

Aiming for Social Justice: Transforming Gender Ideologies in Revolutionary Nicaragua

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Abstract

During 1979-90 in Nicaragua, the revolutionary FSLN government attempted to transform the traditional ideology of gender into one of gender equality, in a partial movement towards social justice for Nicaraguan women. It was hoped that by transforming the ideology, and by providing material changes, women would be able to be full participants in the social, economic and political institutions of Nicaraguan society and the revolution. However, by recasting *only* women's roles and self-definitions, while leaving men's roles and self-definitions relatively untouched, the FSLN's policies had only limited success in achieving social justice for Nicaraguan women.

Introduction

The concept of *social justice*, although often asserted to be very difficult to pin down and even more difficult to achieve, can actually be defined in a rather straight-forward way. According to some theologians, for example, social justice refers to the fact that people have a duty to be active participants in the life of a society or culture, and that in turn, society has an obligation to make sure that people are *able* to participate in the social, economic and political institutions of society.¹ In other words, society has an obligation to organize itself (its economic, educational, political, cultural and social institutions) so that people can contribute productively to society.

In a similar vein, social justice is also conceived of as a way in which to achieve the common or social good. In this case, social justice involves the aggregation of the actions of individuals and groups so that “they converge to create the social good.”² Here, there is no assumption that the common or social good already exists and that it must simply be better distributed (as in *distributive justice*, for example). On the contrary, social justice implies that the institutions of society must be organized and reorganized in such a way as to ensure the rights of all individuals. Most importantly, for the case I am about to discuss, social justice implies a standard for guaranteeing “human dignity by specifying forms of government intervention which are appropriate for the protection of minimum standards of well-being, access and participation for all.”³

Based on anthropological research carried out 1986, and then again from 1988 through 1990 in Nicaragua, I contend in this paper that there are two facets of social justice that are somewhat poorly understood, and this lack of understanding hinders a true achievement of social justice. One is the ideological component. It is not simply enough to organize society’s institutions in such a way as to promote social justice; there must be an ideological underpinning to the changes that facilitates people’s acceptance of, and participation in, these changes.

Secondly, although social justice is said to be distinct from distributive justice, in the sense that it does not imply that the common good (rights, goods, resources, etc.) exists and must simply be distributed in a different manner, I contend that it *does* imply that within society there are those who have greater access to participation in society’s institutions than do others. However, social justice can not be achieved simply by providing greater access, through institutional and ideological changes, to those less empowered, downtrodden or disenfranchised. Those with greater access initially *must also* participate in the institutional and ideological changes, although they may be loath to do so because this participation may lessen their somewhat privileged position.

As we shall see in the Nicaraguan case, the Sandinista government did attempt to tackle both the institutional and ideological changes necessary for social justice. However, in viewing the situation primarily as a problem that the less empowered (in this case, women) needed to address, rather than envisioning it as a problem in which both men and women needed to undergo transformations, the Sandinista attempt at social justice fell short of its goal.

The Nicaraguan Case

Brief History

In July of 1979 the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) took power in Nicaragua after more than a decade of armed struggle against the government headed by Anastasio Somoza Debayle. Upon their assumption of control, the FSLN began a series of revolutionary changes in Nicaragua designed to reactivate the economy, redistribute resources to rural and urban poor, and empower the poorest sectors of society, including peasants, workers and women.

One of the most ambitious changes was the attempt to transform the traditional Nicaraguan ideology of gender, with its emphasis on *machismo* and patriarchy, into one predicated on gender equality. The stated aim of this transformation was to eradicate those beliefs and practices that relegated Nicaraguan women to a subordinate, inferior status vis-a-vis men, thus allowing women to exit the isolation of the domestic realm, participate in all the productive and revolutionary tasks facing the nation, and realize their full potential. At the same time, the government enacted institutional changes (in the areas of education, health care, legal statutes, access to resources, employment opportunities, etc.) that both required and created a foundation for the ideological transformation

Institutional and Ideological Conditions Prior to 1979

The General Situation in Nicaragua

Before addressing the changes (both institutional and ideological) instituted by the FSLN, I will describe the conditions under which most Nicaraguans lived during the regime of the last Somoza. These conditions set the stage for the transformations sought by the FSLN, and establish why I characterize these transformations as 'aiming for social justice.'

The situation in Nicaragua during the time of Anastasio Somoza Debayle has been described as one of misery in a land of riches, based on a structure of underdevelopment and dependency, where the rich resources that the country had to offer -- both material and human -- benefited only a small, export-oriented elite, most of whom were family and associates of Somoza. As a result, Nicaragua suffered one of the worst income distributions in Latin America. While the macro-economic activity was viewed as robust and stable, it was maldistributed in favor of the small, privileged minority and against the poor. By the late 1970s, while the annual GNP was US\$800 per capita, one half of Nicaragua's population lived on an annual income of scarcely US\$286 per capita in an economy that included severe wage repression and prices for everyday necessities that nearly matched those in the United States.

The material conditions in which the majority lived were no better. Seventy percent of all Nicaraguans were malnourished, and overall nutrition was so poor that infant mortality reached 200 per 1000 live births, despite the existence of rich land resources.⁴ In addition, overall infrastructural aspects dedicated to health concerns were minimal. Potable water was available to only 16% of the population, while only 5% of all Nicaraguans had indoor plumbing and 92% lived without access to any sort of sewage system.⁵

Other types of basic services were equally underdeveloped. Public spending on health care in Nicaragua was the lowest in Central America, and in the 1970s there were only 50 hospitals and

clinics for a population of 2.3 million.⁶ Health care, like income, was also maldistributed, with one-half of the hospital beds located in only three major cities, while nearly one half of the population lived in rural areas. In the area of education, too, public spending was the lowest in Central America. This neglect was reflected in the illiteracy rate of 50% nationwide, as well as the 50% drop-out rate, both of which were among the highest in Latin America. Education, too, was maldistributed, with schools concentrated primarily in urban areas.

In summary, the situation in Nicaragua prior to July 1979 was one of great disparities and inequalities, or one of great social injustice. The majority of the population had very little opportunity to participate in the social, political and economic institutions of the country. Nor was human dignity guaranteed - rather, it was denied to the majority of Nicaraguans.

