

ORGANIZING AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN
NICARAGUA: A STUDY OF GENDER & POWER DYNAMICS

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GLOSSARY

Domestic violence: The emotional, physical, psychological, or sexual abuse perpetuated against a person by that person's spouse, former spouse, partner, or former partner or by the other parent of a minor child (McCue, 2)

Physical violence: Includes any action that is intended to produce harm or pain to [the partner]. Aggressors may inflict this harm with their bodies or some object" (Morrison, 36).

Psychological violence: Includes any action or omission intended to produce psychological damage or emotional pain to [the partner], including emotional anxiety, insecurity, disability, despair, guilt, frustration or failure, fear, humiliation, lack of freedom or independence and loss of self-esteem" (Morrison, 36).

Sexual violence: Includes any act in which [the aggressor] requires [his partner] to perform sexual activities against that person's will, through the use of threats, blackmail or physical force" (Morrison, 36).

Empowerment: Control over material assets, intellectual resources, and ideology (Sen and Grown 1987, 129).

Material resources: Physical, human, or financial, such as land, water, forests, labor, money, and access to money.

Intellectual resources: Knowledge, information, and ideas.

Ideological control: The ability to generate, propagate, sustain, and institutionalize specific sets of beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavior.

Gender Interests:

Practical Gender Interests (PGI) (Molyneux 1985, 233): Arise from concrete conditions of women's positioning within the gender division of labor.

Strategic Gender Interests (SGI): (Molyneux 1985, 232): Derived from the analysis of women's subordination and from the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory, set of arrangements to those that exist.

Oppression: Concept that all people do not equally hold power, and that some use their sex, class, ethnic or other privileges to exploit others for their own advantage. (Adapted from Andermahr, 155)

Patriarchy: System of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women (Andermahr, 159).

Power over: Concerned with decision-making on issues over which there is an observable conflict (Kabeer 1999, 224).

Power within: Entails reflection, analysis and assessment of what has hitherto been taken for granted so as to uncover the socially constructed and socially shared basis of apparently individually problems (Kabeer 1999, 245).

Theoretical frameworks:

Gender and development (GAD) (Rathgeber 1990, 494): Theoretical framework that holds that the social construction of production and reproduction is the basis for women's oppression.

Women and development (WAD) (Rathgeber 1999, 492): Theoretical framework that seeks to challenge the unjust relationship between women and development processes, by addressing unequal international and class inequalities.

Women in development (WID) (Rathgeber 1999, 489): Theoretical framework that seeks to integrate women into global processes of economic, political, and social growth and change.

Authors' Note

Articles referenced from the Internet database 'Contemporary Women's Issues' (CWI), are cited as follows: (Author's surname Year, CWI Part #: page #), for those articles that have been subdivided into various parts for retrieval. If the article is stored undivided, citation is as follows: Authors' surname year, CWI p.#).

1- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Domestic violence is the most common form of violence against women, and is the one where women often have the least amount of power to act against it. A study on women conducted by two Nicaraguan NGOs in conjunction with a Swedish university found that conjugal or domestic violence constituted 75% of cases of violence against women in Nicaragua (Ellsberg and Peña 1996, 24). This same study found that 52% of Nicaraguan women had been victims of violence from a spouse or partner at some point in their lives (25). The psychological effects of domestic violence often stay with the survivor for a lifetime, and women may have psychological or emotional scars that will rarely heal (McCue 1995, 96). On a societal level, this form of violence has a multiplier effect, as children who grew up in a violent household are more likely to reproduce this violence when they become adults (101). The impact on the economy and government services is also immense, affecting the work of the police, health care centers, psychological services, and the legislature. Since women in abusive relationships earn less as a result of the abuse, there is also a significant economic impact on the economy, which in Nicaragua was as high as 1.6 % of the 1996 GDP in lost earnings (Morrison and Orlando 1999, 66).

This research intends to look at current trends in organizing against domestic violence, examines different organizing models in Nicaragua, and the repercussions of these models for gender equality, women's empowerment, and the advancement of women's rights. The research question addressed in this essay is the following: How do Nicaraguan NGOs fighting for women's empowerment achieve the short term goals of supporting survivors of domestic violence, and also develop long-term strategies to change the patriarchal system of violence and domination? NGOs are demonstrating that they can be effective vehicles for organizing around women's issues of violence and oppression, identifying women's needs and interests, and developing successful strategies for women's empowerment through collective action. NGOs have become important actors in the last few years, by developing alternative projects to governments and the private sector. They have also become important voices for the marginalized and oppressed, taking the place of the leadership that political parties and labor unions held in the past. NGOs also have their limitations, since they are often financially unaccountable to the populations they serve, have the potential to be co-opted by the national or

local governments, and often do not have a real participative and empowering approach for their constituents. Due to their lack of accountability, NGOs often suffer from many of the limitations of the institutions they are challenging, since they maintain hierarchical tendencies, male-dominated leadership, and a focus on service provision instead of political and economic empowerment.

This paper analyzes the effectiveness of different empowerment strategies by using themes from the international development and gender and development literature to analyze the effectiveness and success of these NGOs. These themes include: the role of women's different identities, participation and empowerment, the role of NGOs, patriarchy, theories of gender and development, and the dichotomy between universal rights and local priorities. From the basis of these themes, I seek to substantiate the hypothesis that grassroots strategies against domestic violence must implement holistic approaches which have a focus on different levels of women's empowerment, from responding to women's survival needs and discrimination, to fighting patriarchy, capitalism, and other systems of domination. In this process, NGOs must also be conscious about the tension between economic and political strategies, and between universal rights and local priorities. NGOs will be able to develop a new paradigm for development if they achieve the right balance between women's self-sufficiency and political participation, and develop an empowerment process that starts from women's realities but keeps sight of the long-term goals of transforming gender relations and equalizing economic and political power.

2- THEMES & METHODS

2.1- Key Themes of International Development

The key themes in the international development program include women's socio-political identities, participation and empowerment, & the role of NGOs in women's empowerment & development. For the theme of identities, I introduced the ideas of Vandana Shiva, Ann Ferguson, and Christine Bose and Edna Acosta. Shiva is a leading activist and theorist of ecofeminism, and has articulated the relationships between different oppressed groups and different oppressions in society, by relating the exploitation of women to the exploitation of indigenous people and nature. Ferguson focuses more specifically on identity development and how men and women's identities are constructed and how they can be recreated. Finally, Bose and Acosta-Belén have edited a landmark book titled "Women in the Latin American Development Process," which has helped me frame issues on identity in the Latin American context from a development perspective.

For participation and empowerment, my literature review has delved into the ideas of Marilyn Carr, Vidya Samarasinghe, Francie Chassen-Lopez, and Srilatha Batliwala. All of these authors provide my analysis with a better understanding of the relationships between participation and empowerment, and about the many ways in which women challenge existing power structures and are able to change gender dynamics. Batliwala focuses on empowerment strategies, Samarasinghe and Chassen-López on political participation, and Carr and focuses on economic empowerment as a specific strategy for women's NGOs. On the roles of NGOs, I incorporate much of the analysis of the two previous sections. The previous sections provide the background about the issues NGOs need to deal, here I focus on what the NGOs are able to do better than others, and what limitations they have in terms of addressing the reconstruction of women's identities and the role they play in enabling women's participation and empowerment. The authors that are important for this section are Kalima Rose, Cynthia Chávez Metoyer, and Katherine Hoyt. Rose writes an in-depth study of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a powerful and successful women's organization from India. Chavez Metoyer has a book that looks at women in recent Nicaraguan history, which includes some important analysis about Nicaraguan NGOs. Finally, Katherine Hoyt, through her interviews with several

Nicaraguan intellectuals, provides a theoretical framework for the work of NGOs. I will now delve into these three themes in the international development context.

Women's Socio-Political Identities:

Identities are a very important cornerstone of international development, since they help us analyze power dynamics in society, and place the issue of decision-making capacity in the context of groups that are identified as the powerful and other groups that identify as oppressed by the powerful groups. Oppression cuts across many issues, and has the potential of uniting groups or issues that are subjugated by the people with more power. In our society, many issues such as women's rights, indigenous rights, and environmental preservation have the potential to unify very different groups of people in order to be able to access more power and to be able to create an alternative paradigm to the current system of domination and exploitation.

Domestic violence cannot be understood without understanding the formation of gender and other types of identities in our society. Women and men learn to identify with certain types of behaviors and certain types of dynamics from the early years of childhood development. Children who grow up witnessing their father abuse their mother will have a greater predisposition to be in an abusive relationships when they are adults, since they have learned from their parents a behavior that is characteristic of their gender roles in society.

Women in developing countries have a multiplicity of identities besides their sex, including identities based on class, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, etc, all of which combine in a myriad of ways to complement each individual woman's personality. Women in Nicaragua may have similarities with each other in terms of their shared history, but there are many ways in which their identity as women differs from each other. Women from the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua have a different cultural and ethnic background than those living in the Pacific or mountain areas, since the former are primarily of African or indigenous descent, whereas the later are primarily Mestizo, or a combination of Spanish, Indigenous, and African ascendancy.

This difference translates into a different set of priorities, since women have experienced a very different relationship with each other, with men, with the environment, and with the government. By the same token, class identity may play an important part in women's self-identification, therefore uniting women from similarly very different cultural or religious background due to a common experience of economic exploitation. For example, a peasant

woman from the Pacific Coast of Nicaragua may identify more with a peasant woman from the Atlantic than with an upper-class woman from the Pacific Coast.

Due to these different identities, women experience oppression differently (Moser 1993, 74), and cannot be homogenized or reduced to a variable for analysis. Chandra Mohanty, in her critique of feminist writers that homogenize third world women has stated that there is no “average third world woman” (Mohanty 1988, 56). Despite the variety of identities that differentiate women’s interests, women do share the commonality of being oppressed for their sex, in a system of domination know as patriarchy¹ (Lerner 1986) as well as by other systems of domination, including colonialism, slavery, & militarism (Bose et al 1995, 1). The continuation of these different systems of domination has been vital to sustain militarism and violence (Peterson 1999, 228), oppressing women as well as other “subordinated people” (116). Militarism and violence have been imposed on people without power, without resources, who have resisted efforts to be dominated, but have still been victimized due to their ethnic background, sex, sexuality, class, or nationality. In this way, militarism has acted as a justification to impose the values and ideas of the dominant groups, who have usually resorted to violence to impose their own system.

Women, poor people, and indigenous groups have also been oppressed by religious fundamentalism (Samarasinghe 1992; Shiva 1996), as well as development (Shiva 1996). Vandana Shiva argues that development is a continuation of colonialism that has continued to exploit women, peasants, and ‘tribals’ (1989, 2). In this case Shiva is referring to development as a new system of economic and political arrangements that has replaced the relationships of dependency and exploitation that existed during colonial times, though in a more subtle and overt manner than was previously the case. Other authors believe that development is not seen anymore “in a dichotomous mode as either economic salvation or unrestrained exploitation of the poor” (Bose et al 1995, 4), and that there are ways in which development can be beneficial to women. This difference of opinion is due partly to the way development is defined, whether it’s the external imposition of economic and political policies, or to policies and projects occurring due to state, private, non-governmental, and grassroots efforts.

Feminist post-modernist theory, which was born as a critique of universalistic theories and in favor of deconstructing the local reality, has sometimes ignored or negated the role of

¹ See glossary for definition.

identities, prompting other feminists to criticize it for a “reductionist” analysis that ignores central issues of race or class (Ferguson 1998, CWI 1:6). However, most feminist analysis from Third World countries focuses on the linkages between the different identities, and the way in which there are “compounding layers of oppression of ... women” (Bose et al 1995, 33), to the point that women have been the “slaves of slaves” in many colonial societies (31).

Vandana Shiva has illustrated how many of these identities are interconnected, and how the “spread of violence as a way of life” (1996, 73) and the combined ecological and human devastation has contributed to the reality that the liberation of women and nature are intricately linked (70). A stark example is provided by the Ethiopian famine, where neo-colonial development policies created greater poverty by removing ‘culturally perceived’ perceptions of poverty that were actually different types of production and employment by women and people from nomadic communities. This famine resulted in ecological destruction and mass starvation, providing a case study for the common bonds that unite the interests of women, poor people, and nature (Shiva 1989, 11). The interconnections are also obvious in peasant and indigenous women’s organizing, where there have been linkages between community, labor and cultural concerns (Bose et al 1995, 29). Some of the NGOs that have been able to bridge these identities include Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), the Women and Development Unit (WAND), and the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) (Bose et al 1995, 30).

Despite the linkages between different identities, it is now clear that there needs to be a focus on gender analysis in conjunction with other analysis about domination and oppression. When gender has been pushed to the background, as happened in many liberation or revolutionary struggles, women’s identity has remained invisible. Gender issues are not primary for women at all times (Molyneux 1985, 234), but they have often been only a marginal factor for men and women within liberation movements. For example, the Sandinista revolutionary government in Nicaragua did not see women (or for that matter indigenous people) as “subjects in their own rights” (Hoyt 1997, 86), even though they did see workers as subjects for whom the revolution was fighting. ON the other hand, the over-emphasis on gender to the detriment of other identities has the danger of creating a “false sisterhood” that can end up having a negative impact on gender relations (Ferguson 1998, 2:1).

In order to have a structural impact on gender relations, we must be able to start by recognizing differences (Molyneux 1985, 232), and creating a feminist ideology that is inclusive and transcends gender (Shiva 1995, 70). In Nicaragua racial, religious, and class privileges exist even within the women's movement (Hoyt 1997, 88). However, women have begun to transcend these divisions, and were able to have a national women's conference in 1992 that brought people from all classes and races (Chassen-López 1997, 2:4). The struggle now is to find ways to build on women's diverse identities while simultaneously reconstituting men's identities as the aggressor, and figuring out ways to include people who don't fit the mold, such as people of mixed race and transsexuals (Ferguson 1998, 2:2). A good starting point might be the consciousness-raising implemented across Latin America that has been based on identifying people's different identities through a participative process of popular education (1:5).

Participation & Empowerment

In order to make significant changes on gender issues, there is a need to respect the process of participation and empowerment. There are different questions that need to be formulated and addressed. First of all, what kind of participation is taking place? Is this participation empowering to women, or is it mainly involving people to produce greater productivity and efficiency? Are women going to be merely participants in development, or will they be able to access power and make decisions about issues that affect their lives? Finally, what is power, and how do people access it or challenge it?

The relationship between participation and empowerment is one that is important in international development, and which is crucial in terms of understanding how gender relations can be changed. Naila Kabeer stated that the issue of empowerment "signals a recognition by those working at the local level that, despite the rhetoric of participatory development, the power to define priorities remains where it has always been, in the hands of a minority at the top" (1999, 223). In order to counteract domestic violence, it is important to recognize that participation does not necessarily lead to empowerment. If we do not recognize this fact, programs leading to eliminating violence will not be successful at altering this dynamic.

Ferguson talks about an 'integrative strategy,' where the means are the ends (Ferguson 1998, 1:5), or as Gita Sen and Caren Grown have talked about it, it's a process in which the "objectives and methods are bound together" (1987, 79). This paradigm of thought believes that you can't justify the ends though bad actions, since this process would betray the very objectives

of empowerment. Empowerment is not only a goal oriented project, but places a lot of importance on the more unnoticeable but even more important changes that take place within people and that affect power relationships in society.

For DAWN, there are a number of requisites that must be met for empowerment to work, including access to resources, skills training, leadership for action, democratic processes, dialogue, participation in policy and decision-making and techniques for conflict resolution (1987, 89). In other words, empowerment is not a simple process, but is one that requires action at many levels, and that focuses on the prioritization of both practical and strategic interests.²

Empowerment is also closely tied to the goals of feminism. bell hooks sees feminism as “the struggle to end sexist oppression” (Chassen 1997, 3:4). For DAWN, feminism “has at its very core a process of economic and social development geared to human needs through wider control over and access to economic and political power” (Sen 1987, 20). Marilyn Carr has defined the priorities for empowerment as affecting policies, institutions and the infrastructure (Carr 1996, 210). All of these definitions and perspectives of empowerment and feminism are interconnected and complementary. However, empowerment also needs to be sustainable in the long term. In her narrative history of the Self-Employed Women’s Association, Kalima Rose states that “demands are useful only if they lead to more organizing, if they inspire more change” (Rose, 33).

