was able to engage with more thoroughly and carry out a detailed exploration of numerous processes it has to promote gender equity. I have chosen to focus on the three most predominant gender equity-promoting processes that exist within the cooperative in this section: the gender specialist, the gender committee, and workshops. Other processes that were mentioned were a scholarships program, a promoters programs¹⁸, and the agricultural extension workers among others, however, informants provided little information on each of these processes.

4.2.3.1 Gender Specialist

The most significant process the cooperative feels it has implemented is the addition of the gender specialist, Azucena, as a staff member. The broad role of the gender specialist is to work with women members and encourage other women to join the cooperative. Specifically in terms of gender work, the specialist is in charge of the GMAS program and visits women members of the cooperative to offer guidance and technical assistance. Before there was a gender specialist, the Board of Directors was in charge of the GMAS program and the agricultural extension workers were expected to offer women members technical assistance. As was mentioned previously, a gender specialist was hired because leaders of the cooperative saw the need. Carlos shared the following:

Well, because we really believe that [it is better that women work with women], because of the shyness that still exists in the countryside, so, it is easier for them to relate to a woman with more confidence because what we want to learn about is practically the problems that women have in the countryside, right, [the problems] of every one of the women, so with greater trust then, with someone who is a woman it can lead to learning about their ideas, their desires, to do things in the direction they want, so we decided to put [a gender specialist], and make her in charge of the process.

Observed changes since Azucena was hired are numerous. The most noted changes have resulted from the visits she makes to women members. As a result of the visits, informants shared that more women have stayed on as members, women are now more active within the cooperative, women have received guidance, monitoring, and follow-ups allowing them to become better organized. Through establishing relationships, Azucena has been able to identify

¹⁸PROCOCER is training cooperative members to be promoters in their own communities and serve as liaisons between the cooperative and cooperative members in the promoter's community. In this way, the communication between the cooperative and all its members is facilitated.

women candidates for certain projects. Additionally, participation in the MMFC activities has increased, and participants of the GMAS program are now more united. Overall, the work of the gender specialist was always spoken about with great emotion and informants were appreciative of the presence of a gender specialist.

Three significant observations are worth noting about the gender specialist. First, Azucena has other significant responsibilities—that come before gender work—including being in charge of marketing the cooperative’s local coffee brand and the scholarships program. Although Azucena feels fulfilled in being the gender specialist, the amount of time she is actually able to dedicate to gender work is substantially limited. The salary of the gender specialist is paid by the cooperative and the number of other responsibilities she has speaks to the limited resources of the cooperative. Second, throughout the interviews it became clear that the role of the gender specialist is to fulfill the emphasis the Board of Directors places on increasing women’s participation within the cooperative. When expressed publicly, Azucena’s desires for changes mirror those of the leaders:

but...there are still changes to be seen because we want to see women taking on positions on the Board of Directors, Credit Committees, eh, as delegates as well of the cooperative we want, all those changes more than anything.

Moreover, Azucena has little autonomy and decision-making power within the cooperative. As mentioned in the previous theme, the MMFC has the leadership training program that Azucena is participating in. Azucena has had difficulties in being able to share the knowledge with women from the cooperative because of limited time—due to other responsibilities—and resources. Since Azucena is not given resources for the activities she wishes to carry out, she must submit official requests for funding for each activity. During the time that I was at PROCOCER, several of the workshops Azucena prepared had to be cancelled because the funds she needed for the workshop were not prioritized and submitted on time; any project she wishes to implement must first be revised by the agricultural extension workers’ supervisor, who also has numerous other responsibilities, and then by the board of directors. Thus, Azucena’s lack of autonomy and access to resources for gender work within the cooperative highly impact several of the gender-equity promoting processes.

Lastly, all of the gender work of the cooperative falls on the gender specialist and is not mainstreamed in the cooperative. This point is further discussed in the Organizational Challenges section.

4.2.3.2 Gender Committee

Between 2008 and 2009, the idea of establishing a Gender Committee arose; the Delegate Assembly approved the proposal and elected members for the Committee. The Gender Committee was mentioned with considerable conviction as important to the gender work of the cooperative. However, as my relationship with informants became more comfortable they shared that the Committee's functional aspect is currently weak. I was eventually told that the Committee is actually not operating at all. One of the reasons given for this was attributed to one of the Committee's three members withdrawing from the cooperative. Upon acknowledging that the Committee has deteriorated, Carlos expressed the urgent need to establish a strategy for the Committee's resumed operations. Adolfo, on the other hand, stated that the reason the Committee has never really functioned is because it has never had any clearly established purpose, goals, and rules and regulations. After some probing, he also shared that the cooperative would like external resources and technical support to draft the rules and regulations of the Committee.

4.2.3.3 Workshops

The third significant process considered to promote gender equity is workshops. PROCOCER relies heavily on workshops as a means of building knowledge among its members. Some workshops are financed and offered by the cooperative itself, but frequently it is external organizations that offer trainings to cooperative members. Trainings from external organizations are on topics such as the management of coffee plants, coffee, and production quality, and coffee cupping and tasting, among others. CECOCAFEN also offers trainings to PROCOCER through the GMAS program and topics offered include credit management, leadership training, coffee storage, and marketing and sales. Informants noted that, when offered, women attend trainings and participate in them but women participate less when they are run by men.

Relating specifically to gender, Donovan shared how workshops can serve to change some of the cultural reasons underlying women's difficulties in joining the cooperative,

Donovan:...[women have] thousands of obstacles, well, thousands of obstacles you see and so, but in that case, gender equity is being done so that we all begin participating in a general way, widespread, that we don't see that no, how to avoid that, that "no, you can't

participate, you belong in the kitchen, you're the one that looks after the children", no, that is the fight of PROCOCER as well

Alejandra: and how is it that those ideas are changing within PROCOCER?

Donovan: Through workshops. How do I explain myself, through knowledge-building workshops about how a wife of a producer can get involved in the activities as well, that it does not necessarily have to be the men, but that rather there needs to be, no, it doesn't have to be only men producers but there can also be women producers, women coffee producers, or women producing grains.

Although they were assumed to have taken place, informants offered no detailed information on gender workshops with regards to themes offered, duration, frequency, and attendance. When answers were given, they were vague and inconsistent. Moreover, the cooperative has no established partnership or affiliation with any health organization, women's organizations and/or women's movements (with the exception of the MMFC) to facilitate gender workshops to cooperative members and leaders.

4.3 Theme 3: Challenges

Accompanying the interviewees' descriptions of gender work in the cooperatives were both explicit and nuanced suggestions of challenges and barriers to such work. Challenges that limit women's ability to join and participate in cooperatives are divided into two categories: socio-cultural challenges and organizational challenges. Socio-cultural challenges refer to interviewees comments on issues that revolve around cultural notions, norms, formation, customs and practices. Organizational challenges refer to comments on the structure and functioning of the cooperative that limit women's involvement. All informants were able to name socio-cultural challenges women face, while organizational challenges were only hinted at. Since the base cooperatives is the level at which producers are organized, results for this section are mostly from my interviews with PROCOCER and are therefore most relevant to base cooperatives.

4.3.1 Socio-cultural Challenges

4.3.1.1 Patriarchal Culture: Men are the "Bosses"

Nicaragua is part of a patriarchal culture that filters into how cooperatives function. As one informant plainly stated:

We're part of a patriarchal culture, where, um, women and men, there is a large gap, unfavourable towards women and that, that same thing is at the core of the cooperatives, the cooperatives are part of that society, so it's the same in there.

As discussed in Chapter 2, *machismo* is very present in Nicaragua and although not generally embraced as positive, is manifested in several different ways. *Machismo* was expressed by most informants as the strong belief that men are the “bosses;” they are in charge of providing and making all decisions for the household and women are expected to be obedient and dependent. As an example, one informant expressed that “...women feel dependent on men and feel that it is the man’s obligation to figure out how to provide household necessities.” Rosa, a delegate at PROCOCER, who considers herself to be “liberated” stated that “[women] only live subjugated by their husbands.”

One manifestation of *machismo* is through men having decisive power over the activities their wives and daughters participate in. As was shared by several informants, men frequently determine if their wives and daughters participate in the cooperative’s activities and decision-making positions or not. Dolores provided an example of one of the reasons men give for not wanting their wives to participate:

Their main argument was that no, women are not going to walk such a long distance. Some raised the issue . . . indicating a bit [that they do not want women to participate] so as to not mistreat women, to not subject women to difficult things.

This quote demonstrates men’s conceptions of women as fragile or weak and unable to perform necessary tasks. Another comprehensive example that demonstrated a manifestation of *machismo* was given by Carla from CECOCAFEN:

Just now there was a diploma in organic production in Honduras, so we needed the participation of a woman... what was the major problem that we were confronted with to send one of the women to the course? That she could not leave the family, because she had small children, because the husband would not let her go, because, eh, who was going to take care of the family, and when we arrived to the see the husband and said to him “look, your wife was selected to go to a course for a diploma in Honduras, and, this is a blessing from God because she is going to be able to prepare herself” and telling him the whole story so that he would let her go, the very first thing that he said was “well, and who is going to look after me?”, who was going to look after him, the woman was leaving and so who was going to look after him. It’s fifteen days and “who is going to look after me?”; those are the main barriers that women are faced with.

Moreover, Rosa and Luz from PROCOCER shared their thoughts on why men do not want women to participate:

Luz: [men are invited to gender workshops] but they don’t come, some of them don’t come.

Alejandra: Why?

Luz: Because of how they are, they don't like [the workshops]. They say that . . . [the workshops are about] women [being] on top, but according to them women need to be, they say that she is less than them. I tell them that we're equal. . .

Alejandra: They have the idea that women need to be less than men?

Rosa: Yes Luz: mhm

The control men have over women's lives presents a great challenge for women to join the cooperative. This is particularly problematic because often the cooperative invites women to activities through their husbands. Donovan expressed his concern with this:

In the case of some [members] that come [to the cooperative] and maybe a leader from the cooperative gives them a note to take home but if the producer doesn't want maybe he doesn't even give the note to the wife or maybe if he is jealous . . . [if the member does not want his wife to go] he doesn't tell her, he's not going to transmit it, maybe it's a big meeting of lots of importance and "no, it's that I don't like that my wife goes there" and so maybe they keep the invitation . . . because I know that that has happened. . .

In recognition of this, some efforts have been made by the cooperative to shift attitudes, but it seems that men are resistant to change. I asked Azucena if the cooperative has offered workshops to men about sharing household tasks, or about acknowledging women's efforts, and Azucena said the reaction she receives from men is "only laughter". Rosa and Luz also shared an example of men's reactions to gender workshops: "It's that when they start speaking to us about gender [the men] get mad because they hey "ah! They're shooting us down!"

