Our daily bread

A study about Aymara women's experiences of violence, discrimination and coping strategies in the Bolivian society

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In Memoriam

Maria Ernestina Aranibar S. de Quiroga (1940 - 2018)

Burgos Fernando Quiroga Guilarte (1936 - 2018)

Abstract

Indigenous women suffer wide discrimination, exploitation and victimization in their societies. This study focuses on the experiences a group of Aymara women have of violence and discrimination, and what strategies they use to cope with these oppressive acts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 Aymara women living in the city of El Alto in the country of Bolivia. The theoretical framework consists of Standpoint Theory and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach that facilitated the analysis of these women's experiences in relation to their agency. Further, *functionings, capabilities* and *agency* have been key terms throughout the analysis. The main findings show that these women have experiences of physical and sexual violence and they have suffered discriminatory acts due to their gender, ethnicity and social class. These experiences have hindered the enhancement of these women's capabilities and their agency. These experiences have also strengthened these women's confidence and thus their agency, especially when, in later years, experiencing more acceptance, by society, towards them as Aymara. The strategies these women use to cope with these experiences have been to improve oneself, help others and never give up. These strategies have also influenced their agency and the enhancement of their capabilities.

Keywords: Aymara, indigenous women, discrimination, violence, El Alto, Bolivia.

List of contents

1. Introduction

In the 16th century, the Spanish and the Portuguese colonized the territory of today's South America.[1] The indigenous population living there were enslaved and brutally treated by the conquerors, who regarded themselves as superior and having the power over the indigenous who they dehumanized. The conquerors appropriated their resources, took over their lands and came with the idea of civilization when primarily forcing them into Catholicism (Nilsson 2013). Through this, the indigenous population were oppressed and despised, ending at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. In this way, as described by Mignolo (2005), coloniality:

> points toward and intends to unveil an embedded logic that enforces control, domination, and exploitation disguised in the language of salvation, progress, modernization, and being good for every one (p.6).

The indigenous population did not accept this type of treatment and many confrontations, as well as resistance took place between them and the conquerors. This led to the independence of many territories in the continent, [2] one of these being today's country of Bolivia. Although Bolivia became independent in 1825 under the lead of Simon Bolívar, the deep-rooted oppressive system towards the indigenous, ingrained in society through colonization, remained in the country (Nilsson 2013). The small ruling elite of Spanish descendants and *mestizo*[3] people continued to reproduce this system, which lead to the severe marginalization of the indigenous population.

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[1] The continent was also colonized by the French and English.
[2] The struggles for independence in Latin America have been different for each territory, which will not be discussed in this thesis due to its non-relevance (and complexity) for the current topic.
[3] Denomination of a person who has both Indigenous and European decency (ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA 2019).

Bolivia as a country has one of the highest population of indigenous peoples[4] in Latin America (Amparo 2018), with the group of Aymara as the largest one with 1.6 million people (14.5% of the country's population) (La autopertenencia 2016).[5] As an indigenous group, the Aymara have suffered land dispossession, denial of their traditions and imposing on them the establishment of a new society throughout the colonial period. After independence, the Aymara have also suffered the denial of their rights, lacked basic needs and experienced wide discrimination. In this way, this group has been at the periphery of society and lacked the same opportunities as the rest of the citizens.

Specifically the group of Aymara women are still deprived, from their basic needs and rights, in their daily lives and have a subaltern[6] position in the Bolivian society. Indigenous women, generally, are discriminated and end up in a vulnerable position because of their ethnicity and their gender (Burman 2016). Additionally, their socio-economic status puts these women even more at the margins of society (ibid.). This study aims to look into the experiences Aymara women have in the Bolivian society as indigenous women, since they are a vulnerable group whom have lacked and still lack opportunities due to their ethnicity, class and gender.

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[4] The terms *indigenous peoples* will be used throughout the thesis in plural form, instead of *indigenous people,* to highlight the diversity among indigenous groups.
[5] All the references in Spanish are translated by the author.
[6] Subalternity is discussed in the beginning of the 4th chapter.

Image nr.1 Political map of Bolivia retrieved from
http://mapsof.net/bolivia/bolivian.

1.1 The situation for indigenous peoples and women in Bolivia

The lack of opportunities for indigenous peoples in Bolivia, specifically Aymara women, is noticeable in several societal areas. In the education for instance, the indigenous population of Bolivia tend to have 3.7 less years of schooling compared to the non-indigenous population (Coordinadora de la mujer 2007). One of four indigenous women, over 35 years of age, face issues with analphabetism and have not finished school (ibid.). A few decades ago, indigenous girls only attended school up to third grade to gain reading, writing and counting skills.

They would then be pulled out of school to work and support their families whereas their brothers were prioritized to attend school, if and when the family's economy allowed it (Mora 2018). This may still be the case for some Aymara families, but is changing since some Aymara women, who did not finish elementary school, have daughters now who attend universities, showing the fast progress that has taken place merely between two generations.

The indigenous peoples of Bolivia do not only experience discrimination in the educational area. In the city of El Alto, where the majority of the population is Aymara, the working area is the one considered as the most discriminatory (Coordinadora de la mujer 2007, cuadro 3, p.40). This area is experienced as the slowest to change in terms of reducing discrimination against indigenous peoples, where their oppressed position is most evident (ibid.). Three of ten indigenous are not remunerated at work, whilst the same number is one of ten for non-indigenous (ibid.). Indigenous women are overrepresented as workers in the informal sector, where wages are low and jobs are precarious. Many of them work as domestic workers at *mestizo* people's homes, often with poor working conditions and treated badly by their employers. Additionally, indigenous children are four times more likely to work than non-indigenous children (ibid.).

As briefly mentioned above, Aymara women end up even more at the margins of society due to their gender. The woman's main role in Bolivia (as for many women around the world) has been to take care of the household, leaving her with no opportunities (or time) to have other types of occupations (EL DIARIO 2016). This has changed in the last three decades since many women are finishing high school and continuing into higher education, shifting away from their traditional household duties. However, the situation for women in the country is alarming. Seven of ten women have suffered some type of violence in their lives and in 2018, 2141 rapes were reported, all by women and girls, leaving out the numbers of many other violent acts that are never reported due to shame, fear, bureaucracy and not trusting the State's protection mechanisms (Coordinadora de la mujer

2019). Furthermore, every third day a *feminicidio*[7] (woman assassination) occurs and 19 of these cases were reported to the public ministry in January 2019 (ibid.). Lastly, the legislation of the country penalizes abortion (in most of the cases),[8] which endangers women's lives forcing them to resort to clandestine abortions (ibid.).

This section has provided some background information of the situation indigenous peoples and women have in Bolivia, especially regarding discrimination and violence. To gain a holistic understanding of the situation Aymara women have in Bolivia, there is need to look into the State's role since the past decade has entailed reforms targeting indigenous peoples and women aiming to be inclusive for them.

1.2 The rhetoric of the Bolivian Government

In 2005, Evo Morales, the first president of Aymara descent, was elected in Bolivia, which has been regarded as historical for the country. Morales political party, *MAS - Movimiento Al Socialismo* (movement towards socialism)*,* won the elections with a 53.74% (Boletín Estadístico 2013) under the promise to be the party that would change the living conditions for the most vulnerable groups and would carry an agenda to achieve equality and equity in society (Fontana 2013; Nilsson 2013). A new Constitution was seen as essential to achieve these goals, since the old one had been drafted after independence in 1825. This old Constitution was regarded as favouring some groups in society over others because it was written by the ruling elites back then. However, a new Constitution needed a majority of the votes in the parliament to be implemented, which the Government did not have (ibid.). After extensive discussions among represented parties in the parliament and a referendum held in 2008, a new Constitution was approved (ibid.). Implemented in 2009, the new Constitution is portrayed as aiming to be more inclusive for the whole population, especially by incorporating

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[7] A woman who is assassinated because of her gender.
[8] It is allowed to abort a fetus when the woman's life is endangered or when the woman has been raped.

indigenous and women's rights (Burman 2011; Mamani Huallco & Chivi Vargas 2011). Among the most important changes, it recognizes 36 indigenous languages as official for the country. It has renamed the nation from Republic of Bolivia to Plurinational State of Bolivia[9] and it is intended to implement local autonomy for the country's regions (Fontana 2013). Despite the new Constitution in place it can be questioned to what extent it is achieving a more inclusive society for the marginalized groups (ibid.; Nilsson 2013).

The entering of *MAS* as Government has not only entailed a new Constitution, but also new legislation, restructuring of ministries and other societal implementations. These have been implemented and targeted with the rhetoric of decolonizing[10] and depatriarchalizing,[11] which are used by the Government as ways of carrying out a debate on transforming society, which they see is needed. This rhetoric aims to deconstruct the colonial legacies, but also the patriarchal ones, which both persist in the societal structures (Mamani Huallco & Chivi Vargas 2011). Further, this rhetoric does also specifically target the groups of indigenous and women as the ones to "be helped" by the transformations it aims to achieve.

1.3 Problem formulation

This study is built upon fieldwork conducted in the city of El Alto, where 15 Aymara women were interviewed. As mentioned briefly before, the majority of El Alto's population is Aymara and many have migrated from the rural areas to this city seeking for better life opportunities. The women of this group are vulnerable and fall into a double, sometimes even a triple, discriminatory oppression because of their gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background (Burman 2016). The

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[9] *República de Bolivia a Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia.*

[10] Decolonizing is regarded by the Bolivian Government as "the concentration of State energies to combat racism and patriarchy (…), which is done by establishing, critically, the functioning of the knowing, the power and the being of coloniality" (Mamani Huallco & Chivi Vargas, 2011, p.31) i.e. decolonizing the State through the implementation of public policies for the construction of a just society.

[11] Depatriarchalizing is regarded by the Bolivian Government as "an exercise of public policy that seek to visibilize patriarchy in all its versions to find ways to decrease its intensity, and eventually, eliminate it" (ibid., p. 36).

legacy left by the conquerors after independence has created the hierarchical structures in Bolivia, which are still visible in contemporary society and apparent in the inferior position of indigenous women. This position is visible in many areas, such as education, employment, politics and the private sphere, which hampers Aymara women's opportunities to develop and have better lives. The patriarchal structures in society do also affect these women, who suffer violence, harassment and abuse due to their gender.

As an interdisciplinary investigation, this study combines the fields of International Social Work (ISW) and Development Studies (DS). The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) defines the profession of ISW as promoting "social change and development" (…) through theories about social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge" (GLOBAL DEFINITION 2019). The field of DS on the other hand, is a young interdisciplinary field that aims to study progresses in societies. Its core aim is to "improve people's lives" (Sumner 2006, p.645) mainly focusing on 'developing countries', but emphasizing that these societies are non-homogenous and the issues their people face are always context specific. Both of these fields are intertwined and related to the thesis topic, since it intends to transmit the point of view and realities Aymara women have of being indigenous women in the society of Bolivia. Letting these women's experiences be illustrated by themselves and gaining an insight in how they experience their position as indigenous women in the city of El Alto, are the objectives of this study. As written above, indigenous women experience wide discrimination in the country, but do also suffer violence in different forms. In this study I aim to bring forward the experiences this group of Aymara women have of violence and discrimination, but also if they have any coping strategies for these. Hence, this study aims to answer the research question:

What experiences do Aymara women have of violence and discrimination in their daily lives and what coping strategies do they use for these oppressive acts?

Supported by the sub-questions:

- How do these oppressive acts influence the agency of these women?

- How do these coping strategies influence the agency of these women?

1.4 Thesis disposition

The second chapter describes the context of the city of El Alto where this study was carried out, followed by the third chapter where a literature review can be read about publications related to the thesis topic. The fourth chapter describes the theoretical framework of Standpoint Theory and the Capability Approach. Further, the used methods for this study can be read in the fifth chapter, including the ethical considerations taken in account. The main findings and analysis can be found in the sixth chapter, followed by a seventh chapter of a concluding discussion of them, a discussion on the chosen methods and suggestions for further research.

2. Contextualisation: the city of El Alto

The city of El Alto was officially founded the 6th of March of 1985 becoming the youngest city of Bolivia (Historia de El Alto 2019). It is situated in the West of the country and constitutes part of the Bolivian *Altiplano*[12] at an average height of 4150 m.a.s.l. (Ríos Calderón 2017). The city has had a rapid population growth since its foundation due to migration from rural areas. The National Institute of Statistics, INE,[13] estimates that in year 2018 the population should have reached 922,598 people, making the city the second most populated in the country (Población 2018). El Alto consists of 14 districts and belongs to the province of Murillo and the Department of La Paz, where the inhabitants are mainly Aymara and speak the languages Aymara and Spanish.

