Many development organizations now recognize the importance of culturally sensitive project design and implementation. Unfortunately most of these groups continue to disregard the significance of gender. This qualitative research examines a women’s cooperative in rural El Salvador which formed in order to find a means of generating income and to improve the general status of women in this region. One purpose of this qualitative research was to investigate what, if any, economic and social benefits the cooperative members received through their involvement. Another purpose was to analyze the models of development employed by the agencies involved in implementing four cooperative projects, as well as the member’s attitudes toward those projects. Data presented in this thesis was collected during a fifteen-month period in 1994 and 1995, and a one-month period in 1998. Twenty-six cooperative members were interviewed in 1998. The four projects investigated include cows and nutrition, land and reforestation, artisan crafts and corn mills. These findings indicate that the empowerment model of development, in which self-reliance is maintained and strategic gender needs are met through mobilizing around practical gender needs, is the most successful. Focusing on local knowledge and preserving the agency of the target population are critical to project success. The findings also show that social power is attained by many women in the
cooperative as increased self-esteem and involvement lead to gaining a legitimate voice in community affairs. Economic power, however, is only achieved by maintaining a paid leadership position within the cooperative. This research makes recommendations centered on improved access to credit.
Development Projects and Questions of Empowerment:
A Salvadorean Women's Cooperative

by

Kristen L. Hannigan-Luther

A THESIS
submitted to
Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Presented October 23, 2000
Commencement June 2001
Master of Arts thesis of Kristen L. Hannigan-Luther presented on October 23, 2000

APPROVED:

Redacted for Privacy

Major Professor, representing Applied Anthropology

Redacted for Privacy

Chair of Department of Anthropology

Redacted for Privacy

Dean of Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Redacted for privacy

Kristen L. Hannigan-Luther, Author
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people contributed to the writing of this thesis. First and foremost, I would like to thank the women of Unidas Por La Paz, who have requested to remain nameless, but whose strength, wisdom and perseverance I attempt to convey in these pages.

I have been privileged to receive support and inspiration from family and friends during the fieldwork and writing of this thesis. To my parents, Bob and Judy Hannigan for believing in me and supporting my journeys to Latin America; to my brother, John Hannigan, for providing comic relief and support; to my sister, Kim Hannigan-Downs for serving as my on-campus liaison and for encouraging me; to Steve Hannigan-Downs, for fielding my computer questions with grace; to Sarah Payne and her son, Bergren who entertained Shay so that I could sit down and write.

This thesis could not have been completed without the assistance of numerous people. Steve Lewis and Kath Owston reviewed my cooperative formation section and project descriptions for accuracy, and introduced me to San Fernando. Karen Murphy-Mendez reviewed my Salvadorean social context sections and gave helpful suggestions, Candace Grossman provided valuable feedback concerning my personal narratives, Loretta Wardrip handled my long-distance calls from Idaho with patience, and my friends from the department motivated, stimulated and encouraged me through many courses and exams—Judi, Dawn, Pips, Laura, Nick and Heather.

To Nancy Rosenberger for her support in my academic life and my personal life as I entered motherhood, for serving as my advisor and for her constructive criticism of earlier drafts of this thesis. To Joan Gross, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and Mark Moore for their willingness to serve on my committee.
In conducting the fieldwork for this thesis, I was aided by CONCERN/America, who generously provided in-country transportation for my family and myself. My Salvadorean family nourished my body and soul—Renata, Maria Consuelo, Carmela, Emerita, Veronica, Delmira, Maria and Victor. My husband, Gordy, was an invaluable assistant in the field. Among other things, he spent a great deal of time hand-laundering our son’s diapers while I conducted interviews. His consistent love, humor, support and patience have helped me to finish. To my kids—Shay, who has already experienced the beauty of El Salvador and to Melia, who I hope one day will.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 1

1. GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT, GENDER IDEOLOGY AND WOMEN'S COOPERATIVES ........................................................................................................ 4

   1.1 Gender and Development .................................................................................. 6

   1.2 Gender Ideology ............................................................................................... 16

   1.3 Women’s Cooperatives and Social Movements ................................................. 24

   1.4 Social and Economic Power ............................................................................. 26

2. METHODOLOGY .................................................................................................... 28

   2.1 Fieldwork ......................................................................................................... 31

   2.2 Selection of Informants .................................................................................... 35

3. SALVADOREAN SOCIAL CONTEXT: NATIONAL AND LOCAL ...................... 37

   3.1 History of Land Ownership in El Salvador ...................................................... 38

   3.2 History of the Women’s Movement in El Salvador .......................................... 47

   3.3 History of Salvadorean Cooperatives ............................................................... 50

   3.4 Recent Agricultural Cooperatives in the San Fernando Region .................... 52

   3.5 Gender Ideology in San Fernando ................................................................ 53

4. THE COOPERATIVE: “UNITED BY PEACE” ...................................................... 61

   4.1 Cooperative ...................................................................................................... 63

   4.2 Cooperative Projects ....................................................................................... 66

   4.3 Male Views Regarding the Cooperative ........................................................... 76

   4.4 Female Non-member Views Regarding the Cooperative .............................. 78
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Conflict Within the Cooperative</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Introduction to Four Cooperative Members</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ANALYSIS</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Analysis of Projects</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Factors Promoting the Success of a Cooperative</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Social and Economic Power of the Cooperative</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Social and Economic Power in the Lives of Individual Women</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. MODELS OF DEVELOPMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Approaches to Development: UPLP Projects</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Alternatives to Development</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Recommendations</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Cooperative Informants</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Male Informants</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Female Non-member Informants</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Map of El Salvador</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Department of Chalatenango</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Region of San Fernando</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIFLD ................................................. American Institute for Free Labor Development
AMES .......................................................... Association of Women of El Salvador
AMPES ....................................................... Association of Progressive Women of El Salvador
AMPRONAC ...... Nicaraguan Association of Women Confronting the National Problem
AMS .......................................................... Salvadorean Women’s Association
ANTA .......................................................... National Association of Agricultural Workers
ATOs .......................................................... Alternative Trade Organizations
C/A .......................................................... CONCERN/America
CAFOD .......................................................... Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
CEMUJER .......... Center for Women’s Studies “Norma Virginia Guirola de Herrera”
CIS .......................................................... Center for Exchange and Solidarity
CODIPSA ........................................................ Diocese Health Commission
CO-FENASTRAS ........ Women’s Committee of the Salvadorean National Worker’s Federation
COMADRES ....... The Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador “Monsignor Romero”
CONAMUS .................. National Coordinating Committee of Salvadorean Women
CORDES .................................................. Regional Commission for Development
DIGNAS ........ Women for Dignity and Life “We are Breaking the Silence”
FECCAS .................................................. The Christian Federation of Salvadorean Peasants
FMLN ....................................................... Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
FUNPROCOOP ........ Foundation for the Promotion of Cooperatives
GAD .......................................................... Gender and Development
GAM..................................................Mutual Support Group (of Guatemalan women)
IBRD.............................International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)
IMF..........................................................International Monetary Fund
IMU.................................Institute for Research, Training and Development of Women
INSAFOCOOP................Salvadorean Institute for the Development of Cooperatives
MAM................................................Women’s Movement “Melida Anaya Montes”
NGOs.........................................................Non-Governmental Organizations
SAPs.................................Structural Adjustment Policies
SCIAF..........................................The Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund
UCS..............................................Salvadorean Communal Union
UPLP..........................................................United By Peace
USAID..................................United States Agency for International Development
WAD.............................................Women and Development
WID................................................Women in Development
WED................................................Women, Environment and Development
Dedicated to the women, men and children of San Fernando, who graciously shared their lives with me. To the women of Unidas Por La Paz, who laughed and cried with me, and continue to inspire me.
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND QUESTIONS OF EMPOWERMENT:
A SALVADOREAN WOMEN’S COOPERATIVE

INTRODUCTION

Ducking out of the rain, I entered the dark one-room building and instantly felt the intensity of eighty pairs of eyes upon me. Two kerosene lanterns provided a dim glow while a battery-operated boom box pumped out Latin pop. It was September 15th, El Salvador’s Independence Day. I spent the next three hours dancing with strangers and casting furtive glances at my husband who was occupied dancing with all of the twelve year old girls brave enough to ask him. Afterwards our new friends led us with their flashlights as we stumbled sleepily down the steep hill to our rented adobe house where we would live for the next year. This was my first night living in San Fernando.

For the following year I worked alongside a women’s cooperative, Unidas Por La Paz (United by Peace, UPLP), as a volunteer for a refugee aid and development organization. I entered this experience full of a desire to make a difference as a culturally sensitive and respectful partner to the women in the cooperative. It turned out to be more challenging than I had anticipated to work in community development. Making a difference without imposing my own priorities and opinions on the cooperative and on the communities stretched me in new ways and eventually led to my interest in the study of anthropology.

In this thesis, I examined community development in San Fernando, El Salvador in conjunction with the women’s cooperative, Unidas Por La Paz. This analysis was two-fold in that I investigated both the cooperative projects and the effect involvement in
those projects had on the cooperative members in terms of their social and economic power.

Analyzing the cooperative projects both in terms of development theory and from the perspective of the participants provides valuable feedback specific to community development projects in similar settings. The framing questions I posed were: What kinds of development models were implemented in these cooperative projects? How successful were the projects from a development perspective? Did the cooperative members view the projects to be successful?

Examining the effects of cooperative involvement on member's social and economic power evolved quite naturally. The cooperative members often stated that income generation, specifically earning money for their children's education, was a primary goal of cooperative involvement. The women also made numerous statements referring to their roles as women and their transformation from working solely in their households to having their own projects and meetings. As one cooperative leader said regarding involvement, “We had to leave behind the slavery that we were in...The biggest objective [of the cooperative] was to come to have a means of working for survival” (Helena, 1/24/981), Also, members frequently referred to changing attitudes regarding self-esteem and making a difference as women. The framing questions for this part of the research were: Do these women have a legitimate voice in the public sphere? Has the self-esteem of these women changed? Do the members need to engage in other income-generating activities outside of the cooperative, or are their financial needs met through their participation in this women’s group?

---

1 Informant's pseudonym and interview date follows each citation. Please refer to Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 in the Methodology section on pages 33 and 34 for informant data.
It is my hope that this thesis will prove to be a valuable tool for other cooperatives or organizations striving to do a different kind of development. By valuing local knowledge and contextualizing the problems and their solutions, community development workers can help the people to help themselves. Instead of being treated as helpless victims, the local population is empowered while maintaining agency.
The truck lurched and bounced along the dirt road that wound precariously through the beautiful mountains of northern El Salvador. Every so often we passed a small adobe house alongside the road. People came to their doorways or windows, with tools of their tasks in hand, curious to see who was passing by in the rare vehicle. They were unaccustomed to seeing foreigners and stared intently at me as I waved and smiled with a smile braver than I felt. I was on a tour of the region with the volunteer worker I was replacing, Steve Lewis. We drove to those communities accessible by vehicle and hiked to the others. Lewis introduced me to key contact people and we ate and slept in people’s homes. During one of the long truck rides Lewis asked me, “What do you think are the important duties and roles of a community developer?” My reply was something along the lines of, “Well, I don’t really consider myself to be a community developer. I’m going to be working alongside the women in the cooperative rather than being a leader, and I view myself as having a support role; a role of accompaniment.” Lewis’ fitting response was, “You are a community developer now, so get used to it.” So there I found myself, a community developer, yet wary of being one. I held an image in my mind of the kind of difference I wanted to make in my position as a volunteer with a development organization. Yet, I also had negative stereotypical images of culturally insensitive and patronizing forms of community development. This chapter reviews current literature regarding gender and development, gender ideology and women’s cooperatives and provides us with a framework within which a further analysis of the research questions may be conducted.
Map 1.1 Map of El Salvador

1.1 Gender and Development

1.1.1 A Historical Perspective

During the 1940s, a "colonial discourse" (Parpart, 1995:256) dominated the field of development. Viewed as a linear process, development was equated with modernization. It was believed that nations moved from being undeveloped or backwards to developed and modern, in accordance with European imperialism. Modernization theory postulates that an entire population will benefit when policies are enacted that promote industrialization. In pushing for modernization, the values and institutions which are used as models are Western in nature (Ferguson, 1996:574; Barriteau, 1996:143).

Women were basically ignored in the development paradigms of the 1950s and 1960s. Development plans were thus designed with the assumption that men alone performed all productive tasks. The only role allocated to women was that of mother. This role was valued in so much as it was critical in generating the future producers of a society. Women’s work in subsistence labor and in the informal sector was largely ignored. Industrialization encouraged males to find waged labor and to grow cash crops while women were left with increased work loads in order to produce sufficiently for their families (Parpart, 1995:256-257; Ferguson, 1996:574).

Ester Boserup’s work in the 1970s shed light on the true nature of development and its impact on women. She found that current development schemes were negatively affecting the status and economic standing of women. Boserup encouraged development planners to consider the role women play as producers in society in order to implement more beneficial development plans. Boserup, Irene Tinker and others lobbied in 1973 to
pass the Percy Amendment to the United States Foreign Assistance Act mandating that United States development plans should incorporate a focus on the status of Third World\(^2\) women (Parpart, 258; Ferguson, 1996:584).

Women in Development, or WID emerged in the 1970s as a marginal sub-field in development with a focus on women’s health, education, employment and access to land and credit. WID increased in popularity with the declaration of the “Decade for the Advancement of Women” by the United Nations from 1976-1985. WID was adopted by USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and the World Bank, but their implementation was viewed as an additive approach by many. Projects for women were added into preexisting programs (Ferguson, 1996:574; Parpart, 1995:258).

An alternative approach to development, Women and Development, or WAD emerged in response to WID. Proponents of the WAD approach focused on self-reliant development, removed from what was viewed as paternalistic attitudes and language inherent in WID. Activists and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) which adhered to the WAD perspective sought to implement small-scale, women-only projects. WID supporters responded to these policy critiques by explaining that their focus remained on basic human needs rather than inequality between men and women. WID proponents continued to assert that women’s lives and economic development would both be improved by increasing women’s productivity at work. (Parpart, 1995:257-259).

Another approach, called the Gender and Development, or GAD approach emphasizes the importance of analyzing power relations, as well as the divisions of labor within societies. The various aspects of women’s work both in the productive and

\(^2\) The term “Third World” is used resignedly throughout this thesis, with frustration that a more appropriate term has not yet emerged and been recognized.
reproductive realms are examined. The GAD approach views a focus on women in isolation as incomplete, in that it ignores the status of women in relation to men. GAD proponents believe that through empowerment women will achieve equality with men (Moser, 1993:3). GAD perspective challenges the language used in WID discourse:

...(WID discourse) represents Third World women as helpless victims trapped by tradition and incompetence in an endless cycle of poverty and despair. The possibility that women (and men) in the South might have skills and strategies to protect themselves rarely surfaces. Third World women are characterized as uniformly poor, inadequately prepared to cope with the current economic crisis and desperately in need of salvation through foreign expertise (Parpart, 1995:261).

Instead of viewing women as poor and helpless, the GAD approach analyzes power relations between women and men and strives to equalize that relationship.

Women, Environment and Development (WED) is a focus of certain feminists within the sustainable development movement. This model aims to conserve non-renewable resources through balancing social, environmental and economic needs. Whereas modernization theory values hierarchical control of economic resources by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, WED places emphasis on local control. WED does not equate capitalist economic development with progress. Specifically, the WED approach would encourage the participation of all women in articulating their desires and aspirations in terms of development projects. It would also focus on uncovering the areas of ignorance held by researchers and coordinators of projects (Ferguson, 1996:578-579).
1.1.2 IMF, World Bank and Structural Adjustment Policies

Various international aid programs were established during the 1940s and 1960s. The Bretton Woods meetings in 1944 aimed to stabilize the global economy. The World Bank (or International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) were both established at these meetings as a mechanism of providing loans for technological advancement to less industrialized countries. The IMF was to become involved in setting international aid packages attached to economic and political reforms. International trade and industrialization are the focus of these two agencies in developing the economies of other nations. In 1961 the Foreign Assistance Act established USAID (United States Agency for International Development) as a means of funding major projects abroad that promote US interests, based on Modernization theory (Barritteau, 1996:143).

Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) are implemented by the IMF and supposedly stabilize or improve the economies of "developing" nations. This is basically achieved through the promotion of exports, devaluation of the currency and cutting government spending in food subsidies, public transportation, health care and education. Social programs are privatized, leading to a decreased self-sufficiency in food production, deteriorating living standards, the degradation of the environment and increase in costs of everyday consumption items (Barritteau, 1996:144).

1.1.3 Practical and Strategic Gender Needs

Development policies often fail because they have not identified the actual gender needs in a specific situation. The identification of practical and strategic gender needs is a crucial tool in planning development (Moser, 1993:38).
Practical gender needs are those identified by women as necessary for their most immediate concerns, within their specific context. Practical in nature, these gender needs do not challenge the divisions of labor, nor do they question women's status in relation to men. Rather, they focus on practical needs for survival, such as access to safe drinking water, availability of health care and employment (Moser, 1993:40).

Strategic gender needs within a specific society focus on women's subordination to men. Identified strategic gender needs challenge power structures in order to change roles and overcome women's subordination. Examples of strategic gender needs might include: challenging domestic violence against women; improving access to credit and land; and abolishing a sexual division of labor (Moser, 1993:39).

Some feminists have used the practical/strategic needs model in a patronizing manner. Ferguson believes that some planners use this model to justify a hierarchical planning process, assuming that peasants and poor women place a priority on practical gender needs out of necessity and lack of access to a formal education. Therefore, educated feminists are required to step in and provide the leadership necessary in guiding these women to value strategic needs. The need for educated feminists to act as facilitators and leaders is perpetuated, creating a dependence. Ferguson goes one step further to assert that these educated feminists are interested in maintaining the status quo in order to maintain their leadership positions, income and elevated status (1996:584).

1.1.4 Development Policies: Effectiveness in Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs

The women in development movement (WID), international aid programs and SAPs have all influenced the dominant development policies. The welfare, equity,
antipoverty, efficiency and empowerment approaches to development have each addressed practical and strategic gender needs to varying degrees.

The welfare approach to development emerged during the 1950s. While this approach is still widely used today, it was most dominant during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. With a focus on top-down handouts, this approach focused on bringing women into development as better mothers through mother-child health programs and family planning programs. Practical gender needs were met for women in their reproductive role, and only men were considered to be productive members of society. These programs created dependency, as women were beneficiaries rather than active participants in the development processes (Moser, 1993:58-61).

The influence of Ester Boserup and WID led to the emergence of the equity approach between 1975 and 1985. Proponents of this approach sought to involve women as active participants in development and thus gain equity. Practical gender needs were met as more emphasis was placed on women earning a livelihood and gaining economic independence. Employment was viewed as strongly linked to equality. Strategic gender needs were met through top-down legislation pertaining to divorce laws as well as access to credit and property.

Many development and aid agencies were critical of this approach, as they wanted to remain focused solely on practical gender needs, and did not want to challenge traditions and governments by criticizing women’s subordinate status. Among Third World countries, many governments viewed the equity approach as a western-imported feminism. (Moser, 1993:62-64). Another criticism of the equity approach is that it is based on the assumptions of women from the North. The equity based projects are
designed by women from the North in a paternalistic manner. The focus is on women’s equality with men, which some believe ignores other differences between women such as race and class (Ferguson, 1996: 575).

