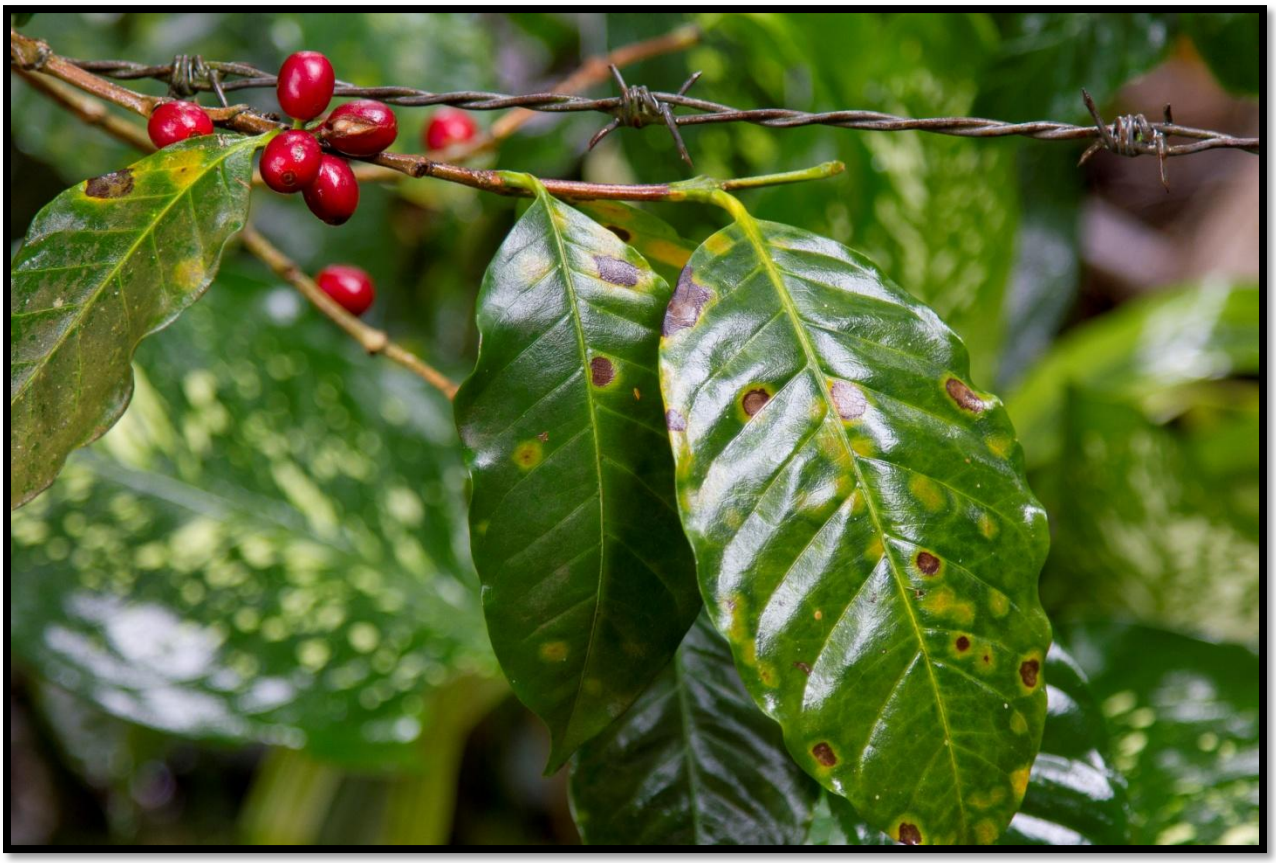
Equalizing Access in the Fair Trade:

An Examination of Gender Equity across Nicaraguan Coffee Cooperatives



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April 19, 2013

Executive Summary

This research project examined how gender equity is being addressed at coffee cooperatives across the northern region of Nicaragua. Three cooperatives situated in the departments of Matagalpa and Jinotega were studied: the Organization of Northern Coffee Cooperatives (CECOCAFEN), the San Ramón Cooperative Union (UCA San Ramón) and the Society of Small Coffee Producers, Exporters and Buyers Cooperative Union (UCA SOPPEXCCA). Three United States based partner organizations of these cooperatives were researched as well: Coffee Kids, the Community Agroecology Network (CAN) and Cooperative Coffees. The research sought to analyze the differential impact that differing definitions may have on perceptions of gender equity and related practice within and across all levels of the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative network. Semi-structured interview, text analysis of gender policies and participant observation were used to answer the research question: what might be the benefits and compromises of establishing a consistent definition of "gender equity" across all levels of the Nicaraguan coffee industry? Is there a need for a standard approach?

I posit that the compromises of imposing a standard approach to gender equity outweigh the benefits. In addition, I propose that the three tier organizational structure of the Nicaraguan cooperative system facilitates the successful implementation of gender equitable policies and practices through a simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approach. This facilitates widespread discussion critical for addressing socially engrained gendered divisions of coffee production labor stemming from cultural norms. Nevertheless, I present the opinion that women's ability to fully access the benefits promised by participation in the cooperative model, specifically Fairtrade certified cooperatives, remains limited due to unequal access to land and therefore gendered inequities persist within this social equity movement.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my interviewees José Luis Zárate García, Heather Putnam, Monika Firl, Santiago Dolmus, Dignas Aráuz Zeledón, Margarita Aráuz Espinoza, Yadira Montenegro, Maura Jarquín Blandón, Marlene del Carmen Jarquín Gonzalez, José Ramón Vanegos Pravia, Berthalina López Martines, Julia Rodriguez González, Zunilda Sanchez Hernandez, Elizabeth Molina Tórrez, and Mausi and Eddy Kühl for their generosity and time. In addition, I would like to thank the Undergraduate Research Center at Occidental College for providing the travel funds necessary for this project. I owe a very special thank you to my mentors, Professor Bhavna Shamasunder and Professor Robert Gottlieb, as well as my advisor, Professor Peter Dreier, for their tremendous support and guidance throughout this process and all of my years at Occidental. Finally, I would like to thank Patrick Riggs for his exceptional photography, my classmates, and my loving friends and family without whose encouragement this project would not have been possible.

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Glossary of Relevant Terms

- **Cooperative Network:** Given the international scope of this research project, it is important to distinguish between the use of the terms 'cooperative network' and 'cooperative system'. For the purpose of this paper I employ the term 'cooperative system' when referring only to Nicaraguan coffee cooperatives of all levels. 'Cooperative network' on the other hand, is used to discuss the Nicaraguan cooperative system and its affiliate U.S. based organizations jointly.

- **Cooperative Structure:** This term is reserved solely for discussion of the Nicaraguan cooperative system. Specifically, it is used when referring to the permeable three tier organizational structure of the Nicaraguan cooperative system.

- **Affiliate Organization:** For the purpose of this paper the term 'affiliate organization' refers to those businesses, organizations and non-profits that have established working relations with cooperatives at any level of the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative system. The focus of these associations may be trade based or non-trade based in nature. Non-trade based refers to those connections which are maintained for the purpose of promoting social development within the cooperative structure. Trade-based refers to those partnerships formed solely around the exchange of coffee. While affiliate organizations may be national or international, in this paper I refer specifically to those partner groups based in the United States, calling them 'U.S. based affiliate organizations'.

- **Tertiary Level Cooperative:** Tertiary level cooperatives are known also as third level cooperatives, 'la Central de Cooperativas', or the center of cooperatives. Tertiary cooperatives are comprised of administrators and technical staff that function as intermediaries, representing the interests of secondary level cooperatives, and subsequently those of primary level cooperatives, in the coffee trade. Individuals employed within the tertiary level are not considered cooperative members.

- **Secondary Level Cooperative:** Identified also as 'cooperativas de segundo grado', secondary cooperatives serve as intermediaries in the cooperative structure, representing the interests of their affiliated primary level cooperatives to their associated third level cooperative. Similar to tertiary level cooperatives, the staff of secondary cooperatives is comprised of administrative and technical personnel who are not identified as cooperative members. Secondary level cooperative staff provides training and necessary financial and technical resources to primary level cooperatives.

- **Unión de Cooperativas Agropecuarias (UCA):** Translated, UCA stands for ‘union of cooperative farmers’. These unions are a type of secondary level cooperatives. Rather than represent one primary level cooperative, as other secondary cooperatives might, UCA’s support several.

- **Primary Level Cooperative:** Known also as ‘Cooperativas de base’ or base cooperatives, primary level cooperatives are organized communities of coffee producers with an elected administration. Cooperative membership may or may not extend to the families of the primary coffee producers, who are the recognized owners of the land used for coffee cultivation. Each primary level cooperative is represented by a secondary and tertiary level cooperative.

- **CECOCAFEN:** The abbreviation utilized throughout the research paper in reference to ‘Central de Cooperativas Cafetaleras del Norte’, translated as the Organization of Northern Coffee Cooperatives. CECOCAFEN is a tertiary level cooperative.

- **UCA San Ramón:** Known in full as the Unión de Cooperativas Agropecuarias Augusto César Sandino, the Cooperative Union of San Ramón. UCA San Ramón is a secondary level union of cooperative farmers affiliated with CECOCAFEN.

- **Cooperativa Danilo González:** Referred to in the research at times as ‘Cooperativa La Reyna’ or ‘La Reyna’, Cooperative Danilo González is a primary level cooperative represented by UCA San Ramón.

- **UCA SOPPEXCCA:** Shorthand for ‘Union de Cooperativas Agropecuarias Sociedad de Pequenos Productores, Exportadores y Compradores de Café’, or the Society of Small Coffee Producers, Exporters and Buyers cooperative union. UCA SOPPEXCCA and SOPPEXCCA are used interchangeably in the paper to refer to this secondary level union of cooperative farmers.

- **Cooperativa Los Robles:** Denoted in this paper as ‘Los Robles’ as well, Cooperative Los Robles is a primary level cooperative represented by UCA SOPPEXCCA.

The Nicaraguan Coffee Cooperative Network

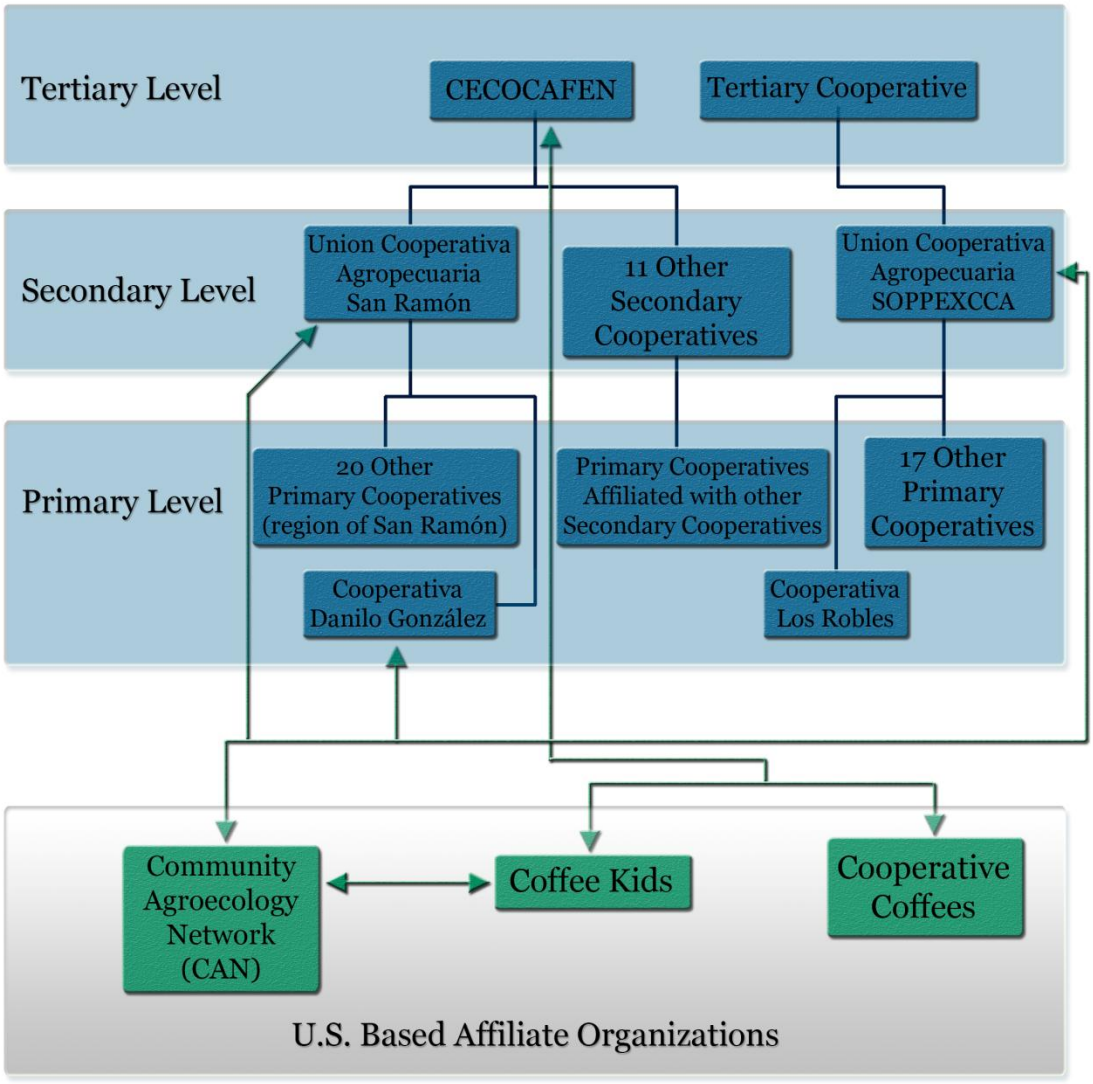

Figure 1

Organizational Structure of Nicaraguan Cooperative Levels

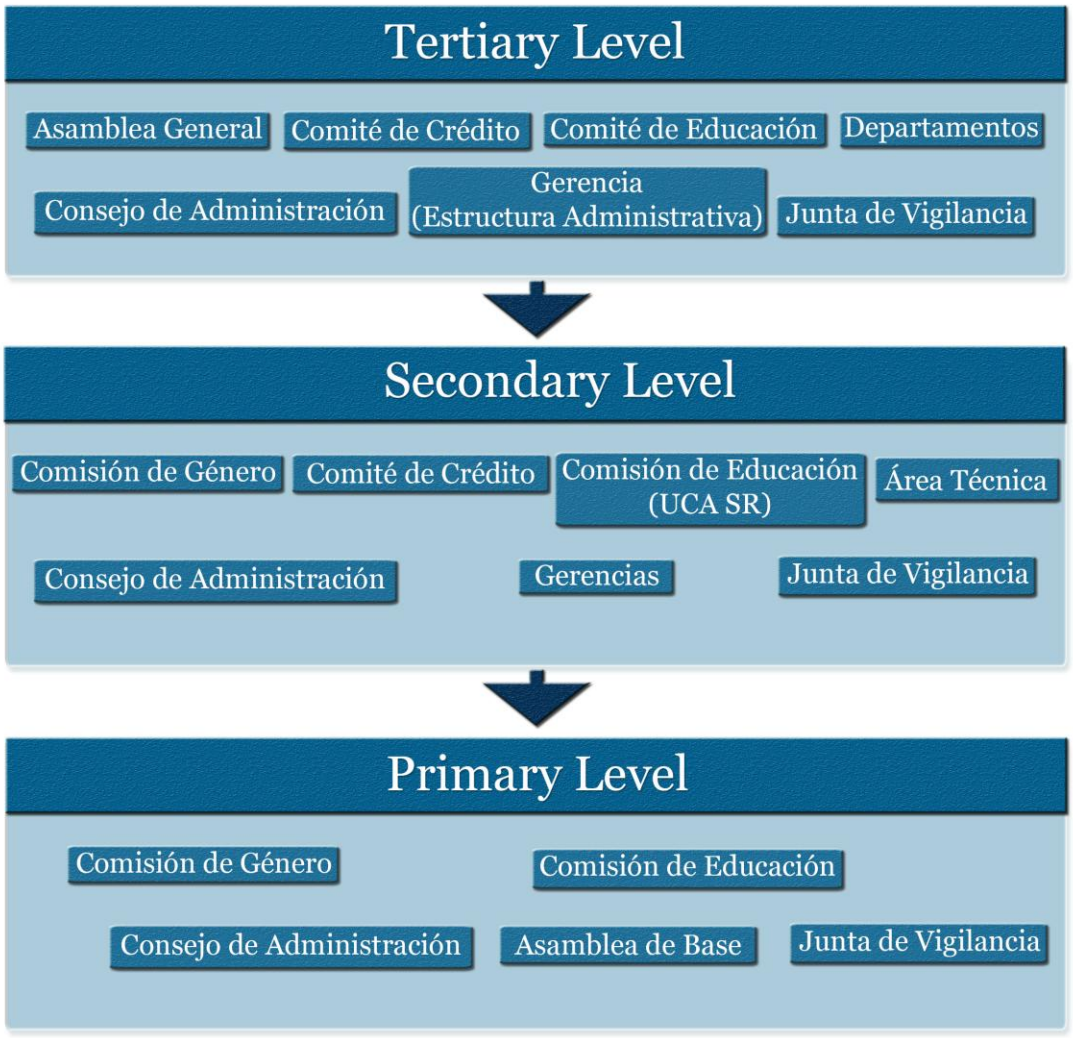

Figure 2

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2

"It has been the world's most radical drink in that its function has always been to make people think. And when the people began to think, they became dangerous to tyrants and to foes of liberty of thought and action."[3]

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[1] Drying Coffee Beans, Cooperative Danilo González La Reyna, Nicaragua: Patrick A. Riggs
[2] Office Billboard of UCA SOPPEXCCA, Jinotega, Nicaragua: Patrick A. Riggs
[3] Nina Luttinger and Gregory Dicum, *The Coffee Book: Anatomy of an Industry from Crop to the Last Drop* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 17.
[4] Coffee Cherries, Selva Negra Ecolodge, Nicaragua: Patrick A. Riggs

Chapter One: Introduction

Coffee consumption is globally recognized as a means for bringing people together, a common social practice that transcends cultural, social and political barriers. Throughout the past decades fair trade practices and organic growing have increased in prevalence in trade and consumer discourse. These movements seek to empower smallholder producers through the adoption of transparent and equitable production and trading practices sustained by affiliated organizations and socially conscious consumers around the world. Despite the measures which have been taken to democratize trade, social, political and economic inequalities remain a reality of daily life for coffee bean growers and harvesters. In particular, the livelihoods of men and women participating in the coffee industry can differ significantly. This can be exacerbated in countries reliant upon coffee production as their major export, such as Nicaragua, which often struggle with high rates of poverty, particularly in rural areas.

Since the 1990s, there has been a movement within cooperatives situated in the northern region of Nicaragua to address gender inequality among coffee growers. This research project is a study of the three tiered Nicaraguan coffee cooperative system and more specifically, it is an examination of five cooperatives which have successfully implemented projects and policies to empower female coffee producers (Figure One). Situated in Northern Nicaragua, these cooperatives are: the Unión de Cooperativas Agropecuarias (UCA) Augusto César Sandino (San Ramón Cooperative Union, UCA San Ramón), the Central de Cooperativas Cafetaleras del Norte (Organization of Northern Coffee Cooperatives, CECOCAFEN), and Sociedad de Pequeños Productores, Exportadores y Compradores de Café (the Society of Small Coffee Producers, Exporters and Buyers, UCA SOPPEXCCA), as well as Cooperativa Los Robles (Cooperative Los Robles), and Cooperativa Danilo González (Cooperative Danilo González) (Glossary). An

additional study was made of U.S. based affiliate organizations, businesses and nonprofits, engaged in trade and non-trade relations with these cooperatives. These organizations include Coffee Kids, the Community Agroecology Network (CAN) and Cooperative Coffees (Figure One). The intent of this project was to examine differences and similarities in how cooperatives from each level of the Nicaraguan cooperative system and their affiliate organizations define gender equity in order to answer the research question: what might be the benefits and compromises of establishing a consistent definition of "gender equity" across all levels of the Nicaraguan coffee industry? Is there a need for a standard approach? This question sought to analyze the differential impact that differing definitions may have on perceptions of gender equity and related discourse as well as practice within and across all levels of the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative network.

Growing up in a family of coffee aficionados in a small Midwestern town where the local hangout place was the town coffee shop, I became accustomed to the norm of coffee consumption without questioning the process by which each cup was derived. The idea of coffee as a non-commodified good remained a foreign concept until I began my studies within the Urban and Environmental Policy Department at Occidental College. Through my courses I learned about the correlation between consumption in developed countries and adverse health and community outcomes for low income production regions in developing countries. Nevertheless, while working as a barista in the campus coffee shop I found I was unable to clearly define for customers the differences between conventional and Fairtrade or organic coffee; I began to question my role as an informed consumer and coffee consumption's broader impact. Is purchasing Fairtrade and organic coffee without knowing and understanding the implications for its producers just as passive as making the choice to not buy into the alternative,

non-conventional market? As I sought to learn more about Fairtrade and organic coffee through research and discussion with fellow students I found these certification movements to be much more highly contested issues than originally anticipated. In particular I became interested in the research which has demonstrated the persistence of social injustices within these movements for equity, specifically in Latin America. I have always had a keen interest in Latin America, primarily in gender studies, fostered by Spanish study, travel and interaction with friends and family from various countries in the Americas. I looked to the UEP senior comprehensive project as an opportunity to study the intersection between these fields, which led to my decision to research the persisting gender disparities within the Nicaraguan coffee industry, principally among those cooperatives participating in the Fairtrade movement.