Despite El Alto and the capital of La Paz being neighbouring cities, they could be described as two different worlds and the border existing between them is not only geographical, but also considered symbolic between the people due to their socioeconomic differences. In the capital city, both the legislative and executive powers have multiple buildings, including those of the Government ministries spread around downtown *(el centro)*. Tall buildings surrounded by mountains give the city its peculiar look and north of the city, the newly reconstructed highway connects the capital with the neighbouring El Alto. The 20-minute drive on the highway introduces the visitor into another city with its characteristic of traffic jams caused by a multitude of mini-buses competing for passengers in a chaotic system and also competing for space with street markets and fairs that close down parts of the city on several days of the week. Brick stone buildings do also represent a typical feature in the scenery of El Alto.

It is not only the highway that connects these cities. Five years ago, the Government decided to build cable cars as public transport connecting them not only to alleviate the traffic problems, but also to promote the inhabitants from both cities to ride jointly. In this way, both *Alteños* and *Paceños*[14] face each other

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[12] High plateau in the Andes.
[13] *Instituto Nacional de Estadística.*
[14] *Alteños* – people from the city of El Alto, *Paceños* – people from the city of La Paz.

directly, when using the cable cars, which may not have been the case before. This way of transport may break not only the geographical border between these cities, but also the symbolic barrier between their residents. However, the division between the populations is still very tangible. Many people from the city of El Alto do not visit La Paz, unless they have an appointment or work there. Likewise, the people of La Paz do not often visit El Alto, unless they are travelling by plane (El Alto International Airport serves both cities), visit *La feria 16 de Julio* (large local street fair) or work there.

The above mentioned portrays a small part of the differing worlds between these cities and gives a glimpse of the segregation that prevails between them. The context of El Alto though is much more profound than can be provided through a written description and one needs to experience the city to understand its complexity.

Image nr.2 View of a part of the city of El Alto from a cable car (researcher's picture).

Image nr.3 *La feria 16 de Julio* attracts many visitors to El Alto on Thursdays and Sundays (researcher's picture).

Image nr.4 View between the city of La Paz and the city of El Alto from a cable car (researcher's picture).

Image nr.5 Typical view of the city of El Alto with its brick stone houses (researcher's picture).

The pictures above show the scenery of El Alto as a large city that keeps on growing where there are many unfinished buildings and where its citizens live their daily lives among markets and traffic jams. The city's location at the high plateau of the Andes creates the rough weather conditions of heavy rains and strong burning sun, both in one and the same day.

3. Literature review

This chapter consists of selected literature, providing a macro perspective on the struggles indigenous women face generally, but also specifically in the countries of Chile and Mexico. It also provides macro perspectives on the new Constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador and how these have attempted to recognize and incorporate the marginalized groups of indigenous peoples into their societies. In this way, this literature review is not fully consistent with its topic since it does not bring up literature from a micro perspective of Aymara women's experiences and standpoints in their daily lives. However, such literature is limited and not easily attainable, which is the reason for the current chosen literature.

3.1 Indigenous women

The socialantropologist Anders Burman (2016) explores in his article[15] "the causes and possible solutions" (p.3) of discrimination towards indigenous women generally. It is stated that indigenous women often fall into a triple discrimination, because of their gender, ethnicity and class. This discrimination is faced within the dominant society where they live, but also within their own community because of their gender (Burman 2016). To stop this discrimination, States have implemented legislation and organisations have launched specific projects, but these solutions have been given with the view of indigenous women as *"victims of tradition"* (ibid., p.3, italics added) and not as individuals who are able to influence their subordinate position or enhance their capabilities. Burman problematizes also the fact that indigenous women are portrayed as a homogenous group when being described, since these women have different life experiences and also live in various contexts (ibid.). Hence being depicted as a sole group who face the same issues is problematic and may have consequences for how States and organisations approach these women's needs. That is why Burman concludes that indigenous women should frame their own solutions depending on their "own

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[15] Burman, A. (2016) *Gender, Politics, and the State: Indigenous Women.*

cultural contexts, social practices, knowledge" (ibid., p.4), instead of being enforced into a western model that has, for instance, equality as its main goal.[16]

3.2 Indigenous women: Cases from Chile and Mexico

One of the indigenous women's groups who neither recognize themselves in the feminist nor the indigenous movements are the Mapuche women in Chile. The sociologist Patricia Richards (2005) focuses on the most important demands Mapuche women have when reclaiming their position as indigenous women in the Chilean State. There has been an expectation, by the State, on Mapuche people to assimilate into the dominant Chilean society in relation to language, religion and customs (ibid.). The State implemented the indigenous law, *Ley indigena 19253,[17]* in 1993, but the indigenous groups of the country kept on being marginalized (ibid.). Richards aims to analyze how these women position themselves as indigenous in a human rights paradigm and how "dominant notions of gender" (ibid., p.199) limit their struggles. The study was conducted through unstructured interviews and participant observation. The Mapuche women express that for their recognition as indigenous women in Chile, the language of human rights needs to be applied. They do also express that their demands can only be met when focusing on global conventions that target specifically indigenous peoples rights. However, only if and when the Chilean State addresses these demands, this group can achieve recognition and gain respect in society.

Another group struggling for their rights and for justice in their communities are indigenous women in Mexico. Sierra (2008) specifically focuses on the experiences these women have of the globalization of human rights and the struggle for gender equality in their communities. Here, gender violence is the

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[16] In many of the read articles (Burman 2016; Diaz Carrasco 2012; Richards 2005; Rousseau 2011), gender equality is brought up as a goal when approaching the needs of indigenous women. However, many of these women do not recognize themselves and their struggles within the goal of gender equality and they regard this goal as often imposed by the western world. Rather, these women want to frame their own needs in consistency with their life experiences.

[17] The indigenous law was implemented to protect and expand land and water rights for indigenous peoples, which included the encouragement of indigenous women's participation for their "integral development" (Richards 2005, p.208). This was an attempt to improve the situation for the indigenous, specifically the poverty among them, but failed because neither of the articles of this law were implemented nor the indigenous groups were recognized constitutionally.

main issue hampering women's lives and that is why the fight against it has become the focus of indigenous women's movements on a global level. When articulating this issue internationally, organs such as the United Nations take this struggle seriously and pressure nation States to act upon it (ibid.). In turn, States implement laws to protect women against violence, which "legitimates the demands of indigenous women" (ibid., p.19). However, only fighting against gender violence at an international, national, regional or even local level, does not enable these women what is mostly needed in order to bring forward their claims, which is articulated as "access to the State's justice" (p.25). This can only be achieved when a joint discourse by the indigenous women in Mexico is created from their own points of view, since they do not recognize the struggles brought forward by hegemonic feminisms (ibid.).

3.3 Indigenous women in Bolivia and the new Constitution

As written above, indigenous women in Chile and Mexico have different struggles in their communities. What these women share in common with the indigenous women of Bolivia is their subordination. Throughout Bolivian history, indigenous women have been victims of a "process of invisibilization" (Diaz Carrasco 2012, p.76) and excluded through "hegemonic construction" (ibid.), which favoured white males from the upper class. This colonial thought persists in the State's structures and Diaz analyzes this production in relation to women working at State institutions. This since in 2006 "a new presence of indigenous women in the Government" (ibid., p.77) is visible, which was enabled through the constituent process where the new Constitution[18] was drafted with the aim to decolonize and depatriarchalise the State from within. The perspective of the *subaltern* person (read: indigenous women) with its lived experiences and knowledge contribute to these processes. They deconstruct the State's colonial structures, specifically when these women work at State institutions and raise their voices when providing their standpoints through these platforms.

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[18] More information on the new Constitution is provided in the next section.

The group of women whom are part of the Constituent Assembly (CA) have also had an impact, in the aforementioned processes, when giving their viewpoints throughout the elaboration of the new Constitution in Bolivia. Rousseau (2011) conducted interviews with women elected for the CA whom also are activists and members in organizations within the indigenous movement. The author aimed to use an intersectional approach to analyze how the indigenous and feminist movements in the country have influenced the new Constitution when putting forward their claims (ibid.). It is argued that the merely presence of indigenous women throughout the negotiations for a new Constitution, "strengthen their voice" (ibid. p.6) and proposed a more inclusive Constitution for the collective rights of indigenous peoples. However, not all demands important to indigenous peoples were taken in account, such as the notion of *chachawarmi,*[19] rather, a focus laid on gender equality, which is regarded, by some indigenous women, as a value imposed by the western world. On the other hand, it is concluded that the mobilization of indigenous women, throughout the elaboration of the new Constitution, resulted in giving them, for the first time in the country's history, a position to claim their rights and needs, which is seen as an accomplished goal for the group.

3.4 A new Constitution as a solution?

The Government of the *MAS* party in Bolivia redrafted the country's old Constitution with the aim to make the new one more inclusive for the marginalized groups in society e.g. indigenous and women. For this new draft to go through, two thirds of the votes in favour were needed in the Parliament (Nilsson 2013). After many discussions and debates, the *MAS* party succeeded to influence the other parties and the new Constitution was enacted in 2009. The most visible changes this Constitution brought for the indigenous peoples were the change of the country's name from *República de Bolivia* to *Estado*

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[19] The notion of gender complementarity, which is an important notion in the Aymara cosmovision.

Plurinacional de Bolivia,[20] the recognition of 36 indigenous languages as official and the recognition of indigenous peoples territorial rights (ibid., Fontana 2014). The political scientist Martin Nilsson (2013) analyzes, from a traditional liberal perspective, whether the presidency of Evo Morales has achieved the incorporation of indigenous peoples into society and created a "multi-ethnic" (p.35) one. Using the Constitution as a tool, the Government has attempted to deepen democracy in the country when implementing local autonomy in the communities for the citizens to have the possibility to participate directly in decisions that affect them (ibid.). Nilsson acknowledges that the institutions of the State, which were formed before the new Constitution and constructed following a western model, "remain relatively intact" (ibid., p. 37) as liberal and democratic. Hence, the new Constitution has not had an impact in these institutions thus far and a deepening of democracy has only occurred to a certain extent. However, Nilsson (2013) concludes that the new Constitution incorporates indigenous peoples rights, culture and traditions, which has opened up for a wider inclusion of these groups regarding their democratic participation.

The new Constitution has also led to new institutional and normative reforms implemented by the Government. These are analyzed insofar how they have contributed to an "ethnicization of the country's social and political life" (Fontana 2014, p.20) and how they have affected social movements, specifically indigenous ones. Bolivia has experiences many conflicts[21] throughout decades and many hoped the new reforms would give an end to these (ibid.). However, the attempts of uniting the various ethnicities of the country have not had the expected results, but have rather resulted in a more fragmented society and also a general dissatisfaction against the Government (ibid.). The conflict of the National Park *TIPNIS*[22] is only one example of the colliding views between the indigenous

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[20] The name change of the State was seen as an essential step to recognize the diversity among the population when renaming it into plurinational.

[21] One of these conflicts, among many others, was the water war in Cochabamba in 1999.

[22] *Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure* (Indigenous territory and National Park Isiboro Sécure). Located between the Departments of Beni and Cochabamba with an area of 1,2 million hectares

movements and the Government. Fontana concludes that the entrance of Evo Morales as president has changed the political arena in Bolivia transforming the different alliances between groups, from which various conflicts have arisen (ibid.). These conflicts play an important role in the continuous support (or non-support) for the Government.

Bolivia is not the only country that has experienced the implementation of a new Constitution in the 21st century. The Ecuadorian State introduced a new Constitution in the year 2008 (Radcliffe 2011). With these new Constitutions, both countries have become "part of the agenda of the new leftist governments" (Fontana 2014, p.25) in Latin America and both documents have similarities, especially the incorporation of indigenous peoples rights. The denomination of Ecuador as a plurinational (and intercultural) State, as the case in Bolivia, is expected to create a process that unites the population and moves away from neoliberal structures in society (ibid.). In the case of Ecuador, the notion of *Sumak kawsay*[23] *(SK)* (living well) is a guiding principle in the new Constitution, which is consistent with a developmental agenda that focuses on human rights and responsibilities and is of importance to initiate "socioeconomic transformations" (Radcliffe 2011, p.241) in society. However the implementation of SK has not permeated society and "remains an aspiration and a goal" (ibid., p.246), which has been a disappointment for the Ecuadorian Government. At the same time the indigenous languages of Kichwa and Shuar have been recognized, which is a step towards attaining wider inclusion for the country's indigenous population.