4.3.1.2 Silence around Land

Another manifestation of patriarchy in Nicaraguan culture is the custom that men, not women, inherit land. Land titles are mostly under the man's name only. This creates a major challenge for women wanting to join cooperatives since land is necessary for coffee production. Recognizing the importance and necessity of land, I asked all informants about land requirements necessary to join the cooperative and about women's position *vis-à-vis* land ownership. An explicit contradiction arose; all informants recognized the importance of land ownership for maintaining one's livelihood. As Adolfo expressed, "[t]o have land is to have life!"—yet efforts at helping women gain access to land are minimal. With the exception of Cafenica joining the Rural Women's Committee, only one other informant from PROCOCER spoke about women and land ownership. Chepito mentioned that he would like efforts to be centred on getting men members of the cooperative to obtain joint land titles with their wives,

but this was briefly mentioned. Azucena stated that currently, most of the women do not consider their husband's land to be their land, and the few women who do have land (which are usually significantly smaller plots compared to the size of land their husbands have) have acquired it because it was "assigned" to them by their husbands.

4.3.1.3 Domestic Work, Education and Gender Stereotypes

All three organizations recognized that women face challenges stemming from cultural norms related to domestic work, attending to the family, and child rearing. Often, informants referred to the challenges women face as "...so many obstacles that women have." One informant shared that there are "some women that live completely bogged down in their homes." Dolores gave an example of how cultural norms around family are instilled:

...Women for their whole lives, even if better educated, we're never going to leave our families off to one side, on the contrary to men, that men when he has the resources and he thinks about himself and he goes to get drunk, and he goes out partying, and he doesn't think "what is happening with my family?" So, it's the culture, it's the cultural shaping that we have. They inculcated us women to be more dedicated to the family. And to men, nothing, them, it's another vision they have. It is very few men that first worry for the family's development.

Child rearing is considered to be the women's responsibility. Not only was the number of children women have named as a challenge but the age of children was also a factor. Many women who are members of the cooperative are older and have older children as attending the cooperative is easier once children are older. Luz shared that as a single-mother she is able to participate because she only has one daughter, and Rosa mentioned that luckily, her youngest of five children is 13. They both provided the number and age of children as a reason why they were able to participate in the cooperative more easily, and Luz referred to her situation as a single mother. This was the only mention of single mothers in all interviews.

Women's double-load is highly time intensive and most often women have very little time to themselves in a day. Being a delegate is time-intensive and often responsibilities require frequent travel. There are women delegates within the cooperative, but it is hard for women because, as one informant shared, "...being a delegate requires time, and women have very little time left over to do the organization's work." However, as Luz and Rosa eagerly told me, women are active in other programs and community organizing.

Education is another area where gender discrimination remains prevalent in Nicaragua. This reality influences women being able to participate in decision-making positions because literacy skills are required to be a delegate or a member of the Board of Directors. Chepito shared some of the difficulties women face:

Many of our people in the area have problems of, of education, that is, low academic levels and that makes them say, for example, Mrs. Julia for example, for example Mrs. Julia is one of our delegates [. . .] yes but up to there. I arrive [signals that he is giving Mrs. Julia a document] “please [read this]”, “no, read it to me,” she says about the documents that she’s given.

Chepito also shared that many women shy away from or try to avoid holding positions because they feel substantial knowledge is required. Chepito has often heard women express with insecurity that they do not want to become delegates because—as Chepito shared—many of them say, “...it’s that one needs to write and I don’t know how to read, I don’t know.”

Contributing to the challenges women face are gendered stereotypes. Since gender stereotypes remain strong, stepping outside gender-normative behaviour does not go unnoticed. Several women informants felt that women who are active members in their cooperative, or who are perceived to be taking on positions traditionally held by men are seen as a threat or are mocked. Below are two experiences from two women informants,

Alejandra: ...Rosa, as a delegate, how do you feel being a woman delegate?

Luz: (laughing) ...in the middle of a whole lot of men! ...“that woman is a man-izer” they say... yes because there are people that have still not liberated themselves from all of that.

Alejandra: Of what?

Luz: Of “look at that woman stuck between men.”

Rosa: I feel very proud to be between all those men! (laughter)

Another informant in a leadership position shared how she is perceived: “Men perceive me as very dominating...they perceive me in that way. So, that perception isn’t the most favourable thing because that creates barriers, but, that’s how it is.”

The strong patriarchal culture that continues to exist in rural Nicaragua, silences around women and land ownership, traditional gender roles around domestic work and family responsibilities, limited education as a consequence of gender discrimination and prevailing gender stereotypes all influence women’s opportunities to participate equally with men in cooperatives.

4.3.2 Organizational Challenges

In this section I use PROCOCER as an example to illustrate some of the organizational challenges faced by women in joining cooperatives. PROCOCER will be used because they were the only base cooperative that formed part of this study. Again, in PROCOCER gender work is mostly around women's participation within the cooperative, with the specific foci of increasing the number of women members and increasing their participation in decision-making positions.

4.3.2.1 Attitudes and influence of Leaders: Power in the hands of few

Attitudes of cooperative leaders influence how the cooperative functions and the extent of the gender work that is taken on. As an example, when I was discussing gender workshops with Adolfo, after some probing during the interview he mentioned one workshop that had been offered at the cooperative by an external organization about the differences between sex and gender, and said he thought the workshop was not very good. When I asked him why, Adolfo stated that "...*naturally* everyone knows the differences..." then rolled his eyes and let out a loud sigh and continued: "because, ok. Who is the one that menstruates? Who has breasts? Who cooks? Everyone knows that, no?" However, when I asked him about other types of gender workshops the cooperative had offered, he proudly mentioned workshops for women to be able to identify equal opportunities that both women and men have in an organizational development process. Later in the interview, Adolfo mentioned that it must be acknowledged that there is a need for more promotion of cooperatives to be done with women and also discussed the importance of integrating women into business development processes because, in his opinion, "[i]t is important for women to be organized." The interview with Adolfo was demonstrative of the tensions between organizational improvement, women's involvement, and his personal beliefs and attitudes.

However, not all the leaders' beliefs and attitudes are consistent with Adolfo's. Other leaders did express genuine interest in incorporating more women into decision-making positions, demonstrating differing opinions amongst leaders. The cultural challenges women face were recognized by all leaders, particularly the husband's control around decision-making. Some leaders justified the cultural customs as natural, as Adolfo stated: "...it is because of human nature that the person who bathes and looks after children are women," while other leaders simply acknowledged them. However, in spite of expressed genuine interest in integrating women and recognizing the cultural challenges they face, informants' answers were non-

committal when I asked why the cooperative has found it difficult to integrate women into decision-making positions. No informant appeared to have considered how to overcome such challenges and concretely support women in obtaining decision-making positions.

One outstanding concern is that power within the cooperative is in the hands of very few individuals. This was a troublesome finding given that PROCOCER is a democratically organized cooperative. As an example, in PROCOCER one single person is in charge of: supervising the agricultural extension workers, project management, the socioeconomic and social development of the cooperative, and the coordination of organic certification, among other responsibilities. Further, although members of PROCOCER's Board of Directors are elected every three years, I did not come across any rules limiting the number of terms one person can be re-elected for, or how long an individual can remain a member of the Board of Directors. There are members, such as Carlos, that have been part of the Board of Directors (holding different positions) since the cooperative was established over 15 years ago, and other members like Adolfo who have held leadership positions throughout the cooperative's existence. Moreover, power is highly concentrated in the hands of few in other areas as well. The cooperative's projects are currently designed by one man (who is also in charge of all funding applications) and the gender specialist is not given the opportunity to provide input or review current or future projects.

Agricultural extension workers—who frequently visit members in their fields to offer assistance and therefore interact directly with all members and *co-productoras*—are also influential in the cooperative's gender work. I was told by PROCOCER informants that agricultural extension workers have received trainings on fulfilling the cooperative's strategies, mission and vision, and gender equity and that they also attend gender workshops within the cooperative when they are offered. Workshops however are not offered regularly and there is no established system to regulate who attends the workshops and what themes are covered. The varied relationships agricultural extension workers have with women members are reflective of the insufficiency of the workshops;

In some cases it is somewhat distant, in other cases they have several friendships with the wives of members, with women members, they have a good relationship, I believe that, in some cases the specialists lack knowledge in how to speak to women that she is shy something like that . . . but in some cases they have not been able to reach women when they are shy.

4.3.2.2 *Gender is not mainstreamed in the Cooperative*

Perhaps most importantly, gender work is seen as separate from all the other work the cooperative does and is not approached as fundamental for a successful cooperative. Gender work is limited to the gender specialist and to women's projects (such as the GMAS program), which remain largely traditional. One example provided by Rosa (a delegate) illustrates how gender work is treated as separate from the rest of the cooperative's activities: "Just us as delegates always get together to have meetings, but to look at inside the cooperative. And what is gender is separate."

To reemphasize, the gender specialist is the only person dedicated to gender work within the cooperative, has few resources allocated to her work, and receives little support from others. Additionally her work is fractionalized as she is often responsible for numerous other tasks. The problem with this was stated by an informant from the MMFC: "You run the risk that when you put one person responsible for gender that it is her, her, her and work only with women; the work does not multiply itself how you would want."

Again, much of the gender work in the cooperative revolves around the GMAS project. The amount of money that is lent is small—women would not be able to buy land with the loan—and the focus of loans given remain within the realm of work that is traditionally considered women's work, such as a small vegetable patch or raising chickens for personal consumption and/or for selling eggs. The way in which one informant describes the project conveys the point: "A little bit of money there so she can work on something like a small farm for chickens."¹⁹ The use of diminutive language to describe women's projects illustrates that women's projects remain both marginal and traditional. Hence, there is a great divide between the processes the cooperative has implemented and authentic empowerment and gender equity.

4.3.2.3 *Becoming a Member is Resource-Intensive*

Several resources are needed to be able to join the cooperative with land being the most significant one. For coffee production, incoming members need to own land, pay a \$5 initial fee and then \$30 of initial capital, provide two reference letters from a current member and once accepted need to be active participants in the cooperative. Members must attend forty hours of workshops on cooperativism, attend all the meetings in their territory and the cooperative and

¹⁹ The Spanish word used in this quote is "gallinitas", which literally translates into "small chickens". In Spanish, the diminutive is used to describe something small and/or insignificant, and is often used to describe children or something that is considered cute.

welcome the agricultural extension workers at their farms. Women are faced with challenges when trying to meet all of these requirements: most women do not have land under their name, most husbands control household finances and women have very limited economic resources, many women lack the free-time to participate in member activities and gender stereotypes promoting women to remain timid, submissive, and in the home would limit women's opportunities in obtaining reference letters.