This paper begins with relevant background information on the Nicaraguan coffee industry; specifically it provides a brief history in order to contextualize recent land reforms and cooperative laws adopted in the country which led to the contemporary structure of the cooperative system. A segment on the rise of sustainable coffee production in Nicaragua and participation in the Fairtrade movement follows. The literature review concludes with a discussion of women's participation in the Nicaraguan coffee industry as it reflects changing social norms of the country at large. Chapter three provides an overview of the research methods employed for this project, both in the United States and during my travels in Nicaragua. Chapters four and five offer relevant overviews of the organizations and cooperatives selected for this study. In chapter six I provide the four principle findings from my study which pertain to the original research question. Four additional findings which add to the conversation on current best practices of gender equity employed within the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative network and the

role played by Fairtrade are included as well. The paper concludes with recommendations and suggestions for future research opportunities.

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[5] Coffee Cherries, Selva Negra Ecolodge, Nicaragua: Patrick A. Riggs.

Chapter Two: Literature Review
-Background on the Intersect of Coffee and Gender Equity in Nicaragua-

"Scholars of Central America agree that the rise of coffee was a historical turning point, particularly in the development of land and labor systems and in the process of state formation"[6]

First cultivated for food in Ethiopia between 575 and 850 C.E., the coffee bean was not consumed as a beverage until between 1000 and 1300 C.E.[7] While the cultivation of coffee spread beyond the Arab world in the early seventeenth century, it was not until the eighteenth century that European powers utilized their colonies for the production of coffee, expanding the trade throughout the tropics.[8] Coffee cultivation now occurs in approximately eighty tropical and subtropical countries, supporting an estimated twenty million rural families worldwide. Considered one of the most valuable internationally traded goods today, coffee is more than an agricultural commodity produced merely for sale and eventual consumption in homes, cafes, and eateries.[9] Rather, the coffee bean is intricately linked to the political, social and economic conditions of both its producer and consumer countries and serves as a common point of connection between the northern and southern hemispheres.

This literature review seeks to provide the reader with an understanding of the contemporary Nicaraguan coffee industry contextualized within the often volatile political, social and economic history of the country. The first section, "The Nicaraguan Coffee Industry," is comprised of three subdivisions including: a historic overview of coffee cultivation in Nicaragua; a summary of the Sandinista Revolution (1979-1990) and the impact of the ensuing agricultural reform on coffee farming; and finally a description of the contemporary cooperative system that

[6] Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux, *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 147.
[7] Luttinger Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 2.
[8] Ibid., 8 & 25.
[9] Ibid., 39.

exists within Nicaragua. The second and third sections of the literature review address "Sustainable Production in Nicaragua" and, "Women's Participation in the Nicaraguan Coffee Industry". "Sustainable Production in Nicaragua" covers the general practices of coffee production with specific emphasis given to Fairtrade and the role it has played in Nicaraguan coffee production. The final section of the literature review discusses the theoretical framework of gender equity employed in Nicaragua and its relation to women's increasing participation in the cooperative coffee network.

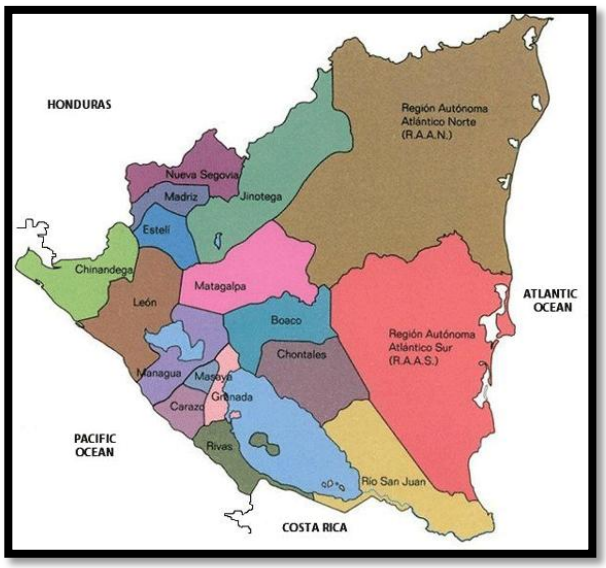
Section 2.1: The Nicaraguan Coffee Industry

Coffee production is an essential component of the Nicaraguan economy. Nicaragua is considered the fifth most reliant country on coffee exports in the world with more than 45,000 micro and smallholder producers operating throughout the country.[10] Coffee generated 519 million USD in sales in 2012 making it Nicaragua's top export as of January 2013. Nicaragua engages primarily in trade with the United States, which purchased almost one third of all coffee exports during 2012.[11] In addition to the U.S., Brazil, Germany, Japan and Italy, among several other countries are primary purchasers of Nicaragua's coffee.[12] Although coffee production is fundamental to its economy, Nicaragua produces less than two percent of the beans traded globally by primary producers of coffee.[13] While coffee production is seemingly generating increased wealth for Nicaragua, the socioeconomic, political, and social inequalities embedded in the history of the country continue to undermine the success of the coffee industry and its participants.

[10] Alejandra Ganem-Cuenca, "Gender Equity and Health Within Fair Trade Certified Coffee Cooperatives in Nicaragua: Tensions and Challenges" (PhD diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2011), 14.
[11] Tom Rogers, "Coffee regains top spot on Nicaragua's export list," *Nicaragua Dispatch*, January 7, 2013, www.nicaraguadispatch.com/news/2013
[12] Informational display from the Nicaraguan Coffee Museum in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. Visited January 5, 2013.
[13] Ibid.

Section 2.1.A: History of Coffee Cultivation in Nicaragua

First introduced to the Americas by the Dutch in the early 1700s, coffee did not become widely cultivated in Nicaragua for commodity purposes until nearly a century later.[14] Coffee farming as a form of commercial agricultural began in the latter half of the 1800s in the southern regions of Nicaragua.[15] The most productive zones of coffee cultivation were later found, however, to be located in northern Nicaragua.[16] The two most productive coffee zones remain the North Central Region and the Northeast Region followed by the Southern Pacific Region. The North Central Region as defined today encompasses the municipal departments of Matagalpa, Jinotega and Boaco while the Northeast Region contains those of Madriz, Nueva Segovia and Estelí. Present day Carazo, Granada, Masaya, Managua and Rivas are the five municipal departments which constitute the Southern Pacific Region.[17]



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[14] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 27.
[15] Mark Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds: the History of Coffee and How it Transformed our World* (New York: Basic Books, 2010) 37.
[16] Ibid.,38.
[17] Informational Display, the Nicaraguan Coffee Museum, Matagalpa, Nicaragua.
[18] Google Images, Accessed April 19, 2013 http://www.aurorabeachfront.com/nicaragua_images/nicaragua_map.gif.

Foreign influence, particularly German, largely dictated the development of the coffee industry within northern Nicaragua during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Beginning in the 1880s several consecutive Nicaraguan presidents issued a series of decrees which sought to subsidize the production of coffee in the northern regions of the country, in particular those of Matagalpa, Nueva Segovias and Jinotega. Included in these decrees were the promise of five cents paid for each coffee tree planted, provided more than 5,000 were sown, and the offer of free land for immigrants, foreign or national, who planted a minimum of 25,000 coffee trees.[19] Owing to these decrees there was an influx of predominantly male European and North American immigrants to northern Nicaragua.[20] Intermarriage between immigrants and Nicaraguan women became common practice and helped not only to facilitate the spread of coffee cultivation among locals but also incorporated women into the burgeoning coffee industry.[21] Coffee cultivation flourished in Nicaragua from the latter half of the nineteenth century until the global Great Depression, contributing to the creation of a highly stratified society.[22]

Section 2.1.A.1: The Coffee Elite and the Politics of Coffee Production

From its earliest cultivation, coffee has linked the experience of the elite landowner to that of the marginalized poor. Unlike neighboring countries in Latin America, the value of coffee in Nicaragua was tied to the land required for its cultivation rather than the processed beans and their exportation.[23] The financial success of coffee witnessed during the latter half of the nineteenth century led to the conflation of land with power in Nicaragua. Consequently, land

[19] Eddy Kühl, *Nicaragua y Su Café* (Columbia: Quebecor World Bogotá, 2004), 128-129.
[20] Ibid., 152.
[21] Ibid., 133.
[22] Jeffery M. Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 14.
[23] Ibid., 20.

became increasingly concentrated in the hands of a coffee oligarchy that wielded considerable control over political institutions and economic policy in Nicaragua until the early 1900s.[24] The social, political and economic disparities cultivated during this time between the few privileged elite and the impoverished majority proved the basis for political upheaval to come later in the twentieth century.

The political power of the coffee elite waned considerably in Nicaragua during the early twentieth century, as a result of global Great Depression and the rise of Anastasio Somoza Debayle to power.[25] From the early 1900s until the 1930s the U.S. military occupied Nicaragua, finally withdrawing due to the world economic crisis. Prior to the departure of its armed forces, however, the United States assisted in the funding, training and structuring of the counter-revolutionary National Guard to serve as its replacement. The U.S. entrusted command of the Guard to Anastasio Somoza Garcia, "an English-speaking, American-educated, politician-cum-military leader" in 1932.[26] Somoza Garcia used growing public discontent with then President Sacasa and military intimidation to win the national election in 1936. When he assumed office in 1937, President Somoza Garcia established a military dictatorship by merging the roles of presidency and chief director of the National Guard.[27] Overt corruption existed throughout the dictatorship which ensued, with the Somoza family retaining control of almost half the Nicaraguan economy.

[24] Ibid., 14.
[25] Ibid., 22.
[26] Susan Ram, "Intervention in Nicaragua: Carter and Now Reagan Find the Options Limited," *Economic and Political Weekly* 18, no. 47 (1983), 1978.
[27] Tim Merrill, "Nicaragua: A Country Study," *Nicaragua*, GPO for the Library of Congress, http://countrystudies.us/nicaragua/.

Somoza established himself as the largest property holder in Nicaragua by the mid-twentieth century, controlling a total of forty-six coffee plantations.[28] In spite of presenting such a formidable force within the industry, Somoza largely retained the support of the coffee elite due to favorable business policies he implemented while in power.[29] Division did occur among the coffee elite during the latter half of the twentieth century under the government of Somoza's son, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, due to the increase in corrupt concentration of political power and wealth within the family and their allies. The rise of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) witnessed further division, with the aristocratic elite and agro-industrial middle class, both of which included coffee growers, supporting the revolution.[30]

Section 2.1.B: The Sandinista Revolution 1979-1990

Founded in 1961 the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) arose as a socialist party opposed to the Somoza regime and United States intervention in Nicaragua. The Cuban revolution and Marxist ideology served as inspiration for its party leaders Carlos Fonseca, Tomás Borge, and Silvio Mayorga.[31] Nevertheless, the revolutionary party took its name, the Sandinistas, from Augusto Cesar Sandino, a non-Marxist nationalist who played a significant role in the removal of U.S. Marines from Nicaragua in the 1920s and 1930s.[32] The FSLN sought to halt the economic, political and social repression suffered by the Nicaraguan people at the hands of the Somoza family and their elite allies. While members of the FSLN varied in their degree of adherence to a radical leftist approach to governance, the majority supported building a coalition with progressive sectors of the elite so as to promote political pluralism and install a

[28] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 170.
[29] Paige, *Coffee and Power*, 28.
[30] Ibid., 40.
[31] Margaret Randal, *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1981), viiii.
[32] Paige, *Coffee and Power,* 32.

mixed economy.[33] The rhetoric employed by the FSLN appealed across all sectors of society and helped to facilitate mass support for the overthrow of Somoza.

In the years leading up to the Sandinista overthrow of Somoza, unemployment remained above twenty percent, more than half of Nicaraguan adults remained illiterate, particularly in rural areas, education beyond grade school was attained by less than ten percent of the population and Nicaragua lacked a comprehensive health care system.[34] In 1972, an earthquake devastated the capital, Managua, leaving thousands destitute. The concentration of relief aid in the hands of the Somoza family and their associates following the disaster served as a catalyst for action by the FSLN and further increased their support among all social classes.[35] The latter half of the 1970s witnessed the violent effects of growing political tension between the Somoza regime, the FSLN, contending anti-regime political parties and intervention by the United States culminating in the mass urban insurrections of 1978 to 1979. Although students and the informal urban working sector were the primary supporters of the FSLN sponsored insurrections, by 1979 the support base broadened to include businessmen and elite members of Nicaraguan society.[36] Elite proponents of the FSLN included members of aristocratic families, individuals who had benefitted from the exportation of commodity agricultural crops, such as cotton, and a substantial portion of the coffee elite who had previously supported Somoza.[37] The coffee elite provided assistance in a number of forms, chief among them monetary donations, the use of farmlands for shelter, and active participation in revolutionary activities.[38]

[33] Ibid., 32.
[34] Randall, *Sandino's Daughters*, xiii.
[35] Merrill, "Nicaragua: A Country Study".
[36] Paige, *Coffee and Power*, 38.
[37] Ibid.. 4.
[38] Ibid., 40.

On July 19, 1979, revolutionaries of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) ousted military dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle ending the United States sponsored Somoza dynasty which had governed Nicaragua with repressive economic, social and political policies since the 1930s.[39] The FSLN assumed control and proceeded to implement the social and economic reforms promised to their supporters throughout the revolution, chief among them agrarian reform.[40] Former allies of Somoza, particularly members of the coffee elite, were targeted in these initiatives which sought to re-distribute land to both men and women via the formation of cooperatives and state-run enterprises.[41]

Section 2.1.B.1: Women and the Sandinista Revolution

Women's support for the FSLN and their active participation, critical to the success of the Sandinista Revolution, succeeded in deconstructing gender based prejudices and brought practical gender interests to the forefront of public discourse in Nicaragua. Women's participation in revolutionary activism ranged from solely a demonstration of support for the FSLN to engaging in combat at the front of enemy lines with their male comrades; approximately one quarter of the revolutionary forces engaged in combat were women.[42] Throughout the revolutionary period a number of organizations dedicated to advancing the social and political demands of women were established. Several of the most recognized for their efforts included the Organización de Mujeres Democráticas de Nicaragua (Nicaraguan Democratic Women's Organization, or OMDN) founded by the Socialist Party, the Alianza Patriótica de Mujeres Nicaragüenses (Patriotic Alliance of Nicaraguan Women, or APMN), and

[39] Ram, "Intervention in Nicaragua", 1978.
[40] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 299.
[41] Christopher Bacon, "A Spot of Coffee in Crisis: Nicaraguan Smallholder Cooperatives, Fair Trade Newtorks, and Gendered Empowerment," *Latin American Perspectives* 37, no. 50 (2010), 54.
[42] Maxine Molyneux, *Women's Movements in International Perspective: Latin America and Beyond*, (London: Institute of American Studies, 2003), 38.

most important, AMPRONAC, the Asociación de Mujeres ante la Problemática Nacional (Association of Women Facing the Nation's Problems) which later became AMNLAE, the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Association of Nicaraguan Women.[43] AMNLAE sought to improve the social and political incorporation of women into the post-revolutionary society through official programs including education and health campaigns.[44]

Women's political mobilization reached a peak in the mid-1980s with AMNLAE claiming 85,000 members and women comprising more than one third of the FSLN leadership.[45] Integration in the revolutionary process provided women throughout Nicaragua with a space in which to develop "*a consciousness of themselves as women,*" and fostered discourse on the re-defining of traditional social, political and economic norms as a means for deconstructing gender based norms within the private and public spheres.[46] As a result of women's active involvement and support for the revolution, upon taking power the FSLN legally recognized the guarantee of women's formal rights.[47] This was most evident in the agrarian reform laws enacted by the FSLN during the 1980s.

Section 2.1.B.2: Sandinista Land Reform

In overthrowing the Somoza Dynasty, the leaders of the new Sandinista government took office and began implementing stages of their promised agrarian reform, starting with the expropriation of land once owned by Somoza.[48] This included more than 25 percent of the country's total land and 15 percent of the land used for coffee cultivation in Nicaragua. Further land was confiscated from former allies of Somoza, specifically members of the old coffee elite

[43] Randall, *Sandino's Daughters,* 16 & 25.
[44] Molyneux, "Women's Movements in International Perspective," 74.
[45] Ibid., 55.
[46] Ibid., 20.
[47] Ibid., 49.
[48] Bacon, "A Spot of Coffee in Crisis," 54.

who had sided with the military dictator over the FSLN.[49] These properties were then redistributed by the FSLN in the form of state-run farms and cooperatives.[50] In spite of this redistribution, the majority of agricultural production intended for export, in particular coffee, remained under private control given the support the elite and the agro-industrial middle class had provided the FSLN during the revolution.[51]

Shortly after the revolution the Sandinista government founded Empresa Nicaraghense del Café (ENCAFE), a state-run agency which nationalized the sale and purchase of Nicaraguan coffee.[52] Coffee producers were only paid ten percent of the international market price through ENCAFE as the remaining profit was used by the Sandinista government to supply credit to farmers. This cycle proved unsustainable, however, and increasing debt prevented coffee farmers from paying their workers fair wages.[53] Throughout the eighties discontent with the FSLN continued to grow among coffee producers who were suffering economically, and among the rural poor who were not benefiting from the literacy programs and health services implemented in urban areas to assist the poor.[54]

Formal agrarian reform laws passed between the time of the revolution and the mid-1980s proved first to be beneficial and then became increasingly controversial. Initial re-distribution of the lands once owned by Somoza and his elite allies was welcomed, and the Sandinista government successfully promoted cooperative membership through the control of coffee export channels, access to credit and agricultural inputs and union membership.[55] Ensuing

[49] Paige, *Coffee and Power*, 272.
[50] Ibid., 277.
[51] Ibid., 272.
[52] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds,* 299.
[53] Ibid., 318.
[54] Ibid., 318.
[55] Bacon, "A Spot of Coffee in Crisis," 54.

reforms and state-centered economic policies proved nonetheless to be detrimental to the Nicaraguan coffee economy.[56] Between the revolution in 1979 and 1984 the Sandinista government had redistributed only five percent of available arable land in Nicaragua to families and they had begun discouraging the seizure of land by the landless which had previously been encouraged by the revolutionary forces. The first formal agrarian reform, passed in 1981, was widely viewed as overly supportive of large-scale producers, private and state-owned, given the stipulation that only estates larger than 350 hectares in the Pacific region of Nicaragua and 700 hectares in the interior of the country, would be claimed for redistribution purposed if unused or rented out by its owner for subsistence use. The majority of large scale farms, both private and state-owned, did not exceed this land size and therefore were allowed to continue cultivating crops for exportation.[57] An additional reform law passed in 1986 stated that underused, abandoned and rented land could be repossessed by the state for redistribution purposes thereby allowing the government to repossess more areas of land.[58] These later reforms and land confiscations were widely viewed as illegal and politically motivated and in 1988 the Agrarian Reform Minister announced the reform process finished due to declining levels of coffee production and growing public discontent.[59]

Relevant to this research is the impact the agrarian reforms had on coffee farmers in the northern region of Nicaragua and on women's participation in the coffee industry. The Law of Farming Cooperatives created 2,000 cooperatives that directly benefitted over 60,000 families in Nicaragua.[60] As a result of the Sandinista agrarian reforms approximately two fifths of the coffee

[56] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 299.
[57] Paige, *Coffee and Power,* 277.
[58] Ibid., 278.
[59] Ibid., 278 & 284.
[60] Bacon, "A Spot of Coffee in Crisis," 54.

farmers located in Matagalpa and Jinotega received land titles.[61] Largely due to their contributions to the revolutionary efforts of the FSLN, women were granted land titles during the redistribution period.[62] Furthermore, upon taking office the Sandinista government formally recognized and promoted women's participation in coffee cooperatives; the Agrarian and Cooperative Laws passed in the mid 1980s acknowledged women as eligible cooperative members.[63] Although the Sandinista led land reforms proved contentious to some, they facilitated the development of the contemporary cooperative network inclusive of male and female coffee producers.

Section 2.1.C: The Nicaraguan Coffee Cooperative Network

The lasting impact of the Sandinista led land reform programs was the expansion of the contemporary Nicaraguan coffee cooperative system through the promotion of cooperativism and the creation of farming cooperatives.[64] The Law of Farming Cooperatives created 2,000 cooperatives that directly benefitted over 60,000 families in Nicaragua.[65] Throughout the 1980s thousands of coffee cooperatives directly created through the agrarian reform were registered with the General Cooperative Management Department (Dirección General de Cooperativas) of the Nicaraguan Ministry of Work.[66] Coffee The General Cooperative Law and seven cooperative principles outlined below currently serve as regulation for coffee cooperatives operating in Nicaragua.