The Ideological Situation Prior to 1979

Although in its simplest definition, ideology is a "set of beliefs, concepts and theories about the world and its inhabitants in general,"⁷ the term often comes encumbered with other features, such as the distortional and hegemonic aspects of ideology. The problem with these proposed aspects of ideology is that not only do they leave scant room for interpretations and manipulations of the belief system by people, and thus posit real people not as actors in the world but objects acted upon, but they also skirt the issue of social change and social justice. If everyone is subject to the power of such a hegemonic ideology, how does one transcend it in order to critique and change it? In other words, how could social justice ever be achieved?

Thus, ideology, in its totality, is not hegemonic and entirely false in its presentation of reality. Rather, it is a "system of thought that guides and legitimates social action,"⁸ and is "supportive of a given set of social arrangements,"⁹ particularly in the sense that it portrays and legitimates relations of power, whether they are the power of certain economic configurations such as capitalism or socialism, the power inherent in class relations, or the relations of power imbedded in cultural constructions of gender.

Therefore, ideology is, as well, a set of beliefs and assumptions that are culturally constructed and maintained, and which act as a practical guide to action in everyday life. In this sense, ideology facilitates and informs the behavior of people, who must be seen as 'acting in reality' or at least, in the reality as they know it at the time. It is for this reason that an ideology may prove so compelling to people, even when faced with alternative ideologies from which to choose.

Finally, all individuals have a part in creating, maintaining, transforming and transmitting a society's system of beliefs or ideology, and in the sense that they have differing experiences and positions within the social structure, they will do so in different ways, generating differing interpretations. Ideology, in that it is by nature ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations, also facilitates this differential use of it as a guide for social action.

In the particular case of Nicaragua during the revolution, I am discussing two ideologies, specifically two *gender* ideologies, or systems of beliefs regarding the way members of the two sexes (male and female) are viewed and expected to behave. As with all ideologies, a gender ideology is culturally constructed and maintained, supports certain social arrangements while challenging others, and guides social action. In particular, a gender ideology acts to legitimate

gender roles (roles culturally assigned based on the sex of the person) and guide the behavior of men and women *as men and women*, while providing a representation of the social order based on gender categories.

The traditional Nicaraguan ideology of gender is best understood as the dominant ideology which represented pervasive and well-established beliefs and values regarding the attributes and behaviors of men and women, and structured institutional arrangements based upon those beliefs. The 'new' Nicaraguan gender ideology set forth over time by the FSLN is thus viewed as an oppositional ideology, in that it arose in direct response to the old, dominant ideology.

A discussion of the traditional ideology in Nicaragua requires some historical reconstruction, based on documentary sources, informant sources, and observation. This representation of the traditional ideology is therefore an idealized reconstruction, in that much of it was discussed both in the documents and by informants in comparison with the new ideology. Thus, the old ideology is presented here as an aggregate of prevalent conceptualizations regarding the nature of women and men, rather than a seamless whole.

Within the dominant Nicaraguan gender ideology, the most prevalent configuration of beliefs involved the concepts of *machismo* and patriarchy. *Machismo*, a set of beliefs predicated upon a series of oppositions regarding men and women, highlighted, in particular, male virility and all things considered *masculine*. These oppositions were, in fact, descriptions of what Nicaraguan society considered to be the natural qualities of men and women. By 'nature', men are sexually voracious, aggressive, active, competitive with other men, dominant over women, and superior in terms of strength and competence in activities requiring logic. Women, on the other hand, were considered highly moral, passive, self-sacrificing, subordinate to men, and inferior in strength and overall capabilities (aside from childcare and domestic work).

This system of opposites not only delineated how men and women were perceived, but also set forth a guide for behavior predicated on these presumed, natural qualities. Men, due to these natural characteristics, were expected to require more than one woman, and to prove their virility through the number of their offspring. In contrast, according to the traditional Nicaraguan gender ideology, women, by virtue of their natural characteristics, were considered to be particularly well-suited for the self-sacrificing nurturance of their children and fulfillment of their domestic responsibilities. Further, because of their childcare and domestic responsibilities, coupled with their 'natural' subordination and inferiority vis-a-vis men, women had, ideally, their activities circumscribed by the boundaries of the domestic sphere, while men, with their active, superior and aggressive natures, were considered better able to cope with the social, political and economic demands inherent in social interaction within the public realm.

Patriarchy, which is essentially a system of familial relations, is a concept hard to disentangle from that of *machismo*. In discussing gender relations in Latin America, the words '*machismo*' and 'patriarchy' are frequently used together to describe the dominant ideology, as in the phrase "the patriarchal, *machista* ideology." However, while the two concepts do speak to similar issues of male superiority, and may in fact promote similar social relations, they do so in different ways. *Machismo* sets forth beliefs about the nature of men and women, which then act as a guide to relations between men and women, and between men and men, irrespective of the

domain in which they are enacted. Patriarchy, on the other hand, describes specifically those relations between men and women that take place within the domestic realm -- familial relations. While *machismo* describes as natural certain characteristics of men and women, patriarchy describes a particular family structure as natural.

Patriarchy is, therefore, a set of beliefs in which the husband/father is the sole provider and locus of authority. Women are considered naturally dependent upon men and submissive to their will. Because of the seemingly natural quality of familial relations, a set of oppositions also arises within the concept of patriarchy as a guide for what people *do*. Men make decisions, while women obey them. Men work outside the home to provide for the family (thus carrying their authority into the public realm), while women, again, must conduct their lives almost exclusively within the domestic sphere. Although women may have, within the domestic realm, a great deal of authority over household expenditures and the raising of children, this authority is limited to areas considered 'naturally' of concern to women, and their decisions can be over-ruled at any time by husbands.

While the concepts of patriarchy and *machismo* cannot be simply reduced to one another, they do act to reaffirm one another. Women's ability to participate in the social, economic and political institutions of their country was severely circumscribed under the traditional Nicaraguan gender ideology; social justice for most women did not exist.

The Situation of Women Prior to 1979

While the situation of most Nicaraguans was desperate prior to 1979, due to the traditional gender ideology Nicaraguan women were in general subject to even more constraints and deprivations. This traditional gender ideology, based upon the concepts of *machismo* and patriarchy, relegated women to an inferior and subordinate status vis-a-vis men. While it is true that middle and upper class women had certain socio-economic advantages over lower class men, it is also clear that the traditional gender ideology, in asserting the dominant position of men, created institutional and ideological inequalities that affected most, if not all, women, and prevented any movement toward social justice.