It is clear that there are central tensions with rolling out gender work. First, despite the fact that PROCOCER is a democratically organized cooperative, power remains in the hands of few. Leaders' (the power-holders) interests in gender equity are limited to increasing women members and women in decision-making positions, without consideration of the numerous challenges women face that interestingly, the same leaders identified. Similarly, gender work is not mainstreamed into the cooperative but rather falls in the hand of one woman who is overloaded with other responsibilities; gender work therefore becomes the "responsibility" of one person and allows leaders to disengage in gender work. Lastly, in spite of the recognition of challenges women face that would clearly limit their possibilities of fulfilling the required criteria to join the cooperative, the criteria for joining has been altered to be more inclusive.

4. 4 Conclusion

Existing gender equity-promoting processes generally reflect different organizational notions of gender equity. Despite the variation in notions of gender equity and applied processes, gender work efforts are predominantly focused on increasing women membership and women's participation within the cooperatives. Evident tensions arose between the rhetoric of gender work and actual practices. The three most dominant tensions were around organizational autonomy and FLO's role in gender work and women's empowerment, the subordination of gender work to commercial interests leaving limited resources for work in this area, and the concentration of power amongst a limited number of leaders in spite of cooperatives being democratically organized. These tensions reflect the need for a balance between efforts from below (the cooperatives) and efforts from above (FLO) to truly change the structures that limit gender equity and ensure that implemented gender work is sustainable.

Of further concern was the acknowledgement of the socio-cultural challenges women face with little consideration of how to address them. Lastly, gender work is limited by organizational challenges, including a lack of resources, the lack of gender mainstreaming and

the lack of a gender analysis of the necessary requirements to become a member. In order to improve gender equity, and therefore overall health and well-being, efforts need to be centred on overcoming the social and organizational dynamics that create many of the challenges women face.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

This study stems from the premise that Fair Trade can act on multiple determinants of health. Despite an increase in awareness of the social determinants of health, what is not explicit in most of the literature is that both daily living conditions and the broader structural forces are *gendered* phenomena and as such demand *gendered* actions to successfully reduce inequities (2). In order to gain an understanding of where *gendered* actions can take place within a Fair Trade context, this thesis project was guided by three overarching research questions: *By what processes do Fair Trade coffee cooperatives intentionally promote gender equity?*, *How do implemented gender-equity processes reflect cooperative leaders' understanding of gender equity?* and, *What challenges hinder equal opportunities and participation within cooperatives for women and men?* Having focused Chapter 4 on cooperative leaders' descriptions and understanding of gender equity-promoting processes, in this chapter I will discuss three salient issues that support the argument that efforts for change need to be both top-down and bottom-up. First I discuss six areas proposed by Rifkin (93) that organizations need to address to affect equity and women's empowerment. I then discuss the problem of conceptual clarity regarding both gender equity and empowerment, employing Longwe's framework for exploring the disconnect that exists between the rhetoric and practice of women's empowerment. Second, I discuss three marked tensions that emerged from the interviews around: empowerment and organizational autonomy versus standardization; the subordination of gender work to commercial interests, leaving limited resources; and the concentration of power within democratically organized cooperatives. Third, I acknowledge silences around predominant gender social issues that were not mentioned by informants.

5.1 Notions of Gender Equity and Empowerment

Any program, policy or alternative trade system that aims to impact women's development needs to employ a gender-based analysis. Most often, however, and as is the case with Fair Trade currently, the population involved is often treated as an undifferentiated "producer" without recognizing the different needs of women producers. This was an underlying issue throughout this research, particularly at the level of CECOCAFEN and PROCOCER. One way in which all three organizations undifferentiated producers was through the insistence that for the organizations, gender equity is very closely linked to notions of the family than to the

positions of women in reference to men. One major problem in construing gender equity in this way is that women are perceived as part of a unit and not as independent, autonomous entities. In turn, women's different and particular needs are not taken into consideration. Longwe (92) writes,

The target group is often treated as an undifferentiated group of 'people' without recognizing the special needs of women; more likely, and worse, a male biased vocabulary is used to describe the target group which becomes 'men' rather than 'people': in this way the women of the target group actually disappear from sight – and from thought. Typically a project document describes the Third World farmer as 'he'; but in actuality, the Third World farmer is usually a woman (p.149).

A lack of recognition of women's different needs influences what and how processes are implemented and in turn the opportunities women have. Currently, many of the processes have been implemented without a consideration of women's different needs and therefore without addressing the challenges women face. This pattern is troublesome because it continues to mask the challenges women face and therefore maintains inequities. Below I use Rifkin's CHOICE framework to explore the areas cooperatives need to address in order to influence participation and empowerment and Longwe's framework to explore how notions of participation and empowerment shared by informants compares to authentic participation and empowerment.

5.1.1 The Role of Cooperatives in Promoting Gender Equity

Rifkin's CHOICE framework was included in the literature review to explore six areas that organizations can address to act on equity and empowerment. The six critical areas include: *capacity-building, human rights, organizational sustainability, institutional accountability, contribution and enabling environment* (93). I will use PROCOCER (the base cooperative) to guide the discussion of Rifkin's framework, but the framework can also be applied to CECOCAFEN, the MMFC and Cafenica.

Based on the findings discussed in the previous chapters, the two major factors that influence how PROCOCER acts on the six proposed areas are a lack of resources and the socio-cultural and organizational challenges that women face. *Capacity building* efforts, *organizational sustainability* and *institutional accountability* are highly influenced by the cooperative's limited resources, weakening some of the implemented gender work. In part, a lack of resources can be attributed to inadequate resource allocation or a lack of transparency in applications for funding.

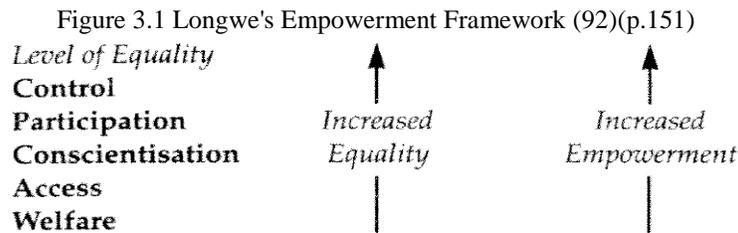
However, a more significant factor is the historical and political contexts from which cooperatives, including PROCOCER, emerged and the influence the context has had on the cooperative's financial stability (this point is further elaborated on in the Tensions section).

The areas of *human rights, contributions and an enabling environment* that would contribute to equity and empowerment are highly influenced by the socio-cultural and organizational challenges women face that have not been fully addressed. Due to the socio-cultural and organizational challenges, most women members do not hold leadership positions and therefore their voices are not present when decisions are being made. Moreover, women's contributions, particularly those of the *co-productoras* are not fully recognized. This is probably exacerbated by a combination of patriarchal structures in the house and community and cooperatives' one member one vote policy (118). Lastly, Rifkin (93) states that "the existence of an enabling environment is the glue that sticks all these factors together. It is an essential ingredient for issues around equity and empowerment to be acted upon and sustained" (p.176). An *enabling environment* is created by changing attitudes and behaviours of those who have the resources and power to make decisions (93). Currently in PROCOCER, the *enabling environment* remains weak due to organizational challenges, including power dynamics and a lack of mainstreaming gender work. A strength of Rifkin's framework is the consideration of an *enabling environment* and this is particularly relevant to Fair Trade, which promotes the formation of cooperatives—a mechanism that inherently promotes an enabling environment. However, Rifkin's framework is simplistic and like Fair Trade, cannot be applied in a vacuum. PROCOCER's work is influenced by factors beyond their control, including financial (in)stability and broader historical, political, and cultural considerations. Considering the complex environments under which cooperatives operate, gender work needs to be implemented in a bottom-up fashion to allow processes to be relevant. However, because of the complexities cooperatives are faced with, efforts also need to be guided by the top. Ultimately, in order to promote a more *enabling* environment, an awareness of gender relations, or *conscientisation* (described below) is critical. Potential entry points are proposed in Chapter 6.

5.1.2 Women's Empowerment

The second framework used in this thesis to better understand women's empowerment at the level of the individual and the empowerment framework the MMFC uses is that is proposed by Longwe (92). Although Longwe's framework (Figure 5.1) was created to assess development

projects, it is helpful as a way to frame action on the social determinants of health and to understand the varied definitions of empowerment that emerged in the study.



Based on the information shared in interviews, Cafenica and the MMFC clearly defined empowerment as women gaining control over their lives in their goal of a whole-person development approach. In that way, their understanding of empowerment is located at the high end of Longwe's empowerment and equality continuum. The MMFC in particular recognized the patriarchal structures of cooperatives and society that influence women's control over their lives and leave them with low levels of power. Although informants did not speak to transforming such structures directly, strong emphasis was placed on training women to gain control and mastery over both their economic and civic lives to then be able to challenge patriarchal structures. Although notions of control were frequently mentioned, the rhetoric of Cafenica and the MMFC and actual practices are substantially different. The recent nature of the establishment of the MMFC and the amount of time that change requires are partly responsible for the disconnect between rhetoric and practice.

However, broader social and political circumstances also influence practice. Cafenica's gender work really came to the foreground within the last few years, once women were elected into Cafenica's board of directors and were then able to establish the MMFC as a gender equity-promoting strategy. Both of these organizations are, figuratively speaking, swimming upstream against strong currents: a Nicaraguan cultural current and a male-dominated coffee market. Moreover, Cafenica and the MMFC are operating independently without the support of other organizations or movements within the country. I believe that each of these factors in turn influence how Cafenica and the MMFC are able to implement gender work to promote control.

Central to CECOCAFEN and PROCOCER's efforts is increasing participation. It is essential to examine how participation is conceptualized by the organizations since there is a "critical difference between going through empty rituals of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process" (94)(p.217). *Participation* in Longwe's

model refers to women's equal participation in the decision-making process, policy making, planning and administration. Although PROCOCER, CECOCAFEN and FLO do mention increasing women in decision-making positions, the intent behind it relates to increasing numbers rather than authentic involvement of women affected by decisions taken. Until cooperatives actively address gender inequities, women will be engaging in what Arnstein (94) refers to as "empty participation" (p.102), since women contribute to the cooperative but are without the same conditions, opportunities and power available to men. As she notes, being involved in a process is not equivalent to having an equal voice (94). The way participation is currently conceptualized by CECOCAFEN and PROCOCER is thus quite tokenistic. In PROCOCER, this became evident through how leaders spoke about women members. All informants proudly boasted about women members and their involvement in the cooperative's activities but it soon became clear that it was always the same three or four women members that were consistently mentioned. This was also the case when male leaders spoke about women delegates, which are only three out of over 60. I certainly do not discredit this accomplishment, but I do not equate this with gender equity in the way that leaders seem to exemplify. Authentic participation, as Arnstein (94) notes, cannot be tokenistic. It must include a redistribution of power and promote control (94).

