

PLACE, SPACE & POWER: From Under the Baobab Tree to a Fair Trade Co-operative-Women's Experiences in Shea Butter Production in Upper East Ghana

Aissa Boodhoo-Leegsma

Under the Supervision of Dr. Deborah Sick

Thesis submitted to the

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Masters of Arts in Sociology

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Ottawa

February 2016

Abstract

Shea butter production in West Africa has been dominated by women and Northern Ghana specifically is a leading global producer. This thesis explores women's perceptions of power, control and agency in the Ojoba Women's Fair Trade Co-operative in Upper East Ghana. I add to the literature on women's experiences with and in fair trade. I examine how the shea industry and the co-operative provide a marketplace for women and a space for women to co-operate and resist power structures. I emphasize how the Western language of empowerment builds substantially from pre-existing women's networks and labour sharing practices in the agricultural context. The thesis evaluates the factors within Ojoba that contribute to women's empowerment. To be 'empowered' in Ojoba reflects a variety of understandings, experiences and locations. Indeed "women's empowerment" may misrepresent how the women are capable of building a physical and social space of safety, debate and growth.

Acknowledgements

I appreciate the countless individuals and groups both in Canada and in Ghana who offered advice and support where they could. My time in Ghana was a remarkable learning opportunity and I am very grateful to the following people for their commitment to immersing me in community life and helping me feel at home: Ellen and David Bartlett, Lucy and Samson Assah, Fatawu Zakaria, Apam and James at Star Shea, the staff at TradeAid, the staff at the Widows and Orphans Movement, Ben and Ama Kye Sasu, the deGraft-Johnson's and the translation and advice of Mercy Abarike.

I owe endless gratitude to my colleague and friend Conrad Duti for his translation and logistics support and his enduring confidence in me. Thanks should also go to the organizations who agreed to be interviewed which gave me a better idea of fair trade and the shea industry, namely the Fair Trade Federation, AfriKids, the Global Shea Alliance and the Widows and Orphan's Movement. Thanks to the Star Shea Kassena-Nankana group who allowed me to sit-in and offered their time in a group interview

Throughout my research, the support and expertise of my committee members, Dr. Ann Denis and Dr. Nathalie Mondain, has been helpful and readily available. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Sarah Lyon for her expertise and her thoughtful comments. The guidance of my supervisor Dr. Deborah Sick, both while I was in Canada and Ghana, has been invaluable and I have appreciated her patience and enthusiasm throughout the entire thesis process.

For their faith in me and offering a miscellany of helping hands, I want to thank: Bradley Dunseith, Clare Annett, Fabiola Aravena, Madelaine Ressel and Felix Boos. My family's support throughout this process has been unwavering and I would especially like to thank Elizabeth Boodhoo, Grace Boodhoo, Paul Leegsma and Alison Boodhoo-Leegsma.

Lastly, to the Women of Ojoba: thank you for sharing your stories with me and inspiring me. Without your trust in me, none of this would have been possible.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Outline of the Thesis Structure	3
Significance of the Research	6
Chapter 1: Theory	8
WID/WAD/GAD	8
Intersectionality Theory	11
Empowerment Theory	15
Conclusion	17
Chapter 2: Methods	19
Research design	19
Integration in the community	20
Interviews & observations at the Co-op	21
Data analysis processes	26
Conclusion	27
Chapter 3: Fair Trade	28
Fair Trade bodies & organizational structures	29
Fair Trade's targeting of economically marginalized producers	32
Women within Fair Trade [co-ops]	33
Fair Trade: all-women's co-ops	37
Conclusion	39
Chapter 4: Northern Ghana & the Shea Industry	41
Ghana Overview	41
Women's commercial & agricultural life in Ghana & Upper East Region	45
Bolgatanga Overview	46
An Overview of Women's Lived Experiences in Northern Ghana	47
Customary practices affecting labour women specifically in the UER	50
Customary practices around labour sharing amongst women	52
Women in shea butter production in Northern Ghana	54
Domestic trends for shea butter consumption & sales	56
Opportunities & challenges of an international shea market	57
Conclusion	59
Chapter 5: Ojoba & Star Shea	60
Overview of work processes & structure of Ojoba	61
Membership structure	63
Leadership structure	65
Operations & business relationships at Ojoba	67
Star Shea	70
Conclusion	71
Chapter 6: Women's power in domestic, co-op & community spaces	72
Domestic & personal power	72
'Power Within' to see value in one's labour & 'Power to' change the labour negotiation	73
Women's 'power to' change their children's educational outcomes	76
Differences among women: the case of co-wives' & widows' power in	

the domestic sphere.....	78
Public sphere.....	81
Contributing factors: Ojoba’s social role in “empowering”	86
Member participation & engagement	87
Bonds & solidarity in the social network.....	90
Social capital & ‘Power Over’	92
The potential power of vocational training & service provision	94
Social/family & community connections & social capital	96
Conclusion	98
Chapter 7: Fair Trade & women’s empowerment	100
Introduction.....	100
Knowledge & accessibility of the Fair Trade Network	100
Fair Price & “Power Within” and “Power To”	103
The buyer & understandings of control, agency & roles	105
Star Shea	107
Conclusion	109
Chapter 8: Conclusions	112
Reflecting on the findings & limitations.....	112
How women contributed significantly to their self-empowering social landscapes	112
Differences between women & heterogeneous experiences.....	113
Reflecting on Empowerment Theory & the discourse.....	114
Future challenges for women’s shea groups.....	115
Sustainability.....	115
Market size versus market penetration	117
Final discussion & opportunities for future exploration & further questions....	120
References	123
Appendix	131

List of Tables and Figures

TABLE 2.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE	22
TABLE 3.1 TYPES OF FAIR TRADE ORGANIZATIONS.....	30
TABLE 3.2 OUTLINE OF THE ROCHDALE CO-OPERATIVE MODEL	32
FIGURE 4.1 THE OFFICIAL REGIONS OF GHANA WITH CAPITAL CITIES	42
FIGURE 4.2 ETHNIC GROUPS OF GHANA WITH THE FRAFRA INCLUDED IN THE UER	43
FIGURE 5.1 MEMBERSHIP PROCESS OF OJOBA CO-OPERATIVE.....	64
TABLE 5.2 FOUNDING DOCUMENT: ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES	68
TABLE 6.1 WOMEN’S PERCEPTIONS OF POWER TO IMPROVE THEIR OWN LIVES	73
TABLE 6.2 WOMEN’S PERCEPTIONS OF POWER TO IMPROVE BONGO-SOE	86

Acronym List

FLO: Fairtrade Labelling Organization (now known as Fairtrade International)

FT: Fair Trade

FTF: The Fair Trade Federation

WFTO: World Fair Trade Organization

OWGC: Ojoba Women's Group Co-operative

OC: Ojoba Collective (buyer)

SB: Shea Butter

SS: Star Shea

UER: Upper East Region

WV: World Vision

INTRODUCTION

I was initially drawn to investigate women's treatment in Fair Trade as producers because of widespread accounts extolling Fair Trade's impacts on marginalized producers and in particular the hugely transformative effect on women. Fair Trade has always focused on marginalized producers, and providing fair compensation and safeguards to protect small scale producers from market exploitation (Bacon, 2010; Moberg and Lyon, 2010). In recent years, women producers have become an important cornerstone in Fair Trade mandates. In 2009, the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) and the Fairtrade Labelling Organization (FLO but now known as Fairtrade International) developed the Charter of Fair Trade Principles, specifically including a commitment to gender equity and women's empowerment (Fair Trade International, 2013). Their commitment highlighted the need to recognize the relatively more precarious position of women in the market. Building off that need, fair trade organizations should ensure equivalent pay for women and men and provide leadership opportunities for women so that women are fully involved and able to participate in decision-making and leverage the benefits of Fair trade production (Fair Trade International, 2009).

The commonly investigated angle in gender-specific Fair Trade research has been to examine how women are at odds with male producers in typically male-dominated commodities (such as coffee, tea, bananas) (Bacon, 2010; Fridell 2007; Kasente, 2012; Lyon, 2010; Lyon, Bezaury & Mutersbaugh, 2010). In most of these mixed-gender accounts, while women were promised better conditions, in most cases Fair Trade co-op's became sites of contestation, or at worst, further excluded or silenced women and their distinctive interests in production, decision-making and domestic labour arrangements (Kasente 2012; Lyon 2008; McArdle & Thomas 2012).

Taking a slightly different angle, I was interested in looking at a commodity that women historically controlled, thus finding a novel avenue to explore women's access to power in Fair

Trade and from a purportedly more advantageous position, in an all-women's co-operative environment producing shea butter (Chalfin, 2004; Greig, 2006). Coming into the field, replete with the literature that described the disempowering conditions women faced in mixed gender co-ops or even the subtle inequalities between leaders and workers in all women's co-op's, I was caught off guard by the supportive and strong social network I encountered.

This thesis makes two main points. First, I argue that women in the Ojoba Women's Co-operative Group (OWCG) have built upon pre-existing social networks and women's work groups embedded in the culture norms of their ethnic group, the Frafra people, who are indigenous to the Bolgatanga region. Second, I argue that the OWCG through its leadership and its mandates has fostered a network of social solidarity and emotional development (to borrow from Nussbaum's capabilities approach), and created a politically recognized hub for women in the village of Bongo-Soe—which has conventionally been dominated by male leadership and patrilineal norms (Agana, 2012).

Discussions of women's empowerment and its correlation with various social enterprises (under which I include fair trade shea butter production and other income generating activities) have been largely associated with predominant WID/WAD paradigms. Fair Trade, as a social movement and proponent of empowering its female producers, subscribes to the belief that economic empowerment results in the foundation for social empowerment (Das, 2009; McArdle & Thomas, 2012). So while Fair Trade peripherally aims to empower women, it by no means goes as far as the Gender and Development paradigm in understanding and planning for women's differences and tailoring their organizational mandates and expectations to truly address root gender inequalities within societies (Das, 2009; Hutchens 2010; Rathgeber. 1990; Syed. 2010).

It is crucial to emphasize the evolution of the topic which began as an initial exploration into Fair Trade's treatment of women and the resultant empowerment derived from being a Fair Trade producer, to an exploration of how shea women utilize their social capital and embedded cultural social network as a group to foster an empowering environment where women can develop a sense of 'power within' and accrue the resources to utilize their 'power to'.

I argue that the co-operative is able to challenge women's roles and thus challenge the illegitimacy of women's change-making abilities in this society through the co-op's leaders and members. The OWCG creates a central women's space where women enhance their own personal power through shared and affirmed understandings of the value of their work and economic contributions (to their homes and to the co-op), which in turn drives their 'power to' invoke change in their lives, their families and fundamentally—acting as a collective of women's voices—in the Bongo-Soe community.

OUTLINE OF THE THESIS STRUCTURE

My thesis is comprised of two major sections: the first five chapters are the requisite background and context-based chapters which summarize my methodological and theoretical approaches as well as giving the necessary literature review. The literature review examines how Fair Trade has evolved and how women have experienced the realities of Fair Trade in both mixed and single gender co-ops, across different regions and commodities. I also give a general description of the shea industry—and its relevance in the Northern Ghanaian context—as well as its historical background, physical process and women's active roles in production. In the second section, chapters five to seven, I present and analyse data directly gathered from my field work.

Chapter 1 examines the historical landscape of women's interactions with development and their portrayals in the development literature. The chapter explores the evolution from WID to WAD to GAD and women's evolving and complex social location in the economy and the household and how development planning positioned women in a variety of tropes. These Western tropes (among the most notable, the Western Gaze) have varied over time, representing women in the Global South as victims, passive observers and non-productive caregivers before ultimately recognizing a certain level of agency in women's livelihoods and domestic partnerships as well as women's significant economic and labour contributions (Jackson, 2007; Mohanty, 1991). I conceptualize empowerment— and the definition advanced by the work of Naila Kabeer—as occurring on multiple levels, personally and politically, with different impacts

to women's perceived power through their sense of self-respect, their voice and ability to act/invoke change and their ability to participate in public forums (Calvès, 2009; Kabeer, 1999; Rowlands, 1995). Intersectionality theory—initially coined by Crenshaw—focuses on women's heterogeneous experiences based on their unequal access to privilege and/or their marginality (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality notes that differences such as race, class, sexual orientation and age are interlocking sources of oppression that have often gone unstudied and overlooked in favour of broad sweeping generalizations of women's 'shared' experiences (Choo and Feree, 2010; Davis, 2008; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Throughout I use a blended interpretation of empowerment, through an intersectional lens, to note how empowerment is not simply accessible to and attainable by all women equally, but attainable by some, excluding others or perhaps coming at the cost of other women's subordination.

In the second chapter, I explain my field research process and planning, first situating the OWCG and my integration into the co-op in Bolgatanga, Upper East Region, Ghana. I describe how I gained access to the co-op and the initial research timeline that took place between April-May 2015. I also introduce the Star Shea (SS) Women's Shea Pickers Group that I met with and interviewed for a briefer period, as a small non-Fair Trade counterpoint to the Ojoba group. I detail my sample of women interviewed at the OWCG and provide the relevant socio-demographic information that was collected. The interview questions and probing tactics are briefly described (with the full interview guide is in the Appendix). Finally, I note my data analysis process where I coded the interview transcripts through Nvivo.

In Chapter 3, I explore the origins of Fair Trade and its social justice oriented mandates in addition to its contemporary priorities, one of which is a focus on addressing gender inequality. I introduce Fair Trade using the official definitions offered by the major Fair Trade Organizations such the WFTO and FLO. I also discuss the structures of these regulatory bodies and the Fair Trade Federation (FTF), the Fair Trade organization to which Ojoba belongs. I discuss Fair Trade's outreach to small-scale producers through the use of a democratic co-operative structure and their commitment to producers documented in the Fair Trade Principles, which also includes

their direct commitment to women's empowerment. I review the recent literature on women's diverse experiences in mixed gender and all-women's Fair Trade co-operatives and their reports on perceived positive and negative changes in their perceptions of power, control and agency in both the domestic and work spheres.

Chapter 4 gives an overview of Northern Ghana and the shea industry and the general aspects of both which affect women's livelihoods, land rights and access to the market. The chapter predominantly focuses on socio-demographic and distinctive features of Northern Ghana, especially in the Upper East Region and amongst the Frafra. Customary practices such as patrilineal land and inheritance rights are discussed in reference to their effect on women's ability to farm and maintain independent agricultural livelihoods from their partners (Agana, 2012; Apusigah, 2013; Poudyal, 2011). The Shea section focuses on describing women's century-old involvement in shea and their continued dominance in the shea market while tracking recent market changes, domestically and internationally, and what these mean for women shea butter producers.

Chapter 5 and 6 provide background on Ojoba and illustrate how the co-op challenges or interacts with socio-cultural norms in their community. Chapter 5 notes the history of the OWCG, with its early ties to World Vision and how current processes structure the membership and leadership responsibilities as well as the way in which the approximately 400 members are paid for their jobs. At the end of Chapter 5 I offer a brief description of how the Star Shea group functions and highlight some of the differences in organization and processes between the younger and smaller SS group and the larger, more established Ojoba group.

Chapter 6 delves further into the social environment of the co-operative and how women perceive changes to their personal and political power, and the potential for Ojoba to provide an empowering environment. The chapter explores how Ojoba's focus on member participation and engagement, the social capital and 'power over' dynamics in the group (aided and facilitated by power differences between women, some attributed to family or social connections in the co-op) and the vocational training, all appear to be significant contributive factors to women's reports of

empowerment. In an attempt to recognize differences among women, I have also included the experiences of women in the sample who were in polygynous marriages and widows, to ascertain how their access and ability to enhance their ‘power within’ and ‘power to’ compare with those of other co-op members.

Chapter 7 focuses on how Fair Trade upholds its commitments to women’s empowerment and also where sizeable gaps lie in women’s understanding of fair trade. The demonstrated lack of knowledge about fair trade has a dual effect of 1) distancing women from accessing and then leveraging their membership (and collective political power) in fair trade as a valuable global network, and 2) making women “unknowledgeable participants”, without the ability to critique, negotiate or change the fair trade process for their betterment.

As in the earlier analysis of power in Chapter 5 and in Chapter 6, I focus on fair price as the most tangible deliverable of Fair Trade. Indeed, women’s repeated remarks affirmed the clear benefit of receiving substantially increased incomes for their shea butter and the corresponding implications on their ability to save, provide for their children’s education, alter their negotiating power in the spousal partnership and otherwise change their own and family’s economic circumstances.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Throughout I offer counterexamples to the majority or dominant positions/experiences of women in the Ojoba co-op in an effort to highlight differences among women and how that manifests in terms of their personal accounts of gains received from their shea production experience. In an attempt to explore other structures of equitable compensation for shea butter producers, I have also woven the experiences of non-Fair Trade shea workers in a much newer and less established group (the Star Shea group) throughout.

Chalfin (2004) and Greig (2006)’s explorations of women shea butter producers sheds light on a widely growing, lucrative and most importantly, a historically women-dominated industry—in a field that had generally gone unexamined. My research aims to contribute to the

illustration of women's dominance in the industry, the significance of that in contributing to women's power in West Africa (specifically in a patrilineal region of Ghana) and notes the intermingling of cultural traditions and customary practices that underlie women's power structures. My research crucially questions the efficacy of Fair Trade empowerment versus grassroots empowerment efforts, and in particular where women's differences, and networks may also factor into their perceptions of power, co-operation and conflict.

CHAPTER 1: THEORY

This chapter outlines the paradigm shift in development's consideration and treatment of women of the Global South. The shift from Women in Development (WID), to Women and Development (WAD) then to Gender and Development (GAD), shows how women were seen as tools and subjects in development to later reinterpretations of women's diverse roles and inequalities and their interactions with development. I also describe the ties between WID, WAD and GAD and empowerment theory, largely based on the work of Naila Kabeer (1999). Finally, I explore how feminist intersectionality theory offers an inclusive framework and how this interacts with women's position in development.

WID/WAD/GAD

Prior to the 1970's, women lacked a substantive role in development, more specifically, women's contributions in the economies and social structures of the Global South were not considered to be significant to Western models of development. The Women in Development (WID) paradigm marked the beginning of the development industry's targeting of women as development tools in the overarching Westernization development projects of the 1970s. The paradigm was based on the pioneering work of Ester Boserup (1970), who investigated women's prevalence in agricultural work in the global South; she noted how women were cornerstones in development but their experiences and concerns were often ignored or minimized in development priorities (Lind, 2003). WID emphasized the generalization of women's experiences of exploitation and subordination in production and the household, across many cultural contexts. In practice, WID was watered down and depoliticized in two substantive ways; firstly, through its articulation and mainstreaming by Western liberal feminists and secondly through its policy applications which viewed women as human capital investments (Rathgeber, 1990, p. 491).

Women and Development (WAD) attempted to rectify the passive role women occupied in WID, positioning them as more active in shaping their own experiences. WAD was significantly more critical of how women were treated by development, and perhaps due to its links to dependency theories, it also recognized that women are already integrated into the economy (unlike the WID assumption that they required further integration). But in a similar way, on a practical level, WAD failed to strongly critique social relations (and development's role in reinforcing these) but instead emphasized institutional inequality as a means to redressing gender inequality (Rathgeber, 1990). Institutional structural inequality- as Rathgeber calls it - was apparent in how women were routinely labeled as victims and a homogenous group and how their distinct (and widely diverse) needs were ignored or subsumed by other development priorities. Instead she posits that WAD advocated for institutional structures to include more women—in order to better represent their seemingly unified interests, rather than a broader critique of the social relations of gender (Rathgeber, 1990). These efforts put women's issues in a larger spotlight in development work, but also neglected the diversity of women as a group (and largely ignored class as a divisive factor).

WID and WAD both positioned the West (and specifically Western women) as the controlling agents over non-Western women. These paradigms suggested the persistence of beliefs in 'one right way' of development and social (and technical/economic) advancement that would challenge assumedly generalizable global inequalities (Rathgeber, 1990). Rathgeber, and others—notably Sen (1990) in his analysis of co-operative conflict)—note how class and accrued social capital are seen mistakenly as categories that equally and similarly affect men and women.

In looking at class, class differences rarely distinguish individuals in a clearly predictable way. For example, hypothetically, a working class man from the Global South may have more in common, in terms of rights and assets, with a middle class woman from the Global South. Moreover, in practice, class may not follow the determinative patterns or restrictions that Western

researchers may assume. This is especially interesting to consider in terms of inter-class differences and distinctions among women.

Bina Agarwal's (2010b) work on green governance in India and Nepal is an illustrative example of how class operates distinctly for women as a group, and certainly within different cultural contexts. In her field research of local forestry councils, Agarwal (2010a, 2010b) finds what most Western researchers might categorize as atypical, noting that upper-class women were actually unable to participate as fully in meetings as poor or peasant women (who were typically less educated or illiterate), who would speak passionately without fear of retribution from husbands or family. She noted that upper class women were far more restricted by caste/class norms which denoted an ideal wife as subservient and obedient to her husband, thus diminishing chances of these women raising their own concerns for fear of undermining the status or dominance of their husband in the council (Agarwal, 2010b, p. 17). This is a specific example that illustrates how current theoretical frameworks favour purposeful class analysis. However, generally both WID and WAD, through their integration into development institutions (and not their iteration in theory) still viewed women as a homogenous group and as a tool to achieve overarching development, growth and modernization. With the growing dissent in feminist thought in the 1980s, which challenged the universal woman and notions of global sisterhood, similarly, at a later point, the WID/WAD paradigms were rigorously challenged (Lind, 2003; Rathgeber, 1990).

Gender and Development (GAD) grew out of this movement, broadening how women were viewed and considering class and other social factors more comprehensively in how they interacted with gender. While WAD also posited this intent, GAD put an emphasis on gender relations and how they shaped women's statuses and rights. GAD is still considered a useful framework because, while it acknowledged the linkages between women's economic, productive and reproductive timelines, it also advocated for women's relationships with men to be studied, as another important factor in understanding the opportunities and constraints women faced in their daily lives.

The work of Chandra Mohanty (1991) was paramount to exposing the ever-present “Western gaze” in feminist development work. Part of the Western Gaze, still embedded in GAD, is an inability to imagine gender relations that are non-normative, in the sense of being outside of the scope of heterosexual partnerships (Lind, 2003, p. 239). Thus when creating policy, unmarried, widowed or lesbian women simply do not appear to be affected by unequal gender relations or are so marginalized, yet outside target groups, that they are ignored. Target groups in development work typically include school-aged girls, new mothers, and mothers with large families. GAD certainly represents a better alternative than the decades of male developmentalist-driven policy (closely linked to Westernizing neo-colonial projects of modernization). It presents the same problem that feminism faced in the 1970s and 1980s: women cannot be a universalized group with generalized experiences and women studying women do not necessarily ‘know’ or ‘understand’ each other’s needs better. WID/WAD/GAD remain stalwart policy and analytical frameworks in development. But for El-Bushra (2000, p. 56), Lind (2003, p. 229) and Rathgeber (1990, p. 493,95), in all three major approaches, translation challenges seem inevitable from theory to praxis (and policy), which gives way to the depoliticization of the framework and the loss of nuance in distinguishing among women and recognizing subordination (in multiple forms). As gender continues to be institutionalized (and prioritized) in the development arena, with gender specialists and gender units considered implicit experts, it will be interesting to see how women are framed and under what lens their experiences are analysed, and if this will accurately encapsulate the diversity of women as a group.

INTERSECTIONALITY THEORY

In the nearly twenty years since GAD was proposed no major theoretical alternative has been singularly endorsed by development scholars. What GAD initially proposed, looking at various impact factors in women (and men’s lives), is similar to the current feminist theoretical interest in intersectionality. Building off of work by Crenshaw (1991, in Bunjun, 2010) and Hill-Collins (2000, in Bunjun, 2010), intersectionality shows the limitation of gender as the sole

analytical factor; Davis defines it as the “interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power.” (Davis, 2008, p. 68).

Intersectionality, as a theoretical approach and a methodology, is recognized as beneficial due to its breadth and broad scope, firmly establishing the multiplicative importance of interactive social categories (such as race, gender, class and dis/ability) rather than the subordinate or secondary status that Western feminist research has assigned to them in the past (Davis, 2008; Choo and Feree, 2010; Nash, 2008). However, beyond Crenshaw coining the term “intersectionality”, feminists from the Global South have continually contributed to intersectionality and challenged its boundaries (and their Western construction) .

Intersectionality’s ‘fuzzy boundaries’ have created challenges for researchers searching for categories, models or structure to utilize (Bunjun, 2010). Working within and extending this complexity, intersectionality researchers have further developed the approach, arguing that to study marginalities we must also excavate how privilege is normative and how it frames and applies marginal labels; others such as Anthias and Yuval-Davis and numerous Black and Chicana feminists, including Claudia Jones and Elizabeth Martinez, refer to sexism, racism and classism as the ‘triple jeopardy effect’ or ‘triple oppressions.’ (Hankivsky, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Feminists from the Global South, like the researchers in the Women in the Caribbean project, have also rejected some of these categories as Northern concepts, and instead suggested their own categories which better fit and represent interests of Caribbean women in particular (Denis, 2008;). For example, the WICP noted the category of ‘work’ to be changed to ‘sources of livelihood’ to include not just women’s paid employment, but all the activities required for domestic and personal survival (Massiah 1986; Denis 2008). In this example, Denis (2008) argues that this more inclusively encompasses working-class Afro-Caribbean women whose life experiences would not be properly articulated if only their paid work was considered, ignoring the plethora of other jobs and roles they engaged in.

However King also (as cited in Nash, 2008) cautions that we cannot simply allow certain categories to supplant or override others, as can be common in an additive model of intersectionality. For example, if the additive model is used, each additional category implicitly means more marginalization - which may or may not be true, but can result in generalization or simplification of a complex interaction of identities and social locations. Instead, while recognizing the complexity of intersectionality, researchers also study the dynamic interactions between these factors, with some individuals or groups transcending their oppressive conditions through conscientization and mobilization (as in Berger's ethnography on the catalyzing effect of institutional stigma, as cited in Simien, 2007) or others shedding part(s) of their status or being 'recruited to other categories' (Adams and Padamsee, 2001, as cited in Choo and Ferree 2010).

At the current juncture in intersectionality, both inclusion-centered and process-centered methodologies have been recognized. I will focus predominantly on process-centered models, thus avoiding some of the pitfalls found within the inclusion interpretation: namely the fetishisation of difference without the problematization of what is 'normative' or 'dominant' and how those with access to power create what is considered the dominant versus what is considered 'the different' (Choo and Ferree, 2010). However, inclusion-centered interpretation has brought the notion of "voice" to the forefront of intersectionality research and this is the significant and distinct approach that I want to draw from. By focusing on the notion of 'giving' and 'recognizing' the voice of those who have been on the margins, and making it central to research, Hancock (as cited in Choo and Ferree, 2010) notes that by bringing 'voice' into research, the public can better visualize and realistically understand multiple intersections and the scattered nature of social positionality.

It is critical to note here that voice-based intersectionality has not been met without criticism. Carneiro (2005) discussed the tendencies of white feminism to subsume Black feminism in Brazil, thus eclipsing race as a core factor in power differences. Similarly, Nnaemeka (2003) argues that because of the lack of acknowledgement of the significant differences between Western feminism and African feminisms (what she refers to as *nego-*

feminism), theoretical concepts like intersectionality neglect to build upon indigenous beliefs which affects whom we choose to include as representative of African women's voices which in turn can perpetuate Western visions of "third world women" (Nnaemeka, 2003, p. 377). In my particular case study, I will be quoting extensively using women's voices to describe their own social location, intersections of inequality and distinct experiences, in contrast to how the conventional development and socio-anthropological literature has portrayed or generalized women's experiences.

Moving to process-centered methodology, (a larger component of my own case study), McCall (2005) describes three means of structuring process-centered intersectional methodologies: 1) anti-categorical complexity 2) intracategorical complexity and 3) intercategorical complexity. McCall defines anti-categorical complexity as the deconstruction of analytical categories because they reduce and simplify social relations and "[re]produce inequalities in the process of producing differences" (McCall, 2005, p. 1774). She defines intercategorical complexity as opposite, where researchers must provisionally adopt existing categories to illustrate groupings and relationships of inequality and changing configurations along multiple intersections (McCall, 2005, p.1774). This approach particularly hinges on the provisional acceptance of categories, with the later intent to deconstruct or even reject some categories. McCall (2005) places intracategorical complexity squarely between the two earlier approaches, noting that it also, "interrogates boundary making and the process of boundary making but like the [intercategorical approach] it acknowledges stable relationships between categories...but focuses on particular social groups at neglected points of intersections" (p. 1774). McCall notes that intracategorical complexity is the ideal approach to use for case studies, because they typically focus on single groups at the intersection of multiple categories. By using intracategorical complexity one can understand the broader structural dynamics affecting the lives of the 'central group' but also reveal, rather than avoid, the diversity and differences within the group.