For example, contrary to the traditional ideological mandate that women remain at home and rely upon men for their material needs, reality dictated that they work outside the home. However, while women made up 29% of the economically active population (EAP) in 1977 (compared to 14% in 1950 and 22% in 1970),¹⁰ they were predominantly concentrated in low-paying and unstable economic situations such as domestic service, street vending, informal sector work and prostitution.¹¹

Although these economic opportunities were open to women, each carried with them distinct disadvantages over the more stable, formal work situations that were available to some men (such as transportation or light industry). For example, domestic servants regularly worked 14 hour days and 84 hours weeks, and street vending and informal sector work were vulnerable to ever-increasing prices of inputs and the low wages of their customers.

In the rural areas, the situation was scarcely better. According to the 1977 census, 18.6% of the rural EAP were women¹² and the majority of these were low wage, seasonal agricultural

workers, often landless, and subject to seasonal unemployment. Despite a law to the contrary, women were paid less than men for the same work, based on the premise that they worked less efficiently. Equally pervasive was the practice of paying male family members for the work of the women, which was seen as "family help", a view reflected in the fact that women's names were rarely entered into the work list of the farms hiring seasonal laborers. This view reflects, as well, the dominant gender ideology's premise that women, their labor and its proceeds were rightfully the property of men, and this severely limited women's ability to control their economic livelihoods.

This limitation of women's access to various institutions in Nicaraguan society was replicated, as well, in areas other than the economic realm. For example, because of sporadic school attendance by girls (due to housework and childcare obligations), over 50% of all females over ten years of age were illiterate, compared with 42% for men.¹³ This lack of literacy had an impact on women's economic opportunities, additional education, and political participation.

In the rural areas, the disparity was even greater; sixty-seven percent of the rural population was illiterate and two-thirds of these illiterates were women. In fact, in some rural hamlets the illiteracy rate of women reached as high as 100%.¹⁴ But even for less-disadvantaged women, this inequality was evident. Women made up less than 50% of the students in post-secondary education (including universities and technical schools), and were primarily limited to careers traditionally considered *female*.¹⁵

The fact that the health care system was out of reach, both geographically and financially, for most Nicaraguans also had a great impact upon women's lives, and limited their ability to participate fully in the life of their country. Poor nutrition, inadequate sanitation, multiple and early pregnancies, and 18 hour days took a grave toll upon women's health, especially among the urban poor and peasant populations. Overwork, fatigue and the ill health of both women and their children, as well as neglect by the medical system, sharply reduced women's energy and effectiveness at work, encouraged their employers and male fellow workers to view them as inefficient, and made the women vulnerable to dismissal based on missed work days due to their own illness or that of their children.

With regard to legal institutions, the most restrictive and discriminatory laws with regard to women involved the two roles most promoted by the traditional gender ideology -- those of wife and mother. Even in these two acceptable roles for women, limits were placed upon their activities. For example, according to the Civil Code, married women were obligated to live in the husband's home. In reality many women, due to abandonment or choice, did not comply with this law, but it does indicate the degree to which women were lacking in autonomy under the law, as well as their almost property-like status. Additionally, the code of *Patria Potestad* gave fathers fundamental rights over their offspring and deemed the father the sole authority in the family, with both wife and children subject to his rule. However, fathers were not required to be financially responsible for their offspring.

Material and Ideological Changes after 1979: Aiming for Social Justice

The General Situation in Nicaragua

Nicaragua in July 1979 was a country and economy in almost complete collapse. Schools, hospitals and factories had been bombed, 70% of cultivable land had not been planted because of the war, tens of thousands were dead and many more wounded or orphaned, and the treasury, looted by Somoza before his flight, contained only enough money to cover two days worth of imports. The institutional changes undertaken during the initial years of the FSLN government were, therefore, designed to meet the immediate needs of the people, reorganize the economy in a more equitable manner, and promote self-sufficiency and sustainable development in Nicaragua.

For example, one institutional area in which the FSLN made a great impact was the redistribution of land. As a predominantly agricultural nation, and with one-half of the population living in the rural sector, a reorganization of the inequitable agricultural system was necessary in order to redistribute resources to the peasantry and reactivate the economy. These agrarian reform policies had a fairly profound effect upon the structure of the ownership of agricultural land. While in 1978 100% of this land was privately held, in 1988 this percentage had been reduced to 65.5% nation wide. State agricultural enterprises comprised 11.7% of the land, while cooperatives had received 13.8% of the land. In addition, large private land holdings (over 865 acres) had been reduced from 36.2% of the total in 1978 to 6.4% in 1988.¹⁶ As of December 1988, 43% of all peasant families had been given land under the reform terms, either as cooperative members or as individuals, and the land they received made up 16.4% of all agricultural land.¹⁷

This emphasis on redistributing resources and creating more options, and working toward social justice, for the poorest sectors of Nicaraguan society also manifested itself in other institutional changes enacted during this period. In regard to access to education, the most ambitious and successful program was the Literacy Crusade of 1980 during which the level of illiteracy was reduced from 50.35% (1979) to 12.96% (1980).¹⁸

In addition to the Literacy Crusade, investment was made in building more schools, enrolling more students, and providing more teachers and professors, particularly in the rural areas. For example, Popular Education Collectives (CEP) provided continuing education for 161,317 adults, 44% of whom were agricultural workers, cooperative members or individual peasants.¹⁹ During the 1979-82 period, over 2900 schools were built, most of them in rural areas, thus bringing easier and more stable access to education for peasants for the first time, and this increased availability resulted in a two-fold increase in total school enrollment at all levels in 1982 (in comparison with the 1978 enrollment).²⁰

In the area of health care, programs were also enacted that positively affected the poorest Nicaraguans, especially the peasantry.²¹ From 1978 to 1983 government expenditures on health care rose 200%, and a new National Unified Health System was created with government-supported health care open to all. Building clinics and providing health care in the rural areas was emphasized, and from 1979-1989, 205 new health centers were built, a 50% increase in the total number nation-wide.

In line with the focus on preventive care, massive vaccination campaigns were organized in the early 1980s to prevent polio and other infectious diseases. Eighty-five percent of the target population (again, primarily in the rural areas) was reached during these campaigns, and measles, tetanus, tuberculosis and whooping cough were greatly reduced, while polio and diphtheria were completely eliminated.

Another emphasis of the government with regard to health involved the establishment of nutrition programs, which in 1979-80 served over 250,000 children and pregnant or nursing women. Other food programs were established, including consumer subsidies, price supports, AFA packages,²² and "glass of milk" programs enacted in elementary schools. By 1983, programs such as these had increased the national consumption of rice by 66%, eggs by 21%, cooking oil by 30% and poultry by 80% (compared with 1977 levels).