With respect to participation, there are different viewpoints of how it becomes an empowering process. Chassen argues that there are two paradigms regarding political participation: The ‘supermadre’ or super mother paradigm that “extends traditional sex roles into the political sphere,” and the politicization of practical gender interests that lead to “alternative and revolutionary models of political participation” (Chassen-López 1997, 3:4). In Nicaragua, these two models have been very prominent, as the first female president in Nicaraguan history, Violeta Barrios, came to power with beliefs held supporting the first paradigm, whereas women’s organizations vied for political space from the perspective of the second paradigm. The second paradigm seeks to form an “inclusionary space from the fusion of public and private and personal and political (Chassen-López 1997, 2:4).

The question of how to transcend oppression through empowerment is crucial for women’s organizations. There are many mechanisms for women’s cooptation, including

² See glossary for definition.

indoctrination, coercion, and class privileges (Samarasinghe 1992, 242). Women from upper-class backgrounds are able to receive certain privileges for their class status, and therefore are not trade away their support of feminist ideals in order to gain monetary or political advantages. Women, as well as men, also come to believe that the current state of gender relations is good for them, and believe that the ways things are organized and the way power is held is the natural state of things.

The state is not always the enforcer of these control mechanisms, and even though the state is patriarchal, it is also able to address gender inequities when pressured to do so (Molyneux 2000, 40). During the rule of the Sandinista government, women had a chant that stated “No revolution without women’s emancipation, no emancipation without revolution” (1985, 237). This theme talks to the struggle between the revolutionary ideals of the Sandinistas and the ideals of the women’s movement, and at the same time about the capacity for women’s concerns to be addressed by the government.

The role of religion can also have a negative effect on women’s participation in society, especially on women’s visibility in the public sphere (Samarasinghe 1992, 256), since it tends to restrict those areas where women are permitted to become active according to fundamentalist religious institutions. This is one reason why role models can be so important for women’s participation and empowerment (255). Even though Violeta Chamorro did not vocally challenge sex roles between men and women, and often stated her conviction that women should play a supporting role to men, she also opened up spaces by the mere fact of her becoming the Nicaraguan president. Sometimes, what comes out in actions can speak louder than what is said by words. In this way, many women took heed of the fact that if Violeta could become president, they could also take charge of their lives and political participation. This is a first step in the process for “ungendering power” in society (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 217).

In order to realize women’s empowerment, women need to organize collectively for change. The strategies adopted will depend on the context and the goals of the actions being taken. However, if we are to challenge women’s oppression, we need to be able to empower women and be able to do so in a way that addresses men’s and women’s identities and gender roles in society. Naila Kabeer talks about a process in which women are able to gain a new consciousness, and in which there is a transformation of the ‘self’ (1999, 250). The key to the issue of empowerment is to be able to challenge the structures that keep patriarchy in place. In

my analysis in the second and third chapters, I will look at how women have adopted various strategies based on three main theoretical frameworks. The question that comes up is: Are women empowered by economic means, or do NGOs need to engage in tactics that raise consciousness or raise awareness about women's rights? Or is it a combination of these strategies that will bring about women's empowerment?

Marilyn Carr et al. believe that economic empowerment is the route to women's emancipation, and that it is closely linked to political processes. According to the editors of this publication, economic empowerment creates a greater awareness about women's needs and reality (1996, 213), addresses social ills such as domestic violence (208), and increases women's bargaining power (216), which she believes is the key determinant to women's empowerment (203). However, their definition of economic empowerment includes elements that are not strictly economic in nature. In addition to financial, enterprise development and marketing, they define this strategy as including bargaining and socio-political strategies, which by logic belong more as political in orientation (198). Peterson et al, on the other hand, envision the process of empowerment as conflicts resolved by nonviolent intervention and mutual learning (216). These different approaches are partly exemplified in two successful NGOs: The Grameen Bank and the Women's Development Programme (WDP). While the former uses a class-based grassroots strategy of empowering women, the later approaches empowerment by "creating a climate of questioning, reflecting, sharing, choosing, seeking, & discovering" (Kabeer 1999, 249). The two ways of looking at empowerment are often not as different as might appear, since the economic and political dimensions of empowerment often go hand in hand. However, the question is how to prioritize work for women's empowerment, and how much to focus on visible conflicts such as competition for economic resources versus other less visible but more embedded issues that contribute to women's oppression (Kabeer 1999, 226).

Role of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

During the last quarter of a century, NGOs have become dominant actors in international development. NGOs are demonstrating that they can be effective vehicles for organizing around women's and oppressed groups identities, are able to identify women's needs, and are have been able to develop successful strategies for women's empowerment through collective action. However, NGOs have very different ideas and strategies to generating participation, and have very different ideas about how to achieve empowerment. And even though NGOs have

advantages over states or political parties in addressing gender interests, NGOs also have various limitations, including their lack of financial accountability to the people they serve, their male-dominated leadership, and a continuation of some of the hierarchical tendencies that are also present in government institutions and political parties.

NGOs have dealt with some of the limitations of governments and political parties in addressing women's needs and gender dynamics. Despite the democratic principle of equal participation for all people, women's voices are often marginalized due to the exclusionary and competitive character of electoral democracy (Samarasinghe 1992, 239-240). Men are able to use their gender privileges in order to acquire power, and have the contacts and resources to protect their gender interests. Governments also tend to have very top-down decision-making structures that impair women's ability for true political participation in developing countries (Ferguson 1998, 2:4).

In socialist governments, or in most class-based political parties, women are also marginalized in the decision-making process, leaving them little room to articulate their demands. Women's active participation in liberation movements is often a "matter of expediency" (Samarasinghe 1992, 241), in which women's participation is accepted and encouraged in order to win the liberations struggle. Women are then forgotten once the liberation movement takes power and starts designating leadership positions to mostly male members of the movement. As many of these revolutionary organizations have lost their ability to retain their leadership, NGOs and popular organizations have created a new model for democratic change (Hoyt 1997, 88), and have been able to take on the mantle of the "democratic vanguard" in defense of women's and other oppressed groups rights (99). Many of the old organizations have also not been grounded in the communities or neighborhoods (Bose and Acosta 1995, 6), which has limited their capacity to reach out to the unemployed or non-paid workforce, largely consisting of women and poor people.

According to Orlando Núñez Soto, it is time to overcome the limitations of the previous two revolutions of liberal democracy and socialism, and create a third revolution, which he has termed as an "insurrection of the consciousness" (Hoyt 1997, 90). The thinking behind this new revolution is based on many of the ideas of the Critical Theorists, who were German-based theorists who sought to identify an alternative to the dehumanizing aspects of capitalism and state-led socialism. The critical theorists believed that civil society would be able to create a

greater consciousness about people's reality reality, and be able to create an alternative economic and political system from the bottom-up, that would also be based on cooperative values. NGOs are in some ways reflecting the ideas of critical theorists, and have been able to overcome the lack of vision and action in both liberal and revolutionary governments and in political parties, by incorporating a participatory democracy that is responsive of women's interests (Ferguson 1998, 24). They have done so by combining strategic and practical gender interests (Moser 1993, 77), and by "develop[ing] a new way of doing politics associated with principles of autonomy, internal democracy, and egalitarianism" (Molyneux 2000, 65).

In addition to the new paradigm represented in the work of many NGOs, women's involvement in these and other community organizations has responded to the fact that NGOs are able to access power (Samarasinghe 1993, 254), and that they represent a viable way for women to gain independence from socialist states that claimed to represent their rights (Molyneux 1985, 251). NGOs have been able to access power through the process of defining women's issues through collective action (Chávez-Metoyer 2000, 110). By this process, women have pushed for a "greater consciousness and increased women's legitimacy in the public sphere" (Bose and Acosta 1995, 6-7), and have moved governments to provide services or implement policies, as in the case of the Self-Employed Women's Organization (SEWA) in India (Rose, 22). SEWA has also been effective at working at different levels to impact gender dynamics, by working at the grassroots, on a national level, and even on the international level (24). They have done so by being an effective vehicle for women at the grassroots, who have seen the organization as truly representing their interests. By focusing on creating a greater awareness of gender disparities, SEWA and other NGOs have sustained pressure on governments, in order for these to implement services, legislation, and even labor monitoring (3).

In addition to accessing power by raising consciousness of gender disparities and women's needs, NGOs have been able to access power in the more traditional forms, by developing broad alliances and mobilizing women for action, or what Naila Kabeer has termed the "power with" and the "power to" respectively (Kabeer 1999, 245-253). Kabeer talks about how women are not viewed as "needy clients" anymore, but are now "competent actors" in decision-making (261). In Nicaragua, several women's coalitions have been able to create significant changes in gender relations. These coalitions include the National Women's Coalition, the Women's Unemployment Project, and the Women's Network Against Violence

(Chávez-Metoyer 2000, 102-106), which have fought for women's political participation, economic empowerment, and raising consciousness about women's roles respectively.

NGOs are also effective at identifying needs, and providing women with access to resources (Kabeer 1999, 261). The Women's Aid Organization (WAO), for example, has developed a variety of strategies to combat domestic violence, including shelters for abused women, counseling, legal assistance, job placement, and housing assistance (246). All of these actions seek to access power by restoring women's self-esteem and autonomy (246).

Despite all these advantages and strengths of NGOs, they have many weaknesses. When they aid in the development of more grassroots women's organizations, they are not always successful at ensuring the autonomy and sustainability of these organizations (Carr 1996, 198). This can be problematic if situations of dependency are created between the grassroots and the NGO, and women are not truly empowered in the process. Even though women may have access to more resources and have a public voice, they may repeat some of the dynamics of unequal power relations existent in society, by not being able to create a more autonomous space of their own. A different solution for NGOs would be to become more accountable to women instead of donors or governments (Kabeer 1999, 262), effectively transforming themselves into more grassroots-based organizations, and increasing their responsiveness to women's needs and long-term empowerment. In their current form, they often still have some structural problems, such as "little organizational or resource base independent of the project being implemented" (Sen and Grown 1987, 91), and also somewhat of a "top down approach" (92). These two problems are often indicators of the same patriarchy that is embedded in all of society, since women and men have learned to accept certain roles and behaviors as their natural roles. For NGOs to break from this mold they need to constantly challenge the assumptions and thinking behind their programs, and think about how these programs will have a lasting impact.

A final problem NGOs have relates to the type of work they carry out, and how it relates to the work done by the government or the private for-profit sector. Maxine Molyneux (2000, 64) talks about a new social contract between the government and NGOs, where the government is passing on many of its responsibilities to the for-profit and non-profit sectors. There is a danger that NGOs will take on many programs or issues that should really be done by the government, due to the resources it has, its ability to cover a wide area, and because many public goods can only be provided and taxed for in a just and equitable manner by the state. In a similar

vein, NGOs may also be co-opted by states acting on behalf of patriarchal interests, by carrying on certain tasks or activities that are not challenging the basic structures of inequality, and are in fact making it easier for these structures to remain in place (Bose and Acosta 1995, 7). For NGOs to have a lasting impact and truly empower women, they need to be aware of their limitations as well as aware of their capacity for change.

2.2 Key Themes in Gender & Development

The key themes to be analyzed in the gender & development field are patriarchy, theories in gender and development, and universal rights vs. local priorities. The first theme in the gender and development field is patriarchy, which I define and analyze by looking at the structural barriers that prevent women from accessing power and keeping them oppressed. I follow with an analysis of the three main theories in gender studies in development, which are Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD). This analysis seeks to analyze how the theories explain women in the productive sector, in the reproductive sector, and how gender relations systematically oppress women. The third theory, GAD, takes a deeper look at gender relations, and is more focused on empowerment and participation, so has provided women's NGOs with a deeper understanding of women's situation in developing countries. Finally, the last theme is a comparative analysis of universal rights and local priorities. Here I seek to analyze the contradictions and complimentary issues that both of these ideas bring to gender studies in development.

For patriarchy, I bring in the views of Gerda Lerner, Naila Kabeer, and Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan. The first two provide a good theoretical understanding of patriarchy, whereas Peterson and Runyan develop an analysis that explains how women are oppressed by patriarchy in the international context. For the theme about theories in gender and development, I have incorporated the analysis of Eva Rathgeber, Irene Tinker, and Caroline Moser. Rathgeber has an article that explicitly compares the three theories under discussion, and which provides a good starting point for my own analysis. Tinker and Moser bring in an economic and political analysis that compares the strategy of empowerment to the different theories and policy approaches used by governments and development agencies. Finally, for the theme of universal rights vs. local priorities, I am focusing on the work by Maxine Molyneux, Chandra Mohanty, and Gita Sen and Caren Grown. Molyneux was the first to clearly articulate the differences

between practical and strategic gender interests, so is of great importance to the field and to this particular analysis. Mohanty comes from a post-structuralist analysis that argues for focusing on local priorities, whereas Sen and Crown bring an analysis that places more emphasis on universal rights and the intersection of different types of oppressions.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women (Andermahr, 159). This system has been around for over 2500 years, and is the earliest form of oppression³ in recorded history (Lerner 1986, 212); even before class oppression came into existence. In fact, the very first gender defined role for women was within marriage transactions, where women were traded as property between men (215). As I argued in the first section on identities, even though patriarchy was created independently of other oppressions, it has developed in conjunction with these others. Maria Mies talks about how there are three tiers of capitalist exploitation: The holders of capital, mostly male wage laborers and mostly female non-wage workers, and housewives and subsistence producers (Chavez-Metoyer 2000, 26). This division into these tiers is a more modern application of Marx's analysis of class in modern society that takes into account the effect of patriarchy on economic exploitation of women. An analysis that combines class and gender exploitation avoids "binary divisions of power [that] create false dichotomies" (Mohanty 1988, 71). Mohanty argued that such binary dichotomies were too restrictive to fully understand women's exploitation in society, since there are many other issues that contribute to gender inequality.

Patriarchy is entrenched in our society at the structural, institutional, and interpersonal levels (Kabeer 1999, 226). Structural issues include violence against women and economic factors. Economic exploitation is a deeply embedded structural component of patriarchy. For example, Santos argues that violence against women is exacerbated by the flight of western capital (Santos 1999a, 36), which has worsened economic conditions and increased women's vulnerability. Women are also at the bottom of the economic scale, receiving less pay for the same type of work that men do, no recognition for unpaid labor, and more duties in the household. Women have less power and money than men, and more work and responsibilities (Bose and Acosta 1995, 20).

³ See glossary for definition.

Violence against women is closely linked to economic exploitation. Gerda Lerner argues, “sexual exploitation of women is the very mark of class exploitation” (1986, 215), a view corroborated by many articles and the current reality of prostitution around the world. In India, SEWA has recognized the vulnerability of poor women in society, and the fact that they are often the main targets of different kinds of violence (Rose, 32). However, poor women are not the only victims of violence, and in fact there is not conclusive evidence that domestic violence diminishes with greater economic status. In addition, women’s class position is “consolidated through their sexual relationships” (Lerner 1986, 215). This is another way of stating that women gain class privileges depending on their relationships with men in power (Lerner 1986, 218). Women are pressured to engage in sexual relationships with men with power, either due to economic necessity, family coercion, or by men’s abuse of their physical, political, or economic power. This reality of women’s exploitation is compounded by the stereotype of women as weak, homebound victims of violence (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 73 and 114), instead of as strong participants working to end the cycle of violence. The stereotype of the weak woman victimizes women, and creates false images of women’s ability to live independently of men, and of the relative roles and responsibilities of men and women.