[61] Bacon, "A Spot of Coffee in Crisis," 54.
[62] Ibid., 55.
[63] Ganem-Cuenca, "Gender Equity and Health within Fair Trade Certified Cooperatives in Nicaragua," 13.
[64] Ibid, 12.
[65] Bacon, "A Spot of Coffee in Crisis," 54.
[66] CECOCAFEN, *Nuestro Origin*, CECOCAFEN.
http://www.cecocafen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=89&Itemid=156

Section 2.1.C.1: Cooperative Laws

The first General Cooperatives Law was established in Nicaragua on July 6, 1971 and sought to provide a guideline for the structure and purpose of cooperatives.[67] The law has since been amended three times and was replaced in 2004 with the General Cooperatives Law of 2004 (Law No. 499); this law has also since been revised.[68] Law No. 499 offers a comprehensive overview of, among other aspects: the activities cooperatives may or may not partake in, the treatment cooperative members are entitled to, and the process behind cooperative formation.[69] Articles Eight, Twenty and One Hundred and Three specifically address the promotion of gender equitable treatment among cooperative members.[70] All coffee producing cooperatives must abide by the General Cooperatives Law.

In addition to abiding by Law No. 499, coffee cooperative members are beholden to practicing seven cooperative principles. The first is that cooperatives must be open organizations which do not discriminate on the premise of gender, race, social class, or political position or religion. Second, cooperatives must be democratically administered organizations in which male and female members have an equal right to vote and represent their cooperative. Third, cooperative members must contribute equally to the capital earned by the cooperative and a portion of income earned by the cooperative must be shared communally. Fourth, cooperatives are to be recognized as autonomous organizations controlled by its members. Fifth, cooperatives must provide education and training to members so as to contribute to the social development of

[67]Clifford C. Hooker and Reyes, "Reglamento a la Ley General de Cooperativas," *La Gaceta*, March 10, 1975. http://www.bu.edu/bucflp/files/2012/01/Regulations-of-The-General-Cooperatives-Law-of-1971-Regulation-1-of-1975.pdf
[68] Boston University Center for Finance, Law and Policy, *Nicaragua*, http://www.bu.edu/bucflp/countries/nicaragua/.
[69] Unkown, "Decreto No. 10-2005," *La Gaceta*, March 18, 2005. http://www.bu.edu/bucflp/files/2012/01/Executive-Decree-No.-16-2005-Regulating-General-Cooperatives-Law-of-2004-Law-No.-499.pdf.
[70] CECOCAFEN, *Política de Equidad de Género y Generacional* (Matagalpa: Centro de Cooperativas Sueco, 2009), 7.

the cooperative. Sixth, each cooperative must serve their members effectively and support the cooperative movement through collaborative efforts at the local, national, regional and international level. Lastly, the seventh principle calls for members of a cooperative to work for the sustainable development of their community through policies acceptable to all members.[71] These principles and the regulations set forth in the Cooperatives Law are to be practiced within each level of the three tier Nicaraguan cooperative system.

Section 2.1.C.2: Structure of the Cooperative System

The Nicaraguan cooperative structure is organized in a three tier, permeable hierarchy (Figure One). The primary level of the system is comprised of base level cooperatives. Base level cooperatives are collectively organized communities of smallholder coffee producers.[72] Membership is exclusive to land owning coffee producers and may or may not be extended to the families and relatives of the individual producer. These cooperatives generally represent from between ten to eighty members of whom the majority are frequently men.[73] Gendered divisions in membership may or may not correlate with women's disparate access to land.

Base level cooperatives are largely represented by secondary level cooperatives. One type of secondary level cooperatives is unions of cooperative farmers (Union Cooperativa Agropecuarias, or UCA's). Unions of cooperative farmers generally represent between ten and fifteen base level cooperatives, which could translate into representing from one hundred to several hundred primary producers.[74] Secondary unions are staffed by trained, professional staff

[71] Unión de Cooperativas Agropecuarias SOPPEXCCA, *Política de Genero Institucional* (Jinotega, 2005), 17-26.
[72] Karla Utting, "Assessing the Impact of Fair Trade Coffee: Towards an Integrative Framework," *Journal of Business Ethics* 86, no. 1 (2008), 139.
[73]Digna Aráuz Zeledon, Interview with author, January 15, 2013.
[74] Utting, "Assessing the Impact of Fair Trade Coffee," 139 & 140.

who work to meet the needs of primary level cooperative members as well as the staff of tertiary level cooperatives.[75]

Secondary level cooperatives or unions of cooperative farmers are affiliated with tertiary level cooperatives or cooperative centers. Tertiary level cooperatives may serve between ten and twenty secondary level cooperatives including UCA's. As such they often represent a minimum of six hundred base-level cooperatives or thousands of primary coffee producers. Tertiary cooperatives are staffed by professionally trained administrative and technical personnel who serve primarily as intermediaries between coffee producers and direct buyers in the coffee trade, particularly in the northern hemisphere. Tertiary level cooperatives assist primary cooperatives with attaining specialty coffee certification such as Fairtrade and organic.

Section 2.2: Sustainable Coffee Production in Nicaragua

"Sustainable coffee goes beyond just the decommodification of the bean. It's also a decommodification of producer and consumer, a way to understand that at each end of the international value chain there are living people."[76]

Sustainable coffee is an umbrella term utilized within the coffee industry to refer to coffee grown using alternative practices certified by independent agencies. There are three primary types of sustainable coffee certified by international agencies and sold commercially in competition with conventionally grown coffee. These three sustainable coffees are Fair Trade (Fairtrade), organic, and bird-friendly, otherwise known as shade grown coffee.[77] Nicaragua has been involved in the cultivation of alternatively grown coffee beans since 1990.[78] The following section briefly explains the process of alternative coffee cultivation as compared to conventional

[75] Margarita Espinoza, Interview with author, January 8, 2013 and Yadira Montenegro, Interview with author, January 9, 2013.
[76] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 210.
[77] Ibid., 187 & 188.
[78] Eddy Kühl, *Nicaragua y Su Café*, 264.

with particular attention paid to Fairtrade production. A short history of Fairtrade is provided as context for explaining the entry of Nicaraguan coffee cooperatives into this niche market. The section concludes with a discussion of the standards and benefits of Fairtrade as they pertain to coffee producers in Nicaragua, specifically women.

Section 2.2.A: The Process of Coffee Production

Although more than half of the world's supply of coffee is produced by small-scale farmers operating on areas of approximately five acres or less, the global market is nevertheless constructed so as to best meet the needs of large producers owning and operating vast coffee estates. Conventionally cultivated coffee is largely unregulated as compared to coffee cultivated for sale in alternative or specialty markets. In the newly formed alternative markets producers are required to complete agricultural certification programs and independent agencies inspect cooperatives to ensure there is compliance with the standards set forth by the organization, be it Fairtrade, organic or another.[79] While organic, bird-friendly and shade-grown coffee standards seek to reduce the environmental externalities of coffee production, Fairtrade aims to embody the cost of labor in the price of coffee.[80] All three types of specialty coffee seek to emphasize the inputs of coffee production not addressed in the conventional market- such as cultivation methods, bean quality and origin- with the purpose of transforming the traditional producer consumer dynamic of non-relation to one of mutual investment.[81]

[79] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 188.
[80] Ibid., 195.
[81] Ibid., 156.

Section 2.2.B: The Fairtrade Label and Market

The fair trade model originated in the latter half of the twentieth century on the premise that direct trade between producers of any good and alternative trade organizations (ATOs) would prevent exploitative practices witnessed in the conventional market.[82] Alternative trade organizations sought to guarantee small-scale producers market access through a network of "Third World shops" and provide them a fair price for their goods in order to help them improve their individual and community livelihoods.[83] Coffee first entered the market of fairly traded goods in the early 1970s.[84] Beginning in the 1980s there was a movement by the ATOs and network supporters to label fairly traded products as such so that they might be distinguished from conventionally traded goods in order to then market them to the mainstream retail sector, primarily grocery markets.[85] Consequently, the 'Max Havelaar' label was created in 1988 by a development agency in the Netherlands to distinguish coffee which had been purchased using fair terms of trade from coffee which was obtained and distributed via the conventional market.[86] Throughout the ensuing years various labeling initiatives were started throughout European and North American markets. The Fairtrade Labelling Organization International (FLO) was founded in 1997 as a means of bringing together all of the labeling initiatives to establish universal standards for Fairtrade certification.[87]

The Fairtrade Labeling Organization International (FLO) is an international certification association which seeks to promote smallholder producers through the adoption of transparent

[82] Benoit Daviron and Stefano Ponte, *The Coffee Paradox: Global Markets, Commodity Trade and the Elusive Promise of Development* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 173.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 197.
[85] Daviron and Ponte, *The Coffee Paradox*, 173.
[86] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 197.
[87] Fairtrade International, *History of Fairtrade*, Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International. Last modified 2011. http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what_is_fairtrade/history.aspx.

and equitable trading practices sustained by affiliated member organizations around the world and socially conscious consumers.[88] In its most simplistic form, the term Fairtrade, or Fair Trade, refers to the market-driven model of transparent trade in which power is equalized between producers and vendors. Fair terms of trade, or fair trade, refers to the standardized principles and practices of Fairtrade. Specific to the coffee industry, these terms include but are not limited to: the guaranteed provision of a minimum fair price for green coffee beans, partial financing from the importers upfront if necessary for the pending sale of exported coffee beans, and advice from importers on how producers might improve the quality of their coffee and hence their business.[89] Producers and suppliers seeking Fairtrade Certification must abide by the standards set by FLO and enforced by FLO-Cert, a separate audit company.[90] As required by FLO, coffee cooperatives seeking certification must employ transparent administrative practices, be democratically managed and return a portion of the income earned from selling their beans in the Fairtrade market to social development projects within their community.[91] Import organizations and distributors seeking certification must verify that they buy their products from certified smallholders.[92] Fairtrade Certified coffee is now widely distributed with over two hundred cooperatives from twenty five different coffee producing countries selling more than seventy five million pounds of green coffee through the alternative market.[93]

[88] Fairtrade International, *What is Fairtrade?,* Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International. Last modified 2011. http://www.fairtrade.net/what_is_fairtrade.html.
[89] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 198.
[90] Fairtrade Labelling Organization International, *What is Fairtrade?*
[91] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 196.
[92] Sarah Lyon, "We Want to Be Equal to Them: Fair-trade Coffee Certification and Gender Equity within Organizations," *Human Organization* 67, no.3 (2008) 261.
[93] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 202.

Section 2.2.B.1: Participatory Benefits of Fairtrade

The benefits coffee producers receive from achieving Fairtrade certification are primarily economic in nature. This was particularly evident during the Coffee Crisis of 2001-2003. Nicaragua's dependency upon coffee proved devastating to the health and well-being of the country during the Coffee Crisis; a third of the population was reported as malnourished in 2003 and the country suffered a mass exodus.[94] During this time period the number of cooperatives operating in Nicaragua declined drastically, from approximately three thousand to less than one thousand, due to the lack of government investment and attention. The Fairtrade movement sought throughout this time and following the Coffee Crisis to revitalize the cooperative network. The number of Nicaraguan cooperatives has since nearly returned to its previous numbers.[95] Throughout the Coffee Crisis Fairtrade certified cooperative members were provided prices double or triple that which was offered coffee farmers through the conventional market. Global prices dropped at times below fifty cents per pound of coffee; however, the price paid by Fairtrade remained above one dollar per pound.[96] The income earned by certified cooperatives allowed for members to maintain stability in the face of the Coffee Crisis while those selling their coffee in the conventional market frequently lost their land and a means to a living.[97] As a result of the Coffee Crisis increased attention was paid to the relation between consumers and producers participating in the coffee trade, and consequently the Fairtrade movement generated increased support. Growing public attention also facilitated the ongoing intercontinental move to replace the network intensive commodity chain with a value chain, in an effort to not only

[94] Ibid., 102 & 103.
[95] Heather Putnam, Interview with the author, November 30, 2012.
[96] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 201 & 202.
[97] Valerie Nelson and Barry Pound, "The Last Ten Years: A Comprehensive Review of the Literature on the Impact of Fairtrade," Commissioned by Fairtrade Foundation (London: University of Greenwich, 2009), 35.

support farmers in their livelihoods but also promote consumer conscience about the social, political, economic and environmental injustices facing coffee producer.[98]

Since its founding the Fairtrade Labelling Organization International and its affiliated members have worked to redefine the coffee value chain in a way which locates the majority of trade profit within producing countries rather than consuming countries. A value chain can be understood as the process of economic exchange and product transformation which occurs between the cultivation of coffee and the consumption of the final product produced from the beans. Within this process, each stage in which beans are transferred and transformed is considered a link in the value chain with differing costs attached to each. The general value chain attached to coffee beans includes the following stages: cultivation, the first stage of processing, exportation and shipping, distribution within consumer countries, roasting and packaging, redistribution, brewing and consumption. Additional or fewer links may be included dependent upon the specific type of coffee bean and the exporting and importing countries.[99] Money spent by consumers is dispersed among all the aforementioned economic links, largely in an unequal manner.[100] Since the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement in 1989 a greater portion of these value chain stages are being completed in consuming countries, significantly reducing the amount of income generated for coffee producing countries. Between the late 1980s and 2001 the amount of each dollar spent on coffee in the United States returned to coffee producing countries was reduced by seventy percent while the retail price of coffee rose forty percent.[101] Fairtrade aims to rectify such unequal allocation of consumer money through the removal of unnecessary links in the value chain, such as the middlemen within coffee producing countries,

[98] Laura Raynolds, "Consumer/Producer Links in Fair Trade Coffee Networks," *Sociologia Ruralis* 42, no.4 (2002).
[99] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 110.
[100] Ibid., 113.
[101] Ibid., 115.

and by factoring the costs of labor as well as qualities of the beans produced into the price paid to certified coffee cooperatives.[102] Coffee producing countries with mostly small-scale farmers, such as Nicaragua, stand to benefit enormously from such changes.

Section 2.2.B.2: Fairtrade in Nicaragua

'Free trade' Nicaraguan coffee was first marketed in 1986 by Equal Exchange, a U.S. based coffee retailer begun the same year which sought to guarantee fair terms of trade to democratically run small-scale coffee farmers.[103] Nicaraguan coffee was selected for the first marketable product due to the political upheaval occurring within the country at that time and the trade embargo President Reagan had imposed upon the Sandinista government. The decision made by Equal Exchange to sell Nicaraguan Coffee, dubbed Café Nica, was publicly viewed as a demonstration of solidarity for the revolution and a challenge to U.S. foreign trade policies.[104] Since the 1990s Nicaraguan coffee producers have actively participated in the certified Fairtrade markets. More than fifteen percent of the coffee cooperatives presently operating in Nicaragua have received certification from FLO-Cert.[105] The Organization of Northern Coffee Cooperatives (CECOCAFEN) and the Promoter of Cooperative Development in the Segovias (PRODECOOP) collectively represent eighty percent of the 5, 433 Nicaraguan smallholder producers now certified by the Fairtrade Labeling Organization.[106] As a result of Fairtrade certification and the associated economic benefits and technical trainings made available to their members, CECOCAFEN has had the capacity to develop into a sophisticated and sizeable cooperative with specialized staff and cupping labs used for testing the quality of beans produced by its primary

[102] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 156.
[103] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 320.
[104] Equal Exchange, *History of Equal Exchange: A Vision of Fairness to Farmers*, http://equalexchange.coop/story.
[105] Kate Macdonald, "Globalizing Justice within Coffee Supply Chains? Fair Trade, Starbucks and the transformation of supply chain governance," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no.4 (2007), 797.
[106] Bacon, "A Spot of Coffee in Crisis," 57.

cooperatives.[107] In spite of the benefits Fairtrade certification has provided for coffee producers in Nicaragua, there is concern that the economic focus of Fairtrade has prevented FLO from enforcing its standards pertaining to gender equity among cooperative members.[108]

Section 2.2.C: Fairtrade and Gender Equity

Although Fairtrade maintains standards regarding the promotion of gender equity, the persistence of gendered disparities within the coffee cooperative system in Nicaragua demonstrates that movements for equity are nevertheless susceptible to the persistent nature of economic, social and political inequalities. The intention of FLO is to foster gender equity primarily through anti-discriminatory standards as well as investment in women's income generating activities and capacity building workshops.[109] A study conducted in 2009 to measure the impact of Fairtrade on reducing gender inequities within certified coffee and non-coffee cooperatives of various producer countries found Fairtrade does not necessarily have the capacity to challenge culturally engrained gender norms which underlie women's inability to participate.[110] Additionally, it was found that there is "a lack of explicit gender policies and strategies amongst Fairtrade organizations" and furthermore, Fairtrade certification may result in a disproportionate increase in workload for women as opposed to men.[111] Other research conducted on this issue, specifically among coffee cooperatives in Nicaragua, found that women continue to have limited access to land ownership and the means of production necessary for coffee cultivation.[112] Although greater efforts have been taken to reduce gendered discrimination

[107] Luttinger and Dicum, *The Coffee Book*, 202 and 203.
[108] Nelson and Pound, "The Last Ten Years," 31.
[109] Lyon, "We Want to Be Equal to Them," 259 and Macdonald, "Globalizing Justice within Coffee Supply Chains?", 800.
[110] Nelson and Pound, "The Last Ten Years," 38.
[111] Ibid., 31.
[112] Bacon, Ganem-Cuenca, Lyon, Wing-sea Lung

within the Nicaraguan coffee trade than throughout the rest of Latin America, gender equity remains one of the foremost issues to be addressed by cooperatives across Nicaragua.[113]

Section 2.3: Women's Participation in the Nicaraguan Coffee Industry

"…empowerment is not simply a matter of choice. It is embedded in the women's sense of self-awareness and agency as connected with the community's sense of empowerment and in the wider contexts created by the culture, national interests, and outsider involvement."[114]

The study of gender equity in the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative network must be grounded in a review of how gender equity has been studied and theorized within Nicaragua at large. Gender equity is most commonly analyzed in relation to Nicaragua's history of patriarchal social, political and economic practices as well as the culture of machismo which pervades societal norms. It is significant to consider the implications of patriarchy and machismo when studying gender-based differences in formal rights and divisions of labor, such as those present in the coffee industry.

Section 2.3.A.: The Culture of Machismo and Coffee Production

Discussion of persisting gender based inequities within the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative structure must take into account the historic and ongoing role patriarchy and machismo have played in constructing Nicaraguan society and social norms. While machismo and patriarchy both stem from a fear of female empowerment and the implicit loss of male domination each manifests itself in different forms.[115] Patriarchy refers to a differential power relation in which men are empowered and exert control over women through institutionalized

[113] Jannie Wing-sea Lung, "Making the Invisible Count: Developing Participatory Indicators for Gender Equity in a Fair Trade Coffee Cooperative in Nicaragua," (PhD diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2011), 112.
[114] Gayla Jewell, "Contextual Empowerment: The Impact of Health Brigade Involvement on the Women of Miraflor, Nicaragua," *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* 19, no. 49 (2007), 55.
[115] Ibid., 51.

social practices, such as gendered divisions of labor within the domestic sphere.[116] While patriarchy refers to the systematic institutionalized practice of male domination, machismo is understood to be the sense of entitlement held by men and used as justification for exerting control over the actions of women and lesser men.[117] In the context of coffee production, gendered division of field labor could be considered the consequence of patriarchy, while low participation of female coffee producers in cooperative meetings as compared to high participation of male members would be attributed to the culture of machismo. The discussion of patriarchy and machismo is pertinent to this research project as both continue to influence the ability of women to fully benefit economically and socially from participation in coffee cooperatives, specifically with regards to the issue of land ownership and property rights.

Section 2.3.B: Property Rights

Property rights have historically reflected the Nicaraguan experience of patriarchal political systems and the socially ingrained norms of machismo. Throughout the nineteenth century, Nicaragua underwent a process of liberal political development through the introduction of various civil codes and constitutions which regulated individual rights by gender.[118] Although the earliest civil code recognized the potential of both men and women to control property, citizenship was conferred solely upon men owning land.[119] Women were allowed to inherit, own, and bequeath land; however, their ability to control their own property was dependent upon marital status.[120] Single women and widows fortunate enough to have access to land were allowed to own and maintain control over their property. Once a woman entered into marriage,

[116] Molyneux, "Women's Movements in International Perspective," 205.
[117] Jewell, "Contextual Empowerment," 51.
[118] Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux, *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 157.
[119] Ibid., 151.
[120] Ibid., 157.

however, national law mandated that the operation control of any property be passed to her husband.[121] As privatization of land increased throughout the latter half of the 1800s, in conjunction with the rise in agro-exportation and the coffee boom, the higher value placed on land resulted in further limitations on women's ability to access land and own property.

The Civil Codes of 1867 and 1871 provided legal basis for husbands to acquire control of their wife's property as well as of her physical being.[122] Civil Code 1867 granted men the right to manage any property owned by their wife prior to marriage as well as any additional land acquired by the pair during their marriage. Women could only regain control through death, either their own, in which case they legally could bequeath their property, or through the death of their partner in which case women became the acting manager of any jointly owned or previously owned property. Alternatively Civil Code 1871 gave control of a women's womb to her husband with the intent of ensuring that offspring belonged to the husband for purposes of property inheritance.[123] While these patriarchal laws imposed limitations on the social and economic freedoms of women, they simultaneously facilitated a trend in nonmarrying activity to preserve women's ability to partake in commercial activities generated by the growth of the Nicaraguan economy in the early 1900s.[124] The history of gendered property rights in Nicaragua is crucial for understanding trends in women's political, social and economic participation throughout the twentieth century and more specifically, the changing roles of women in coffee cultivation and production.