3.5 Some remarks
This chapter has outlined the situation indigenous women have in the countries of Bolivia, Chile and Mexico. It has also brought up whether the new Constitutions

(MOVIMIENTO REGIONAL POR LA TIERRA 2017). The fight for the National Park*,* where a road was proposed, by the Government, to be built that would go across the park argued as increasing trade opportunities, but endangering the social and natural habitat for the indigenous community living there. This proposal engaged many, as indigenous movements marched into the city of La Paz in 2011 to demonstrate against it and were welcomed by the urban middle class people of the city.

[23] Living well in the language of Kichwa, which is one of the indigenous languages in Ecuador.

in Bolivia and Ecuador have had any impacts for indigenous peoples rights, specifically for indigenous women. Moreover this chapter deals with research about the *subaltern* position indigenous women end up in due to their ethnicity, gender and class. In conclusion, this literature has contributed to gain a wider understanding of the situation indigenous women face in different parts of Latin America.

4. Theoretical framework

The aim of this study is to bring forward the lived experiences a group of Aymara women, living in the city of El Alto, have in the Bolivian society. As stated earlier, indigenous women are, as part of societal structures, deemed to be in a *subaltern* position in society, which is consistent with the writings of *subalternity* by Spivak (2006).[24] The discussion in this chapter is focused on how theory can help to understand better, whether the person deemed "inferior" in relation to the "superior" has a voice, i.e. has the right to express opinions and be heard, especially when the inferior's voice is always interpreted through the lens of western knowledge.[25] The way the *subaltern* is diminished, as a colonized subject subjugated to *othering* by the "superior", leaves no opportunity for the *subaltern* to express the opinions the person has (ibid.). This is the foundation for this theoretical framework as when applying it, it intends to bring forward the voices of the *subaltern,* facilitated by the use of Standpoint Theory. Further, the Capability Approach (CA) will also be described, as part of the theoretical framework.

4.1 Standpoint Theory

This subsection is structured providing a general introduction of Standpoint Theory (ST), followed by the description of its constituencies, Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST) and Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST).

ST is used to bring forward the voices of oppressed groups by focusing on their own standpoints. When applying ST, a different perspective is added to academia, since the standpoints of these groups have not been considered earlier and in this way not been able to contribute to the knowledge production (Foley 2005/2006). It is also seen as a "liberatory epistemology" (Foley 2003, p.45), which stands in contrast to the hegemonic conventional knowledge that has always been of

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[24] Spivak, G. (2006) *Can the subaltern speak?*

[25] Western is regarded here as the knowledge produced in and by the western part of the world that has permeated and dominated research. As Grossfoguel (2013) discusses, western knowledge production cannot be longer seen as strictly geographical as before, since many scholars who are non-western, may use and apply western knowledge in non-western contexts leading to the production of this knowledge being reproduced in these contexts.

western origin (Foley 2005/2006). There is a significant difference between including the oppressed and marginalized groups into the production of knowledge and strongly engaging with their own views and understandings of their world and surroundings to produce knowledge (Harding 2009). The latter is the aim with ST, which provides a more objective account, since the standpoints are expressed by the individuals of the oppressed group(s).

The main focus of this theory are women and indigenous populations, that are differently treated depending on the social categories they are part of, such as ethnicity, class and gender. That is why the standpoints of these groups should always be analyzed with an intersectional approach (ibid.),[26] as each of these categories define the position these individuals have in society. A standpoint is regarded "an achievement, not an ascription" (Harding 2008, p.120) and can neither be ascribed nor achieved by a sole individual. Rather, it is the collective group who should struggle for the achievement of the standpoint, while challenging what is regarded as "real" in society, which is produced by its dominant institutions (ibid.). Therefore, ST is applied as a starting point to bring forward the voices of the oppressed groups.

It is worth mentioning that ST is also used as a methodological tool and seen as a "theory of method" (Moreton-Robinson 2013, p.332). I am aware that the interrelation between standpoint as theory and methodology can be diffuse and sometimes even used interchangeably. That is why the theory will be used in this thesis to bring forward the standpoints of Aymara women as a means to highlight the experiences in their daily lives.

4.1.1 Feminist Standpoint Theory

The core of ST is FST, which emerged in the early 1980s as a reaction to production of knowledge in academia. This since the standpoints of women were regarded as needed in research, because their experiences had been excluded from

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[26] Intersectionality is regarded as a tool for "understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world" better (Hill-Collins & Bilge 2016, p.2), which facilitates the visibility of existing power relations between individuals who belong and fall into different social categories of gender, race, class, sexuality, ableness and/or citizenship.

hegemonic knowledge produced by men. Hence, academia had until the emergence of FST predominantly been western and patriarchal (Hekman 2004). Further, women had a position in society reflecting a "special form of exclusion and oppression" (Harding 2004, p.57), which was reflected in their lived experiences and by bringing their standpoints to the fore, the production of knowledge becomes "more objective and reliable" (ibid.). The use of FST provides an epistemological advantage, which entails a "unique insight into certain aspects of reality" (Harding 2004, p.60) from the perspectives of women that were earlier ignored. Its use aims to transform the power relations, which have put women in an inferior position in society.

It has to be pointed out that all women should not be clustered into the same group when using FST since their experiences differ. They constitute part of various categories of ethnicity, class, sexuality and ableness, which gives them different vantage points. In this way multiple views, either from women of several groups or women belonging to the same group, produce knowledge in FST (ibid.) Furthermore, FST is "situated and perspectival" (Hekman 2004, p.226), entailing that the standpoint brought forward is subjective and differs from person to person. For this thesis, the delimitation is the group of the interviewed Aymara women in El Alto.[27] These women may share similar experiences, but these may also differ depending on their (pre)conditions in life. In this way, when applying FST we can conclude that even though indigenous women all over the world may not share the same standpoints, they are still able to meet as a group who "share the common experience of living in a society that deprecates" (ibid., p.341) them, which, in turn, facilitates their jointly knowledge production.

4.1.2 Indigenous Standpoint Theory

Despite FST being the core of ST, feminism, generally, has a tendency of engaging with oppressed and marginalized groups, such as indigenous peoples. This is how Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) emerges. The scientific world did not only privilege the interest of western men, neglecting women's

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[27] See section 5.3.2 for sample selection.

experiences, but it also neglected the standpoint of indigenous peoples by defining which knowledge ought to be legitimized (Foley 2003). Indigenous peoples have been studied by non-indigenous researchers, in non-indigenous languages and for non-indigenous people, excluding indigenous peoples as the main actors of their lives and knowledge(s). As an indigenous researcher in Australia, Dennis Foley stresses the importance of applying IST as an epistemology, which leads to the contribution of knowledge production when the standpoints of indigenous peoples are brought forward. The indigenous person is at the centre of IST and the research is conducted for the sake of the indigenous, not the other way around benefiting only the researcher or academia. With the indigenous person's standpoint a "more inclusive and therefore a more valid form of knowledge" (Foley 2005/2006, p.26) is created. At the same time, IST is seen as:

> a process of ontology, an epistemological approach enabling the Indigenous person to maintain/regain or learn their own epistemological standpoint that has been lost due to colonisation and the adoption of ethnocentric Western forms of applications to knowledge (ibid., p.29).

One of the most important goals with IST is the emancipation of indigenous peoples leading to their "recognition and self-determination" (ibid., p.31). Foley (2003; 2005/2006) does also point out that an indigenous person should conduct the research when using IST, since the person has greater knowledge and understanding of the issues indigenous peoples face, which makes it more culturally appropriate.[28] Further, with the use of IST, indigenous peoples knowledge(s) and voices are brought forward in academia, which was not the case earlier, however, these are still very few. At the same time, when applying IST the intention is not to change or transform the prevailing power relations between indigenous and non-indigenous, since indigenous peoples still share the

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[28] This is later addressed in ethical considerations, section 5.5, since the researcher is non-indigenous.

experience of being regarded *inferior* and *subaltern*. Rather, the use of the theory provides a different starting point from where to produce knowledge, since the indigenous person is the owner of the knowledge.

4.2 Capability Approach

The Capability Approach (CA) was developed by Amartya Sen, who won the Nobel prize in economics on 1998 (Sen 2001) and has later been used and developed by others, such as the philosopher Martha Nussbaum. This approach focuses on the individual and the possible capabilities the person has to live a life the person considers and values worth living. The approach is that of expanding and enhancing the capabilities an individual has, which in its turn leads to the person enjoying substantial freedoms. In this way, the person's quality of life is improved while, through this, human development is reached (ibid.). In the writings by Sen (2001) the approach is described as focusing on the individuals as *agents* in their lives, rather than *patients*. When recognizing individuals as *agents,* they are given the power and are seen as capable of improving their lives, rather than individuals who are passive and oppressed. Further, through this recognition*,* the person is capable to choose the path to follow for the individual's own development. However, for the individual to be able to enhance their capabilities, there is need of certain (pre)conditions in the person's life. Poverty is seen, for example, as depriving individuals from their capabilities since it entails not only the lack of an adequate income, but also the deprivation of other fundamental needs e.g. being well nourished, having the opportunity to education or proper housing. In this way, having an income is an important mean to enhance a person's capabilities (ibid.).

There are three important aspects to take in account in the CA, these are: *functionings*, *capability* and *agency* (Deneulin & Shahani 2009). *Functionings* are the actions a person values or that constitute the being of a person i.e. *functionings* are having an education, having a job, being healthy, etc. These *functionings* need

to be identified by the individual, since the person knows what she/he/xe[29] values. *Capability* is the "freedom to enjoy various *functionings*" (ibid., p.31) i.e. a person being free to enjoy for instance having an education or a certain job. *Agency* is when an individual is able to pursue a goal or several goals the person has set, where the person is an agent "who acts and brings about change" (Sen 2001, p.19). When using these three as guiding concepts, they enable the creation of a framework (illustrated below), where they are interrelated and where the ultimate goal is to have *agency* thus become an agent.

Agency
The individual acts and
brings about change

Capability
Freedom to enjoy various functionings

Functionings
Actions a person values to do, identified by the
individual
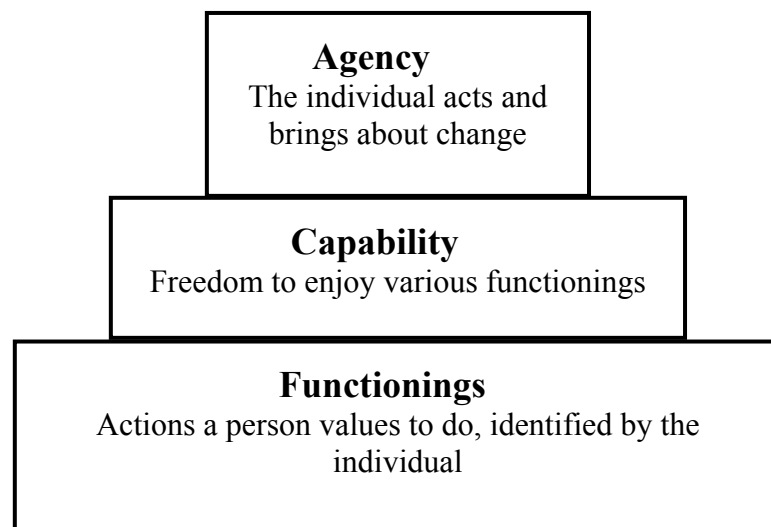
Figure nr.1 The guiding concepts.

Further, the CA is described by Nussbaum (2011) as a "pragmatic and result-oriented" (p.17) approach, focused on social injustice and inequality due to these factors depriving persons from enhancing and developing their capabilities. However, the State has the responsibility to make policies that facilitate individuals to enhance their capabilities e.g. by providing education. Basic education and health care are brought up as two main needs that facilitate the enhancement of the capabilities a person has, since both improve the person's quality of life immediately (ibid.). Moreover, CA focuses on what a person is "able to do and to be" (ibid., p.18) with the capabilities the person has. By being

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[29] Xe is used as a gender neutral pronoun.

provided the right tools, the person can develop its capabilities and live the life "the person (…) has reason to value" (Sen 2001, p.87). Sen does not identify specific capabilities a person may have, which is a detriment to his approach. Nussbaum (2011), on the other hand, identifies ten central capabilities, these are: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and control over one's environment.[30] However, every individual's capabilities are different since they have different (pre)conditions and experiences in life, but do also live in different contexts.