Patriarchy also oppresses women and restricts their ability to participate in society by the threat of sexual violence (Lerner 1986, 225; Samarasinghe 1992, 252), and imposes a view of women as victims or objects who defend themselves (Mohanty 1988, 58). In this way, women face the real threat of retaliations for active participation, and they are devalued as active participants within society. Sexual violence is greater in areas of intense military presence (Santos 1999b, 149; Peterson and Runyan 1999, 226), which brings up a specific institutional causal factor of patriarchy. In military areas there is a marked increase of prostitution and trafficking of women, and violence against women is greater. At times, military personnel use rape as a form of terrorizing women when in combat (Sen and Grown 1987, 73), or sometimes even in times of relative peace. In many countries, the rape of prisoners has also been a standard practice against women (Molyneux 2000, 62), and it is also practiced on men, though a lot less frequently than on women. Collective violence against women is not limited to the military. In some communities, families or communities have collectively chastised, tortured, and even killed young girls who have been ‘guilty’ of “transgressing the family honor” (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 219).

Besides the military, religious fundamentalism is another institution that has also subjected women to “social control” (Samarasinghe 1992, 245). Religious fundamentalists from many different religions have often applied a literal interpretation of their religious documents in order to justify men’s decision-making authority within the household and in the productive sphere. In the American continent, religious fundamentalism has been used to subjugate women since the Spaniards arrived on the continent, and women suffered from male-dominated religious practices even during pre-colonial times. Other forms of institutionalized patriarchy have diminished, such as practices employed by the state. States are now assuming a “greater responsiveness” to gender issues (Molyneux 2000, 71), though this varies greatly from country to country, and is strongly influenced by the degree of control of religious fundamentalists on state structures.

At the interpersonal level, patriarchy can work only with women’s cooperation (Lerner 1986, 217). The problem is that women have in many cases internalized their inferiority (218) in the same way that men have internalized a sense of superiority over women. Women have learned to blame themselves for such issues as domestic violence (Kabeer 1999, 233), and have been blamed by their families and communities for an act over which they had no control. All of these practices translate into higher rates of domestic violence, since different types of violence against women are intricately connected (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 227, Santos 1999a, 41). As more women are abused and victimized in the public sphere, there is an increased acceptance of violence within the home. Conversely, inaction regarding the pervasiveness of domestic violence translates to a greater acceptance of more public forms of violence against women.

Patriarchy can only begin to change when we learn the lessons of power relationships and how identities are shaped in society. There needs to be a creation of an alternative system, and the “creation of a world free of dominance and hierarchy that is truly human” (Lerner 1986, 229). Women, and increasingly many men are developing a new value system that equates women and men’s decision-making in the private and public spheres. There is now a greater awareness of the dysfunction of current gender relationships within the household (Kabeer 1999, 234; Peterson and Runyan 1999, 214).

There are still many differences in NGOs perspectives on how to confront patriarchy. For example, Santos argues that much of the women’s movement has refused to see prostitution as a central issue to women’s liberation (1999b, 173), whereas other groups think that this is an

important issue for women to address. There are also different perspectives on what to do with the military. Peterson and Runyan argue for a feminization of the military, even while they accept that diverse militaries may still engage in indiscriminate violence (1999, 226). The DAWN network, on the other hand, advocates for a reduction of military expenditures (Sen and Grown 1987, 83). What is clear is that the “supermadre” paradigm (Chassen-Lopez 1997, 3:3) employed by women leaders like Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua has not created any lasting changes for women. New methods for challenging and ending patriarchy need to be formulated, in which the cycle of violence is not repeated, and where women and men create new forms of relating to each other.

Theories in Gender and Development

There are three main theories that analyze women’s situation in developing countries, which are women in development (WID), women and development (WAD), and gender and development (GAD). WID developed as a theory when women began to recognize that governments and development agencies were not including women as active participants in the development process. This analysis was very groundbreaking when it started in the 1970s, and was able to bring women into the discourse of development. However, theorists advocating WID were not always very critical about the economic structures that oppressed poor women in Third World countries. As a result, WAD developed as an independent critique of international economic inequalities, and generated a new alternative for women seeking a more critical perspective. However, neither of these theories was focused on gender relations, and the importance of women’s work and decision-making in the household. As a result of this criticism, a new theoretical paradigm called gender and development (GAD) has entered the discourse on women and development (Rathgeber 1990, 489).

According to Eva Rathgeber, these three trends “[have] been associated with a varying set of underlying assumptions and [have] led to the formulation of different strategies for the participation of women in [the] development process” (489). These three perspectives share a common view that women are disadvantaged in today’s world, and that development, economic and political institutions have systematically discriminated against women. The three perspectives are also in general agreement about the need for women’s empowerment, however they have different ideas about what this means and how it can be carried out.

The WID viewpoint is the oldest of the different perspectives addressing women's situation in the international context. According to this model, women are not sufficiently integrated into development, so we need to find ways to include women to the social, economic and political processes of developing countries (Rathgeber 1990, 489). WID advocates for the incorporation of women into economic activities where they can acquire the resources for financial independence and political empowerment (490).

WAD developed in response to WID because theorists and activists argued that the development process is often flawed, and that we need to change this process in order to address women's needs and gender inequality. The WAD perspective "assumes that women's position will improve if and when international structures become more equitable" (Rathgeber 1990, 493), and argues that you cannot just bring women into a structure that is unequal and flawed. This means that societies need to address first and foremost the issues of class and imperialism. The assumption is that women's oppression is a lesser or inferior by-product of other systems of oppression. In other words, the assumption that the class struggle that the philosopher Karl Marx advocated for must be the priority if we are going to address women's inequality.

Both of the previous perspectives have contributed much to the debate about gender inequality, but remain very limited in addressing the roots of women's oppression. Neither of these perspectives has much to say about violence against women or about gender-based relations between men and women. Both of these views might argue that domestic violence can be addressed once women acquire more power over economic or political processes. Both WID and WAD focus on the productive sector of society, ignoring the importance of incorporating an analysis of household dynamics and decision-making, which has been called the reproductive sector in feminist analysis. By ignoring the reproductive sector, WID and WAD are not able to address the range of oppressions and obstacles that women face, and thus oversimplify the causes and responses to gender inequalities. The poverty that women face is important, but we must also look at other factors, such as ethnic discrimination, and the fact that patriarchy justifies the current institutional and societal distributions of power, roles and responsibilities.

This is where the third theoretical framework, Gender and Development (GAD) enters the debate. GAD states that women are agents of change who need to organize themselves for a more effective political voice (Rathgeber 1990, 494). GAD also believes that women's organizing needs to take the reproductive sphere as a central issue for action, and that we cannot

ignore household division of power and responsibilities when addressing unequal gender relations. This theoretical framework places a greater importance on strategic goals than they receive in WID and WAD. At the same time, GAD also builds on the two other theories, since gender relations are not independent of the economic system in which they operate, and are very much affected by the type of development paradigm and international relations that are in dominance.

The complexity of the differences between these viewpoints comes into focus in developing countries that are faced with overwhelming poverty on the one hand, and international systems of exploitation and extraction of resources on the other hand. When we look at both of these issues, we see that WID and GAD are still very relevant to analysis, since they focus on very real concerns for women, and seek to make significant changes to women's situation. As Tinker states, "[WID theory] legitimized efforts to influence development policy with a combined argument for justice and efficiency" (Tinker 1990, 30). This analysis has produced changes in the inclusion of women throughout development projects, and has raised awareness about gender and development in some key institutions. For example, a study by the Agency for International Development (AID) found that evaluations using an analysis of sexual division of labor produced more efficient development projects (Rathgeber 1990, 498). However, it is possible that a focus on efficiency could end up causing more harm than good, since greater efficiency often entails more profit-driven development. This type of development has only increased levels of poverty and inequality, and forced more women to find more jobs to survive, and to resort to such types of employment as prostitution, pornography, and other sexually and physically abusive employment.

WAD theory is also limited in advancing women's concerns. In socialist countries, where WAD has been the primary theoretical framework, women are conceivably worse off, since they are now faced with more work, but "no redefinition of gender relations" (Molyneux 1985, 229). Women continue to work in the household, but now also have to work outside the household, so even when they have the same type of income generation work as men, they have more responsibilities with family activities. WAD has also been traditionally biased against nature and indigenous people (Shiva 1989, 4), and has dismissed issues important to feminism as not important for women, or as expressions of 'western' feminism.

The problem faced by NGOs is in defining their priorities for action. WID theory argues for placing a greater importance to focusing on economic power over legal rights (Tinker 1990, 33), since the latter have a need for enforcement, which is often minimalist or nonexistent. However, other people argue that there is an “artificiality of separation between development and politics” (Kabeer 1999, 260), since there is a complimentary set of work that needs to be carried out in both the political and economic arenas. This is why many proponents of GAD argue that WID strategies are important to women’s empowerment, as long as they are implemented in conjunction with a gender analysis (82). GAD theorists have also warned about a certain determinism that underlines much of the analysis in the international discourse. Rathgeber argues that economic determinism by WID advocates must be avoided (1990, 204) in order to produce more flexible and responsive strategies for women. Other determinisms are also restricting, whether these are class-based analysis by WAD proponents, or the theoretical abstractness of GAD analysis. However, GAD is still the most far-reaching of these theories, since it has created a critique of gender relations that truly challenges notions of male superiority and decision-making. GAD addresses violence against women in a more direct fashion, since it includes the possibility of redefinition of male and female identities. It is also focused on empowerment linked to consciousness-raising, which is important for women’s visibility and increased decision-making in the household and in the public arena.

Universal Rights vs. Local Priorities

Many feminist theorists who agree on the importance of a gender and development (GAD) analysis disagree on the prioritization of universal rights vs. local rights. Most feminists would argue that both of these issues are important, and that they are both relevant and necessary in order to design strategies for women’s empowerment (Ferguson, 1:7). However, there is a tension about which issue is more important for development practice. The universal rights perspective argues that universal rights for women should be applied regardless of religion, culture, economic situation, or political system of a given country. The local priorities perspective argues that local priorities should be placed at the forefront of the women’s movement, without imposing universal notions from the outside world. These two are not by design mutually exclusive, since it is possible to incorporate universal rights to development and still work on the local priorities for women.

However, there is a tension between these two perspectives, and it needs to be examined in order to design successful empowerment strategies for women. Some feminist writers and activists place an emphasis on the different oppressions in society, and how feminism must be able to challenge all of these in order to advance women's rights (Sen and Grown 1987, 19). The focus on universal rights is especially important when the simultaneous exploitation of women, nature, indigenous people, and poor people comes to light. From this reality, it is necessary to push for rights that benefit all oppressed sectors, and protect women's rights regardless of the religious dictates of a specific country or region. Proponents of universal rights also point out the "disempowering nature" of rejecting universal notions, since women and other groups are not able to find mobilizing ideas that can unite them together (Hoyt 1997, 82 & 98). Certain groups like Human Rights Watch have been able to monitor women's issues and press for changes based on a unifying issue that applies to all countries (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 228). In Nicaragua, SI Mujer has been able to put pressure on the government by appealing to the international community about the restrictions placed on NGOs by the government (CEIBA 2001). This new activity by NGOs has become stronger and more effective with the process of globalization, since state's authorities are eroded, and women have more capacity to claim autonomous spaces and demand international monitoring (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 228).

On the other hand, advocates of local priorities criticize the universal language as disempowering, since it has the potential to stereotype women as "powerless" and in need of outside intervention (Mohanty 1988, 55 & 59). There are also country-based examples of groups that mobilize according to a different set of needs and priorities. One such group is SEWA, which varies its actions by the type of environment and sexual division of labor in each locality (Carr 1996, 214). The Grameen Bank has also implemented its programs based on the identification of local needs, and has been flexible enough to change the way its business operate in order to suit the schedule and work of the women participants of its program (214).

The tension is to some degree between the local economic needs and the global gender needs, of which Third World women often fall in the middle (Sen and Grown 1987, 19). Radical feminists, who propose a focus on gender issues over other oppressions, and WAD feminists, who argue for a need to analyze class analysis as a primary issue, attack Third World women who believe that both of these analyses must be used in a complimentary way. Another issue of contention between the local needs and the universal rights approach is the difference between

practical gender interests (PGI) and strategic gender interests (SGI). The former relates to immediate perceived needs, and arise from the “concrete conditions of women’s positioning within the gender division of labor” (Molyneux 1985, 233), whereas the later entails a ‘strategic goal’, and “entail[s] an analysis of [women’s] subordination and from the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory set of arrangements from those which exist” (232). Naila Kabeer argues that these two are not separate or dichotomous categories, but are linked by strategies for empowerment (261). However, there are some issues, such as measures against violence against women that have been classified by Molyneux or other writers as strategic gender interests (1985, 233).

As PGI and SGI can be reconciled, so can the focus on universal women’s rights and local priorities. As Núñez stated, it is possible to create an “insurrection of the consciousness” (Hoyt 1997, 90), based on a critical analysis of reality that leads to social emancipation (81). Feminism in its different forms and strategies is challenging assumed cultural values and defined sex roles. However, this is also a constructive, and not only a destructive process. Focusing on the empowerment and political participation of women and other groups can combine the potential for change of universal rights to the empowerment of women through their own analysis of their reality. We must simultaneously create new identities that change gender dynamics and create a new sexual division of labor based on equality. In this process, we will be creating new common values that reflect and affirm the diversity of our planet, and respect the equal value we have as human beings.

2.3 The purpose and methods of research

This research intends to look at current trends in organizing against domestic violence, examines different organizing models in Nicaragua, and the repercussions of these models for gender equality, women’s empowerment, and the advancement of women’s rights. The research question addressed in this essay is the following: How do Nicaraguan NGOs fighting for women’s empowerment achieve the short term goals of supporting survivors of domestic violence, and also make steps to changing the patriarchal system of violence and domination?

I seek to understand how women’s rights are being advanced and how women’s visibility is improved, at the same time taking note at what is happening under the surface, or as Naila Kabeer states, those “interests [that] might be unarticulated or unobservable... conflicts of

interest [that] may be suppressed not only from the decision-making agenda but also from the consciousness of the various parties involved” (Kabeer 1999, 226).

I am using theoretical models from gender and development studies, in order to understand the strategies for empowerment used by Nicaraguan NGOs fighting against domestic violence. These models have enabled me to gain a better understanding about how domestic violence can be addressed at the community and national levels. The models of feminist grassroots organizing around domestic violence in Nicaragua all have theoretical backgrounds in Gender studies; they are not simply practical actions without an ideological background for their implementation. Most of the strategies reviewed also have a focus on women’s empowerment, such as the ones that advocate for a change in gender relations, advancing women’s human rights, women’s economic self-sufficiency, or a Marxist analysis of social change. I also review NGOs that are not focused on empowerment, but are concerned with providing services or relief to women within the established framework or development model.

I seek to substantiate the hypothesis that grassroots strategies against domestic violence must depart from a gender and development theoretical analysis that focuses on women’s empowerment and the reconstruction of women and men’s identities. In order to change the cycle of violence and patriarchy, it is necessary to implement holistic approaches which have a focus on different levels of women’s empowerment, from responding to women’s survival needs and discrimination, to fighting patriarchy, capitalism, and other systems of domination.

From the basis of this hypothesis, I study how domestic violence is framed within the women’s movement, and how grassroots strategies for women’s empowerment against domestic violence are different or similar from one another. I do not believe there is one solution or ideal strategy, but I do think that the consciousness-raising strategy has been the most effective at making significant changes in affecting domestic violence in Nicaragua. Various of these NGOs have been able to simultaneously address women’s victimization in the public sphere and also her oppression within the household, by providing shelters, resources, or legal tools for women and raising awareness about the culture of violence and unjust gender relations.

I have relied on books at the American University, the AU Law School, and George Washington University, in addition to my own collection on books relating to Nicaragua. I have also relied on some of the smaller but more focused libraries and resources in the Washington area. These include books and articles from the National Organizers Alliance (NOA), the

Nicaragua Network, the Association for Women in Development (AWID), and the Commission for the Advancement of Women of Interaction (CAW). The Contemporary Women's Issues online database of articles has provided me with many articles that relate specifically to domestic violence in Nicaragua, including a significant number that focus on the NGOs engaged in this issue.