By using the intracategorical approach, I am able to use stable categories of difference and broader structural dynamics which I observed (decidedly as an outsider) which provides the most accessible means to highlight a previously understudied group while integrating ‘voice’ as a means of revealing differences and normative process of qualifying and constructing ‘difference’ from the subject’s perspective, rather than the researcher’s. The blend of structural-process models of intersectionality, with elements of inclusion-interpretation models, gives a theoretical framework with the necessary structure to frame the analysis by using categories to visualize relational dynamics, difference and social positionality. However, this still allows individual’s agency to center the discussion through showing their “subject positions and how they adapt in complex locations” (Adams and Padamsee, 2001, as cited in Choo and Feree, 2010). Finding and revealing these ‘spaces between’ [categories], can allow the researcher to search for and find areas of contestation, areas of resistance or areas of negotiation; these areas represent spaces where conventional forms of ‘empowerment’ can be witnessed.

EMPOWERMENT THEORY

Empowerment can be traced to various theorists, Foucault and Freire are the most commonly associated with notions of power and the process of empowerment. The notion of creating and facilitating processes of consciousness-raising as a method of brokering individual and community change however is usually attributed to Freire (Calvès , 2009). Calvès (2009) in particular notes how empowerment first came into the development agenda through the work of feminist activists, seeking to use empowerment as a tool for dismantling patriarchal power structures. Measuring empowerment remains both a preoccupation and a problem for researchers. Empowerment itself has been defined by numerous scholars, in a variety of different ways. Most account for multiple ‘levels’ of empowerment, usually noting differences between personal versus political empowerment (Rowlands, 1995). In a widely used definition, Naila Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as, “the ability to make choices-or choose alternatives- from many possible actions.” (p. 435). In particular, she deconstructs how we understand empowerment in

terms of agency and access to resources. For Kabeer (1999), agency is ‘the ability to define one’s goals and act on them’; for women, this ability demonstrated a ‘power within’ which was indicated by participation in decision-making and bargaining/negotiating (p. 438). While visibly agency can be a clear indicator of some level of empowerment, Kabeer (1999) also describes ‘power to’ as a transformative action versus ‘power over’ which is inherently disempowering (to others) and may involve coercion, threat and violence. Her analysis of empowerment is thus careful to not connote power as agency, instead she recognizes operative inequalities as the foundation to understand how or if empowerment is functioning. Kabeer (1999) also rejects the thesis that increased access to resources automatically leads to increased control therefore resulting in increased decision making for women. Rather, for Kabeer, (1999, p.441) access to resources can signal potential, but mingles with and depends on other factors such as Bourdieu’s ‘doxa’, the ingrained aspects of culture and tradition which construct differing realities and interests even within similar groups.

However, empowerment is also problematic in terms of the social construction of the term and its labeling effect. If we consider the work of Amartya Sen (1990), he still operates within Western interpretations of empowerment. Sen (1990) positions the woman in the heterosexual spousal arrangement, adopting ideas of bargaining power as obtainable purely through increased economic participation of women. This follows the same logic of most social economy initiatives (such as fair trade or microfinance and microenterprises); if a woman is economically productive, she is economically empowered and therefore household and overall social relations will be less strained and more emancipatory, also echoing the Western feminist call for female emancipation via total independence of wives from husbands. This approach considers one ‘level’ of empowerment (the economic element) and conflates it with the social, collective empowerment of women as a whole. However, it is important to note that Sen (1990) argues that spousal partnerships are not inherently co-operative, but women negotiate these as a means to ensure some economic independence, which can operate as a starting point for personal empowerment or equalizing power relations within the household.

Calvès (2009) also draws attention to the institutional focus on economic empowerment, linking it to an increased individualization of empowerment that focuses on individual choices, access and opportunities. Calvès (2009) tracks the meaning and usage of ‘empowerment’, from when empowerment was tied to greater consciousness raising projects and ‘power to’, to its current focus that largely ignores political struggles or questioning who has access to power.

Jackson (2007) and Cornwall (2007) both cite the need to examine empowerment in how it is understood by women of the global South; this necessitates a drastic rethinking and deconstruction of empowerment as a Western feminist construct which is inherently individualistic. Instead, Jackson (2007) problematizes notions of empowerment and autonomy that the West seeks to ‘bestow’ on women in the global South. She posits that women engage in a creative conjugal partnership (slightly amending Sen’s notion of co-operative conflict in the household) with their spouses which balances work and social life in a way that cannot be comprehended using conventional frameworks like bargaining power analyses or empowerment measures. Moreover, often access to resources, external agency and networking can lead to benefits not only for the individual but also for spouses and the overall household.

While Jackson (2007), Cornwall (2007) and Kabeer (1999) all argue that a Western construction of empowerment and the ‘empowered woman’ is at play in development, the exact identity of this concept differs, and is probably re-modeled differently for different locations, groups of women and types of projects.

CONCLUSION

Women are frequent subjects in both the development discourse and the practical application of policy. Their positions in the household as well as both the informal and formal economy are now more recognized than ever; however women being at the forefront of development planning often comes at the cost of tokenizing women’s experiences in addition to generalizing across women’s different inequalities, privileges and access to resources. Moving beyond WID and WAD, GAD has attempted to problematize and excavate gender norms and

structural sources of gender equality, often using the language of empowerment theory to promote a participatory and well-meaning dialogue for actors and targeted women in development. Considered alongside intersectionality theory, GAD and empowerment theory have a role to play in complicating and thus better depicting and interpreting women's lived and differing experiences with inequality. The next chapter describes the methods used to better explore these experiences.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

RESEARCH DESIGN

I specifically looked at producers in the Ojoba Women's Shea Co-operative, based near Bolgatanga, in the Upper East region of Ghana (considered to be part of the larger area known as Northern Ghana). Because most farming is done in outlying rural villages outside the market in Bolgatanga, I studied women shea butter producers primarily from the Bongo-Soe community, which is a small village where Ojoba's processing facility is located, approximately 15 km from Bolgatanga.

I selected the Ojoba Women's Co-operative for several reasons. Mainly it has a clear mandate to only include women and promotes the "empowerment of women... and the value of working together and helping [other women] succeed" (Ojoba Co-operative, 2014). Additionally, the co-op is one of the smaller co-operatives, including roughly 400 rural women, making research and interviewing more feasible in order to understand the scope of operations and experiences of the women.

As previously mentioned the Ojoba Co-operative is located in the greater Bolgatanga municipality. 'Bolga', as it is colloquially known, is the regional administrative capital of the Upper East. It has an urban population of approximately 72,768 people (Municipality of Bolgatanga, 2014). The town is also center of the greater municipality area and thus encompasses 182 towns and villages (Municipality of Bolgatanga, 2014). 57% of the total labour force is engaged in agriculture. Although the area is made up of numerous ethnic groups such as the Akans, Ewes and the Ga-Adanbge, the Ojoba Co-op is exclusively composed of women from the Frafra group (Lush Corporation, 2012; Municipality of Bolgatanga, 2014). The overall population of the entire Bongo District (of which Bongo-Soe is part of) was 84,545 according to a 2010 census, however Bongo-Soe is a mere fraction of that total population. (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010, p. ix)

Integration in the Community

Upon reaching the research community in Bolgatanga, Upper East Region, I conducted an independent search to find the Ojoba Women's Co-op. This phase lasted approximately two to three weeks and also operated as a means of integrating me into the community. This phase was additionally necessary to gain contacts in the community and plan out participant selection. Bernard (2011, p. 358-359) highlights the importance of using this initial time to conduct informal interviews, remembering conversations that occur casually and using this information to piece together an idea of community life and build rapport with community members.

During this phase, I was able to conduct several informal interviews with NGO actors involved in various women's shea butter groups in the Upper East Region. These informal conversations gave me the opportunity to pre-test portions of my interview guide and gather more background information into industry-specific knowledge of shea butter production. It was through these conversations (specifically with World Vision Ghana, who gave seed support to Ojoba) that I was connected with the leader of the Ojoba Co-op. During this time I also found my translator, who himself works with a Fair Trade certified organization in Bolgatanga. He had the necessary language capacities to translate (being local to Bolga) and also had numerous contacts in women's groups and Fair Trade organizations because of the nature of his work.

I also met with the shea organization, Star Shea, that would offer me access to interview their non-FT women's shea groups located in the nearby Kassena-Nankana region outside Bolgatanga. The non-FT group would serve to act as an informal control group to investigate empowerment differences between fair trade and non-fair trade, as well as to examine overall trends in women's participation in shea butter production. My contact through this organization was a regional field manager who would introduce me, enabling me to return with my translator at a later date to interview women. They also provided me with their own translator from the Kassena-Nankana region, in case any regional dialects required specific help, therefore resulting in two translators for the non-FT group.

I initially reached out to the leader of Ojoba (through an introduction given to me by World Vision Ghana, an original partner in the co-op) who herself was part of the community and directly involved in grassroots work, rather than the co-op's 'corporate arm' (based in the United States). A preliminary meeting was planned with her in order to familiarize her with my project and my research intent. At this time she was given a copy of the recruitment letter to further inform her (and the group) of the aim of my research. She quickly gave me permission to begin interviews at the co-op. She extended an invitation for me to come the next day to the co-op to meet the members and begin interviews.

Interviews and Observations at the Co-op

The interview and observation phase took place over 7-8 weeks in April and May 2015. The research objectives guided data collection and although only volunteers were solicited, some selection was used through purposive sampling in order to collect and record experiences that show women's diverse positions (such as leaders and variety of types of 'jobs' in the co-op) in a women's only Fair Trade co-op and investigate the intersectional nature of inequality differentiating these women. Once I had taken a tour of the co-op and established what were the different jobs, such as packagers, grinders, and so on, I then used purposive sampling to attempt to get a wide spread of different "jobs" represented in my interviews. Table 2.1 (next page) notes the different types of members interviewed.

Table 2.1: Socio-demographic profile of the sample

Name	Job	Age	Years in Co-op	Education	Marital Status	Income derived from shea (%)
Nana	Grinder	38	7	None	Married	70
Ama	Packager (and trainer)	55-56	13	None	Married	50
Assibi	Packager	Late 50s	2	None	Widow	Unknown, Shea > Farming
Assompoka	Packager	44	18	None	Married, Co-wife	50
Dorcas	Grinder (supervisor)	~50	17	None	Married	75
Adjua	Boiler	40	15	None	Married	50
Belinda	General Member	40	5	None	Widow (lives with brother-in-law)	50
Thema	Leader	49	7	PSE	Married	30
Kukua	Leader	42	18	PSE	Married	25
Kessie	Boiler	30	4	None	Married, Co-wife (First Wife)	Unknown, Shea > Farm

Source: Author's Interviews, 2015

During this time I also undertook direct observations during several of the co-op general meetings, special 'event specific' meetings and smaller financial group meetings. On field visits when I would not interview, I would explore the co-op, working with the women learning the process, and visiting the local community (BS), especially on market days. Visits during local market days were especially useful to build my understanding of shea's market value and observe women's roles as independent negotiators and entrepreneurs as well as noting women's roles in the community. My attendance at meetings was unobtrusive and was translated simultaneously by my translator. I most frequently attended non-compulsory meetings such as those of the literacy group or the Village Loans and Savings Association (VLSA). Unfortunately, due to dry season and the Upper East's traditional funeral season, general meetings and leadership meetings

were held very infrequently or often postponed (the co-op officially ‘opened’ for production season in early May). However, in the few meetings I was able to observe fully, I carefully tracked which members attended (and if these members corresponded with those I interviewed), who spoke, how many times they spoke, and who appeared to be ‘leading’ the meeting.

For this aspect of the observation I relied on Agarwal’s (2010b) suggestion to keep track of how often and how many women speak during meetings. The intention of these notes was to examine what Agarwal (2010b) calls “hierarchical heterogeneity” of women and how it differentiates their interests and therefore prioritizes the voice of more ‘powerful’ women while diminishing the voices of other women. As Lyon has noted in her work, the direct observation used in the community helped me to note daily tasks related to shea butter production and household functioning, as well as evidence of women’s relative power within the community and among themselves in public spheres.

Due to recommendations of my translator and local researchers, I condensed my interview format from two semi-structured interviews to one, which typically amounted to a 45 – 90 minute conversation. This was recommended in case I was unable to reconnect with the same woman twice due to funeral season or the rotating work shift system at the co-op. In addition, women were reminded that they could speak with me candidly at any time after their interview as well, and some women did do this later on, when further rapport had developed and they became more accustomed to my presence (through an interpreter, but also with some independently speaking to me in English). The interview first gathered basic information regarding women’s various roles in shea butter production, general socio-economic and demographic information (such as age, marital status, children, ethnic and clan affiliations, land tenure/ownership, occupation, etc.) as well as perceptions of fair trade and its utility to both individual women and the community as a whole. The initial interview guide was to be used to maintain a loose order to the interview, as advised by Bernard (2011), however after the first two interviews several questions were adjusted for increased comprehension and feedback from participants. Questions especially related to

empowerment, fair trade and power relations (non-concrete terms) were teased out in more detail and using more analogies or anecdotes to elicit more detailed and lengthy responses.

The second half of the interview relied on open-ended questions in which interviewees were asked to examine their understanding of Fair Trade and its implications in their lives both as individual producers and as community members (i.e., whether there is discernable benefit). Probing questions were used in order to draw out longer and more in-depth responses; types of probes that were used include: the long question probe, the echo probe and the neutral probe (Bernard, 2011, p. 162). The long question probe was used to a great extent by the translator who noticed that women required context for a single question, thus by condensing several related questions, respondents understood the question more clearly and were more likely to give a longer response. I used the echo probe often as a clarifying tool, to ensure that I understood any ambiguous or often symbolic language properly and also to ensure that women were assured of their response. Tangible examples were used (based on Kabeer's 1994 and Rowlands' 1995 formulations of empowerment) to determine the power dynamics in play and included: who manages household finances, who has control of labour, one's ability to participate in community or co-op activities, one's ability to participate politically or one's ability to disagree with their partner's decisions (Kabeer, 1994; Rowlands, 1995). Other questions which developed organically included: how is income split, do you disclose your income to your husband, and/or does your husband disclose his income?

In addition, I was able to have several additional informal interviews with the two key leader figures to gather more information about the history of the co-op, how it has changed, plans for the future and what they feel are the advantages of a women's co-op in the community. They were also asked in more detail about when and how they came to be in the current position they hold (and other positions they may have held); what they see as their responsibilities as a leader, how often and in what ways do they interact with other members of the co-op; and how they think they are advancing the interests of women (in the community at large). By asking these questions (sometimes repeatedly and phrased differently) across several interviews, I was

able to build greater rapport and elicit longer responses; it also allowed me to triangulate across multiple sources and about certain stories or facts about the co-op. As a secondary means of gathering background information, I also examined founding documents of the co-op which laid out by-laws, regulations and the role of all actors originally involved in the co-op (community, executive, members, and NGO partners). Requests to access formal membership rosters of the co-op were granted, however, executives were ultimately unable to find them.

As noted above, as an informal control, I also conducted interviews with 10-20 women who were not part of a FT group, but instead belonged to the Star Shea Network. Star Shea is part of a larger NGO that represents 300-400 women's shea picking and processing groups in Northern Ghana. They help mobilize smaller village women's groups into larger co-operatives and provide them with specialized market technology that gives them accessible information on the fluctuating market rates of shea. It is important to note that while some of their groups are fair trade certified (through IMO Fair for Life), the group I chose was not fair trade but was a certified organic group.

The non-FT group was in the Kassena-Nankana region outside of Bolgatanga. It was very loosely organized, presumably owing to the fact that it was a much more newly mobilized women's picker's group. This meant they had no set meeting or working time, and no production or work facility to meet at. This greatly increased the difficulty to meet with the group. One introductory meeting was arranged by the administrative official from SS; my introduction meeting with the group was combined with an annual requisite training meeting on organic production (as the group was organic certified by completing the required sensitization trainings and passing contamination screenings). I eventually had two more meetings with the group. At the second meeting I began by interviewing one of the woman leaders, however, our meeting evolved into a group interview in which approximately 12 women (including 2 leaders) joined in.

The same interview guide was used for the non-FT group, with the fair trade section of questions being omitted, instead asking about their affiliation with the SS Network (the organizing NGO that certified and helped organize these women's groups). Because they were

purely a picking group, questions about shea were primarily focused on the raw nuts and market prices for this and not the butter. These women were also asked if they had any knowledge of Fair Trade and Organic certification and their understanding of it.

The majority of the interviews were transcribed while still in the field, in case translation questions arose on the ground I was then able to ask the translator immediately. The interview transcripts and translations were also double checked by a second (independent) translator, who clarified some ambiguities in the data and was able to catch small errors in translation or comprehension (on my part). The Star Shea interviews also included two translators; in addition to my usual translator, we were also lucky to have one male Star Shea volunteer who was from a particular village close by Kassena-Nankana and therefore knew the specific local dialect and had worked with the women for several months already.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCESSES

Data analysis consisted of examining data from the interviews, looking for potential relationships between indicators of socio-economic status (e.g., age, marital status, land ownership, education, kinship affiliation), roles within the cooperative, participation in co-op decision-making, the different positions women take on the co-operative (self-declared and appointed) and overall perception of the personal and communal benefits of Fair Trade to (diverse groups of) women. Involvement levels in the community and power dynamics outside the co-op (typically between women in the community and between partners in the household) were also examined in both groups. Basic socio-economic indicators (such as religion or education attainment levels) were compiled to give context to the sample characteristics.

Data from interviews as well as observation at the co-op were also analyzed in terms of patterns of intersectionality across certain kinship groups or classes among those who occupy leadership positions or command a degree of authority within the co-operative. Three members were shown to be distantly part of the same extended family, while the leaders with higher levels of formal education belonged to a higher-income group in the community.

Data was pre-coded in Nvivo by using text queries to highlight phrases and words that were often used in interviews by participants. This created broader categories which encapsulated four themes I had observed routinely in the interviews and at the co-op, those surrounding “Community Norms”, “Co-op Social Norms and Regulations”, “Empowerment Indicators” and “Shea as a Business”. I began first cycle and second cycle coding, primarily using descriptive coding and, in Nvivo, coding which typically fell into the one of the four broader themes. Field notes, interview transcripts, and background interviews (with NGOs) were all coded in this process.

CONCLUSION

The four coding categories were an original guide for chapter organization but the two codes about norms became useful context and descriptive data which became the basis for Chapter 3-5. “Empowerment Indicators” are the foundation for Chapter 6, relying heavily on women’s quotes as demonstrative of their understanding and personal examples of empowerment in their lives. “Shea as a Business” reflects the business reality of the co-operative and the market for shea butter and is used in both Chapter 4 and Chapter 7 to highlight the commercial realities affecting women’s social realities in the co-op.

As a researcher, I acknowledge my lack of insider knowledge and my positionality as a non-Ghanaian in the field. In an attempt to redress that fact I have made concrete attempts to juxtapose ‘difference’— rather than imply simple generalizations— in Northern Ghanaian women’s lives, through highlighting where hierarchy, differential access to power and privilege intersect and create heterogeneous accounts of transformations in power, victimization and self-actualization.

CHAPTER 3: FAIR TRADE

Fair Trade is a global movement that aims to provide fair payment and fair treatment to agricultural, food and craft producers. Fair Trade aims to be a social justice alternative to globalized free trade and its well-documented repercussions such as commodity cartels and sweatshop labour, just to name a few. It emerged as an alternative form of trade in the late 1960s, becoming a larger part of the market in the 1980's. However, prior to it becoming a household name, the first attempt to create direct and equitable trade between producers and consumers, came out of the work of Edna Ruth Byler, a volunteer with the Mennonite Central Committee. Through Byler's field visits, she began bringing back handicrafts from Puerto Rico, Haiti and Palestine to the US, which eventually led to the formation of SELFHELP Crafts (the precursor to Ten Thousand Villages) in the early 1970s (Ten Thousand Villages, 2015). Ten Thousand Villages is widely believed to be the first enterprise entirely devoted to procuring and selling fair trade goods from the Global South to the Global North (Ten Thousand Villages, 2015). Oxfam and other European NGOs began selling "fair trade" handicrafts in the late 1960s; in 1986 Equal Exchange became the first fair trade coffee co-operative in North America (Fair Trade Resource Network, 2011)

One of the major players, the World Fair Trade Organization (which will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter) gives this general overview:

Fair Trade is more than just trading. It proves that greater justice in world trade is possible. It highlights the need for change in the rules and practice of the conventional trade and shows how a successful business can also put people first. It is a tangible contribution to the fight against poverty, climate change and economic crisis. (WFTO, 2014, para. 3)

This extract is useful because it partially demonstrates Fair Trade's social justice orientation but it also shows the way in which Fair Trade fits well within the development industry—by aligning itself with popular development priorities such as fighting poverty and climate change. But this quote also provides context for how Fair Trade does not strive to be fully committed to 'social justice' or rather radical social change that will question or disrupt social inequalities. Instead,

this model, while using the vocabulary that would suggest an activism-based approach, also dovetails well with a market economy approach. Thus, contemporary fair trade, with adages like ‘trade not aid’, takes on some parts of conventional free trade regimes which it had initially hoped to dispel¹. The WFTO and FTF have created the broadly used “10 Principles of Fair Trade” which guide most fair trade organizations (including the Fair Trade Federation, which is associated with Ojoba) in ensuring their operations holistically treat producers fairly and ensure multidimensional ‘fair products’ to consumers. The ten principles are as follows: create opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers, transparency and accountability, fair trading practices, payment of a fair price, ensuring no child labour and forced labour, commitment to non-discrimination, gender equity and women’s economic empowerment and freedom of association, ensure good working conditions, providing capacity building and promoting fair trade and respect for the environment (WFTO, 2013). I will further explore the principle committing to non-discrimination, gender equity and women’s economic empowerment later on in this chapter (see page 35).

FAIR TRADE BODIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

From the late 1980s into the mid-1990s, the formalization and institutionalization of Fair Trade began. The third party certification system, which is now a critical part of having a Fair Trade labeled product was launched by Max Havelaar in the Netherlands in 1988 (Fair Trade Resource Network, 2011).

Fair trade is monitored and enforced by both the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) and the Fairtrade International (FLO). In addition to these two bodies which set global standards, FLO-CERT is an independent certifying body which completes on-the-ground oversight and certification and inspection audits with producers. In addition, to these three major bodies, there are numerous smaller bodies also involved in Fair Trade certification, inspection and membership

¹ At the 1968 United Nations Conference on Aid and Development (UNCTAD), ‘trade not aid’ was officially endorsed as a development mandate, thus introducing and normalizing institutions and concepts like fair trade and microfinance as legitimate approaches to development.

regulation, such as IMO Fair for Life, Body Shop's Community Trade, Whole Foods Whole Trade and the Fair Trade Federation (See Table 3.1 below).

Table 3.1 Types of Fair Trade organizations

Type of Organization	Attributes	Example Organizations
Third-party inspection & certification body	3 rd parties inspect field operations and compare against set FT standards	FLO and affiliated national bodies (e.g. FT Canada) and IMO's Fair for Life
Membership organization	Organizations assess a company's commitment to FT practices using their membership criteria. No additional verification of other parts of supply chain	<u>Fair Trade Federation</u> and WFTO
Brand Programs	Major vendors create and market in-house fair trade which is externally verified by 3 rd party certifiers to meet their own standards and requirements	Whole Foods (Whole Trade) and The Body Shop (Community Trade)

Source: Fair World Project, 2010

The Fair Trade Federation (FTF), is a membership organization and is how the Ojoba Co-operative is branded Fair Trade. The FTF cannot and does not brand itself as an on-the- ground certifier with oversight but they do encourage some of their food and agricultural members to seek certification, as this can be useful for their business (A. Ferguson, personal communication, July 2015). According to one FTF official there is no desire to duplicate the services already offered by FLO-CERT and other bodies and, perhaps due to the vast majority of their members being small-medium enterprises with limited resources and a focus on grassroots operations, FTF notes that most members – all of whom are buyers— prefer to work hand-in-hand with producers directly, rather than through a certifier. While this approach is reliant on the honour system and partially anecdotal evidence, memberships are re-screened and renewed annually. However, according to the FTF official, renewing members are rarely rejected unequivocally, although they can be scrutinized through a more rigorous, in-depth audit by a screening committee (ibid). The most common rejections (particularly for new members) are for: not ensuring prompt and fair

pay, a lack of “empowered working conditions” or not directly providing opportunities for groups deemed as “marginalized peoples” (ibid). I also asked the FTF representative how they are able to track their members and their supplier groups on a more routine basis, as directly contacting producers is not the usual means for the FTF to pursue problems with producers. For this the FTF mostly relies on product/goods complaints, for example, a retailer or consumer finding a “made in China” sticker on a supposedly FTF product (ibid). According to the FTF Code of Practices, producers should be aware of the FTF, have contact information, and are encouraged to contact the FTF with concerns.

FAIR TRADE’S TARGETING OF ECONOMICALLY MARGINALIZED PRODUCERS

Fair trade quickly incorporated the co-operative model that had been popularized in the 1970s (Moberg and Lyon, 2010). The Rochdale co-operative model which encompasses 7 main principles, outlined below in Table 3.2 (next page), was the model used for fair trade.

Table 3.2 Outline of the Rochdale Co-operative Model

Basic Values	Principles	Practices
Self-help	Voluntary and open membership	Member recruitment policy, rules of admission, equal opportunity policy
Self-responsibility	Democratic and member control	Constitutions, voting rights, role of management
Democracy	Member economic participation	Economic performance, rewards to members, how capital is raised
Equality	Autonomy and independence	Relations with/dependence on the state; market position
Equity	Education, training and information	Public relations, member education, management training
Solidarity	Co-operation among co-operatives	Federations, networks, joint enterprise
	Concern for community	Policy on environment, stakeholders, community development

Source: Birchall 1997: Figure 2.1, 7.1, cited in Dergousoff, 2009

By using the co-operative model, fair trade was able to achieve the holistic incorporation of producers, as they would also be considered owners of co-ops and have higher stakes and control over their livelihoods (Dergousouff, 2009). In some cases, as in Nicaragua (and many other Latin American countries), agricultural co-ops already existed and were nationalized institutions prior to fair trade's entrance into the market (Bacon, 2010). Co-ops were used by proponents of fair trade as a means to ensure the participation of all involved in commodity production. In theory, the democratic structure of cooperatives ensures all members a voice in general meetings (which occur at a minimum of once a year) and allows all members the opportunity to run for leadership positions. The co-op was thus used by fair trade to equalize relationships among producers, exporters and foreign buyers, and ensure not only fair prices but fair conditions and the social development of workers (Moberg and Lyon, 2010).

Fair trade co-ops vary widely in size, from some representing several thousand members, to smaller co-ops being made up of a few hundred members. All members must be registered and participate in all general meetings. The co-op is directed by an executive council or executive board, which manages the direction of the co-op. However, each member has a vote on the co-op's motions and business which, theoretically, creates a powerful platform for members to reject or support any decision proposed by the executive board. Fair trade requires that detailed records of bookkeeping, meeting minutes and annual reports are kept and accessible to both fair trade inspectors and general membership (Russell-DuVarney. 2013). However, despite these requirements, each co-op retains its own 'culture' as Lyon (2010) notes, and therefore the co-op becomes a reflection of greater community, family and gender relations already at play in the region.

Previous mass agricultural and market processes (namely those following from the Green Revolution) had further edged small-scale producers out of the market due to competition and unfair pricing (Patel, 2012). Fair Trade provided an opening and refuge in the market for small scale producers, and eventually marketed and branded itself enough to create a consumer demand for products that compensated farmers fairly and abided by a set of ethical principles (Bacon, 2010; Lyon, Beazuary, Aranda, Mutersbaugh, 2010). Fair Trade, with a commitment to delivering fair and stable prices to producers, and giving co-ops access to markets directly (rather than through middle men) began to target small scale producers in order to assure their incomes and livelihoods, especially in light of large scale cartels and multinational corporations (such as Dole and Nestle).

Women within Fair Trade [co-ops]

Women commodity producers, in particular, face a number of challenges in marketing their wares. Not only are they typically small scale producers, but they are often unable to go to market or commercial areas (due to limited mobility or domestic obligations), have less access to land and other resources and generally represent a disproportionate number of those living in

abject poverty (Kasente, 2012; Lyon, et. al., 2010;). The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) has one gender-specific commitment in its major guiding fair trade principles, stating a “commitment to non-discrimination, gender equity and women’s economic empowerment and freedom of association” (WFTO, 2013). Jointly, FLO and WFTO created the multifaceted Charter of Fair Trade Principles in 2009 (Fairtrade International, 2013). The principles build off of basic principles of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) decent working condition provisions. In the charter, both organizations pledge to:

- Improve the relative position of women and other disadvantaged groups
- [Provide] opportunities for groups that are underrepresented in skilled occupations or in leadership positions to develop their capacity for such work
- [Ensure] women receive equal pay to men for equivalent work, and fully participate in decisions concerning the use of benefits accruing from production and from Fair Trade relationships (Fairtrade International 2009, p. 6)

This joint pledge addresses gender inequality directly. This pledge avoids the common gender pitfall in development-based initiatives which emphasizes the inclusion of gender issues as a secondary factor. Often this means only focusing on fair remuneration and the subsequent assumption of the monetary ‘trickle-down effect,’ (presumably) dismantling systems of gender-based oppression and social inequality through enhanced income earning opportunities. While this commitment primarily focuses on the equal wage and fair work component, elements of ensuring fair, inclusive decision-making bodies are also linked to the participation of women and other marginalized groups.

