Empowering indigenous women in Guatemala
– A qualitative study of the indigenous women’s ability to empower themselves in the department of Sololá, Guatemala

Kvinnliga ursprungsbefolkningens väg till egenmakt i Guatemala
-En kvalitativ studie om kvinnliga ursprungsbefolkningens möjligheter till egenmakt i regionen Sololá, Guatemala

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English title:
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Publication type:
Master’s Thesis in Business Administration and Economics
International Business Administration and Economics
Advanced level, 30 credits
Spring semester 2017
ISRN Number: LIU-IEI-FIL-A--17/02600—SE

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“Tenemos que seguir luchando. Yo sé que nosotras podemos, juntas de la mano.”

“We have to keep on fighting. I know we can, together hand in hand.”

One of our respondents, 02 March 2017.
Abstract

Empowerment is a fundamental human right. The indigenous women in Guatemala, however, suffer from both gender and racial discrimination, which through history have un-empowered them. Using a qualitative methodology, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 13 indigenous Guatemalan women to examine the conditions these women face in the process of empowering themselves. In order to aid the collection and analysis of the data, we developed a theoretical model of empowerment consisting of the following empowering components: economic capacity, human capital, social capital, gender equality, political influence, self-esteem, and awareness. The empirical results show that all components of the model, indeed, influence the empowerment of our respondents in the study. The challenges that these women face are related to gender inequalities, discrimination, corruption, economic scarcity, and dependency on others. To facilitate their empowerment, the women currently use formal networks to start businesses and achieve greater awareness about their life situation and their rights as women. We conclude that reduction in gender discrimination, access to healthcare, possibilities to education, and economic independency are necessary in combination with support from the government and NGOs in order to empower the indigenous women in Guatemala.

Keywords: Guatemala, empowerment, indigenous women, herstory, empowering women.
Acknowledgments

This thesis is more than a product of 30 credits and a longer journey than from Sweden to Guatemala. We are incredibly grateful to have had this opportunity and we would like to thank all the people involved. First of all, we wish to thank our supervisor Ali Ahmed, who has stood by our side throughout the whole process of this thesis, even when we were on the other side of the world. Thank you for your commitment and insightful support. We would also like to thank the members of our thesis group for your invaluable advice and ideas.

We wish to thank the organizations Individuell Människohjälp, Diakonia, We Effect, Acopedis, Coindi, Redmusovi, and Comité Campesino Del Altiplano. This study would not have been achievable without your knowledge, time, and support. We would like to direct a special thanks to the staff at Individuell Människohjälp, for helping us in every way possible with advice, contacts and making us feel at home in your office. A special thanks to Lucrecia Cumes and Mauricio Mogollón for your kindness and insights, and to Marta Alicia Vicente and Petrona Cuy at Acopedis, for your willingness to interpret the interviews. To Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, for showing interest in our study, for your financial support, and for providing an inspirational and enlightening course in Härnösand.

A special thanks to family and friends for your love and support along the way. To each and every one of the people we met in Guatemala, who helped us one step further into understand the purpose of our study. To our friend Cirilo and his family, for your generosity and hospitality. And to Gen, for guiding us, making us believe in ourselves, and finding our inner strength.

Most of all, we wish to thank all the amazing women in Guatemala who decided to participate in the interviews. For opening up their homes, taking their time to talk to us, sharing their stories, and for giving us a reason to carry through this study. For reminding us that the sea is the only thing that stands between us; that we are all the same, and that we have to stay strong together to make a change.

Frida Lundström and Elin Morén
1 June 2017, Linköping
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

If the collective memory is history, is the collective amnesia then herstory? The choice of what is preserved is made by whoever has the power. The un-empowerment of women and the over-empowerment of men through time has contributed to the collective amnesia. Empowerment should be the right of every human being as it is the ability to control the factors that decide one’s quality of life and well-being. The empowerment of all human beings, regardless of sex, race, or other individual traits, is a matter of course in many modern societies today. It is, unfortunately, not so obvious in a lot more other societies. In this study, we examine the empowerment of the indigenous women in Guatemala.

The Guatemalan society is characterized by discriminating structures against the indigenous people originating from the 14th century’s colonialism and the 36-year-long civil war, ending in 1996 (UN Women, 2017a). These periods of time were marked by massive killing of the indigenous people, submission of women, and control over women’s bodies and lives (United States Institute of Peace, 2017). Despite the fact that the peace agreements in 1996 promised stronger protection in the constitution for women and the indigenous population, the constitutional change has not yet been implemented (Globalis, 2015), and the indigenous women are still the foremost victims of sex and racial discrimination and inequalities (UN Women, 2017a).

The Guatemalan constitution is supposed to defend equal rights, possibilities, opportunities, and responsibilities of both women and men (Constitución de Guatemala, 1993a), as well as protect the people, independently of their race, gender, culture, or religion (Constitución de Guatemala, 1993b). However, the reality is different; equal rights and opportunities for every Guatemalan citizen clearly do not apply (Vinding & Kampel, 2012). Guatemala ranked 125th out of 188 countries on the Gender Inequality Index 2015; an index which is commonly used to compare inequality between sexes across countries, where lower ranking indicates higher inequality (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). Furthermore, Guatemala has one of the world’s highest female murder rates. As late as 2013, there were 759 reported cases of women being killed due to violence (UN Women, 2017a).

Guatemala also has one of the highest income inequality rates in Latin America, which can be very much connected to rural and indigenous areas (World Bank, 2016). Although Guatemala is a lower-
middle-income country and the largest economy in Central America, as much as 59.3 percent of the population live in poverty (World Bank, 2016). The indigenous people represent the majority of the population in poverty (World Bank, 2016), and women are affected the most (Feuerstein, 1997). Regarding participation in the labor market, there are large differences between women and men. Only 40 percent of the women, as compared to 83 percent of the men, are represented in the labor market (UN Women, 2017a). Also, there are large wage differences between women and men, where women earn 78 percent less than what men do (UN Women, 2017a). In some regions in the rural areas, women are not even compensated for their work since their efforts are considered to be a part of the work done by their men, and thereby considered to already be compensated by the wages paid to the men (UN Women, 2017a). On the political arena, the participation of women is remarkably low. There is a small, almost nonexistent, participation of women in governmental institutions, where only two percent of the municipalities are run by women (UN Women, 2017a). Furthermore, it is common among young indigenous women, mostly among the ones living in rural areas, to either drop out of school or not receive any education at all (Global Education Fund, 2017). In the majority of the cases, it is due to gender disparities or lack of economic resources. Being part of Guatemala’s most disadvantaged group, the access to education is highly limited and as much as 48 percent of the indigenous women are analphabetic (UN Women, 2017a). These limitations naturally have devastating consequences, such as not being able to learn Spanish. The language barriers make them even more deprived (Vinding & Kampbel, 2012), and increase the exclusion from the Guatemalan society. The power relations and distance between the indigenous and non-indigenous Guatemalan population grows even larger when the indigenous people do not have the possibilities of learning the official language.