I have attended various presentations and activities relating to gender roles and community organizing against domestic violence, which have helped me keep my essay grounded on concrete issues and experiences, and have deepened my understanding of the challenges faced by NGOs working against domestic violence. These include a presentation by Yeta Ramírez of the Nicaraguan Network of Women Against Violence, a presentation by Beckie Masaki of the San Francisco based Asian Women's Shelter, a focus group about male attitudes on gender issues led by Mark Lancaster of InterAction, and a presentation by advocates and activists of international women's rights. Finally, for my theoretical background, I have relied on writings from different courses at American University, including Women & Development, Micropolitics of Development, skills institutes on Gender Analysis and Microfinance, International Development, and Comparative Social Movements. The resources found at the different libraries have also deepened this part of the analysis.

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3- OVERVIEW OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

3.1 Introduction to domestic violence

Domestic violence is the most common form of violence against women, and is the one where women often have the least amount of power to act against it. It combines psychological, physical, and sexual violence, all of which often occur in conjunction with one another. Even though physical violence is the most visible and most widely reported, it is often psychological violence that is more frequent and which often stays with the victim and the victim's children throughout their life. Some of the more serious psychological effects of domestic violence include learned helplessness, the "battered woman syndrome," and post-traumatic stress disorder (McCue 1995, 96-98).

A study on women conducted by two Nicaraguan NGOs in conjunction with a Swedish university found that conjugal or domestic violence constituted 75% of cases of violence against women in Nicaragua (Ellsberg et al, 24). Thirty-eight percent of the respondents had been victims of violence from a spouse or partner at some point in their lives. The psychological and emotional scars of domestic violence often stay with abused women for a lifetime (McCue 1995, 96).

On a societal level, this form of violence has a multiplier effect, as children who grew up in a violent household are more likely to reproduce this violence when they become adults (McCue 1995, 101). At the same time, the impact of domestic violence on the country's economy is immense. In a study presented at the IDB conference on "Domestic Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean," Andrew Morrison and María Orlando found that domestic violence in Nicaragua reduced women's earnings by \$29.5 million a year, or about 1.6 percent of GDP (Morrison & Beatriz 1999, 66). In a country that experienced a negative annual GDP per capita growth rate of -3.4 for the period of 1975 to 1998, this figure is a very significant number (HDR 2000, 184). To this statistic we can also add the impact that domestic violence has on state services, including police protection, health care, and education, all of which consume a significant amount of resources from the state.

The two issues of institutionalized violence and loss of women's earnings have huge implications for development. Domestic violence is prevalent throughout society, and its existence continues to take away women's power that leads to a cycle of violence that repeats itself throughout society. At the same time, we cannot ignore that the many structural causes of

domestic violence have roots not only in patriarchy, but also in other systems of domination and exploitation. Capitalism, colonialism, and racism all contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence in society. However, patriarchy is the main structure that exists to legitimize and encourage the physical, emotional, and psychological violence by men to women, since it legitimizes men's role as the income earner, and as the person with more decision-making power in the household and in society.

A cross cultural ethnographic study of 90 "primitive societies" carried out in the late 1980s by D. Levinson found 16 that were classified as "relatively free of interfamily violence" (Ellsberg and Peña 1996, 13). This shows that violence is not necessarily inevitable, and that there may be things that can be done to eliminate it from our society. This study identified four different factors that, when combined, are highly correlated with societies that have high levels of violence against women. These factors are:

- Economic inequity between men and women
- The use of physical violence as a common method of conflict resolution
- Male authority for household decision-making
- Restrictions for unilateral divorce for women

All of these issues reflect on patriarchy, and how it has a stronghold over society due to the combination of household and societal pressure on women. These elements have in common that they all cut off women from decision-making power, since she can only make decisions with the approval of her husband or partner.

Even as domestic violence is rooted in the household, it is supported by institutional and structural systems that maintain gender inequality. Gita Sen states in her book on Third World Women's Perspectives that "peace cannot be separated from development just as equality cannot, because the conditions that breed violence, war, and inequality are themselves often the results of development strategies harmful or irrelevant to the poor and to women" (Sen and Grown 1987, 74). We need to look closely at development and peace strategies, to understand how they might be contributing to women's oppression. Development as it is practiced is applied through the lens of patriarchy, and needs to be constantly re-examined at the local, national, and international levels in order to create programs that truly benefit women. Addressing domestic violence will not only eliminate the powerlessness, violence, and psychological scars on women, but is a fundamental aspect of the struggle against patriarchy in our society.

These factors can help us understand how gender relations are structured in our society, and how men have abused women in order to maintain their power and decision-making authority. In order to understand the roots of domestic violence, it is necessary to understand the theoretical underpinnings of gender analysis in the international context. It is only through this understanding that we can begin to theorize how domestic violence repeats itself, and how it can be addressed.

The following three chapters integrate the analysis developed in the previous comprehensive chapter into an analysis of my research question regarding NGO empowerment strategies against domestic violence. The current chapter presents an overview of domestic violence. Continuing the current introduction, the following section provides a chronology of important events relating to domestic violence with significant events that have occurred in history regarding domestic violence, situating this description as much as possible from the perspective of Nicaragua. The final section of the overview looks into the actions and policies of different Nicaraguan governments regarding domestic violence. This section also looks at government structures within the last 10 years, focusing on economic policies, the central government office for women's issues, the police, and the health sector.

Chapter four starts with an overview of grassroots strategies against domestic violence, and follows with a presentation of my findings on what NGOs have been doing in Nicaragua on women's rights, and where applicable, on domestic violence. The analysis about strategies for empowerment starts with the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Nicaraguan Women's Movement (AMNLAE), a mass-based women's organization that was at the leadership of the women's movement during the 1970s and 1980s. I then go into a comparative analysis of different NGOs working from an empowerment perspective, based on the type of strategy they employ, and using my comprehensive essay as a guide for analysis. Finally, the fifth and final chapter highlights findings and conclusions that have emerged from this essay in relations to my stated research question, and follow-up work that needs to be done in this area.

3.2 A brief history of domestic violence and feminism

The geographic region of Nicaragua has been characterized by armed conflict throughout modern history (Fowler 1989, 5). The use of violence as a form of social subjugation and control was prevalent in pre-colonial times, when the Aztec empire sought to conquer the indigenous

people living in what is now Central America, many of who were distant relatives of the Aztecs (32).

The original inhabitants of Nicaragua belonged to several different tribes. These included Miskito, Sumo, Rama, and Matagalpa, all of who settled in the Atlantic and mountain areas. The Nahua, were more recent arrivals to the current Nicaraguan region, and were closely related to the Aztecs, speaking the same language, and sharing many of the similar traditions and customs with the Aztecs (Fowler 1989, 6). The Nahua group in the Nicaraguan region were called Nicarao by the Spaniard conquerors, and lived predominantly in the Pacific coastal region of the country (4).

The system of patriarchy was established in pre-Columbian indigenous societies in Central America, and many laws or institutions openly discriminated against women, and reinforced patriarchal relationships in society. For example, adultery by women was punished by death, whereas men were allowed to have numerous concubines (Navarro and Sánchez 1999, 12). In marriage, the bride's family paid a dowry, and the groom could annul the marriage if he decided that his bride was not a virgin (Fowler 1989, 204).

Despite these laws, some of the customs did present some level of equality between men and women. For example, punishment against rapists among the Nicarao was legally sanctioned through the practice of enslaving the offender. A rapist could only acquire freedom by paying a ransom to the parents of the victim; otherwise, he would become their slave (Fowler 1989, 198). Women also participated actively in commercial activities in society, including such occupations as medicine women, midwives, street vendors, and traders (Navarro and Sánchez 1999, 13). There were also many women goddesses in the Mesoamerican cultures, though women played a secondary role in "public religious ritual" (13).

The colonization of the Americas by the European empires increased the levels of violence in the region, and violence against women became more prevalent. The Spaniards engaged in a colonization process and conquest that "produced a violence specifically directed against women, ... [who were] raped, killed, enslaved, branded, demanded as gifts or tokens of friendships, and were part of the spoils of war reaped by the conquerors" (Navarro and Sánchez 1999, 24). Spaniards arriving in the Americas were almost all men, so the conquerors often took advantage of the indigenous women to satisfy their own needs.

The Spaniard invaders sought to extract as many possible riches as they could to take back to their native country. In order to do so, they employed a variety of forms of subjugation of the original inhabitants, including the imposition of Spaniard values, customs, religion, government and political structures, architectural designs, social hierarchies, & ideology. This subjugation sought to fulfill two obligations: payment of tribute, and the allocation of labor of the indigenous people (Perez-Brignoli 1989, 39).

The Native Central Americans had instituted a patriarchal social organization before the Europeans arrived to America. However, the arrival of the Spaniards, almost all of whom were men, signaled the creation of a new form of patriarchy that was formed along ethnic lines, as white Spaniards claimed Native Central American women as personal property. Domestic violence had been institutionalized in Europe during the Roman Empire, when the law of marriage stated that married women would have “no other refuge, to conform themselves entirely to the temper of their husbands and the husbands to rule their wives as necessary and inseparable possessions” (McCue 1995, 25).

There is not much evidence of a women’s movement during the colonial or post-colonial times in Latin America, and there is very little evidence of a women’s movement in Nicaragua in the literature review. This does not mean that one did not exist, but it is clear that if it did exist, it did not leave a mark in the new Latin American women’s movement. However, part of this lack of connection to older struggles for women’s emancipation is due to historical amnesia about the achievements and difficulties faces by previous movements for women’s rights, such as the gains made for suffrage, anti-slavery, and other forms of more explicit oppression.

Since the Somoza dictatorship was toppled in 1979, every government has been confronted by women’s organizations that have demanded government action regarding domestic violence. Despite the gains made during the Sandinista years for women’s rights, the Sandinista government never effectively addressed domestic violence. During the eleven years in which they were in power, the Sandinistas established the Statue of Rights and Guarantees for legal equality between men and women, supported the establishment of AMNLAE, a national women’s organization, and encouraged women’s participation in the economy and social aspects of society (Chuchryk 1991,146-148). However, the Sandinistas maintained a patriarchal standpoint regarding gender relations in the reproductive sphere, by opposing the legalization of

abortion, ignoring the issue of domestic violence, and failing to address the divergent responsibilities between women and men within the household.

Despite the limitations of the Sandinista government, including condoning domestic violence and sexual harassment (Randall 1994), it was a huge step forward from the Somoza dictatorship. Somoza's National Guard implemented systematic rape of women as a form of torture (Figueroa 1996, CWI 4:1). Rape was used to "humiliate, degrade, and oppress women" (1). Levels of violence during the Somoza dictatorship were at an all time high, as both the government and the Sandinista guerrillas engaged in an all-out war that left countless dead and left profound emotional and psychological scars on many people. To this day, there has not been an adequate National emotional and psychological healing process from the sixty years of civil war. The ending of armed conflict in the early 1990s has set the stage for the possibility of resolving conflict by more peaceful means. However, economic conditions and the profound psychological and emotional scars left from the conflict have not led to a decrease in violence in society, and we have a situation where domestic violence has actually increased during the last few years (Mohr 1994, CWI 1)

The Sandinista government, which held power in Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990, significantly advanced women's rights and economic status. In 1990 in Nicaragua, the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) lost the national elections, signaling an end to a social experiment that had drastically altered the landscape of Nicaraguan society. During their eleven years in power, they decreased illiteracy levels from 50% to 13% (Williams 1991, 191), eliminated polio and diphtheria and greatly reduced various other health epidemics from the country (194), established democratic & internationally observed elections in 1984 and 1990 (Weaver 1991, 128), institutionalized non-repressive armed forces (Linfield 1991, 291), and implemented a profound agrarian reform by reducing large landholding from 36.2 to 13.5 percent of the land (Baumeister 1991, 236).

However, the "proverbial glass ceiling was still in place" at the end of the Sandinista government (Randall 1994, 23). Women's concerns were only partially addressed, without fundamentally challenging patriarchal systems of power. Domestic violence was barely addressed during the Sandinista tenure, and in fact only came up as an issue of national discussion after the Sandinistas had lost power in 1990, after the war had subsided. As Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan remind us in their book on Global Gender Issues, "direct and

indirect (structural) violence are not separate but interdependent. And as the dire effects of direct violence are, indirect violence shapes the lives of all of us all the time – and especially injures women and other oppressed people” (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 115-116).

On the international level, the anti-violence movement got off to a real start after Erin Pizzey opened a shelter for women and children in England in 1971 (Harlan, 117). The US had established its own first women’s shelters within a couple years, and much of the world would also be inspired by this example. In many ways, women’s shelters had always existed in many communities, they were just not recognized as such by the outside world. However, the gaining ground of the women’s movement and the incredible manifestation of women organizing to reclaim their place in the productive and reproductive spheres opened up new possibilities for women’s empowerment and action.

As a result of all this movement and new awareness, the United Nations declares the Decade of the women, with a founding conference held in Mexico City in 1975 (Harlan, 35), and a closing conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985. These two conferences begin to develop a feminist agenda that includes violence against women as a primary concern. In the follow-up conference in Beijing, in 1995, violence against women is part of the agenda for action laid out for government action.

During this time, and especially with the kick-off of the decade of the women in Mexico City, the women’s movement starts to take shape in Latin America. The first Meeting of Latin American Feminists takes place in Bogotá, Colombia in 1981 (Morrison and Biehl 1999, 8). The conference condemns sexual violence against women, and declares November 25th as International Day for Ending Violence Against Women. The fifth meeting, taking place in 1990, established a Latin American network to combat domestic and sexual violence. This network has “helped to place the issue of violence on the political agenda and has influenced the passage of legislation, helped establish centers for assistance, and had a major impact on the mass media” (8).

As of 2001, the Latin American network has been heavily engaged in a consciousness-raising campaign, which has included the use of many media outlets across the continent, the search for endorsements by governments of the campaign, and various other dissemination and training activities geared towards mass audiences and empowering messages against gender-based violence (UNDP 4/11/01). Nicaragua joined this regional campaign after the creation of

the Nicaraguan Women's Network Against Violence in 1992, and has become one of the stronger national networks within the Latin American countries.

Domestic violence continues to occur at alarming levels in Nicaraguan society, with a study realized in 1995 by Ellsberg & Peña et al. reporting a rate of 52% of women who had been abused by their partner at some point in their life (Ellsberg and Peña 1996, 24). Twenty-seven percent of women had been abused in the year preceding the 1995 survey (24). Another study carried out in 1997 by Andrew Morrison & María Beatriz Orlando confirmed the rate of lifetime domestic violence against women in Nicaragua (Morrison and Orlando 1999, 66). This study found that women who are battered by their husbands or companions are also likelier to earn less income as a consequence of the abuse (66). However, it was not able to find a correlation between socio-economic status and domestic violence, corroborating the claims by many feminists that domestic violence is underreported in wealthier households, since women with resources tend to have more private avenues to defend themselves (Ramirez, 3/10/01). Despite these findings, many feminist organizations claim that poverty and harsh economic conditions contribute significantly to domestic violence (Hope 1994). After the Sandinistas, the subsequent governments of Violeta Chamorro (1990-1996), and Arnaldo Alemán (1996-2001) have not taken a stand on domestic violence, and have in fact worsened this social phenomenon through different policy actions. I will now take a closer look at different areas where both of the governments have had an impact on domestic violence.

3.3 Government Policies on Domestic Violence in Nicaragua

The structural adjustment policies (SAPs) that have been implemented by the different governments since 1987 have had a profound impact on all levels of society, creating a vast army of unemployed or underemployed people, increasing income inequalities, and increasing violence across society. Hope Mohr (1994) argues that the privatization of the economy has encouraged the resurfacing of patriarchal tendencies, leading to increased levels of domestic violence and other forms of oppression of women. Although economics is by no means the only factor influencing domestic violence, it is an important contributor.