The impact of all these institutional changes was significant. By 1983, infant diarrhea had decreased 75%, and this, coupled with better nutrition and vaccinations, resulted in the rate of infant mortality falling from 121 per 1000 live births in 1978 and vaccinations, resulted in the rate of infant mortality falling from 121 per 1000 live births in 1978 and 1979 to 90 per 1000 live births in 1983. The incidence of other deadly diseases decreased as well, and over-all life expectancy rose from 52.2 years to 57.6 years by 1983.

In summary, it is clear that in reorganizing the institutions of Nicaraguan society, the FSLN was attempting to promote, and even achieve, social justice. Women and men throughout the country were now able to aspire to at least minimum levels of well-being, access and participation.

The Ideological Situation after 1979

In examining the new gender ideology of the FSLN, three key statements of the FSLN's views toward gender equality stand out. These statements were made in 1969, 1982 and 1987, and all are expressed in oppositional terms vis-a-vis the traditional ideology.

Although the FSLN did not assume power until 1979, it had a decade earlier officially acknowledged the subordinate status of Nicaraguan women. In 1969 the revolutionary agenda set forth by the FSLN included the pledge that the revolution would "abolish the discrimination that women have suffered with respect to men; it will establish economic, political and cultural equality between women and men."²³

Reflected in the 1969 statement, however, was a belief that women's natural and primary role was that of mother, and thus they were to be solely responsible for childcare. Men were viewed as naturally seeking out other women and abandoning their families, a situation which then required women to work outside the home. The policy solution in 1969 was to improve the work situation of women, not challenge the behavior of men nor the identification of women solely with motherhood.

Nor were other aspects of the traditional ideology directly challenged. It was accepted that women work outside the home to support their families, but in 1969 there was no FSLN policy to expand this work to include traditionally-male jobs. Prostitution, a job of last resort for many financially-strapped women, was to be eliminated, not because of change in the conception of

women, but as a reaffirmation of the dominant gender ideology. A woman, by nature, is highly moral and sexually passive, and thus, prostitution is considered beneath her "dignity" under ideal economic circumstances.

The only indication that the dominant gender ideology might, at some later date, be challenged (and thus, implying a true attempt at achieving social justice) was the assertion that the "political, cultural and vocational level" of women would be raised in order to "establish economic, political and cultural equality between women and men." In spite of this assertion, the implication throughout the statement is that institutional changes will transform the situation of women, while the core beliefs of the gender ideology would be left intact.

The period of 1979-1982 was a time of reconstruction, economic reactivation, and reconciliation in Nicaragua, but it was also a period in which the FSLN sought to consolidate and strengthen the revolution by integrating more people into the revolutionary process. Thus, the various policies and programs initiated at this time in order to redistribute wealth and resources in a more equitable manner not only furthered the FSLN's goal of social justice, but also acted as a mechanism by which Nicaraguans would become invested in the continuation of the revolutionary process.

This need to strengthen the revolution by widening its base informed, in part, the type of focus the FSLN had at this time for Nicaraguan women. Much of the economic legislation enacted during this period, such as the Agrarian Reform Law and the Agricultural Cooperative Law, while not designed solely with women in mind, broadened their access to various economic opportunities, and demonstrated to them the tangible benefits of the revolution. General social programs, such as the Literacy Crusade and numerous vaccination campaigns, likewise provided wide access to crucial services, while also integrating thousands of Nicaraguans (especially women) into the process as volunteers.

However, imbedded in this general goal of integrating women into the revolutionary process was an emphasis on strengthening their traditional roles, as set forth by the traditional gender ideology. As foretold in the 1969 agenda, there was a special focus upon mothers and children, reflecting the continuation of the belief that women's primary natural quality is that of mother and childcare giver. A public speech given in early 1982 by Tomás Borge, Minister of the Interior and member of the Sandinista Joint National Directorate, states this position clearly:

*How can we not guarantee that a woman can be both a mother and a worker, both a mother and a student, both a mother and an artist, both a mother and a political leader, both fulfill all the tasks the revolution demands of her and at the same time fulfill the beautiful work of a self-sacrificing, capable, and loving mother.*²⁴

While women were to be integrated into the revolution through their public activities, it was never to be forgotten that the true nature of women was as a "self-sacrificing, capable, and loving mother." Certain features of the dominant gender ideology (that women remain in the domestic realm, absorbed in childcare and household tasks, while men, acting in the public realm, provide the sole familial support) were to be changed, not by transforming the definition of what it meant

to be men and women, but by adding to those features the belief that women have the obligation and right to work productively outside the home and for the revolution.

The goal, therefore, was to make the achievement of some forms of participation easier for women. Hence, there was an emphasis on services that would socialize housework and childcare: "it is society that has to provide the necessary day-care centers, laundries, people's restaurants, and other services that will, in effect, free women from household work." Childcare, housework and cooking were still envisioned as women's roles, and thus, it is society, not male family members, who would step in to lessen the burden of these tasks upon women.

Here we see an area of possible conflict – an expansion of certain features for women, while leaving the presumed natural ones essentially intact. While women might acquire new roles, such as those of revolutionary or productive worker, the continued inflexibility of required behaviors such as childcare, based on presumed natural qualities, foretold a piling up of duties and possible conflict.

At the same time, however, there was recognition of the special role the people's beliefs and attitudes may play in holding back the attainment of social justice. Borge, in the same discourse, speaks of the need for a transformation in this area as well:

We have to struggle against the habits, customs and prejudices of men and women. We have to embark upon a difficult and prolonged ideological struggle -- a struggle that equally benefits men and women. Men must overcome a multitude of prejudices. We know compañeros who are revolutionaries in the street, in their work-places, in their militia battalions -- everywhere -- but they're feudal señores, feudal lords in their homes. We must convert ourselves into compañeros of the women . . . sharing in whatever means possible the housework, love and care of the children.

Although Borge signals the need to transform the beliefs of the old gender ideology, in particular those beliefs associated with patriarchy ("feudal lords in their homes"), he does not explore it further; he does not highlight exactly which beliefs need changing. However, Borge does point out that men, as well as women, must change to fit the New Nicaragua.

It is in light of statements such as those made by Borge in 1982 that we can understand various institutional changes enacted in this time period that specifically addressed the situation of women. The 1979 Statute of Rights and Guarantees made clear the primary tenant of the new, evolving, critical gender ideology: the equality of men and women. The Media Law asserted the highly moral nature of women, and the respect they should therefore be accorded.