Identifying and documenting conditions that determine the empowerment of human beings is essential in order to achieve gender equality, poverty reduction, and economic growth in a country (UN Women, 2017b). In the specific case of Guatemala, we believe that it is important to assemble such knowledge in order to facilitate the empowerment of indigenous women. Failing to empower these women would not just be a violation of human rights, but would also be a violation of basic economic principles, as such failure would continue to harm efficiencies, productivity, and economic growth in Guatemala. An increased participation of indigenous women in political, social, and economic activities could help them reduce their dependency on others as well as help the whole country to take advantage of unexploited economic efficiencies, resources, and productivities in order to stimulate economic development. Hence, it is of utter importance to examine the specific conditions that these women face.
1.2 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the indigenous women’s ability to empower themselves in order to achieve independency and rise from poverty in Guatemala. To this end, this project aims to address the following research question:

- What conditions do the Guatemalan indigenous women face in their empowerment?
- What is needed in order for the Guatemalan indigenous women to improve their conditions of empowerment?

1.3 Methodology

In order to empirically answer our research questions, we first developed a theoretical model of empowerment, consisting of the following components: economic capacity, human capital, social capital, gender equality, political influence, self-esteem, and awareness. We used our theoretical model as an analytical framework to guide our empirical assessment of the empowerment of indigenous women in Guatemala. We conducted a qualitative field study in Guatemala, which involved semi-structured interviews with 13 indigenous women. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and summarized. Content analysis was then used to identify common themes and constructs from the empirical material. Finally, we interpreted and evaluated our results with the support of our analytical framework.

1.4 Contribution of the study

Most of the previous research about the empowerment of women have solely an economic focus. Geleta (2016), Arjmandi et al. (2011), and Swain and Wallentin (2009), for example, investigate the link between empowerment and economic support, in form of microfinance for women. Although they take into consideration other factors, such as social dimensions and cultural norms, the main focus still lies within the economic context. Furthermore, studies have also been carried out to examine discrimination against indigenous populations all over the world (see, e.g., Viding & Kampbel, 2012; Hernández-Zavala et al., 2006; Acosta-Bélén & Bose, 1990), as well as the exclusion of Maya1 as citizens (see, e.g., Sundberg, 2003). Hérnandez-Zavala et al. (2006) focus on the discriminating structures against the Guatemalan indigenous population, such as language barriers. Moreover, Vinding and Kampbel (2012) document discrimination against the indigenous population in the Guatemalan labor market, manifested as limited access to jobs and wage differentials. Prior

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1 Maya refers to a group of indigenous people of Mesoamerica (Ancient History Encyclopedia, 2012).
studies have also shown that the position of the Guatemalan indigenous women is hindered by ideological structures in Guatemala (Camus, 2001), and by violence against women (Ogrodnik & Borzutzky, 2011).

To our knowledge, there is no study about the empowerment of the indigenous Guatemalan women that specifically has investigated the combination of factors that we are focusing on; i.e., economic capacity, human capital, social capital, gender equality, political influence, self-esteem, and awareness. In addition, Goetz A. and Sen R. (1996) put forward some concerns regarding the quantitative studies on women’s empowerment. In particular, they argue that quantitative studies do not tell us anything about the way women and men actually think of empowerment. Thus, this study aims to improve the understanding of the empowerment of indigenous women in Guatemala from various perspectives, including social, political, and economic aspects, by using a qualitative approach.

1.5 Guatemalan context

When studying the empowerment of indigenous women in Guatemala, it is important to take into account the historical, political, and economic aspects that characterize the indigenous women’s situation. Guatemala is the largest economy in Central America, with a population of 16.6 million people and has shown a rapid growth rate during the last years (World Bank, 2016). As previously mentioned, there are high levels of discrimination against indigenous people in the country, which can be traced back to the colonialism, and in modern time, to the civil war. During the war, the indigenous population suffered the most, as 83 percent of the people being killed in the war were indigenous (United States Institute of Peace, 2017). Because of the armed conflict, Guatemala has gone through long periods of macroeconomic instability. When the 36 years long civil war ended in 1996, foreign investments suddenly increased the opportunities for a macroeconomic stabilization (The World Factbook, 2017). However, violence, corruption, gang crime, and drug trafficking hindered the foreign investments, and are still major problems in the society (Globalis, 2015). The country is characterized by political insecurity and changes in the presidential government, including a number of high-profile corruption scandals that have led to several departures in the government and shaken the confidence among the civil population (Globalis, 2015). People’s demand for peace and justice, and the human rights of the indigenous people are important political issues in the country (Globalis, 2015).
2. Empowerment – a theoretical framework

2.1 Model

Women’s empowerment has a crucial role in the well-being of nations as it promotes gender equality, reduces poverty, and facilitates economic growth (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Blumberg, 2005). We argue that women’s empowerment depends on various factors but that the following are the most important ones: economic capacity (Sen & Mukherjee, 2014; Arjmandi et al., 2011), human capital (Sen & Mukherjee, 2014), social capital (Ansari, 2012; Arjmandi et al., 2011), gender equality (Arjmandi et al., 2011) and political influence (Guaraldo-Choguill, 1996). Using these components, we develop a model of how to reach empowerment. Our model is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including economic, social, political and cultural dimensions, and then, supported by analyzing and comparing previous studies and research. The model shows that these five components are connected to each other and that you cannot reach empowerment with solely some of them. In addition, the components together build and accumulate self-esteem and awareness. Without self-esteem and awareness, you will not be able to use the components and therefore not be able to reach empowerment. Namely, the five components can both generate and are dependent on self-esteem and awareness. This is based on studies made by Marrs Fuchsel (2014), Nikkhah et al. (2012), and Arjmandi et al. (2011), who stress the importance of self-esteem and awareness in women’s empowerment. In Figure 1 we illustrate the overall notion of our model of empowerment. In the rest of this section we will discuss the components of the model and how they may facilitate empowerment.
2.2 Economic capacity

Since Blumberg (1984) defines economic capacity as having access and control over sufficient economic resources to be able to cover one’s basic needs, we argue one of the key elements for empowerment is economic capacity. If individuals have economic capacity, they can provide for themselves and are able to make economic decisions, and therefore plan for their future independently. Henceforth, the concept of economic capacity includes all assets that can generate income in any way and thus includes monetary resources, property rights of land, animals, machines, equipment or any other asset.

If an individual does not have economic capacity, it creates a dependency to others and therefore prevents the person from having empowerment. Blumberg (1984) argues that economic independency may be sufficient for women to reach equal power. There is a vast evidence showing that with greater economic power, women gain more say in the household and that the increased economic capacity leads to empowerment (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Blumberg, 2005). This has also been presented in several investigations where women have been given microloans, with the intention to increase decision-making in the household, access to economic resources, and liberty (Swain & Wallentin, 2009). However, it is a controversial issue, as consisting constraints such as social and cultural norms have significant impact. The intended economic independence is overtaken by gender roles and norms, leading the women to fall back in a position that is controlled by their husbands or other men, preventing the women from the benefits of the microloan (Swain & Wallentin, 2009). A high degree of male control over the loans could postpone the empowerment of the women as the money enters the domestic sphere. Domestic violence can also have negative effect on economic capacity, and therefore affect the possibility to be economically independent, even many years after the violence occurred (Lindhorst et al., 2007). Goetz and Sen (1996) argue that the possession of monetary resources is not enough, but that training and support to increase women’s consciousness about gender inequalities are required.