Indigenous peoples have other (pre)conditions in life than the rest of the groups in society due to the marginalized position they end up in because of their ethnicity. While performing research with indigenous peoples, Murphy (2014) brings up self-determination as a collective capability enabling indigenous peoples to be engaged in political decisions that affect them. Self-determination is regarded as "a source of development and human well-being" (ibid., p.321), since the individual has the opportunity to engage and decide for oneself. Here, self-determination is seen as a collective capability, which only functions when practicing it jointly as a group (ibid.). In this way, it is described as encompassing:

> the freedom to determine the character and boundaries of the political
> community itself, including the criteria for membership and political
> participation; the freedom to establish institutional mechanisms of
> collective deliberation and decision-making; and, perhaps most
> importantly of all, the freedom to make decisions as a community in
> the absence of external interference or domination (ibid. pp.323-324).

From this perspective, this capability is strongly related to political action and policies in society. However, the self-determination of indigenous peoples has

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[30] To read specifically about these capabilities, read Nussbaum, M.,C. (2011) *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach,* pp. 33-34.

decreased and in some places been totally eradicated mainly due to colonization, which has led to the neglect of indigenous peoples opinions (ibid.).

The reason for using the CA for this thesis is to identify the capabilities the interviewed Aymara women may have, but also the lack of opportunity to enhance them due to different life experiences. CA is also used to identify if these women enjoy their substantial freedoms through these capabilities or if these are hampered due to reasons that this study will attempt to identify. The collective capability of self-determination will be used in this thesis in combination with two of Nussbaum's central capabilities; bodily integrity and control over one's (political) environment.

5. Methodology & methods

The research paradigms in the social sciences are built on epistemological and ontological grounds. Epistemology is regarded as "*how* we know things" (Della Porta & Keating 2008, p.22, italics added) and ontology is regarded as "*what* we study" (ibid., p.21). This research aims to transmit the standpoints of Aymara women, making it in this way subjective. Hence, its epistemological ground is humanistic. This one focuses on the interviewees "subjective understandings of external reality" (ibid., p.25) making their own perceptions the only valid reality. Thus, the way we know things is through experiences. *What* is studied in this case is the social phenomena consisting of the experiences these women have in the society where they live. The ontological ground is constructivistic, since the experiences of the interviewees are not objective entities, rather they are constructed socially by them and by other social actors.

Further, this chapter will outline the methods used for this study including reflexivity of the study, the design chosen for the research, its mode of procedure, how the interviews have been analyzed, the criterias assessed for the study's credibility and its ethical considerations.

5.1 Reflexivity

The term reflexivity is described by O'Reilly (2009) as the reflexive thinking the researcher needs to address when conducting for instance fieldwork. The researcher needs to be critical about the steps taken throughout the research and how these affect the interviewees, but also reflect upon the position the researcher has in relation to them. The author in this case was born and grew up in the country of Bolivia, which has provided her with pre-understanding of and insight to the context where the interviewed women live. This has certainly facilitated the contact with the Aymara woman, not only language wise, but also since both the researcher and the interviewees share the common denominator of being *Bolivianas* and women. This puts the researcher in an *insider* position. Also, being a *paceña* speaking with the slang from La Paz, helped to create a bond between the interviewer and the interviewees, which enhanced the similarities between

them rather than their differences. However, the author is often regarded as a *choca* (a blondie) or a *gringa* (westerner) in the Bolivian context, which puts her in a certain position in relation to the interviewees. Further, being a student conducting fieldwork for higher educational purposes from a University in Sweden entails a certain position, since the student is the one conducting and interviewing the women (and not the other way around), which may have caused an unequal relation between them. This puts the researcher in an *outsider* position, which could have influenced the interviewees willingness to take part in the study, but also their responses throughout the interviews, since they may have felt they had to participate, because of the researcher being a former intern at the organisation some of these women sometimes visit and take part in their workshops.

A concrete example illustrating the unequal relation between interviewees and researcher is when they received the consent letter[31] where it was mentioned that the thesis would be written in the English language. This surprised some of them since many do not speak English and regard the language as formal. In this case the researcher always tried to stay modest and respectful towards the interviewees no matter their educational or occupational background. The aforementioned characteristics the researcher has, puts her in an *insider* and *outsider* position in relation to the interviewees and the context they live in. This has evidently influenced the research and the mere awareness of it shows the importance of keeping the study transparent.

5.2 Research design
The chosen method for this study is of qualitative nature. As Rubin and Babbie (2014) write, "qualitative research methods attempt to tap deeper meanings of particular human experiences" (p.471), which was the intention of this research when interviewing Aymara women about their experiences as indigenous women in the Bolivian society. Within qualitative research, the method of semi-structured

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[31] The consent letter can be found at last in the appendix.

interviews[32] was chosen as most suitable to understand the experiences of these women, because it enables the researcher to follow a set of questions, but at the same time ask follow-up questions depending on which answer is provided. In comparison to quantitative research that aims to generalize, test variables and collect data broadly this study aims to bring forward the lived experiences of these women, which would have not been attained by using, for instance, questionnaires (ibid.). However, issues arose regarding the ensurance of the study's objectivity, which shows the disadvantage qualitative research may bring. The researcher in this case is the only person who carried the whole process (everything from interviews to analysis), which cannot always be confirmed as objective. To assess this, the steps taken for the credibility of the study are outlined in the section 5.4.

5.3 Mode of procedure

5.3.1 Choice of literature

Searching for relevant literature within the investigation topic is essential to gain understanding of what is known and what has been researched so far (Bryman 2012). The chosen literature was mainly found through LUBsearch,[33] where both articles and books relevant to the thesis topic were found. To widen the scope of search, other databases were used such as FLACSO Ecuador, NGOs[34] – and ministry webpages, but also ministries in Bolivia were visited to ask for relevant publications. The articles found had to fulfil the criteria of being peer-reviewed and the terms used throughout the search were "Aymara", "Women", "Indigenous", "Bolivia", "El Alto", "Latin America" and "discrimination". These terms were regarded as the most relevant in relation to the thesis topic to find suitable articles. The abstracts of these were read and depending on their content, they were either downloaded and read or discarded. The chosen articles focus on the struggles indigenous women face generally, but do also focus on indigenous women in Mexico and Chile. Further, the articles provide a view on indigenous

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[32] These interviews are described in the subsection 5.3.3.
[33] Lund University's database.
[34] Non Governmental Organizations.

women's participation in the elaboration of the new Constitution in Bolivia and also how the role of this one has influenced the recognition of indigenous peoples in the country. Moreover, national and international publications by NGOs were used, that often conduct studies about the situation for marginalized groups.

5.3.2 Sample selection

Non-probability sampling was chosen as a sampling method, which is often used in qualitative research (Rubin & Babbie 2014). Specifically, snowball and convenience sampling methods were used for this study. Snowball sampling has the characteristics of finding the interviewees for the study when first establishing contact with a group of people, who later facilitate the contact with the rest of the interviewees (Bryman 2012; O'Reilly 2009). Convenience sampling was also used due to the sample's "availability to the researcher" (Bryman 2012, p.710). The researcher had an internship prior to the thesis semester at an NGO working with the leadership of Aymara women, which played the role of gatekeeper[35] and enabled the establishment of contact with some of the interviewees. This first contact was crucial, since it facilitated the trust between interviewee and researcher. For instance, when a interviewee did not arrive to the interview, the researcher asked other women on the streets and at their selling stands if they were willing to participate in the study, whom all reacted sceptically and refused to participate. In other words, not having this internship placement would have made the process of finding interviewees very difficult.

The sample chosen for this study is a group of 15 Aymara women between the ages of 40 to 70 years whom live in the city of El Alto. The delimitation of ages was chosen, because it was important that these women were adults who had elaborated their life experiences and had perspective on them. The amount of participants is also suitable for the allocated time and workload that a master thesis comprises.

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[35] Person/s, organizations or some other institution that grants access and facilitates the contact with the participants in one way or another (O'Reilly 2009).

5.3.3 Interviews as fieldwork method

Fieldwork is described as the period where the "primary data" (O'Reilly 2009, p.2) is collected and this was carried out during two weeks in the city of El Alto, where the 15 interviews were conducted. These interviews were semi-structured, which have the aspect of letting the participants "talk freely" (ibid., p.127) and develop their answers. The interviewer used an interview guide with 16 questions developed by her and approved by her supervisor. The first eight questions were introductory and asked the participants where they live, about their childhood, their family, their occupation, which languages they speak, but also how a typical day in their lives looks like. The aim with this introductory part was to gain an understanding of the person's life and ease into the second part of the interview. The last eight questions were more profound and asked the women about their life experiences, specifically if they had experienced any type of abuse, mistreatment or harassment due to being women, Aymara or due to their age. The aim with this second part was to gain a deeper understanding of the realities these women have lived e.g. experiences of violence and discrimination, but also how they cope with these.

Only when using the method of interviewing, the participants were able to open up and tell their stories, while the researcher listened carefully and could ask follow-up questions. These were held in a place and at a time chosen by the interviewees for them to feel comfortable. These places were offices, main squares, homes, cafes and out on the streets. The consent letter informed the participants the maximum duration of the interviews up to 60 minutes. Having conducted the interviews, the longest lasted 80 minutes and the shortest around 30 minutes. The interviews were held in the language of Spanish, which can be questioned since this language is the dominant in society brought by the colonizers and also non-indigenous. Foley (2005/2006) points out that indigenous research has been conducted in non-indigenous languages, which is problematic since it is preferable to use the traditional language of the indigenous as a "first form of recording" (p.34). Despite this, most of the interviewees are bilingual and grew up speaking Aymara and Spanish. Some of the women were not fluent in

Aymara and the researcher does not speak the language either. This is why Spanish was used to communicate with the participants, since using a translator could have caused confusion and misconceptions of what the women expressed, but also important information could have been lost. In a few interviews, the women expressed themselves in Aymara when giving examples on a couple of words or sentences, which they later translated into Spanish for the interviewer to understand. These are though not regarded as vital for the understanding of the whole interviews.

5.3.4 Recording & transcribing

The conducted interviews were recorded with two different devices, a recording device and a mobile phone. Recording was essential, since it "allows more thorough examination of what people said" (Bryman 2012, p.482) and the interviewer can focus and pay attention to the interviewees rather than taking notes. These recordings were kept digitally safe as well as the transcriptions of them. The transcriptions were done manually on computer documents, thus no transcribing program was utilized, even though this task was extremely time consuming (ibid.). After transcribing the interviews, the researcher listened to the recordings again in order to modify the transcriptions if something had been misheard. Lastly, the transcriptions were printed as paper copies for the analysis of them.

5.4 Thematic analysis

When examining the transcriptions while re-listening to the interviews, themes emerged according to the asked questions from the interview guide. These themes are in line with the research questions of the study, which relate to the lived experiences of the Aymara women. The three overarching themes are: violence, discrimination and coping strategies. Consequently, depending on what was said by the interviewees related to these themes, their told stories were highlighted with a pen. These told stories were then written down in a document and printed

to have a better overview of what was said by the interviewees according to each theme.

5.5 Thesis credibility

The terms of validity and reliability are the most commonly used when explaining the credibility of researches. However, the relevance of these terms in relation to qualitative research has been questioned and the terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are used to enhance the scope of trustworthiness better within qualitative research (Bryman 2012). Provided by Lincoln and Guba (1985), these terms will be the ones assessed for the credibility of this thesis.

Credibility

To ensure the credibility of this study, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement and member checks were used. The first criteria *peer debriefing* facilitated the researcher to express the carried study thus far when discussing it with peers and especially with her supervisor, which enabled to question the research and be provided with new inputs to develop it. Also, several drafts of the thesis have been sent both to the supervisor and to University peers, to receive feedback on the written text, which has given the researcher the opportunity to edit and elaborate the thesis document. The second criteria, *prolonged engagement,* was accomplished when the researcher spent long time at the context where the participants live. This was done when the researcher had an internship for ten weeks, prior to the fieldwork period, in the city of El Alto, which provided insight into the daily context of these women. The internship carried was namely at an NGO working with the leadership of Aymara women (and some men). This enabled the first contact with these women as a first step to build trust with them and engage in their daily lives. The last criteria *member checks* was done throughout the interviews when e.g. rephrasing what had been asked to the interviewees to check the consistency of what was said by them, but also to ensure the researcher had understood what they meant. In one occasion, for instance, the

interviewer realized she had the need to ask a question when the interview was over to gain a holistic understanding of one of the women's life. This was solved through calling the participant, since both had already gone separate ways.

