

Union women organizing towards a gender perspective at Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT) in Mexico City

A study on their strategies, obstacles, and the inclusion of men



¡Por la autogestión de la clase trabajadora!

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ABSTRACT

This thesis takes the stance that globalization and neoliberalism have dramatically altered gender relations in Mexico. Women's increased access to the paid labor force has caused conflicts and a demand for the revision of traditional gender relations. From this background, I examine women's organizing towards gender equality through a case study conducted at a confederation of independent labor unions called Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (the Authentic Labor Front, FAT) in Mexico City. The thesis explores the relations between these women's movements and concepts of strategic gender interests, citizenship construction, and gender equality within the still largely patriarchal culture of Mexico. Moreover, women's and men's attitudes towards and possible obstacles in achieving gender equality and a gender perspective at FAT are extensively discussed and related to the above-mentioned theoretical concepts. The inclusion of men in gender equality issues is also considered.

The research was conducted through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and literature collection. My theoretical standpoint is that women are developing strategic gender interests as they realize they are being marginalized, which leads to their organizing towards a gender perspective. With their organizing they are engaging in the development of a more democratic citizenship that takes into account women's interests. I also argue that men should be actively included in gender issues at FAT, in order for the gender perspective to be successful.

Key words:

Globalization, neoliberalism, machismo, gender interests, gender equality, women and citizenship, women's movements, independent labor unions, Mexico

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INTRODUCTION

Women's organizing in social movements is a global phenomenon (Ticehurst 2005; Stahler-Sholk et al 2008; Millán 2014). There are examples of this worldwide: countless local, national, and global initiatives exist (see for example Perry 2008; Schild 2008; Lebon 2014). In Latin America this is no different (Swanger 2008; Wise et al 2003). Women organize for a multitude of different reasons and causes. Many, especially in developing countries like Mexico, are argued to be related to (economic) globalization, neoliberalism, and trade liberalization (De Keijzer 2006; Domínguez 2004; Brickner 2006).

Following scholars like Domínguez (2004), Espinosa (2004), Brickner (2006), and Molyneux (1985; 2001) this thesis takes the stance that women were largely marginalized with the coming of globalization, neoliberalism, and free trade agreements in patriarchal societies like Mexico. As they entered the paid workforce, "these women experienced a double [or sometimes triple] burden attached to more responsibilities [...] rather than changing their traditional roles" (Domínguez et al 2010, 188)¹.

In the last few decades, Mexico saw an increase of the political Left and Leftist social movements, such as urban popular movements (Espinosa 2004; Domínguez 2004), among which are many women's movements and women organizing in mixed organizations (Espinosa 2004; Domínguez 2004; Lebon 2014). According to Dangl (2007), the reason for many of these movements' organizing could be explained as a reaction to the failures of neoliberal economic policies. Examples are women's resistance against (gender) violence and feminicides² (Domínguez et al 2010; Lagarde y de los Rios 2005), urban popular women's movements in the 1980s, groups within popular feminism, and women struggling for full citizenship rights from the 1990s onwards (Schild 2008; Espinosa 2004; Domínguez); and women organizing for gender equality in labor unions (Domínguez 2010; Domínguez and

¹ This triple burden refers to paid work, household responsibilities, and political or union organization. It causes time constraints among other issues, as men rarely take up household responsibility in Latin America and Mexico (Olavarria 2006).

² The systematic, violent, killings of women that occurs in the north of Mexico and countries in Central America. Several researchers describe links between these killings, trade liberalization, and the development of the maquiladora industry that followed (Domínguez et al 2010; Weissman 2005 in Domínguez et al 2010).

Quintero³; Rigat-Pflaum 2008; Quintero 2013). My research focuses on women organizing towards gender equality within a confederation of independent labor unions called Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT) or the Authentic Labor Front in Mexico City. However, I chose to approach them not from a labor union perspective, but as an urban social movement⁴.

From the time these women's movements became more focused on gender issues and feminist discourses they are argued to have contributed to the challenging of the patriarchal gender order in Mexico (Espinosa 2004; Domínguez 2004). According to Olavarria (2006, 29-34) economic globalization saw a rise in "the movement advocating greater gender equality across all spheres and the acknowledgement of women's rights". A reason for the traditional 'hegemonic masculinities' in Mexico to change is this "continuous struggle of women towards gender equality in all social spheres" (De Keijzer 2004, 32). Women thus play a central role in the promotion of gender equality in Mexico and other parts of Latin America (De Keijzer 2004).

From the broader perspective of the theoretical and practical relations of feminism to the Left and to women in social movements, my research examines women's gender interests and organizing towards a more democratic form of citizenship. It takes the women groups within and beyond FAT as a case study and explores the women's strategies in organizing towards greater gender equality. I investigate whether and how their organizing contributes towards the implementation of a gender perspective in the union, how the current functioning of the gender perspective is, and why these women are organizing despite the fact that there is already a gender perspective implemented at FAT. I also ask myself what the union's men's views are on the topics and how they can contribute to these gender-mainstreaming policies.

Aim

In my thesis I aim to analyze what strategies women in social movements choose to organize, what their interests are, and how their organizing contributes to implementing or advancing a gender perspective within their organization. I aim to make the voices of the women within this organization heard and to raise awareness

³ The reference to Domínguez and Quintero is from a still unpublished book that contains a chapter on FAT. References to this chapter therefore contain no date. Edmé Domínguez, my supervisor and one of the authors, provided it to me.

⁴ I motivate this choice in the Delimitations and the Background chapter.

for the situation FAT's women are in. I also investigate what FAT's men's attitudes and perspectives are and how they can contribute to gender mainstreaming processes.

Research Questions

This thesis has two main research questions and various sub questions:

1. How does women organizing contribute to the development or advancement of a gender perspective in a mixed organization⁵?
 - What are women's interests in organizing towards a gender perspective, and what, if any, is the relation with citizenship?
 - What are men's attitudes towards gender issues, and should or shouldn't they be included in gender issues within mixed organizations?

2. What are the women's strategies in organizing at FAT and what, if any, is the relation with FAT's gender perspective?
 - How is FAT's gender perspective perceived?
 - Why are the women organizing, when there is already a gender perspective implemented at FAT? And what are the men's views on the women's organizing?

State of the Art

An enormous amount of literature exists on the discourses I draw from in this thesis. This section should therefore be seen as a brief overview of relevant existing literature.

Machismo and gender relations

Contemporary globalization and trade liberalization (like NAFTA) have brought major changes to the world (Eriksen 2007). In Latin American countries with a traditionally deeply rooted machista culture (Swanger 2008; Olavarría 2006), these changes affect men, women, family dynamics, and gender relations (Olavarría 2006).

⁵ With a mixed organization I mean an organization or movement both men and women are part of and participate in.

It is important to know what machismo means in order to fully understand the impact of these changes.

The patriarchal, *machista* culture is omnipresent in daily life (Castañeda 2012). Ingoldsby (1991) describes various characteristics of machismo in men: show masculinity, be physically powerful, and have superiority over his wife. The author suggests women can perpetuate machismo as well; it preserves their way of life and the principles they grew up with. Marina Castañeda (2012) argues it is not only men who are responsible for or cause a machista society, but that it is so deeply rooted in the system and culture that it becomes unconscious, even for some women and men who do want more gender equality in society.

Paid work is classified as a man's job in machista societies. It therefore has a masculine image. Women generally take care of household and children. Men are the decision-makers and main income providers. This marginalizes women and reinforces gender segregation (Rigat-Pflaum 2008). There thus exists "a widespread gender ideology that undervalues women in general and women workers in particular" (Domínguez et al 2010, 194).

Women organizing

As the Introduction shows, theory describes links between globalization, neoliberalism, changing gender relations, and women's organizing. This is also the case for Mexico (Swanger 2008; López Nájera 2014), causing a necessity for alternative strategies in women's or feminist organizing and their citizenship construction (Espinosa 2004).

"Neoliberal 'structural adjustment programs' have [affected] family dynamics [...], heightening gender consciousness and altering organizing conditions for women in social movements."
(Stahler-Sholk et al 2008, 214, parentheses original)

Women's organizing with regard to gender issues often does not receive much support; resistance against it is common (Esplen 2006; De Keijzer 2004).

The above-described changes and their clear links to globalization and neoliberalism in the last few decades are the reason why I choose to approach globalization as

‘something new’ in this thesis, along with scholars like Scholte (2005), Eriksen (2007), Giddens (2000), and Castells (1998).

Frente Auténtico del Trabajo

Very little research exists on FAT, even less on FAT’s women’s organizing. Hathaway (1997) offers a historic overview of the organization and its activities, but does not mention FAT’s women’s organizing, or the gender perspective. Domínguez and Quintero analyze the development of women groups at and beyond FAT, and FAT’s gender perspective. They conclude that the implementation of a gender perspective and the involvement of FAT’s men in it have been difficult, due to men’s resistances (Domínguez and Quintero).⁶ A book by Belarmino Hernández (2010) offers a historic 50-year overview of FAT, but dedicates little to the gender perspective and women organizing. To my knowledge, no research exists on FAT’s men’s perspective on gender issues and the women organizing.

Theoretical Framework

I follow scholars like Molyneux (1985; 2001), Jónasdóttir (1988) and Jónasdóttir and Jones (2009) who conduct critical in-depth analyses of *women’s interests* and what these interests may contribute to the debate on women’s struggle for participation and gender equality. Molyneux (1985) makes a distinction between women’s interests, practical gender interests and strategic gender interests. Women’s interests is a much-contested topic, as one should be careful of generalizing; one cannot assume that all women have the same interests. Jónasdóttir (1988) and Jónasdóttir and Jones (2009) outline a *formal* and a *content* dimension of interests. The formal is most directly related to the struggle for formal representation, the substantive refers to the aims, needs, wishes, and demands that are needed to achieve this representation (ibid.). Both dimensions are interconnected.

I place the discussion on interests within the discourse of women’s citizenship construction. Domínguez (2004), Espinosa (2004) argue that citizenship in Mexico is a masculine model where women often remain ‘secondary citizens’. Molyneux (2001) argues citizenship is highly contested, changes with time, and is context-

⁶ For a more substantive overview of existing literature in relation to FAT and its gender perspective, I refer the reader to the chapter The Case.

dependent. She claims the success of women's movements in citizenship construction depends greatly "upon a creative interaction between civil society and the state" (Molyneux 2001, 201). Brickner (2006) claims women's organizing in Mexico can challenge sexist union structures and contribute to the social construction of citizenship. Lastly, I explore whether gender mainstreaming and men-mainstreaming may be a successful strategy to achieve gender equality in Mexico. For this, I draw from scholars like De Keijzer (2004), Olavarría (2006), Ratele (2015), and Esplen (2006) who argue that men in mixed organizations should be actively included in gender issues.

Relevance

This thesis elaborately discusses the consequences of globalization and neoliberalism in Mexico on women organizing and gender issues, hereby demonstrating its relevance to the Master Program in Global Studies. Little research has been done on FAT, even less with a focus on FAT's women and gender issues. These women in national and transnational groups that go beyond union organizing, pursuing women's interests and cooperating on the advancement of gender equality, make this case worth researching. Moreover, the fact that FAT implemented a gender perspective may offer a valuable contribution to academic literature, as unions in Mexico are usually patriarchal, with little attention for women's issues. New analysis on the case of FAT could shed light on possible progress and challenges in the last years, and what strategies could help the furtherance of a gender perspective. Globalization and neoliberalism brought similar changes to other Latin American countries. This thesis may therefore be relevant for other cases at independent unions in other parts of Latin America. Lastly, literature exists on including men in gender issues. However, not many of these studies are done from a feminist research perspective, taking into account both men's and women's views. Moreover, to my knowledge there is not a single study that analyzes the perspective of FAT's men regarding gender equality and the organization of the women. A gender perspective can only be successfully implemented with the cooperation of both men and women. Men's interests and views therefore ought to be investigated, which is what I did.

Delimitations

My thesis conducts a case study at a specific organization. It is therefore limited in the scope of the research to the organization of women within (urban popular) social movements such as independent labor unions. I do not cover union organization as a whole. Moreover, my research focuses on Mexico and Latin America and my case study on women in a Mexico City confederation of independent labor unions. Generalizations about women organizing in an international context or women in similar situations in different countries may not be possible, as the goals, strategies, historical background, and type of organization may differ across countries and regions. At most, I make suggestions that might be applicable to or relevant for other (inter)national situations. My thesis can form a basis and serve as a starting point for further research on these topics.