Furthermore, a woman’s economic capacity is important in a broader perspective, and plays a central part for a nation’s well-being, since excluding the female workforce constitute a waste of economic resources. Female economic empowerment has a strong and positive linkage to poverty-reduction, economic development, less corruption, less armed conflict, and less violence (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Blumberg, 2005). That is to say, we can conclude that economic capacity is a crucial element for empowerment, although economic capacity alone does not create empowerment.
2.3 Human capital

We define human capital broadly as investments in individuals which favor their performance in their daily occupation, whatever it may be. The investments involve knowledge, competence, good health, and other characteristics that can be obtained through education, experience, and healthcare. This is in line with how both Kasemsap (2017) and Becker (1995) define human capital; that is, any characteristic that contributes to one’s productivity.

Human capital does not alone create empowerment. However, Sen and Mukherjee (2014) claim that the empowerment depend on, among other, access to education. According to Kabeer (1999), education creates a perspective of alternatives, which in turn admits a more changeable consciousness. Furthermore, Ogrodnik and Borzutzky (2011) assert that education is important in the creation of opportunities that improve the economic empowerment of women. Ogrodnik and Borzutzky (2011) further argue that poverty reduction is dependent on policies that allow women to enter the labor force, which in turn depends on governmental actions for women, such as providing access to education and healthcare. The importance of governmental intervention in poverty reduction was highlighted already by Smith (1776) and Marshall (1920). They argued that it is impossible to rise from poverty without outside help, such as government social programs. Marshall (1920) preferred a combination of government intervention and private charity to eliminate poverty. Hadenius et al. (2000) argue that a well working democracy needs both human capital and well-working, trustful institutions. Moreover, Hadenius et al. (2000) claim that human capital stimulates active citizenship in a democratic society, and that the individuals are the ones who influence the democracy. This means that the democracy depends on the competence and the political resources that the citizens possess. At an individual level, these resources refer to human capital, such as education.

It has been proved that human capital stimulates economic growth, raises the economic well-being, and reduces poverty (see, e.g., Becker, 1995). More specifically, Becker (1995) claims that investments in human capital are one of the most effective ways for poverty alleviation. We argue that human capital not only supports economic growth and efficiency, but also fights inequality and the formation of disadvantaged groups. We base this on Becker (1995), who claims that, since 90 percent of the assets of any population are human capital, people with disadvantaged backgrounds have higher chance to climb the economic ladder if they have an education. This is supported by the fact that countries with a higher inequality of human capital, also have a higher income inequality (Becker, 1995).
2.4 Social capital

Social capital is defined by Grootaert (2004) as an individual’s access to formal and informal networks. Access to formal networks means being involved in formal groups in the community, while informal networks refer to having relationships with family members, relatives, friends, neighbors and colleagues (Grootaert, 2004). In small firms’ performance, Saha (2015) demonstrates the importance of both formal and informal networks, as firms dedicated to only informal networks do not reach the same performance as those with both kinds of networks. To be able to use and benefit from one’s network, a certain amount of trust is required (Saha, 2015; Grootaert, 2004; Knack & Keefer, 1997). Moreover, Knack and Keefer (1997) show that the level of social capital has an impact on the economic performance, using trust and civic norms as indicators of social capital.

Zhang et al. (2017) argue that social capital and networking can create various advantages, such as making more resources available, or receiving information and service from people in the network. Such favors could in turn lead to employment, promotion, or more and better contacts. Additionally, Zhang et al. (2017) state that the resources extracted from the eventual networks in business, politics, and in social occasions ought to be contributing to poverty reduction. We consider poverty not only to be a lack of income, but also to be a lack of capabilities and possibilities to gain these capabilities. According to Ansari et al. (2012) these capabilities can be delivered through an increase of social capital. Arjmandi et al. (2011) assert that the social environment has an impact on the women’s empowerment, and that social influence is of importance in gaining self-esteem in the process of empowering oneself.

On a collective level, social capital can be connected to economic growth, less inequality, less crime, less corruption, and better working authorities. As argued by Putnam (1996), a democracy works better in societies with higher levels of social capital. Moreover, Putnam (2000) finds that norms and networks are important elements in the effectiveness of the society, and that trust is an element that arises from this. Thus, empowerment through social capital is of importance for a country at large.

2.5 Gender equality

We argue that gender equality implies equal conditions and rights for both women and men, meaning a balance of power, status, opportunities and rewards. This is based on Rolleri’s (2013) definition of gender equality, including equal access and use of resources, equal participation in relationships, the household and, the community, and also the right to feel safe and free from violence. We argue that the absence of violence is important in the empowerment of women, since it influences the self-
esteem. A study made by Marrs Fuchsel (2014), shows that domestic violence is closely linked with self-esteem and therefore the ability to reach empowerment.

Gender equality plays a crucial role for economic growth, since the unpaid work taking place in the domestic sphere has a negative effect on GDP (Gammage, 2010). The alternate wage of work can be seen as an opportunity cost for the value of household work. Gammage (2010) argues that the unpaid household work and the time-poverty that arises, is something that is usually experienced by women. This aligns with Becker’s (1991) theory of the household’s division of labor, which says that the members of the household will assume tasks and investments in human capital that are based on their comparative advantages. As there is a stereotype of women having a comparative advantage in household related work, women will therefore invest more in household competence.

Women as decision-makers seem to be a key factor to their empowerment (Alkire et al., 2013) and have shown to be a positive strategy of survival and poverty alleviation (Chant, 1997). However, Datta and McIlwaine (2000) point out that even though this could be proved, there is still the traditional gender ideologies and the overall structures in the society that hinder total gender equality. There is a need for acceptance of women-headed households (Chant, 1997), as well as a worldwide process of gender decolonization (Acosta-Belén & Bose, 1990). According to Acosta-Belén and Bose (1990), power relations between women and men is something that is present since the colonial experience. As long as women are in a position where they have limited conditions due to gender inequality, they do not have the ability to be empowered. Furthermore, investing in women is critical for poverty reduction and speeds up economic development, since leaving women behind have large negative effects on an economy (Chant & Sweetman, 2012).

2.6 Political influence

With political influence, we refer to an individual’s access to the political arena on various levels; through the ability to express one’s opinion, believe in one’s voice, have an impact on the political decisions, and vote to achieve personal interests. This is based on a number of definitions in the literature. First of all, Guaraldo-Choguill (1996) suggests that individuals should be able to influence the questions that affect them, and, should consider themselves a part of the political process that govern the local and higher levels of society. Secondly, Ferris et al. (1989) define political influence as a process of maximizing short-term or long-term self-interests. Finally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, states that taking part in the government of one’s country is a human right. Since political participation is a way to control factors that define the quality of one’s life,
empowerment cannot truly be achieved without it. In addition, political influence has a strong correlation to gender equality, as creating awareness and giving women opportunity in the political arena not only is important for the empowerment of the individual, but also for changing the structures and increasing women’s interests for decision-making processes (Goetz & Sen, 1996).

A study made by Ulbig (2008) implies that simply having a voice in the politics is not enough, but that the voice’s influence, and more specifically, the belief in the value of one’s voice, is what matters in a democracy. Ulbig (2008) also argues that the perception of one’s voice and influence is correlated with political trust. Moreover, Hadenius et al. (2000) suggest that trust in institutions and the absence of corruption is crucial in order to have political influence. For a well-functioning democratic society, it is of utter importance that all individuals participate in the politics at all levels. Therefore, we argue that the belief in one’s voice, the representation of one’s voice, and political trust altogether form political influence.