From the reviewed Fair Trade literature, the most common goal and indicator of gender equity is increasing participation through more women's involvement (14,15). Despite a few variations between them, CECOCAFEN and PROCOCER's major gender equity efforts are centred on increasing the number of women members and women in decision-making positions, however, neither one has a clear strategy for how to do so. In the Longwe framework, this approach to equality and empowerment fits, at best, as increased *access*, through membership. Despite efforts to increase women membership, neither CECOCAFEN nor PROCOCER are addressing necessary components for women to have truly equal access. The most predominant example of this was seen through discussions around women's access to land. The recognition that land is essential for one's livelihood was ever-present yet very little is being done to fundamentally address the limited access women have to land. Discussion of women and land ownership was a thorny issue and I had to really probe to encourage responses from informants. For reasons that remain somewhat unclear, it seems that it is a secondary issue to those in

leadership positions, except for those in Cafenica and the MMFC. Thus, CECOCAFEN and PROCOCER's gender equity efforts hover around the level of *access*.

An analysis of how implemented gender equity-promoting processes relate to Longwe's model, and therefore contribute to empowerment, is also worth exploring. Besides promoting gender equity through increasing participation, the GMAS and scholarships programs also aim to promote gender equity, but again are limited in impacting women's empowerment. Although both of these processes have provided women with opportunities, the GMAS program in particular maintains what are considered to be women's traditional roles. Longwe (92) critically examines women's projects and argues that there is still a common perception amongst development personnel that women's development is confined to separate women's projects, and that these separate projects should be concerned with income-generating activities (92). This perception is reflected in the GMAS program and in other Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives, where many of the non-coffee producing activities women are involved in are still "traditional" (9,80). Although these programs provide considerable benefits and economic gains, these activities continue to propagate traditional roles and do not challenge the critical areas necessary for authentic empowerment: a re-distribution of power and control.

In order for women's participation to lead to authentic empowerment, women need to be able to participate to the same extent as men. This involves efforts from both the cooperatives (below) and Fair Trade (above) to change the structures that limit gender equity. Fair Trade needs to better define empowerment to include notions of control and power. In this way, cooperatives can continue to implement context-specific processes, but through broad definitions provided by the top, ensure that control and power are addressed. At the base cooperative level, power sharing (which is mostly held by men) is essential for gender equity and socio-cultural and organizational challenges that limit women's equal participation need to be acknowledged and addressed.

A radical change in gender dynamics would require true conscientisation to enable participants to step outside the patriarchal culture and adopt a more feminist consciousness. *Conscientisation*, or in other words an analysis of gender relations, involves the crucial realization and revelation that women's poverty and low status does not arise primarily from their own lack of individual effort, literacy or schooling. Conscientisation involves women's identification of the extent to which their problems arise from gender discrimination within the

social system, which automatically cuts them off from the opportunities which are given to men (92). In order for CECOCAFEN and PROCOCER to truly advance gender work, conscientisation efforts need to be applied at all levels within the organizations to provide more *enabling environments* to begin to change gender relations.

5.2 Tensions

Throughout the research, numerous tensions emerged between rhetoric and practice. In this section I focus on the three most predominant tensions: first, empowerment and organizational autonomy versus standardization; second, the subordination of gender work to commercial interests, leaving limited resources, and; third, the concentration of power within democratically- organized cooperatives. I consider these tensions to be reflective of the need for efforts from both the cooperatives (below) and Fair Trade (above) to change the structures that limit gender equity.

5.2.1 Empowerment: A Form of Organizational Autonomy or a Standard?

While tensions existed at all levels in interpreting the idea of organizational autonomy, tensions between organizational autonomy and FLO's role in gender work were particularly evident. Informants from Cafenica articulated that FLO's role should be strictly about motivating cooperatives to take on gender work and spoke to the dangers of making gender equity a standard. Alternatively, they felt that cooperatives should be autonomous in implementing context-specific processes. On the other hand, informants from CECOCAFEN expressed that FLO's role should be more active and involved in helping cooperatives implement gender work but also hinted at the importance of autonomy and expressed concerns with gender equity as a standard imposed by FLO. PROCOCER's relationship with FLO is different from the other two organizations since it is the base cooperative that has to comply with FLO standards. PROCOCER's understanding of FLO's role *vis-à-vis* gender work is based on the pressure it feels from FLO auditors to increase women's participation.

As made visible through their mission statement which is "to connect disadvantaged producers and consumers, promote fairer trading conditions and empower producers to combat poverty, strengthen their position and take more control over their lives" (75), FLO places explicit focus on empowerment. However, FLO does not provide a clear definition of what it means by empowerment or what steps need to be taken to ensure producers are empowered. The lack of a clear definition, in this case, serves both as a strength and a weakness. In providing no

clear definition and allowing organizations to interpret ‘empowerment,’ organizations are able to apply a definition that best suits their realities. Without clearly defining empowerment, efforts may be misguided or diluted through loose interpretations. A balance needs to be established in providing clear working definitions that permit organizations to adapt the definitions to their realities and therefore take actions to truly advance gender equity and empowerment.

5.2.2 Subordination of Gender Work to commercial Interests and Limited Resources

Despite differing notions of gender equity and empowerment among organizations, there are other significant factors limiting gender equity. I argue that one of the major reasons for a lack of authentic gender work at the base cooperative level is because the cooperative focuses primarily on the economic goals of advancing members’ financial positions, but doing so comes at the cost of little effort toward improving social dimensions of lives.

Ultimately, it would seem that additional resources are essential for gender work. One of the major contributing factors for the lack of resources for gender work within cooperatives is cooperative debt, which is common for cooperatives in Nicaragua, including PROCOCER, but was seldom mentioned by informants. In PROCOCER’s 2008-2010 work strategy for example, one of the indicators that was included for ensuring the financial sustainability of the cooperative was the reduction of the cooperative’s debt by 20% (24). The economic instability of cooperatives has been an issue dating back to the revolution and the formation of cooperatives. Moreover, the limited inclusion of women within cooperatives during the revolution and thereafter continue to influence current gender relations between cooperative members.

Placing the cooperative’s economic instability aside, it seems that in the case of PROCOCER, little to no effort is being placed on applying for funding or projects that promote gender equity. For example, the MMFC’s recommendation—that for each project cooperatives apply for, they request a certain percentage of the funds for gender work—has not been applied. There is an ongoing contradiction, therefore, between the cooperative’s intention to promote gender equity and their allocation of resources in order to carry out effective gender work.

5.2.3 Power within Democratic Organizations

Despite the reality that cooperatives are democratic organizations, based on this research it appears that a select few individuals hold power within cooperatives. In the case of PROCOCER, notions of gender equity of the individuals in power are reflected in the processes that are implemented and in the way they are implemented. In the case of workshops and

trainings, informants consistently mentioned that workshops and trainings were ways in which gender equity was promoted within the cooperative, yet workshops and trainings on gender equity seem to be the exception. As reported in the results, the specific themes of gender workshops were unknown and the frequency of workshops was scarce. There is also a lack of adequate training of agricultural extension workers, who essentially are the individuals in the cooperative that work directly with women and men producers and *co-productoras*. Moreover, the gender specialist has little autonomy or decision-making power within the cooperative and has few resources available for gender work. Furthermore, gender work within the cooperative is allocated to one single person with other significant work responsibilities. To ensure that the interests, needs and priorities of women members are taken into account, it is essential that gender issues are addressed by organizations internally and contrary to having one single person in charge of all the gender work, necessitates a process of ‘gender mainstreaming’—that is, the integration of gender issues into all aspects of an organization and its work (37). Gender mainstreaming would therefore go hand in hand with conscientisation.

Three predominant tensions emerged from this research: tensions around empowerment, organizational autonomy and Fair Trade, tensions between gender work and economic interests, and tensions regarding democratic organizations with few power holders. These tensions do affect what and how gender work is undertaken. The first identified tension influences how the cooperative approaches women’s participation and empowerment while the second and third tensions affect the six areas Rifkin proposes be addressed by the cooperative to promote equity and empowerment. The tensions reflect the complexities of the system and the delicate dance between bottom-up and top-down efforts to promote gender equity. In order for gender work to advance, these tensions must be addressed.

5.3 Silences

Over the last three years that I have spent time in Nicaragua, and throughout my field research, I have come to know about the gendered social issues of gender violence, machismo, high rates of male alcoholism and single mothers both in rural and urban contexts. These realities, which increase vulnerability, are highly prevalent in Nicaragua, yet were scarcely mentioned in my interviews. Although informants did not mention these issues, they did arise in informal conversations with cooperative members, in meetings with some of the counterparts, in bus rides, and day-to-day living. The reasons behind silences, both personal and collective, are

multifaceted and complex. From my position, I cannot accurately define why they are there and how they should be addressed. These silences, however, are fundamental and should be explored in future research.

Another unacceptable silence in these contexts thus far has been the lack of women's voices. Women's voices are imperative for understanding gender equity and for determining necessary actions. In this research, informants did not speak to the need to hear women's voices, or whether their voices have already been included or not. Before moving forward or determining where or what actions need to be taken, the voices of women producers and *co-productoras* still need to be heard. More generally, women's experiences within Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives have not been heard, and without their voices, action cannot be adequately gauged. As noted in Terstappen's study (119), women want to be protagonists of the Fair Trade story and do not want to be lumped under a generic "producer" heading. Similarly, the women from his study hope that Fair Trade can have an impact on different aspects of their well-being and not just in the economic realm (119). Fair Trade must actively begin to hear and include the diversity of women's voices and experiences.