I research the women groups within FAT from an *individual*, not an *organizational* (FAT) level. Women from cooperatives, urban popular movements, and other unions are also included; the scope thus goes beyond union organizing. My interest lies specifically with these women's organization towards gender equality and a gender perspective. Therefore I chose to approach the movement as a social movement, rather than limiting myself to union women organizing.⁷ Moreover, I did not interview FAT staff in higher positions than the steering committee⁸, nor did I specifically research organizations or labor unions affiliated with FAT. I had neither the space nor the time to do that in this thesis.

THE CASE

Background

This chapter serves as the background of my thesis. It contains a social and historical overview of women organizing in Mexican labor unions and the role of gender within these. I also discuss FAT and their creation of a gender perspective.

⁷ The Background chapter offers further motivation of my choice to study the women's movements at FAT as urban social movements and not as union organizing.

⁸ The steering committee is officially called the Coordinación Nacional (National Coordination). It is appointed by the National Assembly and currently consists of 3 men and 3 women, all of whom I interviewed for this thesis. They have the most knowledge of FAT as an organization and oversee the day-to-day operation of FAT in all the regions and sectors it operates in (Gómez and Robles n.d., 13-14).

I have to take into account that globalization and neoliberalism have altered women's organizing conditions, and gender and class-consciousness has heightened (Stahler-Sholk 2008; Olavarría 2006). A gendered analysis *of* and *within* social movements is therefore important. The increasing awareness of and attention for gender issues within Mexican organizations and social movements in recent decades led women to organize to challenge these patriarchal, sexist union structures and to advocate gender equality and the enforcement of women's labor rights (Brickner 2006). However, this does not go without a struggle. One has to take into account that organizing in independent labor unions was (and still is) very difficult and often not even allowed in Mexico⁹ (Pastor Juvenil Obrera 2003). Also, the "traditional union's ability to defend women's rights in developing countries [like Mexico] is rather weak" (Sánchez 2000 and Brickner 2006 in Domínguez et al 2010, 194). Women have a difficult struggle in becoming accepted and seen as full members of labor unions (Lebon 2014; Domínguez and Quintero). They face not being taken seriously by the male union members, their objectives with regard to gender issues are considered too theoretical, are met with a disinterest, resistance, and are seen as not important or as threatening male leadership (Domínguez and Quintero; De Keijzer 2004).

Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT) in Mexico City

I conducted my a case study at Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (The Authentic Labor Front), a coalition of independent labor unions with its head office in Mexico City. FAT was founded in 1960 in a political environment that sought total control over labor unions (Hathaway 1997), with little allowance for independent organization. FAT continuously fought for a fair representation of workers, who had very little say in workers rights (Belarmino Fernández 2010). In the sixties and seventies they shifted towards the political Left and joined both national and international unions in the workers' struggle against capitalism and neoliberalist policies (Hathaway 1997).

⁹ In Mexico, there is a distinction between *charro* unions (the CTM), and independent democratic unions such as the ones that are part of FAT. The CTM, Confederación de Trabajadores de México, or Confederation of Mexican Workers, is the largest confederation of labor unions in the country, linked to the political party PRI. They generally do not have the workers' interests in mind, but rather the interests of the employers and/or political party and large corporations, such as maquiladora plants. Workers of the plant usually do not have any real representation in the collective bargaining contracts signed by the *charro* union. In fact, the workers often don't even know they are 'represented' by something like a union. Wages are set at a minimum, working conditions are poor, and anyone who dares to complain or organize independently to improve these conditions runs a high risk of getting fired (Pastor Juvenil Obrera 2003, 184-5). Independent unions such as the ones part of FAT are different, do not have links with the government or employers and, as mentioned, do have workers' interests at heart.

This intensified in the NAFTA era. Today, FAT still fights for justice, liberty, and democracy. Their mission is to construct a more free and just society, aiming to achieve their ultimate goal of *autogestión*¹⁰ for the working class (ibid.).

Through the collective contracts, used at all FAT offices and at the affiliated unions, equal treatment of men and women in terms of salary is guaranteed. FAT incorporates the Mexican labor laws into the contracts with regard to women's needs (maternity leave, breastfeeding, et cetera). FAT has representative offices in more than half of Mexico's states, and is active in various industries such as textile, automotive, transportation, and the public sector (UE International 2015). It is a Leftist coalition of labor unions that is independent from the government¹¹ and corporations, with intensive links to urban popular movements, and cooperatives (Domínguez and Quintero). Besides national partnerships, FAT is also part of many international alliances.

FAT's gender perspective

Labor unions in Mexico are often owned and dominated by men (Domínguez 2010). Since the 1970s women started playing a more important role in FAT. The first objectives regarding the organization of women within FAT were established in 1981 (Belarmino Fernández 2010). This was mainly possible due to "greater openness and consideration of women workers in independent unions" (Domínguez and Quintero, 1, own translation). Canadian union women¹² played a large role in the establishment of the gender perspective (ibid.). The NAFTA negotiations opened the possibility for transnational solidarity, where the Canadian and Mexican union women visited each other for training, conferences and exchanging experiences. FAT was very involved

¹⁰ Autogestión is a very central and integral part of what FAT fights for. A literal translation to English does not exist. According to the Real Academia Española (the Spanish language dictionary) it means a "system of organization of a company [or other organization] according to which workers participate in the decision-making processes" (RAE 2015, own translation). Henri Lefebvre defines it as follows: "Each time a social group (generally the productive workers) refuses to accept passively its conditions of existence, of life, or of survival, each time such a group forces itself not only to understand but to master its own conditions of existence, autogestión is occurring" (Lefebvre 2009, 135, parentheses original). It is this definition that comes closest to what FAT stands for as a union defending and improving workers' rights.

¹¹ FAT does not have any official links and affiliations with or dependencies on corporations or political parties. However, politically they do tend to side with the Leftist PRD, as I noticed among almost all FAT affiliates. During election time in 2012, the PRD was openly supported by FAT staff and affiliates with banners, attendances to the party's conferences, et cetera. Other political parties, such as the ruling PRI and PAN, did not receive any noticeable support from FAT members.

¹² These women were part a group of women who started organizing from the moment the Free Trade Agreement between the USA and Canada was signed in 1984. They became leading actors in the Pro-Canada Network/Action Canada Network, which originated from the massive debate around the Free Trade Agreement (Domínguez and Quintero, 1).

in this. “The need arose to form women groups that went beyond the organization of FAT, to integrate other women union groups and women from the urban popular movement” with as a main objective the analysis of NAFTA’s impact on various aspects of women’s lives (ibid.). “[A] national women's network, which coordinates work on gender and equality, [is now] represented as part of FAT's leadership body, and operates within all of its sectors and zones” (UE International 2015), mainly as a result of the hard work and initiatives of the above mentioned women themselves (Belarmino Fernández 2010).

FAT’s women did not receive much support from the male members of FAT when first suggesting work towards gender equality, as the men considered the women’s concerns as too theoretical (Domínguez and Quintero). The reaction of FAT’s men appeared to be at best an attitude of tolerance instead of actual interest in the women’s work, while there was often even clear resistance to it (Domínguez and Quintero). Practice thus proved a masculine dominance within FAT that contradicts its gender perspective.

FAT’s union women realized the need to organize on a larger scale, including also women from urban popular movements and cooperatives. Various national meetings of FAT’s women followed. Gender representatives from each region were appointed, the National Commission of Gender was founded, and with transnational help, strategies were determined. It was decided a gender perspective needed to be implemented into all sectors and organizations of FAT (Domínguez and Quintero). After several years of struggle, the National Assembly adopted this.^{13 14}

Some positive work has thus been done to improve gender equality, but progress has been slow (Domínguez and Quintero). On FAT’s new website (FAT 2015) the gender perspective has a prominent place and takes up an integral part of the organization’s strategy. In practice, the gender perspective is being implemented through gender equality workshops for female FAT staff, and separate workshops for female FAT affiliates, to teach them about gender equality, women’s rights, and women organizing. Posters and folders on gender equality are also distributed amongst FAT’s

¹³ This thesis offers a summary of several important events, but does not have the space for a full and detailed account of all processes and events regarding the implementation of the gender perspective at FAT. For this, I recommend to read Domínguez and Quintero’s chapter on FAT, Hathaway (1997), and Belarmino Fernández’s book (2010).

¹⁴ The National Assembly I refer to in this thesis is officially called the Congreso Nacional (National Congress). It is the highest authority and elected organ within FAT, where members can vote on proposals (Gómez and Robles n.d., 13-14), as was done with the incorporation of the gender perspective.

men, women, and affiliates. Occasionally, the national gender coordinator and gender representatives give workshops or lectures for (usually larger) mixed groups of men and women.

This suggests that gender equality *has* taken up an integral part of FAT's work, publications, and policies. Contradictions are noticeable, however, when comparing the presentation of FAT's gender perspective on their website and in Belarmino Fernández's book (2010) written for FAT, with Domínguez and Quintero's independent research. Nowhere in the 2010 book or on the website is it mentioned that women face rejection, resistance, disinterest or unwillingness from FAT's men regarding the gender perspective, or that women are still being marginalized within FAT. The book is 370 pages long, but only 7 pages are dedicated to women, the gender perspective and gender equality. Neither the book, or the website, nor other documents I found at FAT offer any analysis or concrete empirical results of the functioning of the gender perspective. Perhaps things have changed since Domínguez and Quintero's 2005 research. Or are there still discrepancies between theory and practice? I hope to shed some light on recent developments and the current status and level of implementation of FAT's gender perspective with my empirical research.

METHODS

Methodology

Research design

As my research concerns women organizing and one of the aims of my research is to make the voices of FAT's women heard. I took this as a starting point to determine my methodology. Bryman (2008, 396) discusses feminist sensitivity in relation to research design and determines that qualitative research "provides greater opportunity for a feminist sensitivity to come to the fore", as it "allows women's voices to be heard [and] women *not* to be treated as objects to be controlled by the researcher's technical procedures". Quantitative research on the other hand is more likely to suppress women's voices by ignoring them or by giving more importance to statistics (ibid.), the opposite of my aim. Because it is important in my research to listen to what FAT's women have to say and to make sure that they are not silenced in any

way, I chose a qualitative research design. This by itself does not guarantee a feminist sensitivity in research. Therefore I decided to write my thesis from a feminist research perspective. The feminist research perspective by Ackerly and True is defined as being “expressed (in part) through a feminist research ethic that guides our research decisions and helps us to reflect on and attend to dynamics of power, knowledge, relationships, and context throughout the research process” (2010, 1, parentheses original).

According to Bryman (2008) an interpretivist approach allows research from an individual perspective, focusing on how people make sense of the world around them by interpreting and analyzing their behavior. It is precisely my aim to conduct my research from an individual (not an organizational) perspective, and I will be interpreting and analyzing the behavior and opinions of the participants through interviews and observations. I thus chose an interpretivist rather than a positivist approach.

My thesis is based on a constructionist ontology, as I believe social phenomena are produced through social interaction and that they are in constant state of revision. In my opinion, social objects are socially constructed, rather than “hav[ing] an existence that is independent of social actors” (Bryman 2008, 19). Creswell (2009, 8) refers to this as constructivism, and claims: “[...] individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences”, meanings bestowed upon them by culture. In this type of ontology, the goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation, which is precisely my aim.

Methods

In choosing my methods I reflected on the possible options through the lens of a feminist research ethic (Ackerly and True 2010). As my main method I chose qualitative semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviewing has become one of the most used methods in feminist research, as it “allows many of the goals of feminist research to be realized” (Bryman 2008, 463), such as a non-hierarchical relationship, as well as the possibility to build trust between the interviewer, and the interviewee (Ackerly and True 2010). Bryman (2008) adds that semi-structured interviewing reduces the power relations between interviewer and interviewee to a minimum, which will stimulate the women to express their views and opinions.

I complement this method with participant observation. Though not as elaborately used as my interviews, it allowed me to observe the gender relations within FAT as an organization as advised by Ackerly and True (2010). With solely interviews as my method, I might have missed out on noticing these gender relations among FAT staff. It will enable me to “uncover unexpected topics or issues” and allow me to “gain access to areas like patterns of resistance at work” (Bryman 2008, 466).

These two methods combine into an overarching case study of women’s organizing at FAT and its gender perspective. A case study is appropriate for my research, as it concerns the study of people’s behavior within an organization (Bryman 2008).