2.7 Self-esteem and awareness

Nikkhah et al. (2012) and Arjmandi et al. (2011) state that with self-esteem and awareness, a woman can be independent and her role in society will be improved. As self-reliance creates an opportunity for the woman to be self-sufficient, she can change her economic behavior and in that way, be independent. This, in turn, will improve the woman’s role in the family and in the society, and therefore create respect for women’s rights and make women equal to men (Arjmandi et al., 2011). It has further been shown that an increased self-esteem increases the chances of empowerment for women (Marrs Fuchsel, 2014).
3. Methodology

3.1 Choice of methodology

In the introduction, we presented some illustrative statistics of poverty rates amongst the indigenous people and inequality rates of gender in Guatemala. These numbers provide a starting point on which we base our study. We wanted to find out what lied beneath these numbers, and therefore, we chose a qualitative approach which aligns with Leedy (2005), who writes that a qualitative approach can be used in order to describe a complex and versatile situation. A qualitative study gave us the opportunity to, as Patton (2002) explains it, examine the social reality from the perspective of those living in it. Bryman and Bell (2011), argue that understanding other people’s consciousness in taking their role is essential in gaining social knowledge, which was why the respondents’ own perception of their situation was of great importance for us in answering our research questions. If instead, a structured method would have been conducted, Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that it would require a certain preselected image of the reality, as some decisions have to be made regarding what one aims to find and what social reality one aims to meet. The perception of the respondents’ reality might have been limited or skewed by this premature decision. Hence, a less structured approach allowed us to more accurately capture the reality of the respondents.

A qualitative method can include collecting data through interviews, observations, or studying previous literature on the subject (Patton, 2002). Interviews aim to bring in-depth answers of people’s feelings, experiences, knowledge, perceptions, and opinions (Patton, 2002). As our purpose was to study the conditions of the indigenous Guatemalan women’s empowerment, we used interviews as our main method. The interviews were semi-structured, which according to Bryman and Bell (2011) aims to receive the respondents’ own view on the situation without the influence of the interviewer, and in that way, gives a deeper understanding of the situation. Furthermore, the choice of semi-structured interviews was important, as it gave us the opportunity to add supplementary questions, besides the one’s we already had planned. Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) discuss the importance of making an interview framework in beforehand in order to successfully conduct a qualitative research interview. This means that the interview framework has to be carefully planned in accordance with the study’s purpose and research questions, to ensure that the desired data is collected. To make sure of this, the interview questionnaire was carefully constructed, based on our theoretical model and used in all conducted interviews.

Apart from the interviews, we also wrote detailed field notes within a couple of hours after each interview, including general observations, thoughts, impressions, reflections, and feelings from the
interview. In addition to the field notes connected with the interviews, preliminary field notes were made about observations of the environment when considered necessary. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), the observations in the field contribute to the qualitative study by providing information to the analysis that the interviews alone most probably would not. Furthermore, the observations contributed with a better understanding and apprehension of the context in which the people interact, which, according to Patton (2002) creates an overall perspective.

3.2 The interviews
The interviews were planned with help from Swedish and Guatemalan NGOs (non-governmental organizations) located in Guatemala (details and names of these are found in Appendix 1). In accordance with the recommendations of Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) and Seidman (2013), we conducted a pilot study to see if the interview structure was appropriate for the study, and furthermore, for us to be familiar with our roles as interviewers. The pilot study was conducted with a representative from one of the NGOs, aiming to simulate a real interview situation. After the trial interview, changes were made according to the outcome of the pilot study.

The interviews were conducted with indigenous women living in rural areas of the department of Sololá in Guatemala, during a field study between the 21st of February 2017 and the 19th of April 2017. When conducting the interviews, we started with a presentation of the project and ourselves, an explanation of the purpose of the study, and a presentation of the ethical principles (found in chapter 3.6 - Ethical issues). The interviews were then initiated with some general, short, and descriptive questions regarding age, marital status, employment status, number of children, monthly income and education level. The personal questions were asked in the start of the interview as the rest of the interview questions were focused on the individual’s own perceptions and beliefs. In case the interview questions had been less focused on the individual, personal questions may have been asked in the end of the interview to reduce the risk of the answers being threatened of it appearing too personal (Leech, 2002). The more sensitive questions were asked in the middle or toward the end of the interview, as Leech (2002) refers to the respondent as being more confident with time. However, the most important questions were not asked last in the interview, as it would be a risk of running out of time and lose valuable information. In practice, however, none of the interviews had to be cut short due to lack of time. The longest interview lasted for 88 minutes and the shortest one for 41 minutes. The interviews were based on the questionnaire found in Appendix 2.
Nine out of 13 interviews were conducted in Spanish. In four cases, the respondents only spoke Mayan languages, and therefore, those interviews were conducted using an interpreter. The interpreters were representatives from the NGOs that helped us find the respondents. We believe that since they were familiar with the project, and therefore, the concepts and constructs that the questions focused on, the chance that they translated the intended purpose of the interview to the respondents and back to us, was high and satisfactory. Moreover, our questions included some words that might not even exist in the Mayan language vocabulary and therefore we believe that it is important that they were translated by a person who is familiar with the subject. Furthermore, we followed, as far as it was possible, the recommendation of Raworth et al. (2012) to use the interpreter only as a channel for communication with the interviewee. To avoid paraphrasing and to ensure that the interpreter passed on the exact same words that we used, we asked the questions in first person.

Raworth et al. (2012) also argue that it is important that the interviews take place in a surrounding where the interviewees feel comfortable and the quality of the recording most likely will be successful; that is to say, without any interruption of noise or other distractions. With this in mind, the interviews were conducted in the women’s own homes whenever possible. Furthermore, we believe that conducting the interviews in their homes also contributes to a deeper understanding of their life situation. We strived to follow the advice of Raworth et al. (2012), however, this was not always possible, and some interviews had to be conducted where the women worked. The consequences of this were that sometimes interruption by other persons or disturbing noises was difficult to avoid. One interview was carried out at a market where a respondent had her business, another interview got interrupted by noises of the respondent’s animals, and another time, the traffic disturbed the interview. Nevertheless, the few distractions in some of the interviews mainly affected the transcription and we believe that this did not have a significant impact on the credibility of the data.

### 3.3 Sampling

In terms of geography, our study was conducted in the department of Sololá, as it is one of the departments in Guatemala with the largest population of indigenous people (Minority Rights Group International, 2008).

Patton (1990) explains that there is no recommended sample size of a qualitative study, but rather that the sample size depends on the purpose and the resources of the study. Patton (1990) argues that a smaller sample gives more depth to the study, while a larger sample gives more breadth. Considering our limited time of eight weeks in the field, conducting, transcribing and analyzing all
the material, we set the sample size to 13 respondents. Additionally, our intention was to find more depth in our study, since we would classify this case as what Patton (1990) refers to as information-rich.