Two laws in particular dealt with the special difficulties facing mothers. The Provision Law of 1982 reaffirmed the primary importance of the family unit, and underscored a need for men's presence in that unit, but did not address the beliefs that made the application of the law impossible. As long as the 'nature' of men was seen to include a need for more than one woman, not all families would have a father present. With men's nature requiring their continual presence in the public realm, while women's presumed natural character made them best suited for childcare and domestic work, the domestic division of labor was unlikely to change.

The period from 1983 to 1987 involved a deteriorating economy, mobilization for defense, and massive destruction wrought by the *contra*, especially in the rural areas. With defense needs consuming up to 50% of the national budget, and financial hardship induced by an economic blockade as well as the decrease in international aid, many of the institutional changes initiated in the previous years had to be scaled back, or stalled completely.

As the years progressed, less and less money was available for education, day care, health care, nutritional programs and employment expansion. Inflation rose as well, and over-all, Nicaraguan families faced much greater economic hardship than in the 1979-1982 period. The structural damage inflicted by the *contra* upon day care centers, schools and health clinics also directly affected the situation of women, particularly in the rural areas.

At the same time, however, the situation of war also provided a unprecedented expansion in opportunities for women. With men increasingly involved in defense (especially after the introduction of the military draft in 1983), women were encouraged to fill the vacancies left by the departing men in the classrooms, factories, agriculture, neighborhood defense committees and local militia. Greater emphasis was placed upon women's role in production, and although they were still primarily concentrated in areas traditionally associated with women, such as health and education, women's options did expand to include non-traditional work, especially in the northern war zones, where the mobilization of men was the greatest.

In describing the struggle the FSLN must undertake with regard to women, the 1987 Proclamation highlighted

*discriminatory laws and policies, the subordinate position of women in society and in the family, paternal irresponsibility, physical and moral abuse, and machismo, all of these obstacles and attitudes that must be overcome by men and women*²⁵

as significant problems. Recognizing that "the criticism of *machismo* and its consequences is just beginning," the FSLN admitted that "despite the important achievements . . . discrimination against women is still prevalent in our society."

Singled out for special praise and encouragement by the 1987 Proclamation were Nicaraguan mothers. For example, in discussing the role of women in the overthrow of Somoza, the Proclamation remarked that

as mothers, women have become a symbol of courage and integrity, representing the morale and dignity of our people; mothers of political prisoners, mothers of the disappeared, mothers of the tortured, mothers who carried their pain with dignity.

In reaffirming the importance of the family unit in Nicaraguan society, women were described in 1987 as the keystone of that unit, because "women have been the fundamental pillar of the Nicaraguan family, defending and supporting their families in the most difficult circumstances, for which they deserve the highest respect and admiration." Thus, while certain behavioral features of *machismo* associated with men (irresponsible paternity, violence toward women, etc.) were condemned by the emerging ideology, the presumed natural qualities such as self-sacrifice and morality associated with women remained on a pedestal along with motherhood.

The reaffirmation of this part of the dominant gender ideology formed the basis for some of the more specific policies set forth in the 1987 Proclamation:

We will continue investing our efforts and resources to aid the family, especially abandoned mothers, in the care of children, and to create conditions which facilitate their incorporation in productive and social tasks. We will continue to struggle so that women may fulfill their maternal and family responsibilities in steadily improving conditions, while preventing such responsibilities from becoming insurmountable obstacles to their development and personal fulfillment.

Such declarations, along with the reverence for motherhood, indicate that the new roles for women being incorporated into the new gender ideology were to be laid over, rather than supplant, the role of motherhood.

This emphasis highlights how central "maternal and family responsibilities" are, not only to the dominant gender ideology, but to the emerging critical gender ideology as well. The belief in the primacy of motherhood as a defining feature of women was not challenged, but rather added to, during the time of the FSLN's governance. Prior to 1979, motherhood was the *only* defining feature of women under the dominant gender ideology, a situation that limited women's ability and freedom to take on other roles. Not only were women considered generally incapable of engaging in other types of activities, but the role of motherhood, with all its attendant responsibilities, was believed to leave time for little else.

But by 1987 it was clear to the FSLN that many of the successes of the revolution were due to the participation of women and that women could no longer be relegated to domestic life because of their supposed incapacity to act elsewhere. Motherhood and domestic responsibilities therefore maintained their immanent quality; but women had the capacity to do all else as well. It is an important shift, but one that, while transforming the dominant gender ideology, also leaves much intact. Women were able to do much more, and in fact, *had* to do much more. The New Nicaraguan Woman would be a Super Woman.

Men, too, were targeted for some (although limited) change by the Proclamation, in addition to the exhortation that they share "domestic chores and family responsibilities." Certain behaviors emanating from the dominant gender ideology were no longer considered acceptable:

We will continue to struggle against irresponsibly paternity and the physical and moral abuse of women and children by promoting, on a social and institutional level, ever-stronger responses against those guilty of such conduct.

Irresponsible paternity and moral (sexual) abuse, behaviors associated with the presumed natural qualities of *machismo*, and physical abuse, a reflection of the belief in the ultimate natural authority of men within patriarchy, were condemned. But the authority of men, and their 'natural' sexual aggressiveness and voraciousness were not challenged as 'natural' male attributes.

In summary, these three key statements by the FSLN signaled the emergence of a new gender ideology in which certain features of the traditional gender ideology remained intact, while others underwent transformation. The natural qualities ascribed to women remained the same,

except for those that overtly deemed them subordinate and inferior, while the behavioral features of women were greatly expanded to include many opportunities and responsibilities in addition to child care and domestic chores.

With regard to men, those behavioral features deemed incompatible with respect for women (such as domestic violence) or at odds with the goal of economic stability for every Nicaraguan family (such as irresponsible paternity) were condemned, while an attempt is made to expand their responsibilities to include a share of child care and domestic chores. But the natural features which, according to the dominant gender ideology, formed the basis of men's 'nature' were of secondary importance in the transformation, except in the sense that the belief in men's 'natural' superiority and dominance over women was considered incompatible with the goal of gender equality, and consequently with social justice.

The Situation of Women after 1979

The impact of the various institutional changes (both those that targeted women specifically and those that applied to the population in general) upon women was mixed, primarily because translating these policies into *de facto* changes was not so easily accomplished. However, strides were made in the areas of employment, health, education, legal protection and political participation.