Use of theory

I started my empirical research with several theoretical concepts. However, some of the theories used were altered or discarded after conducting the empirical research, as I felt the ‘old’ theories did not fully explain my case. Most of the theories used thus depended on the results I got from the interviews and participant observation. An example of this is the fact that I realized *after* conducting the interviews with the men that theory on masculinity and men and gender issues needed to be included. Theories were thus generated inductively in my thesis, instead of starting with a theory as is done in (post) positivism (Creswell 2009; Bryman 2008). As Ackerly and True (2010, 77) put it: “[...] expect the theoretical import of your research to be revealed through your analysis of the data”. I built on the theoretically informed and empirical literature in my research fields that proved most relevant for my case, as Ackerly and True (2010) advise.

Data Collection

I have already motivated above why I chose each particular research method, but there is one more reason why I thought these methods together would be able to provide me with the best possible data. Ackerly and True distinguish three different types of data that can be gathered: ‘talk data’, ‘participant, visual, or numerical data’, and ‘textual data’ (Harding 1987, 2 in Ackerly and True 2010, 160-161). With the methods I chose I gathered each of these: talk data through my interviews, participant data through my observations, and textual data through literature and theory, offering me the widest possible range of data for my thesis.

Semi-structured Interviews

The most important empirical data of my thesis consists of 14 semi-structured interviews. I chose semi-structured interviews, as there were several themes I wanted to discuss in each interview; these themes (see below) are the main basis for my empirical research. In choosing unstructured interviews, I would have had more trouble controlling the interview (Bryman 2008), making it more difficult to incorporate my themes. Structured interviews do not fit with the feminist research ethic I applied; they limit the freedom of speech of the interviewee, exactly the opposite of my aim (Ackerly and True 2010).

I conducted the interviews individually, face-to-face. The interviewees were chosen according to three different groups: female FAT staff, male FAT staff and female FAT affiliates¹⁵. As Bryman (2008) suggests for semi-structured interviews, I prepared an interview guide with the following themes, and several questions for each theme:

- Labor conditions and gender relations
- The home and gender relations
- The gender perspective of FAT
- The organization of women within FAT

This guide gave me directions as to which topics and main questions to discuss during the interviews. There was room for extra questions and “non-scheduled” topics. I left this to the participants to decide. In line with the feminist research ethic the participants decided if and how long to discuss each topic. I allowed them to include other topics and ask me questions¹⁶. Not all questions in the guide were asked in all interviews, but all interviewees answered the most important questions.

All 14 interviews were recorded, with explicit permission.

I conducted interviews with 11 women and 3 men at FAT. As mentioned, women’s organizing towards a gender perspective in mixed organizations like FAT is the main aim of the thesis, which is why the main focus is on FAT’s female staff and female affiliates. Previous research at FAT has shown that in Mexico’s patriarchal culture

¹⁵ The women in this last group do not work for FAT but participate in FAT’s activities, such as marches and workshops, and therefore have knowledge about the organization, its gender perspective, and the women groups within FAT.

¹⁶ For more information about my interviews in relation to the feminist research ethic, see Ethical Considerations below.

work on achieving gender equality is still largely done by women. I want to make their voices heard and aim to get to know how these women organize towards achieving a successful gender perspective, what their strategies are, whether the gender perspective has advanced in the last decade, what obstacles they face, and how they see the attitude of men towards gender issues and a gender perspective. However, I believe the implementation of a successful gender perspective in an organization requires effort from both women and men, which is why I decided to include three interviews with men as well. The men's interviews are to serve as reference; hence they are fewer than the interviews with women. The men did contribute very valuable information, but the thesis does not aim towards a comparative case study between FAT's women and FAT's men, which explains why the majority of the interviews were conducted with women. I set the number of men and the number of women I wanted to interview beforehand.

Participant observation

I conducted participant observation on a couple of occasions¹⁷. In the hopes of finding out more about the gender relations within FAT, I observed a meeting of FAT's steering committee, a group of 3 men and 3 women. My goal was only to listen and observe in order to gain an insight in the gender relations through verbal and non-verbal behavior. Therefore, I took the role of *complete observer* in which I did not interact with the participants and they did not take me into account (Bryman 2008, 410-411). The participants agreed to the observation, its recording, and my taking field notes beforehand.

I took a different approach for the other two observations, which were conducted during a gender equality workshop¹⁸ FAT organized for female affiliates once every two weeks, and a gender workshop for female FAT staff. I participated in these workshops myself, and conducted my participant observations in the mean time, with permission. My role here can thus best be described as an *overt role as participant-as-observer* (Bryman 2008, 410). I decided not to record these two observations, as I wanted the women to feel as free as possible to express themselves. I did take field notes (with permission).

¹⁷ As Bryman (2008, 465) suggests, I limited my definition of participant observation to the specifically observational activities involved in participant observation, and do not include interviews as part of participant observation.

¹⁸ See the chapter "The Case"; here I elaborate on these gender equality workshops.

Participants

It was important to me to interview the coordinator of the gender program and the Gender Representatives in Mexico City and other FAT offices. They are the ones who know most about the organization's gender perspective, and are responsible for implementing it. I also wanted to interview the six members (3 men and 3 women) of the National Coordination of FAT, as they have the most knowledge of FAT at an organizational level, also with regard to the gender perspective. The remaining interviews I conducted were with women who attend the gender equality workshops organized by FAT.

I did not have control over the age of my participants. They are between 30 and 70 years old. The interviewees have different educational backgrounds and levels of education: from elementary school to university, and from lawyer and industrial engineer to workers at a large indoor market in Mexico City.¹⁹ All participants are Mexican natives.

The participants remain anonymous and are identified only by sex (F for female, M for male), age, and affiliation with FAT. A number from 1 to 3 will be assigned to the men (for example M3), and a number from 1 to 11 for the women (F6 for example) for analysis-, identification-, and in-text reference purposes.

Literature collection

A third type of data collection I used was the studying of organizational documents, folders, publications, and the FAT website. I did this in order to find out how FAT, as an organization, presents its gender perspective on paper (in theory), and to gain an insight in how the women who attend the gender equality workshop are educated about gender equality and the organization's gender perspective²⁰. It allowed me to determine if there are any discrepancies between the theory and practice of FAT's gender perspective.

I also used academic literature and theory for my thesis. I gathered the necessary literature through books, articles, Google Scholar, Google Books, Gothenburg

¹⁹ Several of the female FAT affiliates work at this market. They clean the public bathrooms there. This market is called CeDA (Central de Abasto), and it is one of the largest indoor markets in the country. These women have been affiliated with FAT for a few years, since FAT helped them in their struggle for better labor conditions and gender equality. For more information about their struggle, see Belarmino Fernández (2010, 334-340, in Spanish) or FAT's website www.fatmexico.org.mx. Their union is called STRACC.

²⁰ Handouts in the form of folders and documents are often used at these workshops. It gives the participating women the opportunity to re-read the discussed topics at home and to use them as study material.

University's online library, and the online library of Eindhoven University of Technology. I used English and Spanish literature.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis of both the interviews and the participant observations I roughly followed Creswell's analysis process, which contains several steps (Creswell 2009, 185-186). As this describes a general process of analysis for qualitative research, I found it useful for the analysis of my research data.

For the interviews analysis, I first identified several main themes²¹. I then divided them up into sub-themes, so it would be easier for me to locate information later on in the analysis process. Creswell refers to this process as *coding* (ibid.). I also identified several patterns, commonalities and differences I encountered (Creswell's Step 3). After Step 4 I had 4 main themes and 3-5 sub-themes left for each topic, with which I started the detailed analysis.

In the analysis of the observations I looked for certain patterns in gender relations for the people present during the meeting of FAT's steering committee, and for anything during the gender equality workshops or at other occasions that would help me understand why these women organize themselves and what the men's attitudes could be towards their organizing and FAT's gender perspective. I patterned the summaries of the observations just as I did with the interviews.

Both the observations and the interviews were then compared and analyzed with theory. As mentioned, several new theories had to be found in order to explain the situation at FAT.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative research with an interpretive approach will always be somewhat biased, as the researcher him/herself is part of the research and will need to interpret the findings (Bryman 2004; Creswell 2009). In a constructivist approach, the researcher acknowledges that his/her own personal and cultural experiences shape the interpretation of the research (Creswell 2009). This is the case in my empirical

²¹ These themes were selected based on the answers of the participants regarding the topics and were both more elaborate and more specific than the earlier-mentioned four interview themes.

research, as it was conducted in a (for me) foreign country and language²². I did try to minimize biases by maximizing my knowledge about the Spanish language and Mexican history and culture before conducting the research. Despite this, it may be possible that I have missed certain cultural and language specificities. However, my Spanish and knowledge of Mexican culture was sufficient enough to limit these biases or losses to a minimum.

During and after the interviews, participants were given the opportunity to bring up their own topics and ask questions, allowing for them to speak about things we had not discussed in the interviews, or to elaborate more about certain topics. I did this to make sure they would not leave the interview feeling there were things left out; I gave the participants the opportunity to share their stories with me, related or unrelated with the interview themes. Moreover, I chose to divide the interviews into several main themes, making sure to cover a broad scope of topics related to my research.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play an important role in a feminist research perspective. The personal viewpoints expressed during interviews and observations needed to be handled in an ethical way, making sure to reduce power relations and to prevent marginalization or silencing from occurring (Ackerly and True 2010). I handled this as follows. All participants knew me, my position as intern/researcher, and my research topics before conducting the interviews and observations. They volunteered to be interviewed and agreed to be observed beforehand. To create trust, I started the interview and observations with small talk to make the participants comfortable. They were told they could stop me at any point during the interview/observations should I touch upon a topic they did not want to discuss or if they felt uncomfortable. They could ask me questions as well. After discussing this I asked for permission to record, which all participants allowed.

The participants have shared some very personal opinions and criticisms with me with regard to FAT, for which I am grateful. I do not want their cooperation to have any possible negative influence on the relationships between FAT's staff or affiliates.

²² I am from the Netherlands and my native language is Dutch; the research was conducted in Spanish, in Mexico.

For this reason, only their sex, age, and position at or affiliation with FAT is included, as this information is important in the empirical analysis.

Limitations

In hindsight, given the amount of work it took to conduct and analyze them, it might have been a better idea to slightly reduce the number of interviews. However, all interviewees gave me valuable information, which is why all 14 interviews are included in the thesis.

The views the men shared with me proved to be very useful during the analysis process, so I decided to give them more importance by including theory on masculinities. While this thesis is not a comparative case study between FAT's men and women, looking back, I could have interviewed more men. Yet I feel the three men that were available for interviewing at the time provided me with enough useful material to carry out the research of this thesis the way I did. I therefore do not see it as a shortcoming to have three (not more) interviews with men.

The interviewees in my case study are all linked to FAT and also represent offices in other cities in Mexico. Making generalizations or drawing conclusions for other (similar) organizations in Mexico or other countries may not be possible. The outcomes and conclusions of this thesis are specific for my case study and may not be applicable in other situations. Careful analysis of the local situation is therefore necessary, before using this information in any other organization.

THEORY: WOMEN ORGANIZING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

The purpose of this chapter is to have an in-depth discussion of existing theory that helps me answer my first research question and its sub questions. I first investigate the concept of women's gender interests and processes of citizenship construction, both in relation to women organizing. I then explore the role of men in this and their attitudes towards gender issues.²³

²³ Theories from different fields are encountered in relation to these discourses: feminism, social movement theory, resistance studies, Latin American studies, masculinity theory, globalization, and perhaps even psychology or behavioral sciences. The thesis has neither the time nor the space to discuss all. This chapter should be seen as a discussion of the theories that I deemed most fitting for answering the research questions, and most applicable to the case study at FAT.

Women's Interests

Maxine Molyneux (1985; 2001) and Anna Jónasdóttir (1988) argue that women's interests are a contested topic, yet "central to feminist evaluations of [...] social policies [...]" (Molyneux 1985, 230). One should be careful to equate gender interests with women's interests and to assume gender is the decisive factor in women's interests, for this is not automatically the case. Women's oppression is argued to be multicausal and varies across space and time, and also class and ethnicity. Determining a single set of common women's interests is therefore extremely difficult, if not impossible (Molyneux 1985). Recognizing difference rather than assuming homogeneity is therefore crucial in the applicability of any theory on interests. What Molyneux (1985; 2001) does recognize is that the different conceptions of women's interests may be, explicitly or implicitly, related to the causes of gender inequality, and that women may have certain common interests, which she refers to as gender interests. There is thus a distinction between women's interests and gender interests (Molyneux 2001). She argues the need to "specify how the various categories of women might be affected differently and act differently on account of the particularities of their social positioning and their chosen identities" (Molyneux 1985, 232; see also Jónasdóttir 1988, 43), taking into account gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality among other factors.