Transferability

To achieve transferability in any study, a "thick description" (ibid., p.316) of the carried process is brought up as essential. For this study, the steps taken throughout the research process, which are described in the thesis, are the accounts for guiding the transferability of it, which allow the reader to follow what has been done and in which way. However, whether this study is transferable into another context and time is an "empirical issue" (ibid.), since the time and context where this study was carried can only be accountable for that specific time and context. Especially the fieldwork carried out, because it was conducted during two weeks in February 2019 and with a specific group of Aymara women. The same study could be conducted in another context and time, but it should be carefully carried out since interviewing another group of indigenous women entails different and/or similar lived experiences. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) write, instead of the researcher arguing for how transferable this study is, it is the own reader who is responsible to make this conclusion with the provided material (ibid.).

Dependability

To ensure the dependability of this study, the chosen steps throughout the research process were discussed with the researcher's supervisor. In this way, the research could account for the reliability of the chosen methodology and theories in relation to the conducted research. When providing detailed information about the carried process, the possibility to replicate the study is higher since all the steps provided are followed to attain this. Further, for a study to be dependable, it is important to be aware that the context and time where it is conducted is constantly changing, which may affect the chances of replication (Given 2008). For this specific case, the time when these Aymara women were interviewed will change

since time evolves, but also the context where they live could be exposed to both minor and major changes. Hence, being transparent throughout the thesis document facilitates the ensurance of the research's dependability.

Confirmability

To ensure the confirmability of this study, there is need to have a thorough explanation of what has been done and why throughout the research process. Since it is only one and the same researcher who has conducted the whole study from beginning to end, biases do always need to be accounted for and this can only be possible if and when the researcher is transparent regarding the study in the thesis document. To confirm the study, proof needs to be provided to show that the interpretations of the results are consistent with what was said by the participants, rather than these being influenced by biases the researcher may have (ibid.). To ensure this, when listening to the interviews while reading its transcriptions, themes related to the studies research questions emerged. However, qualitative studies alike this thesis cannot always be accounted for achieving confirmability, since another researcher might have other conclusions than the ones brought forward in this study.

5.6 Ethical considerations

When conducting research where people are the main subjects of study, there are several ethical considerations to be taken in account. Especially when the investigation involves indigenous peoples, since they have previously been researched within western academia with a lack of respect (Tunón et.al 2016). The book[36] by Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes how researchers can think of and which methodologies they can use when conducting research involving indigenous peoples. The following questions are starting points for any researcher or scholar conducting this type of research:

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[36] Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2012) *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*.

Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interest does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, p.7).

These questions should be asked by the researcher in order to reflect upon the consequences it may entail when conducting indigenous research. Also, keeping a critical distance is of importance to make the research more "*trust-worthy*" (Olsen 2016, italics added) and can be achieved with the help of these questions. The mere fact of using Standpoint Theory for this thesis shows that the point of entry is these women's experiences, which takes in account their standpoints as the most important. Standpoint Theory does also provide "a way for scholars to conduct ethical research aimed at transforming colonial power" (Ardill 2013, p.317), since the aim with the theory is to stand in contrast to the conventional theories in academia.[37]

Other ethical considerations taken in account will be described below with the terms of consent, confidentiality, anonymity, responsibility and respect.

Within research "free prior informed consent" (Tunón et.al 2016, p.67) should be given. Hence, the researcher called the interviewees to explain the study and ask if they were willing to be interviewed, which is a first step for informed consent (ibid.). If and when the person gave its consent on the phone, the researcher sent the letter of consent as a picture through WhatsApp[38] for them to read it. If the person did not have/use this application, the letter was read out loud for the person before the interview (the interviewee had a copy for herself to read) and the interviewer made sure the person understood by e.g. asking if she had any questions and understood what the study was about. The interviewees signed two copies of the letter; one copy was for each interviewee and the other for the researcher. Additionally, the researcher made sure the interviewees were aware of their participation being voluntary, this stated in the consent letter, but also

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[37] For more information on Standpoint Theory read the previous chapter.
[38] WhatsApp is a phone application widely used in Bolivia to communicate.

mentioned before the interview, which is another important step to achieve informed consent (ibid.).

It is crucial to keep the interviewees personal information confidential and anonymous. Confidentiality within indigenous research is regarded by Tunón et.al (2016) as the right of the indigenous participant to not have any sensitive information disclosed or published. Throughout the interviews, many of the women opened up and cried when telling their life experiences. None of them neither expressed they were uncomfortable when speaking about this nor expressed their refusal of a specific story to be later told in the thesis. It is though problematic and regarded as inappropriate that the researcher conducted the interviews and kept no further contact with the interviewees afterwards (ibid.), which makes me question the benefits for these women taking part in this study. Measures have been taken to deal with this ethical consideration as appropriately as possible, which are further discussed in the 7th chapter. Additionally, anonymity as part of confidentiality, was ensured through naming the interviewees instead of disclosing their names in the results chapter, but also keeping the documents of their transcribed interviews safe digitally.

Lastly, respect and responsibility are assessed as essential when conducting research within indigenous communities (ibid.; Olsen 2016). Paying respect for the individuals taking part in a study is important in any research conducted, especially when the interviewees belong to an indigenous community and the researcher is non-indigenous. Respect goes hand in hand with being responsible as a researcher and taking the research and its interviewees seriously. Researching about indigenous peoples is already a sensitive topic that "needs to be handled with care" (ibid., p.29) and it is important that the interviewees presence is not viewed as merely there for the sake of the thesis. Rather, if someone is benefiting from the research it should be the indigenous community and not the researcher (ibid.; Foley 2003).

6. Analyzing the interviews

This chapter intends to analyze the life experiences shared by the Aymara women in the conducted interviews. Three overarching themes emerged during the interviews: violence, discrimination and strategies to cope, which are interrelated with the research questions of this study. Before the interviews are analyzed, background information will be provided about the interviewed Aymara women to contextualize their individual lives.

6.1 The interviewees

Interviewee	Name
1	Laura
2	Natalia
3	Alejandra
4	Paula
5	Raquel
6	Valeria
7	Erica
8	Carmen
9	Silvia
10	Liliana
11	Daniela
12	Carla
13	Rosario
14	Isabel
15	Fabiana

Table nr.1 Presenting the participants.

Laura is in her 60s, she grew up in a province[39] and migrated to El Alto as an eight-year-old. Laura never attended school and started to work at an early age when she moved to the city. She is a mother of four children and a grandmother of nine grandchildren. Laura lives in a house with one of her son's family. She works at the moment looking after a library at nights and she enjoys her job.

Natalia is in her 60s and grew up in a province. She migrated to El Alto as a nine year old to live with her godfather, since her parents had scarce resources and were not able to provide for her. Natalia attended school until she got a contagious disease, which stopped her from attending school. She had to start working when she moved to the city mainly in restaurant kitchens. Her family consists of her husband, her six children and her fifteen grandchildren.

Alejandra is in her 50s and grew up in a province. She finished high school and started to work as a seller when she was 18. Alejandra migrated to El Alto when she was 33 years old. She is the oldest of eight siblings and had four children, since one of her son's has passed away. Alejandra occupies a high position as a leader at an association in El Alto.

Paula is in her 40s and has lived her whole life in El Alto. She grew up with her family consisting of six persons. They all lived in one room and shared a house with uncles, aunts, cousins and a grandmother. Paula lives now with her husband and her two sons. She attended school as a child and has afterwards studied business administration. Paula is at the moment finishing a law degree and applying for jobs.

Raquel is in her 40s and grew up in the city of La Paz with her parents and two siblings. She later moved to El Alto. Her mother was not able to walk during Raquel's childhood, the family could not afford a wheelchair and they carried her around in the house. Later, her mother was miraculously cured and could walk again. Raquel lives in an apartment with her husband and three children. She graduated from high school and studied to become a dentist, but could not afford her studies anymore and started to work. Now she runs her own business with her husband. They deliver vegetables and fruits to different market places.

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[39] The geographical area of provinces is rural.

Valeria is in her 40s and grew up in a province. She migrated to El Alto with her parents and siblings when she was two years old. Valeria started to work in La Paz when she was 12 years old while attending school. After graduating from high school, she migrated to Argentina to work for a couple of years. When she came back to Bolivia, she met her future husband whom she lives with now and has three children with. She works selling clothes at different markets in El Alto.

Erica is in her 40s and lives in La Paz. She grew up in El Alto with her parents and siblings, but was born in a province. Erica attended school up to third grade and herded sheep afterwards. She got her house constructed and lives there with her husband and two daughters. When Erica migrated to El Alto she started to work as a domestic worker in La Paz and has been doing it ever since. Erica expresses she is quite tired of working and thought she would stop working when she got married. She felt though the household's economy was not stable enough and kept on working.

Carmen is in her 40s and grew up in a province with her father and siblings who she later migrated with to El Alto. Her mother died when she was a child. Carmen has autism and expresses it has hampered her from developing as a human being, especially since she did not know about her diagnose until around 10-15 years ago. Despite this, she graduated from high school and occupies now a high leader position at an association in El Alto. She mainly works selling plastics. Carmen is single mother of a two-year-old.

Silvia is in her 50s and grew up in the city of La Paz with her family, but later moved to El Alto. She went to school up to sixth grade and started to work after it. Silvia works selling clothes in El Alto and in the city of Cochabamba. She lives with her husband and was a mother of six children, since one of her son's passed away.

Liliana is in her 60s and grew up in a province with her parents and three siblings. Later, she migrated to El Alto and lives now with her husband and her son. Her other son passed away when he was fifteen. Liliana went to school and later got a scholarship that enabled her to graduate as a communicator. She has

been working with several projects since then and she works now as the director of a Non-Governmental Organization.

Daniela is in her 40s and grew up with her father and siblings in a province, her mother died when she was a child. Her family migrated to El Alto when she was seven. Daniela went to school and later studied to become a dentist. She runs her own consultancy now. Besides her profession, Daniela occupies a high position as a leader in an association of El Alto, which she finds challenging. She lives with some of her siblings in a house in El Alto.

Carla is in her 40s and was born in a province. She migrated to El Alto as a baby with her mother, her stepdad and her siblings and grew up there. Carla went to school and studied to become a teaching assistant, which she works with now. She lives with her husband and her five children.

Rosario is in her 50s and grew up with her parents and siblings in a province. As she expresses, her parents prioritized her brothers' education, which made her attend school only up to third grade. When she turned 16, she was sent to El Alto to seek for jobs to help provide for her family. She started to work as a domestic worker in La Paz and has, in the past years, sold meat in markets. Rosario lives with her husband, is a mother of five children and a grandmother of two.

Isabel is in her 40s and grew up in a province. She finished school and started to work afterwards when she migrated to El Alto when she was 18 years old. Isabel lives with her husband and her two sons. She runs a business with her husband where they sell llama and alpaca weavings to different markets.

Fabiana is in her 40s and grew up in La Paz. She later moved to El Alto. Fabiana attended school until she was 16 and then started to work in restaurant kitchens. She later finished high school attending night school. Fabiana is a mother of three children and separated from the children's father. She is now married and expresses her husband is her jewel. Fabiana has worked with diverse things and the last job she had was selling papaya juices.

6.2 Violence

It should be pointed out that not all interviewed women experienced violence in their lives. However, among the interviewees who did experience violence, most of the violence was physical in the form of being hit and beaten and some were also exposed to sexual violence in form of rape, abuse and harassment. Among the ten central *capabilities* identified by Nussbaum, the *capability* of bodily integrity applied is:

> Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction (Deneulin & Shahani 2009, p.44).

As described by the interviewees, the different forms of violence they have experienced have affected them. Even if these experiences are in the past and the women might have coped with them in some way or another, they are still influenced by them today. A though experience of violence is the one of women assassination, *feminicidio,* which was experienced by Fabiana when her sister got murdered.

> *"We were eight children and the one that used to tell us that has passed away. She has passed away, she has been assassinated, her own husband killed her. Yes, she suffered a feminicidio in 2016. Yes her death has been very tragic, she was strangled." – Fabiana*

Natalia did also express she was affected when her husband's son hit her. She told that several years after this, she could not be around him and kept distance, but also cried often when she thought about what happened.