We used a purposeful sampling in the selection of the interviewees, meaning that the respondents were strategically chosen according to specific criteria. The purpose with this kind of sampling is to strategically choose respondents who are relevant to the study and who are able to give answers that can be used in analyzing the research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As mentioned, the respondents were found with help from various NGOs. Before leaving Sweden, email contact was made and meetings were booked with Swedish NGOs located in Guatemala. During the meetings with these organizations, they put us in contact with their Guatemalan partner organizations of relevance to our study, located in the department of Sololá. During the meetings with the local NGOs, they scheduled interviews with suitable respondents in order for them to accompany us and interpret when needed. They found the respondents based on the criteria that they should be indigenous women living in rural areas in the department of Sololá. Summaries of the profiles of the interviewed women are presented in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>N' of children</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>Monthly income*</th>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>Interpreter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Informally divorced</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Own business</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Embroiders and sells blouses</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carina</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Own business</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Own business</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Housewife and has a fish farm</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Retired and sells fabrics</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriela</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sells painted masks</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irma</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Works in a kitchen</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Works in a kitchen</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Informally divorced</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No occupation</td>
<td>No income</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Works in a kitchen</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marina</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Partner (not living together)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sews and sells fabrics</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The names of the respondents are fictional.
*The monthly income is expressed in USD.
All of our respondents take part of different support programs and projects offered through the aforementioned NGOs. The programs and projects include education, personal and sometimes economic support, with the aim to increase the participant’s awareness of women’s rights and gender equality.

Since the selection of the respondents was made by the NGOs there is a risk that the profiles of our respondents are biased. It may have been that the NGOs on purpose chose cases in which the women’s participation in the support program was successful, as there is a risk of the NGOs wanting to appear good. There was also a risk of the respondents wanting to appear good in front of the NGOs. However, we chose to work with several NGOs in order to lower the risk of bias. We also believe that if there is a bias in our material, then there is a risk of underestimating the problems and obstacles of the women rather than overestimating them. It is reasonable to argue that indigenous women who are not participating in support programs are more likely to have an even more difficult life situation than those with help and support.

3.4 Content analysis
The interviews were recorded, transcribed and then summarized in a content analysis. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) content analysis is a research method that aims to interpret the content of text data through the process of initially identifying themes or patterns of the data, and then through coding the findings. Weber (1990) argues that the purpose of using content analysis in qualitative research is to classify large amounts of text into a manageable number of categories that represent similar meanings. In addition, Krippendorff (2004) writes that this method is useful to summarize, rather than report all details of the content. We found this to be a proper method for our study, since it allows us to summarize large amounts of material, and therefore, facilitates the interpretation and analysis. Again, we used our theoretical framework as a compass to guide ourselves through the content analysis.

To start with, we tried to condense the parts we found interesting for our content analysis aiming to preserve the core meaning of the content, although translated from Spanish into English, and expressed with fewer words. The condensed meaning units could then easily be organized by coding as Graneheim and Lundman (2004) suggest, indicating that the condensed meaning units were divided into subthemes, which in turn, were sorted into themes. Our content analysis, consists of 15 themes and 79 subthemes. An example of such procedure is presented in Table 3.2.
Table 3.2: Example of coding and thematization in a content analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning unit</th>
<th>Condensed meaning unit</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I would earn more money, I could build a house for myself.</td>
<td>Would build house with higher income.</td>
<td>Build house.</td>
<td>In case of increased income.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Meaning unit is originally in Spanish and directly written in condensed meaning unit without translating it into English.*

The data of the content analysis was then summarized into frequency tables, to facilitate the understanding of the results of how many respondents gave an answer belonging to a specific subtheme. All the data was coded and divided into their respective subthemes, however, only summarized in frequency tables when we found that it would ease the understanding of the results.

The subthemes are not exclusive, which implies that a respondent can account for more than one subtheme within a theme. For example, one of the respondents answered that she decides over her own income when we discussed economic capacity, and later on she explained that her husband made all the economic decisions in her household. Thus, her answer accounted for both *decides over own income* and *economic decisions made by husband*. Additionally, if the subtheme *limited access for geographical reasons* had a frequency of five, this does not automatically imply that other respondents were not limited for geographical reasons. It only means that they did not specifically express this to us during the interview.

### 3.5 Methodological criticism

As always with qualitative studies, there are problems with generalization. It is difficult to generalize a study of 13 respondents to an entire population, or generalize the result of a specific case, to another case in another environment. In this thesis, it is questionable whether a sample of 13 indigenous women from the department of Sololá can be representative for all indigenous women in Guatemala. We can also question whether it is representative for another female indigenous population in another country. Because of this reason, it is of importance to, in accordance with Bryman and Bell (2011), mention that the results of this qualitative study should be generalized to the theory rather than the population.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) write that the reliability of a study is determined by the probability of the results being the same, even though the study is conducted by other researchers and in another
Since our study includes the attitudes of individuals, which may vary over time and context, the reliability of the study might decrease because of this. Additionally, Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) argue that the validity of a study is the extent to which a study really examines what it intends to examine. It refers to making the study credible by controlling, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the results of the study throughout the entire research process. Thus, Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) argue that every qualitative study is unique, and therefore, it is hard to establish the criteria that should be followed to achieve good quality. However, the validity is strengthened if the researchers choose to report and reflect over the made choices during the research process, as the choices might affect the results (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). Hence, by being transparent in our methodology and by following the same questionnaire for all interviews, we aim to increase the reliability and validity. As a qualitative study often depends on the researchers and their subjective interpretation of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011), our study could be criticized for its difficulty to replicate. That is to say, it is likely that the exact same conclusions would not be drawn if the same study was to be conducted by other researchers. Nevertheless, we are of strong belief that the conclusions would be similar to ours.

### 3.6 Ethical issues

The study is based on the principles of research ethics presented by Vetenskapsrådet (2002). The principles include requirements regarding information, consent, confidentiality, and utility. First of all, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the interviews. Second of all, the participation of the respondents was voluntary and anonymous, and they had the right to end the interview whenever they wished. Third, the information was handled with confidentiality and by no one other than us. Finally, the collected information was used for scientific purposes only.
4. Results

We present the results of our content analysis, organized by the five components of our theoretical framework: economic capacity, human capital, social capital, gender equality, and political influence. Within each component we identify a number of constructs in order to analyze the homogeneity and heterogeneity among our respondents as regards empowerment of women.

4.1 Economic capacity

4.1.1 Covering expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covers with help from husband or others</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No income</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers by herself</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were 13 respondents. The numbers were derived from a content analysis.

It is necessary to mention that only one of the respondents have an estimated monthly income higher than the minimum wage in Guatemala. Out of all respondents, five have an estimated monthly income of 150 quetzales (roughly 20 USD) or less. As shown in Table 4.1, three major subthemes were identified on this topic in our content analysis. The subtheme *covers with help from husband or others*, represents most answers. This category implies that the respondents cannot cover their expenses with their income alone, but need financial help from others, which could be from their husbands, other family members, or friends. In most cases the respondents depend on the salary of their husbands to cover their expenses, as was the case for Bella, Diana and Irma. Only one respondent, Laura, answered that she would loan money from someone when her income does not cover her expenses and does not allows her to buy food or other necessaries, such as medicine for herself and her family. Only one respondent, Carina, was considered as *covers by herself*. Carina explained that her income pays for food, her son’s education, health, the business, and that she even saves some. After Karen was left by her husband, who previously was responsible for covering the expenses of the family, she is now living alone and does not have any income.

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2 The minimum wage in Guatemala during 2016 was 2394.40 quetzales (roughly 325 USD) per month in the non-agricultural sector, according to WageIndicator.org (see http://www.wageindicator.org/main/salary/minimum-wage/guatemala/archive/2).