In the 1970s, there was a general consensus that Modernization theory had failed and the World Bank shifted to a focus of eradicating absolute poverty. Women’s poverty was seen as a problem of underdevelopment, not of subordination to men. The anti-poverty approach to development emerged in the 1970s in response to the equity approach. Unlike the equity approach, the anti-poverty approach avoided addressing strategic gender needs by confronting local power structures. Instead, an emphasis on practical gender needs in women’s productive roles was the focus. This was to be achieved through small-scale income-generating projects. (Moser, 1993:66-69).

Currently one of the most popular approaches to development, the efficiency approach emerged in the late 1980s. In this model, the participation of women is emphasized, and associated with equality. Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) are instituted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stabilize national economies. SAPs came under criticism, as having a strong male bias. As SAPs decrease social services, development emphasizes women’s labor as a means of compensating for declining services. The efficiency approach relies on the elasticity of women’s labor as their working hours increase, particularly in unpaid labor through their reproductive and community managing roles. Practical gender needs are met at the expense of longer work hours for women (Moser, 1993:69-73).

As one of the most recent approaches to emerge, the empowerment model is based on the grassroots movements and writings of Third World women. This approach
recognizes the triple role of women and focuses on a bottom-up strategy of self-empowerment for women. This empowerment often occurs through increasing consciousness of women regarding their subordinated role. The empowerment model emphasizes participatory democracy and popular education (Ferguson, 1996:576; Moser, 1993:76).

1.1.5 Women’s Triple Role Ignored by Western Planning Stereotypes

Women’s triple role is often ignored in development planning. In addition to reproductive work, women also perform productive and community managing work. The bearing and rearing of children is the reproductive work seen as “the maintenance and reproduction of the labor force” (Moser, 1993:29). Productive work may take on numerous forms. Rural areas often involve women in agricultural labor while women in urban settings work in their community or at home in informal sector enterprises. Productive work is identified as “a task or activity which generates an income and therefore has an exchange value, either actual or potential” (Moser, 1993:31). Although the productive work that women are involved in has exchange value, it is still frequently invisible, especially in rural settings. In addition to childrearing and earning responsibilities, women conduct community managing work involving, “the work undertaken at the community level, around the allocation, provisioning and managing of items of collective consumption” (Moser, 1993:34). Community managing is work completed on a voluntary basis, such as protesting insufficient water or sewage systems within a community. A combination of factors including recession and structural adjustment loans have led to a deficit in housing, infrastructure and social services. This
deficit increases women’s workload as they engage in bottom-up strategies to provide for
their families and manage their communities in sustainable ways (Moser, 1993:27-35).

Three main stereotypes adhered to by development planners are detrimental on
many levels. The first stereotype is the heterogeneity of household structures. Planners
often implement projects based on a nuclear family structure of a wife, husband and
children that is just one of many family structures in our world today. The nuclear family
stereotype also involves headship. Planners have ignored the emergence of female-

Western planning also accepts a second stereotype of the household as a natural
decision making unit. This view ignores conflict occurring within the family as well as
unequal resource allocation. Moser asserts that this stereotype also ignores the “inter-
household resource and labor exchanges and systems of reciprocity” as well as the

The third stereotype presents the woman as a victim in development policy.
Instead of existing in a passive victim status, women continually mobilize to overcome
the difficulties imposed by industrialization. Women are active participants in the
economy, and they respond actively to the challenges they face in various developmental

1.1.6 Alternatives to Development

Literature shows several alternative forms of development, which, although they
are not entirely in agreement with one another, generally emphasize holistic approaches
which value agency and liberation. Bhattacharyya defines agency as “the capacity of a
people to order their world…the capacity to create, reproduce, change, and live according
to their own meaning systems, the powers effectively to redefine themselves as opposed to being defined by others” (1995:61).

Many people value the popular education model advocated by Paulo Freire. His main principles involve: education that is liberating; relevance of issues; problem posing rather than a banking style of educating; dialogue; reflection and action; and radical transformation (Hope, 1984:6-12). Freire writes

...(C)ertain members of the oppressor class join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation...they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: Their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people’s ability to think, to want, and to know. Accordingly, these adherents to the people’s cause constantly run the risk of falling into a type of generosity as malefic as that of the oppressors... They talk about the people, but they do not trust them; and trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change (1989:46).

Freire’s alternative to development postulates that development, or transformation is not something that one person or group or organization can do effectively for someone else.

Others question the assertion that development is a historical necessity and that all people in the Third World want development for themselves and for their families. Escobar views this as an ethical dilemma faced by anthropologists, and is especially critical of the involvement of USAID and the World Bank (1991:674).

While some approaches emphasize popular education, others assert that in popular education there still exists a hierarchical framework wherein the educator is the producer of knowledge. According to Escobar and others, these educational leaders or facilitators also receive an unequally greater share of the status and funds (Ferguson, 1996:577). Escobar writes “development has functioned as a mechanism of power for the production and management of the Third World” (1991:676). He calls for an
alternative to development, proposing that social movements may provide a valuable alternative, functioning in resistance to dominant powers (1991:668-676; 1995:225-227). Escobar postulates that social movements are able to set their own agendas and priorities as well as avoid the hierarchical model of power and prestige for staff and facilitators (Ferguson, 1996:577).

Another alternative to development offered by DAWN\(^3\) views development as “improved living standards, socially responsible management and use of resources, the elimination of gender subordination and social inequality, and the organizational restructuring that can bring these about” (Barritteau, 1996:148-9). Instead of viewing existing development approaches as inherently good except for the fact that women are overlooked, DAWN stresses the need for a completely new approach. Their alternative “makes the vantage point of poor “Third World” women central; a holistic approach that integrates economic, political, cultural, and environmental issues into development; ...the linking of micro-economic units such as the household and the community with macro-economic policies” (Barritteau, 1996:149). This alternative approach to development would place women at the center of a holistic evaluation of the various factors impacting the lives of those women. This holistic approach would need to examine gender ideology specific to the development context in order to be effective.

1.2 Gender Ideology

Latin America is a diverse region comprised of numerous countries, cultures and feminisms. Similarly, women cannot be classified as one homogeneous group in any part

\(^3\) DAWN originated in India in 1984 and offers critical analysis of WID discourse (Barritteau, 1996:153).
of the world. It is impossible to generalize gender ideology for the entire region without accounting for differences in class, race, and sexual orientation. Instead, I will discuss three areas specific to Latin America in which gender ideology is impacted: domestic and public spheres; economic conditions affecting women’s roles and status, and mothers as activists. A complete discussion of gender ideology in the focus area of this thesis, rural El Salvador, follows in chapter 3.

1.2.1 Domestic and Public Spheres

A public-private division of gender roles in Latin America can be traced back to the casa/calle distinction maintained by Catholicism during the Spanish colonial period. Women were expected to remain in the home (casa), while men were in the public street space (calle). Supposedly, this distinction was to protect female virginity and family honor (Safa, 1995:45). This traditional separation of public and private spheres is being challenged in numerous ways today. While the idea of separate spheres is inapplicable in many parts of Latin America today, certain aspects of the concept apply to this research. In this paper I will use the terminology and concepts employed by Deborah Billings (1995) in her discussion of women and men in highland Guatemala.

Domestic sphere refers to the reproductive and productive activities accomplished by women as well as the physical spaces where those activities are carried out. In terms of reproduction, women physically bear children and then do the majority of rearing and teaching of those children. Women are involved in production both in the home and in the community. According to Billings rural women throughout Latin America have their days filled by “caring for children, raising small animals for the family’s consumption or to sell, hauling water, making, washing and mending clothing, cooking, and cleaning”
(Billings, 1995:148). She also refers to women's participation in agricultural production. The term "domestic sphere" thus refers to all of the spaces where women engage in these tasks— the home, the markets and the water sources for example. Since women do not live and work in isolation in rural Latin American settings, and are interacting with one another in many of these areas, the term "private" or "private sphere" seems inadequate in this setting (Billings, 1995:137).

Public sphere refers to the space wherein "community members deliberate common affairs and make decisions regarding community life" (Billings, 1995:138). Although women attend public meetings and events, it is usually the men in these rural settings who speak out. Often, the women don't express their opinions in mixed-sex company and are excluded by the decision-making processes at community levels.

As women become activists on behalf of their children, their participation is legitimized by society because of their roles as mothers. In this way women are making decisions and finding their voices in public areas. Their domestic sphere is enlarged to include the public spaces where they are marching, demonstrating, lobbying and organizing. This demonstrates the overlapping nature of the spheres. It is impossible to look at the domestic and the public spheres in isolation from each other.

1.2.2 Economic Restructuring

The economic restructuring which began in the 1970s played an important role in the emergence of women's movements and changing gender ideologies. Rising oil prices in the 1970s and the ensuing debt crisis led to a Latin American economic crisis. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) implemented Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) in an attempt to stabilize the economies. In general, SAPs lead to the
privatization and cancellation of social services as governments cut spending. Faced with food shortages, rising consumer costs, and in many cases, military dictatorships, mothers became activists and formed movements (Jaquette, 1994a:3).

There is still debate regarding the effects of SAPs on women’s status. There has been a recent boom of female work force participation associated with economic restructuring, which increases women’s visibility in the public sphere. Higher costs of living, as well as male unemployment also increase the female labor force. On the other hand, increased hardships for women have been linked to the implementation of SAPs. In the Caribbean, instead of improving the economy Barriteau writes, “structural adjustment programs penalize people” (1996:144). Women are forced to work even harder to find innovative ways to support their families when social services deteriorate. Their undocumented work in the informal sector as unpaid laborers absorbs the negative impact of SAPs. Women living in poverty find it extremely difficult to perform their socially expected roles. As Vivienne Bennett writes,

Their gender role makes women the managers of the process of social reproduction. Traditionally, social reproduction has fallen to family members who are not directly responsible for generating the family’s income or the means to acquire whatever the family needs for survival—in short, to women. Women cook, clean house, raise children, do laundry, and care for sick family members. In the past 15 years, economic crisis and hardship have forced more and more Latin American women to seek waged labor. Yet women have retained primary responsibility for the household (1995:80).

Women responded to the hardships resulting from SAPs by organizing and demanding that the state recognize their unmet needs (Macdonald, 1994:10; Safa, 1995: 33-34,48).

In addition to increased work-loads in the informal sector, women are also experiencing increased employment in the formal sector. Converting economies from
import-substitution to export-manufacturing has led to the employment of more women, particularly in free-trade zones. Many multinational corporations prefer hiring women, who are viewed as less likely to organize and more submissive (Wolf, 1992:115-116). Women are also viewed as having lower labor costs. These factors, combined with inflation and with higher educational levels for women, have led to higher rates of female employment in the formal sector. In areas where multinational corporations are active, males have experienced decreased employment, because the women are seen as more desirable to hire (Safa, 1993:28-29; Johnson-Odim, 1991:320-321; Nash, 1989:234-237).

As women are earning more and contributing to the household economy through the informal and formal sectors, gender ideology in the home and in society is affected. For example, Helen Safa's research in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic revealed that women gained more authority in the home when they became major, or sole economic contributors. Most of the women in Safa's study felt that their economic contributions gave them increased negotiating power with their husbands (1993:28). Instead of being liberated by their employment in the formal sector, however, women are exploited by assembly industries, overburdened by their responsibilities at work and at home, and alienated from husbands who struggle to adjust to their wives' newfound power.

1.2.3 Mothers as Activists

Many countries throughout Latin America have experienced dictatorships or various forms of economic restructuring through which women emerged as activists. In this thesis I will focus on those women who have been motivated to action through their roles as mothers. While their initial participation is inspired by what they view as the
duties of motherhood, they eventually organize themselves and politicize their causes (Fisher, 1993:30).

There are numerous examples of women becoming activists out of their mothering roles over human rights and consumer issues throughout Latin America. In Guatemala mothers formed the Grupo Apoyo Mutual (GAM) in response to the disappearances of their children. They organized themselves in order to support one another, draw more attention to their missing children and apply pressure on the government to find their children (Personal communication with GAM members, 2/1/90). In Chile, women formed communal kitchens in order to produce large quantities of food more inexpensively for their families. The Chilean government viewed the kitchens as subversive and the women were targeted and the kitchens raided. In Nicaragua and El Salvador women joined the revolutionary forces in combat challenging military rule. The Asociación de Mujeres Confrontando la Problematica Nacional, or Nicaraguan Association of Women Confronting the National Problem (AMPRONAC) marched in public places to bring attention to human rights abuses. They also provided support for the Sandinista forces through food, medicine, homemade weapons and neighborhood organizing. A group of mothers in El Salvador formed the group CO-MADRES The Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared, and Assassinated of El Salvador (“Monsignor Romero”), in order to confront the human rights abusers of their country. (Fisher, 1993:30-31; Tula, 1994:1-3; Chinchilla, 1994:178; Mason, 1992:64-65).

One of the most well known and earliest examples of mothers organizing around their missing children is the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina. This group formed when the women met at repeated visits to numerous government offices in search of their
missing children. Their first actions were to meet weekly in silent vigil in front of the capital building. Their children were “disappeared” by the military dictatorship. The women express their suffering and indignation publicly by parading it, marching with photographs of their missing children. While their own pain is in the public spotlight, the mothers are drawing attention away from themselves, to what has happened to their children. These mothers are not marching as passive victims. Rather, they are demanding action (Fisher, 1993:30; Ruddick, 1997:369-381).

As women throughout Latin America became active in response to the needs of their children, they also became organized, more informed, politicized and empowered. As Jane Jaquette writes, “Ironically, military authoritarian rule, which depoliticized men, had the unintended consequence of mobilizing women” (1994a:4-6). Women began working together in various causes to support one another, but they found through their discussions that instead of being individual in nature, their problems were actually socially based. These movements which were initially based on practical gender needs developed into movements concerned with strategic gender needs as well. Jaquette describes this transformation, “[women’s movements] were developing a new kind of feminist practice, that by organizing themselves and making demands as women and as mothers, they were effectively confronting both political and economic repression, empowering women of all classes, and politicizing the issues of survival, of everyday life” (1994a:6). (Fisher, 1993:31)

Through confronting the social problems they faced, women began to combat the larger political issues as well as the socially accepted gender roles of their communities. Women claimed more public spaces as their own domestic arenas. For example, in
Nicaragua the women were intimately involved in the Sandinista movement. This involvement both gave them an increased confidence in their own abilities to fight for their beliefs, as well as earned them the right to participate in politics on a community and national level on equal footing with men. In this way, they gained new access into the public sphere (Chinchilla, 1994:178-179; Jaquette, 1994b:225-226).

The feminisms of Latin America have merged through many of these women’s movements. Initially, practical gender needs are addressed. Women come together and organize in order to fill specific needs related to caring for their families. Eventually, their discussions often lead these women to address the strategic gender needs related to their situations. Organizing on behalf of their children, speaking out in public and attending numerous meetings brings the women into opposition with the traditional gender expectations imposed on them by society. When the women are away from their homes more often, their families have to reevaluate the distribution of labor in their households. Instead of always acting on behalf of others, which tends to reinforce traditional gender roles, women often merge practical and strategic gender interests as they politicize their movements and become empowered by them (Jaquette, 1994b:225-226; Fisher, 1993:31).

Even though strategic gender needs are being addressed, many women involved in these movements in Latin America continue to view feminism as a middle-class concept and prefer to identify themselves with the “popular feminism” movement. This demonstrates that they have concerns that they feel are unique to them and not shared by middle-class women. Popular feminists also tend to view feminists as anti-men and anti-family. Popular feminists also struggle to set the agenda within the feminist movement.
Often, they feel that their concerns, such as the effects of imperialism, are not addressed by the mainstream international feminist movement. This reinforces the point that in a diverse region such as Latin America, there remains a plethora of feminisms and gender ideologies (Jaquette, 1994b:225; Johnson-Odim, 1991:322).

1.3 Women's Cooperatives and Social Movements

As women face increasing difficulties in meeting the needs of their domestic responsibilities, they become activists around consumer issues. Becoming activists moves women out of the traditional domestic sphere into situations in which they have contact with other women with similar concerns. Often these women organize themselves, forming cooperatives or joining social movements that address their concerns. Women's cooperatives form and operate under a variety of situations and have varying levels of success. A review of cooperative literature reveals certain factors which emerge as playing an important role in the success rate of a cooperative. I have chosen five factors to focus on in this thesis: collective identity and consciousness; access to credit; access to markets; project ownership; and whether everyday concerns of participants are addressed or not.

A collective identity or consciousness is crucial for a successful cooperative. The cohesion formed from a shared belief system creates a strong group or social movement. As groups often organize around an issue, their shared identity is based on that issue, be it human rights, or consumer issues. For example, in Southern Mexico, Guatemalan refugees organized a women’s movement based on human rights violations and on their exclusion from the power structures (Billings, 1995:226-7). A group’s collective
consciousness allows the members of that group to identify shared oppressions and then take action as an organization.

Cooperatives reliant on credit and other forms of outside funding are at a disadvantage. It is extremely difficult for rural women in many Latin American countries to gain access to credit. Males often control all forms of collateral, and the women are considered bad risks for loans. This makes it nearly impossible for women interested in craft production or other income-generating activities to purchase the necessary raw materials. Artisan cooperatives able to make and sell a product with minimal costs are at a definite advantage. One such example is a group of women producing pottery in Chiapas, Mexico (Nash, 1988, 53-55). The only cost was transporting the finished pots to market. The clay and minimal tools were all basically free. Therefore, the women remained independent, rather than reliant on outside funding for raw materials.

Cooperatives striving to generate income often produce an item for sale, which necessitates market availability. Many cooperatives produce and market crafts geared toward a tourist or international market. Local tourist markets fluctuate and rarely compensate fairly. The local tourist markets are often inundated with products, making it difficult for the artisans to get fair remuneration. Reliance on funding through Alternative Trade Organizations (ATOs) also creates dependency. When cooperatives sell to the international market through ATOs, they gain a fair price, but they do not gain an assured market. The international market also fluctuates as tastes and preferences for crafts change. Additionally, the ATO market cannot absorb the production of the artisans in cooperatives. Janet Page-Reeves writes about Bolivian alpaca weavers and their reliance on the international market. She found that while grassroots cooperatives are
often portrayed in a romantic light in terms of eradicating poverty, the many struggles involved in accessing credit and fair markets often outweigh the accomplishments of such cooperatives (1998:86-91; Olson, 1999:57-61).

Project ownership plays an important role in determining the success rate of a cooperative. Olson (1999:61-63) describes a women’s weaving cooperative in Guatemala where the women are functioning independently. This simultaneously puts them at a disadvantage in terms of access to markets and credit, yet enables them to control their own destiny as they produce goods designed by them, and of which they are proud. This is in sharp contrast to other cooperatives in the same region which have been forced to join large organizations in order to survive, or who have to produce cheaper goods to cater to a tourist market.