Jónasdóttir (1988) and Jónasdóttir and Jones (2009) offer a critical discussion and reflection on the applicability of the concept of interests to women's situation in society. They distinguish between the *formal* and the *content aspect* of interests, the *formal* being "the demand 'to be among', or the demand for participation in and control over society's public affairs", and the *content*, being the specific needs, wishes, and demands of people in order to be satisfied, also referred to as *agency* (Jónasdóttir 1988, 40). One should be careful not to use the term interests as synonymous to needs or demands, as this causes the *formal* aspect of interests, that of active participation, to disappear. The *formal* and *content* aspect should always be seen as interconnected and simultaneous (Jónasdóttir 1988).

The concept of interests is argued to be politically relevant in times of rapid transformation in which social groups no longer accept the ruling political order, such as in the case of Mexico in relation to globalization and neoliberalism. These processes, as argued above, have left women marginalized and facing a triple burden

in the traditionally patriarchal society. As Molyneux (2006, 1178) describes it: “the furtherance of women’s rights have stalled in the face of unpopular neoliberal policies which have continued to take a disproportionate toll on women.” Women groups, according to Jónasdóttir (1988), have started to question this ruling patriarchal system, or ‘salus populi masculini’ as she refers to it, as it does not reflect their common gender interests as women.

Strategic and practical gender interests

Molyneux (1985) makes a similar analysis on gender interests in relation to women organizing and their questioning of the current gender order. She distinguishes between women’s practical and strategic gender interests. Practical gender interests are defined as “based on the satisfaction of needs arising from women’s placement within the sexual division of labor”, referring to an immediate perceived need, such as housing, nutrition or basic welfare provisioning that does not have a strategic goal of for example achieving gender equality (Molyneux 2001, 44).²⁴ Class effects are present here, as women of a higher social class often do not have (as many) practical gender needs in terms of housing, public welfare et cetera as lower class women (Molyneux 1985). Also, as Domínguez (2004), Moser and Levy (1986) and Molyneux (2001) suggest, women tend to have special practical gender interest in the domestic sphere and welfare provision, as they are (especially in Latin American countries) still largely responsible for household and childcare duties. Their practical gender interests, and in fact women’s movements in general in Latin America, are thus often associated with mothering and motherly or “women’s virtues” (Domínguez 2004; Molyneux 2001).

Strategic gender interests, as opposed to practical gender interests, are derived deductively by the women themselves, “from the analysis of women’s subordination and from the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory, set of arrangements to those which exist” (Molyneux 1985, 232). The desire to challenge gender subordination is thus key in strategic gender interests. For example, the removal of institutionalized forms of gender discrimination and the alleviation of a double or

²⁴ Again, one cannot assume women’s unity in gender interests and gender issues, whether practical or strategic, and one has to take into account that women’s acceptance and recognition of and desire to realize certain strategic gender interests cannot be taken for granted.

triple burden are well-known strategic gender interests for many women in Latin America (Olavarria 2006; Brickner 2006).

It is argued that women's practical needs ought to be met before strategic gender interests can be effective (Molyneux 1985); after all, if women do not have housing or other adequate living conditions, it is unlikely that their first priority will be, for example, the creation of policies on gender equality at the political level. Jónasdóttir agrees with this as she says that women should first have their needs met without having to fight for their own positions of influence (Jónasdóttir 1988).

Some scholars like Moser (1989) and Moser and Levy (1986) make the transition from interests to needs in order to make the above-discussed theoretical concepts of gender interests applicable in gender (policy) planning. While it can prove to be a useful tool in planning, one needs to be careful with its practical applicability. Molyneux (2001) cautions that interests are more clearly intentional than needs, which are usually deemed to exist. Jónasdóttir (1988) argues that needs tend to be defined by others, for example the political elite, while in interests there is a greater degree of agency. Exactly this is what is important in the development of strategic interests: the women's agency and that their interests are analyzed and defined by the women themselves. In any situation, one ought to be careful to not *assume* gender interests *for* women, but let the women themselves conceptualize and organize towards their strategic interests, from their specific socio-historic intersection of gender, class and ethnicity. Jónasdóttir (1988) suggests a close relation between needs and interests, especially in the planning field. Moser (1989) calls for the translation of interests to needs once the women themselves have identified their interests.

Women and Citizenship

The discussion on interests in relation to women's organizing can be placed within the broader discourse on women and citizenship struggles. In their subordination, many women have learned that they have "the right to demand rights" (Dagnino 1988, 48, in Domínguez 2004, 31) and start organizing towards gender equality. One could thus state that, with the transition from practical to strategic gender interests, women are becoming feminist and that strategic gender interests may therefore be considered as women's 'real interests' (Molyneux 1985; Espinosa 2004). This brings

me to the contribution of women's citizenship construction to the advancement of women's strategic gender interests.

Along with Molyneux (2001), Espinosa (2004), Domínguez (2004), and Brickner (2006), I argue that women organizing towards gender equality are actively contributing to the improvement of their citizenship. Citizenship is defined by Domínguez (2004, 28) as "the recognition of rights in liberal societies" and by Molyneux (2001, 165) as the "legal foundation of social membership". In Mexico men and women have equal rights by law. However, in practice, women are still limited in exercising full citizenship rights; they perform substantially more household work (including child care) than men. Combined with paid work, they have little time for political participation and other forms of exercising citizenship rights that men have easier access to (Hendra, FitzGerald, and Seymore 2013), marginalizing them to secondary citizens (Espinosa 2004). Citizenship therefore has been and still is a masculine model, where women's attributes are more often than not the reason or excuse for their exclusion (Domínguez 2004; Espinosa 2004). Citizenship is thus itself deeply gendered, and also context and culture-dependent. One therefore has to analyze women's ability to exercise citizenship rights in practice (Molyneux 2001). Women's transition from the private (the household) to the public (participation in, for example unions) is essential here. To achieve this, a "sexually differentiated concept of citizenship" is needed; one that gives "political significance to women's capacities 'including women as women' in a context of civil equality and active citizenship" (Domínguez 2004, 28).

Without a *formal and institutional link*, and *social and political participation*, democratic citizenship is hard to achieve, according to Espinosa (2004, 198). Linking the struggle for citizenship to political parties and formal politics could thus be fruitful. Gutiérrez goes one step further and claims: "the struggle for women to achieving citizenship [...] could be considered as the cornerstone of current politics" (Gutiérrez 2002 in Espinosa 2004, 202, own translation).

According to Molyneux (2001), civil society ought to play a large role in women's empowerment, through training, education, and creating awareness. Women's participation in civil society is thus key. At the union level, Espinosa (2004) suggests social participation and collective action as ways to achieve a true democracy, that is,

with citizen's participation in social spaces, not only in formal politics, and thus a participatory citizenship that grants real influence on decision-making processes.

However, this is not an easy task and not without obstacles, as we shall see in the next pages. Moreover, it cannot and should not be attempted without taking into account women's diversity and individuality (Molyneux 1985; Espinosa 2004). Domínguez warns that this could otherwise lead to *essentialism* where women's individuality and diversity are surpassed by a commonality of, for example, women as mothers, causing those who do not fit this description to lose all legitimacy (Domínguez 2004, 29), hereby also ignoring important discourses such as class and ethnicity, failing to make the transition to women's strategic gender interests (Espinosa 2004).

Women's movements have increasingly been important in Latin America in citizenship and rights struggles (Molyneux 2001). Domínguez analyzes interviews with Mexican women who participate in either feminist or mixed organizations. She concludes that these women's participation in organizations has "awakened a gender consciousness", which helped overcome internal struggles, mainly with regard to the private-public dichotomy and therefore also in gender relations within the family (Domínguez 2004, 129-130). Beyond that, a heightened gender consciousness in women through participation can eventually lead to their active citizenship and to "tolerance for diversity, respect, and solidarity", all essential elements of democracy (Domínguez 2004, 143). Molyneux (2001) outlines several positive results from the active citizenship model, such as the creation of spaces for women to occupy in the public sphere, and their being able to challenge their subordination in the home, leading to a cultural transformation for women and the redefinition of gender relations (see also Olavarría 2006).

Among the citizenship rights that have been underdeveloped in Latin America, Brickner names women's labor rights. Having a paid job opens up the possibility for women to engage in political discourse through work-based political organizations like labor unions. Not having this opportunity, because of a double burden or the simple denial to access the workforce, not uncommon for Latin American women, prevents women from having an "equal stake in citizenship" (Brickner 2006, 57).

The construction of citizenship is therefore essential for women, as it challenges the institutions and also the State itself in their barriers to equality.

Espinosa (ibid.) and Barquet and Osses (2004) argue that citizenship construction for women is an unfinished struggle. Domínguez (2004) concludes that many problems remain, such as overcoming the private-public dichotomy, the low priority generally given to women's issues in patriarchal Mexico, and often even active resistance against the incorporation of gender issues into mixed organizations or society in general. A lack of a critical mass of women in decision-making positions also contributes to this.

According to Molyneux (2001) and Bricker (2006) neoliberal reform in Latin America has weakened the independently unionized workforce and women's position in it; therefore also affecting women's incorporation into citizenship in a negative way. Brickner (2006) examines in theory and empirically how women's organization in several Mexico City labor unions can contribute to the challenging of gender inequality within the unions and an expansion of citizenship rights for these women. As we know, Mexican labor unions are largely patriarchal, and therefore more often than not fail to defend women workers' interests (Brickner 2006; Rigat-Pflaum 2008). Any changes with regard to gender equality and the social construction citizenship thus depend on the women themselves. By doing this through collaboration with other union women groups, civil society, feminist NGOs, training women to become active leaders and representatives of women workers' interests, Brickner argues that these women become empowered and political agents of change. This may lead to the raising of women's issues within unions, and eventually the incorporation of gender equality or a gender perspective within these unions (ibid.). The cases of women unionists in Mexico City she examines, provide proof that "organized and dedicated union women can influence the highest levels of discourse about women's labor rights [..., and] acting in alliance with other social actors [...] can be a successful strategy in advancing the discourse about women's labor rights", hereby contributing to women's redefinition of citizenship to accommodate their needs (Brickner 2006, 68).

I can now answer the first sub question: What are women's gender interests in organizing towards a gender perspective and what, if any, is the relation with

citizenship? Firstly, generalizations on women's interest are not possible, as among women class, ethnicity, and socio-historic differences exist that cannot be ignored. Their common interests, referred to as gender interests, can be practical or strategic. Women organizing towards a gender perspective in a mixed organization may be seen as the pursuit of strategic gender interests, implying that women themselves have concluded to not agree with the ruling gender order and aim to change this through organization. Women's organizing towards a gender perspective also has both a *formal aspect* of (equal) participation, and a *content aspect*, for example through their demand for a gender perspective in a mixed organization. In order to overcome women's marginalization in patriarchal societies in Latin America, women enter in citizenship struggles, such as the organization towards a gender perspective in a mixed organization, in order to achieve their strategic gender interests. Women's incorporation in civil society, such as labor unions, is key in the achievement of women's strategic gender interests and a more democratic form of citizenship. There is thus a direct relation between women's strategic gender interests and citizenship struggles.

Men and Gender Issues

Attitudes

Latin American men and women have experienced changes to their private and public life due to economic globalization, causing a questioning of the prevailing gender system and concepts of masculinity and power, and with that tension and conflicts arise (Olavarría 2006). As a natural reaction of men and women who are uncomfortable with these changes, one sees actions to try to prevent them, or hesitations to accept change (Ratele 2015; Esplen 2006).

De Keijzer, using Bourdieu's theory of 'habitus', offers an explanation of why change can be difficult. Habitus is described as "structures of perception, thought, and action that last over time and are adaptable to different situations. These structures tend to be reproduced in the socialization of others through an educational process instilled by authority" (for example parents or the Church²⁵) (De Keijzer

²⁵ See Domínguez 2004 and Molyneux 1985 on the influence of the Catholic Church on gender relations in Mexico and Latin America. In fact, examples exist of programs that actively try to "drive women 'back home' [...] as a desire to impose a renewed religious hegemony over sexuality and gender and over family relations" (De Keijzer 2004, 33).