[121] Ibid., 152.
[122] Ibid., 157.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid., 161.

Section 2.3.C: Trends in Women's Cooperative Participation

The latter half of the twentieth century saw women beginning to openly question and challenge their social, political, and economic subjugation. The various feminist movements which developed throughout Latin America during the 1960s opened spaces for women and men to exchange public discourse on new perspectives of gender relations and power. Through political activism and increased participation in community organizations, among other strategies, women have sought to empower themselves and in doing so they have successfully drawn attention to gender issues in their respective countries.[125] This holds particularly true for Nicaragua as evidenced by the changing roles women occupy in the cooperative system.

Section 2.3.C.1: Participation in the Coffee Industry

Available reports which document and analyze the participation of women in the Nicaraguan coffee industry, and in the Fairtrade coffee industry more broadly, demonstrate that women's participation in coffee production remains limited. In Nicaragua, women have progressively gained access to land since the 1990s, either through male relatives or husbands or via the support of their coffee cooperative.[126] Nevertheless, female land ownership remains low as compared to male ownership which may explain the disproportionately high number of male cooperative members as compared to female cooperative members operating in Nicaragua.[127] A study conducted for Fairtrade found that throughout Latin America women are less likely to participate directly in coffee production due to traditional gendered divisions of labor.[128] The same study further highlighted that women with a more active participatory role in coffee cultivation are either younger or from an economically less stable household, or both, and that

[125] Jane Jaquette, *Feminist Agendas and Democracy in Latin America*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 9.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Maura Blandón, Interview with the author, January 11, 2013.
[128] Nelson and Pound, "The Last Ten Years," 33.

participation is driven by need.[129] Consequently, women are increasingly seeking alternative means of income. In Nicaragua women have resorted to forming their own primary producer cooperatives to overcome gender inequities.[130] These initiatives as well as other programs which provide women with additional earned income, such as the sale of crafts or other handmade goods, outside of coffee production are gaining in prevalence.[131] The following quote from a report commissioned by Fairtrade provides a comprehensive summary of women's contemporary participation in the coffee cooperative system:

> "A few of the case studies note progress on women's representation in specific co-operatives. But in other cases representation is not found to be improving much where current gender roles and inequalities are entrenched or where little effort has been made to tackle them. For example women's representation in co-operative management and meetings is limited by gender norms which see their sphere of influence as being more about education or welfare than having a say and confidence to speak in male-dominated meetings. Although co-operative membership and associated rights are open to women in theory, this does not guarantee their full participation in practice."[132]

As this section demonstrates, women's roles within the coffee cooperative system are changing to better serve the needs of female producers in the face of persisting inequities; however, the broader impact of such initiatives on perceptions of gender equity and changes in local and international discourse remain to be examined.

Understanding women's contemporary participation in the Nicaraguan cooperative system must be grounded in a larger contextual understanding of the political, economic and social factors which facilitated their involvement. This research will examine how gender equity is perceived and addressed within the three levels of the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative system. Specifically it will look at the role Fairtrade as well as affiliate trade and non-trade based

[129] Ibid., 33.
[130] Bacon, "A Spot of Coffee in Crisis," 60.
[131] Nelson and Pound, "The Last Ten Years," 33.
[132] Ibid., 31.

organizations have to play in promoting efforts underway to reduce gender based inequities among coffee producers.

Chapter Three: Methodology

An extensive review of existing literature on the intersections between the social and political mobilization of women in Nicaragua since the latter half of the twentieth century and the concurrent development of the cooperative coffee system served as a basis for this research project. Primary research was conducted in two parts over a period of six months and employed a combination of techniques, specifically the use of semi-structured interviews, participant observation and text analysis. The first portion of research was conducted in the United States during fall 2012 and funding from the Occidental College Undergraduate Research Center made travel to Nicaragua for the subsequent research possible during January 2013. The purpose of conducting interviews was to collect information on whether a standardized approach to defining and addressing gender equity within the Nicaraguan coffee network is a viable and favorable option, and, if so, whether a top-down or bottom-up approach to this issue would be most effective. As research progressed and the original question was sufficiently addressed, the focus of the project changed to examine factors within each level of the cooperative network which facilitate or inhibit the successful and sustained implementation of gender equitable practices.

Section 3.1: Semi-structured Interviews

The original portion of the primary research for this project sought to understand how individual perceptions of gender equity within the Nicaraguan cooperative coffee system differ and compare across levels of the network. Although surveys provide a useful means for collecting quantitative data and limited qualitative information, the highly qualitative nature of

this project lent to the decision to use semi-structured interviews as the principal means of research. Employing the semi-structured form proved beneficial in that it provided subjects with the space to discuss in length both personal and collective experiences of addressing gender inequity in Nicaragua through the coffee cooperative network. Descriptors frequently utilized by subjects in response to questions on gender equity served as a stand-in for quantifiable data that might have been otherwise collected in surveys.

Section 3.1.A: United States Interviews

Over the course of fall 2012, research was conducted to identify the principle United States based affiliate organizations of the Nicaraguan cooperatives selected for this study. Convenience sampling allowed for the compilation of a list of international organizations engaged in trade with the three cooperatives selected for study in this research, CECOCAFEN, UCA San Ramón and UCA SOPPEXCCA. Internet searches of these cooperatives facilitated the identification of eleven U.S. based affiliate organizations, six for CECOCAFEN and UCA San Ramón each and five for UCA SOPPEXCCA. These included InterAmerican Coffee, Thanksgiving Coffee Company, Sustainable Harvest, Café Moto, Peet's Coffee, Coffee Kids, Green Mountain Roasters, Cooperative Coffees, Catholic Relief Services, USAID, and the Community Agroecology Network (Appendix A).

Interviews were solicited from representatives with each of the aforementioned organizations. Staff from eight of the eleven associations replied indicating interest and willingness to participate in the research project; no reply was received from InterAmerican Coffee, Café Moto, or Green Mountain Roasters. Although follow-up letters were exchanged with representatives from Thanksgiving Coffee, Peet's Coffee, Sustainable Harvest and Catholic

Relief Services these correspondences did not result in interviews. Communication with a representative from USAID continued until January 2013, yet did not lead to an interview.

Interviews were conducted via Skype with representatives from Coffee Kids, the Community Agroecology Network (CAN), and Cooperative Coffees between November and December 2012. Each interview subject was asked the same set of questions tailored to obtain information on the role their organization plays within the Nicaraguan coffee trade network and the influence they may exert in promoting gender equity within the system (Appendix B). Findings from these preliminary interviews provided a basis for developing the semi-structured interviews conducted in Nicaragua.

Section 3.1.B: Nicaraguan Interviews

Three cooperatives situated in the northern region of Nicaragua were identified to serve as preliminary sources for interview subjects. Administrative representatives from CECOCAFEN, a tertiary cooperative, and UCA San Ramón, a secondary cooperative, as well as UCA SOPPEXCCA, another secondary cooperative were contacted via email in November 2012. Following the initial exchange of emails, a request was made to visit the cooperative offices in order to conduct interviews with available staff during the month of January. Confirmation emails were received throughout November and December.

During January 2013, original research was conducted in Nicaragua over the course of two weeks. Altogether eleven interviews were conducted with both non-member individuals in administration positions at the main offices of each cooperative level and cooperative members at the grassroots level of the network. The first interviews conducted were with individuals in administrative positions at each of the three aforementioned cooperatives; the snowball

technique was employed in order to identify further interview subjects involved at the primary level of the cooperative structure. Two leaders employed in the office of CECOCAFEN, a tertiary cooperative, were interviewed, one female and one male. Interviews were then conducted with one female coordinator from UCA San Ramón, a secondary cooperative affiliated with CECOCAFEN, and one female coordinator from UCA SOPPEXCCA, another secondary cooperative not affiliated with CECOCAFEN operating in the region of Jinotega. A joint interview was conducted with two female members of Cooperative Los Robles, a primary level cooperative belonging to UCA SOPPEXCCA. A separate day was spent visiting the community La Reyna to interview five members of Cooperative Danilo González, a primary cooperative affiliated with UCA San Ramón. Interview subjects included the cooperative president (male), vice president (female), two members (female), and the daughter of a member.

Interviews were conducted within the offices of CECOCAFEN, UCA San Ramón and UCA SOPPEXCCA and within the communities of Los Robles and La Reyna, both in community areas and the homes of individual members. Two sets of interview questions were used, one tailored towards representatives from the administrative level (Appendix C) and one modified for cooperative members at the primary level (Appendix D). The questions posed sought to elicit information which would lend to understanding current perceptions of gender equity among individuals actively participating in all levels of the Nicaraguan cooperative structure. Additional questions specific to the responses of each interview subjects were asked to prompt lengthier conversation on the culture of machismo and social development projects which have been implemented within the various levels of the cooperative system to equalize male and female participation. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and recorded with the

permission of the interview subject. Upon return to the U.S. interviews were transcribed and translated for use in this paper.

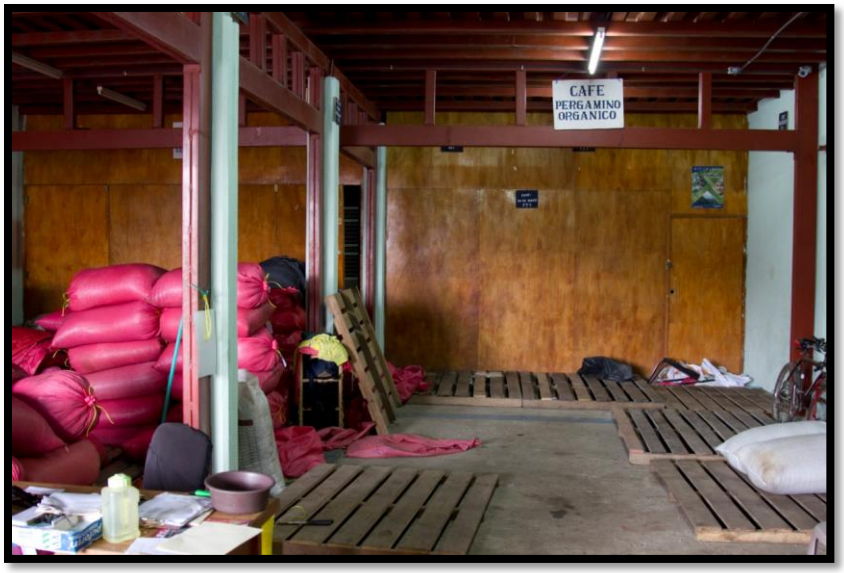
An additional interview was conducted with Mausi and Eddy Kühl, the owners of Selva Negra, an ecolodge and coffee estate located between the cities of Matagalpa and Jinotega. Although the coffee produced by this farm is not sold through the cooperative network the interview responses of the owners proved beneficial in understanding the history of coffee production in Nicaragua. Particularly with regards to women's roles and the movement towards gender equity within the country at large. Although the couple co-owns the estate Mausi is the primary supervisor and maintains the responsibilities of labor oversight and general management. An interview was conducted in English with Mausi and the questions posed were those asked of administrative staff at CECOCAFEN, UCA San Ramón and UCA SOPPEXCCA. In response to the subject's answers further follow-up questions were asked which prompted a conversation about the culture of machismo and the movement to empower women throughout Nicaragua. The information attained from this conversation added to that acquired in conversation with the other female research subjects when considering the overall current state of gender equity in the Nicaraguan coffee industry.

Section 3.2: Participant Observation in Nicaragua

During the course of research conducted in Nicaragua visits were made to the cities of Matagalpa, Jinotega and San Ramón as well as to the communities of Los Robles and La Reyna. It is important to include participant observations to provide context for analyzing how the cooperative system is structured to meet the needs of the individuals involved at each level as well as across levels of the overall network.

Interviews were conducted in office settings in Matagalpa (CECOCAFEN), San Ramón (UCA San Ramón), and Jinotega (UCA SOPPEXCCA). Although the administration of CECOCAFEN, a tertiary level cooperative, is the same as UCA San Ramón, an affiliated secondary cooperative, seeing the offices allowed for observation of differences in the purpose of each entity. Specifically, the office of CECOCAFEN is more formally structured to receive visitors such as foreign investors and tourists. The office of UCA San Ramón on the other hand includes a large community space filled with information on past and current campaigns and programs run by the cooperative union. It is used largely for general assembly meetings of cooperative members

Touring the office of UCA SOPPEXCCA provided an opportunity to compare how secondary cooperatives differ in structure based upon the needs of their affiliated primary level cooperatives. Similar to UCA San Ramón, the office of UCA SOPPEXCCA also provides a community meeting space for members and non-members use. Two significant differences were noted between the offices. The office of UCA SOPPEXCCA includes a warehouse used for storing the processed bags of dried coffee beans produced by its primary cooperatives prior to their sale and local or transnational distribution.



[133]

Furthermore, located next to the main office is a coffee shop owned and operated by trained cooperative members of UCA SOPPEXCCA which includes a cupping lab.

[134]

Noting similarities and differences in structures through participant observation serves to augment analysis of the cooperative system structure.

[133] Office of UCA SOPPEXCCA, Jinotega, Nicaragua: Patrick A. Riggs.
[134] Café Flor de Jinotega, Jinotega, Nicaragua: Patrick A. Riggs.

While visiting the community of Los Robles interviews were conducted with two female members of Cooperative Los Robles at a road side café owned by one of them. In the town of La Reyna, interviews were conducted both at the processing center of Cooperative Danilo González and at the homes of several cooperative members. The visit to La Reyna proved the most beneficial for gathering information via participant observation. January is the middle of the coffee harvesting season in Nicaragua and as such it was possible to watch the process of coffee cherry collection, the drying of coffee beans and the removal of imperfect coffee beans while visiting Cooperative Danilo González.

 [135]

Observations were made on the participation of male and female cooperative members in these processes to be used in contextualizing the findings of interviews conducted with four cooperative members and one non-member participant of the cooperative.

[135] Drying Coffee Beans, Cooperative Danilo González, La Reyna, Nicaragua: Patrick A. Riggs.

Section 3.3: Organizational Analysis

Following completion of interviews, an analysis was conducted of the cooperative network. First the strength of relations between U.S. based affiliate organizations was assessed. Second, the relations maintained between these U.S. based companies and Nicaraguan cooperatives were analyzed; this included associations with cooperatives at the primary, secondary and tertiary level (Figure One). An assessment of the organizational structure which exists within each cooperative level (primary, secondary, and tertiary) was made in order to analyze the overall three tiered hierarchy that comprises the Nicaraguan cooperative structure (Figure Two).

Section 3.4: Text Analysis of Gender Policies

In the course of conducting background research it was found that gender policies are maintained by CECOCAFEN, UCA San Ramón and UCA SOPPEXCCA. A brief report on the contemporary role of women within the UCA San Ramón cooperatives and current projects was accessed online. Copies of the policies upheld by CECOCAFEN and UCA SOPPEXCCA respectively were obtained from the two offices while in Nicaragua. The print versions of these policies, however, are out of date as revised versions of the gender policies used independently by CECOCAFEN and UCA SOPPEXCCA were to be released early in 2013. Comparing and contrasting the content of these policies nonetheless proves beneficial in that they not only provide formal definitions of gender equity but in addition provide a context for more in depth analysis of the interview responses.

Chapter 4: Case Studies of United States Based Affiliate Organizations

"We are a network so every project that we start, every initiative that we have is a partner project working with people on the ground"[136]

Section 4.1: Defining U.S. Based Affiliate Organizations

Affiliate organizations are defined in this research as businesses, nonprofits and organizations with offices in the United States which maintain trade and non-trade based relations with CECOCAFEN, UCA San Ramón and UCA SOPPEXCCA. Through convenience sampling three organizations were selected for the case study of U.S. based affiliate organizations: Cooperative Coffees, Coffee Kids and the Community Agroecology Network. Affiliate organizations primarily engage with administrative representatives from the secondary and tertiary levels of the Nicaraguan cooperative system (Figure One). The following section provides a historic overview of the operations of each aforementioned affiliate organization and an explanation of their role in the Nicaraguan cooperative coffee network.

Section 4.1.A: Coffee Kids

Founded in 1988, Coffee Kids is a 501(c)(3) non-profit headquartered in Santa Fe, New Mexico with partner offices in Oaxaca, Mexico and the EU.[137] The organization began as a canvassing fundraiser project crafted by Bill Fishbein, a specialty coffee roaster and retailer from the United States, following a trip he made to Guatemala in the 1980s during which the overwhelming scenes of poverty experienced by coffee producing families led to the idea of Coffee Kids.[138] The non-profit seeks to empower coffee farming families through community based projects and programs. Specifically, Coffee Kids works to connect their partner

[136] Heather Putnam, Interview with the author, November 30, 2012.
[137] Coffee Kids, *Frequently Asked Questions*, Coffee Kids, http://www.coffeekids.org/about-us/faqs/.
[138] Coffee Kids, *About Us*, Coffee Kids, http://www.coffeekids.org/about-us/.

organizations in coffee producing countries and the cooperative communities they represent with local nonprofits and organizations so that through collaborative efforts, coffee growers may overcome the barriers preventing them from improving their lives and livelihoods.[139]

Although Coffee Kids does not directly engage in the trade and sale of coffee, it contributes to building a just and sustainable network through the provision of non-trade based funds and support services to coffee producing families. Coffee Kids invests in five programs areas which are: health, education, economic diversification, food security and capacity building.[140] Projects are adapted to meet the needs of each partner organization and as such certain program types may receive more attention than others based upon the needs of the coffee growers.[141] In Nicaragua, for example, projects promoting food sovereignty among cooperative members and scholarships for youth receive priority attention.[142] Funds are made available for community based projects and programs largely in the form of donations used for micro-credit loans and in the form of scholarships.[143] Seventy five percent of the funds received by Coffee Kids are dedicated to the program services they provide their partner organizations.[144] Since its founding Coffee Kids has expanded its operations with partner programs to five countries throughout Central America which include Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, Peru and Nicaragua.[145]

[139] Coffee Kids, "Frequently Asked Questions".
[140] Coffee Kids, "About Us."
[141] Coffee Kids, "Annual Report 2010 to 2011," *Annual Report*, Coffee Kids, 4.
[142] José Zárate, Interview with the author, November 13, 2012.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Coffee Kids, "Annual Report," 7.
[145] Coffee Kids, "Frequently Asked Questions."