It is necessary to look at how different structures and policies may contribute to gender inequality and discourage women's empowerment. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has raised concerns about the effects of the

adjustment policies and the connection of these to the advancement of women (Chinkin et al 1993, CWI 5:1). It is clear that SAPs eliminated hyperinflation, which had been one of the major economic problems of the 1980s. Inflation reached a level of 35,000% a year (Ricciardi 1991, 262), a rate higher than any Latin American country has experienced, and that was only comparable to the hyperinflation of Germany before the Second World War. This type of inflation had to be dealt with tough economic measures. The problem was that women were affected the most by both the inflation and subsequent SAPs, and there has been no effort by any of the government to reverse the harder impact that SAPs had on poor people and specially to poor women.

Government institutions geared specifically to women have experienced a transformation from an initial emphasis on legal support, to a more hands-off approach under Violeta Chamorro's government, to an orientation that reveals the Catholic Church's profound influence under Arnoldo Aleman's tenure. The Sandinistas' Women's Legal Office (OLM) actively advised survivors of domestic violence, providing help to a total of 10,500 battered women in 1985 alone (Collinson 1990, 16). They produced a report in conjunction with the Government Social Security (INSSBI) Office on Family Orientation and Protection that defined abuse as a social problem, rooted in an unequal relationship between men and women. Partly as a result of this report and the publicity around it, the Nicaraguan Constitution of 1987 included an article that "guarantees every citizen the right to physical, psychological, and moral integrity, [and] states that cruel, inhuman or degrading behavior is a crime punishable by law" (1990, 17).

This inclusion of domestic violence within the Nicaraguan constitution was probably the only public acceptance of the issue by the Sandinista government. The government of Violeta Chamorro placed even less emphasis on the rights of women in the household, and was in fact opposed to the work of various NGOs advocating for women's rights. During their pre-election campaign, the National Opposition Union (UNO) that brought Violeta Chamorro to power made a statement threatening to close the Centro de la Mujer XIXCHE, where abortions were performed (CODEHUCA 1991, 13). Violeta also stated during her campaign that the women's place is at home (Mohr 1994, CWI 2), even though this statement contradicted her own stance as a woman running for political office. Contradicting this initial rhetoric, the Chamorro government seemed to oppose gender discrimination at times. Violeta issued a statement for the 1995 Human Development Report supporting women's rights and opposing violence against

women. She states, “The issue of violence against women must be a priority concern. Violence, like discrimination, is an infringement of human rights, which are integral to any truly democratic system. All states must agree upon and apply the conventions intended to eliminate both discrimination and violence” (HDR 1995, 108). In addition to her proclamations, Violeta has followed up with the creation of the Nicaraguan Women’s Institute, which was responsible for the participation of the government delegation in the Beijing Conference for Women.

The actual policies of the Chamorro government with regard to women’s rights are somewhere between the original statements and the later pronouncements. The Women’s Institute did in fact participate in the Beijing Conference in 1995. However, the government failed to do any follow-up to this historic event. Myra Paso Marciaq and Maria Hamlin Zuniga of the Nicaraguan Women’s Initiative, have stated that the Women’s Institute did not provided publicity to the Beijing conference, did not make any specific commitments or allocate any funds to implement the Platform for Action, and made no efforts to involve women and NGOs, or to make linkages with other U.N. Conference Agreements and Conventions (WEDO 1996, CWI 8:6). This situation, given the devastating effects of the structural adjustment policies and the inadequate process of healing after the war, has only aggravated the incidences of domestic violence in Nicaragua.

The government of Arnaldo Alemán has bowed to pressure from the Catholic Church, and changed the Women’s Institute to the Ministry of the Family (Sweeney 2000, CWI 1). This Ministry has sought to erase the gains made by women during the last 15 years, and has railed against the “chaotic state of disunion in the Nicaraguan family today as well as for the loss of moral values” (2). While arguing against family disunion, it has not focused on family conflict, or the incidence of domestic violence. The creation of this ministry has revitalized the women’s movement in response, and has been a catalyst around which many NGOs have rallied against.

The Role of the Police and Domestic Violence

Despite the deterioration of government institutes or ministries in relation to domestic violence and women’s rights, there has been a significant improvement within the police force. In Nicaragua’s history, the police used violence and rape as forms of torture against women. During the Sandinista government, this situation was eliminated, but the police still took no actions to stop husbands from using violence within the household. It is only after the 1987 Constitution changed the definition of domestic violence that the police recognized it as a social

problem, and not merely a private family dispute (Collinson 1990,16). As women officers gained a new perspective of their own rights as women, they started becoming more vocal about the need to create special offices or commissariats dedicated to survivors of abuse.

In Margaret Randall's interview of Aminta Granera (1994, 205), one of the highest-ranking officers in the police, Granera talks about her role in the creation of the first women's precinct that would include women officers and specialists dealing with domestic violence. It is significant that people in Granera's position within the Police Department General Secretariat are committed to the issue of domestic violence, since it has enabled the police to expand their role on this issue, at the same time that the government has become more opposed to women's rights in general. The police also have the statistical information to justify their work. For example, Granera talks about the fact that even though crime increased by 7 to 8 percent in two years, rape increased by 23 to 25 percent during the same time period (Randall 1994, 203).

The increased consciousness by male police officers has also been significant, though there are still many problems within the police. A case that created much commotion was the killing of an unrepentant rapist by a police officer during questioning (Fernández Ampié 1995, 25). Many people supported the action taken by the officer, even though he stated, "[I] was wrong to act as an offended father, forgetting that I was a police officer I should be punished for the crime I committed" (25). This incident shows the complexities of the struggle against domestic violence. Even though many women were supportive of the action by the officer, it still legitimized the use of violence as a means to resolve a conflict, and reinforced the gendered notion that the male police officer should come to the aid of the abused female victim, using violence once again to act on his emotions.

Despite the limitations of the police to the problem of domestic violence, it has made some important gains in enforcing laws to protect women. As of the year 2000, women's police sections were located in Ciudad Sandino, Estelí Juigalpa, León, Managua, Masaya, Matagalpa, and Mulukukú (Chavez Metoyer 2000, 108). This national presence is slowly making an impact and the state is no longer turning a blind eye to domestic violence. In fact, it can be an ally in eliminating violence against women.

Domestic Violence and Public Health Provision

Public health is another area of high concern for state provision to survivors of domestic violence. There has been a constant deterioration of government health services to battered women. Women are victimized by the state by a variety of ways. First of all, there are not enough facilities for women to give birth to children, which is one reason why the maternal mortality rate was at 197.5 per 100,000 live births in 1996, the highest ever reported in Nicaragua (WHJ1999, CWI 1). In Nicaragua, 158 out of 1000 teens become mothers, which is the highest rate of adolescent pregnancies in Latin America (WHJ 1996, CWI 1). Compounded by the government's lack of attention to primary maternity services, the government is also working to take away the legal status of many NGOs that work in providing health related services to women. Taking away their legal status would affect their rights to publish materials regarding facts about domestic violence, among other information (Off Our Backs 2000, CWI 1).

Doctors in Nicaragua have also been lacked the proper medication to treat patients, using medications with expired dates to treat women. As a result, many women have been incapacitated, forcing them to wheelchairs or to be dependant on medications for life (Sandoval 1993, CWI 8:4). All of these factors or elements of government violence against women reinforce the power of men over women in the household, since women do not have government support, and can often only rely on NGOs to defend their rights and get assistance. The church has again been an active voice against women's rights, leading the fight against abortions, family planning methods, and women's sexuality. The Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo has spoken out against "contraceptive colonialism," and condemned use of family planning methods and the use of concepts like "reproductive rights, reproductive health and safe sex" (WHJ 1997, CWI 1). Since women face the opposition of their partners, the church and the state on health matters, they have had to rely on NGOs to access information. Unfortunately, NGOs are under increasing scrutiny by the government, and have less capacity to act freely without government or church interference.

4- ORGANIZING AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

4.1 Strategies for empowerment for NGOs working against domestic violence

Domestic violence is a difficult issue to organize against, not only because people who do so are openly challenging patriarchy, but also because this issue goes directly to the private sphere, the household. The power that the violator has over the violated is difficult to break, due to societal pressure against women divorcing their husband or partner, safety of children, economic survival, the powerlessness of the victim of violence, or the lack of alternatives to the existing situation (McCue 1995, 113). There is “no single generalized reason” (112) for women to remain in an abusive relationship, since subjective issues relating to the length of the relationship, the development of survival skills by the victim, the ‘normalization’ and cyclical character of the abusive relationship, and the fact that blame is often placed on oneself or external factors, rather than on the abuser (113). The “power within” (Kabeer 1999, 245) needed to imagine an alternative to an abusive relationship does not exist for many women caught within a cycle of violence. When it does exist, the other constraining factors make it difficult for women to leave the abusive relationship and create a new life.

In order to recognize the destructiveness of the current system of domestic violence, new possibilities have to be imagined, and the creation of the power within needs to be developed. Naila Kabeer describes this process as “strategies ... [that] entail reflection, analysis, and assessment of what has hitherto been taken for granted so as to uncover the socially constructed and socially shared basis of apparently individual problems” (245). Thus, empowerment is a collective process that occurs by joining with people with similar problems to derive a common understanding and solutions to change their reality. However, power within can be created in different ways, depending on the cultural traditions and assumptions of the community. In western cultures the creation of the power within tends to take on an individualistic nature, encouraging self-defense and acquiring the ability to take action with the aid of paid professionals, instead of the surrounding community. This is also the case in wealthier households in Third World countries, where women have the means to hire attorneys, psychologists, doctors, etc. for some measure of defense. Even though wealthier women suffer the same rates of abuse as poor women (Morrison and Orlando 1999, 66), the former are able to confront this abuse in private, without the full knowledge of the community (Ramírez 3/10/01). Paradoxically, even though they have more resources at their disposal, this process is less

empowering than the collective mode, since it does not necessarily lead to a greater consciousness of the problem in the same way that meeting with other abused women does.

For women in a lower socio-economic status, and for women in many developing countries, there is more importance to the power within that arises from the community. For example, a community-based organization, the Asian Women's Shelter in San Francisco, has articulated a women's empowerment strategy that clearly focuses on creating a stronger community based on values and traditions from Asian American communities (Masaki 4/17/01). The focus on the self is important, since they provide shelter to individual women and articulate the internal healing process in terms of "rebuilding lives with dignity, hope and empowerment" (AWS Annual Report 2000). However, their long-term strategy for change is centered on creating community awareness of domestic violence and building relationships with other organizations working on the issue.

Organizing from the community also focuses on the fact that women at the local level are the best suited to identify their own best strategies and priorities. As Chandra Mohanty has argued, it is necessary to look at the "formulation of autonomous, geographically, historically, and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies" (Mohanty 1988, 49). This does not necessarily mean that theoretical frameworks are not applicable, but they should only be used with caution. People at the grassroots are able to articulate their own needs (Clark 1990, 91-2). However, these are not only the articulated or most visible concerns, but also those that form part of the "hidden transcripts," described by James Scott (1990, 14). These hidden transcripts are everyday forms of resistance that women use to counter the violence against them, and the survival strategies employed in this process.

In fighting against domestic violence, there is a tension between responding to the immediate need of survival and the strategic need of empowerment and conscientization. For example, the Asian Women's Shelter has identified its strategic plans for the coming year, and some fall within immediate practical needs, such as "addressing the high turn away rate of those in need of our services" (AWS Annual Report 2000) whereas others fall in the long-term strategic needs, like "fostering innovative collaborative partnerships with other organizations, toward contributing to the larger movement to end domestic violence" (AWS 2000). Both of these are important, but they produce tensions about where to focus staff and prioritize the work of the organization. NGOs that are able to combine short-term needs and long-term objectives

do so by addressing the combination of interpersonal, institutional, and structural problems that oppress women, and by taking a holistic approach of women's needs and gender disparities in developing countries. This strategy has to be done by starting at the grassroots, and not imposing decisions or blueprints for action, but rather helping the process develop from the bottom to guide the strategies for action.

The strategies for empowerment of domestic violence survivors cannot be homogenized, since women face vastly different problems in different places, and need to develop their own solutions based on their cultures, religious practices, and traditions. Besides, there is also an increasing awareness that violence permeates society at all levels, and that even men and people in same-sex relationships also suffer from domestic violence (McCue 1995, 92-95). But even though we cannot and should not homogenize survivors of domestic violence, there are certain things that can represent unifying issues for women and men across the world. These issues were mentioned in the section on structural causes of domestic violence, as the elements that are common to violence-prone societies. They include the accepted use of violence in conflicts and the acceptance of male and female roles in the household and in society. In order to begin to organize around these unifying issues, we must be able to see where we have come from in history, and to be able to apply those lessons to the future.

As discussed in the introduction, there are several theoretical frameworks that explain and inform grassroots strategies in the international development context. These frameworks include Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), & Gender and Development (GAD). Each one of these theoretical frameworks is linked to different strategies of empowerment, though there is some cross-fertilization among these strategies and among NGOs that take on different elements from the frameworks (See appendix II-Table on theories & strategies).

For example, WID has a strong economic component, since it is focused on the productive sector, and is the main theory behind the grassroots strategy of integrated development. In practice, WID may not necessarily be empowering to women, but at the same time it may also constitute part of other strategies for empowerment, since these strategies are not monolithic or fixed. Many organizations that start out from a WID framework for action move on to other grassroots strategies for women's empowerment. Others, like SEWA have a truly comprehensive approach to women's empowerment, which incorporates many of the

tenants of WID, but also many of the tenants of WAD and GAD. In practice, SEWA implements strategies for women's empowerment that empower women economically, raise consciousness, and integrate women into development processes (Kabeer 1999, 241).

The movement against domestic violence had its beginning in the WID framework, which called for the integration of women into global processes of economic, political, and social growth and change. Many NGOs followed this framework to improve women's self-esteem and meet their survival needs. As time has gone by, and the pervasiveness of domestic violence has become more apparent, it has been more evident that the WID strategy may not be truly effective in empowering domestic violence survivors. Addressing gender discrimination might work in other similar settings where there is a clear issue of male dominance and control, such as professional promotions and wage discrimination against women. However, even here, WID tends to have limited results that do not challenge systems of domination and the way in which power is exercised.

The focus on survival and discrimination within the WID framework is important, but it does not go far enough to create new systems of power sharing and non-violence. There is also the problem that many organizations that work to provide an integrated package of services may not be focused enough on the long-term goal of women's empowerment, since they are always working on how to improve the accessibility of opportunities for women. This focus on practical needs can also obscure the need to look at the long-term change of gender relations.

Working within the WAD framework has also proven to be limited, since the reproductive sphere is not addressed here either, and places too much emphasis on developing alternative economic structures to the existing capitalist development models. Many NGOs have worked on providing women with the economic means for self-advancement and independence, thinking that once women earn more money, they will be able to escape the abuse from men. However, this does not always work out as expected, since women do not always have control over their own income. The study mentioned previously by Morrison and Orlando also shows that "women who suffer physical violence earn only 39 percent as much as women who do not suffer this abuse" (Morrison and Orlando 1999, 66). Therefore, even if women work outside the home in income-generating activities, the violence directly affects income-earning capacity.

Despite these problems, it is possible to have an economic empowerment program that simultaneously enables them to control material resources and helps them organize to have

greater control over their lives. The Grameen Bank seems to be a model of this type of combined strategy, where women gain ‘power within’ from their growing gender consciousness, while they are primarily addressing survival needs and economic security.

The development of ‘power within’ that is at the root of the consciousness raising grassroots strategy is linked to GAD. Consciousness-raising can take on different forms of action, including community organizing, building social capital, human rights work, and conflict transformation (Moser and Shrader 1999, 11). Each of these types of work are focused on addressing the causal structures of oppression and conflict in society, by raising awareness about oppression, while simultaneously creating change by challenging the distribution of power in society.