5.4 Conclusion

Recently, Fair Trade certified coffee cooperatives have implemented gender equity-promoting processes. However, the effectiveness of implemented processes is counteracted by a lack of consideration of the socio-cultural and organizational challenges women face that hinder their membership into and participation within cooperatives, and limit women's empowerment. The problem of conceptual clarity regarding gender equity and empowerment, both by the cooperatives and by FLO is problematic. I do not argue that specific definitions need to be established so that all organizations work in the same way. Instead, more pointed definitions would more efficiently target the need for gender equity within organizations. Otherwise, and as demonstrated by this research, participation can be tokenistic. Moreover the subordination of social dimensions—that include gender work—to commercial interests is problematic. Cooperative debt is a critical issue that cannot be underestimated (41), however, cooperatives have committed to working towards gender equity and this cannot be done without the proper allocation of resources. Lastly, despite cooperatives being democratically organized, power remains limited to a select few who maintain patriarchal notions. The notions leaders of base cooperatives hold are reflected in the types of gender equity-promoting processes that are

implemented and in how these processes are implemented. Cooperatives working in and through Fair Trade must begin to explicitly acknowledge and address the challenges women face and women's different needs in order to truly empower women. Fair Trade can support cooperatives by providing more pointed definitions of empowerment and clear aims for increasing women's participation so that cooperatives can develop context-specific interventions to work towards greater gender equity and empowerment.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND ENTRY POINTS

This research study emerged from a broader action-research agenda that examines the potential of Fair Trade to act on or promote change in social determinants of health. This thesis explored the influence of currently implemented gender equity-promoting processes in Fair Trade coffee cooperatives on gender equity, a key social determinant of health. The study identifies both socio-cultural and organizational challenges that hinder progress in equity work and identifies tensions that speak to the disconnect between rhetoric and practice. The study's conclusions are timely, since FLO as well as many cooperatives in Nicaragua are placing greater emphasis on gender equity and cooperatives are implementing gender equity-promoting processes.

Although cooperatives generally operate under democratic principles, only a select few individuals hold decision-making positions within cooperatives. To some extent those in decision-making positions may reflect the views of cooperative members, but often their own interests and priorities appear more heavily weighted. For this study, based on feminist and social determinants of health approaches, the most appropriate informants were individuals with decision-making power in order to understand how the positions of these individuals influence gender equity. Through an exploration of implemented gender equity-promoting processes, I was able to better understand notions of gender equity and empowerment that cooperative leaders hold and how such notions impact what and how processes are implemented. Currently held notions by PROCOCER's leaders do not allow for a thorough evaluation of what *really* limits women's participation and opportunities: the socio-cultural and organizational challenges women face. Until these challenges are acknowledged and addressed, the impact of gender work will remain limited.

Based on this study and several others, women do experience benefits from their involvement in Fair Trade (5,9,119). However, too frequently women's voices and aspirations are not taken into consideration; thus I echo the calls for more gender-sensitive research within Fair Trade (9,10,18,119). FLO and base cooperatives also have pivotal roles to play in order for Fair Trade to be truly equitable and empowering. Again, Fair Trade is not a panacea, nor should Fair Trade or cooperatives be the only two actors in gender work. But, both Fair Trade (from

above) and cooperatives (from below) hold potential to effectively address gender equity as a social determinant of health.

One significant point of consideration is FLO's mention of participation and empowerment without clearly defining these terms. This approach is problematic because, as demonstrated in this study, it can lead to tokenistic approaches to gender equity. However, as informants have clearly stated in interviews, and with consideration of the importance of contexts both for empowerment and social determinants of health, FLO should not make gender equity a standard or provide detailed definitions of participation and empowerment. Instead, FLO can provide a broad picture of overall goals, allowing each organization to then tailor them to local contexts. I believe this is a significant contribution FLO can make to advance authentic gender equity; and in that way, I believe that Fair Trade holds great promise as an action on the social determinants of health.

Nonetheless, it is not solely the role of FLO to address gender equity. The responsibilities of gender equity work need to be balanced between FLO and cooperatives themselves. Cooperatives should be defining and implementing processes to reflect women's needs. *Both* FLO and cooperatives need to acknowledge and address women's different needs in order to truly be equitable and empowering.

In the end, this study stems from a broader action-research agenda and partnership and as such, contributes one part to a much larger puzzle. The agenda seeks not solely to document, but to act on what is encountered in the various studies that comprise it, and therefore I end by providing potential entry points of action for PROCOCER.

6.1 Potential Entry Points and Future Research/Action

In order to understand what constitutes the essential elements of global health²⁰ research, two authors reviewed the collective experiences of 14 Teasdale-Corti funded health research teams (16). A shared goal of global health research was to “seek *key modifiable* determinants of health that could be affected to make people more resilient to the social and ecological factors that impacted their health and well-being” (emphasis added) (16)(p.3). Underlying the teams' conception of global health research was their focus on equity as an ethical imperative in the

²⁰ The term 'global health' was used as early as the 1970s and with rapidly increasing reference in recent years. This to some extent signifies a shift in thinking from 'international health', which concerns itself primarily with the control of the spread of epidemics across national boundaries to 'global health' which concerns itself with the health of the global population as the forces of globalization become stronger (16).

concept of health for all. The ultimate goal was, through understanding the complexities of these determinants and their interactions, to contribute to the development of effective, equitable, sustainable and ethically sound solutions to health problems, and create equity in health between and among populations (16).

The CSDH report also calls for research factors that work to reduce health inequities in given circumstances, and how best to implement interventions such that they contribute to a reduction of these inequities (1). This research took into account the complexity of these interventions. Based on an understanding of the local context, PROCOCER's circumstances, and Longwe's empowerment framework used by the MMFC, I suggest three entry points, or modifiable determining factors that require both action and research.

First, specialised resources can be considered both a modifiable and an essential factor for promoting gender equity. The gender specialist, who has had a positive impact on women members and *co-productoras* holds a pivotal role in catalyzing gender work—particularly if she enjoys a significant level of autonomy. Although the gender specialist is a hired position and not an elected one, the gender specialist could work closely with the board of directors to allow her to have decision-making power and to ensure that a somewhat independent gender analysis occurs with each decision that is made within the cooperative. In this way, the gender specialist can guide actions to promote the five levels of equality proposed by Longwe. Moreover, the gender work the gender specialists do cannot suffer from fractionalization of efforts. Acknowledging the weight and importance of gender work within cooperatives also means re-distributing her work to enable a focus on planning, promoting and instituting the mainstreaming of gender work within the cooperative. These are measurable changes, and would also thus be 'research-able' interventions.

Second, PROCOCER relies heavily on workshops and trainings for knowledge building among members. In order to improve gender equity, elected delegates, board of directors, agricultural extension workers and individuals with other power-holding positions can be exemplars for the rest of the cooperative and participate in mandatory gender workshops once they enter new positions. Through these *conscientisation* efforts, gender work and the promotion of gender equity would be transparent and more easily mainstreamed in the cooperative. PROCOCER can establish contact with organizations that work with gender issues and have these organizations offer workshops to women and men members and *co-productoras* on a

regular basis. Workshops can be offered separately for women and men so that women feel more comfortable participating and voicing themselves. It is important to ensure that men participate in gender workshops. Moreover, through the MMFC efforts, PROCOCER can have exchanges with other organizations that belong to Cafenica for the mutual sharing of experiences and to provide help and support to each other. Numerous forms of evaluation of educational interventions are possible here; the educational interventions represent modifiable determinants.

Third, in order to ensure the sustainability of gender work within PROCOCER and to address women's *access*, 0.5-1% of the social premium could be set aside for gender work and facilitating women's access to land. Through Cafenica and CLAC, PROCOCER could lobby FLO to institute standards around resource allocation. The cooperative could also look elsewhere for funding for gender work. As an example, to increase women's access to land, the cooperative can apply for projects that would offer women loans high enough for them to be able to purchase land. Moreover, the cooperative can sensitize and facilitate negotiation processes between women and men for land. Each economic intervention could be followed by long-term studies that track their impact. The database created as a secondary product of this research would allow for such tracking.

6.2 Conclusion

In their seminal report, the CSDH issues an urgent, justice-based call for action on the social determinants of health that by definition must extend responsibility beyond the health sector. For gender equity specifically, the CSDH (57) states that "addressing the problem of gender inequity is essential for the health of all people and requires action both outside and within the health sector" (p.17). Based on its principles and values, I opened this thesis with the presentation of Fair Trade as one such initiative that both exists outside of the health sector and holds potential in acting on key social determinants of health.

As reported in other studies, Fair Trade does yield tangible material benefits that impact health and that could potentially impact gender equity. However, Fair Trade is not a panacea. Rather, it is an imperfect system, fraught with tensions, contextual limitations, and unequal power relations. These imperfections however should not be taken as cause to give up on Fair Trade, but rather provide the impetus to better understand and begin to resolve these contradictions. This study begins to shed some light on these limitations and illuminates both the tensions that exist within organizations and the challenges that women face that ultimately hinder

the impact of well-intentioned gender work on gender equity. Drawing on complimentary feminist and social determinants of health-based approaches to research, document revision and a series of key informant interviews with various leaders from different levels of organizations in the Nicaraguan Fair Trade coffee sector, I found that many of the tensions and challenges result from the interaction of local contexts with the standards imposed by FLO. In particular, Fair Trade currently applies the same basic set of standards to producer organizations involved in coffee production across the world without considering the diverse contexts that encompass these groups. This is also true for the shift towards empowerment FLO is undertaking. The concept of empowerment is being used without a clear definition and is being applied across diverse contexts. I argue that this is an inappropriate approach and suggest that Fair Trade is fundamentally influenced by relationships and contexts and therefore cannot be designed, executed, or examined in a vacuum. Echoing the sentiments of the CSDH which state that a solid understanding of local contexts is crucial to assess adequate actions on the social determinants of health, my findings suggest that it is erroneous to assume that the same action can be applied across contexts, and FLO's homogenous application of standards and empowerment across the world must therefore be considered a significant shortcoming. I argue that if effective work towards gender equity is to occur through Fair Trade, FLO must ensure that its standards and notions of empowerment are malleable enough for cooperatives throughout the world to adapt them to their local contexts. Similarly, clear goals for gender equity and empowerment can be established, allowing each cooperative to take the necessary steps to achieve authentic empowerment and gender equity.

Moreover, by incorporating perspectives from various levels of organization in coffee production, my analysis suggests that changes in gender equity require simultaneous actions at the lower (household) levels and higher (FLO) levels. This requires an honest commitment to gender equity from certified cooperatives and FLO. This commitment would entail a re-evaluation of the distribution of power and resources within cooperatives and throughout the coffee production system and, equally important, an explicit and targeted analysis of the context. Uniting my findings and over-arching frameworks, it becomes clear that Fair Trade can only fulfill its potential as an action on the social determinants of health if its commitment to gender equity is made more explicit and mainstreamed through the promotion of *authentic* participation and empowerment while making the standards and goals malleable to local contexts. As shared

by informants, I also believe FLO's role is to motivate gender work and to encourage base cooperatives to take on explicit commitments to gender equity.

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APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Fair Trade

What criteria does Fair Trade require for maintaining certification?

What is FLO's role in promoting gender equity?

Do you feel that FLO has an empowerment focus?

Does FLO have any criteria for women's participation and/or empowerment?

Does either FLO or the cooperative have set criteria on how to use the social Premium?

Joining the cooperative and responsibilities

What is the process for joining the cooperative?

What responsibilities come with being a member or delegate?