Bringing women to the forefront of production and leadership in women’s co-operatives might be a way of positioning fair trade goods as socially-conscious, gender-sensitive products for consumers, but has it necessarily led to tangible benefits for women? Fairtrade International’s Annual Report 2013-2014 notes that 23% of all Fair Trade farmers and workers are women yet, as Hutchens (2010) points out, globally women producers’ participation is less than 10% at the board level (Fairtrade International 2013a, p.26).

Before we examine the literature on women solely, we need to first examine women's mixed interactions with men, and the overall institution of Fair Trade, prior to the inclusion of 'all-women's co-ops'. In general, men are still remunerated at a higher rate than women in the production chain, either through gendering of tasks which are more lucrative (such as male dominance in sales or distribution) or due to land rights issues which permit men to own more productive land or have primary land titles (Lyon et al., 2010, p. 94). In Fair Trade, even with an emphasis on 'providing opportunities for groups that are underrepresented in skilled occupations', women have consistently less access to buyers, exporters and other more profitable sections of the Fair Trade production chain (Lyon et al, 2010, p. 99).

The issue of land rights is a significant barrier for women's involvement in farming and fair trade. While land rights legislation varies nationally, generally it is difficult for women in the global South to be primary or sole land owners with land titles. In the case of Nicaragua, Bacon (2010, p. 53) notes that a gradual wave of change is due to Sandinista land reform which has slowly opened up access of land to women. However, he also notes that the government's lack of wherewithal to implement widespread land reform has translated to the fair trade co-operatives' political inability or lack of commitment to help women become or retain status as independent farmers (Bacon, 2010). Beyond a lack of wherewithal, many researchers (for example, Agarwal, 2010 in South Asia and Kabeer, 1999) find that political will is simply not invested in enforcing land rights, especially at a local level. Lyon (2008) finds a substantially less promising situation for women's land rights in Guatemala where farming is still considered a 'family endeavour', compensating the family as whole for the entire harvest. This keeps men as central players (even if absent) and undermines women's highly active roles in tending the land, while also allowing for incomes to be misappropriated by husbands.

Fair trade also neglects to account for deeply entrenched patriarchal systems, both in the community and in the agricultural sector, especially in the case of historically (male) gendered crops such as coffee, cacao, bananas and sugarcane (Hutchens, 2010; McCardle & Thomas, 2010). The impacts of these institutional biases manifest both in terms of production (what are

considered appropriate commodities for women to produce) and in terms of participation and decision-making within coops.

Kasente (2012) specifically explores how coffee has been historically and socially constructed as a 'man's crop', with a similar phenomenon being noted by Lyon et al. (2010) in the masculinizing emblem of Juan Valdez as symbolic of the inherently male nature of coffee farming. Kasente's (2012) interviews illustrate an interesting understanding in Uganda of 'gendered crops' being attributed to male and female norms surrounding financial obligations and labour requirements, with one female worker stating that "coffee is equal to money and since men have the duty to provide money to their household, coffee is rightfully a man's crop" (p. 119). A more critical interpretation of this statement leads to questions of prescribed roles in families and restrictions on income earning capacity as well as the exclusion of women from handling valuable, dangerous or lucrative commodities. The vilification of women and the mythology of the woman "coffee thief and he-goat" in Ugandan coffee markets is a clear illustration of the narratives imposed on women, rejecting their ability to handle coffee and coffee's connotation as a 'cut-throat, male-dominant' site of domination (Kasente, 2012, p. 120, 22).

By neglecting to account for patriarchal systems of oppression, fair trade assumes that benefits of Fair Trade will equally trickle down to both men and women. Women's reproductive timelines and domestic duties are especially critical to consider in determining their availability to participate in voluntary initiatives (or leadership roles), in addition to their daily non-domestic work. Fair trade initiatives that encourage home-based work or handicrafts appear to be one way to compensate for or offset women's domestic scheduling concerns. But largely, women's reproductive timelines and domestic schedules/duties pose a challenge to increased participation and access to power in their production capacities.

Lyon (2008) and other researchers (Bacon, 2010; Hutchens, 2010; Sick, 2008) have questioned the efficacy of 'diversionary programs' such as women's basket weaving or handicraft projects that fair trade co-operatives create with the intent of the groups addressing the

gender equality conditions of fair trade. The researchers also note that these programs do create some income-generation. However, these projects rarely connect women with the market (especially given the isolation from urban markets and systemic limitations on women's mobility) or significantly enhance their income opportunities, and are often merely symbolic inclusions of women in the business of co-ops. Lyon (2008) also notes the same phenomenon in the development, packaging and creation of 'coffee tours', which remove women from operations or business decisions, while giving them a separate arena of involvement. Coffee tours, or other women-led projects, typically arise from specific opportunities created for women by co-operatives, but remain peripheral to the overall operations of the co-op.

The critical literature notes that, because of the increased burden and heavy workload of women (in production and in the household), seeking their increased participation in the co-op seems problematic, despite women expressing a willingness to be involved (Lyon, et al., 2010). Indeed the participation of women in handicrafts, or other diversionary programs, calls into question how these types of projects do foster women's participation. As Lyon (2008) notes:

The willingness of women to participate in groups which directly serve their personal economic interests (income generated by weaving remains entirely in female control as opposed to coffee income, which is either reinvested in production, spent on general household expenses or is controlled entirely by men) indicates that, while it may be difficult, women are able to rearrange household responsibilities when necessary for desirable forms of group participation. (p. 262)

From this, we can discern that the argument of involving women goes beyond addressing domestic labour and work scheduling concerns, and should include understanding what are deemed 'desirable forms of group participation' and understanding women's economic interests and opportunities within overwhelmingly patriarchal environments where cultural norms dictate a gendered division of labour.

Fair Trade: All-Women's co-ops

In response to recent challenges regarding approaches to addressing gender inequality, Fair Trade has been gradually introducing all women's co-ops, often with the assistance of local

NGOs, whose strategic gender priorities are also met by assisting with this task. It is important to note that the previous section's examples reflect the experiences of women in mixed-gender co-ops, which may uniquely differ from the experiences of women in women's only co-ops. While the notion of all-women's co-ops is not entirely new, these co-ops have rigorous and strong gender policies. Bacon (2010, p. 60) describes how in Nicaragua the national network of co-ops and NGOs collectively created a women's co-op where women reported increased satisfaction in being both involved in production and management of coffee that was tailored to fit their domestic schedules.

Yet, women's co-ops are not immune from problems of equity. For example, in her study of *Café Feminina*, a coffee co-op of 250 women with strong policies advocating for women's participation in fair trade co-ops, Russell-DuVarney (2013) found that the barriers that excluded some women from joining — privileging certain women over others — had perhaps been overshadowed by close analysis of embedded patriarchal oppression. For example, she describes that while attempting to create a women's only 'empowered space' where women undergo training (literacy and otherwise) to participate in all operations of the co-op, *Café Feminina* imposes such onerous member prerequisites (such as 40 hours of training and weekly meeting attendance) that one is left to consider how feasible these requirements are for women with less access to childcare and other support systems. This raises the question of whether there are structural barriers preventing more marginalized women from becoming involved in the co-op. Russell-DuVarney (2013) goes on to describe how despite a clearly stated goal of 'women's empowerment', there is clear internal differentiation among the women, with founders and more wealthy (or socially established) women controlling leadership positions (Russell-DuVarney 2013, p. 55). She also notes that while democratic voting structures were in place (in founding documents and policy records), most women interviewed were unsure of the electoral process (or how to become more involved) and the executive board was mostly unchanged, with positions primarily being occupied by daughters of co-op founders (Russell-DuVarney 2013, p.55). Class

and social position thus are relatively unexplored elements in the examination of the structuring of work and women's participation in co-operative structures.

Thus, while some have argued that increased membership in FT coops would help to empower small-scale female producers, (Bacon, 2010; Hutchens 2010; Le Mare, 2010), others argue that membership alone has not resulted in an equivalent increase in across the board empowerment of women (Lyon, 2010; McArdle & Thomas, 2012; Nelson & Pound, 2009). Thus the push by national or global fair trade organizations to impose sweeping standards for gender equality tend to be symbolic, setting numerical quotas which often fail to address underlying social disparities that vary widely within groups and between regions (Lyon, 2008; Hutchens, 2010; McArdle and Thomas, 2012).

Furthermore, there do not seem to exist institutional mechanisms for measuring how and how much 'participation' in FT contributes to women's empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Fair Trade, as both a social movement and a system of corporate social responsibility (from the consumer perspective) has evolved from its earliest and more grassroots forms. The globally spanning network, representing marginalized producers across numerous regions and commodities, sets global standards and mandates that seek to regulate and enforce factors of 'fairness' beyond the delivery of a fair price. The more recent pledges to more fully engage and empower women in co-ops by the WFTO, FLO and the FTF reflect the broader Fair Trade commitments. Both in mixed-gender or women's only co-ops, women's experiences in fair trade have generally been found to be very different from those of male producers (Bacon, 2010; Kasente, 2012; Lyon, 2008; McArdle & Thomas 2012). Several questions arise from Fair Trade claims of empowering women: how does Fair Trade differentiate among those co-operatives that are 'doing women's empowerment right' and those that are merely going through the motions? And, more crucially, how can Fair Trade seek to understand the differing (empowering or not) experiences of women within all women's co-operatives? These questions are meant to

underscore broader issues of agency, participation and power within co-ops and how these factors comingle with gender, status and class to result in diverse experiences in production and leadership in fair trade co-operatives.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHERN GHANA & THE SHEA INDUSTRY

The Republic of Ghana has a population of roughly 25.91 million (Ministry of Food and Agriculture 2012:1). Within the population, there is a fairly significant divide between what is considered “Southern Ghana” and “Northern Ghana”. This divide runs along cultural, agricultural and commercial/economic lines. In this chapter I will be discussing the distinctive cultural and ethnic groups of the North, in particular the Frafra who live in the area where I conducted field research. I will also outline the agricultural and economic contexts of the North, especially with regard to shea butter production.

GHANA OVERVIEW

Ghana’s principal agricultural exports: cocoa, timber and fish/seafood, are mainly to be found in the South. So while Northern Ghana, a region comprised of the Upper West, Upper East and Northern regions of the country (Yaro, 2013, p. 1), makes up roughly 40% of the land area of Ghana, the North’s agricultural and economic impact has been largely underrepresented (Ministry of Food and Agriculture 2012, p. 3; Yaro 2013, p. 84).

Bolgatanga, the city closest in proximity to where I conducted the research, is the capital of the Upper East Region (UER). Figure 4.1 (next page) shows the regional breakdown of Ghana, as well as the crucial market and economic centres of Accra, Kumasi, Tamale and my field work location, the greater Bolgatanga municipal region. The small communities in which I worked, Bongo-Soe and Kassena-Nankana, lie within the Bolga-Bongo greater district, about 4-6 kilometres outside of Bolgatanga proper.

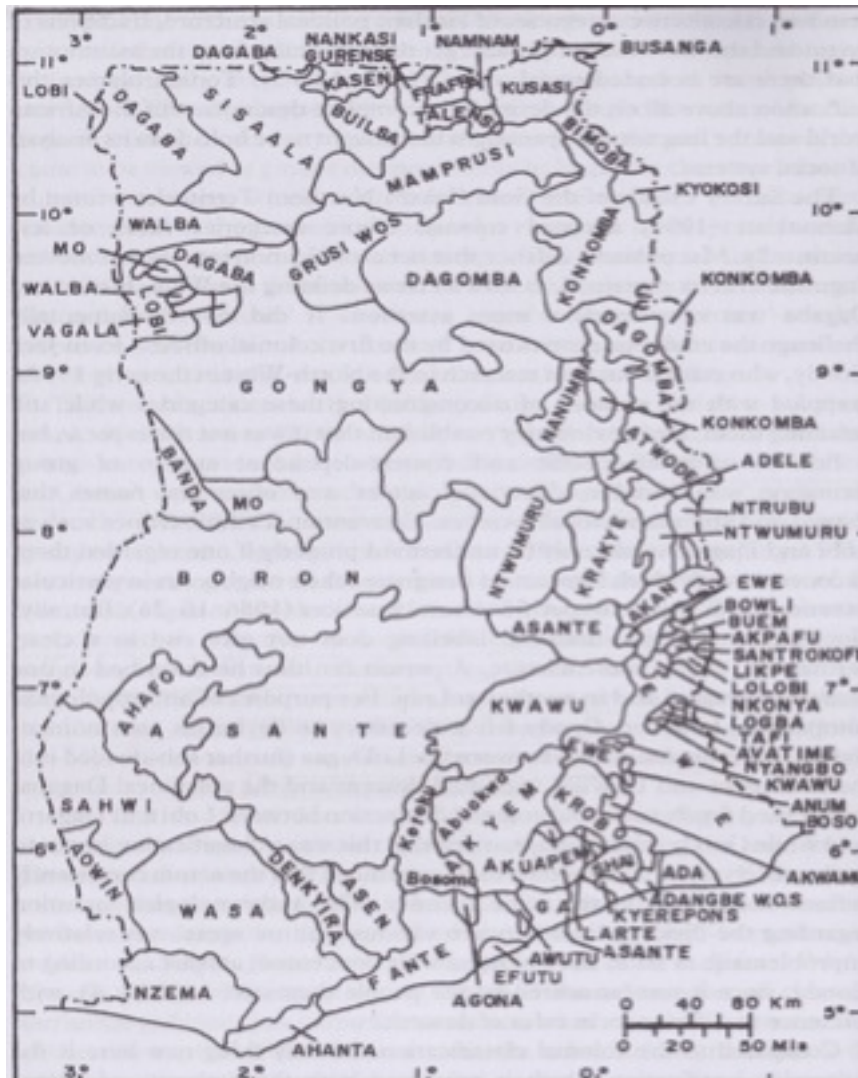
Figure 4.1: The official regions of Ghana with capital cities



Source: GhanaWeb, 2016

The Frafra are the dominant ethnic group in the Bolgatanga municipal region, and they speak Gurune, which is also colloquially referred to as 'Frafra'. There are other ethnic groups, and a mixture of their affiliated languages in the Upper East (such as Kassen, Talensi and Dagbani); Figure 4.2 (next page) gives a breakdown of these groups, with the upper section indicating where the Frafra live.

Figure 4.2: Ethnic groups of Ghana with the Frafra included in the UER



Source: Lentz, 2006, p. 259

Development of the North has long been overlooked and neglected in contrast to the rapid industrialization and commercialization of the South (Yaro, 2013, p. 4). However, despite its marginalization, Northern Ghana remains an extremely crucial site of agricultural production and community-based development. Under Kwame N'krumah's rule, immediately following independence from Britain in 1957, Ghana experienced a Green Revolution and the North benefitted greatly from this redistribution of land, access to credit, growth of agricultural extension services and most importantly increased farming subsidies (Yaro, 2013, p.7).

Unfortunately by the 1980's, impositions made by structural adjustment programmes removed subsidies and flooded the market with products from Europe and the US, greatly damaging the North's capacity to grow and sell its own major domestic crops (such as rice, tomatoes and nuts) (Yaro, 2013, p.10)

At present, the North is still the most agriculturally productive area of Ghana and also the most dependent on its agricultural output. Producing almost exclusively for the domestic market, 70% of the population of the North is engaged in agricultural activities (Laube, Schraven, & Adimabuno Awo, 2013, p. 64). The most common conventional crops are millet, sorghum, groundnuts and rice (Laube et al., 2013). Shea nuts, which grow wild, are another important domestic and international export commodity (see later discussion on shea).

As a result of the rural nature of the North, infrastructural under-investment and long-term exclusion from policy-making priorities, as well as a litany of other systemic inequalities, poverty and food security are still significant issues in Northern Ghana. Official statistics from 2000 note that 88% of the rural population live under the national poverty line, although these also noted that there was a projected slight reduction between 1998-2006 (Laube, et al, 2013, p. 64). Despite this adversity, civil society and grassroots development are highly active in Northern Ghana, especially in regional centers such as Tamale, capital of the Northern region, and Bolgatanga, capital of the Upper East region. Many organizations, often in collaboration with traditional governing bodies (Chieftancies or 'Na's), work to address core social issues in the area including, but not limited to: livelihood diversification via income generating programs (women-specific and generally), children's education, widow and orphan supports, violence against women, savannah conservation, HIV/AIDS transmission and physical disability accommodation. Communities are also integral actors in addressing these social issues; in fact, prior to the rapid "NGO-ification" of Northern Ghana (by Ghanaian NGOs and international entities), communities had been mobilizing to address some of these issues independently. Several organizations with whom I spoke, indicated that, whether along spatial/village-specific lines or ethnic lines, issues revolving around women and poverty reduction are part of ongoing community awareness and

mobilization campaigns. These campaigns are often further punctuated by advertising, sensitization and training campaigns offered by NGOs (B. Pealore, personal communication, May 2015; D. Dordaa, personal communication, March 2015; Widows and Orphans Movement, personal communication, April 2014).

WOMEN'S COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL LIFE IN GHANA AND THE UPPER EAST REGION

While recent development literature has remarked on the growing phenomenon of the feminization of agriculture, in many regions of Africa this is decidedly not a new phenomenon. Economically speaking, in the Sub Saharan region, women provide 70% of the agricultural labour and produce 90% of the food, while also maintaining their primary domestic roles (Apusigah 2013, p.151). In her seminal work, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, Ester Boserup noted the massive female involvement in African agriculture, drawing attention to the fact that prior to foreign intervention, female farming systems were often more widespread than male-led farming (Boserup, 1970, p. 5). She also describes how European inducement was a decisive factor in directing men towards cash crops while women remained increasingly involved in crops for family consumption (Boserup, 1970). In West Africa, specifically in Burkina Faso (which lies just 40 km from Bolgatanga) Greig (2006) noted that farming practices and knowledge were already historically female-dominated, especially in the production of shea butter. In general agricultural production, women are at the forefront of subsistence farming and market trading in Ghana.

A particularly interesting aspect of the domestic market is the prevalence of the “market ladies” or “market queens” who are individuals or organized groups of women traders who control and heavily monopolize the domestic vegetable market, especially in large market hubs like Tamale, Kumasi and Accra (Clark, 1994). However, as Clark (1994) explains these women are not necessarily Northerners and have acquired and inherited various privileges and social capital from their education, families and social networks. This is significant because she notes

that Northerners typically occupy very specific niches in the market (for example, tomato cartels or male handicraft sellers), and she posits that their social network and upward mobility in the market is not comparable to the social solidarity that the Kumasi market ladies have. The market ladies also often further entrench inequalities and hierarchies among women especially affecting the less [commercially] networked and typically more impoverished rural women, which could affect Northern women. While Northerners may be associated with rural life, Ogundipe-Leslie (as cited in Apusigah, 2013, p.150) warns that the ‘myths of traditional rural women’ and how researchers perpetuate “the myth of linear development from rural bondage which opposes rural with urban living and categorizes rural women as lacking sophistication, Westernization and free spirit of urban women” mischaracterizes and stereotypes rural women. Thus claims of the compliant victimhood of rural women should be carefully interrogated and ‘rurality’ should not become synonymous with inferiority to urban women, but instead recognized as a potential site of inequality and contributor of ‘difference(s)’ in the non-homogenous category of Ghanaian women.

BOLGATANGA OVERVIEW

Bolga is a particularly fascinating case study because the town and most of the surrounding villages are homogenously Frafra, with other groups being a rarity and mostly a result of out-marriage. Locals often remark this has resulted in stronger social cohesion and less conflict because of the cultural (and linguistic) unity, especially in comparison to neighbouring market town of Bawku, (also in the UER), where inter-tribal violence has erupted in the past few years and only recently has curfew been lifted. From a research perspective, the homogeneity of the Frafra (with marginal differences across village-spatial divides) provides some shared identities and norms. This is a particularly interesting group in which to examine the taboos, roles, and norms surrounding women and work, specifically women’s reproductive and productive roles relative to the heavily agricultural society in which they live.

The Frafra are an example of a patrilineal inheritance society; this has a large effect on women's productivity and labour as it may limit their control or capacity to assert land ownership (Agana, 2012). However, as Agana (2012) notes, this does not outright exclude women from owning land, and conventional patrilineal assumptions have been questioned in recent years through partial land reforms. The Frafra have typically allowed women to farm groundnuts and rice (independently) while men primarily farm millet and guinea corn. Millet and guinea corn are considered staple crops which traditionally have required sacrifices to the Gods and therefore cannot involve women (Agana, 2012). Agana (2012, p. 89) explains how women are typically granted land or plots on the primary family land by their husbands to farm their own groundnuts and/or rice, but women act in an assisting role with their husband's millet and guinea corn.

In the Northern Ghanaian case, rural women are not only massively active in the agricultural market—many even owning their own plots, due to recent land tenure reform allowing women to own land independent of men—they are also at the center of sophisticated networks of traders, local commercial activity and new innovations in income generating initiatives (such as baobab oil processing, brewing and ice-cream making, to name a few, (Apusigah, 2013, p. 156; Yaro, 2013, p. 96). Although women are highly involved in those other types of enterprises, shea is one of the few options where women have full and independent control, especially in the agricultural domain. Women as farmers and agricultural producers are highly attuned to market forces and national happenings (such as recent fertilizer cuts in tomato farmer subsidies) that may threaten their business' viability. Rural Northern Ghanaian women are able to keep a close ear to the ground (both within rural communities and at large), in part due to their individual efforts, but also due to their high degree of associativism. According to Yaro (2013), group solidarity and mobilization have been key in of tackling regional issues of scarcity, voicelessness and infrastructural shortcomings.

An Overview of Women's Lived Experiences in Northern Ghana

Growing up as a girl in Northern Ghana, remains a very distinctive process in comparison to their counterparts in the matrilineal South. Historically in the North, girl's education has been

de-prioritized, with boys' education being privileged over their sisters. But with compulsory primary education now a federal mandate, girls in the North are guaranteed basic education, with larger numbers then also continuing on to secondary and tertiary education (Agana, 2012; Yaro, 2013). Once done their primary education (or sometimes secondary), the contemporary Northern adolescent girl will often seek immediate livelihood paths to support their natal family and prepare for their impending marriage (Ungruhe, 2011). In order to do this, it has become quite common for girls to seasonally migrate to urban centers like Kumasi or Accra (Ungruhe, 2011, p. 159) In fact, in my interviews, leaders noted that the formation of the Ojoba Co-op was partially in response to the increasing amount of rural-urban migration which depleted entire communities of their population of young women. However, it is also worth noting that many young women do indeed return to help their families for important agricultural times such as the groundnut harvest in October (Ungruhe, 2011). Ungruhe (2011) also points out in his study of Northern migrants that most mothers are somewhat alarmed by the expectation for their girls to seasonally migrate, especially given the potential for exploitation and sexual violence. However, most daughters and mothers recognize the value, economically and socially, in girl's migrating. Most clearly, this period allows young women to prepare for marriage (purchasing ceremonial clothes and other wedding items). When girls reach a marriageable age, mothers and families are active in ensuring a suitable marriage as this is an important rite of passage in Northern Ghana.

Women as wives in Northern Ghana encompass a variety of roles. Both monogamous and polygynous relationships are acceptable forms of marriage and co-habitation. Typically when a man takes a high number of wives (greater than two) this is indicative of his wealth and/or access to resources which indicates the ability to sustain a large household (a status usually reserved for local chiefs). When women get married in Northern Ghana, bride price is observed, sometimes in the form of cows, but also including modern substitutes like kente cloth or cell phone credit. Women themselves receive a 'symbolic dowry' of a calabash to bring with them into their new home with their husband (Padmanabhan, 2007).

In the home, the wife and husband are agricultural partners but observe the Northern Ghanaian tradition of keeping separate farming plots (Malapit and Quisumbing, 2015). The split between husband and wife may reflect the gendering of crops, with Northern men responsible for ‘staple crops’ like millet, maize and yams while Northern women are responsible for ‘soup ingredients’ like tomatoes, peppers and onions (Padmanabhan, 2007). However the division is not strictly observed, with both men and women occasionally diversifying their plots. It is interesting to note that while Northern tradition guarantees men and women separate farming plots, national survey data indicates that 85% of [non-commercial] agricultural parcels are owned by individual men, 9.8% by individual women and only 3.5% are jointly owned (Malapit and Quisumbing, 2015, p. 56).

Besides agricultural partnership duties, wives are also responsible for food security and welfare provision and cooking in the domestic sphere, in addition to obligatory child-rearing. In a study of the “Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index”, Malapit and Quisumbing (2015, p. 62) found that Northern Ghanaian women have a determinant role in ensuring household food security and when women specifically had domestic budgeting and financial powers (or input) the household experienced less food shortage and women had a greater ability to ensure food security. Women are primary food providers, often combining their own and their husband’s agricultural output, to prepare and cook household meals. In times of scarcity, women are still responsible for meal preparation and will then use their incomes (from a joint household budget, their own personal savings or an allowance from their husband) to purchase food stuffs. Overall we can note that women’s duties and earnings are heavily focused on child and family welfare which was strongly confirmed in my interviews where women reported their shea earnings being needed and spent on school fees, school supplies and children’s lunch money.

A discussion of Northern women’s incomes, also then merits a discussion of where these incomes come from (if not from a spouse or the household pool). While shea production is a typical woman’s household activity (whether for home use or commercial sale), women in the North are involved in a multiplicity of income-generating activities. Some examples of women’s

common enterprises include: *dawadawa* (traditional herb used in cooking) processing, baobab oil processing, cell phone credit vendors, seamstress work and food vendors. All these roles lend themselves the flexibility which can allow women to accommodate their domestic obligations.

Beyond their productive duties and work roles, women are also community members who hold onto their ethnic identification and play a variety of roles. Yitah (2012) notes the novel way in which Kassena (where Star Shea is based) women negotiate their ancestry and challenge socio-cultural discourse through the re-working of traditional proverbs which may be sexist or “put women in their place” in the home. The women Yitah (2012) worked with challenge and rework community norms through laughter, jest and comedy within their spousal partnerships, to assert new roles or changing roles for women. Another critical role in a woman’s life course is that of grandmother. As women age, and their children become independent and many become widowed, women can be offered new roles and senior status as grandmothers who provide crucial child-rearing and decision-making support to the family network (Gupta et al. 2015). McGadney-Douglass and Douglass (2008, p. 157) explain how grandmothers can even be given the status of co-parent and thus elderly women can also occupy high status positions with a large degree of decision-making power, beyond the “productive and reproductive value” of their younger years. Thus across women’s life courses Northern Ghanaian women experience significant changes, inequalities and privileges which contribute differentially to “what it means to be a woman”.

Customary Practices Affecting Women Specifically in the Upper East

In recent times, women have also been able to influence major social change around issues such as land tenure, property and inheritance customs. They have harnessed their social capital in the community, transforming it into political capital, resulting in situations where First Wives (in traditional polygamy) are included on Elder Councils, and in the most extraordinary cases, women becoming chiefs, or queen mothers (as has happened in the Upper East in Bongo, Soe, Sekoti and Bawku) (Apusigah 2013, p. 157).

Bugri (2008, as cited in Agana, 2012) notes that male perception has been changing in favour of women owning land in North-East Ghana. However, others are more cautious in acknowledging the effect of changing perceptions on land tenure and property inheritance realities. As Agana (2012) notes, the Frafra are patrilineal and daughters are routinely denied property and inheritance. This holds unless they are married but if marriage does not happen expediently then assets can be passed on to male siblings. Wives are also not legally guaranteed rights to their deceased spouses' property; thus women's property and inheritance rights are inherently tied up in their ability to marry and sustain a marriage. Similarly Agarwal's (1994) findings amongst Muslim and Hindu women in India also note the regularity of de facto rather than de jure land and property inheritance rights (Kabeer, 1999). However, Agana (2012, p. 95) does remark that for widows, conditions are becoming slightly more favourable; instances of a widow's land being taken away by her husband's family if the woman refuses to remarry are occurring less regularly. Practices have traditionally dictated that widows re-marry a close or a distant relative within the husband's clan. However, should they not accept these proposals or others from the community, a widow has the option to remain single. Agana (2012) found in his study that there are increasing reports of women in urban and peri-urban areas around Bolgatanga registering as land owners at the municipal Deed Registry. However, he is more hesitant in applying these findings to women in rural agricultural settings.