A first step in creating the space for women’s internal empowerment or ‘power within’ has been the forming of shelters for survivors of domestic violence mentioned in the previous section. These have formally been around since the early 1970s, and it is these that have provided women with a space to break away from the violence of their spouse or partner and to begin to build a life of their own.

However, even though shelters can be empowering, they can also have the opposite effect. This can happen when shelters do not provide a safe enough space for women, or when women are forced to move out to give way to other women before they are ready to move on with their lives (Masaki 4/17/01). In this case, women may social stigma, face the option of becoming homeless, need to move from one shelter to another for a long time, or moving back with their partner to a potentially worse situation than when they left. What shelters do provide, is a safe space, a community of people who understand domestic violence and are willing to help, and the opportunity to rebuild their life. Shelters are also a platform for collective grassroots action against domestic violence, since it is hear that women’s voices can be heard, and where NGOs are able learn from the survivors of abuse, at the same time that women learn to empower themselves and their community.

Besides domestic shelters, there are many other strategies for women’s empowerment from the consciousness-raising perspective. Some of the organizations engage in work within the religious framework, by raising consciousness about the discordance of religious faith and practice and domestic violence. The movement by men opposing domestic violence is another consciousness-raising activity that has been successful at challenging people’s attitudes about

gender relations (Harlan, 8). There have been many campaigns that have used the media, by focusing on community events, testimonies of abused women, or a specific day of action, like the Latin American Day Against Domestic Violence. Other consciousness-raising activities include electing women or men who publicly denounce domestic violence, holding known politician abusers accountable to their actions, feminizing the police force, challenging health, educational and other state institutions on gender discrimination and inaction, passing laws protecting women, pushing for enforcement of laws protecting women, and even changing the language and perceptions around domestic violence (118-119). I will review all of these in detail in the following section.

4.2 The movement against domestic violence in Nicaragua

In 1997 a very public act took place relating to violence against women, when Zoilamérica Narváez accused her stepfather and former Nicaragua president Daniel Ortega, of subjecting her to a lifetime of physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse (Largaespada 1999, 1). This case was very significant, since Ortega has been a major political player in Nicaragua for the last 20 years, being the president and formerly the director of the governing coalition for a period of 10 years. Mr. Ortega had also continually dismissed women's concerns; going as far as stating that abortion was a western import, without relevance to Nicaraguan society. When Zoilamérica Narváez came out with her story, Ortega reacted with silence, only dismissing the charges against him as false. Even as he dismissed the charges, he protected himself by legislative immunity, and refusing to answer to Narváez claims in a court of justice.

This case has brought the issue of violence against women to the Nicaraguan consciousness. As the consciousness has developed over the pervasiveness of violence against women, more and more organizations have responded to the needs of women in abusive relationships, creating a strong infrastructure of NGOs and other organizations working for women's rights. Even before this newsworthy event, many organizations had started to develop and actively work on this issue, so that when a conference for women took place in 1992, a large group of NGOs formed the National Network of Women Against Violence. This network is currently composed of over 160 different Nicaragua NGOs.

Additionally, other sectors of society have become aware of the need for action on violence against women, spurring the creation of various men's anti-violence groups, several

police offices for women around the country, and greater responsiveness from health, educational, and other social services on the issue. Unfortunately, many institutions such as the national legislature, local and regional governments, the court system, labor unions, and private corporations dominated by men have been slower to recognize the need for change on violence against women, and in many cases have actively opposed the efforts of NGOs fighting for greater awareness and changes on this issue.

Given the unreceptive attitude of many prominent sectors in Nicaraguan society, it is very significant that violence against women has become a national issue for debate in Nicaragua. However, this new debate is partly due to the fact that the feminist movement has become quite strong in Nicaragua within the last ten years, and so has the non-governmental sector, which represents the institutionalized part of the movement for women's rights (Chávez-Metoyer 2000, 101).

There have been some NGOs that are approaching the issue of domestic violence from a welfare approach, basically seeking to “bring women into development as better mothers” (Moser 1993, 56). Examples of this type of NGO include the Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Foundation and the Nicaraguan Women of Conscience (MNC). The Chamorro Foundation seeks to “preserve a culture of reconciliation, peace, and democracy through education, freedom of expression, and actions to reduce poverty in the poorest sectors” (CEIBA 2001). The objective of MNC is to “encourage civic participation to the Nicaraguan citizenship for democratic development in the Pacific coast of Nicaragua and Estelí.” (CAPRI 1995, 200).

The Chamorro Foundation seeks to follow the ideals of Violeta Chamorro, who stated in her election campaign that women should be able to stay at home and be better mothers to their children (Chavez Metoyer 2000, 44). Ms. Chamorro stated a number of times during her campaign that she advocated for the nuclear family structure, even though this structure does not reflect the reality of Nicaraguan households (45). However, the discourse was meant to encourage patriarchal values to resurface, since women's organizations had been able to gain a lot of ground during the 1980s, making it possible for women to challenge the stereotypical notions of a domestic women, and the idea of a conflict-free household. These two objectives, reflected in the ‘pro-democracy’ and anti-feminist NGOs show that there are organizations working for women that do not seek to challenge gender discrimination, and do not necessarily respond to women's practical or strategic needs.

However, many NGOs limit themselves to providing services and do not seem to go beyond the immediate needs of women. They fail to challenge either the patriarchal systems of domination or free-market economic policies both of which are some of the main causes of domestic violence. However, there are exceptions to this, and it is true that there are many different methods of collective organizing, which are often complimentary to each other. As is evident from Appendix 1, many women's organizations do not clearly fit one mold or style. Although there are various organizations that focus on collective action for consciousness-raising, some of these same organizations also have a strong economic focus, and also concentrate on providing direct services to individual women.

In the following sections, I will first look at the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Women's Movement (AMNLAE) in Nicaragua, and how this organization has been a precursor to the current work of various Nicaraguan NGOs in framing the issues and taking action against domestic violence. The second section will take a look at the intersection of gender and ethnicity in Nicaragua, and how it is important to have this as a fundamental part of the analysis, given how patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, and other forms of domination cannot be fought individually or with a single tactic or method. The third, fourth, and fifth sections look at different Nicaraguan NGOs working from the three strategies outlined in table 1, of economic empowerment, integrated development, and consciousness-raising. I will then go on to linkages these NGOs have developed with other NGOs, with the state, and the broader society.

4.2.1 AMNLAE: The first feminist organization

Much has been written about the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Nicaraguan Association for Women (AMNLAE), and its role as a mass organization for women in Nicaragua. AMNLAE's approach to women's empowerment started from an economic empowerment strategy, looking to integrate women into the economy, at the same time that Nicaragua was creating its own model of a 'mixed economy.' Its theoretical framework was developed solidly within the WAD analysis, critical of traditional development, but not critical enough of prescribed gender roles within society. Its strategy for empowering women was for women to contribute to the economic development of a new Nicaraguan society, where women could participate equally with men in the economic, political, and social life of the country. Despite these goals, women were only able to become involved in lower decision-making areas of the society, without

challenging too much the prescribed gender roles within the country. Additionally, women were still burdened with household responsibilities, as more participation did not result in a sharing of duties or decision-making ability with the husband.

AMNLAE was originally created in 1977, with the acronym of AMPRONAC, and started as an organization of middle class women committed to the Sandinista struggle against Somoza. AMPORNAC changed its name to AMNLAE after the Sandinistas came to power, and assumed its prescribed roll of integrating women into the revolutionary process. At the time, this represented a significant advancement for women, who had been restricted of participating in many productive sectors within Nicaraguan society. AMNLAE committed itself to this end, and was able to mobilize women to the literacy campaign, to participate in health provision, and to become involved in all sectors of the new Sandinista government.

Despite these gains, AMNLAE rarely challenged the all-male Sandinista leadership. On the few occasions when it did, such as claiming the right of women to be part of the military service, the leadership of the Sandinista party and government often had the final decision-making power. AMNLAE both opened and closed spaces for women's political and social participation. At the same time that it provided a forum for women's voices, it also silenced those positions that were not popular with the Sandinista leadership, and did not fundamentally challenge gender relations in society.

This situation within AMNLAE began to change in the late 1980s, when it became obvious that women did not feel represented in the organization. The push to democratize AMNLAE, and to make it independent from the Sandinista party failed as hierarchical tendencies within the party stifled dissent, and as the demands of the war against the USA-funded guerilla insurgency imposed a self-censorship among many feminist leaders (Randall 1994, 273).

In relation to domestic violence, AMNLAE recognized it as an important issue, but did not do so publicly until the 1990s, after a decade of being in existence. AMNLAE has also developed a gender analysis within the last ten years, and has participated in many consciousness-raising activities that have differed from its orientation during the Sandinista period.

4.2.2 Organizing by Gender & Ethnicity in Nicaragua

In 1993, three black nationally known baseball players were acquitted after collectively raping a young mestizo woman in Managua in a case that pitted the sports media, the Catholic Church, and the indigenous communities against various feminist organizations (Criquillon 1993, 2). This case was the first case to explore the contradictions between ethnicity and gender in a country that has been marked by strong discrimination against women and against people of African and indigenous descent. The debate around violence against women was very intense, since people from the majority black Atlantic coast have been excluded from decision-making and even from the power to self-rule for many centuries. The conflict between ethnic identity and oppression of indigenous people on one hand and women's rights on the other hand began to sharpen, and in many ways created a greater awareness about who is left out of power and who makes the decisions. On the other hand, this conflict pitted women from the Pacific and Atlantic against each other, without creating any working groups or linkages between organizations from both regions to create lasting solutions to violence against women.

During the development of the women's movement in the Pacific coast of Nicaragua, a similar new consciousness was developing in the Atlantic coast. Nicaragua has historically been divided by geography and ethnicity, with the majority Mestizo population living in the relatively densely populated Pacific and mountain areas, and the indigenous and black populations living in the Pacific coast.

The Atlantic coast has traditionally been neglected and oppressed by the government based on the Pacific coast, which has traditionally been dominated by elites from the Mestizo population. The Sandinista period experienced the first effort on the part of the government to reach out to the Atlantic coast in a way that was not only about extracting resources. However, the Sandinistas had a very hierarchical mode of government, and in the same way that the leadership and the party was seeped in sexism, there was an undercurrent of ethnocentrism as well (Randall, 1994, p. 75). The Sandinista leadership tried to involve the population of the Atlantic coast to the Nicaraguan Revolution, without first asking them what they wanted from the government. Many people from the Atlantic Coast, or 'costeños' viewed these Sandinistas as just another interventionist government that wanted to impose itself on the Atlantic coast. As a result, many of them joined the counterrevolution and started fighting against the Sandinista

government. After several years, the Sandinistas were able to finally negotiate with the armed fighters from the Atlantic, producing the guarantee of political autonomy for the Atlantic Coast.

During this time of armed conflict, the women's movement in the Atlantic coast started developing. As an alternative to AMNLAE, a new organization was formed in 1987 called Nidia White Women's Movement (MMNW). This new NGO was formed to fight for women's rights from the perspective of the 'costeño' women. The main objectives of this organization included: fighting against inequality; promoting women's integration; strengthening the autonomy process; and promoting a gender identity among women in the North Atlantic coast (CAPRI 1995, 200). This organization has traveled further in its development process than many women's NGOs from the Pacific Coast, in terms of incorporating both a gender and a race analysis. This analysis is very crucial, since women in the Atlantic coast have suffered double discrimination and oppression from their sex and ethnic origin. Myrna Cunningham, a woman from the Atlantic Coast interview by Margaret Randall says, "it's impossible to talk about a viable alternative that doesn't take these issues seriously: gender and ethnicity" (Randall 1994, 76).

The other visible women's NGO in the Atlantic coast is the Association of Indigenous Women of the Atlantic Coast (AMICA). AMICA does not have the same gender perspective that MMNW has developed, since it approaches women's empowerment from a WID-based theoretical framework of incorporating women into the development process. However, like MMNW, AMICA is also based in the north Atlantic coast and is concerned with the rights of indigenous women. Neither organization seems to have a focus on domestic violence, though MMNW does have an "Attention Clinic" as one of its organizational activities.

The story about the baseball players mentioned earlier has begun to open a space for discussion about the intersections of gender and ethnicity in Nicaragua (Criquillón 1993, 2). Despite the intense polemic brought about by this case, there is still a long way to go for women's NGOs to see the discrimination of women from the Atlantic coast by race and ethnicity in a parallel light to the discrimination of women in the rest of the country.

What is clear is that these organizations have an analysis that incorporates the importance of ethnicity and the need to live in harmony with the environment. From the literature review, it is not apparent that a focus on race or ethnicity is widespread within the women's movement, though this is a central component of the DAWN analysis, and is a central tenant of ecofeminism. During the last couple years, the Atlantic coast created a university that focuses on

environmental preservation as a main element of its educational curriculum, and has a focus on training people to empower themselves in skills that are useful in their own communities. People in the Pacific coast of Nicaragua have much to learn from the people in the Atlantic, who are using an analysis that links the oppressions of nature, indigenous people, and women by the common dynamics of exclusion and domination. For any of the strategies for women's empowerment to be successful, they will need to incorporate this analysis into women's oppression and the way they approach their consciousness raising, service provision, or economic empowerment.

4.2.3 Economic empowerment strategy

The strategy of women's economic empowerment in the 1980s was implemented not only by AMNLAE, but also by most of the NGOs working for women. The major class-based organizations, including the National Farmer's Union (UNAG), the Farm Workers Association (ATC), and the Sandinista Worker's Federation (CST) worked from an analysis of supporting the Nicaraguan revolution through women's productive participation. These three organizations developed women's sections that addressed women's concerns within the organization. However, they were dependent on Sandinista ideology and hierarchy, and resisted efforts to incorporate a gender analysis into their organizational framework. ATC was probably the most receptive of these organizations, and pushed through with attempts to integrate gender-specific demands along with its traditional class-based focus. During the later part of the 1980s, the ATC worked on issues like childcare and family planning (Chuchryk 1991, 150), effectively pushing the boundaries of what was politically feasible during those years of war and economic quagmire.

In 1991, the ATC officially distanced itself from AMNLAE's dependency relationship towards to Sandinista party line, and called on NGOs to break with AMNLAE (Criquillón 1995, 231). However, ATC had within its own structure many of the same hierarchical tendencies that had had alienated many women's organizations from AMNLAE, and was not able to rally other organizations to its own positions. As a result, ATC was not able to develop a leadership position in the women's movement, and it eventually distanced itself from the work being done by other feminist organizations. By the time that the 1992 Women's National Gathering was organized, none of the main organizations implementing an economic empowerment strategy participated in

this landmark event (231). This break between these organizations and others in the feminist movement stems from a different ideological vision about women, where there was a difference of opinion about what type of identity was more important, whether it was class, gender, or a combination of these. There was also a different conception about how to empower women and other people in the membership. The vision of these three organizations stemmed from an ‘economic determinism’ that did not allow for different perspectives, or the possibility that class-based discrimination was not the most important issue to be addressed.

Nicaraguan NGOs working from the economic empowerment strategy have had very little focus on domestic violence. A notable exception to this is the Movement for Working and Unemployed Women. Its leader, Sandra Ramos, stated in an interview by the New Internationalist that “women’s demands for equal pay, equal rights and against violence were put on hold [during the Sandinista years], subordinated to the global demands of the revolution. But today women are no longer prepared to tolerate this” (New Internationalist 1996, CWI 1). This NGO was set up by women who were frustrated with the male-dominated Sandinista Party and also with the male leadership within the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST).

Other NGOs working from an economic empowerment strategy have not articulated their position in regards to domestic violence or violence against women, but some of them are working with other groups that do have a strong position on these issues. For example, the María Jose Talavera Collective has worked in conjunction with the Network of Women Against Violence to establish a revolving loan fund for women (Perkins 1999, 9). The collective gives priority to the economic angle, but they are not averse to working with other groups or coalitions that focus on more gender-based issues like domestic violence.