Cooperatives addressing the everyday concerns of the participants have higher success rates than those that do not. In general, women in rural Latin America lead very busy lives. Their participation in cooperatives is in jeopardy if that involvement leads to increased work loads. A Guatemalan organization of women in southern Mexico refugee camps responded to women’s immediate needs in a way that enabled increased participation by the organization’s members. Gas stoves and communal corn mills were distributed in order to reduce the meal preparation time. Addressing the daily concerns of the members of any group will lead to increased and sustained participation (Billings, 1995:261).

1.4 Social and Economic Power

The literature has led to two definitions of power that are measurable: social and economic. These will be used in the thesis. Social power refers to the power women
themselves feel they have achieved to facilitate change in their environments, be it in the home, within the cooperative, or in the community. This power can be measured by examining whether or not the women have a genuine sense of their ability to affect change and also by whether they voice opinions in meetings on the cooperative or community level; in same gender or mixed-gender company. Finally, this social power may be examined through the perspective of whether or not women have a legitimate voice in the public sphere (Billings, 1995:242). Literature shows that as women's voices become legitimized in the public sphere they are able to affect more change.

Economic power is intrinsically tied to basic survival in many rural areas of Latin America, and in many parts of the world. This thesis examines a women's cooperative whose members are concerned with improving the lives of their children. The women need money in order to feed, clothe and educate their children. Economic power is achieved if the cooperative provides sufficient economic resources so that the female cooperative member does not have to engage in any other income-generating activities.
CHAPTER 2.
METHODOLOGY

My relationship with the people of San Fernando began in July of 1994 when I moved to El Salvador to begin work as a volunteer with CONCERN/America, a refugee aid and development organization. During July and August I visited the region of San Fernando while attending language school in San Salvador. In September of 1994 I moved to the community of San Fernando Nuevo and lived there for thirteen months, until October of 1995. San Fernando Nuevo is a centrally located community within the region of San Fernando. While there I made frequent visits, at least once every month, to the other communities of the region, particularly those involved in the cooperative, Unidas Por La Paz (United by Peace). I returned to the region for four weeks in January and February of 1998 in order to conduct the interviews for this research.

My interest in the region of Central America dates back to 1989, when I began traveling to and studying the region. During my junior year of undergraduate study, I participated in a semester long Central American study tour with a group of students and professors. We lived with families, met with representatives of grassroots movements and governments, and studied the history of US involvement in the region. After that experience I desired more extensive time in Central America, and during 1994 I sought out volunteer work with agencies whose philosophies I agreed with. CONCERN/America (C/A) had a position available in El Salvador in the area of women’s development as well as a position suitable for my husband. After reading C/A’s literature and speaking with the organization’s director, I felt very comfortable with their development philosophy. They obviously had gained the respect of the local
people in the areas they worked, through implementing sensitive and respectful
development practices.

Participant observation (Wolcott, 1995: 87-102; 246) was a strategy that I
implemented throughout the fifteen months that I lived in El Salvador as well as during
my return trip in 1998. As a volunteer worker in the region, it was important for me to
accompany people in their daily tasks and to spend a great deal of time listening.
Through this, I established extensive social network ties in the region. As an active
participant in the cooperative, I gathered large amounts of information, which I was able
to build this later research upon.

Throughout my time in San Fernando, my closest friends were members of the
family that I ate meals with. The family lived across the street from me, and consists of a
married couple and their six daughters, aged 3 to 16. The woman in this household was
not involved in the cooperative at that time. She had participated in some of the past
projects, but had differences of opinion with the group and eventually dropped out.
Perhaps the fact that she was not a member of the group that I worked closely with, as
well as the sheer number of hours that we spent together in meal preparation and
mealtimes enabled us to become good friends.

Other than this family, most of my friends in the region were actively involved in
the cooperative. I spent a great deal of time with the three cooperative promoters and
developed friendships with each of these women. When I traveled to other communities
in the region I ate and slept in the homes of other families. Often these families were
involved in the cooperative as well.
I also became acquainted with people through participating in local festivals and parties, visiting the schools and health clinics, and working alongside people in daily tasks. Most of my conversations with women occurred while preparing tortillas together. The fact that I was far less skilled at forming tortillas than the women with whom I worked opened up a window wherein we could make fun of my results and laugh together. My tortillas created a space in which I was viewed less as a foreigner and more as a friend. In addition to preparing tortillas, I also accompanied the women as they washed clothes in the river, washed dishes in their homes, carried water, gathered firewood, engaged in small income-generating activities, and performed the tasks of cooperative projects.

In El Salvador, my husband worked in the area of health, which enabled me to become acquainted with all of the health promoters in the region. This was my main source of ongoing contact with men in the region, as many of the health promoters were male. The other men that I became best acquainted with were the spouses of the leaders of the cooperative. Two of the promoters are married, and some of the other community coordinators are married or have partners.

I was the second CONCERN/America volunteer to work with UPLP. The volunteers before me, a married couple, Lewis and Owston, lived and worked in the region for three years and were instrumental in forming the cooperative and in initiating many of the projects. Lewis was also very active in the development agency community in Europe and had numerous contacts with donor organizations. He and his wife were well-loved and respected by the people of the region.
I carried certain biases with me as I entered my volunteer work in 1994, and again as a researcher in 1998. As a volunteer, I viewed my role as empowering the women of the cooperative in managing their projects and funds, and in becoming more self-sufficient and less reliant on outside administrative and financial assistance. Most of my time working with the cooperative was spent in administrative assistance. I attended the promoter’s meetings once or twice each month, as well as monthly community and regional meetings. I assisted the women in planning meeting agendas, soliciting and managing funds and administering the projects. The leaders were interested in improving their basic accounting skills, so we held mini-workshops at their planning meetings. In addition to this, I also implemented discussions on topics that I deemed helpful, such as conflict resolution and project investigation and planning. A further discussion of my involvement in the specific cooperative projects follows in Chapter 4.

2.1 Fieldwork

When I returned to the region in 1998 I took my husband and my six-month-old son with me. While the people in the region knew my husband well, seeing me in a mothering role was new to them. I found that some of the women were much more receptive to me and willing to talk with me since I had a child. All of the women and children were anxious to hold my son and cuddle him. Initially I experienced a sense of pleasure that I had somehow found even greater acceptance in the region as a new mother. Motherhood made me more of a known entity and less of a strange curiosity (so old and no children!).

While conducting fieldwork I often left my son in the care of his very capable father and went out alone to visit the women in their homes. This action was viewed
critically and I was constantly questioned as to the whereabouts of my child. When I responded that he was with his father this was often acknowledged with a slow, pondering nod of the head, as if to say 'how strange.' Due to the heat of the climate and my son's nature I continued conducting interviews without him, for the most part. He was much more comfortable in the shady hammock hung behind our rented one-room adobe home than he would have been in the heat and dust of my days. However, the women may have been more forthcoming in the interviews in the presence of a baby. Some of the women, especially those from other communities, came to see me in the house where I was staying, which enabled us to talk while observing my son. It is my suspicion that they found more enjoyment in the latter. I visited the women from San Fernando Nuevo in their own homes, often while they completed various household tasks.

In 1998 I conducted open-ended, semi-structured interviews with twenty-six women in the region who are members of the cooperative (Figure 2.1 on page 33), three women not involved in the cooperative (Figure 2.2 on page 34), and five men from four different communities in the region (Figure 2.3 on page 34). I attempted to learn the insider's viewpoint through ethnographic interviewing (Spradley, 1979:34). The cooperative informants range in age from 16 to 69, live in five different communities, are single, widowed, married or living with a partner and have varying levels of cooperative involvement. The informants participated voluntarily, on an informed basis and with confidentiality.

I was fortunate to attend a regional meeting and evaluation of the cooperative while conducting my fieldwork in 1998. Ninety cooperative members, various male
### Figure 2.1  Cooperative Informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name*</th>
<th>Date*</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Civil Status*</th>
<th>Kids</th>
<th>CommunityX</th>
<th>Involvement *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Silvia</td>
<td>1/22/98</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Julia</td>
<td>1/22/98</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Sofia</td>
<td>1/23/98</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Juana</td>
<td>1/24/98</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Helena</td>
<td>1/24/98</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Cristina</td>
<td>1/24/98</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Adela</td>
<td>1/25/98</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Reina</td>
<td>1/25/98</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Luisa</td>
<td>1/26/98</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Carla</td>
<td>1/26/98</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Adolfinina</td>
<td>1/28/98</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Guadalupe</td>
<td>1/29/98</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Susana</td>
<td>1/30/98</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Consuelo</td>
<td>1/30/98</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Abigail</td>
<td>1/30/98</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Felicia</td>
<td>1/31/98</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Caridad</td>
<td>2/2/98</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Miriam</td>
<td>2/3/98</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Lydia</td>
<td>2/4/98</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Maria</td>
<td>2/4/98</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Clara</td>
<td>2/6/98</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Marta</td>
<td>2/6/98</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Alicia</td>
<td>2/7/98</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Fe</td>
<td>2/8/98</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Francesca</td>
<td>2/10/98</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Beatriz</td>
<td>2/10/98</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All names are pseudonyms
* Interview date
* S: Single; M: Married; C: Common law marriage; W: Widow; Sep: Separated
* 1: Low; 2: Average; 3: High level of involvement
community council members and representatives from CORDES, a Salvadorean NGO working with UPLP, were all in attendance. As part of the agenda for the meeting, each cooperative community group gave a report regarding cows, land and other projects. In this way I was able to gain a great deal of information and up-dates on projects just two days after my arrival in the country. It was an extremely helpful way to begin my fieldwork.

In addition to the regional meeting, I met with one focus group of four women from the community of San Fernando Nuevo. In the focus group we discussed the corn

---

* All names are pseudonyms;
* Interview date;
* S: Single; M: Married; C: Common law marriage; W: Widow; Sep: Separated;
* 3: San Fernando Nuevo; 4: Valle de Jesús; 7: Los Naranjos
mill, the cooperative community meeting location difficulties, the cow project, sewing workshops, the different attitudes men have toward the cooperative, loans for women, the cooperative's relationship with CORDES, and development on behalf of their children.

2.2 Selection of Informants

I sought out active as well as less active cooperative members. Some of the women came to me and I visited others in their own homes. Originally, my goal was to interview 20 cooperative members, based on a total cooperative membership of 60. That membership had grown to 90 between 1996 and 1998, so I tried to conduct as many interviews as possible, conducting 26 cooperative member interviews.

I encountered several limitations while conducting my research. Time and financial limitations necessitated my spending only four weeks in El Salvador in 1998. This time frame dictated the number of interviews I was able to conduct, as well as the amount of travel around the country. My schedule, along with the isolated nature of the region of San Fernando made it difficult to travel to meet with representatives from other Salvadoran NGOs active in the region. Fortunately, I had a great deal of contact with most of these agencies during 1994 and 1995.

My limited time, as well as the fact that I had my infant son with me, also made travel within the San Fernando region challenging. Basing my decision on concern for my son's health and well-being I elected to remain in the community of San Fernando Nuevo during my fieldwork. This decision made it difficult to interview women from all of the seven communities involved in the cooperative. Many of the women traveled to San Fernando Nuevo, enabling me to interview women representing five communities. I
was fortunate to be present at the regional meeting and evaluation, which was attended by women from each of the seven communities. In this way I gathered input from each of the seven community groups.

Another very important limitation in my research is the fact that I was an active participant in the cooperative and development agency involved. On the one hand, this gives me a view of the cooperative's inner workings and a broad base of knowledge about the subject. On the other hand, my perspective and analysis are impacted by my involvement. In addition, when I asked the informants questions regarding specific projects and the cooperative, their responses may have been affected by my previous involvement. Perhaps some women were hesitant to criticize a project that I had been personally involved in. As a foreigner, I am also viewed as a connection to funding sources for future projects, even though I made my status as a student conducting research very clear. This position may have also affected the responses of the women I spoke with.

Finally, a limitation meriting recognition is my status as an outsider. Although my extended stay in the region during 1994 and 1995 gave me insight and rapport in the communities, I was still a foreigner to most of the region's inhabitants. The sheer number of hours I spent with the women completing household and cooperative tasks enabled me to develop friendships. Returning as a mother in 1998 also increased our common ground. In spite of these factors, my research was still influenced by my position as an outsider trying to learn the insider's perspectives.
CHAPTER 3.
SALVADOREAN SOCIAL CONTEXT: NATIONAL AND LOCAL

While living in El Salvador, I spent many hours listening to people recount their experiences of the war. My friends spoke of violence and terror, betrayal and hardship, conviction and solidarity on a scale difficult to relate to. Being heard and believed seemed to be an important step in their healing process, even if their reality was very different from my own.

Juana told me her son was shot and killed by the military behind our house. He had been accused of being a FMLN fighter by a neighbor who was desperately trying to save himself by pointing the finger at someone else.

José told us about being tortured and disappeared in prison while his wife frantically contacted the Red Cross and other groups to bring attention to his plight.

Cora told me she used to wear a green dress whenever she walked to her sister’s house in case she needed to hide amongst the trees from the military troops patrolling in the area.

Rosa showed me the bombed out shell of the church where she and her husband were married before the war.

Stories like these revealed a great deal to me about the region and the people there, and also enlightened me as a community development worker. Understanding the negative stigma attached to cooperatives during the war was important to my comprehension of why some women chose not to become involved. Different alliances during the war became heightened divisions in the postwar climate. People with whom I became exasperated due to their inability to get along with one another had often
experienced intensely divisive episodes during the war years. At times I became frustrated when the cooperative members failed to work well together, or when there were group conflicts, or when the cooperative came under intense criticism by the community. Situating the current cooperative within the social context of post-war El Salvador was an aid in becoming a more informed and hopefully more sensitive development worker.

This chapter examines the social context in which Unidas Por La Paz operates. Specifically, I discuss the history of land ownership in El Salvador, the Salvadorean women’s movement, Salvadorean cooperatives and gender ideology specific to San Fernando.

3.1 History of Land Ownership in El Salvador

El Salvador was originally inhabited by the Maya, while never establishing itself as a center of Mayan culture. During the eleventh century, the Pipil migrated south from Mexico. Speakers of the Nahuatl language, the Pipiles are related to the Aztecs and eventually controlled three-fourths of what is now El Salvador. In addition to the Pipiles, the Lenca inhabited the areas north and east of the Lempa River. The Pipiles owned land and food communally, with each family assigned one plot to cultivate (Equipo Maíz, 1990:12). The principal crop, maize, thrived in many different environments and provided adequate nutrition for dense populations. The farming techniques for maize were traditional; clearing fields by burning and then using a sharpened stick to dig and plant (Pearce, 1986:12-13).

Land use and ownership changed dramatically with the arrival of the Spanish. The first Spanish invasion occurred in 1524. After many battles and massacres, the
Spanish dominated the Pipiles in the year 1539. Land, instead of gold was the main attraction in El Salvador. The Spanish sought to control the fertile land and the large indigenous population. The Spanish enforced *encomiendas*, in which the Spanish enslaved and dominated the Pipiles, and were responsible for converting the indigenous people placed under their supervision to Christianity. The Pipiles were then required to work as slaves for the designated Spaniard. During this time, the Pipiles maintained control over their own communal lands. Meanwhile, the Spanish established *haciendas*-large parcels of privately owned property- which began to put pressure on the communal lands of the Pipiles (Pearce, 1986:14-17; Equipo Maiz, 1990:26,28).

After achieving their independence from Spain in 1839, the production focus in El Salvador was changed to further enrich those who controlled the indigenous population. Land ownership changed with the cultivation of coffee in El Salvador. The most sought after land for coffee production was the same land traditionally populated by Pipil communities, namely the upper slopes of the valleys and the sides of volcanoes. Since the ruling class saw no value in communal land holdings producing crops for local consumption, various laws were passed in 1881 which abolished communal lands. Thus the majority of the fertile land was redistributed to the coffee producing elite while the peasants were left to go in search of farm land for subsistence crops higher still in the rocky, mountainous terrain (Equipo Maiz, 1990:55; Tula,1994:188). Coffee production increased quickly, making up 76% of all exports in 1901 and 95% by 1933. During this period the cultivation remained in the hands of only 350 individuals (Pearce, 1986:20, 22-23). The cultivation of coffee led El Salvador away from a multi-crop economy to what became a one-crop cash economy (Anderson, 1971:19).
In addition to coffee production, El Salvador produced sugar cane in the central valleys and cotton in the coastal areas. These three dominant crops contributed to diminishing the lands of small farmers, who were then forced to over farm and over exploit their small land holdings.

Internal migration began as early as the 1890s in El Salvador. The first wave of rural to urban migration occurred shortly after communal lands were abolished and the indigenous population was forced off of their land. Large numbers of landless peasants began migrating to Honduras around the 1920s. The “Soccer War”\(^5\) in 1969 between El Salvador and Honduras forced the return of 130,000 Salvadorean immigrants, causing increased demands for limited land resources (Pearce, 1986:32; Tula, 1994:193).

In the 1960s landholders began the process of renting out plots of land not occupied by commercial crops. While in the past, peasants reimbursed the landowners by giving them a percentage of their harvested crop, in the 1960s the landowners began the practice of requiring money up front in exchange for rental plots. Most peasants did not own enough land to provide sufficient food for their own families. Therefore, they sought out small plots to rent each year as well as temporary employment on the coffee plantations and in the cotton fields and sugar cane fields in order to afford the rent. By the 1970s the large surplus labor force created a situation in which the majority of peasant households could no longer provide for their own families due to insufficient land holdings and lack of wage labor (Pearce, 1986:33).

---

\(^5\) The soccer championship playoff series between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969 fueled an already heated land dispute and was the impetus for a five-day war between the two countries. In the 1960s, Honduras had a population density of one person per ten acres of land, whereas in El Salvador, there were 8 people for every ten acres. Scarcity of land led thousands of Salvadoreans across the border, mostly illegally, in search of a livelihood. These immigrants were forced to return to El Salvador at the time of the Soccer War.
3.1.1 Settlement and Land in the Department of Chalatenango

Located in northern El Salvador, on the border of Honduras, the department of Chalatenango consists of 1,857 square kilometers (See map 3.1). Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, the area now known as Chalatenango was sparsely populated. This population further declined with the creation of haciendas. People began migrating to Chalatenango to claim private lands when communal land holdings were abolished and then again later when the coffee plantations forced people from their own lands and further into the highlands. Small farmers continued to farm both independently and communally in Chalatenango into the early twentieth century. Large landholders in the region produced indigo and began cattle ranching. The creation of synthetic dyes resulted in less demand for indigo on the world market, and coffee replaced indigo as the principal export in El Salvador. This shift led to a depressed economy in Chalatenango, with reliance on subsistence farming and temporary employment on the various sugar cane, cotton and coffee plantations that continues through today (Pearce, 1986:45-46).