Operations began in Nicaragua in 1998 in response to the devastating effects of Hurricane Mitch on coffee production within the country.[146] As a result of previously established connections maintained by founder Bill Fishbein, Coffee Kids began working with CECOCAFEN, channeling financial support through a contingency fund established for coffee farmers by the tertiary level cooperative.[147] The following year Coffee Kids worked with CECOCAFEN to develop an educational program for cooperative members, which continues to this day. The Community Leadership Scholarships project provides funding to CECOCAFEN which is then distributed in the form of scholarships to the sons and daughters of cooperative members for attending high school or technical school.[148] Each scholarship includes the provision that student recipients commit to completing one hundred hours of work-study or community service within their particular coffee cooperative.[149] Students have the opportunity to work in a variety of positions which include, "organic production inspectors, technicians, cooperative administration, cupping, vaccination campaigns, literacy campaigns for adults" and other vocations.[150] A similar program, the Youth Development Scholarship project began with SOPPEXCCA in 2009. This program, however, not only provides scholarship recipients with the costs needed to complete high school or technical school, but also the training and funds needed for students to begin their own micro-businesses while completing school.[151] Through training in micro-business management and financial support from Coffee Kids, which allowed for the purchase of equipment and materials, several youth from SOPPEXCCA have established a self-

[146] José Zárate, Inteview with the author, November 13, 2012.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with the author, January 4, 2013. *Quote:* "*…se iniciado ya con buen tiempo un programa de apoyo económico para becas y que estudien los hijos y las hijas de los productores asociados. En ese case eh consiste en, en una pequeña ayuda económica para que ellos pueden movilizarse de sus comunidades hasta el centro poblado donde está la escuela."*
[149] Coffee Kids, *Community Leadership Scholarships*, Coffee Kids, http://projects.coffeekids.org/community-leadership-scholarships/
[150] José Zárate, Interview with the author, November 13, 2012.
[151] Coffee Kids, "Annual Report," 17.

sustaining chocolate production business.[152] Through these scholarship programs and other initiatives, crafted to meet the unique needs of the members of CECOCAFEN and UCA SOPPEXCCA, Coffee Kids has been instrumental in working to "guarantee sustainability and promote leadership of following generations" within both cooperative structures.[153] Official partnerships were established with both CECOCAFEN and UCA SOPPEXCCA in 2007.[154]

Coffee Kids endorses equity in all program areas and particularly relevant to this research is the community microcredit and savings project developed collaboratively between the nonprofit and CECOCAFEN which began in 2000.[155] Referred to as GMAS (Grupo de Mujeres en ahorro Solidario), the Women Saving in Solidarity project promotes the generation of supplementary income among coffee producers through the provision of low-interest loans to community based businesses. Groups of coffee producers, in particular women, are offered training in financial literacy, business administration, leadership and cooperativism, which imparts upon them the skills necessary to engage in entrepreneurial activities.[156] The intent of the project is to ensure that coffee producing families have access to income during the months between coffee harvests. Since it began the GMAS program has expanded to serve forty-three rural coffee producing communities affiliated with CECOCAFEN, through the operations of twenty seven different women's groups.[157] Funding received in the form of micro-credits is commonly used by women to cultivate coffee or additional crops such as sugar cane or corn, or for entrepreneurial purposes such as selling cloth or starting restaurants within the cooperative community. Most recently, in 2011, a group of women who were approved for credit opened a

[152] José Zárate, Interview with the author, November 13, 2012.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Coffee Kids, "Frequently Asked Quesitons."
[155] José Zárate, Interview with the author, November 13, 2012.
[156] Coffee Kids, *Community Microcredit and Savings Project*, Coffee Kids. http://projects.coffeekids.org/community-microcredit-and-savings/
[157] Coffee Kids, "Annual Report," 12.

cannery and with the support of Coffee Kids, "they were trained how to preserve fruit and built a cannery so that they may sell their own products in the local community".[158] Businesses started with the financial support of the Women Saving in Solidarity groups have been shown to be generating a profit margin of twenty five to fifty percent, and the GMAS groups save on average between $2.50 and $5.00 per month to reinvest in the community.[159] These results demonstrate Coffee Kids has successfully obtained its goal of not solely providing micro-credit loans for start up businesses but rather encouraging savings among coffee producers, particularly women, to ensure the longevity of their independently crafted supplemental income generating projects.[160]

Section 4.1.B: Community Agroecology Network

Through the collaborative efforts of Dr. Stephen Gliessman, Roberta (Robbie) Jaffe and a group of international researchers, the Community Agroecology Network (CAN) was established in 2002 and is presently based in Santa Cruz, California. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit developed in response to the coffee crisis and its detrimental environmental, health and economic outcomes for coffee producing communities throughout Central America and Mexico. CAN sought to create an alternative trade model other than Fairtrade that would ensure a fair price for coffee farmers by linking them directly to consumers in the United States.[161] The organization promotes sustainable development within coffee producing communities by fostering partnerships among cooperatives, nonprofits, community based organizations, international universities, coffee

[158] José Zárate, Interview with the author, November 13, 2012.
[159] Coffee Kids, "Annual Report," 12.
[160] José Zárate, Interview with the author, November 13, 2012.
[161] Community Agroecology Network, *Our Work*, Community Agroecology Network, http://www.canunite.org/about-us/our-work.

roasters and consumers.[162] The Community Agroecology Network has expanded its operations to work with partner organizations in Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Nicaragua.[163]

The Community Agroecology Network seeks to reduce persisting inequities among coffee producing communities and foster the creation of a just coffee trade network through a multi-faceted approach. Underlying the model employed by CAN are the principles of food security and food sovereignty, agroecology and interculturality.[164] CAN upholds that individuals, households and communities maintain the right to a safe, reliable and sufficient source of nutritious food which meets both dietary and cultural needs. The organization promotes the realization of food sovereignty through agroecology, the design and maintenance of sustainable food systems that incorporate traditional knowledge and local production experiences. Interculturality recognizes that sustainable food systems depend upon the trust, accountability and joint willingness of stakeholders to learn. Furthermore, CAN calls for the equitable treatment of men and women free from discrimination attributed to race, ethnicity, age or social status.[165]

The primary methods used by CAN and its partner organizations to facilitate sustainable development among coffee farming communities include participatory action research (PAR), action education and trade innovations.[166] Participatory action research seeks to integrate research and community action in a singular technique. Teams of researchers work with local nonprofits, organizations and other groups over time to develop a network through which they identify environmental, social and health issues faced by coffee farmers and their communities.

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[162] Ibid.
[163] Community Agroecology Network, "Annual Report 2012," *Annual Report and Financials*, Community Agroecology Network, 5.
[164] Community Agroecology Network, *Core Principles*, Community Agroecology Network. http://www.canunite.org/about-us/core-principles.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Community Agroecology Network, *Our Work*.

The results obtained by CAN researchers are shared with partner organizations and their communities for the purpose of creating strategies to overcome the observed barriers. Action education serves to build upon the participatory action research method by promoting advocacy for change and public awareness of social and environmental injustices through work with university students, rural youth in partner countries, farmers and coffee producing communities.[167] As an organization CAN facilitates the development of a more sustainable coffee trade through its Trade Innovations program. Through this program CAN has implemented direct trade between coffee farmers affiliated with international partner organizations, and coffee roasters and consumers largely located in the northern hemisphere. The organization sells CAN AgroEco® Coffee, produced in Nicaragua and Mexico, to generate funds for a Sustainable Agriculture Fund accessible to the organization's partners.[168] Programs in Nicaragua which seek to address food insecurity and promote youth leadership are funded through grant money received from a U.S. foundation, and a portion of CAN's annual earned income covers costs associated with field studies and production of AgroEco® Coffee.[169]

The Community Agroecology Network began its operations in Nicaragua in the early 2000s through the personal connections of researchers and informal collaboration with other organizations working on similar projects in the area.[170] Specifically, CAN built upon the relations established with Nicaraguan cooperatives as a result of a USAID project undertaken by Christopher Bacon, Paul Katzeff and Nicholas Hoskyns to develop ten cupping labs throughout the country in 1999.[171] The Community Agroecology Network first partnered with

[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Community Agroecology Network, "Annual Report," 5.
[170] Heather Putnam, Interview with author, November 30, 2012.
[171] Ibid.

PRODECOOP, a tertiary level cooperative located in the region of Las Segovias.[172] Pertinent to this research, however, is the partnership between CAN and UCA San Ramón which began in 2010.[173] Through this partnership primary level cooperatives operating in the Municipality of San Ramón have access to the CAN sponsored youth leadership and food sovereignty initiatives as well as participation in the production and sale of AgroEco® Coffee.[174] Throughout implementation of these projects CAN has sought to ensure that women and men are equally involved in the decision making process.[175]

The Community Agroecology Network found through its work with PRODECOOP that "efforts at creating food security will not be maximized unless you target women not men".[176] Consequently, CAN has sought to ensure that women and youth are the principle beneficiaries of the food sovereignty and youth leadership projects thus far implemented in eight primary level cooperatives affiliated with UCA San Ramón.[177] In connection with these initiatives, CAN supports training for women on small business development for the purpose of providing them ownership of resources and to guarantee the efficacy of further projects.[178]

Section 4.1.C: Cooperative Coffees

Legally established as an organization on December 1, 1999 in Minnesota, Cooperative Coffees is a collective of roasters situated throughout the North America which import fairly

[172] Community Agroecology Network, *Nicaragua*, Community Agroecology Network, http://www.canunite.org/network/nicaragua.
[173] Heather Putnam, Interview with author, November 30, 2012.
[174] Community Agroecology Network, *Nicaragua*.
[175] Heather Putnam, Interview with author, November 30, 2012.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Community Agroecology Network, "Annual Report 2012", 15.
[178] Heather Putnam, Interview with author, November 30, 2012.

traded green coffee beans from coffee cooperatives throughout Central America.[179] The idea for the coffee importing cooperative was generated by founder Bill Harris during his travels to Guatemala in 1997.[180] Cooperative Coffees aims to improve the livelihoods of small-scale coffee farmers through the provision of fair terms of trade to their partner cooperatives rather than through investment in social development projects. Their purpose is not to generate wealth for themselves but rather "to pay as much as [they] can to producers and sell the coffee at as low a price as [they] can to the roasters".[181] Cooperative Coffees aims to satisfy roasters and consumers while also ensuring a return investment to coffee farmers, guaranteeing positive financial outcomes among coffee producing communities.[182]

Since its founding, Cooperative Coffees has grown from seven independent roasters to include twenty four situated throughout the United States and Canada. The original seven included: Bongo Java, Café Campesino, Dean's Beans, Heine Bros Coffee, Larry's Beans, Los Armadilos (now Third Coast Coffee) and Peace Coffee.[183] The list was expanded most recently in 2008 to include Vermont Artisan Roasters, and Third Coast and Doma Coffee. Cooperative Coffees imported its first containers of coffee in 2000 from Guatemala, Mexico and Sumatra. Partnerships continue to be cultivated with additional cooperatives in these countries as well as in Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Mexico, East Timor, Peru, Bolivia, and El Salvador.[184] In 2012 one

[179] Cooperative Coffees. *Timeline.* Cooperative Coffees. http://coopcoffees.com/resources/downloads/Folder_Recto_CCfinal.pdf.
[180] Coop Coffees, *History*, Cooperative Coffees, http://coopcoffees.com/who/about-cc/history-of-cc
[181] Monika Firl, Interview with author, December 7, 2012.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Cooperative Coffees, *Timeline.*
[184] Ibid.

hundred containers, a net worth of eleven million USD, were imported and distributed to members of the coffee roasters cooperative.[185]

The original intent of Cooperative Coffees was to support newly forming coffee cooperatives gain access to a market which offered fair terms of trade. Once a cooperative was established they were to be removed from Cooperative Coffee's roll count; however, this model has since evolved so as to maintain partnerships with all cooperatives, regardless of their status as newly forming or established.[186] Cooperative Coffees now works with twenty five coffee partner organizations.[187] In addition to importing green coffee beans for roasting, Cooperative Coffees works with its partner groups to assist them in achieving Fairtrade and organic certification for their primary coffee producers.[188]

Cooperative Coffees first began working in Nicaragua in 2002 with CECOCAFEN. This partnership was fostered through connections with Bill Fishbein, the founder of Coffee Kids.[189] Although PRODECOOP, located in Nueva Segovias, Nicaragua, was another option Cooperative Coffees opted for CECOCAFEN given that it was in its nascent stages and PRODECOOP was well established.[190] Cooperative Coffees continues to source coffee from CECOCAFEN's affiliated secondary cooperatives. Cooperative Coffees recently began offering workshops for well established cooperatives on coffee roasting, business practices, and other topics identified as areas of need by coffee farmers. The objective is to advise and provide technical assistance that allows for these cooperatives to increase their potential and produce better quality coffee for

[185] Monika Firl, Interview with author, December 7, 2012.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Cooperative Coffees, *Timeline.*
[189] Monika Firl, Interview with author, December 7, 2012.
[190] Ibid.

roasters affiliated with Cooperative Coffees.[191] Groups of two to three volunteers are organized by Cooperative Coffees and sent to Nicaragua to provide one-on-one trainings. While Cooperative Coffees does not have the means by which to influence or work to address issues of gender equity present within the Nicaraguan cooperative system, they look to establish partnerships with those cooperatives and organizations which respect men and women equally.[192]

Section 4.1.D: Pertinence to Research

Although each of the three affiliate organizations which served as case studies for this research project maintains similar visions for a coffee trade network which values the lives and livelihoods of its producers free of all forms of discrimination, there is a lack of formal collaboration among affiliate groups working within the Nicaraguan cooperative system to achieve this outcome collectively. In analyzing current approaches taken to addressing gender equity within the Nicaraguan cooperative network, it is important to note the strength of relationships that exist between U.S. based affiliate organizations themselves, as well as between affiliate organizations and their partner coffee organizations, and finally the relationship which exists between representatives from affiliate organizations and primary coffee producers.

[191] Monika Firl, Interview with author, December 7, 2012.
[192] Ibid.

Chapter Five: Nicaraguan Case Studies

Although only three cooperatives were selected originally for study, during the course of research in Nicaragua the opportunity arose to include two more cooperatives. Initially, the project was limited to studying one tertiary level cooperative (CECOCAFEN) and two secondary level cooperatives (UCA San Ramón and UCA SOPPEXCCA). Including two primary level cooperatives in the research (Cooperative Danilo González and Cooperative Los Robles) provided for the development of a more thorough review and analysis of the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative system, specifically its organizational hierarchy (Figure Two). The following section provides relevant information on each level of the Nicaraguan cooperative structure as well as the cooperatives which served as case studies for this research project.

Section 5.1: Tertiary Cooperatives

Tertiary cooperatives, or centers of cooperatives, serve the purpose of helping base level cooperatives gain access to secure national and international coffee markets. A principle function of tertiary cooperatives is to serve as an intermediary between secondary level cooperatives and affiliate trade and non-trade partner organizations.[193] Tertiary level cooperatives, such as CECOCAFEN, seek to market and procure the best prices for coffee beans cultivated by their associated base level cooperatives. Although tertiary cooperatives are situated at the top of the cooperative structure, information and resources are exchanged with other levels both in a bottom-up and top-down approach (Figure Two).

[193] Digna Zeledón, Interview with the author, January 15, 2013.

Section 5.1.A: CECOCAFEN

Founded in 1997, CECOCAFEN is headquartered in the city of Matagalpa, Nicaragua. Originally comprised of four organizations, the center of cooperatives has since grown exponentially.[194] CECOCAFEN is currently consists of twelve organizations which in total represent 2,503 coffee producing families.[195] Ten of these twelve organizations are primary level cooperatives and the remaining two are secondary level cooperative unions (UCA's), one of which is UCA San Ramón.[196] While the majority of cooperative members are men, the number of female members continues to rise; twenty eight percent of families currently integrated into CECOCAFEN are households headed by women.[197]

As mandated by cooperative law, CECOCAFEN is comprised of an organizational management which includes an administrative board, several committees and the operational departments tasked with providing technical and resource support for affiliated secondary and primary level cooperatives. Tertiary level cooperatives are required to employ an oversight committee, an education committee and a credit committee.[198] Maximum authority for cooperative decisions is held by the general assembly which is comprised of male and female delegates from the sub-level cooperatives represented by CECOCAFEN.[199]

CECOCAFEN has been instrumental in the promotion of alternative and sustainable coffee production methods amongst Nicaraguan coffee producers. The tertiary level cooperative has been particularly effective in helping affiliated primary level cooperatives attain Fairtrade

[194] CECOCAFEN, *Nuestro Origin*, CECOCAFEN.
[195] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with author, January 4, 2013.
[196] CECOCAFEN, *Nuestro Origin*, CECOCAFEN.
[197] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with author, January 4, 2013.
[198] Digna Zeledón, Interview with author, January 15, 2013.
[199] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with author, January 4, 2013 and Digna Zeledón, Interview with author, January 15, 2013.

certification.[200] Additionally, CECOCAFEN works to promote and support social development projects undertaken within the secondary and primary cooperative levels of the Nicaraguan cooperative structure.[201] This involves the provision of technical, legal and financial support for projects and policies initiated within secondary and primary level cooperatives, in particular those which promote gender equity such as the GMAS program discussed in the previous section of this paper.[202]

Section 5.2: Secondary Cooperatives

Secondary level cooperatives and unions of cooperative farmers (UCAs) represent multiple base level cooperatives and function as an intermediary between the tertiary and primary levels of the Nicaraguan cooperative system (Figure One). Two secondary unions of cooperative farmers were studied in this research project, UCA SOPPEXCCA and UCA San Ramón. Although these secondary level cooperatives developed independent from one another, both serve the purpose of overseeing the functions of primary level cooperatives and ensuring compliance among members with cooperative laws and regulations.

Section 5.2.A: UCA San Ramón

Established in 1991, UCA San Ramón is a union of cooperative farmers with its main office located in the city of San Ramón in the municipal district of San Ramón (Figure Three). UCA San Ramón is one of two unions of cooperative farmers affiliated with CECOCAFEN. The secondary union of cooperatives represents twenty-one primary level cooperatives operating

[200]CECOCAFEN, *Nuestro Origin*, CECOCAFEN.
[201] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with author, January 9, 2013.
[202] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with author, January 4, 2013.

throughout the municipality of San Ramón. In total UCA San Ramón represents one thousand and eighty members of whom thirty percent are women.[203]

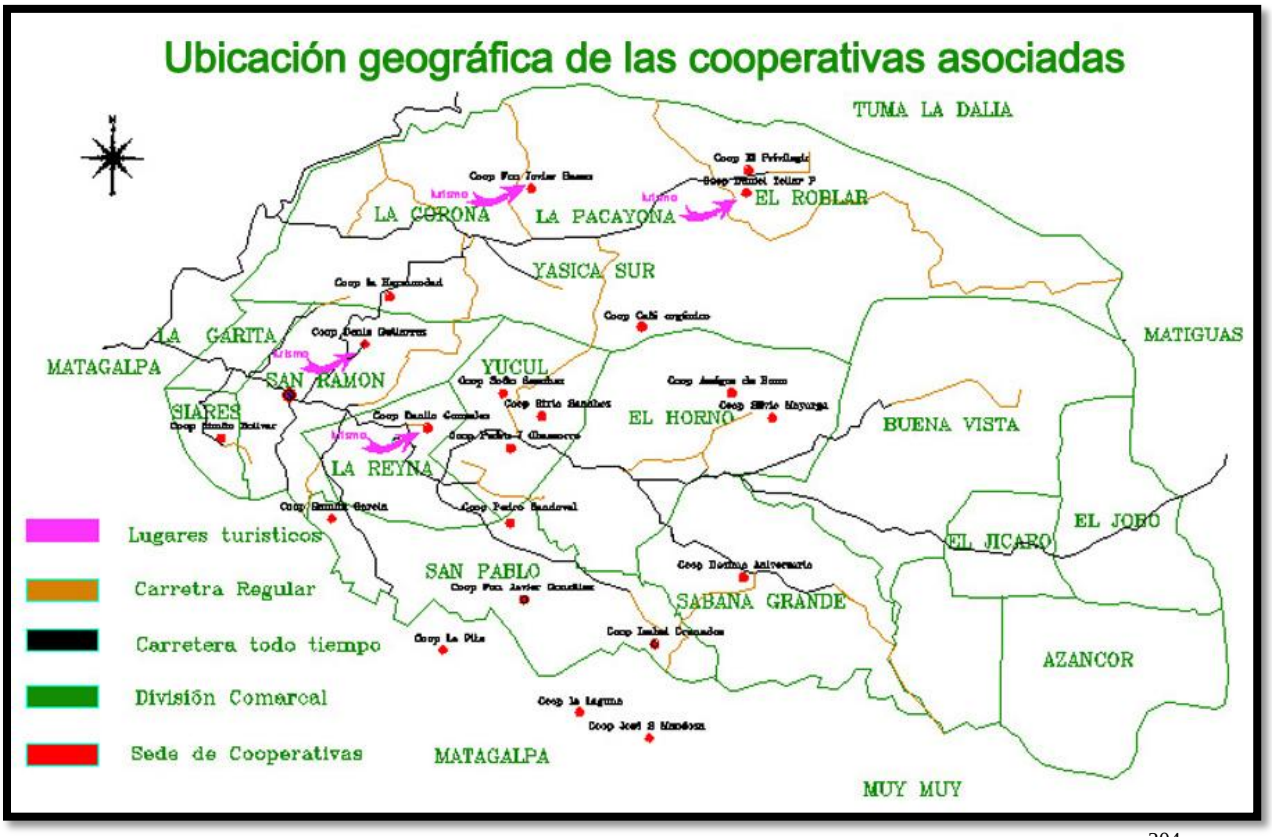

Figure Three: Map of Primary Level Cooperatives Affiliated with UCA San Ramón[204]

The management of UCA San Ramón is comprised of an administrative board, an oversight committee, a credit committee and an educational committee. The staff of UCA San Ramón is comprised of trained professionals who are not considered to be cooperative members.[205] Unlike CECOCAFEN, the tertiary level cooperative with which it is affiliated, UCA San Ramón also has established a gender committee in order to promote gender equitable practices within its own organization as well as within its affiliated base level cooperatives.[206]

[203] Yadira
[204] Photo Credit: http://www.ucasanramon.com/images/stories/articulos/mapas-cooperativas.jpg
[205] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with author, January 9, 2013.
[206] Ibid.

Gender committees are comprised of male and female staff members that oversee the primary level cooperatives to ensure they are in accordance with the gender equity regulations of CECOCAFEN and UCA San Ramón as well as those maintained by each base level cooperative.

The primary responsibility of UCA San Ramón is to assist affiliated cooperatives with social and economic development and the trade of their coffee beans. Personnel from the office work closely with primary coffee producers to identify areas of need within each of their associated base level cooperatives and collaborate to meet these needs. UCA San Ramón assists with the procurement of technical assistance and resources, such as micro-credit loans, necessary for improving cooperative production practices.[207]

Section 5.2.B: UCA SOPPEXCCA

UCA SOPPEXCCA is a secondary level cooperative operating in the district of Jinotega. Its main office is located in the city of Jinotega adjacent to Café Flor de Jinotega, the coffee café owned and operated by its cooperative members. UCA SOPPEXCCA is a union of cooperatives similar to UCA San Ramón; however, it is not affiliated with CECOCAFEN. UCA SOPPEXCCA currently represents eighteen primary level cooperatives, serving a total of six hundred and fifty coffee producers of whom two hundred and fourteen are women.[208]

The organizational structure of UCA SOPPEXCCA, as with UCA San Ramón, consists of a management team which includes an administrative board, a credit committee and a gender committee as well as a department dedicated to technical support. Those employed in the technical sector interact directly with cooperative members in the field through visits, trainings,

[207] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with author, January 9, 2013.
[208] Margarita Espinoza, Interview with author, January 8, 2013.

and dialogue with the representatives from primary cooperatives.[209] The principal purpose of UCA SOPPEXCCA is to support small-scale coffee producers through technical trainings, social development projects implemented at the base level of the cooperative system, and through the provision of microcredit loans and financial resources in order to facilitate improved livelihood outcomes among associated primary level coffee producers and their families and communities.