The lack of focus on domestic violence is not necessarily due to the fact that it is not considered important by these organizations, but rather that economic needs are an immediate survival issue. This conception differs from that of the other organizations like UNAG and CST, who did not think that issues relating to the reproductive sector were important for women’s empowerment. In general, economic empowerment work for women has not been tied in with work against domestic violence. This is not necessarily true elsewhere, as the case of SEWA in India has shown. In Nicaragua, it seems like there is still some way to go before there are organizations that are able to effectively integrate the economic reality of women and work against violence into their work.

4.2.4 Integrated development strategy

The vast majority of Nicaraguan NGOs working with women are using an integrated development strategy for empowerment. Within this group of NGOs, there are very few that focus on domestic violence as part of their services to women, with a few notable exceptions like the Nicaraguan Center for Constitutional Rights (CDC), and the Woman and Family Center for Assistance and Services (CMF). Both of these NGOs provide legal assistance to women, by helping them identify the legal mechanisms and legal rights to defend themselves against male abusers. Although CDC is limited to legal assistance and advocacy within the legal framework, CMF carries out a combination of services in addition to legal support, such as health and nutritional education, psychosocial services, and sexual education.

The maternal communal homes that have begun to establish themselves around the country also encounter domestic violence, even though it is not explicitly a focus of their work. An example of these types of NGOs is the Casa Jinotega, which was recently profiled in *Ms. Magazine*, and which is providing a ‘safe space’ for pregnant women in Jinotega, Nicaragua. Even though this center is not geared to victims of domestic violence, it has been responding to many of the more subtle forms of domestic abuse, such as the expectation that women will continue to give birth to children as long as they are able to (Otis 2001, 34), or the fact that there is little if any support by men to the health, nutritional, and rest needs of pregnant women. Women that come to the center sometimes carry out tubal ligations against the wishes or knowledge of the husband. One “38-year old malnourished woman” who underwent this operation against her husband’s consent did so after bearing her seventh child (36). The sexual exploitation of women for their childrearing is a common form of abuse, and even though it is not one of the more obvious types of abuse, it does have a profound effect on women’s ability to provide for herself or her family, or to be able to become financially independent from her husband or partner.

There are many other Nicaraguan NGOs working from a strategy of integrated development that do not have any specific programs or services specifically on domestic violence, but rather work on technical assistance, educational outreach, referral services, or legal literacy. Some of the services offered include the provision of credit to women, helping women find work, family planning or sexual education, basic health services, and basic paralegal assistance to women. In other words, the focus is on providing a package of services that will

assist women in “tackling social problems” (Batliwala 1994, 136). These NGOs include the Mothers’ Committee “Nora Astorga,” Pro-Familia, Integral Center for Life and Hope for Women and Children (CIVEMN), and the Nicaraguan Association for the Defense of Women (ASONICMU) (CAPRI 1995). All of these NGOs have a focus on women’s practical survival needs, and include some aspects of gender analysis, though they do not generally work to challenge patriarchal conceptions within society. The objectives of these organizations do not generally include the advancement of women’s rights, but rather providing services to women and incorporating women into the development process.

Finally, shelters for abused women are the one type of NGO that does not quite fit the mold for this strategy for empowerment, but nevertheless carries out an empowering process for women. However, I decided to include it in the integrated development strategy, since NGOs carrying out this work are generally concerned first of all in attending to the immediate needs of women, which generally include lodging, health treatment, and psychological counseling. In Nicaragua, there are two main organizations working on the provision of shelters. The first one is the Association for the Support of the New Family in Nicaragua. This NGO has spearheaded the now well-known IXCHEN centers for women, which combine educational outreach about domestic violence with the provision of shelters for women (Ellsberg and Peña 1997, 16). The Women’s Center for Immediate Action (Acción YA/CIAM) has also opened up different shelters for women, in Estelí and Managua (16).

The provision of shelter by these organizations provides a real empowering opportunity for women, for whom the act of fleeing from their home represented a first step in order to stand up to the violence to which they were subjected to. Naila Kabeer talks about how this space for women is fundamental to the creation of the ‘power within’ and to be able to build control over their own lives (1999, 246). Shelters provide an opportunity for women to improve their bargaining power against men, since they now have a place to go if the husband or partner becomes violent (247).

4.2.5 Consciousness-raising strategy

The consciousness-raising strategy, as articulated by Srilatha Batliwala, involves the organization of women into collectives that “engage in a process of learning that leads to a new consciousness” (Batliwala 1994, 136). These groups determine their own priorities for action,

and work on a community-based or a broader scope of action. There are five main strands of activity of anti-violence Nicaraguan NGOs that I have identified within the consciousness-raising empowerment strategy. These are: political participation, women's human rights, male-focused anti-violence work, community organizing, religious-based organizing, and the use of testimonies and stories.

First of all, the organizations working from a political participation focus, have done so thought using three main types of political activity: Electing women to elective office, challenging abusing men who are running or are in elective office, and holding officeholders accountable on issues relating to domestic violence. The first strategy has produced mixed results for women, since many of the women that have held elected positions in the last ten years have been advocates of approaches that are often not empowering to women, such as the welfare, anti-poverty, and efficiency policy approaches. Violeta Chamorro is a prime example of this model, since her government pushed for an economic package that increased poverty levels and the number of unemployed people in the country, while simultaneously advocated for traditional family values of female subservience and household responsibilities for women. However, women have in general been supportive of policies and laws against domestic violence, even when they have been members of political parties that advocate for patriarchal values. The Nicaraguan Women's Network Against Violence was able to persuade female legislators to support the bill for domestic violence that was pending in 1995, and were able to get Violeta Chamorro's endorsement and signing the bill into law. Within the Network, several groups organized local-based activities to support the passage of this law. The Autonomous Women's Movement held two training workshops for violence survivors, whereas the Isnin Women's Center distributed flyers, stickers and pins, and collected signatures in support of the law (LA & C Women's Health Journal 1998, 2).

There have been some recent cases of powerful men being challenged by a history of domestic abuse. The most famous of these is the case of Zoilamérica Narváez abused by her father in law, which was mentioned earlier in this chapter. Even though Zoilamérica has not been successful at bringing a response by Daniel Ortega to her claims, she has raised the awareness of domestic violence to a new level, and has challenged the view that the leading opposition party, the FSLN, represents women's interests. Zoilamérica has also been able to articulate the view that feminism is not tied to Sandinista ideology, even if most feminists (Zoilamérica included)

claim to be Sandinistas themselves. In a similar vein, women's organizations have been able to hold a common line of criticism on men who are abusive and are in power positions, creating a greater consciousness about the possibilities for change by effectively challenging the legitimacy of men at the top of power positions. Women's NGOs have been able to successfully pass laws against domestic

NGOs have also been able to hold people accountable to their campaign promises. For example, the National Women's Coalition was organized for the 1996 elections, and was composed of parties, collectives, and organizations that sought to develop a "Minimum Agenda" for Women, that seeks to "guarantee the human rights of women, understanding that these are civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights that must be exercised individually and collectively, with a special emphasis on the rights of women in ethnic groups" (Chavez Metoyer 2000, 103). This organization has seen the importance of recognizing that women from the Atlantic coast share a double or triple discrimination, and that there is a need to value their struggle and human rights.

All in all, these efforts at women's political participation have increased women's visibility, challenged the discourse and traditional way of doing politics, forced accountability of elected officials, and created a greater arena for women to voice their concerns. The next step will be to force the issue of domestic violence as a serious criminal issue, in which men of the legislative bodies cannot claim exemption due to their political office (as Daniel Ortega has done during the last five years).

Identity-based organizing

Organizing around domestic violence is intrinsically identity based, since it is addressing women and men's identities, and how masculine and feminine identities are created in society. The focus tends to be on women, in terms of their empowerment, self-sufficiency, and political participation. We have already addressed women's identities as women, as members of exploited ethnic identities, and even from their class-based identities. However, there is a lot of work that also needs to be done with children and with men from an identity-based consciousness-raising approach. Children who experience domestic violence or who are direct victims of it need to be counseled and supported by the outside community. Men also must be helped to change from their violent tendencies, or we will not be able to eliminate domestic violence.

As far as youth and children, there is coordinated effort within the Women's Network Against Violence. The network has a Commission of Education and Youth, one of the four commissions carrying out national level work for the network (Chavez Metoyer 2000, 107). Outside of this commission, I was not able to find much evidence of NGO work in support of children in violent households. There is a NGO network for youth (CAPRI 1995, 57), but it does not seem to have developed a reach or impact similar to that achieved by other coalitions such as the Women's Network Against Violence. One NGO working for children's rights is the Popular Judicial Front for the Defense of Women and Children (57). This NGO has developed investigations about the situation of children, and has defended their rights in court. However, it does not have a focus on helping youth develop a greater awareness of their reality outside of a strict legal framework.

As far as male-based organizing, there is a lot more development of activities, and a significant number of all-male collectives that are working to challenge the macho identity, and are working to eradicate violence against women. The first collective of men was formed in 1993, and was focused on three objectives (LA & C Women's Health Network 1996, 20:1):

- To challenge men's passive, and often complicitous attitude toward violence against women, including rape, physical and psychological abuse, sexual harassment and many other manifestations.
- To reflect on and analyze how violence affects men's lives and the harm it causes. To identify the mechanisms by which it is reproduced and to explore non-authoritarian alternatives.
- To offer men an opportunity to confront machismo and to act together to promote non-violence.

Men's efforts to change men's attitudes are a very recent phenomenon, but have made a visible impact on society, and have been able to show that as much as men's attitudes are learned, they can also be unlearned. Men involved in these men's collectives have expressed how being a part of a discussion and action groups has enabled them to be "less controlling," "unlearn my lack of expressiveness," and "not reacting violently to people who don't respect me or in situations in which I feel pressured" (LA & C Women's Health Network 1996, 20:3). Men are beginning to make efforts to change, in the face of criticism, ridicule, and outright hostility. The biggest obstacle for most men seeking to change themselves and others is their own learned

behaviors, which have been reinforced, developed and given them privileges throughout their lives. Benno de Keijzer, a Mexican activist and author argues that “men’s socialization is “a set of attributes, values, functions and behaviors that are considered essential to the condition of men in a given culture ... in the case of Mexico, there is a hegemonic model of masculinity in which the male is culturally constructed as essentially dominant, a figure who discriminates against and subordinates women and other men who do not conform to this model” (20:5).

Despite the big strides that men’s groups have realized in the last few years, the type of work that they are carrying out is not very well understood, even by feminist women. Different publications and feminist activists often mention the work of men’s groups (Ellsberg & Peña 1996, 17; Ramírez 3/10/01), but there is little explanation about how it links to the work of women’s NGOs. Men’s groups also encounter the difficulty of reaching out to a wider audience, but they have begun to use the media to publicize their efforts and have begun to start an educational process that reaches out to young men, in an effort to address male identities in the early stages of the formulation.

Community organizing

Community organizing is the type of consciousness-raising activity that is the most varied. SI Mujer has been the most visible organization employing community organizing against domestic violence, though it has also been very active in many other types of activities, including service provision, advocacy, coalition-building, etc. Besides SI Mujer, there have not been many other groups that have such a range of activities, but there are several that have approaches to consciousness-raising that focus on various types of community organization, by focusing on popular education, conflict resolution, or direct action activities that either challenge abusive men or state provision of services.

There have been several groups focused on a popular education methodology, including the Nicaraguan Action and research Center, Puntos de Encuentro, The Nicaraguan Center for Democratic Participation and Development (Cenzontle), Grupo Venancia, and the Institute for Research and Change. All of these groups have somewhat of an identity based-focus of organizing, but they are also seeking to use research in order to develop local-based knowledge that can be used for action. Cenzontle, for example, uses new theoretical and methodological frameworks that employ a variety of study instruments, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation (ICRW 1999, 4). Cenzontle is focused on strengthening

participation and empowerment for poor women, and has been able to implement a process that is very inclusive, steeped in analysis, and that promises to be around for the long haul. Besides these objectives, popular education in Nicaragua has sought a variety of methods that will help women gain power. Grupo Venancia seeks to accomplish that by the following methods:

- Contribute to the development of self-esteem and personal and collective growth.
- Gain visibility in society of women's words, knowledge, and feelings.
- Contribute to the development of a democratic and participative organization
- Contribute to the enrichment and multiplication of feminist popular education
- Promote the self-generation of economic and development projects that promote women's autonomy.

Religious-based organizing

Religious-based organizing has developed as a powerful mechanism to address domestic violence. Yeta Ramirez, a main organizer within the Network of Women Against Violence, talked recently about the efforts by women in the network to address violence from a religious perspective. She talked about how the Commission of Women of Faith was created in order to engage women in men from a theological based perspective, by relating peace and non-violence concepts from the perspective of Christian scriptures and the church-based ideas (Ramírez 3/10/01). Ms. Ramírez talked the political nature of this work within the church, since they were seeking to relate Jesus' suffering from facing an unjust political system to the suffering by women as they confront the patriarchal system that supports abusive men (3/10/01). The theology that Ramírez and the Commission use is based on the idea of the sacredness of the human body that was created in God's image. She talks about how this sacred body is constantly violated by men, therefore contradicting God's message of love for humanity (3/10/01).

Ramírez also placed emphasis on the psychological elements that keep women in abusive relationships. Religious-based organizing has enabled women to gain self-esteem and move on to a new phase of their lives by being able to connect their faith to their need for security, health, and happiness. She said that in the organizing in the churches, women's advocates try to show how guilt and lack of forgiveness can hold women back from leaving abusive relationships, or from being able to rebuild their lives (3/10/01). She placed emphasis on the fact that women should not have to forget what happened to them, but should be able to regain their

humanity, and escape from the cycle of revenge and violence that holds women down physically as well as psychologically.

Religious-based organizing is one of the fastest growing types of action by groups seeking to raise consciousness about domestic violence. Religious-based organizing is proving to be very effective at creating changes in some powerful institutions, including the Catholic Church. The Commission of Women of Faith recently pressured the Cardinal of Nicaragua and the Bishops of Juigalpa and Bluefields to “publicly reject violence against women and children” (Chavez Metoyer 2000, 107). Since over 85% of Nicaraguans consider themselves Catholic, this statement makes a very big impact on society, and is beginning to make Catholic leaders accountable to women’s concerns.

Individual testimonies

Testimonies are by their nature individual actions, but they are often used by organizations as part of an organized campaign to raise awareness about domestic violence. In Nicaragua, the testimony of Zoilamérica Narváez described at the beginning of section 3.2 has made a tremendous impact on Nicaraguan’s perceptions about domestic violence. When Narváez came out publicly with her testimony about the lifelong sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse that her step-father had subjected on her, it help to launch an unprecedented national dialogue about domestic violence. Narváez testimony galvanized many feminist actors, and was a main impetus for many other women to come out with their own personal stories of abuse (Largaespada 1999, 4). It also created awareness among many men about their responsibility to act for change, and as a result several men’s groups were created to address their privilege as men and their possibilities for action.

The Network of Women Against Violence has also organized testimonies that have created more awareness about domestic violence around Nicaragua. Much of this activity has taken place on November 25, the Latin American Day Against Sexual Violence (Criquillón 1993, 7). During this day, and the days leading up to it, NGOs have organized many consciousness- raising activities, including reflection groups for women, workshops for young men, meetings with professors, work sessions between police and activists, self-defense classes, artistic events, compilation of cases of abuse, video and movie presentations, graphic presentations of domestic violence, advertisements in the media, and interviews in different media avenues (7). Most of these activities incorporate individual testimonies from survivors of

domestic violence, and have been effective at personalizing the issues, and showing the pervasiveness and extent of domestic violence. They have been very effective at creating a new mentality about women's ability to break the mold, and to be able to confront society about something for which she has usually felt great shame about and hopelessness to do anything about it. Testimonies have been as much self-empowering tools as they have empowered large sections of women.