For example, one notable aspect of the agrarian reform was the fact that the beneficiaries did not have to be household heads. In most other reforms enacted in Latin America, recipients of reform benefits had to be heads of households (because of the assumption that the household as a whole was the social unit that would benefit) with dependent children, and therefore men were generally the beneficiaries.

In 1982 this incorporation of women into the Nicaraguan reform sector was made an even more explicit goal with the enactment of the Agricultural Cooperative Law, which stated that neither sex nor kinship position would limit a person's ability to be a beneficiary. Furthermore, Article 132 of the law required that women be integrated into agricultural cooperatives under the same conditions as men, with the same rights and duties.

In the state (APP) agricultural sector, women remained primarily in seasonal occupations, making up (along with children) 70% of the coffee and tobacco harvesters, and 60% of the cotton pickers in the 1984-85 cycle. Men still filled the majority of permanent positions on the APP, but with increased integration of men into cooperatives and defense there was an ever-increasing feminization of the agricultural labor force.

In terms of the *type* of participation that was available to, and exercised by, women on cooperatives and state farms, it is clear that women were more and more involved in non-traditional activities. This was especially true in the war zones of the north, where most men had been mobilized for defense. On the tobacco farms (state and cooperative) in this area, women were involved in all phases of the cycle, including driving tractors (a distinctly male activity prior to 1979, and rare in most other areas of the country). In these areas as well, women were being trained in the technical aspects of cultivation.

However, on the rest of the cooperatives and state farms women were often excluded from the technical and mechanical phases of agricultural production, and little emphasis was put on training women in these areas.²⁶ In addition, on many cooperatives women either continued to do traditional activities, such as cooking for the cooperative members, or were given auxiliary projects such as poultry, fish or bees which, because they were not the major focus of the cooperative, often suffered from neglect and failed.²⁷

Considering the economic sector overall, women did show increased participation, and in 1989 women were 45% of the EAP, up from 29% in 1977, a percentage that was as high or higher than in most industrialized nations at that time.²⁸ However, women were still over-represented in lower-paying and less stable occupations, such as domestic service (70%), market vending (84%) and informal sector work (65%), and the predominance of women in health (80%) and education (74%) reflected the continued existence of a division of labor based on gender and traditional views of "women's work". Prostitution, a common source of employment for women prior to the revolution, was outlawed in 1979, and retraining centers (such as sewing cooperatives) were established around the country to provide occupational training, literacy and other skills to former prostitutes.

Women also benefited along with the entire population from the changes made in the health care system discussed previously, but certain changes benefited women more directly. The new focus on preventive care included an emphasis on pre, neo and post-natal examinations, to which access was improved due to the increased number of clinics (particularly rural ones). Sex education was carried out through the schools and in the media, as well as in the clinics, and included information on contraceptives and family planning.

As in the case of health care reform, women benefited from the expansion of educational services, and had a high level of participation in the Literacy Crusade. During the Literacy Crusade, over 45% of the teachers in the rural areas were women and by August 1980, women made up 46.5% of the rural students who had passed the literacy course. Finally, in the Adult Education Courses given in the rural areas, 49% of the students were women.²⁹

A variety of legal guarantees were enacted by the FSLN that directly addressed the subordinate situation of Nicaraguan women. It must be stressed, however, that *de jure* protection does not necessarily translate into *de facto* observances, and it was certainly the case in Nicaragua that insufficient time and resources were devoted to enforcing these laws and applying penalties. In addition, some of these guarantees, while representing an ideal goal, could never be enforced. However, guaranteeing women's rights through the constitution and in civil law, was not only a step toward institutionalized changes, but also made the public aware of the government's desire for social justice.

An assessment of some of the most pertinent decrees shows a distinct effort to address the issue of women's subordination within society and within the family. In 1979 the government set forth the "Statute of Rights and Guarantees of Nicaraguans," which assured the full equality of all men and women with regard to rights, duties, legal protections, wages, and family relations. At about the same time, the "General Provisional Law on the Media of Communication" banned media exploitation of women as sexual objects (including advertisements) and prohibited pornography.

Other legal acts dealt with the traditional relations between men and women in the domestic realm. In the early 1980s, *patria potestad*, which codified men as the sole authority in the family, was abolished, and replaced with the "Law of Relations Between Mothers, Fathers and Children". This Act, which was passed by the National Assembly but never published (and thus, never fully implemented), stated that both parents have equal authority over decisions regarding children, and removed the father's prerogative over children in case of divorce. In addition, men who abandoned their families were required to pay child support (either in cash, kind or a share of the domestic tasks, but only if the man acknowledged paternity), further equalizing rights and duties between mothers and fathers, and attempting to address the problems affecting female-headed households, as well as the issue of male desertion.

The "Nurturance/Provision Law" (also passed by the National Assembly, but not published) of 1982 also spoke to the equality of parental duties, and required all income earners in a family to supply a child with clothing, food, education, housing and other things necessary for survival. As an attempt to support the family as the basic societal unit and to stress the need for family cohesion, this law also addressed familial responsibilities, other than financial, and required men to do their fair share of the domestic work and childcare. This law was particularly difficult to enforce, and indeed, no one attempted to do so. Yet, it did indicate some willingness on the part of the government to take appropriate intervention measures to work toward social justice.

In regard to women in the workplace, the National System of Ordering Work and Salaries, enacted in 1984, codified the policy of the FSLN, existent since 1979, that women and men be paid equal wages for equal work. The 1982 decree covering rural workers outlawed the practice of paying male heads of families for work done by female relatives, and required that all workers over the age of fourteen be paid directly. As indicated previously, compliance with this decree, especially in the private sector, was variable. But where compliance did occur, women gained better control over their own income, and public recognition of their productive activities. Lastly, despite a law guaranteeing maternity leave, compliance was low, especially in the private sector,³⁰ and in order to avoid the law altogether employers often refused to hire pregnant women.

Other areas in which legal changes had been demanded were scarcely addressed. Domestic beating and rape continued to be viewed as private crimes, in which not the state, but the victim, had to press charges. Given that there was no law specifically prohibiting wife beating, and because, according to the dominant gender ideology, it was a man's right (and duty) to do so, women were reluctant to bring charges against their husbands or lovers.

The Constitution enacted in 1987 further codified many of the rights previously discussed. Using gender inclusive language, it established the age at majority at sixteen for both sexes (in many Latin American countries it varies by sex), and stipulated the constitutional rights of equal pay for equal work, complete equality under the law, absolute equality of rights and responsibilities within the family unit, unilateral divorce at the request of either spouse, and women's ability to join cooperatives. However, despite a media campaign to educate the public about their new rights and responsibilities, many women, especially in the rural areas, remained unaware of their legal rights.