3.1.2 Revolution

Unions began organizing in the early 1900s in El Salvador. Striking workers faced persecution from the National Guard. A peasant revolt headed by the communist party in 1932 and led by Augustin Farabundo Martí was crushed by a violent repression under General Maximiliano Hernández in which between 10,000 and 35,000 peasants were killed, in what is known as “La Matanza” (the Massacre) (Anderson, 1971:174-5). All indigenous people, men in particular, were targeted by the National Guard, and forced to hide and abandon all outward signs of indigenous culture such as language and dress. A series of military regimes ran the country for the next fifty years.
Map 3.1 Department of Chalatenango

By the late 1970s land pressures and poor working conditions contributed to a situation in which the landless, the temporary wage laborers on plantations, and the union members all began to call for changes. Once again these groups were met with a repressive military government. By 1979 this tense environment had developed into a war in which the government-backed military fought a coalition of groups known collectively as the FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional or Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front). Over 80,000 people were killed during the twelve-year war and thousands more disappeared. In 1977 the Salvadorean military forces included 7,000 men. By 1985 this number had grown to over 51,000. The guerilla forces of the FMLN were estimated to number between 10,000 and 20,000 during the war (Tula, 1994:196). In 1989 approximately one-third of the FMLN’s active forces were women. An all-women’s battalion formed in 1980 (Carter et al, 1989:15).

On March 24, 1980 the Archbishop of San Salvador, Monsignor Oscar Romero was assassinated while saying mass. He had publicly criticized the military and implored them to stop killing innocent people. The orders to kill Monsignor Romero were given by military General D’Aubuisson (Eissio, 1997:237). Romero became a martyr for the poor of El Salvador and for those committed to human rights everywhere.

The United States government sent hundreds of millions of dollars to El Salvador’s military during this time. This money paid for weapons, as well as training of the military and police forces. Rural areas thought to be controlled by the FMLN were targeted and bombed or invaded in a “low intensity warfare” (Carter et al., 1989:15). Neither side was able gain control and defeat the other, so the conflict raged on, displacing hundreds and thousands of Salvadoreans.
In 1989 the FMLN launched an offensive in the urban areas of the country. Most of the fighting took place in and around San Salvador. In November 1989 six Jesuit priests and two women were brutally murdered by heavily armed soldiers of the ATLACTL battalion on the campus of the University of Central America in San Salvador (Eissio, 1997:237). After the offensive and these violent killings, international pressure mounted, eventually leading to a cease-fire.

In 1992 the United Nations brokered Peace Accords which were signed by the government and the leaders of the FMLN. Radical land reforms were a major component of the peace agreement. This ended the military conflict, but most of the root causes of the revolution continue to be unresolved. In 1993 the National Assembly of El Salvador granted amnesty for all accused, including two military officers convicted of the assassination of the Jesuit priests (Tula, 1994: 183).

3.1.3 Region of San Fernando

The department of Chalatenango was one of the strongholds of the FMLN during the war. The isolated and mountainous region in which the women’s cooperative, Unidas Por La Paz (UPLP) is active was territory occupied alternately by the government-controlled army forces, and the FMLN forces. Therefore, the area was ravaged and many people were displaced, most moving to Honduras or San Salvador. Out of 70 families in San Fernando Nuevo, only 12 remained throughout the war (José, 2/2/98).

Politically, the residents of this region were divided between government supporters and backers of the FMLN. In addition, the region produced both guerilla

---

6 (Please refer to Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 for Informant data on pages 33 and 34).
fighters and military soldiers. The intense community and regional conflicts that arose in this tense situation continue today and are played out in neighbor relations as well as within the UPLP cooperative.

Rebuilding after the war has taken a long time. There was no bus service to the region for seventeen years between 1980 and 1997, the phone service, which consisted of one phone center in the region, was disconnected in 1980 and only just recently reestablished. There was no mail service to the region for fifteen years, between 1980 and 1995. The region never had electricity until 1997. In 1998, the residents of three communities had access to electricity, although not everyone could afford the connecting costs and monthly charges. In 2000, all United by Peace communities except for Los Llanitos have access to electricity.

The population of the entire region of San Fernando is nearly 6,000 residents. The various communities vary in size from 32 families to 180 families. The seven communities in which the cooperative is active are: Sumpul Chacones; Avelares; San Fernando Nuevo; Valle de Jesús; Hierba Buena; Los Llanitos and Los Naranjos (See map 3.3).

The people of San Fernando are peasants, economically relying largely on agriculture. The two main seasons are winter (commonly referred to as the rainy season) and summer, with winter lasting May through October and summer from November through April. The elevation of the area varies between 900 and 1200 meters. The vegetation is a subtropical mix with pine tree areas that are heavily deforested. The staple crops are maize and beans. Soil quality in the area is deteriorating due to fires, deforestation and insecticide use (José, 2/2/98). Most families own a small parcel of land
Map 3.3 Region of San Fernando

To La Palma

Hierba Buena

Valle de Jesús

San Fernando Antigua

Los Llanitos

San Fernando Nuevo

Rio Sumpalito

Los Naranjos

San Juan de la Cruz

Río Sumpalito

Las Torellas

Avelares

Chacunes

To Dulce Nombre

--- Rivers

----- Dirt Road

ooooo Seasonal Road

C Trails frequented by researcher

Community Cooperative Groups
and rent additional land in order to grow enough food to support themselves. A man from the region who was captured and tortured twice during the war and then arrested again after the war due to a corrupt judge told me, “I feel about the land the same way that I feel about my mother. I would never sell my mother, in the same way, I would never sell my land. This land cost us much pain and blood. You can’t buy blood” (José, 2/2/98).

3.2 History of the Women’s Movement in El Salvador

When government repression intensified in the 1970s, a variety of movements emerged, including a women’s movement. Popular organizations, the Catholic Church and the armed-left all formed or became more active at this time (Tula, 1994:202-3).

3.2.1 Influence of the Catholic Church

Many women trace their activism to involvement in Christian base communities. These ecclesiastic communities were first formed by European priests in the areas in and around San Salvador. Women often had leadership positions in these communities. Discussions in community meetings examined the status quo and gender subordination within the household and the society. Some members of these communities faced severe repression for their activism and were killed or disappeared by the military. This repression led the Christian base community participants, including women, to become activists for human rights (Tula, 1994:204).

Through the Catholic Church women also became involved in leadership roles as lay religious practitioners or “delegates of the word” in Honduran refugee camps and in the FMLN controlled zones. In this role, women led weekly church services or
“celebrations” and acted as deacons. In many instances, women continued to fill leadership positions when they returned to repopulated communities following the war (Tula, 1994:205).

3.2.2 Women’s Organizations

During the late 1970s, women’s organizations affiliated with the new revolutionary parties were created. Both AMPES (1975) and AMES (1979) were formed during this period. The Association of Progressive Women of El Salvador (AMPES) focused on women as workers, filling a gap left by trade unions. This organization was forced underground and eventually disbanded in the 1980s. The Association of Women of El Salvador (AMES) directed its efforts toward women in the area of San Salvador who worked as market vendors and maids in the informal sector. AMES also was temporarily forced underground due to repression, and eventually disbanded (Tula, 1994, 205-206).

After a period of severe repression, the popular movement began to re-emerge in the mid 1980s. Many significant women’s organizations formed at this time. CO-MADRES (The Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador “Monsignor Romero”) was founded in the late 1970s and survived without ever going completely underground. Originally, the women in CO-MADRES searched for missing relatives by confronting the military and those in power. More recently, this organization has adopted a feminist agenda. In 1986 IMU (the Institute for Research, Training, and Development of Women was formed to support grassroots organizations. CEMUJER (Center for Women’s Studies “Norma Virginia Guirola de Herrera”) was founded in 1990 with the goal of improving conditions for
women, specifically through improving laws pertaining to women, the family and rape.

CONAMUS (National Coordinating Committee of Salvadoran Women) was founded in 1986. CONAMUS operates a women's clinic as well as a shelter for female victims of domestic violence and has also been active in fighting for children's rights (CONAMUS brochure, 1994). Also in 1986, CO-FENASTRAS (Women's Committee of the Salvadoran National Worker's Federation) began working with female factory workers. While FENASTRAS started work with women in 1981, the focus of CO-FENASTRAS has been on popular education, as well as child care and health care facilities, and support for strikers and victims of domestic violence. In 1987 AMS (Salvadoran Women's Association) was formed to create a means for rural women to become more self-sufficient economically through cooperatives as well as through educational workshops (Tula, 1994:2-4,206-208).

While these organizations all met with fierce repression for years, the period between 1979 and 1981 was especially severe. By the late 1980s many women's groups were thriving again after functioning underground for years. Although numerous women experienced their first leadership roles within Christian base communities, some of the groups moved away from affiliation with the Catholic Church as their ideologies changed. Other groups that formed in connection with revolutionary parties also faced difficulties as the male leadership within the parties sometimes wanted to put aside concerns with gender subordination until the class struggle was resolved. In spite of these difficulties, many groups thrived and some new groups emerged.

One of the new groups, DIGNAS (women for Dignity and Life “We are Breaking the Silence”) formed in 1990. DIGNAS organized its own grassroots movement with
community projects in addition to serving as a support group for other existing women’s organizations. Another significant focus for DIGNAS has been gender workshops, both organized through their own group as well as through other Latin American groups brought to El Salvador at the invitation of DIGNAS (Tula, 1994:206-209).

Another relatively new group, “Women’s Movement 'Melida Anaya Montes’” or MAM) formed in 1992. MAM organized as a group women from diverse backgrounds and situations in order to transform the situation for women after the signing of the peace accords between the FMLN and the Salvadorean government. This group sought to amplify the new spaces for women opening in El Salvador as a result of the ending of the war (MAM brochure, 1994).

3.3 History of Salvadorean Cooperatives

In 1957 the Salvadorean Ministry of Agriculture began encouraging the development of cooperatives with the goals of increasing credit accessibility and strengthening political influence. The Administration of Peasant Welfare took charge of this area in 1964. Another governmental agency, the Salvadorean Institute for the Development of Cooperatives (INSAFOCOOP) also encouraged the development of cooperatives beginning in 1971. For the most part, these groups were funded through USAID and the Inter-American Foundation, and then channeled the funds as credit to farmers with large and medium sized farms. Small landholders benefited little (Pearce, 1986:93).

Another group behind the promotion of cooperatives was the Catholic Church. During the 1950s and 1960s the Catholic church in El Salvador underwent many changes, all geared toward a new call for social justice and an examination of the role of the
church in that pursuit, as part of the Liberation Theology movement. As a consequence, priests in the department of La Libertad were instrumental in the formation of cooperatives aimed at improving productivity through new farming techniques.

The Foundation for the Promotion of Cooperatives (FUNPROCOOP) was founded in 1967. FUNPROCOOP focused on training and education through a center in Chalatenango. By 1969 there were 7,493 peasant members of FUNPROCOOP cooperatives in four departments. FUNPROCOOP came under criticism due to having limited access to ongoing funding as well as a perceived inability to address the larger social problems at hand (Pearce, 1986:93).

Two other cooperatives which have played important roles in El Salvador are UCS (Salvadoran Communal Union) and FECCAS (The Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants). UCS formed in 1969 when approximately 20 communal unions from AIFLD (American Institute for Free Labor Development) joined together. Through USAID and AIFLD, the United States was directly involved in the formation of the UCS. AIFLD promoted the training of selected peasant leaders in the implementation of social projects as well as the formation of communal unions. The UCS has thus been reliant on external funding and had to deal with a paternalistic structure since its formation. It continues to be heavily influenced by USAID and US policy (Pearce, 1986: 94-97).

FECCAS formed in 1964 from a base of peasant unions encouraged by various priests and by the Christian Democrat Party. The organization eventually sought changes in the existing social order as well as agrarian reform. FECCAS grew slowly and did not gain momentum until 1974 when it joined forces with a newly awakened Catholic Church (Pearce, 1986:97-101).
3.4 Recent Agricultural Cooperatives in the San Fernando Region

Salvadorean cooperatives have played an important role in the region of San Fernando as well. The National Association of Agricultural Workers (Asociacion Nacional de Trabajadores Agropecuarias or ANTA) came to the region of San Fernando in 1988. According to one male informant, ANTA formed due to the oppression the cooperatives were facing. He told me “The members of cooperatives were called subversives. This word was used so much that the people using it forgot what it meant” (José, 2/2/98). ANTA formed cooperatives in some communities in the region, and fought for credit in the banks so that the peasants (all males from what information I can gather) could get loans for planting.

ANTA also formed solidarity groups in various communities of the region consisting of 10-15 individuals. The ideal of these groups was “one for all and all for one” (José, 2/2/98). These groups would go to a particular bank to apply pressure to receive credit. Although the bank continued to turn them down, the groups would eventually receive international aid through ANTA. ANTA is less active in the region currently than it was during the war. Apparently, many of the cooperatives formed through ANTA have large debts (José, 2/2/98).

Another group active in supplying credit to male farmers in the region is CORDES. In order to apply for credit, individuals in the various communities form small committees. These groups are approved to receive funds if they meet certain requirements. The individuals in the group must be debt free, the funds must be used on agricultural expenses and the group must be active, with good attendance at each monthly meeting.
3.5 Gender Ideology in San Fernando

In addition to examining cooperatives active on the local level, analyzing the gender ideology is critical to our understanding of the region. In regards to gender ideology, San Fernando is similar to other areas of rural El Salvador, and to some extent, other rural, post-war areas throughout Latin America. In this section I will discuss three main areas concerning gender ideology: parenting; family income; and leadership. Following this discussion, I will present aspects of the changing gender ideology.

3.5.1 Parenting

In the region of San Fernando, women are responsible for rearing children. From the time they are born, infants are kept close to their mothers. Most of the women breastfeed their babies, which necessitates nearly constant contact. Mothers carry their infants in their arms throughout the day, whether they are going to the river to wash clothes, selling items door-to-door, or attending meetings. When women are at home, and need to use both arms to complete a task, their babies are often swung nearby in a small hammock. For example, many households have small hammocks near the area where women cook tortillas. If a woman has to carry water or gather firewood, she may leave her infant for a short period of time with a daughter or other female family member.

Toddlers and young children continue to spend most of their time with women; either their own mothers, or other female family members. After children are weaned, their mothers sometimes have to move from the region to find work in San Salvador. In these instances, the child or children are left with either their grandmother or an aunt on the maternal side.
The majority of mothers continue to live in the region with their children. These women share childcare with extended family, trading off to perform work in the informal sector. For example, a woman may leave her children with a sister for most of the day once or twice a week while she walks to Honduras and back in order to purchase soft drinks, bread or fruit to sell in her own community.

As the children reach school age they become more independent, and the boys begin to spend more time with their fathers, if they are in contact with their father. Many children attend the public schools for at least one or two years. The schools in the region were closed during the war, although a few communities managed to open privately run popular schools. Currently, there are public schools in each of the communities in the region offering from one to three grades. One central school provides kindergarten through ninth grade. The students fortunate enough to study beyond the ninth grade must leave the region to do so. Public education is available only to those who can afford the entrance fee, uniforms and books.

In addition, most children spend their days working to support the family, thus a formal education becomes a luxury that many families cannot afford. It is very common to see children carrying water, gathering firewood, and making household purchases at the small home-based stores. Girls are often recruited to help with childcare, even at a very young age. Boys begin accompanying their fathers or other males in their extended families out to farm in the fields.

3.5.2 Family Income

A second area of gender ideology in San Fernando that is important involves family income or family support. There are many different configurations of households
in the region of San Fernando. The type of family structure that I am discussing in this section includes both a male and a female, as well as children. This family unit may or may not live in a household with other extended family members.

It is my observation that women are expected to participate in the support of the family unit through finding ways to earn in the informal sector, while the men are responsible for all farming. Most, if not all of the men farm plots of land. They grow corn (maize for tortillas) and beans (red or black) for their family’s consumption. Since the men own different amounts of land, some are required to rent out plots as well, or to find ways to purchase additional corn and beans for their family. There are some men in the region also growing coffee, or other produce to sell in markets outside of the region. Other ways in which the men earn actual capital are through finding sporadic employment in either private construction or public infrastructure projects in the region. Both men and women pick coffee on plantations during January and February.

Most of the women I observed were involved in the informal market sector. Women participate in this sector in numerous creative ways. Food items, such as tamales or pupusas prepared at home are sold door to door either by the woman or by a female child. Produce or bread is purchased in Honduras and sold in the community by the woman or her children. Used clothes are purchased outside the community and then sold door-to-door. A small number of women sew clothes or school uniforms to sell. Others run small stores out of their homes, selling items such as cooking lard, salt, sugar, bread, laundry soap, rice and powdered drink mixes. A small number of women have livestock such as chickens or pigs. Eggs are consumed by the family or sold and the pigs are raised and then sold for what the women hope will be a profit.
The only women whom I did not observe participating in this informal sector were the very elderly with extended kinship networks to rely on. The elderly women without much extended family were expected or required to participate in finding ways in which to earn.

Women in the region relied on earning money for their children’s education and for day-to-day costs involved in providing for the household. The money earned through these productive activities is often spent on food items for cooking (such as salt, lard or sugar), and school costs, such as registration and uniforms. The women repair and reuse clothing for years, but need to buy shoes (plastic sandals) more frequently. In the women’s cooperative, Unidas Por La Paz, the women often spoke of a desire to find income-generating activities in order to support their children in school.

The women with male partners or spouses only seem to rely on those men for corn and bean crops. The women find other ways to earn small amount of cash for their day to day needs. When the crops fail, the food supply for the entire year is gone, and the family is forced to find ways to earn unusually large amounts (by picking coffee for instance) in order to buy the corn needed for tortillas. Most families are forced to secure credit in the event of crop failure, and are forced into a debt that is nearly impossible to pay off.

3.5.3 Leadership

Leadership is a third relevant area of gender ideology. While the women have high levels of participation, most of the positions of leadership within the region of San Fernando are filled by men. For example, the community councils in each community of the region consist of eight elected members. One of these eight positions is reserved for a
women's representative." The other seven positions are consistently filled by men. Also, the catechists for the Catholic Church in the region are men.

Most of the women in leadership positions in the community are not from the region. For example, both male and female school teachers work in the region. In addition, the one government-run health clinic in the region has employed male and female physicians. The majority of school teachers and all physicians are from San Salvador or other parts of the country and travel to San Fernando for work, often travelling back home for the weekends.

Apart from the women's cooperative, women from the region have served in leadership roles through the health promoter program run through the Catholic Church. Both men and women from the region went through training to provide health care in their own communities during the war and post-war years.

When the women of the cooperative began meeting regularly, it was the first time many of the women had served in a leadership position. In many instances, the women were too shy or overwhelmed to even introduce themselves during a meeting, and they had never expressed an opinion in a public meeting before. The leaders of the cooperative are all women who live in the communities where the cooperative is active.

3.5.4 Changing Ideology

Many different factors are influencing a change from traditional gender ideology in the region of San Fernando, but the principle catalysts are the revolution in El Salvador and female-headed households.

El Salvador was consumed by a violent class war between 1980 and 1992. During those twelve years women's roles changed in numerous ways. Some of the
women sympathetic to the cause of the FMLN became combatants, and many became leaders within the FMLN. Others provided food for the FMLN or received special training in order to provide medical care or serve as radio operators. The women who were incorporated into this movement did not want to return to the pre-war ideology that relegated women to less active roles.