> *"I got a partner, my husband had three children and I have suffered violence because the son, his oldest son hit me. Like that, I was*

pregnant so from that I am telling, that is violence. That mm with a stick he hit me and I had a miscarriage from my child." – Natalia

As found throughout the fieldwork, the perpetrators of these acts were all men known to the women, which is common (Coordinadora de la Mujer 2019). As read in the quotes above, the interviewed women have atrocious experiences of violence in the sense that these experiences have scarred and affected them throughout their lives. When experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault, these women are not able to achieve the *capability* of bodily integrity, since they are not safeguarded from these types of acts. It is not only the sense of safeness that is jeopardized here, rather these experiences make these women fear their surrounding and feel threatened in their own homes. The safe place they had, their household, becomes unsafe and they are forced to either flee from it to seek protection or stay and live under threat and fear of being abused again. This was the case for Valeria, who left her husband after he hit her several times.

"I have even denounced my husband and in that moment he bowed his head and apologized. Once I accepted it, a second time also (...). Then it happened a third time and I said: No I am going to report him. (...). I stayed at my dad's house." – Valeria

Although Valeria had the opportunity to leave her home for a while, many of the other women did not have this possibility due to lack of economic resources as well as not being able to leave their children. To suffer domestic violence does not only affect the *capability* of bodily integrity, it also affects the women's mental health. When suffering violence of any type, the person may become traumatized and what happened is deeply embedded in the physical memory of the body. In this way, the women do not only experience great fear for being beaten or abused again, their physical and psychological well being are under constant threat, especially if they live under the same roof as the aggressor. Further, these women might stop trusting people and become isolated detaching themselves from their

surrounding because of what happened. This is the case especially for the women who were sexually abused as children, which not only affected their childhoods, but also their trust towards adults. Fabiana, for instance, was abused by her sister's boyfriend as a child and was not able to tell anyone what happened. She only recently opened up and told her husband about it and later to me during the interview, i.e. she has not been able to talk about it for 30 years.

> *"He took me to a place and he tells me 'I am going to make a trick', a trick with his tie he says and he ties my hands and he held the tissue and he covered my mouth and he abused me (…). I was afraid, I did not leave my house during a month, I couldn't eat." – Fabiana*

Silvia did also experience sexual abuse as a child:

> *"I was abused by my uncle. I had an uncle and I was little I had eight years, it has to be my uncle: 'who wants to sleep with me?' he said. I run to him and the uncle paid me and I don't know why he was touching me and all of that. I started to cry (…). I did not understand that time (…) but now we understand." – Silvia*

The bodily integrity and, evidently, the mental health of the women when they were girls were affected because of these experiences, which have kept on influencing them later in life. The girls were children who did not understand what happened to them and when being abused by someone they knew, who was part of the family, their trust for other people decreased vastly. Because of the traumatic experiences of violence these women have, they are not able to become *agents* in their lives. This since they live under constant threat of being abused again, which gravely affects their bodily integrity and mental health. In this way, they become deprived from their possible opportunities in life and hindered from developing as individuals. Thus, disabling them to attain their potential *capabilities*. Further, the women are hindered from becoming *agents* and being

main actors in their own lives, since other individuals decide over their realities when abusing them. Through this, the violence they experience is institutionalized in their private sphere, which makes these women oppressed in their daily lives and to reach any sort of *agency* becomes extremely difficult.

On the other hand, bodily integrity is only one *capability* that can be attained in order to reach *agency*. However, as Sen (2001) describes, it is of importance to live in a society that is able to provide possibilities for its individuals to enhance and expand the *capabilities* they may have for them to live lives they value. Here, the State is of importance because it has the authority to create policies that facilitate their citizens to reach their full potential or at least help them on the way. As Natalia expresses below, she regards it positive that the law 348,[40] aiming to guarantee women a life free from violence, is implemented now, since it did not exist when she suffered violence.

> *"There was none, there should have been those laws back then like now." – Natalia*

Or as Valeria explains:

> *"I have lived it at my home, in the family. Violence like that with my partner and so to say it is a period when you feel very small and you cannot do anything, but now the law is out now, the 348. That normative is out now and it protects us women." – Valeria*

Some of the interviewed women expressed they felt this law protects them if they suffer violence and makes them feel secure since they have a sense of trust towards the legislation. However, as a large group of the women expressed, they felt that despite the law's implementation in 2013, it does not protect them. They

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[40] Law 348, *Ley integral para garantizar a las mujeres una vida libre de violencia,* integral law to guarantee women a life free from violence by "establishing mechanisms, measures and integral policies of prevention, attention, protection and restoration to women" (LEY N° 348 2013, p.5) implemented in Bolivia in 2013.

expressed mistrust for the authorities since they felt they were not taken seriously when they denounced these acts as the following quote by Carmen illustrates:

"My sister suffered violence caused by my brother. A physical aggression, we went to the FELCV.[41] And what did they tell us? 'You surely provoked him'. Like that there are many fallacies in the laws and in the own authorities (…). They are so to say, let's do this way or help out the victim, it is not like that, the victim is beaten and one comes and beats her even more." – Carmen

Women who have suffered violence are in a very exposed position due to what happened to them. When reporting this and seeking for help and support by the authorities, they are met with this attitude, which makes them more vulnerable. In this way, the patriarchal structures of society can be sensed at an institutional level, which hinders the women from demanding justice. From this perspective, the women felt they could not claim their rights because the authorities did not believe them. Already having an exposed position when suffering violence and continuously experiencing this reality, and treatment by the authorities, hampers these women's possibilities to gain justice and in turn, affects the enhancement of their *capabilities*. In this way, the women face additionally an obstacle to attain *agency* since the mechanisms that should protect them in society mock them instead of helping. Their trust towards authorities decreases, which may cause their continued mistrust for societal institutions.

As analyzed above, the experiences of violence these women have affect and influence them in their daily lives. These violent acts are part and consequence of the strong patriarchal structures in the Bolivian society, which keeps on reproducing these acts as well as the acceptance of them. From this perspective, these acts are dominant cultural codes, which are normalized in society and internalized by its population e.g. the perpetrators and the State's authorities.

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[41] *Fuerza Especial de Lucha Contra la Violencia* (special forces against violence). Institution in Bolivia working with crimes of violence in society.

Through this, the *subaltern* position of these women is strengthened since these actors exercise their power over them, whom are already vulnerable, which creates a barrier for these women to reach their potentials to become *agents*.

6.3 Discrimination

The experiences of discrimination the interviewed women have were expressed in different ways, because of their gender, social class and ethnicity. The women's clothing of *pollera*[42] and their spoken language of Aymara are two identity attributes that distinguish these women from the rest of society. These two are used throughout this analysis to highlight the women's experiences of discrimination.

The women expressed they have mostly been discriminated because of their gender, which has happened in many different forms.

> *"Generally it is said that because they wear a pollera they are discriminated, but for me it is not like that (...). For being a woman and for the indigenous origins she has, always the woman (is discriminated) for her gender. She always suffers discrimination in one way or another, from her family, husband, father or mother, anyone, there is always that suffering of social class." – Carmen*

Some experienced discrimination already at an early age when their brothers' education was prioritized over theirs and they had to start working at a young age.

> *"I am a woman they say, before the woman just needed to know how to write and read, nothing else. They did not want me to become professional. Some were like that and I believe my parents got it as well: 'and why do you want it? You are a woman, the man is the one*

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[42] Typical clothing of indigenous women in Bolivia. The *pollera* of Aymara women is characterized by a long skirt, a blouse, a hat, a shawl, typical shoes and accessories.

that has to come forward'. And in that way they discriminated us." –
Silvia

The women do still experience discrimination because of their gender, such as Paula's case, who, when applying for jobs, is regarded as incapable for the mere fact of being a woman.

"I am applying for jobs now and the first thing they say is 'do you have children?' And I say yes, 'are you planning to have more children?' And like that it is already an abuse (…). And they say 'she is a woman, she is not able to work properly up to 100%'." - *Paula*

As mentioned in the introduction, Bolivia has strong patriarchal structures in society and as the Government portrays it, they are carrying out policies to transform and depatriarchalize the State. However, these women expressed that despite laws being enacted, they still experience that gender discrimination has not changed thus far. For instance, experiencing discrimination by being deprived education at an early age has affected these women throughout their lives. The women expressed that if they had the chance to go back in time, they would invest in studying, since they realize how many doors that open when they have an education. As Sen brings up, education is a *functioning* crucially important for the enhancement of a person's *capabilities* as well as the person's individual growth. When the girls' brothers were prioritized education, either due to lack of economic resources or because the parents (or society) thought girls should only have basic skills in reading, writing and counting, the females are already then put in an *inferior* position in relation to their male peers. This may cause a sense of not being worth as an individual, which affects the believe in oneself, consequently leading to the women not being able to enhance their *capabilities* because of this sense restraining them in their lives.

As in the citations above, the persisting patriarchy in society is experienced in how these women are treated when applying for jobs or at workplaces. When not being regarded as capable, even at an interview for a job, strengthens the sense of *inferiority* in relation to men. In turn, this does also make them experience, repetitive times, their exclusion from certain areas in life. Consequently, it is difficult to break the *glass ceiling.*[43] The rejection of women and discrimination they experience by society in different ways does not enable them to enhance their *capabilities* and prevents them from achieving *agency*.

Aymara women do not only experience discrimination because of their gender, but also because of their ethnicity. The women expressed this discrimination mostly happened earlier in their lives, but that it sometimes still happens. In some cases, they experienced this because of their clothing, *la pollera*. For instance, Liliana was discriminated at the university she attended. This institution in society had only been for men and *mestizo* people, and studying at a higher education institution as a woman wearing *la pollera* was very unusual in the 1980s.

> *"The bad treatment for example was when I started to study at university. It was a total discrimination back then. One reason was because you wore the pollera (…). It did not affect me that much, but it hurt, because it was like a psychological violence (…). The things that hurt the most were the insults: 'this indian why does she have to behave this way?" – Liliana*

La pollera is an attribute of identity some Aymara women wear, which distinguishes them from the rest of society and exposes them by being a symbol for the clothing of an indigenous woman. Depending on where a woman wears *la pollera,* she might be treated in different ways. For instance, it is more common that women wear this clothing in the city of El Alto than in the city of La Paz

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[43] The use of *glass ceiling* is used to illustrate the barrier that exists for some groups in society, women for instance, to e.g. get a certain job or attain a certain position at a workplace.

since the population of Aymara is larger in El Alto and the *pollera* is their typical clothing.

> *"Before yes, they looked at us when we went to the supermarket, the ones wearing a pollera did not almost go in. Now everyone goes in, like normal. This happened recently five or six years ago (…). Yes to be honest, when you entered a store and spoke Aymara, they looked at you (…). Now we are equal and they cannot discriminate, that is what I have heard."* – Erica

As the quotes by Liliana and Erica express, the women were discriminated by society when wearing *la pollera* earlier in life. Being discriminated for the clothing one wears and being named in pejorative ways, such as *chola* or *india,*[44] creates discomfort in these women and may weaken their confidence. Depending on the attitudes people have towards them due to their clothing, their enhancement of *capabilities,* such as their bodily integrity, can either be weakened or strengthened. Weakened in the sense that when experiencing discriminatory acts, their vulnerability increases since they are regarded *inferior* than others just for their clothing. Strengthened in the sense, as the interviewees agreed, that *la pollera* has become more valued in society in the past years since the demand for it has increased, which is also seen in more women wearing it who work at ministries (Diaz Carrasco 2012). This appreciation of the clothing may strengthen the bodily integrity of these women since they experienced a societal attitude change towards women wearing *la pollera.* Depending if this *capability* is weakened or strengthened by these discriminatory acts, women are able to attain *agency* in their lives or become hindered from it. Further, some women defended themselves and shouted back to the ones who named them in pejorative ways

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[44] The denomination of *chola* has been used in Bolivia as a nickname for women wearing *pollera,* sometimes used in a degrading way, but sometimes by using its diminutive, *cholita,* it has been more respectful. *India* (indian) on the other hand, has been used when naming indigenous populations in very degrading ways.

when wearing this clothing, which could also strengthen them as individuals and thus, their *agency* since they felt they could stand up to this type of treatment.

> *"For example the ones wearing dresses[45] insulted me, 'this indian this', it was like that before, that is how they treated us and I used to talk back to them (…) we indians cost, that is how I used to tell them and the indian always works, the indian always cultivates, the indian brings the fruit."* – Laura

The interviewed women have not only experienced discrimination because of their clothing, but also because of them speaking the Aymara language. They agreed upon that speaking the language was (sometimes) taboo when they grew up, but that now the language, for instance, gave them better job opportunities.