2004, 30-31). Habitus thus instills in people from an early age what their expected behavior should be within the construction of culture. With the changing gender relations, traditional gender roles are eroding, causing insecurity of how people should be and behave: “[m]en are looking for women who don’t exist *anymore* and women are seeking men who don’t exist *yet*” (ibid., 31, italics original) is an accurate way to describe it.

Men in Mexico are argued to react to gender equality in various ways: public support, active resistance, passive resistance, adaptation of the changes, or a chameleon-like approach where the equality discourse is adopted, but not its practice (De Keijzer 2004). Ratele (2015, 3, italics original) defines resistance as a common “*reactionary* social and psychological opposition to challenges to existing gender relations and hegemonic forms of masculinity.” Furthermore, De Keijzer (2004) describes that men often enjoy the privileges and power traditional masculinity gives them. Some even fear women seizing power over them, explaining a reluctance to gender equality (Scambor and Scambor 2012; De Keijzer 2004). Many men therefore remain resistant or hesitant towards gender equality (De Keijzer 2004; Ratele 2015).

However, De Keijzer (2004) theorizes that men may be more receptive to equal gender relations if they have observed the costs of hegemonic masculinity themselves, for example through experiencing domestic violence or a life-changing event like becoming fathers. Wife, family, co-workers and others have a great effect on the support or resistance of men towards gender issues. Collective changes seem to be more assured this way than when men are criticized and unsupported (ibid.). Just as in the case of women, civil society is said to play a large role as agents of change in men towards gender equality. Moreover, work with boys and young men is considered crucial in their identity formation, which could explain why these groups tend to be more accepting towards gender equality programs and the concept in general (ibid., 44).

Inclusion of men

Throughout literature there is wide support for the inclusion of men in gender issues. Along with scholars like Correia and Bannon (2006), Esplen (2006), Olavarria (2006), and Ratele (2015) I argue that work towards gender equality requires cooperation of men and women together. Both men and women are part of society or a mixed organization. Hence, in my opinion, men should be actively included in

processes towards gender equality and the implementation of a gender perspective in mixed organizations. Gender equality should thus not be seen as merely a women's issue.

Several scholars argue that men's issues in gender equality processes have long been ignored or not given enough importance (Hendra, FitzGerald, and Seymour 2013; Olavarría 2006). Men's engagement in gender equality is, however, necessary (Hendra, FitzGerald, and Seymour 2013). A European Commission report on the role of men in gender equality concludes: "Men and gender equality should not be seen as contradictory to the empowerment of women and the realization of gender equality. [... T]he best way to promote gender equality is reciprocity and cooperation (between different actors and both sexes)" (Varanka, Nährinen, and Siukola 2006, 11 in European Commission 2013, 1, parentheses original). Not engaging with men may in fact even intensify gender inequalities (Esplen 2006).

Scambor and Scambor (2012) argue for gender mainstreaming, where a gender perspective is integrated into every stage of policy processes in society and also in organizations, in order to promote gender equality. This means that one should not only look at women. Men should not be left out, as they are gendered too (Ratele 2015). Correia and Bannon have another approach and suggest 'men-streaming'. The term refers to "the explicit inclusion of male issues as gender issues and the relational aspect of gender" (Correia and Bannon 2006, 246). They state that leaving men's issues out of gender, or directing interventions solely towards women, is ineffective if men do not cooperate and are not included. Moreover, they criticize many international development agencies for still directing their work on gender solely to women, or to engage men in women's gender agenda, which could mean women to have the sole agency on gender issues. They claim this is unsustainable and cannot achieve the targeted goals. Similarly, leaving women out of men's issues will also be counterproductive (Correia and Bannon 2006; Barker 2006).

"Men's support for gender equality often remains abstract and does not necessarily translate into gender equality in practice, evidenced by 'low levels of men's participation in household and caregiving tasks, and in high levels of violence'" (Levtov et al. 2014, 491 in Ratele 2015, 3). One may thus argue that in order to achieve true change, men's active involvement in and support of gender equality and men's inclusion in gender issues is crucial; passive support or the chameleon-like

approach that De Keijzer (2006) describes will not be sufficient to bring about change.

After this discussion, I can answer the second sub question on the attitudes of men towards and their inclusion in gender issues. As women are engaging in gender equality, men have several possible responses to this. Men who have experienced the consequences of a hegemonic masculinity or certain life-changing events, and younger men and boys are argued to be more accepting towards gender equality and may be more likely to want to actively engage in it than other men. Resistance towards gender issues and gender equality within mixed organizations is common due to fear of losing power and hegemony, and also because of peer pressure. Passive resistance and acceptance are seen as well, as is a chameleon approach where on paper gender equality is supported, but not acted upon in practice.

Large support exists in academic theory for the inclusion of men in gender issues; the answer to my question whether men should be included is thus 'yes'. Men and women are both part of society and mixed organizations. Therefore it is argued that true gender equality cannot be achieved without the support of both men and women. It is considered counterproductive to exclude men from gender issues in society in general, or mixed organization. Gender mainstreaming and men-mainstreaming are argued to be strategies to achieve the inclusion of men. In practice, civil society's role in engaging men to become active supporters of gender equality is therefore important.

Conclusions

This brings me to the conclusion of the chapter, and with that the answering of the first main research question: How does women organizing contribute to the development or advancement of a gender perspective in a mixed organization?

The prevailing hegemonic masculinity in Latin American culture can provide problems to both women and men (De Keijzer 2004). Having a paid job offers women the opportunity for political activity in the form of, for example, labor union organizing or participation in women groups or mixed organizations. Through their organization towards gender equality women are argued to make a transition from practical to strategic interests, becoming feminist, as they realize they are being marginalized and oppressed, hereby complying both with the *formal* and the *content*

aspect of their interests (Molyneux 1985, 2001; Jónasdóttir 1988; Domínguez 2004). Involvement in civil society may give women the opportunity to act upon their specific strategic interests and through their collective organizing many examples exist of women pursuing the development of a gender perspective in mixed organizations. NGOs, unions, or other mixed organizations are considered important spaces for women to organize towards gender equality. Organizing in workshops, where the women educate themselves on various themes related to gender and women's rights, empowers them, and provides them with the tools and knowledge necessary to be able to exercise their active citizenship rights and to pursue a gender perspective in a mixed organization. Gender equality within society and in mixed organizations is thus argued to be crucial.

Needless to say, the challenges are large and numerous. I demonstrated that women organizing alone might not lead to the development or advancement of a successful gender perspective. Men's incorporation in gender issues and the cooperation between men and women is crucial in order to achieve gender equality for men and women, not only on paper, but actively, in practice, as well. It therefore requires a joint effort of men's and women's organizing.

It requires a careful process of change for men to realize the costs of hegemonic masculinity and the benefits of men's inclusion in gender equality (Ratele 2015; De Keijzer 2004; Correia and Bannon 2006). However, as De Keijzer (2004) and Ratele (2015) demonstrate, active support from men in gender equality is not impossible and can have positive changes towards gender equality. As long as (just as with women) men's diversity in masculinities, culture, class, and ethnicity are taken into account and the gender programs are not provided in a one-size-fits-all intervention model.

My conclusion is thus that women's organizing can contribute a great deal to the development of a gender perspective, through the demands for citizenship rights and the pursuit of their strategic gender interest, and more concrete through workshops, women groups, and participation in civil society. However, cooperation with men, and men's active inclusion in gender issues is necessary in order to develop and advance a successful gender perspective in a mixed organization.

VOICES OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION WITHIN FAT

“Women are like ants. First you see a single ant, and later it has become a big group that is all working together to build their nest. [...] But only with women and men together we can make true changes.”
(F1, 43, steering committee)

In this chapter I present the results of my empirical research. The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader insight in the situation at FAT with respect to women's organizing and FAT's gender perspective. I aim to make the voices of FAT's women and men heard about these topics²⁶. This chapter will answer the second research question of my thesis, as well as its sub questions.

From the earlier mentioned four interview themes²⁷, I divided this chapter up into several sections, based on the topics relevant for my case study and the answering of the research question and sub questions. I wanted to get an insight into FAT's gender perspective, its functioning, and learn how it is viewed by FAT's men and women. Furthermore, I am interested in the women's strategies in organizing, the possible obstacles they face, and the men's perspective on the women's organizing. All themes were discussed in each of the interviews. The themes should be seen as being interrelated, sometimes overlapping.

FAT's Gender Perspective

How is the gender perspective perceived and how is it implemented?

According to FAT's gender perspective, the men and women at the organization and its affiliates should be treated equally, both on paper and in practice. As we saw in the Background chapter, FAT's men and women are equal on paper in its clauses and statutes. Gender should also be a transversal topic in all activities at FAT, meaning that FAT and its affiliates actively promote gender equality among their staff. So how do FAT's staff and affiliates see the gender perspective?

“In the steering committee we have a specific representation of the gender issues [...]. We want gender equality to be integrated in FAT's daily practices. It is a process of transformation we are in. [...] Within FAT the

²⁶ I do not claim that the outcomes of the interviews are the 'whole or only truth' with regard to the discussed themes. This chapter simply reflects the personal opinions of the interviewees. It does not necessarily reflect or represent FAT's organizational standpoint on the themes, but this was never the aim of the thesis anyway. This chapter provides a piece of the picture. Generalizations may therefore not be possible or accurate.

²⁷ See page 19 for the presentation of the interview themes.

goal is to train and educate our women and men on the gender perspective, so that women will also have rights and are respected. [...] Right now, there are three women in the steering committee²⁸, which was a great achievement.”

(F1, 43, steering committee)

“I think the gender perspective is a central theme on FAT’s agenda.”

(F6, 38, gender representative Ciudad Juárez)

“In all the activities FAT realizes, the gender perspective and gender equality have to be included.”

(F7, 44, gender representative Saltillo)

All participants, both men and women, stress the importance of a gender perspective at FAT. They think it is and should be an integral part of all FAT activities and policies, and all agree it is a positive development at FAT. The gender perspective has also benefitted them on a personal level. Some examples:

“I once heard her [a person not associated with FAT] speak about gender equality [...]. It changed my life, because I realized that this is what we are lacking to work on at FAT. [...] What we have achieved in the last few years is that everyone accepts the gender perspective. Everyone knows the National Assembly has approved that gender equality has to be present in everything we do. [...] With the gender perspective, we have improved the respect for women within FAT.”

(F2, 52, steering committee and National Gender Coordinator)

“We have to keep developing it. [...] We want to achieve its implementation in all areas of the organization and its affiliates. That is our motto.”

(M2, 54, steering committee)

“FAT definitely has a gender perspective. As part of it, FAT organizes workshops, exactly to give us women training about women’s empowerment. We discuss themes like globalization, the double burden [...]. This helps us women to get to know the real world [...], and what our rights are.”

(F4, 43, gender representative Aguascalientes)

In my participant observations, I observed the gender relations at FAT’s Mexico City office during a meeting of the steering committee I was invited to attend.

²⁸ The steering committee now consists of three men and three women, so a representation of 50% was achieved for women. I remind the reader that the steering committee is responsible for the execution of all FAT’s policies, and with that also the gender perspective.

Unfortunately, gender issues or the gender perspective were not discussed during the meeting, as there were more pressing issues at hand at the time. I did not have any influence on the discussed topics, as it was a pre-scheduled meeting with its agenda already set. My goal was to listen and observe in order to gain an insight in the gender relations through verbal and non-verbal behavior. I took the role of *complete observer* in which I did not interact with the participants or participate in the meeting itself. The conclusions I draw from the analysis of this meeting are, that even though there were some lively discussions happening at some points, there was great respect among all six members. Everyone spoke at their turn and was given time to speak without being interrupted. I observed no clear differences between the importance given to men versus women and I did not notice any inequalities that could have gender as basis. Also on other occasions during mixed meetings or in general on the office floor I have not found evidence of a different treatment in men versus women. All members of the steering committee commented there are no differences between men and women salary-wise. No clear gender conflicts were thus observed during the opportunities I had for my participant observation.

This does not mean that there are no gender equalities present. I therefore suggest further research to be done among the FAT affiliates and during mixed meetings, and mixed gender workshops, in order to extend and update the knowledge presented here.