Women were also deeply affected by the violence of the war. Many women in the country lost husbands, siblings, sons, or daughters when they were killed in the fighting. Many suffered emotionally and psychologically when friends or relatives were disappeared by the military. In those cases, the women did not know if their loved ones were dead or alive. Both female combatants and civilians were raped, tortured and killed. Many women were forced to watch while their own husbands or children were killed (Aron, 1991:37). Understandably, these circumstances led to the development of a deep distrust and fear. Women became afraid of being labeled a FMLN sympathizer or cooperative member. Tension between families and within the cooperative continue to demonstrate the ongoing affects of war violence.

Women became heads of households in large numbers as war widows, and had to begin finding means of survival completely separate from reliance on male spouses or partners. Female household heads do not farm, and therefore must earn enough money to purchase the large amount of maize necessary for their family’s annual consumption of tortillas. Women earn in a variety of ways, many of which are described above. Sometimes the women have brothers or other family members who farm a plot of land for them, or supply them with some corn and beans.
By six years after the signing of the peace accords, many women in San Fernando widowed during the war had found new male partners, but their gender ideology remained changed. An actual wedding ceremony is a rarity in the region of San Fernando, due to financial restraints and the fact that Catholic priests rarely reside in the area. Much more commonly, couples begin living together after the woman has a baby. Women are the main providers for their children, even if they find another man to live with. Some of the women who lost male partners during the war believe that the improved status for women was fought for and won. In this way they are either formally heads of households, with no adult males in their homes, or informally more involved with family support and decision making with a new partner.

In 1995 one woman in a community with a paved road showed me the contrast between those households with men and those without. There were very few vehicles in the region, so the paved road served mainly as a place to dry corn, beans and coffee beans in the sun. The woman explained to me that households with men were the ones with crops drying out in front of them in the road while the houses without adult males had nothing. As I looked up the street with this woman I saw that out of twenty houses only three had crops drying out in front.

According to Deniz Kandiyoti, women strategize amidst the “patriarchal bargains” of a society (1988:274-5). Knowing how to work within these “patriarchal bargains” enables women to maximize their life options. According to Kandiyoti, in situations of poverty, “… the necessity of every household member’s contribution to survival turns men’s economic protection of women into a myth” (Kandiyoti, 1988:282). The “patriarchal bargains” prevalent in the region of San Fernando are unique in the high
number of female-headed households and in women’s high levels of participation in the informal market economy. These conditions also bring women into the public sphere, and in this case, into cooperatives.
CHAPTER 4.
THE COOPERATIVE: “UNITED BY PEACE”

On our way to San Fernando one day we encountered a massive landslide that completely covered the road with a twelve-foot high pile of mud and rock. One of the promoters, Maria, was with me. We looked over the steep mountainside to the bottom of the 100 meter trail of mud and saw a red pick-up truck that looked eerily similar to our own agency truck. We learned from the inhabitants of a nearby house that the slide had occurred the day before, and that the truck’s occupants were injured, but alive. A few people were carefully maneuvering the area in order to retrieve some of the hundreds of cabbages which had once been the truck’s cargo and were now strewn across this newly formed scar in the hillside. We turned our truck around and drove the two hours back to San Salvador. A bulldozer worked all night and happily we found the road cleared the next morning.

We stopped part way up the mountain at the tree nursery run by the FMLN excombatants and picked up our preordered pine seedlings. We managed to negotiate the wet and muddy road all the way to San Fernando Nuevo, taking three hours to drive fifteen kilometers. María continued on, walking another hour to her home in Valle de Jesús. She returned to San Fernando Nuevo the next day with a horse. We attached twenty pine seedlings to the horse’s two saddlebags and María led the burdened animal to her community for the cooperative members to plant the seedlings in a reforestation effort. María’s hard work and determination in challenging circumstances were and continue to be an inspiration to me. She hopes her four daughters will benefit from the cooperative’s reforestation projects someday.
In the face of discouraging obstacles, the women of the cooperative rallied forward. A few months before the landslide I had spent an entire day wandering around the hillsides above Sumpul Chacones searching for a missing cow. We had hoped that the white animal would stand out against the brown and deforested landscape of the dry season. We carried a drawing of the cow’s brand so as to be able to reclaim her if she had found her way into someone else’s pasture. The two cooperative members I walked with remained in good spirits, even though losing this cow was a major blow to their community’s cow project. They laughed as they told me how feisty this cow was and how difficult it was to keep her penned in, a problem not yet surmounted, as evidenced by our agenda that day. We walked to the abandoned remains of a bombed out community. Roofs, walls and sometimes entire houses had been destroyed by aerial bombing carried out by the military during the 1980s. One of the women with me had grown up in this community. She showed me the remains of the church. I was reminded that the women in the cooperative had survived and surmounted much more than missing cows, muddy roads and landslides. The cooperative members suffered project setbacks, relentless criticism by the men of the region, and conflicts within their own group. Nonetheless, they developed a new self-confidence in their abilities to conduct meetings, and to plan, implement and run projects. This self-confidence sustains them.

This chapter includes six different areas: a presentation of the formation of Unidas Por La Paz; descriptions of the four projects; sections on both male and female non-member attitudes toward the cooperative; a discussion of conflict within the cooperative; and an introduction to four cooperative members.
4.1 Cooperative

Women in this region of Chalatenango began to meet regularly toward the end of the war years when ANTA (Asociación Nacional de Trabajadores Agropecuarias; National Association of Agricultural Workers) gave two yards of tablecloth material to each woman in San Fernando Nuevo. The women embroidered the tablecloths while meeting on a regular basis and then kept what they made for personal use in their own homes. Later, ANTA donated a sewing machine to this same community. Each woman received enough material to make one skirt, and they met regularly two times each week for a year to sew. Speaking of the origins of the cooperative, one of the participants in the women’s group said, “When we began working and organizing ourselves, we started with a small embroidery project. This is how we began” (Luisa, 1/26/98).

An international development and refugee aid organization, CONCERN/America, (C/A) became involved in this region in June of 1991. C/A formed in 1972, eventually focusing on long-term development work in Central America. C/A became involved in Salvadorean refugee camps in Honduras in 1983 and active in El Salvador in 1984. By the late 1980s, C/A was active in five countries, supporting approximately 25 volunteers. The various areas of focus for C/A include: health promoter training; community medical dispensaries; water/sanitation projects; appropriate technology; vegetable and soybean promotion and cultivation; literacy; women’s projects; vaccination campaigns; nutrition; agro-forestry; and income-generation (CONCERN/America publication, 1997).

In San Fernando, El Salvador, CONCERN/America first collaborated with CODIPSA (Comisión Diosisana para la Salud; Diocese Commission for Health) a Salvadorean health promoter-training program sponsored by the Catholic Diocese in the
department of Chalatenango. At this time two C/A volunteers, Kath Owston and Steve Lewis, moved to Valle de Jesús and began working throughout the region. The main areas of their involvement were health work through CODIPSA, education, and involvement with women’s groups and projects.

After much investigation and informal interviewing throughout the region, the first C/A volunteers found a lot of interest in projects for women. A baby weighing campaign in the region conducted by the health promoters and by Lewis and Owston revealed that the majority of children were malnourished. A cow and nutrition project evolved from this study, in order to improve the nutritional status of the children. In this way, the women’s association and the first association project were established simultaneously. Lewis and Owston identified four women in the region from four different communities with high levels of community participation. The association was officially formed, and interested women began meeting on both community and regional levels. In December of 1992 the group of women elected the same four women to be paid “promoters.” These promoters formed the original leadership of the group, and one of the promoters was elected as president. The group included 60 women as members, was active in seven communities and chose the name The San Fernando Women’s Association, “United by Peace” (Asociación de Mujeres de San Fernando: “Unidas Por La Paz”). The group selected this name in conjunction with the signing of the Peace Accords ending El Salvador’s twelve-year war (María, 2/4/98).

The organization continued meeting on both community and regional levels and the C/A volunteers, together with the promoters began formulating and implementing projects in 1992. In the words of one of the first promoters, “Our objective was to
advance with women and to get rid of the mindset people had that we could only stay at home. The biggest objective was to come to have a means of working for survival” (Helena, 1/24/98). Eventually, the group achieved legal cooperative status. The organization solicited and received funding from two international agencies: the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF)\(^7\) and the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD)\(^8\). In addition, the group began coordinating with CORDES (Comisión Regional de Desarrollo Social, or The Regional Commission for Social Development), a Salvadorean development and agricultural organization. CORDES assisted the group in some of the technical areas of their projects as well as in administrative tasks, as discussed in the project section of this chapter.

In July of 1994 my husband and I arrived in the region to replace the first C/A volunteers. The UPLP promoters had written a letter to C/A asking that when Lewis and Owston left, C/A send a replacement to continue coordinating with their group. C/A granted this request. I was to work with Unidas Por La Paz (UPLP) while my husband continued collaborating with CODIPSA in the area of community health. We left the region in October of 1995. Since that time UPLP has functioned more independently, while continuing to collaborate with CORDES. UPLP continues to receive international funding, channeled through CORDES and dispensed to UPLP on an as-needed/as available basis.

\(^7\) SCIAF’s website states “Inspired by the Gospel call to build a more just world, SCIAF challenges injustice by strengthening poor and oppressed people and by stimulating the Scottish public to share in our common struggle for human dignity.” (www.sciaf.org.uk/)

\(^8\) CAFOD states, “We are a voice for the world’s poor, raising awareness of the causes of poverty and injustice, and are committed to justice for the world’s poor and excluded, whatever their race or religion.” (www.cafod.org.uk/who_we_are.htm)
In 1997 restructuring led to electing seven community coordinators to replace the three paid promoters (One of the original four promoters resigned in 1994.). These seven women receive a monthly salary and are responsible for implementing and maintaining projects, holding community meetings in their respected communities and organizing regional meetings every 2-3 months. One of these coordinators was elected as the cooperative president. By 1998 the cooperative had grown to ninety active members.

4.2 Cooperative Projects

The following descriptions of four cooperative projects will provide insights into the women's attitudes toward the projects as well as provide the background for further analysis of these projects in chapter 5. The four projects that will be introduced are the cow and nutrition project, reforestation and land purchase endeavors, artisan craft production and communal corn mills. Although the cooperative has pursued other projects, such as small bakeries and sewing workshops to learn how to make pants and dresses to sell, the four projects presented here are those with which I am most familiar. As of 1998 the bakery projects were not functioning and two communities (Valle de Jesús and Los Llanitos) maintained struggling sewing workshops.

4.2.1 Cows and Nutrition

One of the first projects selected by the women's association involved raising cows to improve the nutritional status of children in the region. UPLP sought funding to purchase cows for each of the seven active community groups, with the goal of providing a glass of milk each day for the malnourished children. The four promoters, together with Lewis and Owston, secured funding for the cow project through an aid agency,
SCIAF, based in Scotland. Each UPLP community group began with three cows, purchased between 1992 and 1994. CORDES, a Salvadorean agricultural organization, assisted UPLP in selecting cows for purchase, vaccinating the animals and teaching the women how to milk the cows. The funds from SCIAF were channeled to UPLP through CORDES.

Eventually, the women in UPLP decided that those involved in caring for the cows should be the ones to receive the milk. Different women were responsible for milking the cows each day, as well as for giving them food and water. The women would pay a small fee for a share in the day’s milk production and any extra would be sold. In this way, the women in UPLP provided their own children with milk, many of whom were malnourished, but they stopped supplying milk for all of the malnourished children in the communities. The money collected from the milk then went into caring for the cows. UPLP purchased one bull (also with donated funds) and soon many of the communities had calves.

At the beginning stages of the project, many women were involved in each of the communities. The women enjoyed having their own project and receiving the milk that the cows provided. In 1998, 27% of the cooperative informants declared the cow project to be their favorite cooperative endeavor. An 18 year-old member told me, “When we had the cows, many women were active in the group. It was a good project to ignite interest” (Sofia, 1/23/98).

While the project thrived initially, many problems soon arose. By January 1998 only four of the original seven communities maintained cow projects. One of these communities had a total of seven animals, while the others had six, three and one. Most
of the communities lost one or two cows when they fell from cliffs in the mountainous terrain of the region and died. Two cows were stolen in another community. Three communities eventually decided to sell their surviving animals in order to fund other projects.

Losing the cows off of cliffs was not anticipated in the project planning. One woman in the focus group reflected on this issue, “If we had bought them [the cows] here we would not have had all these problems...cows used to this terrain” (focus group, 2/3/98).

The cow project demanded a lot of participation on the part of the women. As the numbers of animals decreased, less milk was available and the women received less of a reward for their hard work. This resulted in a decrease in participation levels. A 69 year-old cooperative member told me,

[the cow project] was good because we received nutritious food. All of the women wanted the milk, but when it came time to feed the cows, no one wanted to do it; when it came time to give them water, no one wanted to do it. In the end there were five of us caring for the cows. Of these five, one woman had to go to work [in San Salvador] to care for her children and another had to stop for other reasons, so then there were only three of us caring for the cows. Then, in a meeting there was a vote, and the majority voted to sell the cows. I didn’t want to sell the cows, but what could I do? (Juana, 1/24/98).

Renting pasture, buying medicines and vaccinations, as well as reimbursing farmers who suffered losses when the cows broke through fences and ate or trampled crops are all expenses that became extensive. An 18 year-old woman said, “When we had the cows, we had to go everyday to give them food, water and sometimes shots. They broke through the fences and ate the bean and corn crops on other people’s land.
One man received 500 colones\(^9\) from the group in compensation for the crops that the cows ate” (Sofia, 1/23/98).

In addition, some women were afraid of the cows and therefore unwilling to go close enough to feed or milk them. As a 54 year-old cooperative member and community coordinator from a group where the cow project is still functioning told me, “When there is milk, then the other women are there every day--to get the milk. But, I still have to do the milking, because the women are scared of the cows. The majority of women do not want to learn how to milk them, because they are scared of them” (Felicia, 1/31/98).

There was a general consensus that a lack of cooperation resulted in the deterioration of the cow project. A 16 year-old cooperative member said, “The cow project would have been better if we had all been united” (Reina, 1/25/98). These sentiments were also expressed by a 69 year-old woman who said, “We didn’t cooperate here. If we had all helped the project would have succeeded, but we lost it” (Adolfina, 1/28/98).

Even in the communities where the cow projects are thriving, the women still face challenges keeping the cows well fed, finding enough participation to complete the necessary tasks and getting milk on a regular basis. A 36 year-old community coordinator in a community where the cow project is still functioning expressed her frustrations, “The cow project is too much work. Everyone helps when there’s milk; but when there’s not, then no one wants to help” (Beatriz, 2/10/98).

---

\(^9\) The colon is the Salvadorean monetary unit. In 1998 the exchange rate was 8.7 colones to one dollar.
4.2.2 Reforestation and Land

The reforestation project aimed to enable women in each community to plant small forests of fast growing trees that would provide an important addition to supplies of firewood and fruit. In January 1993 the women began attending training sessions about planting and growing trees led by an agronomist from CORDES, the Salvadorean development and agricultural organization. In April the women constructed tree nurseries. The women were very enthusiastic, gathering more varieties of seedlings from the hillsides around their homes to add to their nurseries. When it came time to transplant the tree seedlings, a problem arose concerning where to plant them. The women were unwilling to plant the trees on rented land, and in most cases, didn’t own land themselves. Since the women were hesitant to improve land that they didn’t own, many of the trees were planted around the women’s houses and continue to thrive. The women in the cooperative each received a small remuneration for their labor with the reforestation project. ¹⁰

During 1993 and 1994 UPLP purchased land in six communities to have pasture for their animals, to plant food crops for the cows, and for future reforestation projects. The funds for land purchases came from an aid agency in England, CAFOD. Once again, CORDES worked with UPLP in locating valuable land close to the communities, with water sources and relatively flat terrain. It was difficult to find affordable and suitable land for sale. After purchasing land, the women in each community group worked to make improvements by repairing fences, constructing water storage tanks and planting food for the cows in alley-cropping to prevent soil erosion. Community groups that no

---

¹⁰ A discrepancy emerges on this point. The women in the cooperative told me clearly and repeatedly that they were paid for their labor in this project, while Lewis maintains that they were not.
longer have cow projects rent out their land during the months when there is pasture at a rate of thirty colons ($3.50) per month per cow. The number of cows grazing depends on the size of the plot, but usually averages three.

Each community group planted fruit and pine trees on their lands during a second reforestation project in 1995. This second reforestation project aimed to increase the amount of available firewood for future generations as well as produce fruit crops for consumption and sale. The various community groups helped select the types of fruit trees they wanted to plant. In the previous reforestation project (1993), the women had grown many of the seedlings from seed and had planted the seedlings near their own houses. The aim of this second reforestation project was to use cooperative funds to buy seedlings and plant them on the communal land. The women in the cooperative were paid for the time spent working to transport and plant trees.

In one community the fruit trees were stolen out of the ground three days after they were planted (María, 2/4/98). This demonstrates the high value of fruit trees in the region. The communal land is often located far from the community center, making it difficult for the women to protect their trees from this type of situation.

In another community, the women found it difficult to carry water to each individual tree, and many died during the dry season. The coordinator of this group blames lack of planning, “Here the trees died because we didn’t have a hose. If we had a hose we would have been able to save the trees... We planted 64 trees and now there are 15 good ones. If we had purchased the hose and sprinkler heads ahead of time, it would have been better” (Luisa, 1/26/98).
Although the aim of the project was to improve communally owned cooperative land, the women in at least one community elected to plant their trees near their own homes (María, 2/4/98; Luisa, 1/26/98). This frustrated the women from other communities, as it was viewed as unfair. The community coordinator from a group that planted trees on communal land related to me, “We planted trees to improve our land, but the women were not willing to care for the trees, because they found out that in other communities the women received trees personally to plant on their own land; each woman received her own trees...” (Luisa, 1/26/98). The trees planted near the women’s homes have for the most part continued to thrive.

4.2.3 Artisan Crafts

In May of 1995 the promoters of the cooperative and I solicited and secured funds from CONCERN/America to make sample artisan products to use in a pilot study investigating the market demand for embroidered crafts. This endeavor emerged when the cooperative leadership decided to put more energy into the development of an income-generating project for the women of the region. Initially, the women chose five sample embroidered products: Christmas stockings; t-shirts; round pillowcases; square wall hangings; and cotton dresses.

In June the promoters and I went to San Salvador to purchase the materials for their products. The embroidery was done on a fine burlap material and consisted of brightly colored flowers, birds, trees, corn and houses in the designs associated with the traditional Salvadorean art. The promoter most familiar with embroidery worked with women from her own community to make the crafts. These women were compensated for their labor. The cooperative then sent out their completed samples and photos of the
crafts to investigate the market possibilities. Products were sent to C/A and to SCIAF in Scotland. Photos of products were sent to England. In addition, the promoters took samples to the markets in San Salvador. Many of the market vendors expressed a readiness to buy, but said they don’t customarily place advance orders.

The promoters led a one-day workshop to teach three women from each community group how to do the embroidery. The plan was for these women to then go and teach more women the drawing and embroidery techniques in their own communities. The promoters were concerned that participation not be limited to only the women with previous sewing and embroidery skills.

C/A placed an order with the cooperative for ninety items including Christmas stockings, pillow covers and t-shirts. These items totaled 4,776 colons ($549.00). C/A sent one-half of the money in advance, which enabled the women in the cooperative to purchase all of the raw materials. The promoters were also encouraged that an artisan craft store based through CORDES and located in the town of Chalatenango expressed interest in placing an order.