Section 5.3: Primary Cooperatives

Primary cooperatives are collectively organized communities of small-scale coffee producers.[210] Membership is more often than not exclusive to those individuals who own the land upon which the coffee is being cultivated. Depending upon the cooperative, membership may be extended to include the families and relatives of the land owning coffee producers. While the process for obtaining cooperative membership is different for each cooperative, the general procedure is as follows: coffee farmers and their families seeking membership must complete a predetermined amount of educational training on cooperative policies and regulations, they must ask to join and receive permission from the general assembly of the base cooperative, and finally they must complete a membership card to be kept on national registry in Managua.[211] Two base level cooperatives were identified for study in this research.

Section 5.3.A: Cooperativa Los Robles

Situated in the community of Los Robles, Cooperative Los Robles is an organization of forty-five small-producer coffee farmers affiliated with UCA SOPPEXCCA. The cooperative developed as a result of coffee farmers in the area of Los Robles seeking access to better prices

[209] Ibid.
[210] Elizabeth Tórrez, Interview with author, January 14, 2013.
[211] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013.

for their beans as well as the benefits of entering the coffee market as a collectively organized entity rather than an individual. Thirty-five of the members are men and ten are women; the number of cooperative members has dwindled significantly over the years for unspecified reasons.[212]

The structural organization of the cooperative administration is mandated by the General Cooperatives Law. Similar to the other levels within the cooperative system, primary cooperatives invest ultimate authority in its general assembly, comprised of all its members. The management responsibilities of the cooperative are dispersed among its administrative board which consists of a president, vice president and treasurer at a minimum.[213] The administrative board is responsible for directing and overseeing the development plans implemented at the base cooperative level. There is an oversight committee which regulates the functions of the cooperative to ensure they are in compliance with national laws, local laws and the regulations developed by the cooperative itself. There is also an educational committee which advises the cooperative members on legal matters and provides training on cooperativism and the regulations of belonging to a cooperative.[214] Primary level cooperatives are allowed to establish additional committees to meet the needs of their individual community provided they implement the aforementioned structural organization.[215] Cooperative Los Robles has established a gender committee which helps to facilitate exchange regarding gender policies and gender trainings

[212] Maura Blandón and Marlene Jarquín, Interview with author, January 11, 2013.
[213] Julia González, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013.
[214] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013.
[215] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013 and Margarita Espinoza, Interview with the author, January 8, 2013.

between its cooperative members and UCA SOPPEXCCA, the secondary level cooperative with which it is affiliated.[216]

Section 5.3.B: Cooperativa Danilo González

Founded in 1986, Cooperative Danilo Gonzalez is located in the community of La Reyna in the district of San Ramon. It is one of the primary level cooperatives associated with UCA San Ramón. Cooperative Danilo González currently has fifty two members of which thirty two are men and twenty are women. Similar to Cooperative Los Robles, Cooperative Danilo González maintains an organizational structure as mandated by Cooperative Las 499 which states a cooperative must include an administrative board, an oversight committee, an education committee and a credit committee.[217] Cooperative members are elected to administrative positions via secret ballot elections; three positions within the four person administrative board are currently held by female cooperative members.[218] Similar to Cooperative Los Robles, Cooperative Danilo González has, with the support of UCA San Ramón, instituted a gender committee to oversee implementation of its gender policies as well as the workshops and trainings provided on gender issues by UCA San Ramón.

[216] Margarita Espinoza, Interview with the author, January 8, 2013.
[217] José Ramón, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013.
[218] Julia González, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013.

Chapter Six: Findings

"…no ha sido fácil, no hemos terminado, nos falta mucho porque todavía hay mucha resistencia en este la equidad de género. Pero ya hemos avanzado."[219]

Section 6.1: Key Findings Pertaining to Original Research Question

The intent of this research project was twofold: first, to observe differences and similarities in definitions of "gender equity" employed within each level of the Nicaraguan cooperative structure as well as by the U.S. affiliate organizations of the cooperatives selected for study, and second to examine the need as well as potential advantages and disadvantages of applying a standard approach in addressing issues of inequity across the Fairtrade Nicaraguan coffee industry. The following section details the findings of this research project based on responses obtained through interviews conducted in Nicaragua with administrative staff of CECOCAFEN, UCA San Ramón and UCA SOPPEXCCA, cooperative members at the primary level, and through interviews conducted in the United States with personnel from affiliate organizations of the aforementioned cooperatives.

Finding One: There is a lack of consensus within and across cooperative levels as well as between cooperatives and U.S. affiliate organizations regarding the definition of "gender equity".

"Más bien como un idea tácita. Ahí que creemos llegar a tener una definición concreta. Pero para eso tenemos que montar una seria de capacitaciones y de preparación."[220]

Although gender equity is an issue at the forefront of discussion within the Nicaraguan coffee industry, no singular operational definition of the term is agreed upon by all members of

[219] Digna Zeledón, Interview with the author, January 15, 2013. *Translation:* "*It has not been easy, we are not finished; we have much left because of the resistance of gender equity that persists. But we have progressed*."
[220] Digna Zeledón, Interview with the author, January 15, 2013. *Translation: "More or less it is an unspoken idea. We would like to come to a concrete definition. However, for this we would have to assemble a series of trainings and preparation."*

the transnational cooperative network for application within the coffee cooperative structure. Instead there is an unspoken understanding of gender equity that exists between cooperative members and non-members participating in all levels of the cooperative network. Text analysis of gender policies was used to examine differences in formal definitions of the term while interview responses were coded to look at variance in personal definitions employed within each level of the cooperative structure.

Text analysis of the gender policies provided by CECOCAFEN and UCA SOPPEXCCA illustrated how cooperative level, function and history can influence interpretations of gender equity definitions. CECOCAFEN, a third level cooperative, provided an operational definition of gender equity in its policy:

> "Mujeres y hombres deben de tener el mismo trato. La equidad es posible si se desarrollan acciones que favorezcan a todos y todas en conjunto."[221]
>
> *Translation:* "*Women and men should be treated equally. Equity may be developed through actions which favor everyone."*

Alternatively, the gender policy maintained by UCA SOPPEXCCA, a secondary cooperative, did not contain a singular, operational definition of gender equity. Gender equity was defined more broadly within the cooperative principle of equity:

> "Se establecen como principios de las cooperativas los siguientes:…Equidad, que implica…Igualdad en derecho y oportunidades para asociados de ambos sexos."[222]
>
> *Translation:* "*The principles of the cooperative are as follows…Equity, which implies…equality in rights and opportunities for members of both sexes."*

Although the gender policies were devised independently from one another for use within different levels of the cooperative structure, both formally establish that male and female

[221] CECOCAFEN, *Política de Genero y Generacional*, 5.
[222] Unión de cooperativas agropecuarias SOPPEXCCA, *Política de Genero Institucional*, 26

cooperative members and non-members, affiliated with either CECOCAFEN or UCA SOPPEXCCA, should be guaranteed equal rights and opportunities within their respective cooperatives. Analysis illustrates that although formal rhetoric used to define gender equity may differ, the concept is implicitly understood. This is further evidenced by the variance in responses obtained from interview subjects regarding their perceptions and definitions of gender equity.

Representatives interviewed from the three U.S. based affiliate organizations interviewed for this research responded that while their organizations do not maintain formal definitions of gender equity that influence their work with Nicaraguan cooperatives, they all operate on the principle of equality. The Associate Director of the Community Agroecology Network in particular emphasized that despite differences in interpretations of gender equity among individuals within the organization, they employ the guideline that "women be equally involved in decision making as men and that women be the direct beneficiaries whenever possible".[223] The Producer Relations and Communications Manager of Cooperative Coffees voiced the opinion that Nicaragua has a high rate of gender equity compared to the rest of Central America, largely due to the Sandinista Revolution, and that for their business "the working position is that we believe in treating people equally" when engaging in trade relations. However, they feel that the organization is not in a position to address issues of gender inequity.[224] The International Program Director of Coffee Kids provided a much broader definition of gender equity including the need for cooperative members to have access to health services as well as mutual respect and

[223] Heather Putnam, Interview with the author, November 30, 2012.
[224] Monika Firl, Interview with the author, December 7, 2012.

tolerances of different beliefs.[225] Similar views were reflected in the responses obtained during interviews with participants in the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative system.

There was concurrence among individuals interviewed at the tertiary level of the Nicaraguan cooperative structure that gender equity is understood to be the equal right of men and women to participate in coffee cooperatives. The Communications Coordinator of CECOCAFEN defined gender equity as the following:

> "Que igual derechos tenemos los hombres como también lo tienen las mujeres para en principio estar en una cooperativa, para participar en la producción de café y participar también en la comercio organización de venta".[226]
>
> *Translation: "That men and women have the equal right to belong to a cooperative, to participate in the production of coffee and to participate as well in the coffee trade."*

He further added that the gender strategy employed by CECOCAFEN encourages the active participation of women and youth alongside men in the production of coffee to secure a stronger outcome. His response was not explicit whether this referred to economic outcomes or greater gender equity among cooperative members.[227] The Cooperative Development Coordinator (Coordinadora Desarrolla Cooperativa) of CECOCAFEN defined gender equity as the equal right of men and women to be involved in the cooperative: "que tanto derecho tiene el varon como tenemos las mujeres involucraron."[228] While these definitions provided by the interview respondents are in accordance with one another and the gender policy maintained by CECOCAFEN, it is worth noting that the Cooperative Development Coordinator stated there is

[225] José Zárate, Interview with the author, November 13, 2012.
[226] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with the author, January 5, 2013.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Digna Zeledón, Interview with the author, January 15, 2013.

an implied understanding of the concept of gender equity among cooperative members, but as of yet no concrete definition exists.[229]

Analysis of interview responses provided by a representative from the Gender Department of UCA SOPPEXCCA (Agencia de Género) and by the Cooperative Development Coordinator of UCA San Ramón found that within the secondary cooperative level gender equity is defined most frequently in terms of participation. In their responses both female interview subjects spoke to women's increased participation in cooperative meetings and their inclusion in elected positions as a determinant of gender equity. The respondent from UCA SOPPEXCCA stated:

> "Las mujeres están apoderándose, apropiándose de que ellas también tienen capacidad. Que ellas también tienen oportunidades. De que ellas también pueden alcanzar lo que ellas quieren."[230]
>
> *Translation: "The women are becoming empowered. Adapting to [recognizing] their capacity. [To recognizing] that they also have opportunities. [To recognizing] that they also may realize what they want."*

In her interview the Cooperative Development Coordinator of UCA San Ramón discussed the increasing number of women who are filling management positions within UCA San Ramón as well as female cooperative members whom are being elected to positions within the base level cooperatives. The advent of female leadership in UCA San Ramón, along with women's increased attendance at cooperative meetings and trainings is- in her opinion- demonstrative of increasing equity between men and women within the organization.[231]

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[229] Ibid.
[230] Margarita Espinoza, Interview with the author, January 8, 2013.
[231] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013. *Quote: "Y ahora mas sin embargo vemos que hay mucha participación de la mujer y nosotros tenemos muchas mujeres que participan al nivel de la cooperativa en cargos directivos, a nivel de la UCA en los cargos de dirección…a nivel de la comunidad hay muchas mujeres participando en los cargos de la comunidad y a nivel municipal. Entonces hemos visto esos cambios realmente."*

Furthermore, both interview subjects within the secondary level of the cooperative structure called attention to the need to ensure that discussion of gender equity recognizes the issue as one which equally affects men and women. The gender strategy employed by UCA SOPPEXCCA seeks to make available the same opportunities for men and women; providing one gender with an opportunity not available to the other inhibits equity: "nuestro estrategia verdad abrirles más oportunidades a las mujeres y tanto todos los hombres porque la equidad y la igualdad no es dejar los atrás sino que ponerlos a la par."[232] Similarly, as a cooperative UCA San Ramón maintains the following:

> "Porque a nosotros el tema de género no solo se llevamos a las mujeres sino que se llevamos a la familia, al hombre a la mujer porque consideramos que no vamos a avanzar mientras el hombre no esté convencido verdad de que, que importante es la participación de la mujer."[233]
>
> *Translation: "For us the subject of gender is one we bring not only to women but also to the family, to the male, to the female. Because we consider that we will not progress so long as men are not convinced of the importance of women's participation."*

According to the representative from UCA SOPPEXCCA, gender equity refers to the closing of a gender-based gap between coffee producers and the creation of a more just relation between cooperative members; "siempre buscando verdad eh cerrar esa brecha y crear relación de justicia entre los productores."[234]

The most interesting comparisons in definitions of gender equity were identified when analyzing the responses of members at the primary cooperative level. Two female producers belonging to Cooperative Los Robles were interviewed as well as four women and one male affiliated with Cooperative Danilo González. One female respondent from Cooperative Danilo

[232] Margarita Espinoza, Interview with the author, January 8, 2013.
[233] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013.
[234] Margarita Espinoza, Interview with the author, January 8, 2013.

González and both from Cooperative Los Robles addressed the issue of gender equity in relation to discrimination.[235] Specifically, the women of Los Robles stated the following:

> "…No tenemos un discriminación de género. No tenemos nada de discriminación de género y somos escuchadas…Ni por la raza ni por el sexo ni por ningún discriminación. Que todo eso tenemos planeado en una política."[236]
>
> *Translation: "We do not experience gender based discrimination. We don't have gender based discrimination and we are listened to…we do not have any form of discrimination, for race or sex or anything. All of this we have planned out in the policy."*

Further analysis of the responses obtained from interviews conducted at Cooperative Danilo González found that the three individuals interviewed who hold administrative positions within the cooperative varied in their definitions and perceptions of gender equity. In particular the President, a male, stated that the cooperative does not maintain a formal definition of gender equity, equality is something already practiced by cooperative members; "Entonces aquí tal vez no hemos estado buscando la definición técnicamente como tiene que ser esto sino que más que todo un poco la practica….que lo que practicamos el tema de equidad, del igualdad."[237] The female Vice President of the cooperative defined gender equity as the ability of women to voice their opinions and discussed the opportunity for male and female cooperative members to have equal rights yet did not mention equality.[238] The other female representative interviewed defined gender equity as equality between cooperative members, both male and female.[239] Only one respondent from the cooperative, the daughter of a cooperative member, referenced both equality and rights in her definition of gender equity:

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[235] Zunilda Hernandez, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013 and Maura Blandón and Marlene Jarquín, Interview with the author, January 11, 2013.
[236] Maura Blandón, Interview with the author, January 11, 2013.
[237] José Ramón, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013.
[238] Julia González, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013. *Quote: "Como socios tenemos derechos tal igual hombres y mujeres tenemos derechos. De participar en la asamblea, de dar el voto por otra nueva directiva que se eligen. Si tenemos derechos iguales."*
[239] Berthalina Martines, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013. *Quote: "Pero si nosotros digamos en la práctica bueno tanto derecho uno como lo otro participa en todo eso es parte de la equidad de genero."*

"La equidad es la igualdad entre hombre y la mujer. Derechas tiene el hombre como derechas tiene la mujer"[240]

Translation: "Equity is the equality of men and women. The same rights given a man are those rights given a woman."

While the responses obtained via interviews and through text analysis of gender policies illustrate that gender equity is widely perceived as a combination of equal rights, opportunities and participation among cooperative members and non-members, there is nonetheless no standard, formal, definition of the concept employed by all participants in the Nicaraguan coffee network.

Finding Two: A standard approach to addressing gender equity has the potential to beneficially address the following: inconsistencies in application of gender equitable approaches within and across cooperative levels, the persistence of machismo attitudes, and practices of gendered divisions of labor.

"Cada cooperativa debe promover verdad para entre todo su espacio verdad la participación de la mujer. Porque eso también nos mando la ley de cooperativa verdad. Pero no te podría decir que si todas realmente…que avance que llevan en a nivel en el tema de género"[241]

Speaking with representatives from all levels of the Nicaraguan cooperative structure led to the conclusion that while gender equity has improved among members and continues to do so there remain obstacles which a standard approach could help to address. One such hindrance is the variation which exists in how cooperatives within each level of the system choose to implement gender equitable practices. Another barrier to reducing gender inequities is the culture of machismo and consequently, the enduring gendered division of power and labor within households in Nicaragua.

[240] Elizabeth Tórrez, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013.
[241] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013. *Translation:"Each cooperative should promote the participation of women in all spaces. Because the cooperative law mandates this. However, I am not able to tell you if all actually…how each has advanced on the issue of gender."*

Although individual cooperatives may employ a formal definition of gender equity, either through a gender policy or a cooperative statute, the lack of a standard definition employed across all levels of the Nicaraguan cooperative structure prevents consistent application of programs and initiatives which seek to reduce these gender inequities. Comparing Cooperative Los Robles with Cooperative Danilo González provides an example. As directed by UCA San Ramón and CECOCAFEN, Cooperative Danilo González employs a quota system to ensure elected positions are filled equally by men and women provided they are adequate for the job.[242] While the quota system was mentioned in all interviews conducted at CECOCAFEN and at UCA San Ramón as well as in three of the five interviews conducted at Cooperative Danilo González, it is not a widely used strategy for reducing gender inequities. As noted by the President of Cooperative Danilo González in his interview a number of other cooperatives throughout Nicaragua have yet to include women in their organization: "hoy en día hay cooperativas que no…no tienen mujeres integradas en su organización."[243] Cooperative Los Robles comparatively is not required by UCA SOPPEXCCA to employ a quota system and the female cooperative members interviewed believe such an option is not feasible given the high number of male cooperative members.[244] One of the women also noted the issue of women's limited access to cooperative positions due to a lack of knowledge and training: "no todo el mundo puede tener un cargo que a uno sabe y el otro no saber…Tal vez no nos tenemos los posiciones porque una mujer no está preparada."[245] Operating under one standard definition would provide a basis for implementing a universal mandate of gender equitable trainings and quota systems to ensure that

[242] José Ramón, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013. *Quote: "Yo no me recuerdo exactamente pero el estatuto reformado creo que habla de un cincuenta y cincuenta. Pero ahorita en el consejo hay…esta sesenta por ciento que son mujeres."*
[243] Ibid.
[244] Maura Blandón, Interview with the author, January 11, 2013.
[245] Marlene Jarquín, Interview with the author, January 11, 2013.

women and men applying for cooperative positions are not unfairly advantaged against one another.

In determining the benefits of a standard approach to gender equity it is important to consider how differences in conditions of equity vary based upon geographical location, especially between cooperatives located closer to urban areas as compared to those situated in rural areas. Reference was made to the urban and rural divide during two separate interviews, one conducted with the Cooperativa Development Coordinator for CECOCAFEN and the other with two female members of Cooperative Los Robles. The representative from CECOCAFEN discussed how the culture and religion of rural families can significantly impact how gender equity is perceived and addressed.

> "En Nicaragua la política de género a veces la interpretado y no lo han interpretado… Entonces ese ha sido un obstáculo para que el campo, la cultura, la parte espiritual de las familias del campo son muy religiosas…este es la parte negativa. Entonces nosotros estemos tratando de vincular nuestra estrategia que no miran el trabajo genero como libertinaje."[246]
>
> *Translation: "In Nicaragua the gender policy is sometimes interpreted and we did not interpret it. The countryside, the culture, the spiritual part of rural families who are very religious have been obstacles…this is the negative part. Therefore we are trying to link our strategy so that it does not look like at the gender work completed as free license."*

A comment made by one of the female members of Cooperative Los Robles adds to this conversation in that it highlights the need for training of female cooperative members far removed from the office of the secondary level cooperative.

> "Depende de…lugar digamos de lo, de la gente. Porque por ejemplo tal vez una cooperativa que sea de más adentro digamos de la montana tal vez las mujeres este su preparación, su capacitación es menos. Entonces esa gente tal vez la poder tiene todo el marido aunque ella será la dueña."[247]

[246] Digna Zeledón, Interview with the author, January 15, 2013.
[247] Maura Blandón, Interview with the author, January 11, 2013.

> *Translation: "It depends on…the place, we say of the individuals. Because, for example, perhaps a cooperative situated more inside, we say, of the mountain, perhaps the preparation and capacity of the women is less. Therefore among these communities perhaps the husband has all of the power although the woman is the owner of the land or home."*

A standard definition of gender equity could serve as a basis for developing a more comprehensive approach to addressing inequities in rural areas in a manner equal to that which is employed in more centrally located communities.