When analyzing the gender perspective thoroughly through the interviews, participants do voice several concerns regarding persisting gender inequalities and discrepancies between theory and practice of the gender perspective.

“I think we still say that sometimes ‘the men at FAT are in one place and the women are in another place’. That means we still make divisions. We should remove those.”

(F7, 44, gender representative Saltillo)

Participant F1 and F5 elaborate:

“We women have never been very visible [at FAT]. Even though we have always been here, we have never been visible”.

(F1, 43, steering committee)

“For the majority we are treated equally because of the gender perspective, but there are some men who, even though they are in FAT, they lack this education on equality, on justice in the treatment of women [...]. With the representatives of FAT in the other offices²⁹ [...] you also find a lot of machismo. We fight against this.”
(F5, 51, gender representative Monterrey)

In order to understand the practical functioning of the gender perspective in full, I also asked the men’s opinion on the topic.

“I think FAT is an organization that is very advanced in questions like gender equality, at least in proposals. But we are still very far away from achieving all objectives.”
(M1, 58, steering committee)

“We have had resistances, and it is not easy. But now we have defined a clear and consistent concept of gender and gender equality [...]. Since about ten years gender equality has been a priority at FAT. [...] It is also a result of the struggle of FAT’s women. We men cannot stay behind now.”
(M2, 54, steering committee)

We can already notice some obstacles in the practical implementation of the gender perspective here. As said, the topics in this chapter sometimes overlap each other; the obstacles will be further elaborated on in a later section. First I proceed to answer the first sub question.

From the presented information, we can conclude that FAT’s gender perspective is perceived as something that needs to exist, something important that is and should be a central theme in FAT’s daily functioning. None of the 14 interviewees said not to agree with the gender perspective. The goal of the gender perspective is, ultimately, to have everyone’s active support in the achievement of gender equality. FAT has not achieved this yet. However, in the last decade important advances have been made. Examples are the fact that all staff and affiliates now know of and recognize the existence of the gender perspective, and that knowledge on gender issues keeps spreading. FAT’s gender committee has achieved the incorporation of the perspective as an integral part in FAT’s structures, and has the concept clearly defined and communicated to everyone involved in the union. All interviewees agree that the

²⁹ With the other offices, she means the FAT offices in different parts of the country, such as Durango, Saltillo, Monterrey, Ciudad Juárez, et cetera.

gender perspective is something that requires more work, and that it is important to keep developing and improving its functioning.

Women Organizing

What are the women's strategies in organizing?

What follows is an investigation of the women's strategies in organizing and if there is any relation to FAT's gender perspective. I discussed their organizing elaborately with the women and present the results in this section. I start with the results of my participant observations, followed by a more elaborate analysis of the interviews on this topic.

The main way in which women at FAT organize is in women-only groups, educating female FAT staff and affiliates about women's rights, gender equality, the implementation of the gender perspective, among other topics. The female FAT staff all work at the FAT office in Mexico City and are thus employed by FAT. The female FAT affiliates are women who do not work at FAT itself, but are affiliated with FAT through their own union or as independent activists. The female FAT affiliates also attend women-only workshops organized by the gender coordinator that are designed especially for them. These women are generally of a lower middle class or working class, and all said to have grown up with the traditional machista culture present in their families. According to my observations, their level of knowledge on women rights, agency, globalization, and gender equality is therefore rather limited. The two workshops I observed are thus of a very basic level, teaching these women the principles of gender equality; several of the women admitted at the workshops that they did not know women have the same rights as men and should be treated equally, until they learned this at the workshops. When asked during the workshop what these workshops have meant to them, the women stressed that it has given them a sense of empowerment and independence, though they all voiced difficulty in the practical implementation of what they have learned into their household and job.

The first workshop consisted of an exercise with the purpose of teaching the women about gender equality, and FAT's gender perspective. The women were asked to write about their household and family, and the tasks they as women were expected to complete. It showed that all women were responsible for the household and child or grandchild care, and described their household as patriarchal. We elaborately

discussed this issue and the women all voiced their concerns about the inequalities in Mexican society, and that they want to contribute to change this by attending FAT's workshops. The workshop concluded with a short lecture on several famous female leaders and what their roles are, in order to show the women what women can achieve and how women can become leaders. The female FAT affiliates were still in the stages of learning about gender equality and women's rights. In order to teach them more about these topics, I made flyers as part of my internship, which were handed out at the end of the first workshop as homework and were to be discussed in the second workshop. The flyers were little booklets that contained newspaper articles from Mexico and other parts of the world on gender (in)equality and women's rights, for the women to learn about the situation in and outside Mexico. The women at the workshop are often very limited in their access to information, and these flyers, as they told me, helped them to gain knowledge. In a later stage, the workshops would get more advanced, with the aim of giving the women tools to promote gender equality in their own home and at work. I was not at FAT long enough to experience this.

Below are a couple of examples of what the women learn in and think about the workshops:

“They teach us about our rights. [...] I now learned that I, as a woman, should fight for my rights [...] because there should be equality between men and women. [...] I want to achieve this through what I am learning here.”

(F8, 58, FAT affiliate (CeDA, see note 23))

“I think it is very good that these workshops exist and that women within FAT are organizing themselves, because otherwise we women would stay behind. [...] With FAT we have a place to go to, to learn about gender equality issues, and that is important.”

(F9, 55, FAT affiliate (telecommunications union))

The female FAT staff, from Mexico City and other offices nationwide, attend several gender workshops a year organized by the National Gender Coordinator. My observations were conducted in two workshops during a two-day program and are based on my field notes and memories of the workshops. The workshops were interactive, the women were given several group- and individual assignments, and the focus was mainly gender (in)equality in Mexico. These women are responsible for the implementation of FAT's gender perspective in their FAT office. As they are the

gender representatives, their knowledge on gender-related issues is more advanced. The workshops were a combination between lectures and group interaction. The first workshop was about how the traditional economic model currently in Mexico marginalizes women with a double or triple burden and how this may be changed. All participants were asked to write down what their average day looked like; what they did in the household, in terms of childcare, work, organizing (at FAT or their own union), and for leisure. It showed that the women were largely responsible for household and (grand)child care duties, on top of their jobs and organizing at FAT. They were then given a lecture on the role of women in Mexican economy and the inequalities that are present. A discussion on this followed, where the main conclusion was that, with the implementation of FAT's gender perspective, the women aim to contribute to a change in the traditional economy, and with that an improvement in gender equality in Mexican society. Finally, the women were given information on the gender perspective at FAT, stressing the importance for the men to be involved. They were taught that men are also part of the solution to gender inequality and should therefore be actively incorporated. During the next reunion, they would elaborate on how to put this into practice. Sadly, I was not at FAT long enough to be present for these workshops.

In the interviews, several gender representatives of FAT offices elaborate on the workshops and what they mean to them:

“The workshops are educative [...]. We help each other learn and develop in this. [...] FAT also helps women workers, for example in strikes, in defending their rights [...]. We get training about gender equality in our work.”

(F5, 51, gender representative Monterrey)

FAT organizes workshops to give us women training about women's empowerment. We treat themes like the effects of globalization, the triple burden, gender equality and many other themes that help us women to get to know the real world [...], and what our rights are.”

(F4, 43, gender representative Aguascalientes)

“We are educating ourselves, because we [...] understand that we are part of society. We were a weak part. So we have to be trained, united, to be able to make our male colleagues aware that we are worthy as persons. That we are not something apart, but we are people just like them.”

(F7, 44, gender representative Saltillo)

“We are organizing because we want our country to change. We want the position of women to change. We want our daughters to live in equality, and for women to have a better life. [...] We have to promote and boost these changes.”

(F5, 51, gender representative Monterrey)

“The women organize to keep advancing gender equality at FAT [...], and also to understand and preserve their rights, as women and as workers. [...] This capacitation of the women is important.”

(M2, 54, steering committee)

Even though these women already had knowledge on gender issues, the quotes show that they greatly benefit from the workshops. The wide range of topics treated, from globalization’s effects and women’s rights to the triple burden and women organizing towards a gender perspective, provides them with the theoretical *and* practical information necessary to implement a gender perspective in their own FAT offices. Through these workshops the women have learned they are being marginalized in society and need to organize. This is crucial in the transition from practical to strategic gender interests as described by Molyneux (1985). Moreover, the workshops provide the women with training, and with that the necessary tools to overcome this subordination in FAT and to successfully promote gender equality within the organization among men and women. I conclude that these workshops for FAT’s women are essential in developing the gender perspective and improving gender equality at FAT.

Why are there women-only groups?

Taking the above into account, one of the most important answers I wanted to get from the interviews is why women are organizing in women-only groups, while there is already a gender perspective at FAT. Does this mean the gender perspective is not fully successful yet? Or are these groups something that needs to exist in addition to the gender perspective? Several women elaborate:

“We can say that [the women groups] are at the basis of FAT. From the beginning, there have always been women organizing themselves in groups. [...] Women have always been the most vulnerable ones in society [...], so first we have to train the ones that are most affected first and then start to integrate the men for them to learn as well. Because after all, they have also been affected by this social construct [of machismo].”

(F10, 42, Gender Coordinator Mexico City area)

“There is a space specifically for women, because within the National Coordination of gender equality there are various representatives of gender equality in each of the FAT offices, so we need to organize and discuss where there is work needed [in gender equality], and where the gender perspective *is* working. In general, obviously, we [the women] prefer this work to be done by women, because we are the ones that know most about the existing inequities and what problems may exist.”

(F3, 52, steering committee)

“With these workshops, we have to take into account that women are more in a disadvantage, so we have to have women-only workshops. [...] Because if you get together a mixed group, and the women are not empowered, they won’t speak their minds. [...] We wanted to include men’s workshops to train and inform them, so they get to know the gender construction [...]. Once that is done we want to put it into practice [...]. The workshops have so far been successful.”

(F2, 52, steering committee and National Gender Coordinator)

“It is important [to have a women-only space] because here women can speak about female topics and women’s issues [for example discrimination, (sexual) harassment, women’s marginalization] that women cannot or do not wish to talk about in a mixed group.”

(F2, 52, steering committee and National Gender Coordinator)

The women-only groups are thus claimed to need to exist as part of the gender perspective, where women get the opportunity to educate themselves on gender issues. If women are not able to speak their mind freely, it may strengthen the argument that the gender perspective’s implementation is not implemented successfully yet. In the next section I therefore look into the possible obstacles women may face in their organization and in the implementation of the gender perspective in general.

What obstacles do the women encounter?

Now, after about a decade of focus on gender equality at FAT, many participants, both men and women, argue the need to actively include men in the process.

“One of our basic objectives is to achieve equality of rights for everybody. You cannot talk about an equality of rights without solving inequality between men and women.”

(F2, 52, steering committee and National Gender Coordinator)

The strategy to achieve gender equality is thus argued to be a joint effort between men and women, as participant F2 states:

“Women cannot make the changes by ourselves. We are half of the world, but the other half also has to understand gender equality, in order to be

able to work on the same level. [...] We are therefore working together with the men [on gender equality].
(F1, 43, steering committee)

It is thus crucial for the successful implementation gender perspective to have the cooperation and support of both men and women. This thesis therefore argues that both men and women need to learn about and be actively involved in gender equality, and understand why it is so important in an organization like FAT. However, the incorporation of men into gender issues is also where the most obstacles are said to lie.

“In the meetings we are organizing now, there are only women. We have invited the men and told them to participate, but they were hesitant and resisted coming to the courses on gender equality.”
(F8, 58, FAT affiliate (CeDA))

“The men keep believing gender equality is a women’s issue [...]. They will not be interested in anything that is going to take away their powers. A colleague once told me: ‘I was born and raised with a series of benefits and rights that I am not willing to give up.’”
(F6, 38, Gender representative Ciudad Juárez)

“I think we still have a lot of work getting the men to understand and participate with us. [...] I think they are not interested. We have 3 men with us [at her job], and we have told them ‘Let’s go to the gender workshops’ and they say ‘No, that is for women’. [...] They think that, we women will attack or accuse them.”
(F9, 62, FAT affiliate (CeDA))

“[The men] do support us [...] but they are very apprehensive still, because when we invite them to the workshops and they come, they get scared to see that there are more women than men [...]. They know nothing about gender issues and it scares them. We have to teach them, so they will have more awareness [...].”
(F11, 55, FAT affiliate (telecommunications union))

There are a few other possible reasons that could explain the difficulty in getting the men involved. Several participants named the younger generation as being more open to gender issues. They have grown up in a world where they have easy access to information with the Internet, travel, et cetera, and have had more opportunities than their elders to see the world outside Mexico and its patriarchal culture. Two participants’ views explain:

“I think that when the men attend their first workshop they become interested and they keep coming. But they are mostly young men, as the younger generation is far more open towards the issue than the older men at FAT.”