The promoters and I worked hard to design the structure of the craft project. Since some women in the cooperative had previous experience working in craft workshops in the community of La Palma\textsuperscript{11}, they had valuable ideas based on those experiences. For example, the promoters decided that the women would be required to buy the embroidery thread from the promoters to make the assigned crafts. This was to avoid monetary losses, as the women would perhaps be more careful with the thread, knowing that if they cut it to remove a mistake the cost would come out of their own account.

\textsuperscript{11}La Palma is a community located west of San Fernando and is famous for producing wooden crafts, such as boxes and crosses brightly painted with traditional Salvadoran motifs.
pockets. The prices of the products were carefully calculated, adjusting to give the women a fair wage for their labor in sewing, drawing, embroidering, washing and ironing the crafts. Also taken into consideration were shipping costs and costs for the promoters in transporting crafts to markets or the post office. At this time there was neither bus service nor postal service in the region.

The initial enthusiasm of the women for the artisan project waned when the cooperative failed to secure more markets for their goods. Although I placed an order with the cooperative for 75 items after I returned home, the other market possibilities failed to materialize. One main challenge was to produce a consistently high quality product. Some of the women were not very skilled at the drawing and embroidery, so the result was a number of poor quality products. Postal costs were much higher than expected, decreasing the profit margin. In addition, the isolated nature of the region was difficult to overcome in locating more markets, shipping goods, and even in traveling to purchase the raw materials.

4.2.4 Corn Mills

Three UPLP community groups (Avelares, San Fernando Nuevo and Valle de Jesús) purchased electric corn grinders during 1997 and 1998. Through this project, the women aimed to save time as well as generate an income for the cooperative. The preparation of tortillas is a time-consuming process, necessitating cooking, washing and hand grinding the corn, first with a manually turned mill and then again with a stone. The grinding, performed mostly by women, takes around ninety minutes for the average size family. After the corn dough is finely ground, the women form each tortilla by hand, and cook them over a fire on a hot griddle. Many families make tortillas twice a day,
once in the morning, and again in the evening. The new electric mills drastically reduce the tortilla preparation time. A woman or child from each household carries the cooked and rinsed corn kernels to the community corn mill. For a small fee, the kernels are ground quickly into the tortilla dough. The dough is then carried back to the homes, where the tortillas are formed and cooked. One manager in each of the three communities runs the mill twice daily and receives a monthly salary of 125 colons ($14.00).

Overall, the response to the mills has been very positive. In 1998 37% of the cooperative informants selected the corn mills as their favorite project. Everyone in the communities, not just the women involved in UPLP, benefits from the mills. A 34 year-old cooperative member said, “My favorite project is the mill, because it benefits all of the people” (María, 2/4/98). A 36 year-old community coordinator conveyed similar feelings, “The mill helps everyone in the community, but the cow project only helped a few women; and only when there was milk” (Beatriz, 2/10/98). The electric mills have met the goal of reducing the time women in the three communities spend hand grinding. This allows the women to attend UPLP meetings and perform the tasks necessitated by the projects. An unexpected benefit of the mills has been that the women, and sometimes their children, have informal gatherings at the mill once or twice a day to socialize.

The goal of establishing a means of generating funds for the cooperative through the corn mills has been more successful in some places than others. Each month the community groups must pay for electricity costs, the salary of the manager, replacement parts and occasional repair costs. While San Fernando reported very small profits, Valle de Jesús saved enough to provide small Christmas gifts to each of the 85 women using the mill.
CORDES and UPLP have disagreed on two aspects of managing the corn mills. One area of controversy concerning the corn mills has centered on the mill managers.

The women in Valle de Jesús employ a man in the manager position, which was originally established to offer employment and a regular income to a woman in the cooperative. However, the women of this particular community are content with the young man they have hired, and they report that none of the women in their group want the position (María, 2/4/98). CORDES, meanwhile, has strongly encouraged this group to replace the man with a woman. CORDES was also unhappy that this same community elected to use their profits to purchase Christmas gifts instead of investing them back into the cooperative in the form of another project. Regardless of these criticisms, the group has a strong sense of project ownership and continues to operate in a manner of their own choosing.

4.3 Male Views Regarding the Cooperative

Just as the women of the region cannot be classified as one homogeneous category, there are differences amongst the males as well. Men have a variety of attitudes toward the women’s cooperative ranging from jealousy and suspicion to support and admiration. There are women in the region who do not participate in the cooperative because their husbands or partners forbid them to do so. Other women participate while facing strong criticism at home. A small number of men in the region are very supportive and occasionally assist with projects.

The men who are the most suspicious of the cooperative forbid their wives and daughters to participate. These men refer to the women in the group as guerilleras or guerilla fighters from the FMLN. One sixteen year-old cooperative member told me,
“There are some men in this community who don’t let their wives leave the house to go to meetings... Sometimes the men say that we are guerilleras” (Reina, 1/25/98). A 34 year-old cooperative member told me, “There are places in the communities where perhaps the women do not go to the meetings because the men do not let them. There are many communities where we have problems where the men will not let the women leave the homes or the women do not have the consciousness to leave” (Luisa, 1/26/98).

Other men in the region are critical of the cooperative, even though some of them may have wives, partners or daughters who participate. One husband of a cooperative member spoke to me while I attempted to interview his wife, saying, “Here the women [in the cooperative] don’t do anything... They go to the meeting when there is a present... Men have more knowledge” (Miguel, 1/29/98). This sentiment regarding knowledge was echoed by many men who felt that women did not know enough about cows to have a cow project and did not know enough about trees to plant them correctly.

Another, somewhat less critical perspective was voiced by a man who told me, “…not to say that men do things better than women, but in some areas, the men have more experience and the women could use their help” (Cruz, 1/28/98). It was my experience that some women were very willing to accept suggestions from the men, and indeed encouraged it, while others viewed any suggestions as criticism.

Men, as well as women, in the region often pointed out the negative impact of conflict within the group on the cooperative’s projects. For example, a man from Los Naranjos told me, “The [cow] project didn’t function well because it was not organized well, and the women bicker amongst themselves” (Cruz, 1/28/98). Many of the men in the region keep themselves informed regarding the cooperative’s project successes and
challenges. They seem to be acutely aware of the internal conflicts of the group, often siding with one group or the other in the conflict.

From my perspective, the most supportive group of men in the region was the husbands or partners of women in leadership positions. A sixteen year-old cooperative member said, "Some of the men are involved--like my aunt’s man. He helped us build a fence on our land" (Reina, 1/25/98). This man is in a common-law marriage with a community coordinator. While I lived in San Fernando during 1994 and 1995, two of the promoters had husbands, both of whom were very supportive of the cooperative. The coordinators with partners or husbands also seemed to receive support from them. Perhaps these men were the most supportive because their wives tended to receive the most financial and social benefits. On the other hand, perhaps the women in cooperative leadership positions choose men to live with who are more conscientized than the rest of the male population in the region.

4.4 Female Non-member Views Regarding the Cooperative

Obviously with a membership of 90, the majority of women in the region choose not to become involved in the cooperative. Interviews with non-members provide insight into their choices and perspectives regarding the cooperative. There are women who claim to be too busy to participate in the activities of the cooperative. For example, a 25 year-old female non-member told me, "I’m too busy with too much work to get involved. Plus, I’m often sick with terrible headaches" (Emerita, 1/29/98). Being an active member of the cooperative certainly is a time commitment. Attending meetings on a regular basis, traveling to other communities for the occasional regional meetings, and assisting in the projects are all activities which take time away from other tasks. The women in
this region do not have much leisure time. Their daily schedules necessitate many work hours cooking, gathering wood, hauling water, washing laundry by hand and caring for their children.

I was unable to identify any substantial differences between the lives of cooperative members and non-members. In other words, all of the women were extremely overworked. Members and non-members alike both seemed to have equal access to extended kinship networks for support. This leads me to believe that there were other reasons for the non-members lack of participation. Perhaps this group of women who have never been active in the cooperative have fathers, partners or husbands at home who forbid their involvement. Another explanation could be that these women are simply not interested in the cooperative and did not want to convey their lack of enthusiasm or criticism to me, whom they viewed as connected to the group.

A second group of women includes those who participated in the cooperative in the past, but are no longer involved. One woman who used to be involved as a member of the cooperative, but is no longer active said, “I couldn’t make it to all of the meetings, so I don’t go anymore. I went sometimes and not others. I used to be involved when [the first promoter] was in charge” (Veronica, 1/27/98). Conflicts within the cooperative have caused some of the members to leave the group. Changes in leadership have led to fluctuations in membership as well, as demonstrated by the above quote. While one past member confided many frustrations over conflicts within the group, most of the women were less vocal about specific reasons for ending their participation.
4.5 Conflict Within the Cooperative

The cooperative deals with conflict on various levels. The main areas in which conflict occurs are at the community level and between the different communities on a regional level. On the community level, conflicts arise when there is a lack of participation, as well as when women disagree on how the projects should be managed. A general lack of participation and cooperation are described by a 69 year-old cooperative member, “If we had all worked together, we would have had many beautiful projects by now. Instead, we go on in the same poverty” (Adolfina, 1/28/98). Many women I spoke with felt that the cow projects failed in various communities due to a lack of participation and unity. A 40 year-old cooperative member told me, “What we need is to all work for each other instead of only for ourselves” (Fe, 2/8/98).

The other main type of conflict I observed occurred between community groups. There was a sense of competition between community groups for the projects. The women carefully monitor how the other community groups manage their projects. One 34 year-old cooperative member told me, “In some communities, such as Hierba Buena, they did not plant the trees on the women’s land [during the second reforestation project]” (María , 2/4/98). Another woman from a different community related, “We planted trees to improve our land but the women were not willing to care for the trees because they found out that in other communities the women received trees personally to plant on their own land; each woman received her own trees, so the women [in those communities] had more enthusiasm” (Luisa, 1/26/98). There are different projects in the various communities, which leads to a lot of comparing and jealousy. Understandably, each of the groups wants equal access to funding and projects. When discrepancies are
observed, the women express their frustrations. Each community coordinator serves on the regional council, which meets monthly. This group brings problems before CORDES when added assistance is needed. Those coordinators who are the most aggressive and assertive regarding projects and funding seem to gain the most for their individual communities.

4.6 Introduction to Four Cooperative Members

Exploring the life situations of four specific women within the cooperative will provide further insight into how individuals and their families are affected by their involvement. I elected to focus on these four women because they had very high potential to profit from their participation in the group. Two of the women were promoters, one woman is currently a community coordinator and the other is a young and very active cooperative member. In the analysis section I will return to a critical discussion of whether or not social or economic power has been attained through participation in the cooperative for each of these individuals.

4.6.1 Helena

In 1998, Helena was 33 years old, married and the mother of six children, ranging in age from three to thirteen. Her husband farmed a small parcel of land located far from the community where they lived, and too small and depleted to provide sufficient food for the family. In 1996 he attempted to migrate to the United States, but he returned home after being beaten badly and robbed in Mexico. Helena’s mother died in 1997 and her father is a farmer, as well as a prominent catechist in the community.
Helena’s high levels of community participation led to her involvement in the formation of the women’s group, UPLP. At different times during the war, Helena and her family were displaced to the capital city of San Salvador. Through CODIPSA, the Salvadorean health training program sponsored by the Catholic Diocese in the department of Chalatenango, Helena went through the necessary training to become a health promoter in her community during the war and recovery years when the Ministry of Health was absent in the region. She also went through midwifery training and has delivered numerous children in the community.

One of the original promoters of the organization, Helena was also elected as the first president. She told me, “Originally, we formed our group because of the malnutrition, the need in the community. There were children who didn’t have anything; no medicine, no food, so they were malnourished. We bought the cows for the milk, so that we, as women, could work like this.” Helena knew more about gender issues than many of the other women in the region, perhaps as a result of her midwifery training. She said, “The women here didn’t know what the word gender meant.” According to Helena, involvement in the cooperative has affected the women of the region, “We are not so alone. We have learned a lot. Women are not just in the houses, taking care of their children, making tortillas for their husbands. The women know that they have to be at the meetings, that they must do this and that.”

Helena led the UPLP efforts within her own community and on a regional level until May 1997 when a restructuring of the cooperative resulted in replacing the three paid promoters with one coordinator from each of the seven communities. When Helena lost the promoter’s income that her family had become dependent on, she was forced to
find employment as a domestic in San Salvador. She attempts to keep all of her children in school, which increases household expenses, as does the arrival of electricity to the region. One of her younger sisters lives in Helena’s house to prepare meals and care for the children. Presently, Helena is only able to travel to San Fernando a few times each year, and only for a few days at a time.

4.6.2 Luisa

In 1998 Luisa was 34 years old and the mother of four children ranging in age from five to fifteen. She was the coordinator of San Fernando Nuevo as well as manager of the corn mill. During the war years, Luisa was one of the participants in the ANTA sewing group. She identifies this experience as the beginning of women becoming organized in the region. As a community coordinator, Luisa was paid a monthly salary of 300 colons ($35.00). She was also paid 125 colons ($14.00) each month as manager of the corn mill. Her partner grows maize and beans for the family’s consumption. This, together with Luisa’s income supports their household and enables them to keep three of their four children in school. Luisa did not have the opportunity to attend school. She told me, “I cannot read as a result of my poverty. If someone is raised without a mother, its bad luck, because clearly the mother works for her children.”

4.6.3 Reina

Reina was 16 years old and the mother of an eight month-old daughter in 1998. She lived with her mother and had very little contact with her daughter’s father. Reina has one older sister who lives and works in San Salvador as a domestic. After attending one year of school, Reina was unable to continue because her mother could no longer
afford the registration costs. She attended free adult education classes in the evenings and learned how to read, write and do basic math. Her involvement in the cooperative has affected her views on gender relations. She told me, “Some men think that they have more rights than women have; men and women have to work for equal rights.” When her daughter is weaned from the breast, Reina plans to leave her in her mother’s care while she works in San Salvador as a domestic to support them.

4.6.4 María

In 1998 María was 34 years old, married and the mother of four daughters. As a child, María was able to stay in school long enough to develop strong math and writing skills. During the war years, María and her husband were displaced, and lived mainly with a sister in San Salvador. As one of the original promoters of the women’s cooperative, María often used her skills as treasurer and accountant. She is also a talented seamstress and has led sewing courses for women in the cooperative on several occasions. María’s husband farms and raises a small number of cows. He often rents the unused pasture from the women’s cooperative for his own animals. He is very supportive of María’s work with the cooperative and occasionally assists with projects. María’s youngest daughter was a newborn in 1998, her other three daughters were all in school.

As a promoter, María was in contact with the funding agencies. She spoke of conversations with a representative from SCIAF, “Oscar said, every time he comes he says, ‘we’re not going to be able to always help you. You have to find ways to work so that you’re not simply eating your profits, find ways to work and still be left with something.’”
After the restructuring of the cooperative leadership in 1997, María was no longer a promoter. She remained very involved on the community level until 2000, when she ended her involvement with the cooperative due to differences of opinion. In 1998 she was critical of the role CORDES was playing with the cooperative. For example, she told me that CORDES decided to change the structure of the cooperative leadership and that the issue was never actually voted on by the women members at a regional meeting. She also expressed concern that the women no longer maintain direct communication with the international aid agencies. According to María, all communication now occurs between CORDES and the agencies. María feels that the present coordinators do not have sufficient information regarding donated funds from the agencies.

These women are four examples selected from the cooperative membership which is currently ninety women. Each woman in Unidas Por La Paz has a unique situation in terms of family structure, skills, formal education background, and interest levels. The women have joined the cooperative for different reasons, though many expressed a similar interest in aiding the children’s future, and they have been affected by that involvement in many different ways. The following chapter will begin to analyze the cooperative projects, as well as the impact cooperative involvement has had on the individual members and on these four women in particular.
CHAPTER 5.
ANALYSIS

Two-dollar hair permanents were the big hit of the women’s *paseo*. The
promoters and I planned a three-day excursion for the sixty cooperative members. For
most of the women, it was a rare experience to leave behind their many responsibilities
for two nights. Some of the women had never before left the region. We planned an
itinerary of visiting a cathedral, swimming at the ocean, and meeting with a women’s
group from another part of the country.

On the first evening, I waited impatiently for the promoters to get our program
started. We had planned a song and skit night for the women’s enjoyment. Half of the
women and all three promoters were nowhere to be found. Finally, a couple of hours
later, the women returned. They had all gone out for permanents at the local beauty
salons, and came back smiling over their new-found curls. Hair perms were somewhat of
a novelty, and the women obviously felt more excited about perms than skits.

It was a lesson in community development. Instead of following the women’s
lead, I had tried to push my own agenda. Fortunately, the leaders of the cooperative felt
sufficient ownership in planning their excursion to make or revise plans according to the
needs of the participants. Throughout the planning and implementation of each of the
cooperative projects, the women were involved in a variety of ways. The following
chapter analyzes the four cooperative projects discussed in this work from a gender and
development standpoint. The chapter also investigates the social and economic power of
cooperative members.
5.1 Analysis of Projects

5.1.1 Cow and Nutrition Project

The cow and nutrition project relies on a combination of development planning approaches. Certain aspects of the welfare approach to development were implemented, as well as the anti-poverty approach. Because the funds for the purchase of the cows were a donation from an international aid agency, the welfare aspects of the project are undeniable. The focus on child malnutrition and providing milk within the region of the cooperative fits with the emphasis on mother-child health programs within the welfare approach to development.

The anti-poverty approach to development involves an emphasis on income-generating activities for women in an attempt to meet practical gender needs in the area of women’s productive roles. The cow project attempted to alleviate poverty and the effects of that poverty on children’s nutrition. Consistent with the anti-poverty approach, poverty was viewed as a result of underdevelopment and not of subordination to men in the planning and implementation of the cow and nutrition project.

Several informants told me that the CONCERN/America volunteers, Lewis and Owston, initially wanted to use the donated funds for a goat project, rather than for cows. The women in the cooperative, however, felt that goats would be unclean and ugly, and therefore pushed for cows instead. (Ironically, the goats may have survived the mountainous terrain better than the cows.) This information is enlightening, in that it shows the involvement of women in the initial stages of project planning. Whether the women in the cooperative wanted a nutrition project or would have actually preferred something else altogether is difficult to ascertain. The women certainly did not have
access to solicited funds from international agencies before the arrival of the C/A volunteers. This put the cooperative somewhat in the position of being beneficiaries following the lead of the development workers, rather than active initiators of the project. Therefore, while it appears that the women were initially following the lead of a development worker in deciding on a nutrition project, they soon took an active role by voicing their desires regarding what type of animal to raise.

Both the cow/nutrition and land projects involve aspects of the equity approach to development with a focus on economic independence for women as well as strategic gender needs. The cows and land were both purchased in the name of the cooperative, which is somewhat radical in this setting where it is unusual for women to own land in their own names.