Economic necessity and cultural norms have conventionally dictated women's strong involvement in subsistence production. However with coinciding rise of women's rights nationally, coupled with traditional leadership roles for women (such as queen mothers), Northern women are vocal actors and activists in dictating the development agenda and providing solutions to social welfare issues. Women's control over agricultural resources and access to farming is less clearly patrilineal than explicit land ownership (Agana, 2012). Apusigah (2013) eloquently expresses how these women navigate harsh realities, such as food scarcity and subordination, while simultaneously negotiating and circumventing obstacles and confronting limitations of their perceived social inequality, because,

undoubtedly, there is a duality between agency and welfare or even victimization but not a contradiction. It is that non-contradiction that makes it possible for rural women in particular to venture into and subvert the corridors of power and to actively negotiate spaces to support their livelihoods and well-being and propel the socio-economy (Apusigah 2013, p.154)

In the case of Ojoba, women's agency is enhanced, at least minimally on a material level, through their involvement in the shea industry. But although women are dominant members of the agricultural workforce, the larger question is whether shea work is an avenue for women to actualize the non-contradiction between agency and welfare.

Customary Practices around Labour Sharing Amongst Women

It is crucial to note that in Bolga, the Frafra are already well organized to mobilize in formal or informal associations, especially those which include only women. The Frafra historically have demarcated women's roles in sowing, harvesting and processing crops, centering them in the physical process but also symbolically placing them in the center of community life, increasing the social status and perceived 'value' of women and their work in community norms (Yaro, 2013). Independently, prior to NGO incursion into the Bolga region, Frafra women had already established collectivized women's groups where labour such as farming and social planning for events like funerals, could be split (Apusigah, 2013, p. 157). Apusigah (2013, p.157) explains that these original women's groups were usually formed along kinship lines (*buuri*), among young wives or last wives in polygamous relationships (*pogbisi/pogsari*) or unmarried women (*yiwiesi*). In my conversations with local women, most established shea groups had already existed as a collective women's group prior to NGOs helping to structure them into a more formal enterprise. Clark notes that this is a common feature of Ghanaian markets and associations; they operate within indigenous [tribal] models (using traditional chieftaincy hierarchies and roles) but also absorb Western models of co-ops and committees (1994, p. 259). In her work she found that while externally this might appear to be cultural hybridization or even a diminishment of "traditional" models, in reality,

an indigenous hierarchy simply layers on extra Western tiles... Superficial addition of Western models had little effect on the day-to-day activities of the commodity groups, either in functions or procedures. Their attraction to Western titles and trappings of office suggests some parallels to classic examples of imitation of European organizational styles...[but] the Westernized elements were adopted instrumentally and were not a major purpose of group formation (Clark, 1994, p.259)

Clark's (1994) findings reiterate the importance of the underlying indigenous norms and models of community structure, while noting the emergence of Western ideals of group structures. Furthermore, her findings coupled with many conversations I had in the field, absolutely reject the simple and common notion that Western intervention, typically using NGOs as a conduit, is always the necessary step in development and community empowerment. Thus she highlights the assumption that ongoing grassroots development is not significant. In fact, these community frameworks of activism and development provide the necessary and prerequisite backbone for such NGO intervention to even begin.

Through my interviews with women, I learned about the long-standing importance of intra-community labour sharing. Apusigah (2013) specifically drew attention to the distinct cultural practice of the Frafra women to explicitly organize work groups to share labour; indeed these may seem loosely structured to anyone unfamiliar with the community, but Apusigah (2013) notes their very delineated nature. The women's groups are structured around a variety of social categories, some examples include: unmarried women, first wives, widows and elderly women. These categories, though reinforcing difference, can also make important gains in mobilizing previously marginalized groups, such as widows or unmarried women, within the category of "women". (Widows and co-wives' unique experiences will also be discussed in Chapter 6).

Thus, prior to when World Vision formalized the group, women in Bongo-Soe already had work groups to share labour on their farms and to help jointly contribute to funeral arrangements and community fundraisers. When I asked about these sharing arrangements, most women acknowledged their existence, some noting that they depend on this, others saying that they use it on occasion, or otherwise capitalize on the network of the co-op to share labour with

co-op friends. In essence, labour sharing among co-op members constitutes another type of sharing configuration that differs from the traditional Frafra women's labour groups by being more heterogeneous and cross-sectional. One of the leaders (Thema) described how the traditional labour groups played a role in the founding of Ojoba, noting that:

within our local people here, they put themselves into groups to help plaster homes, do flooring, do farm work and if there is a funeral they contribute small-small for that person...so with that, we started. And then World Vision came in and brought us together.

While she notes the 'bringing together' effect of World Vision's involvement, the women in Bongo Soe, did, in a sense, already have established collectivities which contributed to the ease with which World Vision could implement the (formalization) process upon the original Ojoba women.

WOMEN IN SHEA BUTTER PRODUCTION IN NORTHERN GHANA

Women have been involved in and controlled various facets of shea butter production for hundreds of years and are therefore crucial repositories of knowledge which are both physically and socially embodied through knowledge of labour techniques, tree history and selection tactics (Chalfin, 2004, p. 6; Greig, 2006: 466). Affirming women's central role, one of the Ojoba leaders, Thema, noted that, "shea is part of the training a girl should have in the community, she should know how to do this shea butter production." For numerous years, shea butter has been called "women's gold" because of its significant contribution to women's livelihoods and incomes in West Africa (Moudio, 2013). In Ghana, 90% of shea processors are women, and women have a longstanding relationship with the shea butter industry, averaging 15 years of business experience (Al-hassan, 2012, p. 10).

These trees are most commonly found in West African countries such as Ghana, Mali and Burkina Faso (Sekaf International, 2002). Northern Ghana is one of the largest areas (Global Shea Alliance, 2014). Shea butter is derived from the nut of the fruit from shea trees, or *vitallaria paradoxa* (Carette, Malotau, van Leeuwen & Tolkamp, 2009). Shea trees are fire and drought

resistant and most crucially for women with few resources, they are not conventional ‘farmed crops’ because they are endemic to the savannah (Global Shea Alliance, 2014). For women, this is decidedly beneficial because this gives them easier access through the commons, potentially avoiding problematic land disputes or property discrimination women face in some West African contexts. It is significant to note that shea trees only bear viable fruit after 15-20 years of growth (Carette, et al., 2009). The shea fruit are edible, and the nuts come out of the fruit and are what are sold in local markets to make shea butter. Shea butter has mainly cosmetic uses but is also used for cooking.

Once nuts have been acquired, they are washed and dried outside under the sun to remove excess moisture. The nuts are then ground up (at Ojoba they have grinding machines, but this can be done manually) to smaller pieces to roast. Once the nuts are roasted and softened, they are then pounded into a paste. The paste will be supplemented with warm water added in small amounts as the paste is whipped (usually manually). The whipping process continues until the women decide the right consistency has been achieved and significant amounts of fat have been separated by the whipping and skimmed off. The remnants are boiled and from this the oil comes to boil which will eventually settle into the final butter product. Women have traditionally kept some of the butter they produce from their home batches (Carette et.al., 2009, p. 30). Women are involved as pickers, sellers of shea nuts at the market and processors of the butter.

In “Shea Butter Republic” a multi-year ethnographic study of women in rural shea markets in Ghana, Chalfin (2004) found that shea butter production was an intergenerational, female-dominated activity. Chalfin (2004) based her findings on 20 months of fieldwork in both rural areas and at the market. She legitimizes the breadth of her research by having interviewed a wide variety of persons associated with the shea butter trade, from women labourers, to traders, to state agents. Chalfin (2004) makes the point that shea butter production in Ghana defies typical gender relations which suggest that women must strategize and create alternatives to avoid subordination from male-dominated agricultural activities. Rather, she argues that there is a

symbiotic relationship between the field and household work for women in shea butter, noting that:

With regard to shea, the household operates as a foundation for women's commercial endeavours where they exercise substantial control over resources, including their own labour, and the labour of other females... The work of shea processing and trade, enables women to gain status and recognition-not to mention material rewards-within both the domestic context and the public realm beyond it (Chalfin 2004, p. 12).

In this context, shea butter production is a compelling forum for examining how women can dominate multiple levels of agricultural production, commanding material and social resources that enable them to be agents of change in both the household and the community. However Chalfin (2004) also notes that separation and differentiation of women in shea butter production can be seen along class and kinship lines, in some cases allying women and men as nut traders.

In her study of Kumasi women traders, Gracia Clark (1994) also witnessed clear social and geographic boundaries for various commodities. As previously mentioned, vegetable farming and selling is known as a Southern woman's domain, and Northerners have a market niche and dominance in shea trading that goes mostly unchallenged by other groups (Clark, 1994, p. 287, 97). Both Chalfin's and Clark's findings illustrate potential for conflict among women, of different kinship groups, positions and classes, in shea butter production and general agricultural and market life. Still, they also emphasize numerous accounts of innovative co-operative strategies amongst women to support each other's activities (Chalfin, 2004; Clark, 1994). The solidarity between women in the shea sector is quite helpful in combatting and building resilience against the tumultuous and unpredictable nature of the market for shea -both domestically and internationally.

DOMESTIC TRENDS FOR SHEA BUTTER CONSUMPTION & SALES

The domestic sales of shea butter are less prominently tracked. It is worth noting that although the market is rapidly expanding, domestic sales estimates and data still remain elusive

as there has been no systematic collection of data on domestic sales². In previous decades, shea butter was more commonly bought by Ghanaian consumers for cosmetic or cooking use; now, imported goods are often cheaper and marketed as preferable for household consumption (Carette et.al., 2009, p. 39).

One study by the Resilience Foundation (Wageningen University), tracked urban consumer use and purchases of shea butter and noted that in their sample most individuals buy small amounts, between 15-40 grams, and this is widely available at local markets (unrefined) or sold by shopkeepers (Carette, et.al., 2009, p. 59). For those cooking with shea butter—which is increasingly less common as other [cheaper] imports such as sunflower oil or palm oil are used—they must buy larger amounts of butter at a time as vendors who sell butter for cooking use (and sell in larger quantities) sell separately from vendors who sell more refined butter for cosmetic use (Carette, et al., 2009, p. 59-60). Domestic cosmetic companies also sell a more refined and treated shea butter product, by adding perfumes and other additives to shea butter for domestic sale; they are predominantly based in the South (Accra) (Carette et.al., 2009, p.:42)

According to the West African Trading Hub, in 2011 approximately 600,000 tons of shea nuts were picked; of this 350 000 were exported and the remaining 250,000 were consumed or used locally (USAID, 2011, p.11). Previously 90% of exported nuts were processed abroad; however, in the past five years that proportion has dropped to 65% as West African processing operations have increased (USAID, 2011, p. 12). Thus it is likely we will see further growth of domestic processing and consumption.

Opportunities & challenges of an international shea market

The international market demand for shea nuts has been growing substantially each year; in 2004, 150 000 tonnes of shea nuts were exported from West Africa, in 2008 that number had grown to 350 000 tonnes (USAID, 2011, p.11). The Global Shea Alliance (GSA), based in Accra,

² The Cocoa Board is the national body responsible for tracking and representing shea under its larger primary mandate of representing cocoa producers. Shea historically has also been sold through informal or smaller markets, making it less a tracking priority. The board's representation remains an area of future interest and possible contention as shea and cocoa may come into competition as shea continues to be marketed as a “cocoa-based equivalent”.

has emerged as the chief global industry association, and has become in effect a lobbying body for the entire shea sector. The GSA is therefore highly invested in tracking the growth of the international shea market. Despite mainstream perception that shea butter is used predominantly in cosmetic products, according to the GSA tracking, only 10% of global shea sales can be attributed to the cosmetic industry, while 90% of the global industry is based in edible and confectionary-based products (Global Shea Alliance, 2014). However, shea as a cosmetic has been carefully and widely branded as fair trade and organic, and consequently has become part of the growing public interest for socially conscious products.

Unknown to consumers are the market pressures shea butter producers face on the ground. A complex web of pickers, producers, traders, buyers and other intermediaries work within the sector but, as with most small-scale agricultural commodity producers, they are incapable of predicting the stability and liquidity of shea markets. For example, numerous women producers, and men involved in shea-based NGOs, remarked to me that each year there is some difficulty in selling all the butter produced, most notably if you are unable to find an international buyer; if women's groups are too large or produce in excess of the demand on the market, the net benefits, to all members, are minimal. This phenomenon of market saturation was unmistakably apparent in situations where affiliated buyers (or those higher up the supply chain) had told women's groups to hold off on increasing their membership. If, however, producer groups are able to find and supply international buyers, they can produce on a larger scale and sell more; otherwise they are selling for lower prices on the domestic or regional market, or taking it for home use.

The sticking point with finding international markets, and assuming that this is equated with instant profit, is that these producer groups are potentially at the mercy of buyers to provide fair and equitable payment. This is problematic for two reasons: not all buyers are part of fair trade organizations or those that are may not need to adhere closely to fair trade principles because of their market dominance. For example, Hershey's, which uses shea butter in its non-

chocolate products³ and is directly engaged in the shea industry. And secondly, although fair price for nuts is technically a core principle if the buyer is certified “fair trade”, buyers can loosely adhere to fair trade and simply meet certification audits for inspection times. In addition to these concerns, producers who engage with the international market must also bear the variations in transport costs and affiliated concerns (e.g., customs issues) that come with shipping one’s products, although some buyers do shoulder these costs.

CONCLUSION

The growth of the shea industry, both internationally and domestically, could open further opportunities for women as dominant shea producers. Women’s historical dominance in shea butter production and picking remains strong in West Africa. Coupled with slow changes to women’s land rights and extension of their agricultural roles, the social and commercial landscape for women’s shea butter producers in the Upper East is shifting. The next chapter describes how Ojoba (and Star Shea) has evolved in tandem with the market and social trends, and how both groups have developed, in part, independent structures and strategies to ensure their group solidity.

³ Hershey’s and other confectionary corporations have recently begun strongly investing in shea as a “cocoa-based equivalent”. These investments are still works in progress as lobbying groups continue to advocate for shea to be used in North American chocolate production. This has already begun happening in the European market.

CHAPTER 5: OJOBA & STAR SHEA

The Ojoba Women's Co-operative Group (OWCG), the focus of this study, has an interesting and complex history. I came into the field believing that their existence had come about in a relatively linear fashion, following from seed support and structural mobilization initiatives in and around 2000, as is denoted on their website (Ojoba Collective, 2015). After speaking with several actors in the field and with partner NGOs, I learned about the more convoluted path the co-op took from its formation.

World Vision (WV) was involved in the Bongo District from 1996-1998; at this time they noticed that there was a high degree of out-migration, including some women, travelling to seek employment in the South (B. Pealore, personal communication, May 2015). With this level of out-migration, WV personnel were especially concerned about the impact on girls education, maternal support of families and the overall sustainability of community development efforts. However WV also noticed that many of the remaining women were previously organized into groups that split labour communally, helped each other financially and collectively organized in other ways to support each other. This type of embedded strategic solidarity among local women corroborates Apusigah's (2013) findings that Frafra women have already traditionally mobilized at the grassroots to help themselves, along various relational lines. Taking this into consideration, WV decided to invest in 12 women's groups in the area, specifically supporting them financially to take part in some type of alternative income generating activity, beyond subsistence farming (B. Pealore, personal communication, May 2015).

The WV Area Director recalls most of these groups were doing shea butter production, but the Bongo-Soe group was an especially organized and promising group (ibid.) The leaders of Ojoba recall this initial time as when they met under a large baobab tree near the centre of town and did shea butter the "traditional" way, essentially, non-mechanized and small-scale (Co-op personnel, personal communication, April 2015). At this point, the group was selling to local

markets and barely breaking even. World Vision then offered some market facilitation, helping to fund the processing plant, which the shea women now use, and attempting to negotiate a consignment or buyer for the women's group. The women mobilized the community and were able to supply the labour while World Vision provided the building materials and basic equipment like crushers and grinders, thus also cutting down on the time-consuming nature and drudgeries of the traditional physical labour associated with shea butter production (B. Pealore, personal communication, May 2015).

On the commercial sales side, World Vision managed to find the women a small consignment from Body Shop, which provided a temporary arrangement for Ojoba (B. Pealore, personal communication, May 2015). Part of the impetus to become Fair Trade was the realization that Ojoba could sell to global buyers like the Body Shop if they had this label, thus reaping the benefits of growing foreign markets in "socially-conscious" products. Eventually World Vision personnel met a male entrepreneur from the West who was interested in the group and was able to get them a market in Canada and the UK, through another large British-based natural beauty products corporation (B. Pealore, personal communication, May 2015).

OVERVIEW OF WORK PROCESSES & STRUCTURE OF OJOBA

From its initial incorporation to present day, Ojoba has grown substantially, from the original meeting spot under the baobab tree to its commercial processing plant, which in turn has become a community epicenter for the women, their families and Bongo-Soe at large. Since the co-op group began with a few dozen (or less) members loosely organized and making shea butter on a small scale, it has grown to encompass approximately 400 members (Co-op personnel, personal communications, April 2015). The women work on a 'rotating shift system', with each member being given training on a specific role (for example, operating the grinding machinery) and taking a set number of shifts per week doing this job. Women did report to me that from time to time they would be moved to another 'job', either to help out their colleagues or because they might not have been a good 'fit' with their former job. (Interwork conflicts and other workplace

politics will be discussed further below). According to the principles of a co-operative, Ojoba's leaders and executive board are elected democratically by all members. (Some of the discrepancies or realities of this system will be discussed later in this Chapter and in Chapter 6). With such a large membership body, it has become impossible to govern and operate solely from the main production facility. In response to their membership growth, the co-op has created two 'membership groups'. Most of the original members (and Bongo-Soe locals) are part of the "main group" while hundreds of other women make up the "subgroups" which absorb women from neighbouring small villages around Bongo Soe.

Because the subgroups do not process shea butter at the production plant, they are producing smaller amounts at their homes individually, according to a group quota they are given by the Ojoba co-op executive. This will then be purchased from them and then members receive a share of profit based on the amount (weight) they produced at their respective homes. Members in the main group are compensated similarly, although they are divided into 'job types' they also receive income per kilogram of shea butter produced in total at the processing plant. Main group members process at the mechanized facility while subgroup members typically bring in their home batches of butter, although occasionally non-main group members may come by the facility to see if any extra help is required. Both groups of women process the bulk shea nuts that the co-op purchases and stores on site.

Both leaders I spoke with reiterated the same general requirements for membership: women must be from Bongo Soe (or the surrounding villages, in the case of the subgroups), they must attend meetings regularly, and they must complete a 6 month probation period where they train and regularly come to the processing center for training (Co-op personnel, personal communication, April 2015). Meetings are held on a rolling schedule, often planned on a case-by-case basis, but they are roughly scheduled to occur twice a month, or once during busy times of the year (Co-op personnel, personal communication, May 2015). General Assemblies, with all 400 members, are held every quarter (Co-op personnel, personal communication, May 2015). The subgroups operate similarly; they each have two elected leaders (who are then part of the

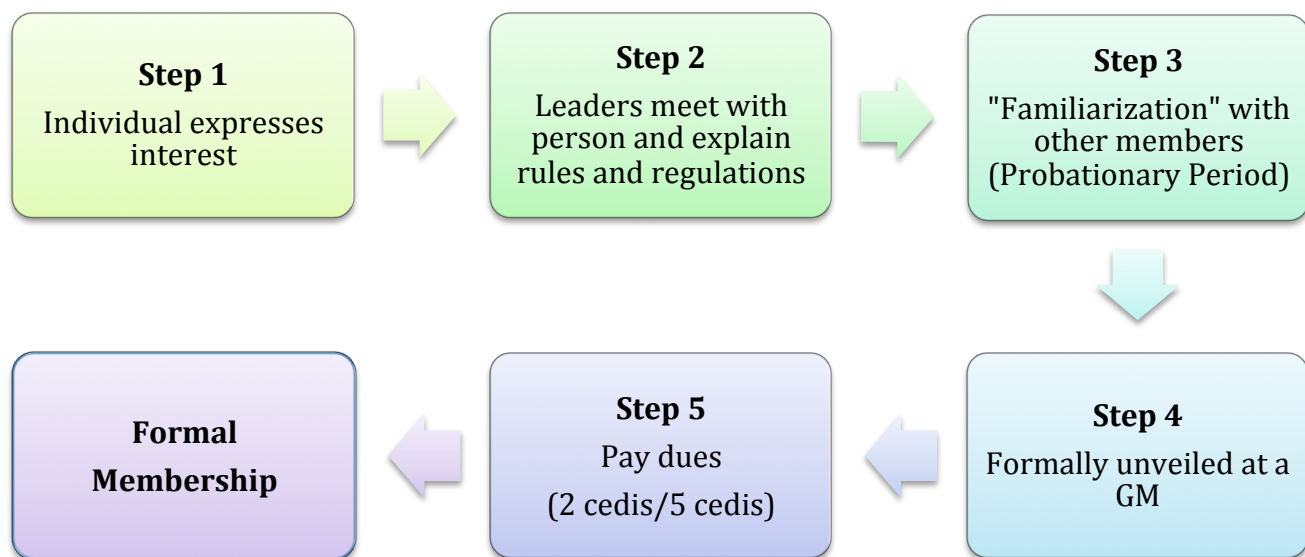
larger overall Ojoba executive) and follow the general requirements of the OWCG. The subgroups and the main group also each have their own peripheral ‘rules’ or ‘initiatives’ such as sharing their labour in farming season and helping split and share family funeral costs among group members.

Membership Structure

The Ojoba Co-op, like any other work organization, has its own internal regulations and processes. In my interviews, I was specifically interested in examining membership entry requirements, intra-meeting norms and regulations, member awareness of rules and regulations and how co-operative mandates (such as voting) were met. Peripherally, I also asked about the existence of ‘subgroups’ which consisted of newer members from surrounding villages and how they integrated into the ‘membership model’ that the main Ojoba group had created.

Figure 5.1 (next page) roughly explains the initiation process that members go through to join Ojoba. It is important to explain that this diagram is based on the reports of women who were older members, and most reflect the original process that was used to recruit and appraise prospective members. Several things should be noted: most members were unable to identify the current process of initiation, but those who could, emphasized how membership dues have increased (from 2 cedis to 5 cedis). The third step, the ‘familiarization’ process, functions as a quasi-probation period where members are introduced to the work, their potential co-workers, and become familiarized with the production process and the facility. Participants gave varying answers as to how long this period lasted, with some women saying this process took a few months (up to six), while another woman stated it was a one month period. Once prospective members pass through these steps and they are formally introduced and pay dues, they are then considered full members and must begin attending all requisite meetings.

Figure 5.1: Membership process of Ojoba Co-operative



Source: Author's Interviews, 2015

Generally, all of the women noted that one of the leaders will organize, publicize and moderate the meetings. It is common that the leaders use different members as messengers to publicize the meetings at community hubs such as churches and local markets. There is an agenda prepared in advance and common themes that emerge are: hygiene and quality processing issues, potential job changes and conflicts within certain departments (such as the Boilers department, for example). Women noted that to speak, members must raise their hand and any members can speak at any given time. When asked if certain people (not including leaders) spoke, this question consistently evoked a humorous, but brief response. All the women laughed and avoided identifying specific women, but noted that a few women tended to dominate discussions, sometimes drawing out the meetings for the rest of the members.

My participant observation of 3 meetings (one large welcome meeting, and two smaller meetings) generally corroborated these descriptive breakdowns; the meetings ran with an agenda, began with dancing and attendance-taking and then proceeded. Several women were more talkative and the women would occasionally talk amongst themselves; one of the leaders would usually quiet them and bring their attention back to the discussion at hand. As an outsider, it was entertaining to watch the leaders attempt to ‘crowd control’ the larger meeting of women, but despite the possibility of interpreting this as pacification, women interviewed uniformly reported that they felt comfortable and welcome to speak at any time. However, in practice, few of the women I interviewed spoke in these larger meetings. One exception was Kessie who was one of the more active voices and described in her interview that she was not afraid to speak up or ask questions, especially to clarify issues she did not understand.

Most of the women I interviewed were more active in the smaller groups which were more informal. The physical setting was more conducive to ease of participation; these meetings involved sitting on the floor in small circles rather than in chairs or benches in one large circle and there was no formal/announced record of attendance called. In this setting, everyone was able to take on roles (such as counting money or taking notes) and generally each woman had the opportunity to speak. These also appeared to involve women who were friends or co-workers in the same department, as opposed to the large general meetings which also brought women from the sub-groups and sometimes external visitors.

Leadership Structure

I had the privilege of interviewing two leaders from the co-op numerous times. They provided many details and additional context regarding the co-op’s history and operations. Both women were also very frank and spoke with a high degree of candour in addressing their current challenges, future challenges and realities of the co-op’s situation. Out of conversations with them and with other non-leaders, questions emerged about the leadership “pipeline” and turnover, members taking on training roles of younger members and the nature of leadership meetings.

One of the leaders when asked what her role was in the co-op explained how there was no role that she did not occasionally do. So while not part of a specific shift group, she would often rotate, doing most of the jobs or go wherever the need was. In my field visits, it was a common sight to see the two leaders, hands buried deep in butter, manually whipping butter when the facility was undergoing power shortage. Both leaders were trained on each part, so in theory could pick up roles where and as it was needed. Older members (not including the leaders) were also somewhat flexible in terms of what roles they could take on. Some of the women interviewed had shifted between departments when the need arose, or in order to take over a supervisory or training role for younger members. Especially interesting was the ambassador role that more experienced members would take. These members could act as ambassadors for Ojoba and visit other [newer] co-ops and train them. While this privilege was usually reserved for older (more experienced) members, there were one or two young or middle-experienced members who had travelled outside the community to train other groups or go to workshops (often leadership focused). It is critical to note that attending these trainings (and travel costs) were typically subsidized (either by the co-op, or in the past, by World Vision). These members hold a fairly high status within the co-op, to be both given this honour but also the opportunity. Some of these women also represent potential future leaders, which was an issue that both leaders addressed: the need to train replacements and ensure sustainability of the co-op through knowledge transfer and skill development.

The two leaders I interviewed are part of a larger executive. This executive board (currently between 3-4 other members) helps with a variety of duties, but is somewhat in flux in terms of participation levels, according to one leader. This board oversees the co-op in its entirety and holds leadership meetings to which subgroup leaders are also invited. These meetings are closed meetings however if you are given 'special roles' by the leaders, you are permitted to come and present your findings during this meeting. Several women remarked that they had done this at one time, mostly sharing updates about nut pricing at local markets. In regard to age as a

marker of difference and status, most of these women who had special roles were older and had supervisory type of roles already in the shift system.

One leader remarked about the selection of young women being a matter of sustaining leadership, and that it is also a specific attempt to stem the immediate short-term repercussions of high outward urban migration. These types of comments often came up in interviews, when women noted that it was due to the co-op they were able to avoid migrating to the city (Kumasi primarily) and thus be more active breadwinners and decision-makers in their families. Her remarks also demonstrate the long-term planning concerns that remain a topical issue in the co-op.

OPERATIONS & BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS AT OJOBA

Both the main groups and the subgroups contribute to the large orders that the OWCG receives which begin from production in May and can stretch until December. May to December also corresponds with the rainy season in the Upper East, also known as the farming season, and also includes November to December, which corresponds to the beginning of the cold “Harmattan” season. According to one leader, the smallest order the co-op will do is 1000 kg and the largest they usually do, at one given time, is 10-12,000 kg; she estimated that in one year the co-op can produce anywhere between 50-60,000 kilograms of shea butter. (Co-op personnel, personal communication, May 2015).

Their buyer, who we can refer to as the incorporated entity of the “Ojoba Collective” (OC), is officially unaffiliated with their British cosmetics vendor, but began the formalization process which would result in the Ojoba Women’s Co-operative Group (OWCG). The Ojoba Collective, which was originally registered in the US (and is also registered in Ghana), is responsible for the business and financial side of Ojoba while the Women’s Co-op is responsible for production and operations in Ghana.

World Vision undertook what was referred to as a “sensitization” campaign to make the women aware of Fair Trade, their obligations and the potential positive outcomes. Part of this

included formally organizing the women (with significant help from the original [Ojoba] women's group leaders) into a formal co-operative, which is the prerequisite for Fair Trade. Founding documents (the co-op was established in 1998 and incorporated in 2013) established who would provide what to get the women started on a large-scale, mass production level. Table 5.2 summarizes these obligations and the corresponding persons responsible.