The last aspect I would like to touch upon in regard to the situation of women during the revolutionary years involves their participation in other areas of public and cultural life (beyond the purely economic realm). Prior to 1979 women were infrequently involved in political organizations, the military and other associations outside their homes. This was due, in part, to the fact that they had little time to devote to activities that did not involve childcare, domestic responsibilities and economic survival.

However, women's wide participation in other social institutions was also hampered by the pervasive attitude captured in the phrase "*las mujeres – la casa; los hombres – la calle*. While men were free to engage in activities that took them out of the domestic sphere (into the street, as the phrase indicates), a woman's place was in the home. Women could leave the house, of course, but according to the traditional gender ideology, her activities should be restricted to the yard where vegetables might be grown or animals raised, or in places (such as stores) where activities necessary to run the home were carried out.

However, beginning with their participation in the insurrection, women emerged from their households and entered extra-domestic organizations in greater numbers than ever before. Fueling this integration were government policies that encouraged women's participation in the economy and education, and programs that helped free them from at least part of their domestic concerns. Education, especially the Literacy Crusade, proved invaluable in breaking down some of the constraints to women's participation. When asked why, in the past, they had not joined any associations prior to 1979, informants often replied, "I was stupid, but now I can read," indicating that as literate persons they felt more comfortable and had more to contribute.

Immediately before and after the victory of July 1979, many mass organizations arose in which women were encouraged to participate. It was felt by the FSLN that participation in the social life of the country would help weaken the traditional gender ideology and imbue the participants with greater dedication to the revolutionary process. However, in the early 1980s it became obvious that many women, even those who had been collaborators or combatants during the insurrection, were unable to participate due to domestic and childcare concerns. Such concerns were still viewed as *women's* responsibilities, and social programs were enacted to lessen (by socializing) some of the burdens on women, in order that they might participate more fully in the revolutionary process.

The area of greatest progress was in the construction of day care centers (CDIs). By 1989, 275 CDIs had been built, with 75% of them located in rural areas, and they served over 40,000 children nation-wide. In addition, communities initiated their own CDIs, which accounted for 60 more day care centers in the countryside.³¹ Although the number of CDIs did not meet overall need, the increase was quite significant when compared to the eight urban day care centers that existed prior to July 1979. Other institutional changes advocated included communal kitchens, community mills (for grinding corn and coffee, two very time-consuming activities) and communal laundry facilities, all of which would serve to socialize domestic labor.

Other institutions, such as AMNLAE (the Nicaraguan women's association), CDS (Sandinista Defense Committees), and the FSLN dealt with a wider range of issues, and women also made up substantial percentages of their memberships. During the 1980s, the CDS around the country

had over 600,000 members, of which 70% were women.³² These committees, which were involved in issues of food supplies, local defense needs and community development projects (such as potable water and electricity), were particularly vital domains for women, although the committees did not address "women's issues" *per se*. However, since the CDS were based locally, women were able to demonstrate to themselves and other members of the community their capabilities as organizers, influence the direction of development projects that affected their lives, and gain a measure of prestige by being an active participant in the development of the social good.

After 1979, women were also substantially represented in the areas of national, regional and local governance. Women occupied 32% of the leadership positions within the government, and throughout the 1980s women held such positions as Minister of Health, Ambassador to the United Nations, National Police Chief, Minister of Social Welfare, Supreme Court judges and deputies to the National Assembly. Not only were these women able to advocate and enact national policies and programs that both directly and indirectly affected women, but they provided highly visible examples of women in positions of power and influence, were vivid symbols of the changing roles of women within the new gender ideology, and demonstrated women's participation in crucial social institutions.

The final area of public participation to be addressed involves the military establishment, including the army, the people's militia and the police. As we have seen, women made up approximately 30% of the combatants during the insurrection. With the victory, however, women transferred (and were transferred) to non-combat roles within the army, government and police, and by 1986, women made up 20% of the Ministry of Defense, but primarily in administrative positions. This was due, in part, to the fact that men at that time were enlisting in the army in great numbers, and army officials felt that during peacetime women were better placed in administrative and technical support roles. This transfer was resisted by some female army personnel, and all women reserve units were established, which were later replaced by mixed reserve battalions.

This tension between women in combat roles versus support roles continued through the 1980s, especially with the establishment of the military draft in 1983. Only men were drafted, although women were accepted as volunteers for active duty, and by 1989 women made up only 6% of the permanent army. However, women continued to contribute to national defense through their involvement in the CDS, neighborhood Revolutionary Guard Duty (in which women were 80% of the participants) and voluntary militia (of the total militia troops in 1984, 45% were women). The police force also remained open to women, and in 1985, 45% of all police were women and the National Police Chief was Comandante Doris Tijerino. Thus, while women were essentially shut out of active military service after playing such a vital role in the insurrection, other areas of national defense, crime prevention and national disaster relief opened up to encourage the participation of more and more women.

Summary and Conclusions

I have looked at the way in which the institutional and ideological dimensions of gender were confronted, in an attempt to achieve social justice, by the FSLN upon assuming power in

Nicaragua in 1979. Several salient features emerge. First, the overwhelming emphasis of the transformation was been to augment, rather than entirely change, the behavioral features ascribed to women. Added to women's duties, as traditionally defined by the dominant gender ideology, was their involvement in productive activities outside the home.

Second, other behavioral features attributed to women according to the traditional gender ideology remained essentially unchanged. Domestic tasks and childcare were still considered to be the domain of women, and while state programs attempted to socialized some of the work associated with these obligations, this attempt was envisioned by all as an effort to help lessen *women's* burdens. Although some pronouncements (such as the speech by Borge) suggested that men help carry out this work, this was not a change that was been actively and continually promoted by the FSLN.

Third, the feature of motherhood remained as the preeminent defining characteristic of Nicaraguan women, in a manner similar yet distinct to its position in the dominant gender ideology. The self-sacrificing nature of women, with regard to their children, was extended to include sacrifice for the nation and for the revolution, and was upheld as a heroic, revolutionary and patriotic attribute. This conception of motherhood was exemplified by the Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs, and in the term used to describe them - *beligerante*. Other presumed natural features pertaining to women, such as their moral and spiritual character, self-sacrificing nature and physical weakness were also reaffirmed in the new gender ideology.