> *"So it wasn't common (to speak Aymara) and there was a lot of discrimination back then towards some, in the school itself (…) they said: 'your mom wears a pollera', like it was a crime. So it was like that the sequel continues from, what is the name, from colonization hehe and it was not that common to speak so they were ashamed before."* – Fabiana

> *"They heard you speak Aymara and said 'she is a peasant', even though you were not born in the country side (…). 'How many animals does she have? From which village does she come from?"* – Paula

As illustrated by Fabiana and Paula, the women experienced wide discrimination when growing up speaking Aymara, which is their mother tongue and an identity attribute they have. Indigenous languages were regarded as *inferior,* since the indigenous populations were despised and at the bottom of the

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[45] It is common to name the women who do not wear a *pollera,* women of dress.

social hierarchy. Some of the women were forbidden, by their parents and teachers, to speak the language when they were children since they thought people would make fun of them and as expressed by the women, because the elders felt they were educating their children by forbidding them to speak Aymara. Through this complying with the dominant society where Spanish has been the official language, which created how these women viewed the language from an early age as questioning it and its traditions. As expressed by them, they became insecure when using the language because of society's view of it. The aforementioned affects the enhancement of *capabilities* of these women and thus their *agency,* since they may have felt restrained to use their mother tongue, which may have affected their sense of belonging to the Aymara culture, but also their sense of being respected and accepted in society.

However, despite the language being taboo during their childhoods, the women expressed that similar to the *pollera,* the Aymara language has gone through a transformation and is valued nowadays. They expressed they felt proud now for knowing and speaking the language and they also felt it was more accepted in society now.

> *"Now the Aymara is implanted (…). You have to know, the one who does not know how to speak Aymara is nothing, even at the university, I tell them (to my grandchildren) you need to know Aymara." –*
> *Alejandra*

> *"I like pretty much to speak Aymara and I am not ashamed like others." – Fabiana*

When it comes to speaking Aymara, either for facilitating the communication with costumers, friends and family or using it for political purposes or even for joy, the usage of this language influences not only these women's enhancement of their *capabilities*, but also their *agency.* As illustrated above, the women enjoy speaking Aymara, which is regarded as a *functioning* since it is an action these

women value doing. The language became recognized as official in Bolivia in the new Constitution in 2009 and through this the confidence of these women, who speak the language, is strengthened. Further, this recognition leads to the *freedom* of enjoying this specific *functioning,* in this way becoming a *capability,* since the usage of it becomes accepted, valued and normalized in society. Experiencing the transformation of acceptance of the Aymara language in society facilitates the enhancement of this *capability* and leads to the strengthening of these women's *agency* in the sense that their mother tongue is recognized now, which was not the case earlier in their lives. As Sen points out, State's have the responsibility to facilitate their citizens to enhance their *capabilities,* primarily by making policies and in this way, enabling them to become *agents.* It can be deduced that through the recognition of the Aymara language, the Bolivian State in this case, has accomplished the enhancement of the *capability* of the citizens who speak and value speaking Aymara.

Lastly, the women experienced discrimination due to their appearance and because of where they live.

> *"To me they tell me: 'why are you brownish and your two children are whitish? And your daughter is only brownish'. And that makes you uncomfortable haha yes I tell them but what shall I do it is my constitution (...). It seems like it happens at workplaces as well, one comes from the country side and they tell the person those things, indirectly they discriminate." – Valeria*

> *"Like I told you, my children attend to the school down (in the city). And they said 'the ones from El Alto, the ones from El Alto' and once I stood and told them a moment, a moment, the ones from El Alto we are persons just like you (...). But in that way people from down always discriminate the Alteños, they say 'that Alteñito', so I am not going to deny, they even said so to my daughter." – Raquel*

As explained in chapter two, a geographical border exists between the cities of El Alto and La Paz, but also a symbolic one between the populations. These borders create the segregation between *Alteños* and *Paceños*, making in this way the *othering* of one another. This *othering* is reproduced through the prejudices the populations have of each other, as in the quote by Raquel. Even though the new transport system of cable cars facilitates the commuting between the cities, creating a meeting between both populations, the socioeconomic difference between them is noticeable and also a reason causing this division. One's socioeconomic situation is an important precondition in life and as Sen (2001) points out, having an adequate income is crucial for the enhancement of one's *capabilities* since it does not only provide stability, but also investment in education, proper housing or being well-nourished. It can be written that the interviewed women have scarce resources, since they live in poor conditions, but this is only my subjective opinion as a Bolivian-Swedish citizen with westerner views on living standards. The women had all a roof above their heads and food on their table i.e. they were not in misery and live like many others in El Alto. However, the above written quotes portray the existing division between the populations of both cities as well as the discrimination some experience for having a different skin tone. These types of acts affect these women, since others in society regard them as *inferior* because of their appearance and where they live. Consequently, their confidence may be affected because of these acts, in this way hampering the enhancement of their *capabilities* as well as their *agency*. Being met by these types of attitudes in society may, on the other hand, also strengthen these women when they express that this type of treatment is unacceptable to the individuals treating them in those ways. Thus, becoming strengthened in the sense of standing up for oneself.

The clothing and the language are apparent attributes of the Aymara women that are part of their daily lives. As described above, depending on the experiences these women have when wearing *la pollera* or speaking Aymara, their *agency* can be strengthened or weakened. At the same time, these attributes are fundamental for the identity of some of these women and the way society treats them (shown in

the citations) because of these attributes, creates an *othering* of the Aymara women leading to their *subaltern* position in society. However, in later years, their experience of becoming more accepted in society definitely strengthens their potential to become *agents* in their lives.

6.4 Strategies to cope

Despite the difficulties these women face in their daily lives: to be heard, to claim their rights, to get a job, and the tough experiences of violence and discrimination they have, they expressed they use different strategies to cope, which strengthens them. This in turn creates an *agency* in them, which enables them to believe in their *capabilities* to run their lives. The strategies these women expressed were related to improving oneself, helping others and never giving up. Their experiences will be analyzed according to these three subthemes.

In the conducted interviews, the women expressed a feeling of sadness and disappoint because some of them have lacked the opportunity to finish school. As previously noted, many of these women had to start working at an early age and stopped attending school. In Sen's (2001) CA, education is essential to enhance one's *capabilities* and be able to live a life one values since it provides knowledge and may lead to work.

> *"My goals have been to raise above so they won't treat me that way (…). I have taken that oppression as strength (…) so I kept moving forward (…). The only way has been to keep studying so nobody comes and says they can everything, as a women you also know." - Paula*

The case of Paula illustrates how only when studying, she felt she could stand up against those who oppressed her. However, despite that not all of the women had finished school, they expressed they wanted to improve as individuals by learning new things. The women had, for instance, participated in workshops and learned about domestic violence, culture of peace, stereotypes and other topics,

which they regarded were useful in their lives. They expressed this knowledge helped them when claiming their rights, but also when they were discriminated in society. From this perspective, this knowledge becomes a *functioning* since they value it as an action and feel they can apply what they learned to their daily lives. Further, wanting to improve oneself has been a drive for many of these women, which creates an *agency* in them because they are willing to learn and gain knowledge, and through this, change their lives. Also, these women expressed they felt more prepared in life when they learned new things, which helped them to believe in their capacity to improve their life situations. However, some of the women felt it was too late for them to attend some sort of school to learn more and improve as individuals, since they already had families to provide for and lacked the possibility and time to invest in themselves. In these circumstances, the women are hampered from becoming *agents* and changing their lives since they feel their opportunities have run out.

Another strategy used by the women, to cope with difficult experiences in their daily lives, is to help others. By helping other women who had been in the same situation, e.g. of violence, the women felt they were transmitting knowledge, and also felt they were able to support other women through difficult times. Helping others is regarded a *functioning* since it is an action these women value to do. Liliana for instance, has been grateful for the opportunities she has been given in life and because of it she has dedicated her life to empower other women through different projects.

> *"To do something for others is my compromise, it is my cause and we need to keep on strengthening democracy, the active participation of women, those capacities women have that are invisibilized (…). I believe that the Bolivian woman as a woman, as a mother, as a wife, as a sister, as a student, as a professional, we need to take some consciousness and unite to say stop to the violence so no more women die." – Liliana*

Or as Natalia expresses:

"Because I have suffered I became a promoter to help other sisters that suffer violence. Then I can transmit and tell them about the law that now there is this law for example the law 348, to tell them (...). And I am going to keep helping like that so to say, I have that goal to keep going." - Natalia

She expresses this task as very satisfying since she sees the changes it makes in peoples lives and also that it is highly appreciated by them. Having suffered violence herself has given her the courage and tools needed to help women in similar situations. As the aforementioned quotes show, helping others is not only a valued action *(functioning),* but also an action that makes these women feel as worthy citizens who provide to their community. This creates *agency* in these women since they realize their capacity when helping others and feel valued for it, but foremost feel they "bring(s) about change" (Sen 2001, p.19) when helping others.

Besides helping others and improving oneself by learning new things, the interviewed women expressed they carried an inner strength, which did not let them give up when they experienced challenging situations in life. This strength was expressed as born from different circumstances, such as experiencing injustices in life e.g. being abused, discriminated or when seeing corrupt leaders in the associations where these women participate and work. Further, this strength grows when gaining knowledge either through studies or workshops and especially when feeling supported by family members, friends and co-workers. Also, religion and faith in God were expressed as playing a very important role in the lives of most of the interviewed women as something that carried them throughout their lives, both in joyful moments, but especially in difficult ones.

"The thing is to have self-love and give yourself value (...). My husband helps me a lot with it and supports me (...). I don't let them get to me, we have our rights and we need to know them." – Fabiana

" I was very rebel when I was young and I think that has given me some positions, so I have stood up against injustices and people have taken me seriously." – Carmen

"We are in that fight, what can we do? (...). I am taking care of everything as man and woman (...). My children tell me: you are going to see God and that is my only comfort." – Silvia

As read in the quotes above, the women's inner strength grows through support from other individuals. When receiving this support, especially from the one's that are close to them, and having someone who believes in them, increases the women's sense of security and they feel capable to achieve things in life. Also, as the women expressed, and illustrated by Carmen, when raising their voices when experiencing injustices, they gained respect from people, leading to their increased feeling of their capacity to stand up for themselves. Further, when believing in God the women expressed they were provided with the support needed to carry their lives despite all difficulties and by relying upon their faith, they felt strengthened as individuals. These different supports helped these women to never give up and also fed their inner strength. Through this, the women's believe in themselves and their capacities increases, consequently, leading to the enhancement of their *capabilities,* but also the attainment of their *agency.*

At the same time, many of the interviewed women are engaged in selling and neighbourhood associations. These associations are platforms where these women are able to express their opinions and where they feel they are able to influence their living conditions. Here is where these women's *agency* is most prominent since they participate and interact with others to change and improve their

communities. This is consistent with the *collective capability* of *self-determination* by Murphy (2014) and the central capability of control over one's political environment by Nussbaum (2011), which entail that a person's *agency* becomes strengthened when the person is engaged politically. Especially when it comes to indigenous peoples and their self-determination, Murphy (2014) describes that this *collective capability* should encompass the freedom of these groups to take autonomous decisions without external interference. Here, the new Constitution of Bolivia is of importance since one of its goals is to implement local autonomy in the communities for people to have the opportunity to influence decisions that affect them (Nilsson 2013). The engagement many of these women have in neighbourhood associations is an example of this. Like Daniela explains, she made herself heard at a meeting, when she claimed her neighbourhood's rights to basic services of water and sanitation, by using the new Constitution.

> *"I started to talk among the presidents using the Constitution and said that we have the right to basic services (...). I meet women who are under the same circumstances, so we are in the same struggle (...). We need to recognize that women are capable as well." – Daniela*

She expressed that by using the new Constitution when demanding her rights she felt supported by the legal framework, which made her claim more valid. When these women become engaged in their own communities and are able to demand their rights at meetings, their *agency* is strengthened since they are able to pursue their goal of changing/improving their surrounding. Further, the engagement these women have in selling associations affect their working conditions and as expressed by them, they are engaged to improve the conditions they have as sellers. This collective engagement is highly important to them since through it they achieve new rules that protect them. In this way, this joint action makes the women gain control over their political environment since they see the results of their engagement, which later on influences their livelihoods.

7. Concluding discussion

The aim of this study has been to bring forward the experiences Aymara women have of violence and discrimination as well as coping strategies for these oppressive acts. These experiences have been brought forward with the standpoints of these women while applying the theoretical lens of the Capability Approach. This chapter will conclude this thesis discussing the main findings of the study, its limitations and suggestions for further research.