The original cow project design emphasized meeting practical gender needs. The women in the cooperative would care for the cows, milk them and distribute milk to the children in their own communities. This plan clearly focuses on the reproductive role of women in their homes and communities. However, as the cow project took shape, the women of the cooperative made the major decision to change its structure and enlarge the scope to meet some of their productive needs as well. The cooperative decided that only the women involved in caring for the cows should benefit by receiving the milk. In this way the women had access to more milk for their own families. The women could earn a small amount of money by selling the extra milk or by making and selling cheese in their community.

The workload of women in the cooperative increased when they were responsible for feeding the cows, leading them to water, vaccinating them and curing their illnesses.
The women in this region were already extremely busy with the daily tasks such as preparing tortillas, gathering firewood and hand washing all of the household laundry. The women with young children found it difficult to care for the cows, especially in those communities where they were pastured far away. Due to these factors, some of the women in the cooperative did not find the rewards of caring for the cows to outweigh the costs. These women stopped participating, thereby further increasing the workload of those women which continued working with the cows. Eventually, some of the community groups became overburdened and overwhelmed by the project, and made the decision to sell their animals and pursue other projects instead.

Personally, I found my cow expertise to be lacking when I attempted to help the cooperative with this project. I learned more about cows than I had ever wished to know, but I was still a novice. The CORDES agronomist working with UPLP was not as available as the promoters and I wished he could be. If the women had a development worker with more experience in agronomy, or more access to the CORDES worker, they may have experienced more success with their cow projects.

The dominant gender ideology of the region also contributed to the women’s difficulties with the cow and nutrition projects. In general, men have been the ones to care for cows in this region. Most of the women in the cooperative had never milked cows before, or even been in such close proximity to them. The women were constantly told by the men of the region that men were the ones who knew more about cows and any difficulties faced were attributed by the men to the women’s lack of expertise. The women faced many challenges when the cows fell from cliffs and died or broke through fences and trampled crops. Unfortunately, some of the men in the region seemed to
enjoy watching the women struggle. Perhaps they were jealous that the women
organized and implemented their own project. Being under such harsh and constant
scrutiny was wearing on the women and this contributed to their lack of ongoing
enthusiasm for the project.

5.1.2 Land and Reforestation Project

While the original idea of a reforestation project came from the C/A volunteers,
the women showed enthusiasm as they began attending classes and constructing their
own community tree nurseries. In terms of development planning methods, the
reforestation project applies a combination of anti-poverty and efficiency approaches.
The project focused on the reproductive gender needs of gathering firewood and fruit
trees as food sources. Additionally, the participation of women was emphasized,
consistent with the efficiency approach. While the project did rely somewhat on the
elasticity of women’s labor, the women received some monetary payment for their time
spent planting the trees, which is not common in the efficiency approach.

The women of the cooperative were incorporated into the beginning and latter
stages of this project. The development worker originated the idea, played a major role
in securing the funding and organized participation in the training courses. Once the
women were involved, they quickly became active participants. They gathered additional
seeds from the area to plant in their nurseries and made the decision regarding where the
seedlings would be transplanted. Instead of reforesting rented land, the women
themselves chose to plant the seedlings around their own homes. These trees survived
because the women felt a sense of project ownership.
A second reforestation project in 1994 was less successful when the women planted seedlings on their own cooperative land (land not previously owned during the 1993 project). Although participation levels were high because the cooperative leaders decided to pay the women involved in planting, the women were not paid for watering or protecting the seedlings. Many of these trees were stolen or died because the women were not willing to care for them in an ongoing manner. In addition, lack of planning on behalf of the promoters and myself resulted in the women not having sufficient tools with which to care for the project. The women mentioned that simply having a hose would have made the project more successful. Involving more of the women from the cooperative in the project planning may have corrected this oversight.

Purchasing cooperative land in the various communities was necessitated by the cow project. Renting pasture for the animals was expensive and the cooperative was not generating enough income to rent land in an ongoing manner. The women worked with the C/A volunteer in writing a project proposal to purchase land for their cow project and for reforestation projects. The funds came from CAFOD, an aid agency based in England. The donation for the land was consistent with the welfare approach to development, in that it was a top-down handout. The women in the cooperative were pleased that they would not have huge loans to repay, and they were enthusiastic about owning their own land. Owning land in the name of the cooperative is more consistent with the equity approach to development, which emphasizes economic independence for women and access to property. The women were active participants in that they learned about soliciting the funds, sought out available and suitable land for purchase, and then decided how to improve their land.
Each community group assessed the needs for their parcel of land and made proposals to the cooperative. Improvements were made by repairing or building barbed wire fences, constructing brick water storage tanks and planting food crops for the cows. Women were paid for their labor as they carried bricks to their land and planted trees. The women hired men in the various communities to build the fences and for the masonry work in the water storage containers. Although the cow projects have failed in some communities, none of the women have expressed a desire to sell their cooperative land. They are able to make small amounts of money by renting out their land during the four months when there is pasture, and they seem to take pride in land ownership.

5.1.3 Artisan Craft Project

The formation of the artisan craft project was the idea of the women in the cooperative. The promoters were anxious to find income-generating projects for the women of the region. The production of embroidered artisan crafts was attractive to the group because the women would be able to do much of the embroidery in their own homes while they cooked or cared for young children. Women repeatedly expressed their desire to me to begin such a craft project. Eventually, I agreed to help them assess the market for such crafts. Together, we solicited funds for the production of sample products.

The project incorporates a variety of development-planning methods. The bottom-up self-empowerment aspects of the project are consistent with the empowerment approach to development. The goal of achieving economic independence for women through a small-scale income-generating project fits into the methodology of the anti-
poverty approach. Women in the cooperative were involved in the planning and implementation of the project at every stage.

Unfortunately, while the women had a definite sense of project ownership in regards to the artisan crafts, they were unable to overcome the obstacles of ongoing access to credit and to markets. Olson writes about the dependency on the international aid community, which develops when cooperatives do not receive support through loans from their own government (1999:57). When groups rely on Alternative Trade Organizations (ATOs) to supply funding and markets, this also creates an unhealthy dependency (Page-Reeves, 1998, 85; Olson, 1999, 61). In the case of UPLP, the women received an order right away from CONCERN/America. C/A even sent then one-half of the money in advance (a common practice for ATOs). When I later placed an order from the United States, I operated in a similar manner. The women of the cooperative then faced the difficulties of producing a consistently high-quality product, expensive shipping costs, and deadlines.

The cooperative was unable to locate Salvadorean markets that operated in as generous a manner as C/A. The tourist shops in San Salvador were accustomed to purchasing goods from vendors rather than placing orders and paying half of the money up front. Without the advanced funds, the women in the cooperative found it impossible to manufacture more products. While the ATOs were more generous and understanding than the local markets, shipping internationally was extremely expensive, and C/A and I could not order sufficient amounts to support the craft project. Markets in Scotland and England did not emerge and the women were unable to continue.
5.1.4 Corn Mill Project

In what appears to be the most bottom-up of all of the cooperative's projects, purchasing the electric corn mills was the idea of the women from the beginning. This project became possible when electricity arrived to three communities in the region in 1997. At that time, there was not a C/A volunteer in the region working specifically with the cooperative. The women were coordinating with the Salvadorean development and agricultural organization, CORDES in managing their funds and other administrative tasks. Women from the cooperative worked with CORDES to solicit funds and then choose appropriate mills for purchase. The community groups then elected one mill manager, who would receive a monthly salary for running the mill twice daily. The project was designed and implemented by women in the cooperative.

The project meets reproductive needs of women in the three communities as well as productive needs. Reproductive needs are met as meal preparation is made more simple and less time intensive. Requiring less time for food preparation allows the women more time to focus on productive needs to generate income.

Project ownership is obvious in the ways in which the cooperative has worked with CORDES. While CORDES recommended that one community group replace the man they have hired as mill manager with a woman, the group stood its ground. This same community group used their profits to purchase one plastic tub and tortilla cloth as a Christmas present for each of the eighty women using the mill, even though CORDES was against this use of funds. These actions show that the women in the group have confidence in their own decision-making skills and in their ability to coordinate the project effectively.
5.2 Factors Promoting the Success of a Cooperative

As a cooperative, Unidas Por La Paz has incorporated various factors that promote sustained success, while failing to recognize the importance of others. The five areas which emerge from the literature on cooperatives are the following: a collective identity and consciousness; access to credit; access to markets; project ownership and addressing the daily needs of participants.

The members of the cooperative share certain aspects of, but not a holistic belief system. For example, the majority of the women are involved in the cooperative because they live in varying degrees of poverty and wish to improve the lives of their children. They share a desire and need to find ways to generate income. They share a consciousness regarding their children. Some of the women in the group are concerned with the role and status of women in society, while others appear not to be. Perhaps some of the women are more vocal than others in this regard. In general, aspects of their belief systems are shared within the cooperative, while others are not.

Successful cooperatives do not rely solely on outside funding. Unidas Por La Paz has not yet been able to achieve a state of economic self-reliance. Their dependence on funds from donor organizations has been an ongoing source of project failure. Time and again projects have ended when the outside funding stopped. The only example of a project that has continued on past the depletion of donated funding is the corn mills (and in two communities, the cow/nutrition projects). These were purchased with outside funds, but they are now functioning and maintained by funds that they themselves generate.
Unidas Por La Paz has also struggled to find access to reliable markets. Living in such a remote and isolated setting makes it extremely challenging to secure markets for goods. The women in the cooperative have not identified a marketable item for the local market, and the international market has not been receptive to their artisan crafts.

The members of Unidas Por La Paz have demonstrated project ownership in certain community-level projects. During the second reforestation project, the members of the Hierba Buena community group decided amongst themselves that their needs would be better served by planting their tree seedlings near their houses, rather than on the cooperative land. Valle de Jesús elected to use their corn mill profits on Christmas presents for the women using the mill, rather than following the advice of the local NGO. On the cooperative excursion the women went out to get hair permanents rather than have a skit night. These examples show promising signs of project ownership by the cooperative members.

Unidas Por La Paz has also done a fairly good job at addressing the everyday needs and concerns of its members. For example, the cooperative decided that the women caring for the cows would be the ones to receive the milk, rather than distributing it to the most malnourished children in the communities. In this way they assessed their needs and restructured the project in order to meet them. During the reforestation projects the women were paid for their labor. This demonstrates a recognition on behalf of the cooperative leaders that the members did not have extra time to work without compensation. The corn mills also demonstrate a mechanism of meeting the everyday concerns of the cooperative members, as well as the non-member women in the region.
This time-saving device enables the women to spend less time hand milling the corn for their daily consumption of tortillas.

In terms of the structure of a successful cooperative, Unidas Por La Paz meets some of the criteria, but not all of it. Having project ownership and meeting the everyday concerns of cooperative members appear to be its strengths, while access to credit and to markets are the biggest obstacles.

5.3 Social and Economic Power of the Cooperative

Changes in social and economic power for the women of the cooperative has varied from project to project, and from woman to woman. An overview of the effects of the projects on the cooperative, as well as a discussion of four individual women follows.

The women of the cooperative came under tremendous public criticism through their cow projects in the different communities. While they experienced an increased self-esteem through learning to milk and care for their animals, the women were strongly criticized by many men in the region. The men were able to remanufacture their previously held opinions that women knew nothing about cows whenever the women experienced difficulties. In this way, the women's social power suffered. In the two communities (Avelares and Hierba Buena) where the cow project has been successful, the women involved have experienced an increase in social power, as measured by comments I heard from men in the region speaking admirably about those specific projects and the women managing them. Economically, only a small number of women made gains through the cow project. Overall, the cows have not produced a sufficient amount of milk to make any real profits. In general, very few women in the cooperative experienced enhanced social and/or economic power through the cow project.
Through their reforestation and land purchasing projects, the women in the cooperative have been affected in a variety of ways. While the women spoke proudly of planting trees for future generations and providing fruit and firewood for their children, they were also criticized by the men for planting the trees incorrectly. These criticisms, as well as having some trees stolen, affected the women's self-esteem and social power negatively. In terms of economic power, the women earned a small amount through the reforestation project, but this was not an ongoing income, thus no real economic gains were achieved. The women in some communities have an ongoing income through renting their land out every year. While this money is beneficial on a small scale to the cooperative, is not a sufficient amount to increase the individual economic power of the women in the group.

The temporary gains in social and economic power achieved through the artisan craft project were not maintained in an on-going manner. When the women of the cooperative formulated and implemented the craft project, they experienced an increase in self-esteem and social power. Early sales contributed to their enthusiasm. Working out of their own homes and generating a small income was what many of the women had desired for a long time. When the women received orders for their products they earned a fair wage and their economic power increased. For a short time they earned money to spend on their children's education, clothes, food or other things. However, this economic power was not sustained due to the ending of the project. When the women were not able to continue in the artisan project, their self-esteem and social power were diminished.
In general, the social and economic power of the cooperative have both increased through the electric corn mills. While the mills only operate in the three communities with access to electricity (as of 1998), the success of the mills has boosted the self-esteem and social power of the entire group. Women in the region who are not involved in the cooperative benefit from the mills, as do their entire families. Thus the group only comes under criticism when the mill doesn’t open on time or isn’t functioning due to needed repairs. Economically, the mills earn money for the cooperative. At times the profits are used on repairs and parts, but at other times the women in the community groups have the power to make decisions regarding the use of profits. This demonstrates increased social and economic power.

5.4 Social and Economic Power in the Lives of Individual Women

5.4.1 Helena

Through her extensive involvement with UPLP, Helena gained social power while experiencing an unsustainable increase in economic power. Helena became even more of a leader in her own community through UPLP. Through her involvement she had numerous interactions with the community groups throughout the region, as well as with various Salvadoran organizations and international agencies. She learned how to negotiate within these structures, and even traveled internationally. Through all of this Helena experienced an increased self-esteem, new abilities, and enhanced social power in the region. Her voice was legitimized in the public sphere.

The restructuring of the cooperative leadership resulted in the loss of Helena’s promoter status. When the economic power she had gained as a promoter changed,
Helena had to leave the region to find work as a domestic. Thus, while UPLP provided a temporary source of economic power through the promoter’s salary as a survival strategy, it was not a long-term solution. Helena’s social power, on the other hand, did not appear to diminish through her change of positions. Those who gained respect for Helena through her work with UPLP maintain that admiration and seem very understanding of her economic situation which forced her to leave the region for employment. In the eyes of some, the new UPLP leadership does not keep up the high standards instituted by Helena.

5.4.2 Luisa

As a leader in a salaried position within the cooperative, Luisa has experienced increases in both her social and economic power. During her first four years of involvement in UPLP, Luisa attended community and regional meetings, took her turn tending to the cows in their project, planted trees and helped make improvements to the cooperative land. It appears that Luisa was unable to rely on UPLP as an economic survival strategy until her involvement led to a steady monthly income. After the restructuring of UPLP leadership in May 1997, Luisa was elected coordinator of community 3. Luisa told me that she began to lead the group without feeling very prepared. She felt timid when she first began to lead the community meetings. Organizing meetings and operating the corn mill twice a day on top of regular household tasks is very challenging. In spite of this, Luisa is committed to the work of UPLP and feels that it is improving the lives of women in the region.

Luisa’s increased self-esteem is identified through the confidence she now has as she leads the community meetings and offers her opinions in front of the group. Luisa’s
social power has increased in her leadership position as well. Now she is the focus of both more criticism and more admiration as a cooperative leader with a legitimate voice in the cooperative and in the community.

The income Luisa earns through her coordinator position and mill manager role helps Luisa and her partner provide for their four children. Her economic power as community coordinator and mill manager has greatly increased, and she does not participate in any other income-generating activities outside of the cooperative.

5.4.3 Reina

As one of the youngest cooperative members, Reina has not gained any on-going economic power through her involvement. She and her mother benefited temporarily from the milk in the cow project and currently benefit from the corn mill. On a few occasions, Reina has received a small amount of money for her labor on behalf of the cooperative. For example, the women involved in planting trees and building a water storage tank were all paid for a day’s work. Aside from these isolated events, Reina has not generated an income through cooperative projects and her economic power has not increased. When her daughter is weaned from the breast, Reina will be forced to leave her in the care of her grandmother and move to San Salvador to work as a domestic in order to support them.

It is difficult to gauge changes in Reina’s social power. As one of the youngest members of the cooperative she has shown high levels of motivation and involvement. This has granted her increased respect within the community. Her social power within her peer group has certainly increased due to involvement with UPLP, while her voice in the community at large remains unheard, perhaps due in part to her young age.
5.4.4 María

María’s social power increased due to her involvement in the cooperative. As a promoter, María became a leader in the community and the region. She established a position for herself that did not diminish when she was no longer in the promoter position. She has been critical of many of CORDES’ actions and encourages the women to stand up against them. She has had a legitimate voice in the community, self-confidence, and finds it easy to voice her opinions, even when they differ from the group.

Economically, María gained power through her leadership positions in UPLP. This power, however, was not sustained. She received a monthly salary as a promoter and benefited economically from teaching cooperative sewing workshops. When restructuring led to a change in the leadership of the cooperative, María lost her promoter position and salary. After five years of increased economic power through involvement in the cooperative that power disappeared along with her promoter position.

Although these are just four specific examples of what the women in the cooperative deal with, I believe that they show the general trends. While each individual woman is in a unique situation depending on whether or not she owns land, has a spouse or partner, the number of children in her household, and the support available to her through extended family, most of the women have generally achieved increased social power while remaining unable to find income-generating projects to provide them with sustainable increased economic power. It appears that only those women earning regular salaries through the cooperative have achieved the desired economic power.
CHAPTER 6.
MODELS OF DEVELOPMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research shows that most models of community development struggle when failing to follow the lead of the local population. Learning how to use the knowledge gained from research to enhance community development without damaging the agency of the local people remains a challenge. I hope that there is a place for an alternative form of development that does not focus on modernity and capitalism, but instead emphasizes agency. Thus, while my strongest recommendation is to follow the people's lead, I also find myself making recommendations and suggestions based on my own research and beliefs. Herein lies the paradox for me. How do we separate out our own prejudices that influence the type of community development we wish to practice and become the type of workers that will make a difference? How do we present results from research that may be helpful without voicing our own opinions? How can we best encourage and facilitate the voices of the people whom we wish to serve? Chapter six offers conclusions in regards to development approaches in Unidas Por La Paz, alternative approaches and recommendations.

6.1 Approaches to Development: UPLP Projects

A variety of approaches to development have been utilized in the UPLP projects. The most common methods utilized in project planning and implementation are the welfare and anti-poverty approaches. The welfare approach emphasizes the reproductive role of women as mothers and views them as passive beneficiaries in regards to development aid. The anti-poverty approach to development views the poverty of poor
women as linked to underdevelopment and therefore attempts to increase the productivity of those women through small scale income-generating endeavors (Moser, 1993:56-57).

In each of the projects discussed in this work, the women in the cooperative received outside funding, consistent with the welfare approach to development. The money for the cows was donated, as were the funds for the purchase of land. The women requested and received money from C/A for a pilot artisan project. The women also requested the funds for the corn mills. In each of these instances, the funds were given as a top-down handout. The women have not had to repay any loans in regards to these funds.

Aspects of other projects are also consistent with the welfare approach. For example, the milk from the cow project was intended to improve the nutritional status of children within the region. This fits within the framework of the welfare approach and the emphasis it places on the reproductive role of women in their roles as mothers.