4.3 NGO linkages to the wider community

Nicaraguan NGOs have also been able to advocate for government action, the incorporation of women's perspectives in the local and national media, and the redefinition of women's human rights. NGOs have been learning to create a much bigger impact than they could ever have at the local level by creating effective linkages by which they have been able to persuade different actors to support the goals of women's organizations. This final section will look at NGOs efforts in coalition building, use of the media, and their advocacy of women's human rights. The action on government institutions is interwoven in this analysis, but some of it has already been talked about in section 2.4 of the second chapter.

4.3.1. Coalition building

The Nicaraguan Network of Women Against Violence (Red de Mujeres Contra la Violencia/RMCV) was created in 1992, at the "Conference of Nicaraguan Women for Unity in Diversity," which drew approximately 800 women from around the country (Criquillón 1995, 233). At this conference, seven networks of activity were created, but not all of them lasted. RMCV, on the other hand, flourished and developed a program for action, initiating the Nicaraguan commemoration of the "sixteen days of activism on violence against women" (Ellsberg and Winkvist 1997, CWI 1) between November 25 and December 10. The network has also been involved in many other consciousness-raising events and collaborations, where women have been able to work together on many of the issues that relating to their work against domestic violence.

Nowadays, RMCV includes over 170 organizations, and hundreds of individuals (Chavez Metoyer 2000, 107), which are organized within four different commissions within the network, including the Commission of Churches, the Commission of Communications, Women's Police Stations, and the Commission of Education and Youth (107). These commissions have taken on

the coordinated work between the different women's organizations, by pooling resources and developing common strategies for women's empowerment.

A significant victory of the network was the successful advocacy demanding the government ratification of the Interamerican Convention on the Prevention, Sanction, and Eradication of Violence Against Women (109). The network has also been successful at passing a domestic violence bill that was signed into law, and that simultaneously raised awareness about the pervasiveness of domestic violence in society (Ellsberg and Winkvist 1997, 1:6). Perhaps the biggest success of the network has been to pool the resources and knowledge of its members into coordinated action, which has enabled it to reach far greater results than would have been possible from the action of individual NGOs. The network is a good example to other NGO coalitions looking to work together to obtain tangible results. The network is a model of the integrative strategy mentioned in the section on empowerment and participation, as activities are decentralized, the leadership is rotating, there is ideological diversity, and decisions are carried out by consensus (1:4). They believe that to empower women, they must have an empowering process to begin with, that effectively lets organizations and individuals participate and make decisions, but where there is a stress on collaboration and not competition, and where diversity of origin and of opinion are valued over ideological cohesion.

4.3.2 Use of the media

The feminist movement in Nicaragua has embraced the use of the media, by publicizing and raising awareness about domestic violence in many different formats. The first explicitly feminist publication in Nicaragua was the weekly "Gente" (People), which ran in the now defunct Barricada daily newspaper (Randall 1994, 302). This weekly closed down as the editors of Barricada took on an increasingly critical stance of the weekly, and firing many of the personnel within Barricada that were adopting a critical stance of the Sandinista Party. With the demise of Gente, a new publication took on the forefront of feminist analysis in Nicaragua. This publication, titled "La Boletina" became the focus for discussion about the women's movement and of the efforts to fight against domestic violence in Nicaragua.

In a broader context, there has been the creation of a Central American Feminist Program called "La Corriente" (the current), which is creating feminist collaborations on a regional level.

The program also has a printed publication, which is directed by Sofia Montenegro, who had previously been in charge of the *Gente* weekly during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

On the international level, Nicaraguan NGOs have been involved in the “Latin American and the Caribbean Campaign to Eliminate Violence Against Women,” which was launched on December 10, 1997 (UNIFEM Web Site 4/11/01). This campaign includes the organization of a radio campaign on women’s human rights, a TV program on International Woman’s Day, a regional contest for Latin American municipalities that have promoted women’s rights, a photographic contest, a radio conference, the publication of a magazine, research into sexual mistreatment of children and adolescents, and the organization of press conferences, special events, and the production and dissemination of promotional campaign materials (UNIFEM Web Site 4/11/01).

All these different actions involving the media have been able to raise the consciousness about domestic violence in a way that was not feasible even ten years ago. One of the four commissions of the Women’s Network Against Violence is the Commission on Communications, since NGOs have found that it is very important to be able to use this medium effectively in a coordinated manner. The question about media and domestic violence is not that it get reported, since there are plenty of sensationalist accounts of violence against women reported on a daily basis. The crucial issue is to change *how* news is reported, in a way that does not reinforce myths about violence or current gender perceptions that are negative or untrue about women and men (Chavez Metoyer 2000, 107).

4.3.3 Women’s human rights

The work carried out in the enactment and enforcement of laws is also very important for domestic violence. The main organizations working on this issue are the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH), and the Nicaraguan Center for Constitutional Rights (CDC). In 1995, CENIDH published an important research that looked into the action of police on domestic violence. This report was titled “Police and Judicial Treatment to Victims of Sexual and Interfamily Violence” (CENIDH 1995). This study produced some important statistics, such as the fact that sexual violence crimes constitute 13% of all crimes reported in the district courts of Managua (CENIDH 1995, 62), and that of these only 17% lead to the arrest of the offending party (61). This study, and other actions similar to it, have placed CENIDH at the forefront of the

struggle against domestic violence in Nicaragua, and has enabled many organizations to place pressure on the police and the judicial system to enforce the laws that have been enacted to protect women's rights.

In addition to these two organizations, the Women's Network Against Violence has also undertaken a coordinated campaign to ensure that the police commissariats engage in the work that they were set up to do, and that they are able to protect women's rights to live without violence. This campaign is carried out by one of the commissions of the network, called "Women's Police Stations" (Chavez Metoyer 2000, 108), which has been monitoring the work of the police through the compilation of information from the women who seek assistance from the NGOs members of the network. For the long term, there is some strategizing about the need to feminize the police force and the judicial system, which would help to improve the responsiveness of both of these bodies to complaints by women in abusive relationships.

The organizations working from a human rights perspective using or organizing against the legal system have placed an emphasis on women's human rights from an international context. In this way, Nicaraguan NGOs have also played in on the debate about universal applications versus local priorities. CENIDH has been able to produce a good balance of these two, and by documenting the relative inaction of the judicial system has been able to push for broader rights for women, tougher sentences for abusing men, and a recognition of the fact that women (and men) do have a right to life without violence.

5- CONCLUSION

My research in this essay was focused on the following question: How do Nicaraguan NGOs fighting for women's empowerment achieve the short-term goals of supporting survivors of domestic violence, and also work towards longer-term change the patriarchal system of violence and domination? In response to this question, I have identified five main conclusions from my analysis:

- 1- Women's Empowerment is fundamental in order to eliminate domestic violence.
- 2- Empowerment has to be achieved by a combination of political and economic strategies, since women's oppression and violence against women are caused by a combination of oppressive systems, including patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, and institutional racism.
- 3- In order to challenge domestic violence, NGOs need to address the dichotomy between the productive and reproductive spheres, and take a hard look at how to empower women in the household, in the community and the larger public sphere.
- 4- NGOs organizing for women's rights need to combine universal women's rights with local priorities, in order to simultaneously challenge patriarchal systems and organize women based on their own concerns.
- 5- NGOs ability to develop linkages with other NGOs and to engage in sustained advocacy of government institutions will greatly enhance their capacity to reduce domestic violence.

Empowerment, as applied by many NGOs in developing countries is an 'integrative strategy,' where the means are inseparable from the ends, and where the process of demanding power is in itself an exercise of power. Nicaraguan NGOs present many examples of this process, from the use of testimonies that have given a voice to abused women, to the national campaigns that bring women and men together in a process of mutual learning and participation, and finally the community organizing efforts in which women have began to articulate new values and new priorities for families, communities, and for gender dynamics.

NGOs seek to empower women against domestic violence by ensuring that the goal of helping women organize collectively and rebuilding their identities is carried out from the perspective of the local people. Empowerment is not a only a goal oriented project, but places a lot of importance on the more unnoticeable but even more important changes that take place

within people and that affect power relationships in society. Empowerment takes on many forms and can be understood as representing different types of activities. Women's NGOs have been able to use testimonies to raise awareness and create solidarity, they have advocated for women's human rights by a month-long consciousness-raising campaign focused on catching the media's attention and reaching a broad sector of the public, they have organized around women's identities, by a conscious examination of men and women's gender roles and the formation of their identities within patriarchy, and have organized from different settings, such as the church, the community, against the state, and even at the international level. Empowerment is a process, and outcome, and a strategy that is allowing women to escape abusive relationships, and is providing oppressed groups with a new alternative for emancipation.

Regarding the relationship between economic and political empowerment, NGOs in Nicaragua have not yet been able to combine these two very much. Organizations working from a political perspective of consciousness-raising have had a much bigger impact on domestic violence than others that seek to provide women with means for economic self-sufficiency. However, NGOs that prioritize political participation of women still confront the reality that the majority of the Nicaraguan working age population does not have a regular job, and that the country still has the highest debt per capita of the world. Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the hemisphere, so NGOs need to work for an alternative economic order that confronts the economic policies that are primarily hurting women and poor people, and propose an alternative framework for the country's economic development. Without an alternative, Nicaragua will continue to live in a state of crisis and overt conflict, making any progress against domestic violence only temporary.

Besides incorporating an economic analysis, NGOs need look at other ways in which women are oppressed, and take stock of how the exploitation of indigenous people, of nature, and of women have to be challenged simultaneously. Women's groups in the Atlantic coast are leading the way in this effort, but there not enough consciousness about the importance of a gender and race analysis in the work of women's NGOs in the Pacific and central areas of Nicaragua. By developing this type of analysis, NGOs will be better able to create coalitions based on the long-term interests of ecological sustainability and the preservation of indigenous cultures. This analysis will also enable to women and men to reconstruct their identities in a way

that takes a deeper look at systems of domination, and that lays the basis for creating a world free of violence and domination.

The third conclusion regarding the dichotomy between the productive and reproductive spheres is an issue that gets at the core of domestic violence. NGOs are working and developing strategies to address violence in the household as well as the community and the larger public sphere. In order to achieve this, men's power and decision making authority within the household is being questioned. NGOs are raising concerns about the current sexual division of labor, by advocating for an equalization of roles and responsibilities, and making men's violence accountable to the community. NGOs are changing and enforcing anti-violence laws, and many are pushing for a re-definition of human rights in Nicaragua, which moves closer to the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights.

However, in order to make fundamental changes at the household level, NGOs also have to look at strategies that raise the issue of domestic violence in each community, in arenas that in which existing gender relationships are reinforced and justified. An example of this strategy is the work within the churches, which NGOs are doing in order to address how domestic violence is incompatible with religious beliefs. The Commission on Churches of the Network of Women Against Violence is organizing women within churches to address the gendered notions of decision-making and the equality between men and women. They are also pushing for the leadership of the catholic and protests churches to actively oppose violence against women. These strategies within the churches hold the potential to create a lasting impact on women's situation, since this is really the heart of the ideological struggle to change conceptions about the relationship between both sexes.

The fourth conclusion relating to the importance of universal rights and local priorities is important in order to design strategies for empowerment that have long-term solutions. Without societal acceptance and recognition of women's universal rights, practices such as domestic violence will continue to exist, since men with power will continue to justify them by cultural or fundamentalist religious argumentations. Nicaraguan NGOs such as CENIDH and SI Mujer, are working on the incorporation of many of these rights to the legal and institutional framework of Nicaragua. The danger in this approach is in forgetting that the strategies for empowerment arise from the grassroots. Even though the universal rights stem from an international agreements, women at the grassroots still have to be able to design their own priorities for action, using

human rights and other universal concepts as a road map to help them achieve their goals. On the other hand, focusing too much on local issues can lead NGOs to forget the bigger picture of women's liberation and the elimination of patriarchy. This can debilitate the women's movement's long-term sustainability and effectiveness as much as efforts that ignore women's local priorities.

The final conclusion relates to linkages and advocacy developed by NGOs. Nicaragua has one of the best organized and effective national coalitions working on domestic violence, the Network of Women Against Violence. This coalition has been successful at creating many changes for women's situation and for implementing and enforcing laws, improving services to abused women, and raising an awareness about the importance of the issue of domestic violence for Nicaragua. The coalition, and some individual groups working outside of the coalition have been able to work for constructive change within the police, the media, government health centers, and even the top government legislative, judicial, and executive powers.

However, the NGO movement is still relatively recent. NGOs are developing their own analysis, and learning how to hold governments accountable to their promises. Until NGOs develop this capacity for sustained, targeted action, they run the risk of having to fight the same battles over and over again.

NGOs are demonstrating that they can be effective vehicles for organizing around women's and oppressed groups' identities, identifying women's needs and interests, and developing successful strategies for women's empowerment through collective action. They have also become important voices for the marginalized and oppressed, taking the place of the leadership that political parties and labor unions held in the past. NGOs have their limitations, since they are often financially unaccountable to the populations they serve, have the potential to be co-opted by the national or local governments, and often do not have a real participative and empowering approach for their constituents. Due to their lack of accountability, NGOs often suffer from many of the limitations of the institutions they are challenging, since they maintain hierarchical tendencies, male-dominated leadership, and a focus on service provision instead of political and economic empowerment.

In order to eliminate the cycle of violence and get rid of patriarchal structures and institutions, it is necessary to implement holistic approaches which have a focus on different levels of women's empowerment, from responding to women's survival needs and

discrimination, to fighting patriarchy, capitalism, and other systems of domination. NGOs will be able to develop a new paradigm for development if they achieve the right balance between women's self-sufficiency and political participation, and develop an empowerment process that starts from women's realities but keeps sight of the long-term goals of transforming gender relations and equalizing economic and political power.

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APPENDIX I-Theoretical Premises & Grassroots Strategies for Women's Organizations

Theoretical Premises ⁴	<u>Grassroots Strategies</u> ⁵	Asian NGO ⁶	Nicaraguan NGO ⁷
<p>Women in Development (WID): Integration of women into global processes of economic, political, and social growth and change. Focus: <u>Productive</u> sector. Roots: <u>Liberal feminism</u>. Problem addressed: <u>Women's exclusion and discrimination</u>.</p>	<p>Integrated Development: Provides package of interventions to alleviate poverty, meet basic survival needs, reduce gender discrimination, and help women gain self-esteem.</p>	<p>Proshika (Bangladesh) RDRS (India)</p>	<p>Nicaraguan Conscientious Women Integral Women's Services (SI Mujer)</p>
<p>Women and Development (WAD): Women need to develop alternative economic structures to the existing capitalist development models. Focus: <u>Productive</u> sector. Roots: <u>Dependency theory</u>. Problem addressed: <u>Unequal international and class inequalities</u>.</p>	<p>Economic Empowerment: Improving women's control over material resources and strengthens women's economic security.</p>	<p>Grameen B. (Bangladesh) Program of Credit for Rural Women (Nepal) SEWA (India) Proshika (Bangladesh)</p>	<p>Women's Sections of the National Farmers Union (UNAG) Women's Sections of Farm Workers Association (ATC) Movement for Working and Unemployed Women.</p>
<p>Gender and Development (GAD): Women are agents of change who need to organize themselves for a more effective political voice. Focus: <u>Productive and reproductive</u> sectors. Roots: <u>Socialist feminism</u>. Problem addressed: <u>Social construction</u> of production and reproduction as the basis for women's oppression.</p>	<p>Consciousness Raising: Organizes women into collectives that tackle the sources of subordination.</p>	<p>SEWA (India) Women's Development Programme/WDP (India) Nijera Kori (Bangladesh) Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era/DAWN (International) Women's Aid Organization (Malaysia)</p>	<p>Women's Action Center (CIAM) Integral Women's Services (SI Mujer) Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH)</p>

⁴ Rathgeber p489-502.

⁵ Batliwala p136.

⁶ Batliwala p136; Kabeer pp223-263.

⁷ As with Asian NGOs, these may be working from two different strategies.