(F3, 52, steering committee)

“In the beginning there was much discussion, especially in the North. [...] I do not know why this is. I would like to know, because in each region we go to, we have to approach the topic and give the workshops from a different perspective. It requires a different tactic.” [...] The same goes for some regions in the South. In general in cities, where there is more access to information, the level of machismo and resistance is lower.”

(F2, 52, steering committee and National Gender Coordinator)

This again proves how deeply rooted machismo is in Mexican society, especially among the older generations and the lower educated, and what a challenge it therefore poses to an organization like FAT in the implementation of a gender perspective.

Several of the female interviewees argue that men are still perceived as more credible and able than women, and that it is the men that people, especially other men, turn to when an important decision has to be made or with a request for information. Even though in some cases there are women in the same position who can just as well take care of this.

“It is difficult for the men, culturally in Mexico, to think that a woman would be a leader or that she would be above them.”

(F1, 43, steering committee)

“Older men still have reluctance to deal with women. So for example if [...] from the region of Chihuahua or Durango they want something from the steering committee, they always direct themselves to the committee’s men. As if the women cannot do it. They are in the same position!”

(F3, 52, steering committee)

Even if they are in exactly the same position, with equal pay and equal responsibility, men are still the person one turns to. So even though a woman at FAT might be in the same (decision-making) position as a man, this shows that a woman’s view, decision, or information is not trusted as much or seen as equally important as a man’s. This is a fundamental problem and a serious limitation for women’s legitimacy and practical gender equality at FAT. If the women, even the ones who *have* managed to obtain a higher post, are simply not regarded as credible and their knowledge and position are not respected, this may be an indication that the gender perspective is thus not working as it should yet.

Striking is that while all female participants describe Mexican society as being patriarchal or machista, two of the men have a different opinion. They see Mexican society as mostly matriarchal, or communicate that it is women and mothers who are largely responsible for the reproduction of a machista culture.

“Mexican society is a very matriarchal society in which the women rule. [...] I claim that the machista attitude is taught by women, from mothers to the children. [...] They call this ‘the invisible machismo’.”
(M1, 58, steering committee)

“I argue that women are the main promoters of machismo in our country. [...] Because the woman says ‘No, my son cannot wash the dishes, my daughter has to do that. My daughter cannot arrive back home at 9PM, but my son ... yes, he can arrive at 1AM, because he is a man.’ [...] This is part of the culture, and it is not even done consciously. These are the roles that are assigned to us already for generations.”
(M3, 63, steering committee)

Participant F10 suggests that machismo is a product of society in general and is reproduced by men and women, often subconsciously, as it is so rooted in culture and tradition.

“We cannot only blame this on the men, [...] both men and women reinforce it. So [the women] are also reproducing this patriarchal culture. [...] Often subconsciously.”
(F10, 42, Gender Coordinator of the Mexico City area)

Yet there are also important advancements and achievements in incorporating men, as this example about the Monterrey office shows:

“In the Monterrey office, men participate. Always. They *do* want to participate. [...] They still have resistances against the concepts of justice, shared responsibilities at home, and understanding the double burden on women. [...] In the first few workshops their resistances were pretty aggressive. Now it has lessened. For some reason, they do want to understand, because they are present at the workshops. We ask them questions about how they want their daughters to be treated and name examples of, for example, harassment. Then they answer that they do not want that to happen to their daughters. We use these examples to clarify to them that that is what we are fighting for, because no woman wants to be mistreated, not physically, and not in her dignity. This they understand, and now changes are being made.”
(F5, 51, Gender representative Monterrey)

What is the men's view on the women's organizing?

It was important to me to ask the three men for their opinion on male participation in gender equality activities, as well. The men I interviewed are members of FAT's steering committee. They are all higher educated, have a long experience at FAT, and have in-depth knowledge about gender issues and FAT's gender perspective. They gave me very valuable information on how the gender perspective is functioning in practice and what their views are on this. As with the women, we see some conflicting ideas.

“The women organize to keep advancing gender equality at FAT [...], and also to understand and preserve their rights, as women and as workers. [...] This capacitation of the women is important. [...] We sometimes organize mixed workshops, for men and women. [...] In the beginning, there was resistance, but slowly the topic becomes more open for discussion.”
(M2, 54, steering committee)

Participant M1 has a different opinion. When asked why the women organize themselves and if there are activities about gender issues where men and women participate, he says the following:

“Ask them [the women], because I do not know. I suppose they are organizing to achieve gender equality. [...] I have never received any invitation to join [mixed group activities on gender issues], so I do not know if these activities exist. Maybe, but I feel they are working in women groups, and I am not included because I am a man, I think.”
(M1, 58, steering committee)

Two of the men voice critical opinions regarding the organization of women and the implementation of the gender perspective as it is now.

“Gender issues were first understood as women's issues. We still have a long road ahead, because we are now at a stage of women organizing in women-only groups. But where I think it needs to go, if we really want to initiate a change [...], is instead of just women organizing we need to move towards a joint effort of men and women in the implementation of a gender perspective.”
(M3, 63, steering committee)

“What we are missing at FAT is a platform where we, men and women, can discuss how we see this problem [of gender inequality]. Where men discuss how we see the issue and women discuss how they see it. But we

have to also discuss it together! This is a path we still have to travel. [...] Only this way can we take equality to the next level in our organization.”
(M3, 63, steering committee)

“We need to establish equal and respectful relationships between men and women at FAT. [...] We have a serious deficiency. Women at FAT are organized and structured in an independent and autonomous way. I am not aware of what they do, when they meet, what they discuss, or what they agree upon. That is serious, because it is not a women’s problem. It is a problem of men *and* women. I think that this impedes the effectiveness [...] of achieving equality, if they operate in an isolated way. [...] It is not a joint effort.”
(M1, 58, steering committee)

“There is a general feeling that the women are isolating themselves, working alone, without providing much information. [...] That generates certain suspicion, an uncertainty of what they are doing. It is like ‘You are a man, therefore you do not have the right to know what we are doing’. That is sad.”
(M1, 58, steering committee)

What participants M1 and M3 say here is very important. First of all, it highlights the fact that gender issues and the implementation of a gender perspective was first seen as merely a women’s issue. Most men were not very interested and did not want to participate in gender issues. The advancement they have made over the last decade is that it is now a transversal aspect of the daily practices at FAT. There is still a long road ahead. When participant M3 mentions that the current strategy is one of women organizing in women-only groups, in my opinion, he outlines one of the fundamental shortcomings of FAT’s gender perspective at the moment. FAT tries to include men in mixed gender workshops, but there is no committee or gender representative that focuses specifically on men and gender issues. Many of FAT’s staff agree that gender is an issue for both men and women, yet there are no men-only groups where they have the space to learn about and discuss gender issues. Moreover, the communication of the women-only groups seems to be insufficient, as the men report not knowing what happens at these meetings and why the women are organizing in the first place. This is a problem, as it clearly leads to negative perceptions on the women’s organizing and could therefore harm instead of improve gender equality.

What achievements and advancements have been made?

Even though the implementation of a gender perspective is a slow and difficult process, according to most women, the workshops on gender have created more

understanding of gender equality and women's organizing among FAT's women and men. The men's acceptance towards the gender perspective is also slowly increasing, as is the number of men attending the workshops and involved in the development of the gender perspective.

“At first [the men] were scared of the women's organizing [...], but they recognize that the women are very strong, they are fighters, and very persistent, very organized. So after they overcame their fear, I think they were surprised, and then they passed on to thinking ‘This is great, now we are with more and so we can do more’ [...], so men and women together.”
(F1, 43, steering committee)

“We have achieved that the men also get involved [...]. Some don't, but others do. [...] We can only achieve this by creating awareness. We do this through workshops, we spread flyers, brochures to inform them about different topics, a newspaper wall at the office, just so they can learn about gender equality and what we do.”
(F7, 44, Gender representative Saltillo)

To conclude this section, I proceed to answer the second sub question: Why are the women organizing, when there is already a gender perspective implemented at FAT? And what is the men's perspective on the women's organizing? I have demonstrated that FAT's women are organizing with the main goal to further develop and advance FAT's gender perspective, to ultimately achieve gender equality. As Mexican society is generally patriarchal, women feel they are disadvantaged due to a triple burden. They have therefore not been able to achieve gender equality, which is what they pursue to change at FAT. The women have expressed the need to have a women-only space to organize, in order to educate themselves first, before including the men in gender issues. According to the women, they are becoming the agents of change who are able to then incorporate the men into gender issues, which they feel is the right way to approach the issue. While the men recognize the importance of a gender perspective, they express a lack of information and understanding on the women's organization. They feel left out and are uncertain what the women's purpose is, which causes resistances. These resistances are described as obstacles in their organizing and in the successful implementation of the gender perspective.

Conclusions

FAT's women feel the need to organize themselves in order to educate themselves on gender issues and equality. The women-only groups give them the opportunity to speak freely and become agents of change with respect to gender equality. They are given the knowledge and tools to bring a gender perspective into practice in their own homes and, in the case of the gender representatives in the different FAT offices, to implement the gender perspective and create awareness on gender issues in their own office or union. Their strategies are threefold: women-only organizing in workshops, lectures and workshops on gender issues in a mixed space with men and women together, and the production of leaflets, folders, and other material to spread knowledge about gender issues and FAT's gender perspective. Their organizing thus has a direct and explicit relation with the advancement of the gender perspective. In fact, their organization forms an integral part of FAT's gender perspective. Led by the National Gender Coordinator, it is the women's ultimate goal to make the gender perspective an active and integral part of all FAT's structures and affiliates. They aim to overcome resistances and apprehension through education and information, and to achieve gender equality both in theory (on paper) and in practice, for the men and the women who are in any way involved with FAT. Moreover, through alliances with other unions and women groups, and international solidarity, they work hard to spread gender equality in Mexico City, nationwide, and internationally. As my research shows, much work has been done and clear advancements have been made in the last decade, mainly on the incorporation of more women, the education of men, and the overcoming of resistances.

We have seen above that views and opinions differ. There is still much work to be done before the women and men at FAT achieve gender equality and full acceptance – in theory *and* in practice – of the gender perspective. Overcoming resistance from men is a long and slow process, as the topics are sensitive, and because it requires a change in the culture and habits that these men have known their entire lives. Achieving active participation of the men is even harder; many men who accept the gender perspective still tend to hold a chameleon-like approach or only passively agree with gender equality. However, the advancements of the past decade show that change is possible. Many positive achievements have been made with regard to the involvement and support of men. I can therefore conclude that a process of positive

change is definitely visible in FAT and that the women's organizing makes an important contribution to the advancement of the gender perspective.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the previous two chapters, I have presented the reader with research on three main themes: women's gender interests in relation to citizenship construction, women organizing in relation to a gender perspective, and the inclusion of men in this. This chapter will provide an analysis and discussion of the theoretical and empirical material in order to examine their interrelatedness and the possible relations of the theory to my case study at Frente Auténtico del Trabajo in Mexico City.

First, it is important to analyze whether the gender perspective has advanced in the last decade, since Domínguez and Quintero conducted their research at FAT. Domínguez and Quintero focused on FAT's women and did not investigate the men's perspectives. They conclude that through the efforts of women groups organizing, FAT incorporated gender equality into all sectors of FAT and integrated a gender perspective into their daily practices. However, the women express experiencing skepticism and resistances from men. Nevertheless, the gender perspective kept developing and the women groups within and beyond FAT continued alongside it. Progress has been slow, but they slowly incorporated men into gender issues as well. Resistance remained present, but FAT's gender coordinator states that they have achieved that gender is now seen by FAT's staff and affiliates as not only a women's issue, and is promoting that working with men and women together should be the way forward (Domínguez and Quintero). My research shows that, a decade later, the National Coordination on Gender has expanded to include female gender representatives from all FAT offices nationwide, who are in charge of the implementation of the gender perspective in their region. Workshops are regularly organized to educate these women and to provide them with the information and tools needed to accomplish this. Workshops for female FAT affiliates are also organized, in order to educate lower class women on gender equality and women's rights, which has proven to give them a great sense of empowerment and agency. The inclusion of men shows to be problematic still. There seems to be a contradiction among women and between women and men with regard to the cooperation of men. On the one

hand, women are saying that they include men in the workshops or at least invite them. Some women say this is successful; others voice resistances from men on gender issues. On the other hand, I have not heard of or witnessed such a mixed gender workshop during my time at FAT in Mexico City, where women and men together learn about gender issues. Moreover, two out of the three men expressed to never have been included in or invited to the women's groups, nor have they attended mixed gender meetings, which is striking, as they are part of the steering committee that is responsible for the execution of the gender perspective.