The anti-poverty approach to development has also been prevalent in the cooperative. For example, the goal of the cow project was to alleviate poverty, and when the women began selling milk and cheese, the project took on an income-generating aspect consistent with the anti-poverty approach. Also, the income-generating goals of the artisan craft project fit within this approach to development.

I identified two instances of the equity approach to development within the projects analyzed in this work. The equity approach emphasizes women’s autonomy as a means of making them less subordinate to men. In the cow project, the women eventually owned the cows in the name of the cooperative. The communal land is also held in the name of the cooperative. In both of these cases, the women and the
development worker recognized the importance of placing the property in the name of the cooperative; this is a radical action in a region where most property is owned by men.

The empowerment approach to development was implemented in regards to the corn mills. The corn mills only required outside funding initially, for the purchase of the mills. Currently, the mills generate enough funds to pay the manager and cover repairs. To my knowledge, this is the only UPLP project that has been self-sustaining. This is also the most bottom-up project in terms of the women’s involvement in requesting, designing and implementing the project.

Overall, it appears that the empowerment approach has proven to be the most effective for the women of UPLP. This approach focuses on women’s self-reliance and on meeting strategic gender needs through mobilizing around issues of practical gender needs (Moser, 1993:57). While some of the other projects had hints of the empowerment approach, it is most clearly evidenced in the acquisition and management of the communal corn mills.

6.2 Alternatives to Development

While some people view everything about the prevailing development paradigm to be negative, there are others who would selectively reconstruct it. Arturo Escobar would thoroughly reject development as it is currently practiced and instead focus on an interest in local autonomy, social movements, culture and knowledge (1995:215).

Instead of rejecting development entirely, Jane L. Parpart critically examines a postmodernist feminist approach to development. She writes that when third world peoples are classified as ‘the other,’ development and modernization are justified while local techniques, knowledges, practices and lifestyles are discredited and subordinated.
A postmodernist feminist approach calls for a “creative synthesis of tradition and modernity, drawing on local knowledge and culture” (Parpart, 1995:254). In addition, this perspective rejects the top-down approach and emphasizes development planning based on a “closer, more localized and contextualized examination of women's strategies for survival....Third World women become the subject rather than the object of development theory and practice” (Parpart, 1995:264).

Agency repeatedly emerges as a key to culturally respectful development. According to Jnanabrata Bhattacharyya, “the value premise of community development is that people have the right to agency, and the distinctive purpose of community development is to safeguard, and where impaired or lost, to reconstruct it” (1995:61). For the women in Unidas Por La Paz to have agency, they must be the ones to desire, plan, and implement any future development projects. If the women are entrusted with the problem posing, planning and implementation of projects, then an intimate knowledge of their lifestyles and practices is easily incorporated, as stressed by Parpart (1995:254). The women of the region of San Fernando are aware of the constraints on their daily schedules and have insider knowledge regarding how various projects may or may not fit within those parameters.

In analyzing the successes and challenges of the cooperative projects of Unidas Por La Paz, the general emerging trends are that it is unrealistic to expect the women to provide labor without just compensation, and that there is a reliance on outside funding. Rae Lesser Blumberg (1991:97) writes that development projects worldwide suffer when women aren't given sufficient compensation for their labor. In Unidas Por La Paz, the women were unwilling or unable to care for the trees planted on their communal land in
an ongoing manner. During the dry season the trees were left without water and many died. In contrast, large numbers of women were available in each community for a day of planting the trees. On planting day the women were paid for their labor, whereas there was no monetary compensation for the ongoing care and maintenance of the tree seedlings. While many women recognized the future benefits of having firewood and fruit for their children, the reforestation project did not meet their more pressing immediate needs.

The cow project also suffered from low participation levels when the women were not compensated for their tasks. As the women related, there were high participation levels when the cows were numerous and there was plenty of milk for each of the women to benefit on a regular basis. However, when the cows died or didn’t give milk the women received fewer benefits and their time was seen as better spent pursuing other income-generating activities. Participation levels eventually decreased and in some communities the cow projects failed.

Another general trend for UPLP is that the cooperative has become reliant on outside funding for project success. Many of the UPLP projects fit the DAWN’s classification of an outside-oriented organization as described by Moser. This type of project is a top-down, outside-initiated, income-generating project, with emphasis on the anti-poverty approach to development. These projects, according to DAWN persist only as long as they generate outside funding (Moser, 1993:200).

With similar warnings in regards to dependence on outside funding, Janet Page-Reeves (1998:85-86) discusses the danger of cooperatives reliance on Alternative Trade Organizations (ATOs). The artisan craft project was unable to function beyond the scope
of outside funding. Other UPLP projects not fully discussed in this work have also failed when outside funding ended. Small bakeries and sewing workshops functioned as long as workers were paid to be trained and funds were available for initial materials. Eventually, however, the projects were unable to stand on their own, without outside assistance.

6.3 Recommendations

After analyzing the projects of UPLP, my own involvement, and that of other community development workers, it seems that it is extremely difficult for projects to succeed in this rural, isolated region. The mountainous terrain, the climate, the poverty, and the lack of adequate government services combine to create an incredibly challenging situation. The women do not have a traditional craft, such as the hand-woven tapestries of Guatemala, on which to base an income-generating project. It appears to be time for a radically new approach.

6.3.1 Recommendations for CONCERN/America

C/A has gained the trust of the women’s cooperative, as well as a working relationship with other NGOs in the region. I believe it would be beneficial for C/A to maintain a relationship with UPLP for as long as both groups deem it to be valuable. This relationship could take many forms, such as a development worker living in the region and working with the cooperative or a consultant that visits the cooperative on a regular basis (for example, a three-day visit once or twice each month).

A development volunteer living and working in the region would have to use extreme caution not to create a situation of dependency. I believe it would be feasible for
an informed development worker to be present in the region, encouraging agency and emphasizing local knowledge. This person would be a crucial link if C/A wishes to be involved in any future projects in the region. A major challenge of this worker would be to change the mindset the women in the cooperative have regarding the donation of funds. I will address this further in the section below on outside funding.

Sending a C/A consultant into the region periodically might help reduce dependency, but a more intimate knowledge of the cooperative and region would be difficult to achieve. On the other hand, through working as a consultant, C/A could provide a valuable resource for UPLP as the cooperative identified problems or interests. Since the cooperative members have expressed an ongoing interest in artisan craft projects, I will use that as an example. If UPLP were interested, C/A could provide valuable resources in another artisan craft project. First, C/A would have to be wary of creating dependency. Encouraging the cooperative to investigate other markets and local vendors (in San Salvador or Chalatenango) before placing an order is one way this might be achieved (discussed more fully below). Requiring a consistently high quality product would also help the cooperative in the long run, because it would be similar to the demands of local vendors. A C/A volunteer with sewing or embroidering expertise could provide much needed support to the group in a one or two week workshop session. An individual with experience in artisan crafts and the international market could help the women create a more appealing product. Since C/A already has extensive experience working in artisan craft production and sales through women’s cooperatives in Guatemala, this could be an area where they could provide valuable support in San Fernando, if the women of UPLP remain interested in pursuing such a project.
If C/A is willing to follow the lead of the cooperative members, and their past actions show that they are anxious to do so, they could maintain a relationship with UPLP for a long time to come. The key here seems to be an adequately prepared volunteer, knowledgeable in gender theory and development and capable of honoring the agency of the people of San Fernando.

6.3.2 General Development Recommendations:

International agencies and Salvadorean NGOs that work with UPLP must redefine the role of community development. These groups can improve their own gender awareness by implementing training within their organizations so that they might become more sensitized to gender issues. This sensitivity can then be translated into improved data collection and analysis, as well as ensuring the agency of those men and women who will be most affected, the local population.

A respectful three-part model of development described by Bhattacharyya offers valuable guidance for future involvement. Self-help, felt needs and participation are the three recommended processes to examine. Self-help refers to the process wherein the community developer engages the people in such a manner that they use their own terms to diagnose the problem at hand. Felt-needs refers to the priority the people place on any given problem. Participation in this context refers to the people taking part in problem identification, prioritizing and problem resolution. Approaching development in this fashion prohibits the community development worker from entering a situation with preconceived notions regarding problems and solutions (1995:63).

It is not always easy to incorporate women from rural Latin America into the process of dialogue required by this alternative to status quo development. Their sheer
work load necessitates creative strategies for securing the viewpoints of women. Despite the challenges, it remains crucial to find ways for agencies to converse with women away from men when identifying community problems and needs. Seeking out those women who are less likely to express their opinions in a public meeting is also important in developing a comprehensive picture of the self help analysis and felt needs in a situation. Participation will then be more easily ensured when the community members or cooperative members themselves feel invested in identifying and prioritizing the issues and working for the solutions.

6.3.3 Recommendations for UPLP

One area in which the organization could improve membership morale would be to equalize access to cooperative benefits. Unidas Por La Paz has been able to provide an ongoing salary to a greater number of women through their restructuring of leadership. Now seven community coordinators receive a monthly wage instead of just three promoters. The only others to benefit economically in an ongoing manner are the corn mill managers. In order to share the benefits of economic power, the cooperative should follow through with replacing the council of community coordinators by a vote every two years. Ideally, only half of the council would be replaced at a time in order to provide continuity.

Another factor involved in sharing the benefits of cooperative membership is through equal access to projects. The communities which are most remote, and those with less assertive coordinators tend to have fewer or smaller projects. Special efforts could be made to equalize the projects. Making the funding and projects available to the communities in direct correlation to the number of active members might be viewed as
fair, but it would also necessitate more work in order to monitor the membership numbers. The cooperative leadership would have to decide whether it would be worth the added work in order to diminish jealousy and competition between the community cooperative groups.

Another frustration for the cooperative has been its relationship with CORDES, the Salvadorean agricultural NGO. For the time being, CORDES appears to be providing a valuable role in administrative assistance. If the cooperative is concerned with the manner in which CORDES is managing their funds, the leaders could write to international funding agencies (SCIAF and CAFOD) and request that UPLP receive duplicates of any correspondence with CORDES regarding UPLP funds and projects. It is my experience that SCIAF, CAFOD and C/A all desire to communicate directly with UPLP as much as possible.

There are definite steps the cooperative could take in order to meet more of the criteria of a successful cooperative. In order to develop a more cohesive collective identity and consciousness the group could consider writing a brief mission statement at their next regional meeting. Access to credit and less dependence on outside funding are also crucial. It appears that improvements must be made in future project definition, implementation and analysis. Perhaps this would lead to more sustainable projects that use outside funding more appropriately. Access to credit will be addressed further in the next section. Market availability continues to be an obstacle for Unidas Por La Paz. A thorough market evaluation on three levels, local, national and international could give the women guidance regarding marketable goods. Salvadorean and international NGOs could be contacted to aid in this assessment. For example, the Centro de Intercambio and
Solidaridad (Center for Exchange and Solidarity, CIS) in San Salvador sells crafts from different cooperatives to international students at their language school. Contacting CIS to learn about what types of crafts or other items, such as coffee, are most desirable by their international and national clientele would provide helpful guidance. CIS could also be a resource for locating and communicating with other cooperatives involved in artisan craft production. Making these contacts would involve extra time and money, which is challenging to find. If the cooperative decides to pursue this direction, then the leaders could find a way to use cooperative funds for transportation costs, meals and other necessities. Perhaps there are even Salvadorean NGOs whose staff travel regularly to Chalatenango to meet with other groups, in which case UPLP could coordinate a closer, more convenient meeting.

A local market assessment could be carried out by the cooperative leaders. Each community coordinator could ask a set number of individuals questions regarding the price or availability of a specific good in her home community. The women could then pool their results at their next meeting. Eventually, the women could develop a fairly extensive survey of the local, national and international markets.

### 6.3.4 General Recommendations:

Achieving sustainable increased economic power has remained one of the biggest challenges for the cooperative. Only a small number of women are needed to fill salaried leadership positions and mill managerial positions. The rest of the women do not receive individual economic benefits from their involvement. Access to credit as individuals has been extremely limited for the women in the region of San Fernando, and many have expressed an interest in receiving loans. The group of four women in the focus group
told me they desired loans for women, saying, “There are no more loans because of debts. The men have debts, so the women do not get loans” (focus group, 2/3/98).

Microfinance has emerged as an extremely popular model of providing loans and savings services to the poor, with hundreds of development and aid agencies operating programs. The diversity of the organizations involved leads to differing opinions on many levels. Some researchers favor a credit-first approach while a savings-first approach is preferred by others. Some institutions may be effectively blending these two approaches (Paxton, 1999:38-39).

Sustainability and outreach are two indicators many reviewers use to test overall effectiveness of loaning and saving institutions. Sustainability is valued by borrowers who are interested in ongoing access to credit. Similarly, borrowers will not be as concerned with repayment if the loaning institution is suspected of being temporary, which could then translate into an unsustainable program (Von Pischke, 1999:2-3).

Outreach varies depending on the goals of the specific program. Credit-first programs are considered to have a deeper, broader outreach, while being accused of maintaining decreased sustainability. In Africa, credit-led programs were found to reach a more female, illiterate and impoverished borrower clientele than the general population. The savings-first programs targeted a more rural, less impoverished and more educated male borrower clientele (Paxton, 1999:51). Some critics reveal that the microfinance programs are not effectively reaching the poorest of the population, asserting that the outreach is geared toward the middle-income and upper poor (Wright, 2000:16-17).

Muhammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh is committed to eradicating world poverty. The Grameen Bank has loaned more than two million
families over 2.5 billion dollars with an excellent payback record close to 100 percent. Coming up with original and successful small business ideas for putting their micro-loans to use is not a problem for the clients. According to Yunus, “Giving the poor access to credit allows them to immediately put into practice the skills they already know- to weave, husk rice paddy, raise cows, peddle a rickshaw. And the cash they earn is a tool, a key that unlocks a host of other abilities and allows them to explore their own potential” (1999, 140). Yunus recognizes that in addition to healing societal ills, access to credit affects personal lives. He writes, “...credit creates economic power which quickly translates into social power” (150).

“Women’s Opportunity Fund” is an example of an organization active in nineteen different countries, providing small business loans to their mainly female clientele. Their goal is to provide opportunities for impoverished women to transform their lives through access to credit. They believe that credit will empower women to create small and successful small businesses that will strengthen their families and communities. This is accomplished by partnering with local organizations that provide the crucial training (Women’s Opportunity Fund Newsletter: “Progress”, Summer 2000). Unlike Muhummad Yunus and the Grameen Bank, the Women’s Opportunity Fund emphasizes training programs for the loan recipients as a means of transformation, and each client attends a seven week course prior to receiving a loan. Yunus believes that the loan clients will make their own transformation happen, if given access to credit.

Applying for and receiving small business loans through UPLP would enable many women to achieve increased economic power. The cooperative could investigate the availability of NGOs in the region of Chalatenango offering microfinance services.
These types of loans are usually between $70 and $100 for each individual borrower. Often the structure of the loan banks is such that groups of four or five take out one loan together, and then hold each other accountable to repay their portion. This results in excellent payback rates.

The cooperative members involved in applying for and receiving loans would be able to decide what types of additional programs and services might be of use and of interest to them. For example, courses could be offered in the areas of writing loan proposals, running small businesses, basic accounting and money management. Special accommodations would be necessary for women who have not had access to formal education and are therefore illiterate.

Women in the region could pursue numerous options in terms of small businesses, investing their loans in sustainable ventures. Loans could be used to purchase sewing machines to make and sell clothes. Funds could be used toward starting a home-based store. The women could use the funds for purchasing small livestock such as chickens or pigs. In communities with electricity the women could purchase refrigerators or freezers, which could then be used to store cheese, ice cream, chocolate covered bananas or other favorite treats for sale (When I was in the region in 1998 items such as these were sold from a few houses). I am confident that the women in the cooperative could come up with many more creative ideas for generating incomes through small business enterprises in the region.

UPLP has received substantial donated funds for various projects. Although these funds have proved extremely beneficial in certain circumstances, they have also created a mindset among the women of the cooperative of expecting monetary donations. For
example, the communal corn mills were a costly expense, which would have been difficult to repay in loan form. While the mills do generate a small profit, this money is generally used to pay the mill manager and to cover repair costs. In this case, the donation of funds has had wonderful consequences for the cooperative and the region. The women planned and implemented the purchasing and running of the mills. They have a tremendous sense of project ownership.

In other instances, large amounts of donated funds have been lost due to the failure of projects. Nonetheless, the women of the cooperative continue to plan future projects that will necessitate large sums of donated funds. Carla Gueron-Montero (1997:117) writes about transforming the survival strategy of poverty into an ability of self-sufficiency. The survival strategy of poverty prevalent within UPLP has developed over time, as the women have become reliant on outside funds. The women of UPLP realize that the outside funding from international agencies will not last forever. I know that the original C/A volunteer who helped them form their association told them this repeatedly. Finding ways to achieve sustainable economic power still remain elusive, and so the women continue to seek out large donations. As María told me, “If the help (aid) ends and we have no profits then we are left with nothing all over again” (2/4/98). Becoming self-sufficient is something that the cooperative members desire, yet achieving self-sufficiency remains a challenge.

I believe that the women of UPLP will realize more agency when they stop turning only to outside funding and find ways that they can help themselves and each other. This research shows that the women in the cooperative, themselves, hold the key to identifying how to achieve economic and social power. Well-trained development
workers, sensitive to gender issues and respectful of the agency of the women could play a helpful role in constructing the arena for dialogue that leads to a more appropriate form of development. Development based on the empowerment model, taking both practical and strategic gender needs into account, could indeed provide the women of UPLP with the structure they need to change their own lives. Through access to credit the cooperative members could create their own economic power, which would translate into increased social power.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Afshar, H.

Anderson, T.

Aron, A.

Barriteau, V.

Bennett, V.

Bhattacharyya, J.

Billings, D.

Blumberg, R.

CAFOD

Carter, B.
Chinchilla, N

CONAMUS
1994 Coordinadora Nacional De La Mujer Salvadorena, 1 de Octubre Día Internacional Del Niño. CONAMUS, Apartado Postal 3262 Centro De Gobierno, San Salvador, El Salvador.

CONCERN/America
1997 Celebrating 25 Years in Service to Impoverished People Around the World. 2015 N. Broadway, P.O. Box 1790, Santa Ana, CA 92702, USA

Eissio, R.

Equipo Maiz

Escobar, A.


Ferguson, A.

Fisher, J.

Freire, P.

Grupo Apoyo Mutual
1990 Personal Communication with members of GAM in Guatemala City, Guatemala.
Guerron-Montero, C.  

Hope, S.  

Jaquette, J.  


Johnson-Odim, C.  

Kandiyoti, D.  

Macdonald, M.  

Mason, D.  

Moser, C.  

Movimiento de Mujeres “Melida Anaya Montes”  
Nash, J.


Olson, J.

Page-Reeves, J.

Parpart, J.

Paxton, J.

Pearce, J.

Ruddick, S.

Safa, H.


SCIAF
Spradley, J.

Tula, M.

Von Pischke, J.

Wolcott, H.

Wolf, D.

Women's Opportunity Fund

Wright, G.

Yunus, M.