Interviews with administrative staff from CECOCAFEN and primary level cooperative members revealed that while there has been a noticeable reduction in inequities, machismo continues to hinder work being done to promote gender equity. The Communications Director from CECOCAFEN observed that:

> "…mientras no se combata el machismo de hombres y mujeres tampoco se va a lograr tener una como una llamo separación distinta….seguimos trabajando y seguimos trabajando primero porque como decía no es fácil y no se convence e la noche a la mañana a la gente."[248]
>
> *Translation: "As long as one is not working to combat machismo between men and women you will achieve a distinct separation…we continue to work and continue to work first because as I said it is not easy and one does not convince the people from night to the next morning."*

He also noted that, with the acceptance of new coffee producing families and individuals into the cooperative, it is essential that trainings on gender equity continue to be conducted as new members may not have previously been exposed to such a frame of thinking. CECOCAFEN has worked and continues to work to ensure that cooperatives do not support machismo among their members nor do they allow individuals who are openly discriminatory against women to join: "y se ha trabajada mucho tambien el tema ese de que nuestros asociados no asocian machistas."[249] In her interview the Cooperative Development Coordinator agreed with the points made by her

[248] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with the author, January 5, 2013.
[249] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with the author, January 5, 2013.

co-worker saying that as a third level cooperative CECOCAFEN is committed to working on the issue of machismo; "este estamos muy vinculado a seguir trabajando en el area de que da machismo."[250]

Machismo was a prevalent topic discussed during the interview with two female coffee producers from Cooperative Los Robles. The coffee producers described the effect machismo has on the livelihood of women as follows:

> "Entonces la mujer siempre vive de criada pero sin ningún derecho. En la cocina allí. Solo creando los trabajadores. Y no se lo mire a la plata."[251]
>
> *Translation: "so the woman lives as a maid but without a single right. In the kitchen. Only creating workers [raising children]. And she never looks [receives] money."*

In the interview, both women discussed feeling more secure and empowered as a result of Law 799, a recently passed law which criminalizes violence against women nationally. Although machismo still exists, this law serves as a model for addressing gender inequity which can be expanded within the cooperative system. Specifically, Law 799 has the potential to serve as a model for developing a comprehensive standard definition of gender equity to be employed across cooperative levels to ensure machismo is officially no longer tolerated.

The issue of gendered divisions of labor was raised in the majority of interviews conducted in Nicaragua. It is interesting to note that the male representative from CECOCAFEN spoke about the Nicaraguan tradition of excluding women from participating in cooperatives decision making processes: "no es fácil porque la tradición en Nicaragua principalmente en el campo, en el área rural es de que son los hombres quienes han venido este participando, son quienes han venido tomando los decisiones."[252] The female representative from CECOCAFEN,

[250] Digna Zeledón, Interview with the author, January 15, 2013.
[251] Marlene Jarquín, Interview with the author, January 11, 2013.
[252] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with the author, January 5, 2013.

on the other hand, spoke about the traditional labor roles of female cooperative members and the need to address the inequalities which stem from both women and men maintaining the mindset that domestic duties are solely the responsibility of women:

> "de que a veces decimos nosotros las mujeres de la casa 'yo limpio la casa'. Generalmente en el campo así es…Esto tenemos que terminar con eso. De que las mujeres no sea la que va a levantar a las cuatro de la mañana con nadie al lado de ella. Estén su marido y estén sus hijos compartiendo desde el hogar y de luego de su cooperativa y de su organización."[253]
>
> *Translation: "sometimes, the women of the house, say. 'I will clean the house'. Normally in the countryside this is how it is…We must finish with this, that it is not the women who wake up at four in the morning with no one by their sides. Their husband and their children should be alongside sharing [the duties], first in the home then in the cooperative and also the organizations."*

The Cooperative Development Coordinator from UCA San Ramón discussed the connection between gendered division of labor and women's participation as well as their voice within the cooperative during her interview. Specifically, she commented on the need for men to participate in domestic duties. Maintaining traditional gendered roles prevents women from accessing and fully participating in the spaces which are slowly being created for them within the cooperative structure, through gender trainings offered by UCA San Ramón as well as the initiatives that have been started to empower female members of the cooperatives:

> "Porque si el hombre no apoyo el trabajo de la casa, el cuido de los niños, el trabajo domestico eso va a limitar a que la mujer también se integra en los espacios…Entonces consideramos que si nosotros tenemos que trabajar mucho ese parte para que los hombres también estén contribuyendo a la labores domesticas porque siempre la mujer hace el trabajo productivo verdad…Entonces cierto la mujer participa pero una mujer que se canse, una mujer quien tiene que trabajar el doble en esa día verdad. Más de lo normal para poder participar en un evento".[254]

[253] Digna Zeledón, Interview with the author, January 15, 2013.
[254] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013.

Translation: "If the husband does not assist with the household work, with watching the children and the domestic chores, this will limit women's ability to participate in spaces being made for her…So we need to work on this issue so that men will contribute to the domestic labor because women are always helping with the [coffee] production…So yes a women participate but it is a tired woman, a woman who has to work double on this day, more than normal to be able to participate in an event."

A standard definition of gender equity recognized and employed across all levels of the cooperative structure has the potential to address the issue of gendered division of labor, which largely stems from cultural traditions of patriarchy and machismo, by regulating uniform programs and policies that guarantee equally shared responsibilities among male and female cooperative members and non-members.

Finding Three: It is widely agreed upon that gender equity has improved significantly in recent years among all cooperative levels and there is not a need for gender inequities to be addressed through a standard approach imposed upon cooperatives, either as a prerequisite for Fairtrade certification or through standards upheld by an affiliate trade organization.

"Las cooperativas son autónomas. Por si sola. No dependen de esta estrategia nivel nacional ni nada de eso sino que ellas dirigen mas por la funcionamiento de la cooperativa, por la ley de la cooperativa..Entonces no es una estrategia que la trabajamos de arriba sino que la trabajamos de abajo hacia arriba."[255]

Representatives from U.S. affiliate organizations were of the opinion that approaches to addressing gender equity ought to originate within each cooperative and that imposing a standard approach from outside could significantly detract from both the experience of the cooperative members and the relationship between the cooperative and its affiliate organization. It is agreed that while no standard definition of gender equity is enforced, the general understanding which exists among organizations operating in Nicaragua and cooperative members is sufficient for the

[255] Ibid. *Translation: "The cooperatives are autonomous, for themselves only. They do not depend upon a national strategy or anything like this, but rather they manage themselves based upon the cooperative law. Therefore it is not a strategy that we work on from top-down but rather we work bottom-up."*

efforts underway at the moment to reduce inequities associated with gender.[256] There is concern that imposing a standard approach would stop the progress underway at each cooperative level. The following statement was provided by the Associate Director of the Community Agroecology Network:

> "I think it's all a process. I don't know if it's necessary to have a formal definition up on our website. Especially right now…we're right in the middle of it. We're clear that we have basic approaches to gender equity and promoting it but we don't all have the same understanding of it. Some of our partners are reluctant to agree on a concrete definition…others that is what they do [work only with women and children] so it's easy."[257]

The International Program Director for Coffee Kids addressed this point during his interview as well and emphasized that what is important is not that a standard approach is taken to addressing gender equity, but rather that each cooperative go through its own process of defining the concept and creating initiatives to address related issues.[258] Each cooperative develops within its own context and introducing a standard approach to gender equity would deny differences which significantly impact the willingness of a cooperative to work towards achieving gender equity.

Interviews were conducted with members and non-members of both Fairtrade certified and non-certified cooperatives. Regardless of certification status, all interview respondents replied that a standard approach is not necessary or encouraged for promoting work around women's empowerment within the cooperatives at each level. Each cooperative ought to develop its own approach to addressing gender equity. The interview with the Communications Coordinator for CECOCAFEN revealed that the gender policy developed by the tertiary

[256] José Zárate, Interview with the author, November 13, 2012. *Quote:"There are a lot of organizations working in Nicaragua and between us we have a lot of consensus about what gender equity means."*
[257] Heather Putnam, Interview with the author, November 30, 2012.
[258] José Zárate, Interview with the author, November 13, 2012. *Quote:* "*For Coffee Kids, the most important is not the definition (of gender equity) but the process…context is very important."*

cooperative provides a general guideline for cooperative members to reference when creating their own policies: "la de CECOCAFEN establece cosas para todas las asociadas pero las asociadas en su política de genero hacen cosas pensando en sus familia productoras."[259] While the policies upheld at the tertiary, secondary and primary levels serve to meet the needs of their respective communities and therefore have differences, they all share in common the principle that women and youth ought to have greater participation: "algunas diferencias pero siempre se promueve…la participación de mujeres y jóvenes es común en todos."[260] Additionally, with regards to Fairtrade certification, the Cooperative Development Coordinator stated that CECOCAFEN is in compliance with the policies and it is the decision of each primary cooperative whether or not to seek certification: "entonces todos estamos en acuerdo de la politica de comercio justo…entonces generalmente la cooperativa toma la decision de la introduccion…entonces de la base está iniciando el trabajo."[261] Given this information, imposing a standard approach as a requisite for Fairtrade certification would not effectively reach all coffee producers and may have the opposite effect of discouraging requests for certification.

The representatives interviewed at the secondary level of the Nicaraguan cooperative system were in accordance with one another that outside organizations should not impose standards on cooperatives regarding how best to address gender inequity. Members of cooperatives affiliated with UCA San Ramón are subject to the regulations of their cooperative and the Nicaraguan cooperative laws: "ellas dirigen mas por la funcionamiento de la cooperativa, por la ley de la cooperativa"[262] While they are not mandated to abide by the gender policies of UCA San Ramón, members of the secondary level cooperative have worked closely with

[259] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with the author, January 5, 2013.
[260] Ibid.
[261]Digna Zeledón, Interview with the author, January 15, 2013.
[262] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013.

representatives from the primary level to encourage the inclusion of gender equitable practices in each cooperative statute: "al nivel de la cooperativa los regalamientos y el estatuto de la UCA nosotros hemos logrado que ellos incluyen a aspectos de género importante".[263] Primary level cooperatives affiliated with UCA SOPPEXCCA on the other hand are all subject to the same gender policy upheld by the secondary level cooperative: "Y nosotros como organización tenemos nuestra política de género institucional que se basa verdad al nuestro a lo que hacemos a nuestro trabajo. Y este cada una de las cooperativas se dirige por la misma política del nivel institucional."[264] Gender equity may be more readily achieved within cooperatives not through forced requirements from outside organizations but from discussion generated within the cooperatives themselves, at each level of the system.

All respondents from the two primary level cooperatives visited agreed that gender policies and similar means taken to reduce gender inequities ought to come from the cooperative members themselves. The two female members of Cooperative Los Robles discussed in length the process their cooperative went though when creating its current gender policy and the beneficial outcomes it has had for their members.[265] While visiting Cooperative Danilo González, two female cooperative members, one in an elected position and the other a newly integrated member, made similar comments about the importance of gender policies being generated by the cooperative members themselves.[266] It is important to note that while the woman who holds an administrative position within Cooperative Danilo González discussed how their cooperative gender policy had been made through various meetings of cooperative leaders,

[263] Ibid.
[264] Margarita Espinoza, Interview with the author, January 8, 2013.
[265] Maura Blandón and Marlene Jarquín, Interview with the author, January 11, 2013.
[266] Zunilda Hernandez, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013 and Elizabeth Tórrez, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013. *Quote from Bertha: "Cada aquí lo hacemos. Por ejemplo el otro lo hicimos como cooperativa. Nos reunimos. Hacemos una reunión de lideres los que participan mas y así conformamos la política."*

the President stated that there was not a policy upheld by the cooperative but rather gender equity was something members just practiced; "pues tal vez política no exactamente…que si hablamos igualdad, todo por igual no es cosa de política son cosas que ya las hacemos pues en la práctica."[267] A standard definition imposed by an outside organization would neither promote a community based approach to identifying and addressing localized issues nor would it necessarily recognize the wide-ranging experience and needs of each coffee producing community with regards to gender inequities. Therefore, affiliate organizations should not impose such a standard definition upon their partner cooperatives.

Finding Four: Adopting a standard approach to addressing gender inequities denies cooperative members and non-members the opportunity to engage in gender policy and program development unique to their community, discouraging individual ownership of said policies and programs. The compromises of a standardized approach outweigh potential benefits.

"Hay consciencia digamos de la política. Porque esa política eh ha sido reformada por nosotros mismos. Ha sido reformada, ha sido creada por nosotros mismos."[268]

Across all levels of the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative network research subjects emphasized the importance of having cooperatives generate their own specific gender policies and initiatives to empower women. While the process is slow, working collaboratively between and within cooperative levels has effectively strengthened the movement to ensure equal treatment and rights of both male and female coffee cooperative members and non-members.

According to responses provided by cooperative members and administrative staff at the secondary and tertiary cooperative levels, policies, workshops and initiatives which address gender inequities are determined using a general assembly in which cooperative leaders convene

[267] José Ramón, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013.
[268] Maura Blandón, Interview with the author, January 11, 2013. *Translation: "There is consciousness of the policy we say. Because this policy was reformed by us. It was reformed, it was created by us."*

and discuss the issues present within their individual communities. The Communications Coordinator of CECOCAFEN stated that including women in these spaces has progressed slowly over the past two decades within all levels of the Nicaraguan cooperative structure; "hemos han ido trabajando y poco a poco…mas mujeres vayan asumiendo responsabilidades. Y eso funciona de una cooperativa de base hasta la cooperativa central."[269] In order for women to have full participatory rights in these newly forming spaces it is essential that men be incorporated into the discussion as well. This can be seen in comments provided by both representatives at the secondary cooperative level. The staff member from UCA SOPPEXCCA asserted that while a policy may exist to provide women with equal access to cooperative spaces, it might not reflect reality. Even though equal numbers of men and women in the general assembly are assured through the quota system, women to not necessarily participate equally with their male counterparts:

> "¿De que no sirve tener cinco mujeres y un consejo si no te van a hablar? Si no van a participar. Entonces la equidad para ellos es de que tanto ellas como ellos estén por participación no por nombre antes un consejo antes organización de la gestión antes una cooperativa."[270]
>
> *Translation: "What purpose is there of having five women elected to the cooperative board if they are not going to speak? If they are not going to participate. So equity for them [cooperative members] is that women just as men are there to participate equally, that women are not just there in name [to fill a quota] before the board, before the management organization, before the cooperative."*

The gender strategy employed by UCA San Ramón seeks to overcome the barriers to participation women face through the inclusion of men in the discussions around gender equity; rather than impose a policy upon its primary cooperatives, they use a grassroots approach to encourage members to own the work that must be done to address gender inequities:

[269] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with the author, January 5, 2013.
[270] Margarita Espinoza, Interview with the author, January 8, 2013.

> "Entonces no es una estrategia que la trabajamos de arriba sino que la trabajamos de abajo hacia arriba. Involucramos a los hombres especialmente porque…nos gusta que lleve verdad que el hombre se sienta que se le toma en cuenta para trabajar el tema de género, que no lo vean indiferencia verdad, que no digan que 'esto no es problema mío asunto de mujeres'."[271]
>
> *Translation: "So our strategy is not one we work on from above but rather we take a bottom up approach. We involve the men especially because we like that the men feel that they should take it into account to work on the issue of gender equity, that they don't remain indifferent, that they don't say 'this is not my problem, it's a matter of women'."*

Imposing a standard approach to defining and addressing gender equity has the potential to inhibit rather than promote conversation around the issue and active participation by men and women at all levels of the Nicaraguan cooperative system.

The importance of cooperative members' participation in creating gender policies and defining gender equity was most apparent in the comments provided by two female cooperative members of Cooperative Los Robles. Over the period of a year, cooperative members met regularly to analyze the gender policies upheld by SOPPEXCCA and other secondary and tertiary cooperatives and to attend training workshops on gender issues. Inclusion in the deliberation around gender policies has led to a wide-spread consciousness of gender equity among cooperative members and ownership of the principles and initiatives laid out in the resulting gender policy:

> "Mira es que nosotros hemos tenido bastante capacitación sobre la política de género. Eh nos hemos reunido con las mujeres eh para estudiarla. Hemos tenido bastante capacitación eh primeramente tuvimos estés reuniones de capacitación como por un ano. Eh teníamos varios encuentros de puede, sobre por encuentro de este o sea nivel de aquí a la base. Después otra capacitación y otro encuentro al nivel analizando siempre la política en Jinotega después con otras cooperativas así de otras centrales…Hay consciencia

[271] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013.

digamos de la política. Porque esa política eh ha sido reformada por nosotros mismos. Ha sido reformada, ha sido creada por nosotros mismos."[272]

Translation: "Look, we have plenty of knowledge about the gender policy. We met with the women to study it. We have had plenty of trainings, first we had these training meetings for about a year. We met several times, each level of the cooperative. After the trainings and another meeting at the general assembly, always we are analyzing the gender policy of Jinotega…There is an understanding of the policy. Because this policy was created by us ourselves, it was created for us by us."

Although a standard approach to defining gender equity is conceivably more effective in reducing inequities, this research demonstrates that the success of programs and policies are tied to the willingness of cooperative members to implement such measures. Imposing a standard definition denies cooperative members the opportunity to address the issue in the best fit way possible for their community; it prevents grass-root collaboration among cooperative members thereby denying them the opportunity to take ownership for creating and implementing policies and programs as a united community.

Section 6.2: Additional Findings

In compiling the aforementioned findings the question was raised of what role Fairtrade and other affiliate trade organizations have to play in promoting gender equitable policies and practices within the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative network, if any role at all. Through interviews it was found that without imposing a standard definition of "gender equity", affiliate organizations and the Fairtrade model have positively influenced gender relations within each cooperative level. This is addressed in the Finding Five below. Additionally there is the question of why and how gender policies and equitable practices have been implemented successfully within the five cooperatives studied in this research project. Finding Six proposes this is due to the structural hierarchy of the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative structure. Furthermore, it was

[272] Maura Blandón, Interview with the author, January 11, 2013.

found that while progress is being made there are a number of factors which continue to inhibit equity among female and male cooperative members, namely the inability of women to access land in a manner equal to their male counterparts. This is explored in the seventh, and final, finding.

Finding Five: CECOCAFEN has incorporated and expanded upon the Fairtrade principle of non-discrimination in its gender policy for use by it and its affiliate cooperatives. This serves as a model for how Fairtrade might work with certified cooperatives to promote gender equity among members without requiring the use of a standard definition.

An interview with the Cooperative Development Coordinator of CECOCAFEN revealed that policies generated by the tertiary level cooperative are framed around the principles upheld by Fairtrade; "la política de CECOCAFEN tiene que estar enmarcada a lo que es la certificación comercio justo."[273] This was corroborated through text analysis of the Gender Equity and Generational Policy (La Política de Equidad de Género y Generacional de CECOCAFEN) attained from the office of the tertiary cooperative. The policy states that the principles of Fairtrade as well as those of Cooperativism provided legal context for developing the policy itself; "la Política de Género y Generacional de CECOCAFEN se basa en los principios del Cooperativismo y Comercio Justo."[274] While Fairtrade certified organizations and cooperatives are obliged to abide by the standards set forth by Fairtrade, the policies of each individual cooperative are not necessarily required to incorporate Fairtrade principles in their rhetoric. The gender policy produced by CECOCAFEN, however, includes a section that highlights both cooperative and Fairtrade principles that may be invoked when resolving issues of gender inequity among cooperative members.

[273] Digna Zeledón, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013.
[274] CECOCAFEN, *Política de Genero y Generacional,* 6.

> "Principios del Comercio Justo: Los productores y productoras deben organizarse de manera voluntaria y asegurar la participación de mujeres y hombres, en la economía como en la toma de decisiones y respetar los derechos humanos."[275]
>
> *Translation: "Principles of Fairtrade: Male and female producers should organize themselves voluntarily, ensuring the equal participation of men and women in the economy, through participation in the decision making process and respect for human rights."*

The decision of CECOCAFEN to include the Fairtrade principle of nondiscrimination directly in their gender policy demonstrates that cooperatives are employing Fairtrade guidelines when suitable for their coffee producing communities. This finding demonstrates that the scope of Fairtrade discourse is expanding among cooperatives to address not only economic but also gender based inequities.

Finding Six: The mandatory internal organizational hierarchy of each cooperative provides for continuity in administrative committees and positions across all cooperative levels. This in turn facilitates the successful development and implementation of gender equity policies and programs across the entire cooperative network.

"…la UCA tiene plan estratégico de género. Entonces para llevar adelante ese plan estratégico nosotros tenemos que trabajar con esas promoverías. Y esas comisiones nos ayudan a facilitar el trabajo que nosotros hacemos desde acá hacia a la base"[276]

As mandated by the General Cooperative Law all cooperatives regardless of level within the overall Nicaraguan structure must include in their organizational body the same four entities: a general assembly, the board of directors, an oversight committee, and a cooperative education and development committee.[277] Additionally, the law allows for cooperatives to generate additional committees to meet the needs of their respective communities. This structure has supported the movement for gender equity within Nicaraguan cooperatives as it has readily

[275] Ibid., 7.
[276] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013. *Translation: "UCA [San Ramón] has a gender strategy. In order to move forward with this strategy we have to work with those who promote the work. These [gender] commissions help us to facilitate the work we do from here to the primary level."*
[277] Cooperative Law and Regulation Initiative (CLARITY), et al., *Applying the CLARITY Principles to the Nicaraguan Cooperative Law: Workshop Report,* Montelimar, Nicaragua: August 2008, 47.

facilitated communication between members and non-members working to address issues of gender inequity.