Fourth, the process of transforming the features ascribed to men by the dominant gender ideology took place at an even slower pace. While certain behavioral features, such as womanizing and "irresponsible paternity" were condemned, few policies were enacted to encourage men to behave otherwise, and portrayals in the media and positions taken by local FSLN leaders tended to reaffirm the continued importance of these features in the cultural description of *what men do*.

Similar ambivalence was shown in the emerging new gender ideology by its approach to the presumed natural features regarding men. The features that described men as dominant and superior, and women as subordinate and inferior, were condemned, and various statements criticized beliefs associated with *machismo* and patriarchy. However, much of the content of those beliefs, such as the "natural" sexual voraciousness of men, their "natural" abilities with respect to physical or technical work, was not as enthusiastically challenged.

Further, as indicated previously, the inequality of access to economic opportunities, resources, education and health care existent prior to 1979 had a particularly devastating impact on women. Expanding women's access to education, child care, health services and economic resources, through socialized services and agrarian reforms after 1979, allowed women to participate in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the country, and thus made movement toward social justice.

However, because the institutional reorganization was *not* matched by a similarly rigorous realignment of the entire gender ideology, the process of achieving gender equality and the complete eradication of women's subordination was slow. Above all, the results of my research

demonstrate that while institutional changes were necessary for achieving social justice, they were not sufficient, and a complete transformation of the ideology of gender was vital.

The FSLN did provide a set of tools and blueprints, having both material and ideological dimensions, with which the transformation of gender relations could occur. In essence, these tools and blueprints, from new legal codes to employment policies to a new gender ideology, established a new and different range of options and possibilities from which men and women could choose to participate or not.

This set of blueprints, however, was an incomplete one that focuses primarily upon expanding the definition of what women do to include a definitive role in productive activities. Because the new ideology consisted of many features of the traditional ideology (particularly an emphasis on the primacy of motherhood), and neglected to sufficiently address the components of *machismo* and patriarchy, changes in men's roles, and consequently changes in relations between women and men, were only occurring very slowly. For this reason, men were often less committed to the institutional and ideological changes occurring in Nicaragua with regard to gender issues, and thus, participated less in these institutional and ideological changes. Without full participation of all Nicaraguan citizens, the FSLN was unable to fully achieve social justice.

Notes

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¹*Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, 1986.

²David Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition*, New York: Paulist Press, 1979, p. 145.

³*Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁴E.V.K. Fitzgerald, "The Economics of the Revolution," in *Nicaragua in Revolution*, ed. Thomas Walker (New York: Praeger), 1982, p. 204.

⁵Richard Columbia, "Women in Nicaragua: A Study of the Women's Movement," *Crosscurrents* 1, no. 17 (September 1987), 2.

⁶Thomas Bossert, "Health Care in Revolutionary Nicaragua," in *Nicaragua in Revolution*, 261.

⁷Russell Keat and John Urry, *Social Theory as Science*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 176.

⁸Peggy Sanday, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender*, eds. Peggy Sanday and Ruth Goodenough (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 5.

⁹Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985), 125.

¹⁰Susan Ramírez-Horton, "The Role of Women in the Nicaraguan Revolution" in *Nicaragua in Revolution*, 148.

¹¹Patricia M. Chuchryk, "Women in the Revolution" in *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, ed. Thomas Walker (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 148.

¹²Carmen Diana Deere, "Cooperative Development and Women's Participation in the Nicaraguan Agrarian Reform," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 65, no. 5 (December 1983), p. 1045.

¹³Ramírez-Horton, "The Role of Women in the Nicaraguan Revolution," in *Nicaragua in Revolution*, p. 148;

¹⁴Elizabeth Maier, *Nicaragua, la mujer en la revolución* (Mexico City: Ediciones de Cultura Popular, 1980), 36-37.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 37;

¹⁶CIERA, *Economía campesina*, vol. IV of *La Reforma agraria en Nicaragua, 1979-1989*, (Managua: CIERA, 1989).

¹⁷CIERA, *Cifras y referencias documentales*, vol. IX of *La Reforma Agraria en Nicaragua, 1979-1989*, (Managua: CIERA, 1989).

¹⁸CIERA, *La democracia participativa en Nicaragua*, (Managua: CIERA, n.d.), 73-75;.

¹⁹CIERA, *La democracia participativa*, 80; Harvey Williams, "The Social Programs," in *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, 194-203.

²⁰Williams, "The Social Programs," in *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, pp.191-94; Thomas Walker, *Nicaragua: The Land of Sandino*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 112.

²¹Sources used for this discussion of the improvements made in health care include Walker, *Nicaragua: The Land of Sandino*, 96-107; Williams, "The Social Programs," 190-203; and Thomas John Bossert, "Health Care in Revolutionary Nicaragua," in *Nicaragua in Revolution*.

²²AFA stands for "arroz, frijoles, azucar" -- rice, beans, sugar -- and represents a basket of goods given monthly to state employees (including teachers and professors) as part of their "social wage."

²³National Directorate of the Sandinista National Liberation Front [FSLN], *Women and the Sandinista Revolution* (Managua: Editorial Vanguardia, 1987).

²⁴Tomás Borge, *Women and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Managua: Ministerio del Interior, [1982]).

²⁵FSLN, *El FSLN y la mujer en la revolucion popular sandinista*. (Managua: Editorial Vanguardia), 1987.

²⁶During a visit to a mechanics school in 1986, near the town of Chaguitillo, I was told by the head of the school that when cooperatives sent members to be trained at the school, they invariably chose men, not women.

²⁷ For example, during a visit to a cooperative west of Estelí, the women members complained bitterly to me that while they had joined on the understanding that a fishery project was to be set up for them (a plan that, to me at least, seemed scarcely feasible given the location of the cooperative), months had gone by with no technical assistance from UNAG and no movement on the part of the male members. In the end, the women decided to leave the cooperative, stating that better economic prospects existed for them outside.

²⁸Chuchryk, "Women in the Revolution," 148.

²⁹ Niurka Pérez Rojas, *El hogar de Ana: Un estudio sobre la mujer rural Nicaraguense*, (Havana: Editorial Ciencias Sociales, 1986), p. 29.

³⁰The government, reluctant to antagonize a necessary and powerful part of the economic sector, was lax in enforcing compliance of certain laws in private industry and agriculture.

³¹Williams, "The Social Programs," 204.

³² Columbia, "Women in Nicaragua: A Study of the Women's Movement," 10.