Table 5.2 Founding document: Allocation of responsibilities

Type of Assistance	Partner Organization/ Provider	Remarks
Group Formation and Organizational Development	World Vision	
Technology Transfer and Product Upgrading of shea butter	World Vision	
Business Management Trainings	NBSSI-BAC (National Board for Small Scale Industries)	Training on leadership and entrepreneurship
Facility, Tools and Equipment	World Vision, Bongo District Assembly, Ojoba Women Collective, Natural Beauty Vendor	WV: Established production center, tools and equipment such as grinder, crusher, roasters, millers, kneader, pots, basins, oven. Bongo Assembly: kneader & polytank Ojoba Collective: electric sealer, packaging materials Cosmetics Vendor: tools, planting materials for establishing shea tree nursery
Technical Assistance in Establishing Shea Nursery	Bole Northern Research Centre	Assisted in procurement of tools and planting materials

Source: Ojoba Women's Co-operative, 2015

After 1998, World Vision had stepped away from the project because the external buyer, the Ojoba Collective (and by extension, the British beauty vendor), became the primary partner of the OWCG. Eventually, WV left the region entirely believing the Ojoba women to be fairly self-sufficient (as was the initial goal of their intervention). At present, WV is still involved with Ojoba Women's Co-op peripherally, giving small financial and networking support to the

women. For example, during my fieldwork in 2014, World Vision had helped sponsor an additional woman's group from nearby Bawku, to participate in seminars with Ojoba to learn their process of shea butter production and their co-op organizational practices. In addition, in the past 5 years, the Ojoba Collective and their natural cosmetics vendor have provided funds to the Ojoba Women's Co-op for more production equipment and new project implementation costs (such as shea butter soap making, which I witnessed).

The majority of their export orders appear to come from the Ojoba Collective, which is referred to as 'the buyer' by all the women in the co-op. It is also important to note that, while these international orders make up the main portion of their income, the co-op does handle its own domestic sales which represent a smaller portion of their overall business. Leaders estimate the co-op produces between 40 and 50 tonnes per year (including both the butter intended for export and domestic sales).

In addition to meeting its sales targets, the co-op is responsible for buying its shea nuts and ensuring their own steady supply. The women rely upon local markets in Northern Ghana and sometimes will even travel into bordering Burkina Faso. They buy at various markets, negotiating for bulk prices where they can, or in small amounts at different times, recognizing the fluctuating floors and ceilings for raw shea on the market at different points in the season. When I visited, the co-op had accumulated a small stockpile of nuts, but would continue buying throughout the season. The sale of the processed shea butter is primarily managed by the executive and the buyer, but the purchasing and negotiating of the shea nuts is a task shared throughout the co-op. Various members, new and old, are given 'homework' tasks to track the prices in the markets, and purchase in small amounts for the co-op if they are travelling or will be in other local markets. These members are given funds by the co-op for purchasing.

Peripherally, the co-op has also been exploring some alternative production initiatives. Shea butter black soap, a previously mentioned example, is one of these new projects; *dawadawa* processing (for cooking) and baobab seed processing [for oil for cosmetic use] were two other

projects I was informed of. These projects are in the exploratory phase, with the black soap being considered the most profitable source of potential international export income.

STAR SHEA

In order to understand whether or how FT cooperatives might be contributing to women's empowerment in northern Ghana, I interviewed another woman's shea group that was non-Fair Trade. I did this for comparative purposes to gain some understanding of how women shea butter producers not involved in FT organizations fare. For this reason, I conducted a group interview with women from the Kassena-Nankana region who are members of the Star Shea Network, affiliate of Star Shea Ltd.

Star Shea Ltd., the business arm that began as a registered non-profit in Ghana in 2009, represents 300-400 groups of women in Northern Ghana (Star Shea, 2015). These groups, counting approximately 10,000 women as members, include women who are pickers and processors (or both in some cases); some of their groups are also certified organic and/or Fair Trade, the former through ECO-CERT and the latter through the IMO Fair For Life label (F. Zakaria, personal communication, March 2015). The group which I interviewed was not a certified Fair Trade group, although it did have organic certification.

The Star Shea Network refers to the vast hierarchical governing and leadership bodies that the women members have formed (at community and district levels) that stipulate and vote on ongoing fair pricing and training requirements, working alongside Star Shea Ltd. to ensure their livelihood security. Star Shea Ltd. provides resources for women to form groups, such as connecting them with local microfinance institutions to finance equipment. Star Shea Ltd. assigns field coordinators to specific regions to ensure fair trade or organic practices are being undertaken on the ground and also to ensure proper training on these. A crucial supplementary resource that Star Shea provides women with is access to a specialized software that calculates market prices of shea on a bi-weekly and monthly basis; Star Shea also creates its own surveys on district market prices on a regular basis to provide to its members. Because of initial seed

funding coming from German software company SAP, Star Shea is heavily invested in introducing internet-based tracking technologies into the shea production market in Northern Ghana; they remain one of the few organizations I interviewed that is taking this novel approach.

CONCLUSION

The OWCG's current membership structure and processes reflect their history and the intervention of World Vision. Their success is not only based on the resource-based support of World Vision and other partners like the Ojoba Collective, but also on pre-existing structures in the community. From a much younger foundation, the Star Shea group has been established as part of a more structured network of women's shea groups, but because it is quite new, members do not appear to be as well organized and immersed in a workplace culture.

The leadership structures of Ojoba (or rather the realities of leadership) while in place and aligned to co-operative principles, do raise questions about turnover and equal member participation and access to power. The next chapter explores how women's understandings of power interact with and can be linked to the co-operative (and Star Shea) environment.

CHAPTER 6: WOMEN'S POWER IN DOMESTIC, CO-OP & COMMUNITY SPACES

DOMESTIC & PERSONAL POWER

As noted in Chapter 1, personal power and political power are two elements of understanding the levels of empowerment and how they operate on the ground (Rowlands, 1995). Kabeer's (1999) 'power within' is often tied to personal power (and processes of negotiation and decision-making) and perceptions of self-worth and value, 'power to' is more linked to external change and thus a more political, action-oriented form of empowerment. In this chapter I would like to use both to explore co-op women's personal and domestic decisions as examples of their power within as well as their power to create change for their families or in their spousal partnerships.

Table 6.1 below presents the women's responses to their assessment of personal power they have to improve their life. These perceptions provide a good foundation to explore the women's sense of agency within the domestic and personal sphere. Women were asked to rate the amount of power they felt they had: none, some, or a great deal. (Women's perceptions of power to improve their community are examined in the Public Sphere section below.) Four of the women felt a great deal of personal power while another four chose the mid-category suggesting they felt 'some power'. While no single demographic factor appears linked to women's perception of personal power, a sense of self-respect and pride was readily apparent in the women who responded that they had a 'great deal' of personal power. Generally, the women who responded that they felt 'some power' were cautiously optimistic that they had been able to change some things in their life, through inclusion in more decisions, but had not been able to

change as much as they would have liked. These women's responses echo Kabeer's (1999, p. 444) notion of 'control points' in decision-making. She explains that through some 'control points' women can gain access and ability to contribute to decision-making, but the initial access does not guarantee power to change or make/implement final decisions.

Table 6.1: Women's perceptions of power to improve their own lives (N=8)

Perceived degree of power	Marital status		Formal Education		Average Years Coop	Average Age of Participant
	Married	Widow	None	Post Secondary		
Some	3	1	3	1	10	48*
Great deal	3	1	3	1	7.5	40

Source: Author's Interviews, 2015

*includes age estimates

'Power within' to See Value in One's Labour and 'Power to' Change the Labour Negotiation

As noted in Chapter 4, in this region of northern Ghana, where patrilineal systems are prominent, there is a strict gender division of labour whereby men are responsible for farming cash crops and acquire the larger tracts of land, whereas women are responsible for subsistence farming and domestic labour. In practice, this means male-“headed” households with male-“headed” farming in which men have rights over women's labour (Agana, 2012). Yet, women in the co-op seem to have the ability to strategically negotiate their work schedule and environment within the conventional gender division of labour which materialized in their spousal partnerships and intra-household relations (Agana, 2012). When participants were asked if they ever worked with men at the co-op, all the women definitively said no; but many divulged that it was commonplace for their husbands to come for short periods to help them. During my field visits, I did witness many of the women directing their husband to load shea butter on to their motorcycles or fetch water from the borehole, which was connected to the co-op's facility.

Instead of placing spouses at odds with each other, opponents in an inherently patriarchal framework, these spousal relationships appear to operate more in terms of what Jackson terms a ‘creative conjugal partnership,’ one that is constantly in flux and where the use of labour is negotiated between men and women for the welfare of the family unit (Jackson, 2007. See also O’Laughlin, 2007; Sen, 1990). The women of the co-op move their domestic obligations to fit their shea labour schedule; and more often than not this results in their spouses helping them meet their production demands, because husbands are aware of the obvious household economic benefits derived from increased shea production.

This creative partnership was also observed by Koopman (1991) in Cameroon, where she noted that instead of the household being a single unit, both men and women controlled their own individual enterprises, but each could manage their own labour and recruit the other partner to help (when necessary) with outputs. In her work among the matrilineal Asante near Kumasi, Clark (1995) also notes the division between women’s enterprises and men’s, but reports that while husbands might work for or in their wives’ businesses, women seldom work in their husbands’ businesses. In the shared West African context, both Clark and Koopman’s examples challenge the model of perpetual conflict in spousal partnerships, fuelled by assumed patriarchal cultural norms guiding partners’ decision-making.

With women being outside the home, working at the co-op and bringing their domestic work (such as sewing) to the co-op, their physical and social environment is altered, which changes the way in which women’s work is valued and the support women receive (from other women) in participating in decision making. This perhaps bridges Kabeer’s (1999) ‘power within’ and ‘power to’ by illustrating the co-op’s ‘power to’ transform women’s role (or the perception of their role) in decision-making, both at home and at the co-op which can bolster

their sense of self-worth ('power within'). Women can leverage their economic value (a large part of which comes from their shea butter production at the co-op) within the spousal partnership, and thus further enhance their personal sense of control over their own labour and resources. Thus, leaving the domestic environment, and participating in productive labour at a formal 'workplace' contributes to both increased 'power within' and increased positive recognition of their contributions by their partners and in the community.

However, one of the leaders noted that women's participation in the co-op has not been without tension, especially in intra-household and marital relations. She noted that while most husbands generally supported their wives, there were:

A few [husbands] who did do other work but now the women have taken over some of it. But you could meet any man [randomly] and the wife is here at the co-op...and he will confess and say 'really [the co-op] is helping'...even if [the men] say you, this co-op, drives away the woman [from the house]...If they get into a fight, the husband knows they will have to come here and plead [for his wife's forgiveness].

Her suggestion is that the co-op can cause marital strain, perhaps due to the wider access to resources for women and tensions surrounding where women's labour should be allocated: 'traditional' domestic work versus work outside the home (or women taking on some of their husband's work because they have more assets). Adopting Blackden and Bhanu's (1999) notion of 'asset inequalities', the transition in labour control (but possibly not managerial control, to borrow from Goetz and Sen Gupta) of directly productive assets (such as land/farming), could signal a disruption in traditional family structures, but also increased power for women in household negotiations (Goetz and Sen Gupta, 1996). This disruption can also be read from the allegation that 'you', i.e., the co-op, lures women away from the home. But her commentary also shows how Ojoba functions as a community centre where women can seek refuge from domestic issues and feel a higher sense of agency and control, strengthened by solidarity among each other.

Women's 'power to' change their children's educational outcomes

I heard from all the women, workers and leaders, that their children's education was paramount. Overall educational disparity appears to be decreasing, with the Ghanaian government placing strong emphasis on providing and enforcing free basic education for all children (Clark 1994, p. 305). Systemic patriarchal tendencies that privilege male education over female, as well as specifically privileging the voice of the father as chief decision maker over the mother, are becoming less overt and have diminished.

Each woman in my interviews identified education as both a starting point for inequality but also as an equalizing resource. When asked why they were not able to have access to formal education, the overwhelming majority stated that girls were 'meant for marriage [not education]'. That statement clearly elucidates why eight of the ten women had no formal education.

The two women who did have a formal education appeared to be exceptional in the Bongo-Soe community. These two were also the co-operative's main group leaders, whose distinct experiences and enhanced access to resources, prior to becoming leaders are important to note. It is particularly important to observe the pronounced contrast in livelihood and family welfare outcomes between those with no education and those who had extensive education, including post-secondary education. The most well-documented implication of educational attainment is the differential education outcomes of their children and the consequential effect on future agency, opportunity and empowerment.

For example, in contrast to the lack of educational opportunities that their mothers had, today all of my participant women's children are in school or have completed primary and junior [middle] school, with a significant portion also completing senior [high] school and continuing to university or vocational colleges. While this upward educational mobility is certainly dependent

on numerous factors (such as the prioritization of education as core to poverty reduction), the women's insistence on keeping their children in school was apparent. Elsewhere, Russell-DuVarney (2013) also found that educational mandates may be the co-op's greatest accomplishment with the strongest legacy and could present a potential opportunity to legitimize women's voices and increasingly recognized roles and power in the community.

It is worth remarking on women's control of budgeting to pay school fees that necessitated a re-negotiation of power in their domestic partnerships in order to focus on educational attainment, especially of their girls. Women exerted their financial influence – largely stemming from their shea incomes-- and managerial control over the budget so that they could insist all the children go to school. Even in larger families where husbands typically only supported the eldest children's long-term educational trajectory, women would intercede. One woman, Ama, when asked if her husband supports the children going to school, noted that sending her children to school was a collective responsibility.

Her statement illustrates a partial re-working of the family decision-making structure as compared to the women's own childhood experiences, where almost all the women explicitly identified their fathers as responsible for deciding (or rejecting) their educational future. Their understanding of the links between greater agency and ability to reach one's goals and completion of an education seemed to be quite apparent. Whether from the co-op's focus on the importance of education, women's own personal observations or development prioritization, coupled with their shea income, their power was buoyed to change their children's educational outcomes.

DIFFERENCES AMONG WOMEN: THE CASE OF CO-WIVES' & WIDOWS' POWER IN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

The status of 'married' carries a strong connotation in Ghanaian communities, specifically as it indicates one's stability and good character as a productive adult member of the community⁴. But specific norms surrounding the importance of marriage for women are shifting in Northern Ghana. "Traditionally" polygynous marriages have been common but generally polygyny appears to be declining. Similarly, attitudes and taboos surrounding widows and unmarried women are also changing. Traditional Northern Ghanaian beliefs historically stigmatized unmarried and widowed women⁵. Today these perceptions are changing, with more unmarried women migrating from rural to urban areas and young women pursuing higher education away from home for longer periods of time with little to no consequences. Their migration does not necessarily represent an escape from stigmatization, but rather it becomes more normative due to economic need (and then leads to less stigmatization) for unmarried women to out-migrate for work or education purposes.

Of the group interviewed, 6/10 were the sole wife, 2/10 were widows, and 2/10 were married to men in polygynous relationships. These four women provided an interesting understanding into how decision-making in the household can occur within alternative family configurations. Even in the case of the two women who were both married to men with other wives, there was a diversity experience of inequality. This was primarily based on the fact that one woman, Kessie, was the first wife-- considered the more advantageous position to occupy in the household; the other woman, Assompoka, was a junior wife. The first wife reflected a more

⁴ For more specifics on marriage, widowhood and their corresponding effects on land tenure and property inheritance, refer to Chapter 4 and the section on Customary Practices Affecting Women.

⁵ In nearby Gambaga, unmarried women and widows were put into a "witches camp" because common mythology stated that widows were responsible for their husbands deaths or unmarried women were suspicious. See the documentary "Witches of Gambaga" for more information.

co-operative partnership, noting that she and her husband were both breadwinners and therefore supported their children together. In contrast, when the junior co-wife was asked about breadwinners, she said that, “in terms of ownership, the man is the head of the family, but in real terms I must come here to bring income because the man does not give me money.” The first co-wife occupies a privileged position where she can work with her husband in accord to provide for the children and split resources amicably; whereas the second wife is more bleak in recognizing the terms of her partnership, knowing she must look outside it for resources. Of course, their husband’s means and statuses should also be considered here and these are just two individual cases that are not indicative of the differences between all first wives and junior wives. In this particular case, the first wife’s larger access to resources (specifically, her husband’s income) and her bargaining power in the household notes where her ‘power within’ has been able to result in actualized ‘power to’. In contrast, the junior co-wife was unable to say that she felt she had power to change her own life or effect change in the community (see Tables 6.1 and 6.2). While the first wife was highly involved in Ojoba (perhaps due to her ability to commit her time more freely or perhaps due to other connections), the junior co-wife was not well absorbed into the social network of the co-op, as evident by her inability to answer questions about its daily operations. Instead the junior wife was more clearly in need and searching for ‘economic empowerment’ rather than having the privilege of citing ‘social empowerment’ as something gained from her membership.

Each woman faces very different realities, thus changing the degree of impact of being part of a women’s income-generating group. There are clear disparities between the two, which is reflected in their respective understandings of personal empowerment or ‘power within’: a

creative partnership for the first wife versus necessity-driven from a potentially conflict-ridden relationship for the junior wife.

This can be further reiterated by looking at income splitting. The first wife explained her control over income splitting as:

usually it's not all your money that you tell your husband about, because if you do that, the danger is that he might relax in his responsibilities and push everything to you. Usually I take a reasonable amount to my husband and say: 'this is what I have earned'. And then there's what I don't give to him.

In fact, she was one of several women I interviewed who promoted this means of maintaining control (or partial agency) in household decision-making. Women would then also enhance their ability to make decisions without their husbands, helped by things such as keeping a separate savings fund for the family. In general, a majority of the women with husbands, (seven out of eight) chose to only partially disclose (or not disclose) their incomes; most also noted that their husbands rarely or never disclosed their incomes to their wives.

Instead of focusing on the negotiating power she had by disclosing her own income, the second co-wife noted that, "I don't know where my husband spends his income because he doesn't disclose it to me, so I have to fend for myself and the children." Both statements provide relevant context for the links between disclosure of income, bargaining power based on earning power and budget creation as a core decision-making process in the household. This also follows Gracia Clark's (1994) findings of market ladies in Kumasi who typically did not know their husbands' incomes, and consequently chose to hide their own, especially to divert a significant portion to their children's education. In fact, although most women referred to their husband and men in general, as 'head of the family/household', this did not exclude women from being involved in budgeting and contributing to decision-making.

Widows provided other interesting insights regarding perceived differences in power and agency and access to resources and networks, compared to their married peers. One of the widows, Belinda, said that her experience as a widow, “has been okay, because previous tradition didn’t favour widows but for me the tradition has changed. There is not stigma.” The same widow noted that the Ojoba Co-op was full of widows and they supported each other. The other widowed woman, Assibi noted that in fact, “it has become easier to make budget and family decisions...but I am also the only one.” This particular woman’s older children have mostly left the community; in the case of the other widow, Belinda, she lived with her late husband’s brother and also had older male children with whom she made decisions⁶. In Assibi’s case, she also did not appear to face increased stigmatization for choosing to not re-marry. In fact, her widowed status (and perhaps her older age, late 50s, with grown independent children) afforded her more agency and control over her own affairs, compared to the younger widow in her 40s, with younger children, with greater financial responsibility and less flexibility. The older widow, Assibi, was certainly unencumbered by stigma and was highly participative and had a clear network of friends at Ojoba. However, in comparison to both of their responses when asked about personal power versus public displays of ‘power to’, it was the younger widow who reported higher levels of personal power than the older widow.

PUBLIC SPHERE

Most women in the co-op commented on their perceptions of the power structure in the community and how they felt excluded from it. The two leaders thus provided an interesting counterpoint because they both had held elected positions in local government. Through this

⁶ The relationship between this widow and brother-in-law could be a form of levirate. However, it was difficult to tell the depth of the relationship or if this particular woman was simply absorbed into the larger family compound of her brother-in-law.

experience they had been able to act as community change agents, while also changing the way in which women participating in the public sphere were perceived.

Women I interviewed uniformly agreed that the Ojoba co-op was an accepted part of community life in Bongo Soe. One woman, Nana especially made a point of saying that although the Chief, Assemblymen and Council of Elders are most powerful, the interaction between Ojoba and those entities was harmonious. She further suggested that their wives being part of the co-op was another indicator of the acceptance of Ojoba by the traditional power structures.

Table 6.2 summarizes women's perceptions of the power they possess to influence change in their community.

Table 6.2 Women's perceptions of power to improve Bongo-Soe (N=8)

Perceived degree of power	Marital status		Formal Education		Average Years Coop	Average Age of Participant
	Married	Widow	None	Post Secondary		
Very little	3	2	5	0	8.4	47*
Some	2	0	0	2	12.5	46*
Great deal	1	0	1	0	4	30

Source: Author's Interviews, 2015

*Includes age estimates

Based on these responses, it is difficult to single out any particular socio-demographic factors that can be linked to certain perceptions of external power. However there are some interesting points to observe regarding the women's understanding of their relationship to the community and the power they felt they had in the community. Five of the eight said they had 'very little' power, while only one woman said 'a great deal'. Surprisingly, the two leaders who were both highly active members of the community, gave more measured responses ('some' power) despite both having been elected Assemblywomen, with one even holding two terms. However, when asked who had the most power to make things happen in the community, all the women (except

the two leaders), agreed that the men held the most power in the community, notably the Chief, the Tindana (ritual landowner), the assemblymen and the Council of Elders.

Despite the consensus, the women were also quick to point out nuances and fissures in the dominant male power structure in the community and their implications for achieving change within the community. One woman, Assibi noted that:

“[there are obstacles to making improvements] because we have so many people here who are self-centered and only focus on their own gain, rather than on overall community improvement. They have plans for change but they cannot even realize the change they want to be seeing...[Interviewer: Who are these self-centered people in the community?].... It's the men, the older men.

Earlier in the same interview she also described the power of the Ojoba group because they can reach goals that they undertake as a group of women, which also enriched her own feelings of personal power. Thus her contrast between the political will of the two groups (the community leadership versus the co-op) seems clear. Her statement indicates that the older men who control local governance are self-interested and short-sighted and thus unable to make improvements in the community unlike the more participatory and pragmatic decision-making in the co-op.

Another woman, Adjua, identified the chief as the person who held the most power in the community, also elaborating that:

the Chief can say something good-and it will hold. But he can also say something bad-and it won't hold...the old generation also has power and so do some women in the co-op. They also have power to do things in the community.

Simultaneously, she both recognized his power as well as his fallibility in the community. Her follow-up statement also proved to be an interesting recognition of women slowly becoming accepted participants and change agents in community life.

Reiterating the perceived sense of change, another woman, Ama, stated:

now it has improved for women here but because in the old days, men could just say something and it must be done, but now the man could say something and the woman can suggest something else, because women give very good solutions to problem

Her statement indicates some re-negotiation of power in public political spaces that the women of Bongo Soe (not necessarily solely from the co-op) are currently experiencing. Although this is her general perception (and perhaps a privileged one simply by being a member of the co-op), she also recognizes the strong symbolic importance of vocal women in public forums, echoing Agarwal's (2010) findings in South East Asia. Indeed she later goes on to recognize the co-op's head leader as also being included in the group of people who have the most power in the community.

Because of their roles as leaders in the co-op, it is crucial to examine the two leaders' differential experiences as woman participants in community life and politics. Their experiences and perspectives may also provide a possible bellwether, albeit somewhat optimistic, of the potential for women's 'power to' create community-level change. One of the leaders argued that women, as the ones who usually ensure the welfare of children and who are the more determined farmers (often farming far beyond the normal season after men typically go inside), have the most power in the community. The other leader simply stated, "formally, it's the men [who have the most power], but! Practically...it's the woman that makes things happen." Similar to her colleague, she asserts that community labour projects--which may be decided by men--will, more often than not, be completed by mostly women. It is difficult to say how much women are able to purposefully leverage their labour, to influence the community and the decision-making process, thus using women's labour which could also be indicative of women's subordination.

Both women also discussed the way in which the Bongo-Soe community supported, required and/or resisted women's agency. The first leader described the institutional power of Ojoba and its well-regarded status in the community saying:

the community, when there is anything, they have to contact us...talking to women, trying to see, maybe if the community want women to do something, they always have to include us [Ojoba]...they always have to involve us

Also speaking about the 'community' at large the other leader describes how at the end of a project which primarily women have worked upon, she'll often feel, "at the end of the day, they won't say women did it, they will say the Bongo Soe community did it." In one sense, the first woman suggests the legitimate power of Ojoba, especially in amplifying "women's" interests; in contrast, the second woman suggests continued community resistance to women's [public] claims of political power. The quote above in combination with my conversation with Kukua (a leader) reflects a certain sense of pride she had in knowing the power the women have 'to make things happen' in the community. She was acutely aware of the Co-op's ability to leverage the power of all the women in negotiations with the community leadership, but potentially also indicating room for power co-option or the representation of more privileged women over other women. By negotiating with the community it would then result in women's interests represented in regards to particular community initiatives they may want. In my interviews with both these female leaders I believe they were acutely aware of challenges to women's participation in community-centered governance, specifically due to both women having sought and held office in the Municipal Assembly. These two women provided an interesting contrast to the other eight women interviewed, demonstrating the differences among and between workers and leaders in the co-op and the concentration of political power (and 'legitimate authority') in a few women.

In terms of understanding the different experiences of widows, both women were fairly pessimistic in assessing their power in the public sphere. Both women conceded that they had little power to change their community, perhaps reflecting the stagnancy of the community to reconsider the subordinate position of widows. So while the older widow, Assibi, had a fairly strong bond within the co-op and access to the social network (so much so that leaders had helped her in the past by lending her money), she also labeled herself a ‘victim’ and did not feel that the bonding and solidarity of the co-op translated into higher self-worth or ‘power to’ change things.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS: OJOBA’S SOCIAL ROLE IN “EMPOWERING”

The Ojoba Women’s Co-operative is an important hub in Bongo-Soe: though it lies on the outskirts of the town it is central in the sense that it is a bustling community centre despite the fact that it is away from the dense family compounds and main market of the downtown. Its centrality in community life is felt not only because so many women from the community belong to the co-op, but also because the town borehole is directly beside the co-op which was drilled as a result of the efforts of the Ojoba women. The image of the co-op lying on the town’s physical periphery is, I believe, a fitting metaphor for the independent identity and power that the co-op maintains and nurtures in women, apart from the community. Many facets of Ojoba provide an ideal ground for members to express increased feelings of empowerment. I will focus on the main contributory factors that members reported as core to their perceptions of increased agency, increased power within and increased opportunity to improve themselves and their circumstances (and potentially signaling increased access to resources and ‘power to’). At the most fundamental level women reported that their participation in the co-op and engagement in ‘co-op life’, such as

meetings and involvement in small group activities, enhanced their power or built the strength of the social network and desirability of membership. Less readily apparent is the social network of the co-op that has a strong normative impact on its members. The provision of additional services and vocational training that Ojoba offers to its members is central to women's perceptions of having greater agency and control over their own lives and adds to their sense of personal power. Lastly, a necessary factor to explore is how family relationships and friendships affect the access certain members may have to 'empowering activities' or the full social benefits of the co-op's environment.

MEMBER PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

Agarwal (2010) described how her participant observation and interviews noted where class and other status indicators were potential correlates with the ability women had to participate in community meetings. In the context of Ojoba, the co-op's women-only and democratic mandate created a complex social environment with less outright observable conflict which made observing the influence and exercise of hierarchical power at meetings quite challenging. The literature is already fairly conclusive on women's limited participation in mixed-gender co-operatives, where men's voices, suggestions and decision-making are privileged in discussion and voting (Kasente, 2012; Lyon, 2010; Lyon, Bezaury & Mutersbaugh, 2010). In that regard, as a researcher, it was noticeably difficult to find clear indicators or correlation between women's differences and their degree of participation in meetings. It was interesting to observe leaders often prompting women to answer their questions; to be clear, they were not prompting specific women to respond exclusively, rather they were looking for any responses

from the group at all, instead of only speaking themselves. One of the leaders described how it was the leaders' responsibility to elicit responses from the members,

With regular meetings we tell them to bring out their views...we may say they won't say anything...but we give them the chance to express themselves, in what they feel...if not, then some will relax. They will say they're not part of the thing. So when you give them the chance, they will give out their views.

Her statement describes several features of being a member of the group and her role as a leader. Namely, she describes two different aspects of member participation: 1) if women do not give their opinions on issues equally and frequently, then the group loses its saliency and foundations if all the women do not feel a sense of belonging and 2) members have their individual views on issues and need to be given an opportunity to express them.

My interviews also confirmed that many members are attuned to the most pressing issues facing them as a group because they fully understand the significance of their roles both economically and socially. Women's sense of pride in being (knowledgeable) members speaks to the positive influence and 'power within' that Ojoba can imbue in its members who embrace its mandate. However not all of the women speak in meetings. This may signify an interesting gap between self-reports of agency to speak and the lack of feeling of power necessary to change or add to the discussion. In contrast, this could also be a strategic decision of women to not become engaged in intragroup politics and instead remain focused on primary (economic) mandates, specifically the physical production of shea butter and day-to-day operations priorities.