What do you think are some of the challenges women face in joining the cooperative?

Gender work

What processes have been implemented that promote gender equity? ¿

Are there programs within the cooperative just for women?

Why is the cooperative promoting gender equity?

Workshops/Trainings

What activities does the cooperative implement to promote skills-building and learning?

Who offers the workshops that are offered?

Land

Does one need to own land to join the cooperative?

Is the cooperative involved in any efforts to help women obtain land?

Relationships with other organizations

Does the cooperative have a relationship with other organizations?

APPENDIX 2: ORIGINAL QUOTES WITH TRANSLATION

Page	Original	Translation
57	Hay hombres y mujeres y que todos tienen pobreza, que son una familia. Para mí lo básico es trabajar con la familia... trabajar con la familia es básico. Y tratar de superar las brechas	There are men and women that are poor, and that are a family. For me what is basic is working with the family...working with the family is fundamental. And working to overcome the gaps
57	Yo creo que el tema equidad debe ir más en principios y valores de las organizaciones dentro del sistema. Dentro del aspecto del auto-monitoreo y no tanto dentro de los estándares porque cuando se convierte en estándar se convierte en una camisa de fuerza y se hace irreal... Se hace irreal porque entonces la gente bueno te meten mujeres en las asociaciones o en las cooperativas para cumplir con un número. Las ponen en la Junta Directiva de Secretaria para cumplir con un número, las convierten a las mujeres en un número. Y el tema de equidad que va muy ligado al empoderamiento es de transformación y de cambio de valores, entonces debe ser enfocando desde otra perspectiva, dentro de los principios y valores de las organizaciones. Y lo vas midiendo, creo, no tanto con números sino más bien por el cambio en la vida de la gente a través de la mejora de las condiciones de la vida de la gente	I believe that equity needs to be more about the principles and values of the organizations within the [Fair Trade] system. [However it needs to occur through] self-monitoring and not so much within standards because when it gets turned into standards it turns into a straitjacket and it becomes unreal . . . It becomes unreal because then people will put women into the associations or into the cooperatives to fulfil the required number. They place them in the Board of Directors to meet the required number, and women get converted to a number. And equity is very linked to empowerment, it's about transformation and a change in values, so it should be focused on from another perspective, from the principles and values of the organizations. And you measure it, I believe, not so much with numbers but instead by the change in people's lives through improvements in the conditions of people's lives
58	no, es que el tema de equidad de género con FLO no es eso, es que FLO no es rol. Eh, FLO puede incentivar, puede motivar a través de su esquema de certificación y de los recursos para que se inicien los procesos de equidad. FLO no lo va hacer, los estándares no los van hacer porque esos son cambios en la gente	<i>no</i> , the topic of gender equity and FLO is not that, it's not the role of FLO. FLO can create incentives for it, it can motivate it through its certification structure and through resources so that equity processes are initiated. But FLO is not going to do it, the standards are not going to do it because those are changes in the people.
58	Para nosotros empoderamiento es que seamos directores de nuestro propio destino	empowerment is that we be the directors of our own destiny.
58	Empoderamiento es una palabra extranjera, verdad, comenzando por allí...eh, y por eso mismo tiene interpretaciones diferentes pues, o sea, eh, y en el tema no está, eh, no	Empowerment is a foreign word, beginning from there . . .and for that reason it has different interpretations, that is, and the topic is not, there is no clear concept of

	<p>hay un concepto claro de lo que es el empoderamiento dentro del sistema Comercio Justo. El tema de que es muy amplio y ambiguo te permite de que cada quien lo interprete y lo mide de la manera que le da su gana y, para nosotros empoderamiento va mas allá de, de tomar decisiones en determinado espacio si no es que es tener acceso a los recursos, es tener acceso a la distribución equitativa, es tener, eh, la posibilidad de aportar tus ideas, de ser escuchado</p>	<p>what empowerment is within the Fair Trade system. The fact that it is very broad and ambiguous allows for each person to interpret it and measure it in whatever way they feel like, and, for us empowerment goes beyond making decisions in a determined space, but rather it is about having access to resources, having access to an equitable distribution, it is about having the possibility to contribute your ideas, be heard. . .</p>
59	<p>mi esfuerzo principal está dirigido a ese desarrollo humano de las mujeres. Fijáte que la comercialización para mi es secundario. Es secundario completamente porque cuando las mujeres se empoderen y se desarrollen, entonces si vale la comercialización. Es un criterio muy personal y que yo se que choca con un montón de gente, verdad. Las experiencias allí están, café producido por mujeres, vendido a mejor precio, llegás a la casa de esa mujer y el que tiene control y el poder de todo es el hombre.</p>	<p>My main effort is directed to women's whole-person development. For me the marketing [of coffee] is secondary. It's completely secondary because when women become empowered and developed, <i>then</i> marketing has value. [But that] is a <i>very</i> personal criterion that I know butts heads with tons of people. The experiences are there: coffee [is] produced by women, sold for a better price; [but] you arrive at the house of the women and the person that has the control and power over <i>everything</i> is the man.</p>
59	<p>nosotros desde Cafenica venimos de un proceso de abajo, por decirlo así, hacia arriba</p>	<p>[a]t Cafenica, we work from a bottom-up process</p>
59	<p>... como compromiso social es porque hay todo la apropiación de los principios y valores cooperativos, la apropiación de los principios y valores universales, entonces eso te permite pensar en el tema de equidad y tratar de transformar la sociedad desde la base...</p>	<p>...part of their social commitment stemming from the acceptance of the universal [declaration of human rights] and cooperative principles and values, which permit you to think about equity and try to transform society starting at the bottom...</p>
60	<p>es [un] proceso de trabajo. Uno, el trabajo en ayudar al desarrollo personal de las mujeres es lo primordial. Porque vos podes dar recursos económicos a una mujer, y eso no significó que ella se desarrolló como persona. Es más ni si quiera significó que ella está teniendo control sobre esos recursos. Ella solo fue el canal para que llegaran esos recursos a la familia, y resultó que quien al final el que está teniendo el control sobre esos recursos es el hombre.</p>	<p>It is a process. First, the work in helping the personal development of women is fundamental, because you can give economic resources to a woman but that does not mean that she has developed as a person. It doesn't even mean that she has control over the resources. She was only the channel for the resources to get to the family, and it turned out that the person that has control over those resources is the man. So, that [personal] work is very important</p>

	Entonces muy importante es el trabajo y eso es de largo plazo	and it is long-term. . .
60	a la mujer se le puede dar el crédito, la mujer compra la tierra, pero el poder sobre esa tierra, y el control sobre esa tierra, lo puede tener el hombre. Porque yo, mira, si bien es cierto, hay mujeres que tienen la tierra y que, y que, y que vos ves que hace la diferencia. Pero también hay mujeres que tienen la tierra y le han dado al hombre un poder generalísimo que hasta a ella la puede vender. Es decir, no es el hecho de la tierra lo que cambia, eso ayuda muchísimo, es el desarrollo personal que la mujer va teniendo y entonces va sintiendo “esto es mío, esto yo lo controlo”. Evidentemente, en la medida que las mujeres se aman, económicamente más independientes, nos va ir ayudando. Pero no solo es la parte económica, lo fundamental es el desarrollo de las mujeres	You can give a loan to a woman, the woman buys the land, but the man can have the power over that and the control over that land... it is true that there are women that have land, and that you see that it makes a difference. But there are also women that have land and they have given men legal power so that he can even sell her [land]. That is to say, it's not the land that leads to change—[though] that helps a lot—it's the personal development that women have and therefore start to feel “this is mine and I control it.” Evidently, as women love themselves, become more economically independent, it will be helping us. But it is not just the economic part, the development of women is what's fundamental.
60	“ah, no más, mejor me quedo en esto pero solo esto y voy a olvidarme de actividades políticas, de actividades organizativas, de actividades productivas, este, porque simplemente me estoy cargando más de trabajo”	ah, no more, better I stay in this and only this and forget about political activities, organizational activities because I am simply loading myself with more work.
61	... a la pobre mujer la seguís cargando y cargando y cargando. ¡No! Hay que empezar a que esa cosa sea compartida, ese proceso de cambio, que entre los 2 empiecen a buscar un cambio, verdad... [lo tenemos planteado como sensibilización a] ambos, a hombres y mujeres, pero hacia la mujer, eh ir más allá a ese proceso de desarrollo personal, verdad. A los hombres, sensibilizarlos para que empiecen a desconstruir sus propios paradigmas	. . .you just keep piling up and piling up and piling up women with work. <i>No!</i> It's time to start sharing, that process of change, that between the two of them they begin to look for a change . . . [we have it proposed as sensitization] to both, to men and women, but with women [we] go beyond that to processes of personal development. For men, sensitize them so they begin to deconstruct their own paradigms. . .
61	acordáte que el tema de género no es la mujer como tal es la familia	[r]emember that the topic of gender is not the woman as such, it's the family.
61	Me decías que como se hace el trabajo de género desde las cooperativa.; Lo primero es que CECOCAFEN, las familias integradas a las distintas cooperativas en principio son pequeños productores, entonces gran parte de trabajo se hace con	You were asking about how gender work is done in the cooperatives. The first thing is that in CECOCAFEN, the families integrated into the different cooperatives in principle are <i>small</i> producers, so a large part of the work is done with the family and