3 According to xe.com, 100 quetzales corresponds to 13.63 USD; as of May 16, 2017.
4.1.2 In case of increased income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In case of increased income</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic needs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in business</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build house</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were 13 respondents. The numbers were derived from a content analysis. The total frequency exceeds the number of respondents due to that the respondents’ answers matched various alternatives.

When we asked what the respondents would do in case of an increased income, we could break down the answers into five groups, as Table 4.2 shows. All categories are fairly similar since they all indicate that the respondents would use an increased income on consumption or investments in order to cover daily necessities, with only one exception: Laura said she would direct some of an increased income for savings. However, Laura also said she would use an extra income for basic needs, maintenance of her children, and that she would invest in a business. The category with highest frequency is basic needs which according to the answers refer to food, healthcare and clothes. The second largest group, invest in business, accounts for six answers. Karen, Laura and Marina, answered that they would invest an increased income in a new business. Furthermore, they specifically mentioned that they would use the income of the business for future basic needs such as food and education for their children. Four respondents mentioned that they want to build a house. Some of them explained that building a house is very important to them since they either rent their house or live with their parents.

4.1.3 Making economic decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Making economic decisions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic decisions made together in the family</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decides over own income</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic decisions made by her, because she is alone</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic decisions made by husband</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make economic decisions over different things</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were 13 respondents. The numbers were derived from a content analysis. The total frequency exceeds the number of respondents due to that the respondents’ answers matched various alternatives.
Economic decisions in this context refer to small purchases and include expenses for daily basic needs since all the respondents have limited economic resources. For example, one of the respondents said (Ana, 02 March 2017): “What I sell during lunch, I use to buy the dinner. The money rotates in that way.” This applies more or less for all the respondents. That is to say, it is a complex situation and it is important to understand what the concept of making economic decisions refers to in this context.

As Table 4.3 shows, the majority of the respondents said that they make economic decision together in the family, which could be together with their husband or other family members. Six respondents implied that they decide over their own income. Three of them because they are alone, and three of them do it even though they are married. However, even though Bella said that she decides over her own income, she also explained that economic decisions in her household are made by her husband. Erica had noticed a change when it comes to being a part of the economic decisions of her family since she started taking part in workshops on equality and through women’s support programs learned about her rights. She said that before entering in these support programs her husband took the economic decisions of their family, but now they do it together and she herself decides over her own income. Of the three respondents that answered that they make their own economic decisions, since they are living alone, Karen and Laura explained that the situation used to be different when they were married and living with their husbands. Marina said that she is in charge of the family since her partner does not live with them.

4.2 Human capital

4.2.1 Access to healthcare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access to healthcare</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited access for economic reasons</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited access for geographic reasons</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were 13 respondents. The numbers were derived from a content analysis. The total frequency exceeds the number of respondents due to that the respondents’ answers matched various alternatives.

When we asked about the access to healthcare, none of the respondents claimed to have full access. As Table 4.4 shows, twelve respondents said that their family’s access to healthcare is limited for economic reasons. Instead of going to the doctor, which is too expensive, they use natural medicines or go to the healthcare center in their communities. Another example of the economic limitation, is that Erica had to sell fish to be able to pay for medical exams at the hospital for her family. Karen
mentioned that a private doctor is too expensive, and that if you go to a national hospital they will not attend you. She stated (Karen, 14 March, 2017): “We do not have the possibility to go to a doctor, all the doctors are private. You go to the hospital and they do not attend you, they leave you lying there.”

Only one respondent, Carina, said that her family have economic access to healthcare. However, she also stated that they are limited for geographic reasons. In total, six of the respondents reported to have limited access for geographic reasons. They said that there are no hospitals in their communities and the healthcare centers cannot offer all medicines that are necessary. Except for Carina, the rest of the respondents with geographic problems have economic problems as well. They mentioned both the cost for the transportation and the cost for the healthcare.

4.2.2 Knowledge and experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and experiences</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learnt as a child</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience from previous jobs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No previous experience, learnt by doing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learnt by paying someone to teach her</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learnt from husband</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were 13 respondents. The numbers were derived from a content analysis. The total frequency exceeds the number of respondents due to that the respondents’ answers matched various alternatives.

Six respondents explained that they had received their knowledge and experiences, such as cooking, knitting, and, selling, in their childhood, as seen in Table 4.5. All of them, except Karen, who does not have a job, reported to be using the experiences they have from their childhood in their current occupations. Four of the respondents have experience from previous jobs, working at hotels, restaurants, or in different organizations. Only one of them, Ana, is using the experience she previously gained, in her current job. Furthermore, even though Marina cannot use her experience in her job, she can use what she learnt in her personal life. She said that through her previous job she got education in women’s rights. As she said it herself (Marina, 23 March 2017): “Knowing the tools to defend oneself in life, I opened my mind, my eyes, to the reality of a woman’s life.” Two respondents said that they had no experience whatsoever before starting working, but that they learnt through doing their job.
### 4.2.3 Access to education

Three respondents did not have the opportunity to go to school when they were young. Seven respondents went to primary school, two went to secondary school and only one of the respondents went to high school. Seven of the respondents can read and write, four have difficulties with reading and writing, and two respondents cannot read nor write at all. Needless to say, some of the respondents have reached these grades and learnt to read and write by going to free night courses as adults. However, the reasons for why the respondents did not have the opportunity to study or to continue to study in their childhood, are solely economic or because of their gender. For example, Jessica explained, that she did not continue studying because her parents had to pay the education of her brothers and that they therefore did not have enough resources to pay for her education. In Gabriela’s case, she was told that since she is a woman, it was better if she learned how to cook as she was going to get married anyway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study has helped participation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study has helped knowing rights/defend herself</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study has helped business</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study has helped children's homework</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study has helped getting a job</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study has helped political participation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study has helped in daily life</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study has helped access to healthcare</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were 13 respondents. The numbers were derived from a content analysis. The total frequency exceeds the number of respondents due to that the respondents’ answers matched various alternatives.

However, a lot of the women that have studied, also experience some positive outcome from it. Table 4.6 shows that the respondents’ answers were diverse when discussing in what way their studies have helped them. Three respondents answered that their access to education have helped them in being able to participate in activities in the community. They all added that by learning to write they can now write their signature and take some notes. Furthermore, two respondents answered that their access to education have helped them in their businesses, for example in keeping their sales register or doing basic calculus. Diana mentioned that by learning Spanish her access to healthcare has improved, as no one has to accompany her to the healthcare center in order for her to communicate.
Two respondents have, through their education, experienced a greater knowledge of their rights and ability to defend themselves. For example, one of our respondents explained (Felicia, 13 March 2017): “I have changed because now I can make decisions and I know my rights. I am very satisfied now because I can write my signature.” One respondent, Bella, has been able to use her ability to read and write, in her job. Another respondent, Felicia, experienced a higher political participation, as she now can write her signature and therefore vote.

Even though the respondents in general did not have a high level of education, they expressed only positive thoughts of a further higher education. In general, they believed that a higher education would lead to higher income, employment, or getting a better job. Some of them considered that with a higher education they would be able to either start a new business or increase the businesses they already have.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hinders for further education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because of children and responsibilities</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic obstacles</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of age or sickness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical obstacles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 - Hinders for further education

Note: There were 13 respondents. The numbers were derived from a content analysis. The total frequency exceeds the number of respondents due to that the respondents’ answers matched various alternatives.