The types of meetings I observed were geared towards an informational or educational purpose, for example, discussing hygiene complaints or other issues that had come up from their last shipment of butter. In this regard, I did not witness a formal meeting where member conflict or formal decision-making (and voting) occurred. Nevertheless, conflict was a normal part of everyday operations that I witnessed at the co-op. Like many workplaces, supervisors and

workers would argue amongst each other. A particularly contentious event was the weighing of one's personal shea butter (produced at home); women would gather around the scale and the leaders would ensure they were getting enough money for their shea butter and that it was being weighed properly. The jostling and boisterous nature of these instances was an opportunity for all members to speak out, and the leaders tended to let the members quarrel amongst themselves during these times. These occasions provided interesting insight into women's vocal participation during particular events, where debate is normative and leaders do not limit dissent. Events such as these can also be taken as illustrations of the actively democratic model of the co-op, namely, the ability for women from various backgrounds to challenge the system and each other without fear of repercussion. This is an important acknowledgement of how Ojoba provides a place where women can speak up and speak out, giving them a 'power to' change the co-op, their individual lives and the lives of other women, in a way which is often unavailable to them domestically, at the market or in the broader community.

Another pillar of the democratic co-operative system, beyond open debate and dissent, is the voting system. Originally, voting was considered part of my questions regarding knowledge of Fair Trade; however, noting the need to explicitly address whether voting occurred, I began asking members for their specific knowledge of voting and elections in the co-op and their participation (or lack thereof) in these processes. I received a variety of responses about what would necessitate voting in meetings, specifically, if a leader was not doing well or wanted to leave, if views were split on taking action on something (for example the use of social premiums), or if there was some form of job conflict. Specific examples of instances where member's views were split, were never specifically elaborated on: however, in the case of conflicts, women explained that occasionally members were mismatched to a specific job or they

were ‘causing chaos’ in one department so women could vote on moving them or whether to take some type of disciplinary action.

During my field visits, I did not witness any group votes on this type of issue, so I am unable to comment on the observable differences in participation and any implied power relations. It is also important to note that while protocol dictates that regular leadership elections are held, voting did not appear to occur frequently⁷ and some of the same leaders have been running Ojoba since its founding. For the most part, this reflects the reality that both leaders have more education than most of the members and more resources to take on unpaid but time-consuming leadership positions (supplemented by other wage jobs).

BONDS & SOLIDARITY IN THE SOCIAL NETWORK

The support and gratitude for the social network in the co-op was expressed strongly by the women I interviewed. Many women shared stories of their colleagues helping them, at work or at home, or their ability to ask the leaders for help, for work or personal issues. This type of ‘group help’ was occasionally visibly apparent, but in other instances, participants identified less visible forms of help. For example, one of the leaders elaborated on the recondite nature of the group’s power to help, stating:

so it is not only selling butter and getting money...we are not dying prematurely like before...I tell you, some people used to fall sick and they would never share their problems with anybody. They would die through stress, not illness. The husband is dead, she’s there with children, nobody to share the problem with. But here, we talk to each other, we are like family...you share your problem. If we are not able to solve it financially, but morally, support also keeps you alive.

⁷ The leaders generally believed that this was due to lack of interest on the part of members; members generally discussed that they felt no need for leadership change because things were going smoothly.

Central to her statement about the moral support and comfort given by members of the co-op to each other, is a discussion of physical space⁸. As noted in Chapter 5, the co-op provides a physical space, a location for women to process their shea, but also a place to congregate, share and commiserate over their family conflicts and bring their domestic work—as I often saw when women would bring their sewing and cooking to the co-op. The ‘coming together’ of the members is partially due to the construction of their expansive physical production facility and co-operative building. While the original women’s group met under a nearby baobab tree, the physical security of the current property offered them a new and sizeable shared ‘home’⁹. In that same sense, by having the physical space to meet, women’s landscapes were extended, from the household, deeper into the community, and into their own community - the co-op. The time spent at the co-op, as well as the intensity of the work process—especially the time-consuming nature of shea butter production— was the forging point of the social network, and the corresponding close rapport and interdependency fostered between the women. And while the physical space provides the backdrop for these interactions to occur, just as in Russell-DuVarney’s (2013) findings, the co-op as an institution does not enforce their trust, cum friendships, but the women themselves collectively initiate this process. A woman-centered workplace upheld the already dominant Frafra cultural belief that women can be workers and supporters of each other, especially when in collectives.

⁸ This was conceived thinking of the effect of a ‘room of one’s own’ (Virginia Woolf) and its impact on the possibility for a collectivity (or collectivities) of women writers. Thanks to Bradley Dunseith for his suggestion to connect these themes together.

⁹ The beginning of the group, meeting under the baobab tree, is now epitomized in the Ojoba Collective’s corporate logo featuring the baobab.

SOCIAL CAPITAL & ‘POWER OVER’

During my interviews, the ‘power of the group’ came up amongst both leaders and workers. By ‘power of the group’ I mean to say the power that women reported deriving from working in groups, achieving their goals together and the ability of the group to help them. Lyon (2008) and Russell-DuVarney (2013) have both written about the power women derive from an all-female co-op; Lyon especially has remarked upon the enhanced power women collectively and individually have in an all-women’s co-op, compared to the power they perceive they have in mixed gender co-ops.

Microfinance groups also provide an interesting backdrop to examine the potential benefits of all-women’s groups and illustrations of power over as it functions within group dynamics. Rankin (2011) discusses the way in which all-women’s microfinance groups provide a protected space where women can build new social networks with other women free of domestic constraints or beyond the family environment. Not only does the Ojoba cooperative likewise provide women with a new social network within a protected space from patriarchal external norms, but it fosters an environment where women actively shape and create their own norms and sanctions within the group. These norms and sanctions dictate appropriate behaviours but can also act as positive peer pressure as in the case of one woman ensuring that her friend at the co-op saves money to pay for her children’s school fees. This form of collective responsibility (which solidarity lending also depends on), is one form of power embodied by women in Ojoba and it has personal implications (in their lives) and professional ones (in their workplace).

Furthermore, they have some ‘power over’ each other (to use Kabeer’s terms) which can have sanctioning consequences. A small but simple example of this is seen in the pressure the co-op, or women individually put on each other, to solely sell their butter to Ojoba rather than at the

market. But this can also function to guarantee the group's cohesiveness and reciprocity. For example, one woman noted that:

it has brought benefits to other colleagues, that everybody thinks of the other, when they come for meetings and one isn't able to come, they start asking and want to know what really happened.

Her remarks suggest that the group itself creates an enhanced (or additional) social bond between the women, creating a sense of group loyalty beyond the bonds of women as members of the Bongo Soe community. It extends their sense of selves, or 'power within' to include building and seeing their social solidarity as women which can have the potential to give them 'power to' in a collective and more political sense.

In addition, the group solidarity also trades upon the notion of 'social collateral' or 'group guarantee' which microfinance has historically leveraged. Women's statuses, in the group and community, can wane, if they are absent from work. Then their co-workers can leverage status, self-declared group commitment and solidarity to invoke 'power over' another, in order to ensure full commitment and participation. Leveraging the power of the group over individual members can foster both conflict and co-operation in the collective, though strategically co-operation between women also functions to allow one to rely on others and their resources. One woman in explaining ways in which the group has helped her, described how:

one thing I cannot forget about being a member of this group...the willingness of the group to help me and help one another in times of crisis...sometimes I could be in a crisis situation and the willingness of the group to help. I think if I was doing this on an individual scale, I wouldn't get the support. [For example] if you need money urgently to cater for a child's needs and you can see the leaders they can lend you money to do so.

Her repetition of 'the willingness of the group' is significant, because not only do individual women help their colleagues through norms of generalized reciprocity, social forces also are at play within the group. Analyzed in terms of social capital, the positive perception of investing

and helping another member is greatly aided by the social capital attributed to being part of an association in the community, and the joint recognition of how the shared identity and sense of reciprocity works in favour of all members (Rankin 2002, p. 12-13). In this way the co-op can further increase the perceived social capital amongst the women by formally promoting co-operation and collective action.

When considering these incentives, women's willingness to aid others is both an act of (strategic) solidarity and an act within a system of generalized reciprocity, nurtured by the embedded social capital which drives a strengthened group bond. Lyon (2008) reiterates that when group participation is deemed 'desirable' (which can be substantiated by the social capital one receives), then other activities and domestic work can be re-arranged. From this perspective then, women are not necessarily passively participating in the co-op; instead, in the case of Ojoba, women weigh the benefits of group membership and strategically negotiate their labour demands to accordingly.

THE POTENTIAL POWER OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING & SERVICE PROVISION

While better prices for their shea butter and a supportive, collective environment were touted as benefits of co-op membership, many women, identified shea production and the co-op as an alternative channel to receive formal and informal education.

Through participant observation and interviews, I learned that the Ojoba cooperative was in fact frequently used as a community centre. Often, shea production itself was peripheral, but the educational mandates for the women were clear¹⁰; Ojoba itself provided the community forum to provide educational services. Examples of these include the adult literacy classes,

¹⁰ In Ojoba's Founding Documents, it notes that the Co-op should provide to its members literacy classes for women and scholarships for children to go to school. While this was noted, only the literacy classes came up in interviews.

additional trades training (on soap-making, baobab processing) and financial literacy and numeracy and banking groups. The women identified these educational needs and, with a little resource support from World Vision and other groups, Ojoba was able to provide training and education supports¹¹. Thus the vocational, or job skills, that were historically part of an informal training process, are now more officially recognized as standard (and valuable) vocational training.

Elsewhere research has questioned the empowerment-building capacity of peripheral micro-projects within co-ops to result in increased agency or empowerment. (see Fridell, 2007; Lyon, 2008; Solomon, 2003), who comment on the existence of these types of micro-projects, noting how they may help alleviate the burden of double work but argue that these activities do not necessarily build social solidarity and sites of empowerment. Yet, one could argue that it seems that much depends on the nature of the activities and that providing literacy and skills training are important for empowering women. Furthermore, these peripheral projects represent the group collectively showing solidarity for the plights of its members and utilizing their collective resources to support others in the group.

Finally, there are examples of all-women's co-ops attempting to use their resources to make deeper societal changes. Russell-DuVarney (2013) and Lyon (2008) both give examples of all-women's co-ops recognizing the widespread nature of violence against women (VAW), creating anti-VAW campaigns and using the co-op as a shelter. In these cases, the group of women consulted members, found a personally relevant issue, collectively pooled financial assets and dedicated their social capital to re-dress and re-center a woman's issue into the

¹¹ Shea women's groups can be found in almost every town or village in the North—their frequent roadside signs attest to the fact—however only recently have development agencies used these groups as a poverty reduction and a commercial scale 'income-generating' strategy.

community's focus¹². Ojoba's types of initiatives do not radically challenge a gender hierarchy or question the social position of women. Drawing from this, the group collectively addresses issues for women but not necessarily 'women's issues' at the structural/institutional level of gender inequality; on the other hand, politically and strategically, the co-op can also assure a longer and more comfortable relationship with the community at large by not challenging the status quo.

SOCIAL/FAMILY & COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS & SOCIAL CAPITAL

Poudyal (2011) and Elias (2007, as cited in Poudyal, 2011) both note that when elite groups are prioritized in income-generation projects, empowerment is thus limited to very specific groups of persons in the community. This can result in a potential consolidation of power within groups like the co-op, which can allow persons with certain privileges to co-opt the power, or speak on behalf of others with less privilege. While this possibility shaped much of my research, evidence was mixed as to what extent this was happening in the co-op.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Ojoba Co-op started initially as a small women's work group in Bongo-Soe. Original members have thus been part of the group's activities for almost 20 years. It was fairly straightforward to ascertain which members were part of the original group because of certain women's breadth of knowledge and historical awareness about the group. Three of the ten participants were members of the original group; one is a leader and another currently has a supervisory role during work shifts. Two are part of the main group site, based at the Ojoba production facility in Bongo-Soe; the other is a regular member of the main group. Length of time as a member was not conclusively indicative of greater agency however. Not surprisingly, those who had been members longer were typically more knowledgeable of all facets of the co-op's operations, commercial activity and benefits of membership. Thus length of

¹² So while Ojoba focused on programs, that generally relieved double-burden of work and addressed educational and asset inequalities, these programs were generally aligned with local development goals.

time in co-op may be a predictive factor in accessing additional resources (and then perhaps, in that sense, increased agency) but not a clear prerequisite for a self-described sense of ‘power within’.

From an intersectional perspective, the difference in membership years, which also roughly corresponds with overall age of the participant, also provides a lens with which to view power differences between the women of the co-op. In the Ojoba context, older women (which also typically meant ‘older’ and/or ‘long-term’ members) tended to be more politically involved and in more supervisory positions than younger members, providing them higher status and political power in the co-op. The age factor in empowerment differences requires more study to ascertain how correlated power is to age.

Other researchers have found that co-ops generally enable a more meritocratic system--in terms of access to rewards and upward mobility opportunities within the co-op-- but this system also rewards those who were founders, family or have been involved for long periods (Lyon 2008; Russell-DuVarney 2013). In Bongo-Soe, the co-op’s formulation of status and merit, most likely also works in tandem with village power structures, which would give increased status to those who may be related to the Chief or other persons who are traditional sources of authority. One woman interviewed did acknowledge that some of the Chief’s wives were in fact part of the co-operative. During my time at the co-op, I did not explicitly meet these women, nor did anyone self-identify as such.

Within the group interviewed, two women described how they were loosely related, through extended family, to the leaders. The women described their relationship fairly circumspectly, mostly citing their distant relations or being a ‘member of the same house’, in the traditional family compound sense. In particular, one of these two specific women, Kessie, was

fairly positive (citing a ‘great deal of power’ within and externally, see Table 6.1, page 76, and Table 6.2, page 86) and had readily accessed additional trainings, often travelling to other cities to act as a trainer and a participant. This particular woman was also an interesting anomaly, in the sense that she was quite young to be so enriched through the co-op and to be such a heavy beneficiary, especially given that she had only been a member for a relatively short time (under 10 years). However, generally speaking, in terms of age, younger members (who had spent less time in the co-op) and the one member of the subgroup I interviewed, were clearly less able to access the benefits of the co-op and produce as much shea butter as some of their older colleagues.

Family was one observable link between members but friendship and sense of charity also appeared to be factors in recruiting members to the co-op. One woman I spoke with noted that a leader had reached out to her at their common workplace and suggested she might be able to increase her income and ability to care for the family if she was part of Ojoba; she was able to join shortly after. When women were asked if they had friends at the co-op, most chose to speak about the role their friends played in recruiting them. Some were recruited by friends after seeing how it positively affected their friend’s lives, other’s recruited or recommended the co-op to friends.

CONCLUSION

Ojoba is one of few large sustainable shea butter operations in the Upper East. Women’s own remarks note a clear appreciation of the economic and social value of belonging to the group and the benefits they have derived from it as well as the social capital that comes with being a member, increasing personal status and networks of help. Most women’s statements reiterated that there are a lot of ways in which women’s lives could be improved and their voices heard,

and, some women pointed to the role of the co-op in doing that. Thus the co-op could be much more than a service provider, but could also become a valuable political institution and collectivity of women's voices, giving women power within themselves and in the community. Educational opportunities and access to education was also another source of empowerment that the women reported. Women's ability to ensure their children's education was a manifestation of their 'power to' invoke immediate change, however overall access to education also provides opportunities for enhanced personal and political power for women, as an independent factor from the co-op and participation in the co-op. Other factors such as the social connections women already had in the community or within the co-op between each other are also potential sites of power co-option or increased benefits of membership, compared to women not 'connected'. These questions can certainly be raised but evidence of clear-cut power co-option was difficult to find.

As I will discuss in the next chapter, women's appreciation for the collective and the opportunities, while strong, is tempered, as it is tied to a substantial and independent factor - the strength of Fair Trade market and the legitimacy of Fair Trade mandates.

CHAPTER 7: FAIR TRADE & WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

INTRODUCTION

The FTF is a membership-based organization which certifies buyers in the US and Canada. The Ojoba Collective is a member of the FTF. According to FTF, their process is distinctive from other certifying bodies, such as the WFTO and FLO; instead, the FTF approves new members primarily on the basis of financial statements, supplier lists, contact information of producers, annual visits to producers and long-term commitments to these same producers/suppliers, documentation of health and safety protocol for working conditions of these producers and meeting or exceeding minimum pricing standards (A. Ferguson, personal communication, July 2015).

Based on an overview of the FTF's Code of Practice and data gathered from women's interview responses, I have focused on three core areas where women's interaction with fair trade (or lack thereof) could have implications for personal and political power. While my research with women at Ojoba indicated a number of ways in which FT has benefitted women shea butter producers and potentially contributed to their empowerment, it is not entirely clear that all those benefits are directly linked to their association with Fair Trade. Thus, in order to get a comparative perspective on how a women's shea group with a different model of trade and structure might affect members, their labour value and the treatment they receive in a non-Fair Trade system, I also discuss insights from the Star Shea shea pickers group.

KNOWLEDGE & ACCESSIBILITY OF THE FAIR TRADE NETWORK

The Fair Trade Federation has a Code of Practice for its members which loosely dictates and outlines the relationship members should maintain with their producers, in keeping with Fair

Trade Principles (that table and a brief summary of observations is available in Appendix 5).

Each section below explores the core themes and issues that came up in regarding Fair Trade in interviews. Generally, Ojoba women's explicit connections with Fair Trade as an institution are tenuous¹³. Members seemed to be unaware of the buyer's (Ojoba Collective's), and thus by extension, the OWCG's membership in the Fair Trade Federation. This lack of understanding hinders the OC's ability to "Build the Capacity" of the women's Ojoba Co-operative, support safe and empowering working conditions in the co-operative and, most evidently, to develop accountable and transparent relationships. If women are not given the basic information needed to understand the process of which they are the fundamental part, how can they critique the process or change it for their own benefit? Similar findings have been noted in Latin America, where producers were primarily unaware of how Fair Trade affected them beyond getting a good price; however in these cases, this was despite the efforts of the co-op doing additional outreach to ensure their member's were more engaged in understanding Fair Trade (D. Sick, personal communication, January 2016).

When I asked about Fair Trade during my interviews, further elaboration was often required to understand how women understood 'fair trade'. When probed, women were fairly uniform in focusing on the 'fair price' element, although one woman described that she had no understanding of what fair trade was. The responses, especially those where women had limited knowledge of fair trade, pose an interesting challenge to the FLO/WFTO Gender Commitments (discussed in Chapter 3, refer back to page 35). Especially when considering Fair Trade's promise that women "fully participate in decisions concerning the use of benefits accruing from

¹³ The search to find how the fair trade certification or association occurred for Ojoba resulted in many different (and sometimes contradictory responses). Even leaders were not able to concretely explain or know how Ojoba was fair trade and whether this determination occurred inside or outside of Ghana. Further research through different fair trade bodies member listings and through the Ojoba Collective website revealed Ojoba to be members of the FTF.

production and from Fair Trade relationships”, a lack of knowledge about fair trade suggests this commitment may be ill-founded in the case of Ojoba (Fair Trade International 2009, p. 6; Hutchens, 2010; Lyon, 2008). The co-operative is able to mobilize its members to provide services and vote on the use of benefits, however decision-making (with the full participation of producers) that is directly linked to Fair Trade or Fair Trade relationships, does not appear to be evenly distributed.

The FTF commitment (see the ‘Build Capacity’ section in Appendix 5) that focuses on connecting the group to the broader Fair Trade movement is an especially promising channel for solidarity-building and connecting women across broader social networks, which in turn could not only strengthen their position in the market but also their collective bargaining power and ability to amplify women’s voices and political power in the market. The Ojoba Collective may maintain these ties but the Ojoba Co-operative does not specifically control or build their own relationships with other fair trade groups, which can serve to isolate them from further accessing benefits of Fair Trade membership. Indeed the lack of knowledge on the diversity of the Fair Trade network, and the self-awareness of Ojoba’s place in it, prohibits the formation of larger solidarity networks for women producers.

It is also crucial to explore some finer points in the implementation of fair trade. For example, social premiums, or the community-oriented portion of fair trade, are one of the most publicized ways in which Fair Trade ‘gives back’ in order to contribute to long-term and sustainable growth in marginalized communities. While women were aware of some type of the social premium going towards the construction of the library or the borehole, who made the decisions about what projects to fund was unclear to them. Therefore it was also challenging for

women to determine if the projects were indeed part of the social premium rather than ongoing or other projects in the community.¹⁴

FAIR PRICE, “POWER WITHIN” & “POWER TO”

Fairtrade International sets international price standards for each of its commodities/products; in this regard the Ojoba collective meets and exceeds the minimum floor price, buying at approximately one hundred euros/metric ton over the Fair Trade minimum standard. Thus this reaffirms women’s beliefs, and one of Fair Trade’s central tenants, that fair price is central to fair trade. All women interviewed spoke at length and in detail about their struggle to earn enough income prior to being offered a fair and substantial price by Ojoba. In almost each interview, women demonstrated their ability to gauge what a fair price was, relative to what they made before and also the normal, non-fair trade prices offered at the markets. Several of the women were the designated ‘point-person’ to go to the market to monitor price fluctuations across seasons. But most women also had a well-developed sense of market fluctuation and the acumen to differentiate between nut prices versus butter prices, and markers of quality. Therefore most of the women I interviewed were able to report fairly accurate market data on shea when asked; however this was not necessarily due to specific “fair trade awareness” or outreach campaigns. This knowledge strengthened women’s bargaining position to know that they were indeed being given a ‘fair price’ by their buyer, especially relative to the local market.

Each woman’s description of fair trade focused on the economic aspects of shea butter production, although several introduced more personal perspectives (invoking the word ‘happiness’) to describe their experiences with fair trade. One woman Assibi went as far as to say:

¹⁴ It was also unclear whether the FTF promise of ‘community reinvestment’ was interchangeable with Fairtrade International’s explicit numerical standards for social premiums. The FTF’s ‘community reinvestment’ does not provide a quantified or easily verifiable measurement of success (ie. engagement in the community) for buyers.

It's that you are selling your product and having a feeling that you are not being cheated, because you get a good and fair price. It also has to do with deriving happiness from what you have sold, so if you sell something and you are happy, then you have experienced fair trade.

This sentiment – also expressed by two other women of Ojoba– of fair trade bringing personal happiness, and by extension, non-fair trade as being a source of inequality or dissatisfaction, highlights women's prior 'unfair' experiences and their relative perceptions of livelihood and life satisfaction before fair trade. Cheating, or the exploitative practices of price-slashing and bartering for the lowest price, is common in non-fair trade buying and selling practices. Her comment about *not* being cheated in a fair trade transaction (also expressed by four other women) suggests that this is a very significant benefit of Fair Trade. Instead, the women noted, fair trade helped 'control the activities of middle men' and gave them a 'genuine price for their products'.

Using Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach (2000), women's reports of increased happiness can be seen as indicators of personal perceptions of self-worth and value. Thus, women's connection of Fair Trade transactions to their overall happiness could be interpreted as a form of 'power within', gained out of partially overcoming an exploitative and fluctuating market that can frequently undermine and undervalue women's labour and small-scale-producers' commodity values. The women's happiness in this case is linked to an appreciation of both the women and their work, therefore offering them a sense of value (or value of their work). Nussbaum's (2000, p. 40) approach is based on a genuine social justice orientation which she defines as, "[a society] where each person is treated as an end, and none as a mere adjunct or means to the ends of other." Her two themes on 'emotions' and 'affiliations' specifically outline one's right to emotional development devoid of anxiety and fear and having the "social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation" (Nussbaum 2000, p. 42). In this sense, we can see how women's perceptions of 'not being cheated' relate to feeling less humiliation in the market (or

could lead to Kabeer's 'power within'). The corresponding happiness that fair trade brings as an indicator of women's sense of economic worth opens up the possibility for enhanced self-respect. If this is the case, Fair Trade may be contributing to increased sense of personal power for some women in the co-op.

The economic gain of fair pay has the clear and well-documented ability to enhance women's 'power to' change their life circumstances in various ways. As discussed in previous chapters, women uniformly remarked on their ability to pay their children's school fees, open up savings accounts and in some cases, even hire farm labour or diversify their crops beyond conventional subsistence crops (thus introducing risk but enhanced profits). While education (in the form of seminars and skill training) was available to all the women I interviewed, secondary benefits that altered women's work responsibilities hinged on women's other resources and status. For example, leaders were the only women who remarked upon the ability to hire labour or diverse crops, and only some women were able to put their shea earnings into a personal savings account. Thus, while a fair price for shea butter does not necessarily ensure an increase in a woman's 'power to', the impact of fair price on ensuring the co-op's liquidity is clear. One of the leaders' statements exemplifies this when she explained that, "Ojoba has done very well by connecting us with FT and getting us Fair price and that makes us able to produce because raw materials are very expensive. So without fair trade we couldn't have still been in business."

THE BUYER & UNDERSTANDINGS OF CONTROL, AGENCY & ROLES

The frequency with which "the buyer" (the Ojoba Collective) came up when women were asked to define fair trade is revealing of women's understanding of the nature of the producer-

buyer relationship in Fair Trade¹⁵. As a researcher, it was difficult to accurately determine who was responsible for ensuring various fair trade requirements among World Vision, the Ojoba Collective, and the Ojoba Co-operative and their British Cosmetics Vendor)¹⁶. The women consistently stated the value of getting a fair price and how appreciative they were of the relationship with the buyer that guaranteed them said fair price. But in other parts of their interviews, women did not necessarily understand their role (or that of the OWGC) versus the role and responsibilities of the buyer or other bodies. For example, one woman credited the social premium and the buyer for the construction of the borehole, when in fact World Vision and other community partners were responsible for this.

This opens up questions about women's understanding of their buyer as a patron, rather than a partner, or whether they are aware of the rights assured to them through Fair Trade, rather than by the actions of any particular one body. In this particular case that misinterpretation could create a perceived dependency on a buyer from the women's perspective where meaningful, consistent dialogue and bilateral negotiation is difficult. This raises the question that if women see their buyer as a patron, they may be unlikely to question how he conducts business. One woman, Nana, critically noted that, "if we only have one buyer and the buyer can change the prices...we won't always know whether we are getting a fair price." This particular woman was the only one to explicitly state what was perhaps implied in other women's concerns over one buyer: dependence on one buyer renders women vulnerable, and as businesswomen, it renders them disengaged in their enterprise. Although most women were unable to comment on the FT certification process or how they were ensured of the "fair price" component of Fair Trade, the

¹⁵ The term "buyer" was used by the women in interviews. Thus my usage here reflects their subjective understandings and voices. In personal correspondence with this individual, he prefers to be known as the "business arm of the co-operative" and Co-Owner and Vice-President of the Ojoba Collective.

¹⁶ A request for clarification was sent to the Ojoba Collective but a response was not received.

leaders were far more aware and involved in business operations with the buyer than other workers. Thus these women represent a possible safeguard in the negotiation and sales process with their buyer but also become responsible for representing the interests of rest of the women in the co-op.

Secondarily, if women are not knowledgeable participants in fair trade, they are then unable to connect to the broader collective social movement of Fair Trade and possibly enhance their political power as a women's co-op. This is not unusual, as was the case elsewhere in fair trade research, where producers were often unaware of their ties to fair trade or how fair trade affected them beyond the economic gain (Lyon, 2010; Lyon, 2008; Russell-DuVarney, 2013)

Star Shea

The lack of larger outside connections for Ojoba, is not the same experience members of the Star Shea Network have because of Star Shea's complicated but highly structured and regular district and meeting schedules. Some Star Shea women noted the beginnings of transformation in terms of their power within as they felt they learned more about issues surrounding their decision-making power, especially when meeting with Star Shea officials and particularly when they met the full women's amalgamated membership of the Star Shea Network. Women were able to build broad solidarity networks and share their struggles to sustain a livelihood compatible with domestic responsibilities and partnership boundaries.

Because of the vastness of the Star Shea network (which encompasses both pickers and processing groups) there is a greater guarantee of fair pricing and equitable treatment of multiple actors along most of the supply-chain, not just at a particular node (for example, in shea butter production). Yet, because Star Shea orders are smaller than those Ojoba receives, Star Shea members' incomes are smaller and some identified their primary challenge as paying school fees.

On the other hand, the women did notice that the ‘organic’ label provided by SS and selling as members of a group, rather than individually, did result in better earnings. Because this group has just started, the increased income did not have as drastically noticeable implications on altering women’s sense of domestic power relative to that of Ojoba. Women largely remarked that decisions were still made after obtaining their husband’s permission and were less likely to refer to making their own farming decisions (or having their own plots) than the Ojoba women. Thus it is harder to make comparable statements in regards to the effect of Star Shea on giving its members either a sense of increased personal or political power. The women appeared to negotiate and act in their domestic partnerships much in a way that was typical to most Frafra norms dictating allocation of farming responsibilities in male-headed farming households

When asked about other ways in which women have benefitted from the group, the women noted that they were now aware of more income-generating projects and ideas that either Star Shea Limited had introduced or out of networking with other women in the Star Shea Network. From the production side, these partnerships across the shea producers’ network could lead to better treatment of all or at least more women across the supply chain. Additionally they can provide increased opportunities for social capital accrue and collective power to affect change, lobby and alter their market conditions¹⁷.