	la familia y cuando se habla de familia son sus mujeres, son sus hijos sus hijas; en otras palabras la mano de obra es familiar en gran medida	when we speak about families it is women, sons and daughters; in other words the labour is family labour to a great extent.
61	ahora sí consideramos que hay una equidad y una correlación de fuerzas bastante equilibrada, bien pues porque antes eran más varones	. . .equity and an equilibrium, because before there were more men
62	...propiciando que las mujeres también tengan acceso y puedan ser electas a responsabilidades en sus cooperativas como miembros de la junta directiva, como miembros de las comisiones de trabajo y también que ellas puedan tener esta oportunidad de hacerse cargo de tareas muy importantes, de tareas muy puntuales al derecho a capacitarse, el derecho a que ellas puedan tener digamos la oportunidad de trabajar igual que los hombres	...to bring about that women also have access and can be elected into responsibilities within their cooperatives as members of the Board of Directors, as members of the Work Commissions, and also that they can have the opportunity to be in charge of tasks, the right to receive trainings, the right to be able to have the opportunity to work the same as men.
63	cuando la gente de manera consciente actúa y no porque le digan “esto hay que trabajarlo de esta manera”, o sea, mientras la persona espera que le digan para hacer, no hay empoderamiento y, en ese caso la cooperativa no va a tener fuerza, en ese caso el trabajo no va a ser sostenido y aquí se habla mucho de sostenibilidad	when people in a conscientious manner act, and not because they have told them “this has to be worked in this way” that is, as long as people are waiting to be told what to do, there is no empowerment and in that case the cooperative is not going to have the strength, in that case the work is not going to be sustainable and here we talk a lot about sustainability . . .
63	yo creo que el empoderamiento tiene que ser más desde, desde la parte de la cooperativa, desde la cooperativa y la gente, o sea si la cooperativa y la gente está empoderada de repente, este, de repente puede ser que digamos, FLO tiene un interés en contribuir, contribuir con, con que esto se lleve a cabo; pero no es, pero si de repente nosotros decimos, “bueno lo más importante es lo que diga FLO”, FLO puede caer solamente un asunto estrictamente académico, y lo estrictamente académico para sistemas como el nuestro no va, no aplica	I believe that empowerment needs to be more from the part of the cooperative, from the cooperative and the people. That is, if the cooperative and the people are empowered all of a sudden... it may be that FLO has an interest in contributing to all that is being carried out, but if we all of a sudden say “well, what’s most important is what FLO says,” FLO can fall into being something strictly academic, and strictly academic is something that does not apply to systems like ours.
63	que hemos visto la voluntad de las mujeres por organizarse y que ha despertado pues prácticamente el interés de las mujeres	“had the will to organize themselves and that women’s interest in joining the cooperative had been awakened.”
64	bueno en primer lugar porque PROCOCER	Well in the first place because PROCOCER

	directamente está integrado por familias de los productores entonces la familia pues, están los hombres y están las mujeres verdad, y entonces eh, también tomamos en cuenta esa parte y que también habíamos de darle participación a las mujeres pues tomando en cuenta que si es la familia la que está organizada y es la familia la que produce, entonces la mujer había de estar también involucrada, no aislada	is directly integrated by families of producers and in the family, there are men and women, and so, we also took into consideration that part and that we should also give women participation considering that if it is the family that is organized and it is the family that produces, then the woman should also be involved, not isolated. . .
65	Yo soy PROCOCER	I am PROCOCER
65	... por lo menos hayamos avanzado siquiera en un 10% y empoderar a las mujeres por ejemplo como dueñas de su parcela.	. . .empower women so that 10% can be land owners.
68	...es necesario hacer una política de género que rompa con esa con ese injusticiato break injustices that exist between women and men...
68	entonces eso ha venido, siendo una barrera en el que la mujeres digamos, este, como que han aprendido que esa es la norma	breaking the barriers that women have come to consider as 'normal'
69	bueno, porque realmente creemos que entre las mujeres para trabajar por la, por la timidez que todavía existe en el campo verdad, entonces este, con una mujer este se pueden entender más fácil, con más confianza porque lo que queremos conocer pues es prácticamente la problemática que las mujeres tienen en el campo verdad de cada una de las mujeres, entonces con mayor confianza pues entonces con alguien mujer pues puede dar a conocer pues, sus planteamientos sus deseos de hacer las cosas de que rumbo quieren más o menos ellas, entonces decidimos poner a la [técnica de género] verdad, y a cargo del proceso...	Well, because we really believe that [it is better that women work with women], because of the shyness that still exists in the countryside, so, it is easier for them to relate to a woman with more confidence because what we want to learn about is practically the problems that women have in the countryside, right, [the problems] of every one of the women, so with greater trust then, with someone who is a woman it can lead to learning about their ideas, their desires, to do things in the direction they want, so we decided to put [a gender specialist], and make her in charge of the process...
70	pero... faltan cambios por verse porque ya queremos ver mujeres tomando cargos en las mesas directivas, comités de créditos, eh ser como delegadas también de la cooperativa queremos, todos esos cambios pues más que todo	but... there are still changes to be seen because we want to see women taking on positions on the Board of Directors, Credit Committees, eh, as delegates as well of the cooperative we want, all those changes more than anything.
71	<u>Donovan</u> :...[las mujeres tienen] miles de obstáculos pues miles de obstáculos ve y entonces pero para ese caso por eso se está	<u>Donovan</u> :...[women have] thousands of obstacles, well, thousands of obstacles you see and so, but in that case, gender equity is

	<p>haciendo ya, verdad, de equidad de género para que ya todos vayamos participando en una forma general, generalizada que ya no miremos que no, como esquivar aquello que “no, tú no puedes participar, tú eres de la cocina, tú eres de que vea los niños,” no, esa es la lucha también de PROCOCER</p> <p><u>Alejandra</u>: y como, como es que van cambiando esas ideas dentro de PROCOCER?</p> <p><u>Donovan</u>: a base de talleres de conocimientos. A base de, de cómo me explicaría ahí, a base de talleres de conocimientos como, como puede involucrarse una, una lo que es la esposa del productor a las actividades también que no necesariamente tiene que ser hombre sino que tiene que haber, no no tiene que haber solo productores sino productoras, productoras de café, o productoras de granos básicos.</p>	<p>being done so that we all begin participating in a general way, widespread, that we don't see that no, how to avoid that, that “no, you can't participate, you belong in the kitchen, you're the one that looks after the children”, no, that is the fight of PROCOCER as well</p> <p><u>Alejandra</u>: and how is it that those ideas are changing within PROCOCER?</p> <p><u>Donovan</u>: Through workshops. How do I explain myself, through knowledge-building workshops about how a wife of a producer can get involved in the activities as well, that it does not necessarily have to be the men, but that rather there needs to be, no, it doesn't have to be only men producers but there can also be women producers, women coffee producers, or women producing grains.</p>
72	<p>Somos parte de una cultura patriarcal verdad, donde este las mujeres y los hombres, hay una gran, hay una brecha verdad, este, desfavorable hacia la mujer y eso, eso mismo está en el seno de las cooperativas, las cooperativas son parte de esta sociedad, entonces igual allí mismo.</p>	<p>We're part of a patriarchal culture, where, um, women and men, there is a large gap, unfavourable towards women and that, that same thing is at the core of the cooperatives, the cooperatives are part of that society, so it's the same in there.</p>
73	<p>...las mujeres se sienten todavía independien... eh dependientes, dependientes que el hombre que tiene la obligación de buscar cómo organizarse y llevar lo que necesita la casa.</p>	<p>...women feel dependent on men and feel that it is the man's obligation to figure out how to provide household necessities.</p>
73	<p>Ellas viven solo sumergidas por los maridos</p>	<p>[women] only live subjugated by their husbands</p>
73	<p>Su argumento principal era que no, por la mujer no va a caminar una distancia tan larga. Unos planteaban de que no para, un poco señalando que para no maltratar a la mujer, para no someter a las mujeres a cosas difíciles, verdad</p>	<p>Their main argument was that no, women are not going to walk such a long distance. Some raised the issue . . . indicating a bit [that they do not want women to participate] so as to not mistreat women, to not subject women to difficult things.</p>
73	<p>Ahorita hubo un diplomado en, este, en producción orgánica en Honduras, entonces se necesitaba la participación de una mujer...¿cuál fue el principal problema que</p>	<p>Just now there was a diploma in organic production in Honduras, so we needed the participation of a woman... what was the major problem that we were confronted</p>

	<p>enfrentamos para mandar a una de las mujeres a este diplomado? de que no podía dejar a la familia, porque tenía que los niños pequeños, porque el marido no la dejaba ir, porque eh, este, quien se iba hacer cargo de la familia y, cuando llegamos a donde el marido y le dijimos “mirá tu esposa fue seleccionada para ir a un curso a un diplomado a Honduras, y este , es este es una bendición de Dios porque ella se va a preparar” y bueno, eh ya echándole el cuento para que la dejara ir, lo primerito que el dijo “bueno ¿y entonces quién me va cuidar?”, quien lo iba a cuidar a él pues, se le iba la doña entonces quien lo iba a cuidar son 15 días “¿quién me va a cuidar?”, esas son las principales barreras que enfrentan las mujeres.</p>	<p>with to send one of the women to the course? That she could not leave the family, because she had small children, because the husband would not let her go, because, eh, who was going to take care of the family, and when we arrived to the see the husband and said to him “look, your wife was selected to go to a course for a diploma in Honduras, and, this is a blessing from God because she is going to be able to prepare herself” and telling him the whole story so that he would let her go, the very first thing that he said was “well, and who is going to look after me?”, who was going to look after him, the woman was leaving and so who was going to look after him. It’s fifteen days and “who is going to look after me?”; those are the main barriers that women are faced with.</p>
73-74	<p><u>Luz</u>: los invitan [a los talleres de género]pero no vienen verdad, algunos no vienen <u>Alejandra</u>: ¿Por qué? <u>Luz</u>: porque como son, no les gustan, dicen que..., que quieren que la mujer este arriba y la mujer tiene que ser, es menos que uno dicen. Yo le digo que somos iguales <u>Alejandra</u>: ¿tienen esa idea que la mujer tiene que ser menos que uno? <u>Rosa</u>: sí<u>Luz</u>: mhm</p>	<p><u>Luz</u>: [men are invited to gender workshops] but they don’t come, some of them don’t come. <u>Alejandra</u>: Why? <u>Luz</u>: Because of how they are, they don’t like [the workshops]. They say that . . .[the workshops are about] women [being] on top, but according to them women need to be, they say that she is less than them. I tell them that we’re equal. . . <u>Alejandra</u>: They have the idea that women need to be less than men? <u>Rosa</u>: Yes <u>Luz</u>: mhm</p>
74	<p>En el caso de algunos [socios] que vienen [a la cooperativa] y tal vez le mandan alguna notita y si el productor no quiere tal vez ni le entregan la notita a la esposa no que está va para allá y tal vez si es celoso [...] [si el socio no quiere que vaya la esposa] no se lo va a decir, no se lo va a transmitir, tal vez una reunión de gran relevancia de gran importancia y “no, es que no me gusta que mi esposa ande allí” entonces tal vez se quedan con la invitación ahí...porque yo se pues, que ha pasado eso</p>	<p>In the case of some [members] that come [to the cooperative] and maybe a leader from the cooperative gives them a note to take home but if the producer doesn’t want maybe he doesn’t even give the note to the wife or maybe if he is jealous . . . [if the member does not want his wife to go] he doesn’t tell her, he’s not going to transmit it, maybe it’s a big meeting of lots of importance and “no, it’s that I don’t like that my wife goes there” and so maybe they keep the invitation . . .because I know that that has happened...</p>