Relevant to this research finding is the increasing prevalence of gender committees within secondary and primary level cooperatives. Gender committees are comprised of male and female cooperative members who monitor cooperatives to ensure that a gender equitable approach is taken by cooperative members when planning and implementing social development projects. Representatives from the gender committees also meet with the general assemblies of the primary level cooperatives to review and adjust gender policies.[278] All eighteen primary level cooperatives affiliated with UCA SOPPEXCCA have gender committees which serve as alliances for staff from SOPPEXCCA that are providing trainings on gender equity: "en estas diez y ocho cooperativas hay este ordeno de dirección…hay comisión de género en cada una de ellas. Entonces ellos son nuestros aliados para capacitar."[279] Gender commissions serve to promote gender equitable practices on their own and may prove even more effective when working collaboratively within the broader structure of the Nicaraguan cooperative system.

The continuity in committees and positions which occurs at all levels of the cooperative system provides for fluid exchange of information and discourse between and among primary, secondary and tertiary level cooperatives. According to the Cooperative Development Coordinator from UCA San Ramón, advice on best practices for addressing gender inequities is frequently exchanged between all levels of the three tier cooperative system to facilitate the progressive introduction of gender equitable programs:

> "hay un vinculo porque la CECOCAFEN también promueve acciones de en la parte organizativa, en el tema de género hacia a las cooperativas afiliadas en este caso hacia a

[278] SOPPEXCCA, *Politica de Genero Institucional*, 4.
[279] Margarita Espinoza, Interview with the author, January 8, 2013.

> la UCA, y luego nos llevamos a las cooperativas… porque la UCA tiene plan estratégico de género. Entonces para llevar adelante ese plan estratégico nosotros tenemos que trabajar con esas promoverías. Y esas comisiones nos ayudan a facilitar el trabajo que nosotros hacemos desde acá hacia a la base."[280]
>
> *Translation: "There is a connection because CECOCAFEN also promotes actions among its affiliate cooperatives to address the issue of gender, in this case UCA, and thereafter we take these initiatives to the cooperatives…because UCA has a gender strategy. So to bring this strategy to fruition we have to work with the female promoters ('promoverias'). And these [gender] commissions help us to facilitate the work we need to do with the base cooperatives."*

Essential to this model of cooperative structure is the ability of opinions to be easily conferred between levels of the cooperative system. Gender inequities stem from various cultural, political and economic factors and implementing gender equitable practices requires continuous, often contentious, dialogue amongst all stakeholders. It is therefore essential that there be a means and a space though which individuals of all levels of the cooperative system engage with one another. The cooperative structure employed in Nicaragua provides a catalyst for such communication.

Finding Seven: Although progress continues to be made in the movement to create spaces for women within the Nicaraguan cooperative structure this process has been inhibited by the inability of female producers to access and own land as easily as their male counterparts.

"Porque ya sabemos que generalmente las cooperativas pues la mayoritariamente inciden los hombres los beneficiarias mas directamente. Entonces nosotros hemos promovido espacios especiales para las mujeres para que ellas también tengan acceso a los recursos y también toman decisiones dentro de la cooperativa"[281]

Across the Nicaraguan cooperative network all individuals interviewed for this project agreed that women's participation has significantly improved over the past two decades

[280] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013.
[281] Ibid. *Translation: "Because we know that generally the men are the ones who benefit the most directly from cooperative participation. Therefore we have promoted special spaces for the women so that they might also have access to resources and so that they may also make decisions within the cooperative."*

consequently reducing gender based inequities. There are a number of reasons to which this change is attributed including: gender trainings for coffee producers led by secondary level administrators, gender quotas for cooperative administrations, a growing number of women's groups, and the implementation of additional income earning opportunities such as micro-credit projects. Such programs aim to empower both female cooperative members and non-members, specifically the wives, sisters and daughters of male cooperative members and women working in administrative positions within the secondary and tertiary levels of the cooperative structure.[282]

Comments provided by individuals within each level of the cooperative structure indicate that programs implemented to date have focused on augmenting both the economic and social participation of women. According to the Communications Coordinator for CECOCAFEN, the savings and loans programs Coffee Kids helped to facilitate are managed exclusively by women to ensure they remain the direct beneficiaries of these initiatives, both in terms of earned income and skill development:"los programas de ahorro y credito dirigido por mujeres ahi no hay derechos que se involucran los hombres. Lo trabajan directamente ellas. Tienen su propia mesa directiva y eso es una que toma decisiones de cómo administra y como usa esos fondos."[283] The Cooperative Development Coordinator of UCA San Ramón provided a similar comment in stating that various actions have been taken with primary level cooperatives to ensure that women have access to certain resources such as credit: "entonces lo que hacemos es facilitar a unas acciones para que las mujeres si tengan ciertos recursos. Este hay muchos proyectos productivos que las mujeres también están trabajando y de alguna manera las mujeres también

[282] Elizabeth Tórrez, Interview with the author, January 14, 2013.
[283] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with the author, January 5, 2013.

han obtenido crédito."[284] While progress has been made in finding alternative outlets through which women might earn supplementary income, there remains the issue of women's inability to earn the same amount as men due to lack of land.

In spite of the progress made in addressing women's low participation within cooperative spaces gendered inequities associated with land ownership are a persisting problem. According to the Associate Director of the Community Agroecology Network, one of the foremost issues requiring attention in Nicaragua is the inability of female coffee producers to gain access to land.[285] While this is in part attributed to a general lack of available land, unequal access also stems from the tradition of male land ownership. The Communications Coordinator from CECOCAFEN provided the following statement:

> "Y son los hombres los propietarios principalmente de la tierra. Porque en el campo eh la economía está basada en la tierra. Y la propiedad por lo tanto esta siempre en las manos de los hombres. Porque por la cultura eh cuando un cuando hay herencia cuando se hereda a los hijos casi siempre…hereda a un hijo. Bien, casi siempre. Y esa posibilidad de heredar a las mujeres es menor. Eso sí es la tradición."[286]
>
> *Translation: "Men are the principal proprietors of the land. In the countryside the economy is based on the land and because of this land remains most often in the hand of the men. Due to the culture when there is an inheritance, it is almost always the case that a son inherits the land. Almost always. The possibility that a woman will inherit the land is minimal. This is the tradition."*

CECOCAFEN and their affiliated secondary cooperatives are working to address the problem of unequal land ownership by requiring that for any new family seeking cooperative membership the woman be legally documented as the proprietor of the collectively shared land. Guaranteeing women land ownership not only ensures they are eligible for cooperative membership but also

[284] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013.
[285] Heather Putnam, Interview with the author, November 30, 2013. *Quote: "…the land is not in the hands of women so we are beginning to explore how to get land in the hands of women when there is no land."*
[286] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with the author, January 5, 2013.

serves as a precaution against women and their children being displaced from their homes in the case of marital separation or divorce, as evidenced in the following quote:

> "en el documento de la propiedad es en al nombre de la mujer no al nombre del marido. Para evitar que muchas veces cuando hay separaciones de familia la mujer tiene que irse porque el hombre es el dueño de la tierra. Pero si la mujer es la dueña, si se separan y alguien tiene que irse que se vaya el hombre y la mujer que es la que anda con sus hijos no es la que tenga que irse a la calle. Que por lo menos tenga la seguridad de que se queda viviendo y se queda cuidando a sus hijos."[287]
>
> *Translation: "the name provided on the property document is in the name of the woman and not the husband to avoid what happens many times when there is a separation of a family which is that the woman must leave because the husband is the owner of the land. If the woman is the owner, however, and the pair separates and someone must leave it will be the man and the woman is the one who will stay with her children, she will not have to take to the street. At the very least she will have the security that she may remain living in the house caring for her children."*

In spite of these measures there remain few other alternative means by which to procure land for women. Secondary and primary level cooperatives do not have the financial resources available to purchase land exclusively for use by female producers as it is not a project which generates international interest: "No tenemos proyecto de tierra nosotros…generalmente nadie de organismos nacionales, internacionales…está apoyando para crear banco de tierra en las comunidades."[288] While progress is being made to ensure female producers have the same access to land as their male counterparts, the importance of land ownership as a serious and persistent inequity within the cooperative system cannot be stressed enough. Women who do not have access to land do not have full access to the benefits of participation in coffee cooperatives, and more specifically participation in Fairtrade certified cooperatives, where economic benefits are tied to land. Ensuring that women have access to land is imperative for securing their cooperative membership and subsequent economic and social benefits derived from membership.

[287] Santiago Dolmus, Interview with the author, January 5, 2013.
[288] Yadira Montenegro, Interview with the author, January 9, 2013.

Chapter Seven: Recommendations

Section 7.1: Policy Recommendations

The findings demonstrate there is not a need for significant policy change within and across the levels of the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative network as the current system is effectively working to address gender inequities. Instead, it is recommended that the programs and policies successfully employed by the five cooperatives and their affiliated organizations presented in this research paper serve as a model of generalized best practices for other coffee cooperatives that are in the process of addressing gender inequities among members. Recommendations one and two provided below are suggestions for relatively low-cost policy changes which have the potential to build upon the progress already underway to promote gender equity within the five cooperatives presented in this research paper. Recommendation three is a suggestion for how the efforts undertaken by the five cooperatives of this study may be applied to other cooperatives operating in Nicaragua and more broadly, coffee cooperatives throughout Central America.

Recommendation One: Greater Dissemination of Gender Equity Policies

Based upon findings one, three and four it is recommended that affiliated tertiary and secondary level cooperatives work together to share resources and ensure distribution of their respective gender equity policies to each primary level cooperative member and their family. Research found that only one of the secondary cooperatives studied provides each of its associated primary level producers with individual copies of its gender policy. The other secondary cooperative disseminates the information contained in its gender policy to primary level produces via trainings offered by ‘Promotoras’, women and men who visit cooperatives to

provide educational trainings. As discussed in Finding One, there is an implicit understanding of gender equity among individuals at all levels of the cooperatives network; however, the lack of a concise definition could be negatively impacting efforts to promote equity among cooperative members. Guaranteeing that each cooperative member is provided with a hard copy of the gender policy maintained by its affiliated secondary and tertiary level cooperatives would raise awareness and public understanding of gender based inequities. Furthermore, universal access to copies of gender policies would provide all cooperative members and non-members with the same base information, reducing the degree of difference in notions of gender equity held by individuals participating in the cooperative system thereby reducing the likelihood that gender equity workshops have differential impacts across cooperative levels.

Recommendation Two: Increased Collaboration within the Cooperative Levels

The recommendation is based primarily upon finding six. In the course of research it was found that while there is a high level of collaboration between affiliated cooperatives of all levels, collaboration among unaffiliated cooperatives occurs much less frequently. For example, there is little partnership between UCA San Ramón and UCA SOPPEXCCA or between Cooperative Danilo González and Cooperative Los Robles. Increased collaboration within the primary, secondary and tertiary cooperative levels would facilitate a wider exchange of knowledge among individuals involved in the Nicaraguan coffee network and has the potential to foster wide-spread discourse of gender equity and equitable cooperative practices. Moreover, growing the network of acquainted cooperative members would prove useful for implementing large-scale campaigns promoting gender equity both within and outside of the coffee cooperative network.

Recommendation Three: Best Practices Model

It is recommended that the common best practices employed by the cooperatives of this research project serve as a guideline for coffee cooperatives looking to develop their own gender equity policies and programs. While these best practices might prove most applicable to other Nicaraguan coffee cooperatives due to the shared national cooperative laws, they may also prove beneficial for cooperatives situated throughout Central America. It is suggested that representatives from the primary, secondary and tertiary cooperative levels use the general assembly as a means to exchange experiences with one another for the purpose of compiling a list of the most effective strategies they have employed to address issues of gender inequity among their cooperative members and non-members. Best practices identified in this research that may be considered include: the duplicate organizational structure of each cooperative level which facilitates permeability of the three tier cooperative hierarchy, the development of gender policies unique to each cooperative, the use of quota systems to ensure equal distribution of leadership positions among men and women, and the regulation of land ownership among primary level cooperative members to guaranteed female primary producers have property rights.

Identified best practices might be made readily available for public consumption in a variety of means. First, they could be posted to the websites of tertiary and secondary level cooperatives. Second, they could be printed as booklets or fliers then distributed to unaffiliated secondary and tertiary cooperatives. Finally, the information could be spread through public forums hosted by cooperative leaders; this method would have the added benefit of publicizing work being done to address gender equity to the broader public throughout Nicaragua and more broadly, in neighboring coffee producing countries of Central America.

Section 7.2: Future Research

The scope of this research project was limited due to time and funding, as well as the use of the snowball technique for identifying participants in Nicaragua. Further research is necessary for building a more comprehensive analysis of the movement for gender equity within the Nicaraguan coffee cooperative network, in particular among Fairtrade certified cooperatives. Recommendations for future research include the following:

Recommendation One: Examination of the role of Fairtrade has to play in ensuring gender certified coffee cooperatives employ gender equitable practices.

This research found that Fairtrade principles have served as a basis for the development of cooperative gender policies in Nicaragua. Further research is needed to understand how Fairtrade International (FLO) and Fairtrade USA might work with representatives from all levels of the Nicaraguan cooperative system to support the concurrent bottom-up and top-down approach currently employed to address gender inequities within all levels of the cooperative structure.

Recommendation Two: Further study of the role U.S. based affiliate organizations fill in supporting and promoting gender equitable cooperatives.

As demonstrated in the research findings, representatives from the U.S. based affiliated organizations studied prefer to work with coffee cooperatives which practice gender equity; however, they commonly felt it was not their place to dictate how and when cooperatives address this issue among their members. There is the question of whether U.S. based affiliate organizations, both trade and non-trade based, should possess a role in influencing the division of labor production and social development projects practiced by their partner cooperatives. Further discussion with representatives from additional affiliate organizations as well as their key cooperative correspondents in Nicaragua is necessary in order to establish a comprehensive

understanding of how international organizations may best work to encourage their cooperative partners to address issues of gender inequity without having to impose limiting or deterrent standards.

Recommendation Three: Additional research regarding the effect gendered land ownership and property rights has on cooperative participation.

According to the research, cooperative membership varies across Nicaragua; it may be extended solely to the owner of the land used for coffee cultivation, the primary producer, or it may include the family of the primary producer. A larger study of primary cooperatives across Northern Nicaragua, as well as additional coffee producing regions in the country, is necessary for identifying gendered disparities in membership as well as for analyzing the cooperative benefits available for land owner members versus non-landowner members.

Recommendation Four: Consider the feasibility of creating a land bank for female coffee producers operating in Nicaragua.

The potential for establishing a land bank for female coffee producers was mentioned in one of the interviews conducted for this research. It is highly recommended that further research be conducted to determine the feasibility of such a project and its potential for equalizing land ownership among male and female coffee producers so as to ensure that women have equal access to the economic benefits promised to land owners through cooperative membership and Fairtrade certification. It would be necessary to examine not only the role cooperatives but also the roles their partner organizations, local nonprofits, government departments and Fairtrade have to play in developing such an initiative.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The decision to create, implement, monitor and evaluate gender policies and equitable practices is a responsibility which must be initiated within the cooperatives themselves at the base level. The success and longevity of adopting gender equitable practices however is contingent upon collaboration within each level of the cooperative structure and across levels as well. A simultaneous bottom-up and top-down approach serves to disperse the burden of responsibility and change more equally. Nevertheless, it is important to note that an approach too heavily focused on top-down has the potential to undermine ongoing efforts. The efforts of CECOCAFEN, UCA SOPPEXCCA, UCA San Ramón and their affiliate primary cooperatives examined in this project demonstrate how a careful balance of power has been achieved through emphasis on a participatory approach to policy and program development. These cooperatives provide a model for other coffee cooperative networks operating within Nicaragua and throughout Latin America looking to reduce gender inequities among their producers and administrative and technical personnel.

In continuing the conversation around gender equity, there is not only the question of what role Fairtrade and affiliate organizations might play in supporting and sustaining ongoing efforts to reduce inequities among coffee cooperatives, but also the role of the consumer. In what capacity are coffee consumers able to support efforts and demand broader change of current trade models? While gender inequities may persist today within the alternative trade models built to foster equity, these models are nevertheless more sustainable than conventional trade models and with the support of consumer advocates may become free of continuing inequities. It is imperative for the success of sustainable and equitable trade for men and women in the coffee industry that consumers take on the responsibility of education and advocacy for change.

Appendix A: U.S. Based Affiliate Organizations

Organization	Subject	Title	Interview Date	Means/ Duration	Consent Form
Coffee Kids (CECOCAFEN)	Jose Luis Zarate	International Program Director (Oaxaca, Mexico)	11-13-12	Skype (39:22)	Yes
Thanksgiving Coffee	Paul Katzeff	Co-Founder	Pending	Phone (707-964-9161)	
Thanksgiving Coffee/ SOPPEXCCA	Nicholas Hoskyns	Board Member, Thanksgiving Coffee (Leon, Nicaragua)	Pending	Skype	
Community Agroecology Network	Heather Putnam	Associate Director, CAN	11-30-12	Phone Call (1 hour)	Yes
Cooperative Coffees	Monika Firl	Producer Relations Manager	12-7-12	Skype (30:00)	Yes
Peet's Coffee	Kathy	Customer Service Representative	*Follow up needed*		
Sustainable Harvest	N/A	*Only trade; not engaged in development projects			
USAID/ Nicaragua	Ira Frydman	Agriculture Development Officer	Pending	Email (ifrydman@usaid.gov)	
Catholic Relief Services	info@crs.org or (877) 435-7277		*Follow up; locate response email*		

Appendix B: Interview questions for professional staff and representatives of U.S. based affiliate organizations

(1) What is the name of the organization you work for?

(2) What is your title within this organization?

(3) How long have you worked for this organization?

   a. How did you first become involved?

(4) What is the history of the organization working with coffee cooperatives in Nicaragua?

   a. When and how did the organization establish contact with cooperatives in Nicaragua?

   b. How was the decision made regarding which cooperatives to work with?

(5) In what ways are resources offered to these cooperatives by your organization? Such as:

   a. Funding (credit, micro loans, donations, etc)

   b. Skill development (leadership trainings, programming, etc)

   c. Materials (irrigation, agricultural inputs, physical infrastructure, etc)

(6) What types of projects does your organization facilitate at these cooperatives? Such as:

   a. Project addressing food sovereignty

   b. Programs for youth

   c. Trainings regarding agricultural techniques

   d. What programs exist which specifically advocate for the empowerment of female producers?

(7) Does your organization define “gender equity”?

   a. If so, what is the definition?

   b. If not, is there an implicit definition that you think exists within the organization?

   c. In what ways does this definition influence the scope of the work your organization does with cooperatives in Nicaragua?

   d. Do you agree or disagree with this definition? What might you add or change?

(8) In your experience, is there a consensus between outside organizations working in Nicaragua and cooperative members with regards to how gender inequity should be addressed?

   a. If so, in what ways does a consensus benefit or challenge the work being done by cooperatives and their associates to reduce gender inequities across the industry?

   b. If not, why do you think there is a lack of consensus?

(9) What is the level of collaboration that exists between your organization and other U.S. based groups working to empower coffee producers, specifically women, in the Nicaraguan coffee trade?

Appendix C: Interview questions for leaders of the tertiary and secondary cooperatives

(1) Which cooperative do you belong to?

(2) When did you become a member of the cooperative?

(3) Why do you participate in a coffee cooperative?

(4) What are some benefits of involvement in the cooperative? Are there any drawbacks?

(5) How is your cooperative run?

   a. What is the governance structure?
   b. How are decisions made?

(6) If decisions are made at meetings, how often does the cooperative host governance meetings?

   a. In your opinion, do most members attend cooperative meetings?
   b. Do you attend meetings regularly?

(7) Are you happy with your representation within your cooperative?

(8) What projects are underway to empower female producers within the cooperative?

   a. What types of projects do you participate in?

(9) Does your cooperative define "gender equity" in the context of women's rights?

   a. If so, what is the definition?
   b. If not, is there an implicit definition that you think exists within the cooperative?
   c. How might you define gender equity?

Appendix D: Interview questions for members of the primary coffee cooperatives

(1) Which cooperative do you belong to?

(2) When did you become a member of the cooperative?

(3) Why do you participate in a coffee cooperative?

    a. Why do you belong to a female only cooperative specifically? (for female coffee producers)

(4) What are some benefits of involvement in the cooperative? Are there any drawbacks?

(5) How is your cooperative run?

    a. What is the governance structure?
    b. How are decisions made?

(6) If decisions are made at meetings, how often does the cooperative host governance meetings?

    a. In your opinion, do most members attend cooperative meetings?
    b. Do you attend meetings regularly?

(7) Are you happy with your representation within your cooperative?

    a. Do you feel your cooperative has an equal representation as compared to cooperatives that are predominantly male?

(8) What is your relationship to mixed gender cooperatives?

(9) Does your cooperative define "gender equity" in the context of women's rights?

    a. If so, what is the definition?
    b. If not, is there an implicit definition that you think exists within the cooperative?
    c. How might you define gender equity?

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All individuals interviewed for this project provided a signed Informed Consent Form and Data Archival Form permitting for their responses to the interview questions to be included in this paper. Permission to use the photographs was provided by Patrick A. Riggs.