In terms of comparing the better positions relative to Fair Trade and non-Fair trade (organic labeled in the case of Star Shea), I compiled distinctions between both groups understanding’s of ‘fair price’, power differences and their links to the market. Both the Ojoba and K-N groups report ‘good’ or ‘fair prices’ relative to the market (although women in the Kassena-Nankana did not report specific prices unlike at the Ojoba co-op where members were

¹⁷ The broader body of Star Shea Ltd. is part of, and an active participant, of the Global Shea Alliance, which does engage in lobbying and marketing activities for the global shea industry.

typically readily aware of market prices). Thus both groups were better off financially with “organic” or “fair trade” pricing but the Star Shea group was less equipped with knowledge of the market, pricing and other challenges.

Comparing the two group’s links to broader movements and the market, both groups notably lacked grassroots ties. In both group’s cases, awareness of what others are doing and broader shea industry trends are mostly disseminated to leaders by the buyers (Star Shea Limited and Ojoba Collective specifically), who are responsible for sharing this information with members.

Comparatively, the Kassena-Nankana group reported lower personal power gained in the domestic realm than the Ojoba group and instead focused on the power, solidarity and security the group gave them. One leader noted that when they were sick before no one could help, but now they come together and help each other when they are sick or when something happens. This is similar to the bonds of social solidarity forged in the Ojoba Co-op, but is more a marker of group social solidarity than result of an external body enforcing or ensuring a sense of collective responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Fair Trade, as a social-justice oriented and market-driven social movement, can only provide so many benefits to so many of its producers (especially when vis à vis buyer’s actions). In the case of women-only Fair Trade co-operatives, such as the Ojoba Women’s Co-op, fair price is ensured, but anything above and beyond that is a peripheral and tertiary benefit and it is difficult to discern whether and to what extent Fair Trade itself is responsible for fostering many of these changes. Thus notions of women’s access to fair trade relationships and knowledge of

one's role relative to other mechanisms or actors in the market is still quite limited. The Star Shea group provides an interesting counterpoint to show how differently structured fair priced initiatives do emphasize social solidarity and connect women at the grassroots to focus on collective power of a network to aid in further economic and social empowerment.

Comparing Ojoba as shea butter producers and the Star Shea group as shea pickers, some clear differences between the groups and their approaches emerged. Part of Ojoba's success, and the success of any co-op, is their communitarian approach to membership and tailoring their women-centered mandates to their own members. The strength of their social network and providing a protected space for women to speak, learn and commiserate also requires social boundaries in order to ensure the benefits to its members. So when buying shea nuts (from other women) the women of Ojoba operate as rational-economic businesswomen, often in search of low prices or discounts and buying in bulk, thus limiting the positive effect of fair pricing to other women in the shea value chain. In contrast, the rationale behind the large Star Shea Network is to attempt to guarantee fair pricing and fair treatment of women workers from pickers to producers. Essentially, it is difficult to say how wide-reaching Ojoba's effect on women in shea is beyond its own borders. Furthermore, it is also difficult to make the conclusion that all Fair Trade (or non-Fair Trade) co-ops empower (or provide empowering conditions for) their members.

On one hand, OWCG gives members much leeway to pursue and build their own strong social networks and community initiatives, but conversely it still places producers in the hands of their market partners (buyers, NGO supports, etc). The strong expectation of material value driving social value (read: economic empowerment leading to social change in a manner similar to trickle down economics) is partially fulfilled by women's reports of greater happiness and 'power within', as well as 'power to' change educational outcomes and their farming realities.

Compared to their local counterparts at the markets, women in specialized and externally supported shea groups (such as Ojoba and Star Shea) benefit from more lucrative sales opportunities. But despite their material gains, women in fair trade, as small scale producers, still struggle to operate and have a sense of agency and control over their livelihoods within a larger array of societal inequalities.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

REFLECTING ON THE FINDINGS & LIMITATIONS

How Women Contributed Significantly to Their Self-Empowering Social Landscapes

The Ojoba Co-operative is a unique entity in Northern Ghana as there are few women's shea groups that have been able to grow to the size Ojoba has and most are not as well structured, organized and able to consistently access resources (such as tools, power and clean water). In contrast, the newer Star Shea group was often unable to access adequate resources due to a lack long-term investment and struggled to be recognized as a strong business entity and advocate for women in their community. But it is impossible to credit Ojoba's successes (or Star Shea's struggles) as being entirely due to their status as a fair trade member. It is worth noting how Ojoba functions as a social environment and how the Bongo-Soe community itself provided a ripe incubator for a larger co-op, with an established and mobilized social network of women (including highly educated ones in leadership).

Education was one of the most noticeable factors which impacted status (both in the community and the co-op) and affected women's personal and political power. While this is a factor independent of fair trade, all women recognized the importance of education in improving one's position in life. The ability of Ojoba women to focus on educating all their children, was largely due to the increased income derived from fair trade participation. Most strongly noticeable was how the highly educated women had a soapbox to speak publicly and be considered legitimate sources of authority in the community, which could also have a motivational effect on other women. The two leaders were the strongest examples of political figures who were given a great deal of authority in the community which in turn gave them the

‘power to’ promote women’s interests in politics, specifically using Ojoba as a conduit to reach women and mobilize them collectively into action.

Differences between women & heterogeneous experiences

Cornwall (2007) and Ogundipe-Leslie’s (1994) findings on the inherent conflict between women, when multiple identifications (outside of their shared membership) clash, are good reminders that women’s solidarity and purported unity, may be falsely assumed. The original intersectionality approach I considered, aimed to broach and explore these markers of difference, such as age, wealth, marital status and education level. Notably, age (or specifically length of membership) stood out as a potential indicator of level of participation in the co-op, and thus older members appeared to derive greater benefits from the social network of the co-op and larger access to resources (such as trainings, guaranteed shift work or leadership roles). Other differences, such as wealth and marital status were less indicative of specific gains or losses in terms of power, agency and control. Intersectional differences are extremely important to contribute to a more accurate understanding of women’s complex realities and underlying social relations in Fair Trade and small-scale commodities production. However the length of my fieldwork and a lack of direct evidence of power co-option (as in the case in Russell-DuVarney’s study, 2013), made it difficult to discern how differences in women’s social connections or statuses, manifest in their sense of empowerment. (Future opportunities for intersectional research in this field will be discussed on Page 126).

REFLECTING ON EMPOWERMENT THEORY & THE DISCOURSE

One NGO official who works with a group of women shea producers (not affiliated with Ojoba or SS), provided an enlightening perspective on the fine balance that income generation projects feel they must manage. She reiterated that shea groups were:

only there to support the family, not cause problems. We try to say though you are empowered with other issues, you should try to respect your husbands because they are seen as the head of the family.

She did not explain further what ‘other issues’ might be considered, but these seemed peripheral to the primary maintenance of the cohesive family structure. This, and evidence from several other interviews suggest that that in the Ghanaian discourse “empowerment” could be interpreted as a Western [NGO]-introduced construct with strongly ‘individualistic’ overtones. This criticism echoes Jackson (2007), Cornwall (2007) and Calvès (2009) who conclude that empowerment has been co-opted to focus on individuality (and personal acquisition) to the detriment of understanding underlying complex social relations in the household.

Furthermore, as Sardenberg (2006, as cited in Cornwall, 2007) notes, purported ‘liberating’ empowerment has become solely ‘liberal’ [read: economic] empowerment, lacking a genuine gender justice component. This type of empowerment would then fall under the WID (or WAD) model, which also means a failure to recognize women’s variance, across commodities, across regions and within the same country, as advocated by the GAD perspective.

By this definition empowerment can be a potentially misleading term for women navigating complex and dynamic social landscapes which require autonomy and constant negotiation to maintain their relationships and position in the community. As Cornwall (2007, p.156) argues, the language of ‘women’s empowerment’ also underplays other relationships and

interests that women have (through the market, the kinship network, etc.) which can cause sites of supposed all-women's empowerment to also be sites of conflict, as interests clash.

Equally importantly, failure to question the use of 'empowerment' in development discourse, means we may fail to recognize how it may already be happening on the ground in grassroots community forms. Thus, we risk undermining the foundations on which efforts to create 'empowerment' would build. The women's pre-existing Frafra labour groups, and the co-op's building upon that to create their own member groups, and sharing labour networks for farm work are a good examples of this. In these cases, the pre-existing groups provide the necessary foundation that social-justice movements like Fair Trade and other development efforts must capitalize on, yet often go unacknowledged as the roots of empowerment-based campaigns.

FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN'S SHEA GROUPS

Sustainability

The shea tree's widespread availability has always been one of the major drivers of mass shea butter production in West Africa. Especially in Ghana and Burkina Faso, where shea trees are endemic and grow wild, producing shea butter has been a part of daily life for hundreds of year (Chalfin, 2004; Greig, 2006). However, livelihood and population pressures have increased the use and sale of shea trees as firewood for home use as well commercial use in cooking and alcohol brewing. Loopholes in the Forestry Commission have allowed the destruction and cutting of shea to continue; the Shea Network of Ghana has recently begun lobbying for shea to be included in the Economic Plants Protection Act and this is an ongoing advocacy effort (Shea Network Ghana, 2014).

The possibility of a shea tree shortage or the degradation of the 'bush' is particularly concerning for Ojoba and other shea butter producers. An impending supply shortage paired with

increasing international demand puts shea producers in a precarious position and substantially endangers the sustainability of their livelihoods -- which have become increasingly reliant on shea as a seemingly unlimited and easily accessible resource. Leaders I spoke with expressed concern about the trend toward using shea as a fuel, but also recognized its link to the exigencies of poverty and limited livelihood options. Selling shea as firewood or charcoal was well-known as a short-term income supplement, especially in the dry season. One of the leaders noted that strategies and laws to protect shea were beginning to come to fruition but were rarely enforced, in notable contrast to the more rigorous enforcement in Burkina Faso.

Her comments have been echoed by numerous groups in the shea industry such as the Global Shea Alliance and the Shea Network Ghana (Global Shea Alliance, 2015; Shea Network Ghana, 2014). This has led to recent calls for the protection of the trees within designated agricultural parklands and the farmed cultivation of shea trees. Ojoba, supported financially by their major British cosmetics vendor, has recently begun planting shea seedlings in their own plantation. Kukua (T9) noted that:

We've started planting the shea but if people had started it earlier we would not be suffering. But we have to start sometime. This season we will try something small, just a few seedlings, and see whether they sprout.

Her quote underlines how their experience with shea tree depletion affirms growing general concerns about the growth of the industry without commensurate efforts to address the sustainability of the industry. These concerns are especially punctuated by the fact that shea trees can take up to 20 years to bear fruit, but the fruit (and therefore the nut) becomes most desirable and ideal for butter production at the 40 year mark (Carette, Malotau, van Leeuwen and Tolkamp, 2011).

Research and some preventative measures are now being undertaken at the global buyer level (through bodies like the Global Shea Alliance, working in co-ordination with multinationals such as The Body Shop and Hershey's), however these interventions are not likely to have immediate repercussions on grassroots women's groups and organizations like the Ojoba Co-operative (Global Shea Alliance, 2014). Pushes towards commercial cultivation of shea are also not likely to bring an equivalent benefit for women's groups because of the tenuous state of women's formally recognized land rights and a lack of ability to own land independent of their husbands. This leads to the question of whether women's ability to continue their market dominance in the shea market as its rapid commercialization sets in, and whether their social networks and collective political power will be able to ensure their voices are heard and their interests are addressed. Sustainability, both ecological and financial, will be a strong determinant of whether shea production remains a potential site of women's empowerment, rather than a site of contestation and competition.

Market Size Versus Market Penetration

According to the Global Shea Alliance, demand for West African-produced shea butter has increased 1200% in the last ten years (Global Shea Alliance, 2013). Interviews with the Ojoba women indicated their concern over the size of the market and their ability to effectively access the international market to sell their shea butter¹⁸. It is unclear how much of the growth in international demand would be Fair Trade and therefore higher priced nuts. So while the market may continue to grow, especially with the continued use of shea in confectionary products, it is critical to ask: who will control and be able to access these market opportunities? Also is the

¹⁸ Women interviewed were aware of the domestic sales of their shea butter but none commented on concerns about growing this segment of the market. Leaders were most aware of domestic market sales. Despite figures noting the international market growth, all women reported a desire to have access to more buyers.

general growth of the market as beneficial to specialized fair-trade and artisanal producers, like the Ojoba Co-operative?

In addition to global market concerns, the Ojoba co-operative faces their own particular market limitations. The capacity for the Ojoba Co-operative to both increase their production abilities, while ensuring material benefits to its members, appears to almost be surpassing its critical mass. While the main group members continue to benefit, subgroup and new members struggle to be engaged fully in member life and active shea production roles. One woman commented on this when asked to describe the atmosphere, she pointedly replied:

There is a need to do more because so many in the group depend on this. We have to start putting up smaller processing centres. So they could produce there and bring it here in bulk. This would give them the power to produce themselves so that they also feel the impact directly. I know they feel it now, but it should be more than this.

Her statement reflects what other producers I interviewed said, fundamentally: this is good [as a start] but we need more. The co-operative was readily able to produce higher amounts of shea butter, but their orders were fairly static and with growing membership, not all members' butter could be bought and absorbed into the quota for major orders. The Star Shea group reported the same thing: groups were not always having all of their butter or nuts purchased each year, with SS Ltd. having to buy among its various groups and not necessarily able to buy back all the shea nuts from the group at once, or they might stockpile nuts for a later time to sell.

Seeing their market limitations and problems with expanding shea butter production, the Ojoba group has recently begun investigating other income generating ideas that would use shea butter. When I visited, they had begun training in soap-making, combining traditional West African black soap and shea butter together. This would give them another product to sell their North American cosmetics vendor, but the soap-making process also required more costly materials and expensive new equipment.

Another barrier to achieving better market penetration was their dependence on their developed relationship with a single buyer. Women in all my interviews described their thankfulness for being given a ‘good and fair price’, however they were all highly aware of the economic problems which could arise from overreliance on one buyer and a lack of diversification in their supply chain

The current shea butter market is a paradoxical scenario for an all-women’s shea butter producers organizations like the Ojoba group. On one hand, the international market for shea butter (and certainly shea nuts) is predicted to grow substantially with Ghana benefitting significantly¹⁹; on the other hand, the woman-centered and woman-controlled value-chain of shea is rapidly changing as more external buyers (non-Ghanaians, and typically men) become more involved in the industry and globalizing the industry at the expense of producer agency, echoing similar trends in other popular commodities and income generating activities (Kasente 2012; Lyon 2008; Mayoux, 2012; Wooten, 2000). The shifting market appears to be moving away from grassroots or small-medium scale production that has been characteristic of shea butter production for centuries. It is difficult to predict how these changing market trends will affect Fair Trade standards and on-the-ground operations with their suppliers and producers. Women, as producers, have definitively benefitted from the globalized market for shea butter for the cosmetics industry, but with dependencies on their global buyers. Whether they will be able to move into positions of power in the new international market is another question. How women across the entire value chain in shea butter production will fare is difficult to predict.

¹⁹ In 2011, Bloomberg predicted that Ghana would begin to target China for a new shea nuts export partnership. The article noted that Ghana exported 60 000 metric tonnes but if access to the Chinese market was obtained, that number was predicted to reach 130 000 metric tonnes. If this occurs it is predicted that the Chinese markets could absorb all of Ghana’s produce. (Dontoh, 2011)

FINAL DISCUSSION & OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH & FURTHER QUESTIONS

For the most part, researchers have continued to critique the efficacy of fair trade for marginalized producers and especially how fair trade truly affects women and enhances their agency in both production and community life (Bacon, 2010; Lyon, 2010; Lyon, Bezaury & Mutersbaugh, 2010; McArdle & Thomas, 2012; Russell-DuVarney, 2013). With the proliferation of women's shea groups whether women, particularly marginalized women, can continue to benefit as well as they have in structured groups remains unknown. This echoes concerns across a variety of Fair Trade commodities which involve women producers, particularly those most marginalized (Mayoux, 2012, Russell-DuVarney, 2013). Coupled with international market changes and shifts in women's degree of control (managerially and labour-wise) across the value chain, the future of Fair Trade (and fairly priced) shea products will form an interesting case study in women's empowerment and bears continued observation. Will women continue to dominate in shea butter production as the industry and international export demands grow? Will they be relegated to labour-roles with less collective power in their groups to represent their interests up the value-chain (where external, corporate and predominantly male interests are more likely to dominate the industry)?

If we are truly interested in participatory and asset-based approaches, the more pragmatic approach may be to understand the 'empowering structures and opportunities' pre-existing on the ground and recognize sites of co-operation that can also act as sites of conflict and competition (Cornwall, 2007). Rather than promoting 'appreciative inquiry' in showcasing women's co-op's testimonials, more critical research and impact assessments contrasting failures in fair trade with so-called success stories, may highlight where social structures, hierarchies, community networks

and women's individual (or collective/political) will have helped or hindered co-operatives (Mayoux, 2012)

I found that differences between women's education levels and age can provide some indication that 'empowerment' and agency have varying articulations that accord with women's unequal and/or privileged access to resources and opportunities. However, how these differences affect overall reports of power to or power within, requires further long-term study, specifically vested in contrasting women of different backgrounds across a shared and presumed equitable social network, such as a co-op.

Beyond further investigations into or on behalf of fair trade organizations, women's grassroots efforts to create social solidarity networks are a crucial (and often underrepresented) part of the research. My findings complicate the apparent successes of Fair Trade and introduce a new lens and perspectives to understand women's empowerment. Indeed "women's empowerment" may even misrepresent how women are capable of building a physical and social space of safety, debate and personal growth. Although this is built partially from increased earnings based on a fair-trade livelihood and the political legitimacy and brand recognition derived from being a fair trade organization, it is critical to recognize the efforts of the women themselves independent of, indeed notwithstanding, Fair Trade mandates.

In addition, further research to strengthen my claims of pre-existing empowerment structures and women's agency in creating social solidarity networks may look at how women (and any non-members) in Bongo-Soe generally feel affected by the presence of the co-op and how its existence has altered women's status and political power in the community. My interviews revealed ways in which the women and the co-op transformed community norms around acceptable forms of labour sharing by introducing hybrid forms of group labour for

women in the co-op. At the same time, women also emphasized the ways in which pre-existing community norms underscored a determination to include women's negotiation capabilities, kinship networks and shared identities into structured labour sharing schemes

Shea butter production has for centuries enabled West African women dominance in one aspect of agricultural production and is therefore a singularly valuable legacy which is at risk of being lost within seismic changes to the shea market which are likely occur in coming years. So much of the Ojoba women's power transformations occurred within the unique workplace culture and environment that the OGWC has built up and fostered from the local women's group which first gathered under that original baobab tree.

References

- Agana, Charles (2012). *Women's Land Rights and Access to Credit in a Predominantly Patrilineal System of Inheritance: Case Study of the Frafra Traditional Area, Upper East Region*. (Unpublished Masters dissertation). Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana.
- Agarwal, Bina (2010a). Does Women's Proportional Strength Affect their Participation? Governing Local Forests in South Asia. *World Development*, 38(1), 98-112.
- Agarwal, Bina (2010b). *Gender & Green Governance*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Al-hassan, Seidu (2012). Market Access Capacity of Women Shea Processors in Ghana. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 4(6), 10-17.
- Apusigah, Agnes. (2013). Women's Agency and Rural Development in Northern Ghana. In Joseph Awetori Yaro (Ed.) *Rural Development in Northern Ghana* (147-168). New York City: Nova Science Publishers.
- Bacon, Christopher (2010). A Spot of Coffee in Crisis: Nicaraguan Smallholder Cooperatives, Fair Trade Networks and Gendered Empowerment. *Latin American Perspectives*, 37(2), 50-71.
- Bernard, H. Russell (2011). *Research Methods in Anthropology*. Toronto: Altamira Press.
- Boserup, Ester (1970). *Woman's Role in Economic Development*. New York: Routledge.
- Blackden, Mark & Bhanu, Chitra. (1999). Gender, Growth, and Poverty Reduction: Special Program for Assistance for Africa 1998 Status Report on Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. (World Bank Technical Paper No. 428). Retrieved from World Bank Documents and Reports website:
http://www.wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1999/06/04/000094946_9904120637099/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf
- Bunjun, Benita (2010). Feminist Organizations and Intersectionality: Contesting Hegemonic Feminism. *Atlantis*, 34(2), 115-126.
- Calvès, Anne-Emmanuèle (2009). "Empowerment": Généalogie d'un concept clé du discours contemporain sur le développement. *Revue Tiers Monde*, 4(200), 735-749.
- Carette, Caroline, Malotaux, Mayumi, van Leeuwen, Miriam & Tolkamp, Mirjam. (2009). *Shea but and butter in Ghana: Opportunities and Constraints for local processing*. Retrieved from: <http://www.resilience-foundation.nl/docs/shea.pdf>
- Carneiro, Sueli (2005). 'Noircir le féminisme'. *Nouvelles questions féministes*, 24(2): 27-32.

- Chalfin, Brenda (2004). *Shea Butter Republic: State power, global markets, and the making of an indigenous commodity*. New York: Routledge.
- Choo, Hae Yeon & Feree, Myra Marx (2010). Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interactions, and Institutions in the Study of Inequalities. *Sociological Theory*, 28 (2), 129-149.
- Clark, Gracia. (1994). *Onions Are My Husband-Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cornwall, Andrea (2007). Myths to Live By? Female Solidarity and Female Autonomy Reconsidered. *Development and Change*, 38(1), 149-168.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Colour. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
- Das, Ranjana (2009). *Working Paper 467: Compromising Social Justice in Fairtrade? Case Study of a Fairtrade Organization in India*. (Institute of Social Studies MA Research Paper Award winner). Erasmus University, Rotterdam.
- Davis, Kathy (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful. *Feminist Theory*, 9(1), 67-87.
- Denis, Ann (2008). Intersectional Analysis: A Contribution of Feminism to Sociology. *International Social Review of Books*, 23(5), 677-694.
- Dergousoff, Deborah. (2009). *Co-operatives and Fair Trade: What are Alternatives?* Retrieved from: <http://www.learningcentre.coop/content/co-operatives-and-fair-trade>
- Dontoh, Ekow. 2011. "Ghana May Target China as New Market For Shea Nuts, Group Says." *www.bloomberg.com*, August 9. Retrieved from December 8, 2015 (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2011-08-09/ghana-may-target-china-as-a-new-market-for-shea-nut-exports-group-says>).
- El-Bushra, Judy (2000). Rethinking gender and development practice for the 21st century. *Gender and Development*, 8(1), 55-62.
- Fair Trade Federation. (2015). *Fair Trade Federation Principles*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fairtradefederation.org/fair-trade-federation-principles/>
- Fair Trade International. (2013a). *Annual Report 2013-2014*. Retrieved from: http://www.fairtrade.net/fileadmin/user_upload/content/2009/resources/2013-14_AnnualReport_FairtradeIntl_web.pdf

- Fair Trade International. (2013b). *Fair Trade Glossary*. Retrieved from:
http://www.fairtrade.net/fileadmin/user_upload/content/2009/about_fairtrade/2011-06-28_fair-trade-glossary_WFTO-FLO-FLOCERT.pdf
- Fair Trade International (2009). *Charter of Fair Trade Principles*. Retrieved from:
http://www.fairtrade.net/fileadmin/user_upload/content/2009/about_us/documents/Fair_Trade_Charter.pdf
- Fair Trade Resource Network.(2011). Brief History of Fair Trade. Retrieved from:
<http://www.fairtradefederation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/History-of-Fair-Trade-11-2011.pdf>
- Fair World Project.(2010). *How Do You Know It's Really Fair Trade?* Retrieved from:
<http://fairworldproject.org/about/movements/fair-trade/validation-programs/>
- Fridell, Gavin (2007). *Fair Trade Coffee: The Prospects and Pitfalls of Market-Driven Social Justice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ghana Statistical Service (2010). Population and Housing Census: District Analytical Report. Retrieved from: http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010_District_Report/Upper%20East/Bongo.pdf
- Global Shea Alliance (2015). 2015 Shea Trade and Industry Conference Program. Retrieved from: http://www.globalshea.com/resources/library/category_id/16/page/1
- Global Shea Alliance (2014). Shea Industry Overview. Retrieved from:
<http://www.globalshea.com/work/14/Industry-overview>
- Goetz, Anne Marie & Gupta, Rina Sen (1996). Who takes the credit? Gender, power and control over loan use in rural credit programs in Bangladesh. *World Development*, 24(1), 45-63.
- Greig, Delaney (2006). Shea Butter: connecting rural Burkinabe women to international markets through fair trade. *Development in Practice*, 16(5), 465-475.
- Gupta, Mira, Raymond Akawire Aborigo, Philip Baba Adongo, Sarah Rominski, Abraham Hodgson, Cyril M. Engmann & Cheryl A. Moyer (2015). Grandmothers as gatekeepers? The role of grandmothers in influencing health-seeking for mothers and newborns in rural northern Ghana. *Global Public Health*, 10(9), 1078-1091.
- Hankivsky, Olena (2014). *Intersectionality 101* [Powerpoint slides]. Retrieved from:
https://www.sfu.ca/iirp/documents/resources/101_Final.pdf
- Hutchens, Anna (2010). Empowering Women through Fair Trade? Lessons from Asia. *Third World Quarterly*, 31(3), 449-467.

- Jackson, Cecile (2007). Resolving Risk? Marriage and Creative Conjugality. *Development and Change*, 38(1), 107-130.
- Jones, Elaine, Sally Smith & Carol Wills (2012). Women producers and the benefits of collective forms of enterprise. *Gender & Development*, 20(1), 1-20.
- Kabeer, Naila (1999). Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development in Practice*, 30, 435-464.
- Kabeer, Naila (1994). *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*. New York: Verso Books.
- Kasente, Deborah (2012). Fair Trade and organic certification in value chains: lessons from a gender analysis from coffee exporting in Uganda. *Gender and Development*, 20(1), 111-127.
- Koopman, Jeanne (1991). Neoclassical Household Models and Modes of Household Production: Problems in the Analysis of African Agricultural Households. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 23(3-4), 148-173.
- Laube, W., Schraven, B. & Adimabuno Awo, Martha (2013) Peasant Adaptation to Environmental Change and Economic Globalization in Northern Ghana. In Joseph Awetori Yaro (Ed.). *Rural Development in Northern Ghana* (pp. 63-82). New York City: Nova Science Publishers.
- Le Mare, Ann (2010). Show the world to women and they can do it: Southern Fair Trade Enterprises as agents of empowerment. *Gender and Development*, 20(1), 95-109.
- Lentz, Carola (2006). *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Lind, A (2003). Feminist Post-Development Thought Women in Development and the Gendered Paradoxes of Survival in Bolivia. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 31(3/4), 227-246.
- Lush Corporation. (2012). *Ojoba Women's Shea Butter Collective: Empowering Women Through Ethical Trade*. Retrieved from: http://www.lushusa.com/on/demandware.store/Sites-Lush-Site/en_US/Blog-Posts?cid=article_ethical-buying-shea-butter
- Lyon, Sarah (2010). A Market of Our Own Women's Livelihoods & Fair Trade Markets. In S, Lyon and M. Moberg (Eds.), *Fair Trade & Social Justice Global Ethnographies* (pp. 125-143). New York City: New York University Press.
- Lyon, Sarah (2008). We Want To Be Equal to Them: Fair-trade Coffee Certification and Gender Equity within Organizations. *Human Organization*, 67(3), 258-268.