Table 4.7 tabulates the reasons for not pursuing further education. Nine of the respondents stated that they cannot continue study due to lack of time, as they have to be at home taking care of their children and other responsibilities. The guilt towards the family is clearly expressed, for example, in the answer of one of the respondents (Erica, 09 March 2017): “I am thinking that if I would study, it would mean that I would have to abandon my daughters and not continue to support them.” Furthermore, seven respondents described their obstacles to an education with economic scarcity. Marina developed her answer on this question by commenting that before thinking about an education of her own, she prioritizes her children’s education and an own house. Three respondents, Carina, Felicia, and Gabriela, mentioned age or sickness as an obstacle to start studying nowadays. One respondent, Erica, expressed the obstacle to be geographical.
4.3 Social capital

4.3.1 Benefits of social capital

Table 4.8 - Benefits of social capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of social capital</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits personal life</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings economic support</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased awareness</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased self-esteem</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits work life</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were 13 respondents. The numbers were derived from a content analysis. The total frequency exceeds the number of respondents due to that the respondents’ answers matched various alternatives.

All respondents stated that they have trust in their relationships and access to both formal and informal networks. Since they found these networks affecting them in a positive way, it is not interesting to explain if it has positive effect, but rather in what way social capital benefits them. It is important to have in mind that all of the respondents participate in support programs offered by different NGOs. Henceforth, we choose to look at this support as social capital through formal networks.

As Table 4.8 shows, there are five different subthemes within this category. The subtheme benefits personal life was mentioned by all respondents, which includes for example support and advice from the people in the network. Helena added that she can share her thoughts and problems with the other members in the group and that she always feels calm after the meetings. However, only five respondents answered that their access to formal and informal groups have given them benefits to their work life. Ana, Carina, and Diana explained that the formal groups have helped them starting their businesses. Furthermore, Erica described that through her participation in the formal group she now has her own fish farm and can receive some income. Marina mentioned that she can use her informal contacts to sell things, to get information, and to share ideas.

Eight respondents reported that their networks have brought them economic support, of which five respondents have received economic support from their formal networks and three respondents from their informal networks. Ana and Carina referred to the savings system and the small capital that they received from their support programs, while Erica, Helena, and Irma have been given the opportunity to plant vegetables and breed fish for alimentation of their families. In Marina’s case, she and her siblings support each other by sharing food when one of them needs it. Laura asserted that when needed, she can ask her friends to borrow her money.
The subtheme *increased awareness*, which refers to knowing and being aware of one’s rights as a woman, is solely connected to formal networks. For example, Gabriela said (Gabriela, 13 March 2017): “I was participating in various activities where they spoke to us about equality, then through these formations I influenced my family.” Furthermore, Ana and Erica stated that through their participation in the formal groups they got to travel to different places and experience things they would not have experienced without the groups. Ana stated (Ana, 02 March 2017): “I never left home before I entered the groups with Acopedis.”

Five respondents accounted for *increased self-esteem*. Even within this subtheme, all the respondents declared that the increase was due to their formal networks. The common opinion of the respondents was that the formal networks make them feel free, experience less fear, and feel as if they have an own opinion and can make decisions. For example, as one of the respondents explained it (Diana, 07 March 2017): “I had this fear of asking my husband but now when I entered the program I am not afraid anymore because now I have rights to have my own money for example.”

### 4.4 Gender equality

#### 4.4.1 Participation in the household

Participation in the household refers to division of household work, decision making in the family, and access and control over economic resources. Within division of household work, the majority of the respondents answered that the domestic work is done by themselves and by their daughters (given that they had daughters, and that they were old enough). One of the respondents, Diana, mentioned that her husband is not involved in the household chores since he gets up early in the morning to go to work. Another respondent explained the division as following (Diana, 07 March 2017): “Because it is in my mind, we have always done it that way, it has to be the woman who washes the clothes.” However, when we asked specifically about the men in the household, some of the respondents changed their answers and said that everyone help out. On the same question, Helena, however, added that the men do not do anything in the household if they are working. They only help with domestic work if the women get sick. She also added that if she would not clean the house, it would be a total mess. However, there are some exceptions in which the husband is helping in some household work, for example, Carina’s husband helps to take care of the children.

When we asked our respondents about the process of decision-making in their families, seven out of the respondents answered that they make the decisions together with their husbands. When we asked this question, we gave an example of deciding about the children’s schooling. Erica said that even
though she makes the most decisions together with her husband, she makes the decisions regarding their children, since she is the one at home with them while he is out working. Three respondents, Felicia, Laura, and Marina, answered that they alone make the decisions in the household. Felicia and Laura are single women, while Marina does not live together with her boyfriend. Laura added that before the divorce, her husband was the one making all the decisions.

When we asked our respondents about the access of money, four of the respondents explained that they have access to their own money. Erica, that earns 150 quetzales a month, said that she decides over her own money, but that both she and her husband have access to the money that he earns. In addition to Erica, two more respondents asserted that they have shared access to the money in the family. Helena reported that her husband is the one in charge of the money. She explained it by saying that since he is the one working he is the one managing the money. In terms of land and house, five of the respondents expressed that another person is the owner of the land where they were living. The owner could either be a relative or a third party renting out the house. In Karen’s case, her ex-husband’s brother is the owner, meaning that she has no legal access at all. In four cases, the owner of the land and house is the husband. However, the women explained that they have access over the land because of the marriage.

4.4.2 Perceptions of the woman’s role in society

Nine out of the respondents mentioned at least one time during the interview that there is higher female participation in society now than before. The general perception was that women used to stay at home and not be a part of neither the community nor the labor force, but that they now are starting to be a bigger part of society. As one of the respondents clearly expressed it (Bella, 06 March 2017): “The woman is now feeling empowered to do her different activities. Now, she is not only a mother but she is also expanding in our communities.” Nevertheless, both Gabriela and Karen said that even though the participation is higher nowadays, it can be improved. They both raised the question of fear and unwillingness as a reason for less participation. Gabriela asserted (Gabriela, 13 March 2017): “When women are not participating, it is because of fear. Because they do not know how to read or write, and even less they know how to speak Spanish. Because it is planted in their minds as well, that a woman should not speak, a woman should not demand.”

Even though the participation in society seems to be improving, the majority of the respondents indicated that there are still major gender differences. A common theme brought up by many of the respondents, was that other women have to ask their husbands for permission to leave the house or to participate in different meetings and groups. Carina said that there are many reasons for the
differences between women and men, but that one possible reason may be that “they do not have this opportunity to earn money, and that is why they put up with their husbands.” (Carina, 07 March 2017).

4.4.3 Perceptions of safety

Although the majority of the respondents expressed that they feel safe, most respondents experienced that there is a lot a violence. Six respondents explained that they themselves have been victims of violence, five of these six have been abused by their own husbands or ex-husbands, and four of them mentioned that there was alcohol involved in the violence. Gabriela explained (Gabriela, 13 March 2017): “Earlier, my husband always drank, got drunk, and came to the house to hit me. He also said that it is better if you move to your parents, because you only have daughters.” She added that as soon as she had sons, her husband calmed down and stopped abusing her.