I can conclude that progress has definitely been made and fruitful work is being done on advancing the gender perspective. However, progress is slow and some discrepancies remain that deserve full attention, especially with regard to the inclusion of men and in the internal communication at FAT about these women's meetings and workshops. I argue that this would contribute to a greater understanding from men towards the gender perspective, the women groups, and gender issues as a whole.

The empirical findings show a clear link between the women's organizing and the development of a gender perspective, greater gender equality. While there are differences in the level of education and social class among the women I interviewed, all of them have expressed persisting gender inequalities at FAT, and their will to contribute to improving this through their organizing. All participants see the incorporation of men as an important element in achieving this. One may therefore draw the conclusion that the women at FAT have a certain set of strategic gender interests in common. This is in line with Molyneux's (1985) theory on gender interests, which is defined as the challenging and overcoming of women's subordination through the formulation of more satisfactory alternatives than those that exists currently (Molyneux 1985). What is more important is that the interviews show that, as Molyneux suggests, these strategic gender interests need to be derived by the women themselves. FAT's women started organizing on their own account, despite resistances from male colleagues, as they realized they were being marginalized. The gender perspective was adopted, and has grown to what it is today, because of their efforts. Moreover, a relation can be made between Jónasdóttir's two components of women's interests and the organization of FAT's women. Jónasdóttir

(1988, 40) identifies a *formal* aspect, or “the demand ‘to be among’”, which we can see at FAT in the women’s demand for equal representation in for example the steering committee. The *content* aspect we could see reflected in the women’s need for gender equality at FAT and a more democratic form of citizenship. Furthermore, it was argued for the concept of interests to be especially relevant in times of rapid transformation. According to the literature, one might argue that the women at FAT have been and still are presently undergoing changes in family dynamics and gender relations, caused by or at least related to globalization and neoliberalism (Jónasdóttir 1988; Molyneux 2006).

In the theoretical chapter, I discussed the links between gender interests and citizenship. I followed Domínguez (2004) and Espinosa (2004) in their claim that citizenship in Mexico is a masculine model that often limits women in exercising their full citizenship rights due to prevailing gender inequalities in the household and at work. The women in my case study, especially the FAT affiliates who described to come from a lower social class and a more machista household, had to overcome obstacles such as a triple burden in order to be able to organize for gender equality at FAT. However, the fact that they *are* organizing for gender equality and representation signifies the transition from the private to the public sphere, which is argued by Domínguez (2004), Brickner (2006) and Espinosa (2004) as an essential step in overcoming the exclusion from active citizenship. Moreover, as Brickner (2006) claims, their organization has transformed these women into agents of change and active contributors to the improvement of gender equality. Many of the women have stressed the importance of this to them on a personal level. Organizing gives them this sense of agency, independence, and empowerment and they are noticing positive changes in their work environment or FAT office in terms of gender equality and cooperation with male colleagues on gender issues. Their efforts thus have results on a personal and professional level. Furthermore, in line with Brickner (2006), Molyneux (2001), and Espinosa (2004), it is argued that civil society should play a large role in achieving more democratic forms of citizenship and women’s empowerment through training and education. FAT is a confederation of independent labor unions, and therefore part of civil society. As discussed, the women are educating themselves with training and workshops, as suggested by Molyneux (2001), which makes the argument that FAT’s women are in the right place to make

an active and valuable contribution to the citizenship struggle valid. Battles with a triple burden and a difficult process in changing gender relations remain, however progress is being made through their organizing. I can therefore conclude that FAT's women are actively contributing to the construction of citizenship rights and equal participation for women within the organization and beyond. "Organized labor [is] traditionally a key actor in the social construction of citizenship rights [...]" (Brickner 2006, 68).

With this, I have shown the direct relation between the women's organizing at FAT, citizenship struggles, and strategic gender interests. I have also demonstrated the link with and importance of civil society for women organizing towards gender equality.

Several of the women express the lack of women in higher positions at FAT, making change more slow and difficult. This could be related to theory on a 'critical mass of women'. Various scholars discuss the necessity for this in order to achieve gender equality. According to Brickner "women leadership is important in union organizing" (ibid., 69). Rigat-Pflaum (2008) voices the need for women who are capable of establishing alliances between men and women in a union. Domínguez (2004) and Espinosa (2004) also agree a critical mass of women in higher positions ought to be an essential element in women organizing towards a democratic citizenship. It is therefore positive that the women at FAT have managed to achieve a 50% participation in the steering committee. However, in the National Assembly men still outnumber women with about 5 to 1; there is thus a need for more women in higher positions at FAT who could act as advocates for the gender perspective in all levels of the organization.

Above, I argued for the inclusion of women *and* men in gender issues, which was an important element that came forward from both the interviews and the theory. Many of FAT's women stressed the need for a women-only organizing space on gender issues. They use this space in the form of meetings and workshops where they discuss and educate themselves on women's rights, gender equality, and agency, among other topics. Theory from Domínguez (2004) supports this claim for a women-only space. Molyneux (2001) warns, however, that a women-only space could place women outside the 'masculine world of politics' and leave women isolated while men control real power. Moreover, FAT's men have voiced their problems with a women-only

space, in the sense that they feel the women are isolating themselves and are not communicating about their discussions. This creates suspicion, uncertainty, and resistance among men. A women-only space at FAT may thus actually work counterproductive to enhancing gender equality (Esplen 2006).

This brings me to the next topic of analysis and discussion: the attitude of men towards gender issues and women organizing, and their involvement in this. The empirical research demonstrates that there is still resistance from men. Gender issues are still regarded as women's issues (which contradicts the statement of the gender coordinator in Domínguez and Quintero), men may be afraid their power and privileges will be taken away with gender equality, or they don't think gender equality is necessary, to name a few reasons. De Keijzer's discussion of Bourdieu's 'habitus' theory offers an explanation for their reaction to change, and argues that it is hard to overcome these societal structures that are so embedded into the culture (De Keijzer 2004). Ratele (2015), Castañeda (2012), and Esplen (2006) also describe the resistance as a natural reaction to change, in this case the implementation of a gender perspective and with that the change in gender relations between men and women at FAT.

According to my empirical analysis, and supported by the theories from Ratele (2015), Esplen (2006), and De Keijzer (2004), it may therefore be beneficial to also work with men-only groups, similar to and alongside the women-only groups, so that the women and men each have a separate space where they can voice their concerns, questions, needs, and other issues related to gender equality. A space where they educate themselves on gender equality, and learn that gender equality can be beneficial to both women and men. Once men and women have reached a certain level of knowledge about gender equality, De Keijzer (2004) suggests a mixed group environment for the joint discussion of gender relations at the organization.

Furthermore, in my opinion, an improvement in communication on women-only groups' activities would lessen the 'us versus them' feeling two of the three men expressed. If there is more openness, there is room to create an understanding on the things that are going on in the women groups, which could reduce the resistance from men (De Keijzer 2004; Ratele 2015). I argue that it is therefore crucial for the gender coordinator and the gender representatives of FAT to involve the men in gender

issues through open communication about the women-only workshops, inviting the men to mixed workshops, and in men-only gender workshops, in order to solve and avoid misunderstandings or misconceptions about gender equality. Scambor and Scambor's theory on gender mainstreaming, the inclusion of a gender perspective in all processes of an organization in order to promote gender equality, is in line with the gender perspective currently implemented at FAT (Scambor and Scambor 2012). By including Correia and Bannon's (2006) approach of men-streaming, the explicit inclusion of men and male issues in a gender perspective, FAT may be able to overcome the resistances they still experience today.

The process towards gender equality is slow and difficult, as we have seen, though the advancements that have been made in the last decade provide proof that change is happening at FAT. I conclude this discussion with De Keijzer's statement:

“[...] it is necessary to provide spaces where men and women can share experience and negotiate alternative ways of relating. An initial period is necessary where the men and women in the group work apart, and we carefully seek ways of bringing them together, fostering communication rather than conflict.”
(De Keijzer 2006, 37)

CONCLUSIONS

While I am aware of the debate on globalization and the different theories that exist on globalization as an old or a new phenomenon, in this thesis I regard globalization as 'something new' that has rapidly transformed society in the past few decades. Neoliberalism and free trade agreements have brought changes in gender relations in traditionally patriarchal cultures like Mexico and other parts of Latin America that affect both women and men, and have marginalized women. Especially in the higher, decision-making positions of many organizations they are in the minority. This limits their ability to advocate effectively for a gender perspective, therefore slowing the process of achieving gender equality in organizations like FAT. In their organizing towards a gender perspective at FAT, I claim that these women are pursuing strategic gender interests, as they have the aim to overcome women's subordination and to achieve a change in gender relations in society in general. Marginalized women are limited in their active citizenship rights, as their lives mainly take place in the private

sphere, as opposed to the more masculine public sphere. In order to claim their active citizenship rights, it is argued that women's transition to the public sphere and involvement in political institutions and/or civil society is essential.

Moreover, I argue that there exists a direct relation between women's strategic gender interests and a broader struggle for a more democratic citizenship in which women are able to exercise their citizenship rights in practice, and are not solely equal to men on paper. This requires a change in the deeply rooted machista culture in Mexico, which explains why the process is slow, difficult and not free of resistance.

My empirical research and the used theories have found evidence for the need of a women-only space in organizing towards gender equality. It gives the women the opportunity to speak freely and express their needs and concerns. Education on women's rights, citizenship, women agency, globalization, and the double burden is suggested to give these women the opportunity to become agents of change, contributing to greater gender equality.

I debated the issues surrounding a women-only space for organization, the inclusion of men, and men's resistance towards gender equality. Men have expressed they felt excluded, and are bothered by the lack of information on the women's activities, which may create 'us versus them' feelings that are counterproductive to what the women wish to achieve. Information and involvement are thus important. Supported by theory from several scholars, this thesis demonstrates the need for the active inclusion of men in gender issues at FAT. I suggest that this may be done through the creation of men-only groups similar to the women-only groups, where men have a space to discuss and learn about all aspects of gender equality. Once both men and women reach a certain level of knowledge on the topics, a mixed space can be introduced for the furtherance of the gender perspective. However, one needs to be aware of the diversity of both men and women; a common set of gender interests can therefore not be assumed. Careful analysis of the individuals and different groups of men and women is necessary before implementing any strategy. It is crucial to offer the men a space where they feel their specific interests and needs can be met, but what these are is to be determined by the gender coordinator of FAT. Such a space for men does not currently exist at FAT.

The main conclusion of the thesis may thus be that gender should not only be looked at from women's perspective and how men can accommodate to that. Men are also

affected by globalization and neoliberalism and the changes this brings to Latin American societies. Gender equality is argued to be beneficial for both men and women. A fruitful approach could therefore entail men also becoming agents of change who, in a joint effort with women, can contribute to the advancement of a gender perspective in organizations like FAT, and in society as a whole.

An interesting area for further research could be the viability of a men-only space and an increased focus on men in gender issues at FAT. It may also be beneficial to conduct further empirical research on FAT's men, both staff and affiliates, to get a more profound idea on the men's perspectives on a larger scale. This information can be useful in order to answer the question of how to overcome resistances against gender issues at FAT, as it gives an insight in how the men feel, where exactly their resistances stem from, and what they would need in order to become active promoters of the gender perspective. Although the main focus was on FAT's women in this thesis, including three interviews with men has proven to be a fruitful decision, which provided a unique insight in the situation at FAT that had not been researched before.

I found great joy in conducting my research at FAT and meeting the enthusiastic women and men who contributed to this thesis. I am pleased to conclude that progress has been made in FAT's gender perspective, and that the women's organizing has contributed a great deal to this. FAT may be a small organization, but with women in offices and affiliated organizations nationwide who dedicate their time to improving gender equality in Mexico, I feel FAT's case provides valuable information to various academic fields. I thank everyone who has been part of this thesis!

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