7.1 Main findings

The emerged themes from the interviews; violence, discrimination and strategies to cope, encompass the essence of the expressed experiences the interviewed Aymara women have in the Bolivian society. What was found according to these themes will be summarised here, while answering the study's research question:

What experiences do Aymara women have of violence and discrimination in their daily lives and what coping strategies do they use for these oppressive acts?

Supported by the sub-questions:
- *How do these oppressive acts influence the agency of these women?*
- *How do these coping strategies influence the agency of these women?*

Some of the interviewed Aymara women have suffered physical and sexual violence in their lives, which have affected their bodily integrity and their mental health. The perpetrators of these acts were all men they knew. These acts have made these women live under fear and threat of being abused again, especially if they live under the same roof as the aggressor. Indigenous women's movements bring up gender violence as the main issue hampering the development of women worldwide (Sierra 2008). This is consistent with this study, since to have lived these traumatic experiences, deprive these women from their possible opportunities in life to enhance their *capabilities* and become *agents*. Although the Bolivian State has implemented Law 348, most of the women do not feel this

law is enforced in society, since the authorities do not believe them when they report what happened. In this way, despite enacting laws, these violent acts are part of these women's daily lives and they keep on being neglected by society when authorities, that should protect them, mock them instead. This makes the women feel hindered when trying to achieve justice, which affects their enhancement of *capabilities*.

The women do also have experiences of discrimination due to their gender, social class and ethnicity, which make them suffer a triple oppression (Burman 2016). They experienced most discrimination because of their gender, which can be explained as a consequence of the strong patriarchal structures that persist in Bolivia. As analyzed, the *functionings, capabilities* and, in turn, the *agency* of these women are affected by these discriminatory acts. Being labelled in pejorative ways creates discomfort in them and puts them into an *inferior* position in relation to the rest of society. In this way, these acts weaken the possibility for these women to enhance their *capabilities* and become *agents* in their own lives.

The women did also express an attitude change, in the past years, of their clothing of *pollera* and the Aymara language becoming accepted in society. This attitude change can be deduced to have begun through the enactment of the new Constitution in 2009 that recognizes the Aymara language as official in the country. Further, the election of Evo Morales, the first Aymara president of the country in 2005, may also have influenced this experienced attitude change, not only by having an indigenous president, but also by the rhetoric of his Government.[46] The women's experiences of changing attitudes towards them as indigenous women strengthens their *agency,* since they feel more accepted in society than previously and their confidence increases in order to improve their lives. This is especially perceivable when the Aymara language is recognized and

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[46] This study has not thoroughly analyzed the election of Evo Morales as a beginning to the experienced change of attitudes in society since it has not been the aim of this thesis. However, his presidency is worth mentioning as an influencing factor, which is consistent with what is discussed in some of the used articles for the third chapter. Specifically the articles by Díaz Carrasco (2012), Fontana (2014) and Nilsson (2013).

there is an acceptance for speaking it, and also when seeing more women in positions of power (such as ministers) wearing the typical clothing of *pollera.*

Another finding is the segregation between the populations created by the geographic and symbolic border between the cities of El Alto and La Paz, which enforces the making of the *other* and thus, the *subaltern* position of the one regarded *inferior* (read: Aymara women). This hampers these women from enhancing their *capabilities* and becoming *agents,* since they are regarded *inferior* as indigenous women in a society where gender and ethnicity matters, which hinders them from developing and growing as individuals.

To cope with the oppressive acts of violence and discrimination in their daily lives, the interviewed Aymara women have strategies of improving themselves, helping others and never giving up. Improving themselves and helping others are *functionings* since both are actions these women value doing. By having the drive to learn new things and seeing how helping others is appreciated, these women's *agency* is strengthened since they become satisfied with themselves through these actions. Also, receiving support from close one's and having faith in God, helped these women through difficult times to never give up. Further, through their engagement in sellers and neighbourhood associations, these women build an inner strength, which in turn feeds their *agency*. Here the women are able to, jointly, pursue their goals of improving their communities by expressing their opinions in these associations and through this achieving change in their lives.

To conclude, these oppressive acts of violence and discrimination are dominant cultural codes ingrained in society, which are reproduced and accepted by the population. These are part of the micro level of the daily lives of the Aymara women, such as when suffering violence caused by men they know, and the macro level, of the treatment towards them by authorities working at State institutions. The acts of violence are obscured dominant cultural codes, since they are a consequence of the persisting patriarchal structures in Bolivia, which are non visible and normalized in society. The clothing and language, on the other hand, are more visible, since they are identity attributes of the Aymara women. Although, the women feel more accepted in society in later years, these dominant

cultural codes strengthen their sense of *inferiority/subalternity*, decreasing their potential to enhance their *capabilities* and become *agents* in their lives.

7.2 Limitations

The chosen qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was found suitable for this study to gain a better understanding of the daily experiences the interviewed Aymara women have in the Bolivian society. The choice of method is not regarded as a limitation for the study, however, if the study would have been of quantitative nature, it could have focused on measurement and testing of variables, which would have provided a different perspective than what was obtained in this study. Although the fifteen conducted interviews provided a sizeable volume of material that was time consuming to analyze, the number of interviews was suitable for the scope of a master thesis as well as the timeframe of it. To have listened through the transcribed interviews at an earlier stage would have facilitated the research process regarding its analysis as well as the assessment of the theoretical framework. Instead, the originally chosen theories were replaced and modified to suit the gathered material at this stage of the process.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the third chapter, the literature review provides a macro perspective of the situations indigenous women face in Mexico, Chile and Bolivia. It also provides a macro perspective on the new Constitutions in Bolivia and Ecuador and how these have attempted to create more inclusion in society for their indigenous populations. However, it does not provide a micro perspective specifically about Aymara women's experiences and standpoints in their daily lives, which makes the literature review not fully consistent with this study's topic.

Only being one researcher for the study is also seen as a limitation since the confirmability, transferability, dependability and credibility of this study may have been influenced by it. If the research would have been conducted in cooperation with a second or even a third person, these criteria could have been more solidly confirmed.

Another limitation found is that as a research within academia, the study (like other studies) had to be narrowed down for it to fulfil the mandatory word count and for the topic to remain within certain frames such as suiting the theoretical framework. Like this, other expressed experiences, regarded as important in the women's lives, were omitted and some of their valuable standpoints excluded. However, there had to be a selection of the standpoints provided as well as an organization of them, since not all the material could be included, and this was attained through answering the posed research questions.

Lastly, as mentioned in chapter five, it is problematic that the researcher has no further contact with the women after the interviews. This especially when keeping in mind that research with indigenous populations should be carried out primarily for the sake of the indigenous groups and not for academia. At the same time, while conducting the interviews, there was no interest shown, by the women, to know about the findings of the study. There is always the possibility to contact the interviewees (although it can be difficult at long distance) to discuss the findings with them. Another option has been to translate the study into Spanish to make it available for more people, especially in Bolivia. This was also a suggestion by some workers at the Vice Ministry of Decolonization of the country that the researcher visited to find suitable documents for the research. The ministry usually announces and encourages students to publish their studies related to topics about marginalized groups.

7.3 Further research

As a master thesis, this study has illustrated the experiences fifteen Aymara women, living in the city of El Alto, have in their daily lives in the Bolivian society. These depict a small part of the tough situations these indigenous women have experienced. Although the women have been affected and influenced by these in several ways, most of them have overcome these experiences in order to improve and change their lives. This has been expressed as an inner strength these women carry. Below I provide a few suggestions for further research in relation to this study's topic.

Questions of the Bolivian State's efficiency, in terms of implementing laws and fulfilling them, came up throughout the research process. With the State's rhetoric of depatriarchalizing and decolonizing in mind, it would be of interest to further study if these have had an impact on the lives of indigenous women at an individual as well as a societal level.

To conclude, a similar study, to this one, but with a larger amount of interviewees could provide a broader picture of the situation Aymara women have in the Bolivian society. Such a study could be used as a start to cooperate with these women to implement and fulfil policies that aim to create better life opportunities for them. Moreover, another research studying indigenous women's struggles in Bolivia could be conducted to map out these and also find possible solutions to them, all considering the points of view from the women themselves.

The aforementioned are suggestions for further research related to this thesis topic. The marginal position indigenous peoples, especially women's, have had throughout centuries and still have in many parts of the world needs to be addressed. This not only for State's to fulfil their undertaking in the two global documents protecting indigenous peoples; the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169) and the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, but also for indigenous peoples to become recognized in their societies and be able to enjoy freedoms other citizens do in their living contexts. Or in Amartya Sen's (2001) own words, for people to "live lives they have reason to value" (p.10).

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9. Appendix
9.1 Consent letter in Spanish

Mi nombre es Sofia Quiroga y soy trabajadora social. Por el momento estudio una maestría en ciencias del desarrollo en la Universidad de Lund en Suecia. Nací y crecí en Bolivia y soy paceña, pero mi mamá es de Suecia y vivo ahí desde mis trece años. De esta forma tengo raíces en dos países fantásticos y diferentes. Ahora estoy en mi último semestre de mi maestría donde haré una investigación en la ciudad de El Alto. El propósito de esta investigación es conocer y aprender sobre la vida cotidiana de mujeres en la ciudad de El Alto. También tiene el propósito de aprender sobre las experiencias que mujeres tienen en la sociedad boliviana a base de cómo son tratadas.

El método que será usado en la investigación será cualitativo con entrevistas a mujeres de la ciudad de El Alto de las edades de 40 a 70 años. Las entrevistas serán grabadas con grabadoras de audio para poder escucharlas después y transcribirlas. Las entrevistas grabadas serán escuchadas solamente por la entrevistadora y serán guardadas digitalmente y aseguradas para que ninguna otra persona tenga acceso a ellas. Las entrevistas duraran máximo 60 minutos y es importante que sean llevadas en un lugar tranquilo que sea acordado por la persona entrevistada y la investigadora.

Su nombre será siempre anónimo y sus opiniones no podrán ser rastreadas de ninguna forma. Su participación en el estudio es voluntario y significa que cuando Usted quiera puede retirar su participación sin previo aviso. Los resultados de la entrevista serán presentados en forma escrita en la tesis de maestría y también oralmente en la defensa de la tesis. El documento será escrito en inglés ya que el idioma de los estudios que lleva la estudiante son en inglés.

Estaría muy agradecida si cuento con Su participación en esta investigación.

Mediante esta carta pregunto si Usted quiere participar en este estudio:

Fecha y firma de participante--

La estudiante responsable del estudio es Sofia Quiroga y su tutora es Norma Montesino. Si Usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio esta bienvenida a contactar una de nosotras.

Sofia Quiroga   Norma Montesino
Estudiante   Tutora
so8268qu-s@student.lu.se   norma.montesino@soch.lu.se
606 – 69 165

9.2 Consent letter in English

My name is Sofia Quiroga and I am a social worker. At the moment I am studying a master programme in development studies at Lund University in Sweden. I was born and raised in Bolivia and I am paceña, but my mom is Swedish and I live there since I was thirteen. In this way, I have roots in two fantastic and different countries. Now I am in the last semester of my master's where I will conduct an investigation in the city of El Alto. The purpose of this investigation is to get to know and learn about the daily lives women have in the city of El Alto. The purpose is also to learn about the experiences women have of the bolivian society based on how they are treated.

The method used for the investigation will be qualitative interviewing women of the city of El Alto of the ages between 40 to 70 years. The interviews will be recorded with a recording device to be able to listen to them later and transcribe them. The recorded interviews will only be listened by the interviewer and digitally saved and ensured that no one will access them. The interviews will last maximum 60 minutes and it is important that they are carried out in a calm place that is agreed both by the interviewee and the interviewer.

Your name will always be anonymous and Your opinions will not be able to be traced in any way. Your participation in the study is voluntary, meaning that You can withdraw from the study without previous warning. The results of the interview will be presented in written form in the thesis document and also orally in the thesis opposition. The thesis will be written in English since the student carries her studies in that language.

I would appreciate very much if I count with Your participation in this investigation.

Through this letter I ask if You would like to take part in this study:

Date and participant's sign --

The responsible student for the study is Sofia Quiroga and her supervisor is Norma Montesino. If You have any questions about the study, You are welcome to reach out to any of us.

Sofia Quiroga	Norma Montesino
Student	Thesis supervisor
so8268qu-s@student.lu.se	norma.montesino@soch.lu.se
606 – 69 165	