74	Es que cuando se ponen a hablarnos de género ellos se enojan porque [los hombres] dicen “ah! Nos tiran carbón a los hombres!”	“It’s that when they start speaking to us about gender [the men] get mad because they hey “ah! They’re shooting us down!”
74	Tener tierra para un campesino es tener vida	[t]o have land is to have life!
75	este tantos obstáculos que tienen las mujeres	...so many obstacles that women have.
75	Si porque hay unas que viven atascadas en las casas	[s]ome women that live completely bogged down in their homes.
75	las mujeres toda la vida, aun teniendo el nivel de desarrollo, nunca vamos a dejar a la familia nuestra por un lado, contrario al hombre, que el hombre él se tiene los recursos y piensa en el, se va a emborrachar él, se va de parranda él, y no se pone a pensar “¿Qué está pasando con mi familia?”. Entonces, es, y es la cultura, es la formación cultural que tenemos. A nosotras nos formaron más dedicadas a la familia y ellos nada, ellos, es otra la visión que tienen. Son muy pocos los hombres que, sí, en primer lugar está la preocupación por el desarrollo de la familia.	...Women for their whole lives, even if better educated, we’re never going to leave our families off to one side, on the contrary to men, that men when he has the resources and he thinks about himself and he goes to get drunk, and he goes out partying, and he doesn’t think “what is happening with my family?” So, it’s the culture, it’s the cultural shaping that we have. They inculcated us women to be more dedicated to the family. And to men, nothing, them, it’s another vision they have. It is very few men that first worry for the family’s development.
75	...supuestamente las delegadas tienen qué, que ...hacer un trabajo con los socios y como mujeres nos quedan poco tiempo para hacer trabajo en las organizaciones.	...being a delegate requires time, and women have very little time left over to do the organization’s work.
76	Mucha gente nuestra en la zona tiene problemas de, de educación o sea poco nivel académico y eso los hace decir, a ver proponemos a dona Nora por ejemplo, por ejemplo dona Nora es una delegada nuestra [...] si pero hasta allí no mas llegue ella “lee”, “no, léemelo” me dice los documentos que le dan.	Many of our people in the area have problems of, of education, that is, low academic levels and that makes them say, for example, Mrs. Julia for example, for example Mrs. Julia is one of our delegates [...] yes but up to there. I arrive [signals that he is giving Mrs. Julia a document] “please [read this]”, “no, read it to me,” she says about the documents that she’s given.
76	es que hay que escribir y no se leer no se.”	“...it’s that one needs to write and I don’t know how to read, I don’t know.”
76	<u>Alejandra</u> : si... y a ver Nora, como delegadas que se siente ser mujer y delegada? <u>Luz</u> : en medio de un poco de hombres... “esa mujer es bien hombrera” dicen... si porque hay gente que todavía no se ha liberado todavía de eso verdad	<u>Alejandra</u> : ...Rosa, as a delegate, how do you feel being a woman delegate? <u>Luz</u> : (laughing) ...in the middle of a whole lot of men! ...“that woman is a man-izer” they say... yes because there are people that have still not liberated themselves from all of that.

	<p><u>Alejandra</u>: ¿de qué? <u>Luz</u>: de “mira pues la mujer entre metida en los hombres” <u>Rosa</u>: yo me siento bien orgullosa ahí en medio de todos los hombres! (ríe)</p>	<p><u>Alejandra</u>: Of what? <u>Luz</u>: Of “look at that woman stuck between men.” <u>Rosa</u>: I feel very proud to be between all those men! (laughter)</p>
76	<p>A mí los hombres me perciben como muy dominante...si, me perciben de esa manera. Entonces, este, esa percepción tampoco es lo más favorable pues porque entonces crean barreras, pero, per es así, es así.</p>	<p>“Men perceive me as very dominating...they perceive me in that way. So, that perception isn’t the most favourable thing because that creates barriers, but, that’s how it is.</p>
77	<p>...que eso naturalmente todo mundo lo sabe...</p>	<p>...<i>naturally</i> everyone knows the differences...</p>
77	<p>porque ok, ¿quién es el que menstrua?, ¿quien tiene pechos?, ¿quien hace la comida? ¿Ahí todo el mundo sabe eso no?</p>	<p>because, ok. Who is the one that menstruates? Who has breasts? Who cooks? Everyone knows that, no?.</p>
77	<p>... es importante que las mujeres estén organizadas.</p>	<p>...[i]t is important for women to be organized.</p>
77	<p>...por naturaleza pues, en las casas quien baña, cuida los niños son las mujeres...</p>	<p>...it is because of human nature that the person who bathes and looks after children are women...</p>
78	<p>en algunos casos si es algo alejado, en algotros casos ellos tienen bastantes amistades con las esposas de los socios, con socias si tienen buena relación, yo creo que si, en algunos casos por la misma falta de los técnicos de falta como hablarle a una mujer de que es tímida algo ahí ... pero en algunos casos ellos no le han podido llegar a las mujeres cuando son tímidas.</p>	<p>In some cases it is somewhat distant, in other cases they have several friendships with the wives of members, with women members, they have a good relationship, I believe that, in some cases the specialists lack knowledge in how to speak to women that she is shy something like that . . . but in some cases they have not been able to reach women when they are shy.</p>
79	<p>Solo nosotros como delegados es lo que te digo que siempre hacemos reuniones pero, para ver dentro de la cooperativa. Ya lo de género ya es aparte.</p>	<p>Just us as delegates always get together to have meetings, but to look at inside the cooperative. And what is gender is separate.</p>
79	<p>Corres el riesgo cuando pones a una persona de, responsable del tema de género que sea ella y ella y ella y trabajar solo con las mujeres. Entonces el trabajo no se multiplica cómo quisieras.</p>	<p>You run the risk that when you put one person responsible for gender that it is her, her, her and work only with women; the work does not multiply itself how you would want.</p>
79	<p>Algunos realitos allí para que ella pueda trabajar allí puede ser en granjas de gallinitas</p>	<p>A little bit of money there so she can work on something like a small farm for chickens.</p>



APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

Acuerdo de Participación
Universidad de Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

Ha sido invitada o invitado a participar en un estudio intitulado:

**La Equidad de Género Dentro de la Producción del Café de Comercio Justo en Nicaragua:
Interpretaciones, Experiencias e Implicaciones para la Salud**

Investigadora

Alejandra Ganem-Cuenca de la Universidad de Saskatchewan, Canadá, Departamento de Salud Comunitaria y Epidemiología. Número de teléfono: (505) 8725-2326.

El propósito de la investigación y los procedimientos

El propósito de esta investigación es de explorar las interpretaciones y experiencias de los procesos existentes que promueven la equidad de género dentro de las cooperativas de café de comercio justo. Ha sido invitada o invitado a participar en una entrevista para este estudio para poder mejor comprender sus experiencias con los procesos de equidad de género. La entrevista se hará con la investigadora y durará aproximadamente 90 minutos. La entrevista será informal, guiada por algunas preguntas generales relacionadas al tema. La investigadora tomará notas durante la entrevista y, con su consentimiento, grabará la entrevista también. En cualquier momento durante la entrevista, tendrá el derecho de pedir que se apague la grabadora.

Esta investigación está siendo conducida con el Movimiento de Mujeres Flores del Café (MMFC) como contraparte. Los resultados del estudio serán compartidos con usted y el MMFC, igual que también con otras cooperativas y federaciones involucradas en esta investigación. La información será compartida por medio de una sistematización que va a documentar las interpretaciones y experiencias de cómo se promueve la equidad de género dentro de las cooperativas. Los resultados de esta investigación también serán presentados en una tesis de Maestría, en conferencias en Canadá, y en revistas científicas.

Aunque la información presentada en todos estos foros va a incluir citas directas y resúmenes de información, la investigadora hará todo lo posible para proteger la identidad de las y los participantes al grado que la persona desee que su identidad sea protegida.

Posibles Beneficios

No hay un beneficio directo para usted o su organización al participar en este estudio. Sin embargo, esta investigación está siendo conducida con el MMFC como contraparte y existe la posibilidad que resulte en algunos beneficios al nivel comunitario. Por supuesto, no hay ninguna garantía que este estudio resultará en estos beneficios.

Posibles Riesgos

A causa que el estudio está tomando lugar dentro de un pequeño grupo de individuos involucrados con cooperativas existe el riesgo que las y los participantes sean identificados. Las y los participantes serán libres de determinar qué es lo que quieren compartir, y pueden terminar la discusión o rechazar preguntas que no quieran contestar, y pueden pedir que la grabadora sea apagada en cualquier momento.

Almacenaje de Datos

Todas las entrevistas y las formas de consentimiento serán guardadas bajo protección por la investigadora, y solo ella tendrá acceso a estas. Las entrevistas serán guardadas por un periodo de 5 años bajo llave, y después serán destruidas. Cualquier individuo que vaya a asistir con las transcripciones o el análisis de los datos tendrá que firmar una forma de consentimiento y devolver todos los reportes originales a la investigadora, y destruir cualquier copia electrónica o dura que queden en sus computadoras personales o en sus oficinas.

Confidencialidad

Los datos de este estudio serán compilados para una tesis que será publicada y presentada en conferencias y también para una sistematización. En todos estos documentos su identidad será confidencial. Sin embargo, es importante que sepa que puede ser difícil mantener la identidad de las y los participantes completamente confidencial. Para proteger su identidad, se les dará un nombre ficticio en la sistematización y otros reportes y toda la información que pueda identificar a las participantes se quitará de cualquier documento, incluyendo citas directas de las entrevistas. La información de las entrevistas puede ser utilizada de nuevo en otra ocasión para analizar los datos de manera más avanzada, pero su identidad permanecerá confidencial en todo instante.

Derecho de Retirar

Su participación es voluntaria y tiene el derecho de contestar solo las preguntas con las cuales se sienta cómoda o cómodo. La información que será compartida permanecerá en confianza y será discutida solamente con el equipo de investigación. Tiene el derecho de retirarse de la entrevista por cualquier motivo, a cualquier momento, sin ninguna consecuencia y cualquier información que haya contribuido será destruida en cuanto lo solicite.

Preguntas

Si tiene cualquier pregunta sobre este estudio, por favor siéntase con la confianza de preguntar en cualquier momento. También está bienvenido a contactar a Alejandra Ganem-Cuenca en el número listado arriba en cualquier momento, o a María Asunción Meza Rojas del MMFC al 2772-4039.

Este estudio ha sido aprobado por la Oficina de Ética de Ciencias de la Conducta de la Universidad de Saskatchewan. Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante pueden ser dirigidas a la Oficina de Ética de Investigaciones por correo (ethics.office@usask.ca) o por teléfono (1-306-966-2084). Puede llamar por cobrar.

Doy mi consentimiento a participar en el estudio descrito, y entiendo que puedo retirar mi consentimiento en cualquier momento y que de igual manera he revivido una copia del Acuerdo de Participación.

Nombre de la o el Participante

Firma de la o el participante

Firma de la investigadora

Fecha