- Lyon, Sarah (2007). Fair Trade Coffee and Human Rights in Guatemala. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 30, 241-261.
- Lyon, Sarah, Bezaury, Josefina Aranda & Tad Mutersbaugh (2010). Gender Equity in fairtrade-organic coffee producer organizations: Cases from Mesoamerica. *Geoforum*, 41, 93-103.
- Malpit, Hazel & Quisumbing, Agnes (2015). What dimensions of women's empowerment in agriculture matter for nutrition in Ghana? *Food Policy*, 52, 54-63.
- Manboah-Rockson, J. (2007). *Chiefs in Post-Colonial Ghana:exploring different elements of the identity, inequalities and conflicts nexus in the Northern Region*. (Unpublished Masters dissertation). University of Calgary, Canada.
- Massiah, Joycelin (1986). Work in the Lives of Caribbean Women. *Social and Economic Studies*, 35(2), 177-239.
- Mayoux, Linda. (2012). *Impact Assessment of Fair Trade and Ethical Enterprise Development*. Retrieved from:
http://www.wemanresources.info/documents/Page3_GenderMainstreaming/3_6_Ethical/IMPACT%20ASSESSMENT%20OF%20FAIR%20TRADE%20AND%20ETHICAL%20ENTERPRISE%20DEVELOPMENT%20final.pdf
- McArdle, Louise & Thomas, Pete (2012). Fair enough? Women and Fair Trade. *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 8(4), 277-294.
- McCall, Leslie (2005). The Complexity of Intersectionality. *Signs(Spring)*, 1772-1800.
- McGadney-Douglass & Richard Douglass (2008). Collective Familial Decision-Making in Times of Trouble: Intergenerational Solidarity in Ghana. *Journal of Cross Cultural Gerontology*, 23, 147-160.
- Ministry of Food and Agriculture. (2012). Agriculture Facts and Figures. Retrieved from:
http://mofa.gov.gh/site/?page_id=6032
- Moberg, Mark & Sarah Lyon. (2010) The Paradox of Seeking Justice Through Markets. In Sarah Lyon and Mark Moberg (Eds.) *Fair Trade and Social Justice Global Ethnographies* (pp. 1-24). New York City: New York University Press.
- Mohanty, Chandra. (1991). Under Western Eyes Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. In Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Eds.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (pp.51-80). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Moudio, Rebecca. (2013) *Shea Butter Nourishes Opportunities for African Women*. Africa Renewal Online. Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/august-2013/shea-butter-nourishes-opportunities-african-women>

- Municipality of Bolgatanga. (2014) *About the municipality: Cultural Heritage and Customs*. Retrieved from: <http://bolga.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/?arrow=atd&=100&sa=1216>
- Nash, Jennifer (2008). Re-thinking Intersectionality. *Feminist Review*(89), 2-15.
- Nelson, Valerie, & Pound, Barry. (2009). *The Last Ten Years: A Comprehensive Review of the Literature on the Impact of Fairtrade*. Retrieved from: http://www.fairtrade.net/fileadmin/user_upload/content/2009/about_us/2010_03_NRI_Full_Literature_Review.pdf
- Nnaemeka, Obioma (2003). Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way. *Signs*, 29(2), 357-385.
- Nussbaum, Martha (2000). Women's Capabilities and Social Justice, *Journal of Human Development*, 1(2), 219-247.
- Ogundipe-Leslie (1994). *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformations*. Africa World Press: New Jersey.
- Ojoba Collective. (2015). *Ojoba Collective*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ojobacollective.com/>
- O'Laughlin, Bridget (2007). A Bigger Piece of a very small pie: intrahousehold resource allocation and poverty reduction in Africa. *Development and Change*, 38(1), 21-44.
- Padmanabhan, Martina (2007). The making and unmaking of gendered crops in Northern Ghana. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 28(1), 57-70.
- Patel, Raj. (2012). *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*. Melville House: New York.
- Poudyal, M. (2011). Chiefs and Trees: Tenures and Incentives in the Management and Use of Two Multipurpose Tree Species in Agroforestry Parkland in Northern Ghana, *Society & Natural Resources*, (24)10, 1063-1077.
- Ramamurthy, Priti (2000). Indexing Alternatives: Feminist development studies and global political economy, *Feminist Theory*, 1, 239-256.
- Rankin, Katherine (2002). Social Capital, Microfinance, and the Politics of Development, *Feminist Economics* (8)1, 1-24.
- Rathgeber, Eva (1990). WID, WAD, GAD: Trends in Research and Practice. *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 24, 489-502.
- Rowlands, Jo (1995). Empowerment Examined. *Development in practice*, 5(2), 101-107.

- Russell-Duvarney, Kelley. (2013). *Insights to the Consequences of Fair Trade From An All-Female Coffee Co-operative*. (Unpublished masters dissertation). Texas State University, United States.
- Sekaf International. (2002). *Shea Butter Village*. Retrieved from: <http://www.sheabutterweb.com/origin.html>
- Sen, Amartya. (1990). Gender and Cooperative Conflicts. In Irene Tinker (Ed.), *Persistent Inequalities Women and World Development* (pp.123-150). New York City: Oxford University Press.
- Shea Network Ghana. (2014). *Advocacy Action of Ammendment of ACT 571*. Retrieved from: <http://www.sheanetworkghana.org/#!/advocacy-action-project/cw58>
- Sick, Deborah. (2008). *Farmers of the Golden Bean, Costa Rican Households, Global Coffee, and Fair Trade*, Northern Illinois University Press: De Kalb.
- Simien, Evelyn (2007). Doing Intersectionality Research: From Conceptual Issues to Practical Examples. *Politics and Gender*, 3(2), 264-271.
- Star Shea. 2015. *The NGO Initiative 2009-2014*. Retrieved from: http://www.starshea.com/?page_id=1131
- Solomon, Colette. (2003). *Giving Women Choices? Development Interfaces: Women and Credit in Tamale, Northern Ghana*. (Unpublished Doctor of Philosophy), University of Sussex Brighton, England.
- Syed. Jawad (2010). Reconstructing gender empowerment. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 33, 283-294.
- Ten Thousand Villages. (2015). *A History of Helping Artisans*. Retrieved from: <http://www.tenthousandvillages.ca/about/our-history>
- Ungruhe, Christian. (2011) Migration, Marriage and Modernity: Motives, Impacts and Negotiations of Rural-Urban Circulation Amongst Young Women In Northern Ghana. (Bayreuth University African Studies Working Paper No. 1). Retrieved from Bayreuth University IGSAS: Women's Life Worlds 'In-Between' website: <https://epub.uni-bayreuth.de/349/1/BIGSASworks.pdf#page=69>
- USAID. (2011). *Investing in Shea in West Africa: A U.S. Investor's Perspective*. Retrieved from: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadu686.pdf
- World Fair Trade Organization. (2014). *Definition of Fair Trade*. Retrieved from: <http://wfto.com/fair-trade/definition-fair-trade>

- World Fair Trade Organization, (2013). *10 Principles of Fair Trade*. Retrieved from:
http://www.wfto.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2&Itemid=14
- Wooten, Stephen (2003). Women, Men and Market Gardens: Gender Relations and Income Generation in Rural Mali. *Human Organization*, 62(2), 166-177.
- Yaro, Awetori Joseph. (2013). The Story of Northern Ghana. In Joseph Awetori Yaro (Ed.) *Rural Development of Northern Ghana* (pp. 1-16). New York City: Nova Science Publishers.
- Yitah, Helen (2012). Kasena women's critique of gender roles and gender justice through proverbial jesting. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 24(1), 9-20.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40(3), 197-214.

APPENDIX 1- Research Ethics Board Approval

File Number: 12-14-10

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 01/23/2015



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice

Social Sciences and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Deborah	Sick	Social Sciences / Sociology	Supervisor
Aissa	Boodhoo-Leegsma	Social Sciences / Sociology	Student Researcher

File Number: 12-14-10

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: Understanding Women's Role in Fair Trade and Shea Butter Production in Rural Upper East Ghana

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
01/23/2015	01/22/2016	Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:

N/A



Université d'Ottawa **University of Ottawa**
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2010) and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above named research project. Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the project, the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the project (e.g., change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, including consent and recruitment documentation, should be submitted to the Ethics Office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at: <http://research.uottawa.ca/ethics/submissions-and-reviews>.

Please submit an annual report to the Ethics Office four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval. To close the file, a final report must be submitted. These documents can be found at: <http://research.uottawa.ca/ethics/submissions-and-reviews>.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5387 or by e-mail at: ethics@uottawa.ca.

Signature:

Kim Thompson
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Barbara Graves, Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB

APPENDIX 2-Participant Recruitment Letter



uOttawa

Faculté des sciences sociales
Faculty of Social Sciences

École d'études sociologiques et
anthropologiques / School of
Sociological and
Anthropological Studies

Empowerment, Women and Shea Butter Production

Participant Verbal Recruitment Text for Women Shea Butter Producers

Hello,

My name is Aissa Boodhoo-Leegsma. I am a master's student in the School of Sociology & Anthropology at the University of Ottawa. I am conducting research, with the support of the University of Ottawa, on female shea butter producers in Upper East Ghana. I hope to learn more about your experiences as shea butter producer and your perspectives on and experiences with Fair trade and local women's only co-ops. I want to note that this research is being done independently from any specific shea butter co-ops in Ghana.

I would like to know if you can help me with this research by participating in my study. This would include an initial interview of about 25-30 minutes with a follow-up interview of about 45-60 minutes. The interviews will be about your experiences as a shea butter producer and your perceptions/experiences with Fair trade and co-ops. These interviews will be scheduled at a place and time of your convenience where the interview can be conducted in a private manner.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You have no obligation to participate but if you decide to be involved your story and experiences will be very important and valuable to my study and help me to better understand problems facing women involved in shea butter production.

The information that you give me will remain strictly confidential. What you tell me in this interview will remain strictly confidential. Your name will not be used in anyway and no information will be given that could identify you in research reports or presentations. The information that I collect will be stored securely both here in Ghana and in my supervisor's office in Ottawa, Canada.

Would you like to participate?

When would be good time for you, and a convenient place for us to talk?

Pavé 10005 / Room 10005
10^e étage / 10^e floor
120, rue Université / University Pk.
Ottawa ON K1N 6N5

APPENDIX 3- Letter of Verbal Consent



Women's Roles in Fair Trade of Shea Butter in Ghana: Informed Consent

As I explained before, my name is Aissa Boodhoo-Leegsma and I am a graduate student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Ottawa in Canada. The purpose of my study is to understand the different experiences of women in shea butter production and Fair Trade shea butter co-ops. This research is being done independently from any specific shea butter co-ops in Ghana.

Before we begin, I just wish to be sure that you understand the study and are still willing to participate.

In this interview, I would like to discuss with you your experiences in shea butter production and feelings towards Fair Trade. I understand that this may be inconvenient but your participation is very important in order to help me understand how participation in a Fair Trade co-op helps women and will allow the voices of people like you to be heard and counted as we try to understand the impact of Fair Trade on women's lives.

Participation: Your participation will consist essentially of being interviewed for at least one interview lasting about 25-30 minutes. If you agree, a second interview of about 45-60 minutes will be conducted in which we discuss the issues and your experiences in more depth. During these interviews you will be asked to discuss your experiences as farmer, labourer and/or co-op member, as well as some general facts about yourself, such as age, schooling, and occupation.

Risks: Your participation in this study will mean discussing some of your life experiences with the Fair Trade co-op and in shea butter production. Talking about personal experiences may make you feel uncomfortable. You are not obligated to answer any of the questions that you find uncomfortable.

Confidentiality and anonymity: It may be difficult to keep your participation strictly confidential from others in your community, but you can be assured that your identity will be protected and the information that you will give me is strictly confidential, unless you indicate otherwise. In all reports and presentations, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. None of the information that you give which could identify you will be used unless I have your permission to do so. The information will be used only for the researchers understanding of the impact of Fair Trade shea butter production on women's lives. No information will be given to any other organization or government agency. Photographs may be taken with the verbal permission of participants prior to the photograph being taken. At this time the participants will also be informed that if they agree to their photo being taken it may be used for future publications.

Conservation of data: The information will be kept secured in a locked location and password protected computer both here and also at my home in Ottawa, Canada. Only my supervisor and myself will have access to this information. All precautions will be taken to secure your identity.

Benefits: Your participation in this study will not only help me, the researcher, to better understand how Fair Trade can better the lives of women, but it will allow you to add your voice and perspectives which could help researchers and policy makers as well.

Voluntary Participation: I wish to emphasize that you are no obligation to participate and if you do choose to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be properly destroyed so it can no longer be accessed by any one.

Do you understand the study? Do you have any questions?

Do you wish to participate?

[check if agreed] _____
Date _____

If you permit, I would also like to use a tape recorder. Would this make you uncomfortable?
Will you allow the use of a tape-recorder? Yes/no _____

If you I have any questions about the study, you may contact myself, my supervisor, or the university

Graduate Student-Aissa Boodhoo-Leegsma, School of Sociology and Anthropology, 120
University Street; University of Ottawa, Canada, K1N 6N5

Professor Deborah Sick: School of Sociology and Anthropology, 120 University St. Room
10121; University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada K1N 6N5 001-613-562-5800, extension 2522

Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research: University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland
St. Room 154; 001-613- 562-5387; ethics@uottawa.ca

This copy is yours to keep.

APPENDIX 4-Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Topic: Understanding Women's Role in

Fair Trade & Shea Butter Production in Rural Upper East Ghana

Researcher: Aissa Boodhoo-Leegsma

First Interview

Opening

(Introductions/shake hands]

My name is *Aissa* and I am a student from Canada doing research on women and Fair Trade in Ghana. I wanted to listen and learn from your experience in shea butter co-ops. [also introduce interpreter]

(Purpose)

I would like to ask you some questions in this interview to learn more about you and your life in Bolgatanga. I hope to conduct a second interview to ask you more about your day to day life and your feelings about shea butter production and Fair Trade.

EXPLAIN INFORMED CONSENT AGAIN (and ability to opt-out of questions or selectively respond)

(Time Line) The interview should take about 30 minutes.

(Transition: Let me begin by asking you some questions about where you live and your family)

Body

General demographic information

1. What is your name?
2. Date of birth (Year only or approximate if necessary)?
3. Where were you born?
 - a. [if not in study village] sk how long they have lived in (study village)?
Where else have you lived?
 - b.i Who lives in this household/compound with you? [get relationship of each to the interviewee, e.g. children, husband , mother, sisters, mother-in-law, etc]
 - b. ii Do your parents [if not in same household/compound] also live here in this village? If not, where (could be different for mother and father). Sisters? Brothers? Other family members who

live in this village, but not in same household/compound? Bolgatanga?

4. Do you have children?

a. If yes, how many children do you have? Dates of birth for each

[if they do not live in the same household/compound, where do they live? What are they doing?

5. Are you married? Husband's name?

6. What ethnic group do you belong to?

7. What languages do you speak? What do you speak at home?

8. Are you a member of a particular religious group?

(Transition to the next topic)

Education

1. How many years did you attend school? (Have you had any other type of school or other vocational training?)

2. [If participant did not complete a level, probe to find out why she stopped when she did] Can you tell me why you stopped going to school after grade _____?

3.. Do your children go to school?

a. What types of school(s) do they go to?

b. Does your partner support your children going to school?

(Transition to the next topic)

Occupation and Farming

1. Are you the primary income-earner in your family?

2. What is your main occupation?

3. Is shea butter production your primary source of income? [about what % is from shea butter e.g. $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, etc]

4. Do you have other work? Other types of income? If so, what types? Where?

5. Just to be clear, are you a member of the Ojoba Cooperative?

6. Are you a member of other farmers' associations?

(Transition: I've enjoyed speaking with you and hope we will be able to speak again for a second interview. Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview)

Closing

(Summarize)

(Maintain Rapport) I appreciate the time you gave me to speak with you. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?

(Action to be taken) I should have all the information I need for now. Next time I would like to talk more with you about shea butter production. Let's talk again soon to decide upon a good time to speak again. Thanks again.

Second Interview

(Re-introductions)

It's nice to see you again. I was hoping to follow-up on our last interview.

(Purpose)

I would like to ask you some questions in this interview to learn more about what role shea butter production and the Fair Trade co-op plays in your life. I would like to know how you feel about your involvement and as a member of the co-op.

EXPLAIN INFORMED CONSENT AGAIN (and ability to opt-out of questions or selectively respond)

(Time Line) The interview should take about 60 minutes

(Transition: Let me begin by asking you some questions about being a shea butter producer)

General Shea Butter Production

1. How long have you been involved in shea butter production?
2. Was your family (parents/other older relatives) previously involved in this production and trade?
3. What compelled you to become involved in shea butter production?
4. Do you use/pick your own shea nuts to produce shea butter? If so questions 5- 7]; If not go to next section]- where? Can anyone go? Restrictions on certain clans (from area)
 - a. How much land do you farm? _____
 - b. Do you own your own land? If so, how did you acquire it? [bought, inherited?]
 - c. If not, who owns the rights to/controls this land? [get them to explain]
 - d. Do you pay rent for this land or you have rights to use this land without paying rent? [probe for further explanation]
 - e. Changes in land rights with increased shea butter production? Or how land rights

- are understood?
- e. Is it common for women to own land in the Upper East?
5. a. Do you grow other crops? If so, what?
 b. Is shea your most important activity?
 c. Can you explain to me about picking shea?
 d. How many hours/day/week do you spend tending your crops? Do you pay others to help you? Do you share labour with others? Who? [get relationships also]
6. Where do you get water for your crops? [e.g. irrigation water from the Veia Dam or from a well?]
7. Approximately how many kilos of shea nuts did you pick this last season? Is that typical?

1. Labour

1. What is your role/job in shea butter production?
 a. Can you explain to me the work that is involved in making shea butter? What is the process? Do you do this work yourself or do others help you? Who?
 b. What type of work do you do each day?
 c. What kinds of tools do you use?
 d. How many hours of work does this require per week?
 e. Do you share/rent your labour to other family members or neighbors who need help? If so, who? How often?
2. When is your most busy time of the year? What are you doing then?
3. Who do you work with on a daily basis?
 a. Are men involved in any aspect of shea butter production in the area? If so, how? What do they do?
4. Approximately how many kilos of shea butter did you produce this past year? Is that typical?

2. Marketing

1. Do you sell your shea butter to anyone other than Co-op Ojoba? If so, to whom/where? Where do you sell the most of your shea butter?
2. Are you involved with selling your shea butter or does someone else do that for you? If so, who?
3. Do you buy shea butter from others and then sell it? From whom [relationships]

(Transition to the next topic)

Connections with Bolgatanga

1. How often do you visit the city centre?
 a. What are the primary reason(s) to go into Bolgatanga?

- b. How often do you visit other villages or towns (Bawku, Tamale)?
 - c. What is the purpose of these visits?
2. How often do you visit the co-op offices in town?
- a. What types of activities do you do at or with other members of the co-op?

(Transition to the next topic)

Participation and Roles in the Co-op

- 1. When did you join the co-op?
- 2. Are there particular requirements to become a member? E.g. own land? Pay a fee to join?
- 3. What are your duties as a member of the co-op?
- 4. Do you attend meetings regularly?
 - a. Are meetings open to all members?
 - b. Who generally organizes and runs meetings?
 - c. During meetings are members encouraged to speak? How often to members tend to speak?
 - d. How often do you speak?
 - e. Are there particular people who tend to speak more than others? Who?
- 5. What types of concerns/issues do members raise during these meetings? (probe) (types of business/agenda that comes up)
 - a. Selling/price?
 - b. Processing/technology?
 - c. Spending/budget, where the money is going?
- 6. What are the biggest problems you face in producing and selling your shea butter? Has the co-op been able to help you and other members with overcoming these problems? If so, how? If no, why not?
 - a. Do the leaders in the co-op take your interests into account? (what are your interests/most interested in)
- 7. Did you produce shea butter prior to joining the Ojoba co-operative? Prior to the introduction of Fair Trade to the region?
 - a. If yes-how was this experience different? [e.g. were prices lower? Was it more difficult to find buyers? Did you work with different people?, etc]

1. Member Networks and Interaction

- a. How would you describe the atmosphere of the cooperative?
 - a. Do most members get along and cooperate? (probe)- do you have friends from the co-op?
 - b. How often do you see members of the executive board? In what capacity? [e.g only at meetings; as friend; to discuss problems]
 - c. Are you related to any of the members of the executive board? Who and how?
- b. **Co-op Benefits**
 - a. What would you say are the main benefits for you of being a co-op member?
 - b. Apart from marketing shea butter, does the co-op have other initiatives to help members? (such as providing credit or organizing ROSCA-Rotating Savings and Credit Association)?

(Transition to the next topic)

Fair Trade

1. What does “Fair Trade” mean to you? How has it affected you as a shea butter producer? Your family? Your community/Village?
2. Do you know what social premiums are? [may need to define in different words]
 - a. What types of projects has Co-op Ojoba used this money for?
 - b. If you could decide, how would you use the money from these premiums?
- 3.If applicable] Before Fair Trade: were you paid differently?
 - a. How did you interact with other shea butter producers?
 - b. What were the benefits of this arrangement? (individually and socially)
4. How do you think involvement with Fair Trade has affected your community/village? How would you say your life has changed since becoming a member of the Ojoba cooperative?

(Transition to the next topic)

Empowerment', Power and Agency

1. How are family decisions and budget decisions made in your family? Are you able to spend the money you earn from shea butter production (and other work you might do), as you like or must you first discuss spending with someone else (e.g. your husband or mother/father, uncle etc?)
2. How are decisions about daily chores made in your family? Do you decide which tasks you will do, or are these decisions made with someone else?
3. Would you say that this is how decisions are made in most households in Bolgatanga?

[could be put in first interview]

4. [Has your ability to make decisions regarding how family resources are used changed since you have become a member of the Ojoba cooperative? If so, how?] keep here
5. Overall, do you believe your involvement in the co-op has led to positive changes in your life changes? If so, in what ways?
 - a. Have you had access to more resources or opportunities? E.g. Have your children had more resources or opportunities?
6. Since Ojoba is a women's-only cooperative, other than providing a place for women to sell their shea butter, do you think that it has benefitted women in particular in other ways? If so, how?
 - a. How much power do you feel you, as a woman, have to improve your life?
[explain your answer]
None – very little – some – a great deal
 - b. To improve your community?:
None – very little – some – a great deal
 - c. For those who feel they, or others have no, or little power to improve their lives, probe how this affects their work as shea butter producers, their relationships with others. Why do they think this is so. What are the obstacles to having more ability to change things? Do they think there is any way to improve the situation?
 - d. In general, who do you feel has the most power to make things happen in your community? Men? Women? Older women? Older men? Younger women? Younger men? Explain. Does it depend on certain factors?

Is there any thing else that you think is important for me to know?
Do you have any questions?

Closing

(Summarize)

(Maintain Rapport) I appreciate the time you gave me to speak with you. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?

(Action to be taken) I should have all the information I need. Please let me know if you have any questions for me. Thanks again.

Note. Adapted from : “Interview Schedule Sample Template,” University of Hawaii-Maui, 2002 .
Retrieved from: <http://www.hawaii.edu/mauispeech/pdf/interviewschedule.pdf>

APPENDIX 5- FTF Code of Practice

Note: Bolded text in the table is based on observations from field work and is discussed directly on pages 106-112 in the main text

	FTF Code of Practice	Ojoba Observations/Realities
<u>Create Opportunities for Economical and Socially Marginalized Producers</u>	- Members should focus on producer's labour and activities resulting in revenue that makes up majority of their income. - Members mission statements do not explicitly have to use Fair Trade, but BCPs and business materials should use them.	- The FTF logo is present on website. Some member's income is primarily shea. This is of course does not take into account sub group members that are not necessarily always active or contributing, pending the size of the order and the quota required. - Business materials appear to be well-branded 'fair trade'.
<u>Develop Transparent and Accountable Relationships</u>	- Members must demonstrate long-term commitments by purchasing from the same suppliers year after year and also increasing their volume of purchase where possible (this can be altered if you choose to shift to more marginalized groups or a group cannot meet order requirements). - Upon acceptance to FTF, members must inform producers of membership, provide FTF Principles and contact information - Exclusive contracts are not considered fair practice. Members may buy an entire harvest if the decision is made freely by producers. Members should also avoid cultivating an unhealthy dependence of group upon members. - Members are expected to share information about producers with customers. - Members must submit financial documentation (e.g. supplier lists, financial statements) regularly to show transparent and accountable relationships. - Members must communicate regularly with producers especially to inform them in terms of changes in buying patterns or terms. Both parties must have full, free and open input into contracts.	- Yes, they have a long-term partnership. Numbers on yearly increase were not available. Presumed growth from 2000, but unable to estimate trends in recent years. No, members are not aware of details surrounding FT. They are not aware of the certification process or the FTF specifically (no principles or contact information appeared to be readily available for producers). - From observations it appears as though the co-op manages its own domestic sales, apart from its export contracts (more involving the member/buyer). - The Ojoba Collective shares producer stories on its website. - Unable to comment on (internal) financial documentation. - Yearly visits and member knowledge about buyers/supply indicate that producers are informed about paying patterns and annual order sizes and trends. Unable to comment on both parties having full, free and open input into contracts.

<u>Build Capacity</u>	• Members can explain social and economic development of producers and their community and over time they help build their capacity and independence. • Members document all visits, create educational tools and help track an organizations work in relation to FTF Principles, in hopes of connecting the group to the larger FT movement. • Members should seek to have long-term buying relationships, with minimum purchases over consecutive years (can seek another supplier if supply or quality has measurably decreased) • Members have clear communication tools on BCPs, market knowledge and producers should have access to formal and informal training (market information, product feedback, finances, etc) as a way to share information. • Members should conduct personal visits to ensure fair trade criteria are being met. • Members have means to share info about producers with other groups, NGOs, customers, as a means of facilitating communication about common needs. • Members actively seek opportunities to share lessons learned with their suppliers. • Members are encouraged to use excess resources, to reinvest in communities or in things to grow producer's business. • External development agencies may work with groups to provide some of the benefits expected of the FTF members and members should provide linkages between them and the producers.	• Member is invested in long-term economic development of producers, has helped with technological investment. Capacity building trainings are frequent (but usually conducted/facilitated by WV). • Members unaware of FTF principles or where the co-op may fit in relation to FTF. Members or leaders did not usually discuss larger connections to other FT organizations. • Long-term buying has been in place with the same supplier (the co-operative in this case). Producers expressed significant gratitude for the long-term nature of this relationship with the buyer. • Producers have access to training, but not necessarily [international] market information or Fair Trade based training, that would give them better capacity to change, be aware or dominantly manage their operations • Personal visits occur annually. • Unable to ascertain how the member/buyer chooses to share information about Ojoba or interact with other group (not present during a field visit). • Community reinvestment has occurred through the drilling of a borehole and the construction of a library. Unclear how this costs were splits between the member/community/co-op and World Vision. • WV does work to provide additional benefits. Linkages (although minimal) are still maintained at present.
<u>Promote Fair Trade</u>	• Members strongly promote and brand themselves Fair Trade through their various communication platforms.	• FTF logo is present on the website and the positive implications of FT are well advertised on the website. • Producers are identified through

	• Members identify producers and their communities at various touch points. • Members can participate in talks, panels and events related to FT.	testimonials on the website. • Unaware of member's activities in these regards.
<u>Pay Promptly and Fairly</u>	• Members demonstrate prices meet or exceed international, national or local FT minimum price standards (no FTF minimum criteria but must show improved price over time). • Members must offer pre-finance or advance payment to producers (and show said documentation of offer). • Members should be aware of special income distribution /equity programs (such as women's leadership training) and demonstrate this is an ongoing process. • Members ensure that producers understand ordering policies (including cancellation policy) at time of order.	• Member slightly exceeds minimum shea butter (non-organic) Fair Trade International Price Standards (last revised by FI 2009). • Unaware of pre-financing. • Unaware of members' knowledge about additional women's programs. • Unable to comment on which or how many producers are aware of an explicit cancellation policy.
<u>Support Safe and Empowering Work Conditions</u>	• • • Members should buy from producers who contribute to development of small-scale producers and benefits actually reach said persons. • Members should work with bodies that enable full member participation, can hold their governing body accountable, maximize ownership for members (but do NOT necessarily have to be co-operatives). • Members buy from organizations that operate with voluntary/open membership, democratic member control, member's economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and independence, co-operation amongst groups and concern for community. • Members have adequate auditing systems to ensure groups commitment to FT	• • Producers are small-medium scale and benefits do not stay within leadership. But unknown how subgroups benefit relative to main group or if these benefits are equally distributed to these women (subgroups) who are small-scale, at-home producers. • Ojoba is a co-operative, with a diverse and broad structure that allows for multiple leaders and overall leadership development. Re-elections and leadership turnover is infrequent, more due to lack of interest or viable candidates (based on availability and education). • Membership is open and education and training is available to all members. Overall concern for community is apparent in donations to library, borehole and other community staples. • Auditing systems around fair trade were not clearly known by producers. Auditing criteria on part of member was not necessarily shared with producers. • Workplace practices were not discriminatory or coercive on the basis of

	principles. • Members do not engage in discriminatory or coercive practices on basis of religion. • Members have non-discrimination policy, including: equal pay for work of equal value, support for women and men to progress in the organization and process for employees to complain about discrimination.	sex or religion.
<u>Ensure the Rights of Children</u>	• Members state the role children have (if any) in production. • Members can buy from organizations where family labour (eg. Helping out after school) occurs, but not where school is disrupted and work is unstructured.	• Family labour appeared to be used during non-school hours, predominantly in agricultural or household tasks. Children had a very limited role in production, if any.
<u>Cultivate Environmental Stewardship</u>	• Members show understanding of environmental impact of their operations on the ground and abroad. • Members show explicit environmental stewardship in organizations goals and policies.	• Unable to comment on this. • Member (Ojoba Collective) has contributed to a shea nursery and energy-efficient stoves.
<u>Respect Cultural Identity</u>	• Members and workers learn and share information on traditional forms of sustainability. • Work together to preserve traditional technique, new techniques openly discussed with workers. • Members respect local traditions when visiting.	• Unable to comment. • See above's note on energy-efficient stoves, as a supplement or possible replacement for conventional boiling fires which require a large supply of firewood (including shea trees). • Unable to comment on respect for local traditions.