Ana shared that she was almost a victim of femicide.4 She told us that she was attacked but that someone helped her and called the police. Nevertheless, she added that she is not afraid anymore. She is now participating in different organized groups of women and trying to inspire other women to stand up for themselves. Yet, even though she filed a complaint, she said that the perpetrator paid the judge, and that they did not proceed with her case. The problem with filing complaints is something other respondents mentioned as well. For example, Marina filed a complaint against her husband after abuse and rape, but could not proceed in the legal process because of lack of money. Moreover, there are many women who do not even file complaints, Carina stated (Carina, 07 March 2017): “It is very unfortunate that women who suffer violence in their families do not report. They do not demand their rights (...) There are women that leave themselves in the hands of the men, or the man is in a position where they say I am the man and I am the one who commands. Maybe that is why the women do not defend their rights.”

The majority of the respondents expressed that they feel safe nowadays. Nonetheless, three respondents, Ana, Felicia and Marina, indicated that they have felt unsafe before, but after starting to participate and learning about their rights they now feel safer and can defend themselves. The improved awareness is clearly expressed, for example, in the answer of one of the respondents (Felicia, 13 March 2017): “Since I started to participate in the activities in the community I started to learn my rights and implemented them in my family.”

4 Femicide involve intentional murder of a woman because of her gender (World Health Organization, 2012).
4.5 Political influence

4.5.1 Individual political influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual political influence</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has political influence</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like to have more political influence</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were 13 respondents. The numbers were derived from a content analysis. The total frequency exceeds the number of respondents due to that the respondents’ answers matched various alternatives.

The respondents’ responses of the individual political influence nowadays have been summarized in Table 4.9. Eight respondents feel that they have political influence in their community through being able to be a part of the decision-making. Six respondents mentioned that they would like to have more political influence, but that an obstacle they face is lack of knowledge, which is due to lack of time and access to Internet. All respondents participate in the elections and decide over their own vote. However, the results show that this has not always been the case for some of the women. Three respondents, Felicia, Gabriela, and Laura, mentioned that an obstacle for them to vote before was lack of knowledge and that they could not read, write, or write their signature. Gender used to be an obstacle for political influence for two of the respondents, Felicia and Karen. Felicia mentioned that the reason that she did not vote in the elections before was that she, because of her gender, did not have the opportunity to learn to read and write. In terms of political participation in the community, Karen said that she did not want to participate at first because she thought that her voice as a woman would not be taken into account. However, she explained that she now participates in political activities in her community although she still experiences discrimination for being one of two women in a group of ten men.

4.5.2 Governmental support

Even though the respondents at times referred to the indigenous population and not the indigenous women when talking about governmental support, we argue that it still affects the women’s conditions to be empowered, and thus, we interpret their answers as if they apply to the indigenous women.

None of the respondents feel protected by the government. The shared opinion amongst all respondents is that they feel abandoned and that the indigenous population is not taken into account by the government. This disappointment is expressed in various ways. Bella said that the government
does not give space to the indigenous population. Gabriela expressed similar thoughts as she stated (Gabriela, 13 March 2017): “I want the government to take us into consideration, and that they consider us the same with the same rights.” More specifically, she wanted the government to establish a law in favor for the indigenous population. Karen said that she feels as if the government does not do anything for the indigenous population, she said (Karen, 14 March 2017): “because if they did, we would be better off (...) the poverty is increasing because there is no work. As women and as indigenous, what should we do?”

We can also observe a great mistrust towards the governmental institutions as many of the respondents discussed betrayal, broken promises and manipulation. Felicia, Karen, and Marina all used the word manipulation when they talked about politicians and elections. Carina shared this opinion as she explained that the government only misleads the people, and uses the indigenous population’s rights to make propaganda but then “they do not fulfill their promises, they do not fulfill with their obligation,” (Carina, 7 March 2017). Marina thought that nothing has been done in favor of the indigenous population and that people are manipulated by the government because of their lack of knowledge and inability to read and write. She stated that there is manipulation especially against women as she added (Marina, 23 March 2017): “sadly the politicians manipulate women giving them things.”

Since all respondents’ perceptions of the governmental support were very negative, we asked our respondents what kind of support they would like. The support they demanded was closely related to basic human rights of the female indigenous population. Education, health, and more support for the communities were things most respondents mentioned.
5. Discussion

5.1 What conditions do the Guatemalan indigenous women face in their empowerment?

Blumberg (1984) argues that an individual should have control and access over sufficient economic resources to be able to cover one’s basic needs. According to our respondents’ answers, many of them are covering their expenses with outside help. Only one respondent, Carina, covered her expenses herself. Although all respondents except for one, explained their way to cover their expenses, we question to what degree their expenses include all basic needs. Many respondents expressed that the money runs out after having paid for food and school, and that they, for example, have difficulties paying for medicine, which we argue should be a basic need. According to Blumberg (1984) individuals should have the possibility to plan for their own future independently in order to have economic capacity. Our results showed that all respondents would spend an increased income on basic needs which we argue means they are still struggling to cover. We claim that this indicates that they do not have sufficient economic resources to determine the destination of their resources. Instead, the resources have their predetermined purposes, which we argue indicate that they cannot plan for their future independently.

We can see that economic capacity is closely related to human capital, as the lack of money was an obstacle for the respondents in gaining human capital. The profiles of our respondents varied in terms of education from not going to school at all, to leaving school after high school. Only three respondents reached secondary school or higher. It is plausible that if the respondents’ level of education had been higher, we might have found a stronger connection to economic empowerment. If that was the case, the theories of Ogrodnik and Borzutzky (2011) and Becker (1995), implying that education leads to a higher economic well-being, would have been applicable. Although our results did not prove this connection, they showed that out of the respondents that have studied, all of them have experienced some kind of positive outcome, and would have liked to continue studying. Among the positive outcomes of education, we found both benefits in work life, and also benefits in personal life that favors self-esteem and awareness. The results also showed better access to healthcare and increased political influence. The increased political influence as an outcome of education is supported by the ideas of Hadenius’ et al. (2000), that human capital stimulates active citizenship. The healthcare available to the respondents was natural medicines and the healthcare centers in their communities. At times, the respondents referred to medical access of their whole family and not just for themselves. Yet, we argue that the family’s access to healthcare still influences the women’s conditions to be empowered, and thus, we choose to interpret their answers as if they apply to women’s individual access.
Apart from education and healthcare, all women possessed knowledge and experience useful for a job, which according to Kasemsap (2017) and Becker (1995) also are included in human capital. It was common among the respondents to use their experiences in their current occupation and some found their experiences fundamental in starting their businesses. This makes us believe that in the cases of our respondents, it was knowledge and experience, and not necessarily academic education, which played the biggest part in their empowerment through human capital. Even though some cannot use the knowledge and experience in their job, they might be able to use it in their personal life, as expressed by Marina. The increased awareness she experienced from learning about gender differences in her previous job, can show a connection between human capital and gender awareness.

Our results showed that another way to increase gender awareness is through social capital in the form of formal networks. The majority of the respondents found that female participation in society has improved, which according to Rolleri (2013), should indicate that the society is moving towards gender equality. The respondents stated that the improved participation is due to women now knowing their rights and are getting more space, which shows that awareness creates more gender equality. It can be discussed from where this awareness and space arises, whether all women have this awareness, or if it is only the case for our respondents. We believe that the awareness in this case, is closely connected to the women’s participation the support programs.

Our findings showed that all respondents made use of not only formal, but also informal networks, in line with Grootaert’s (2004) definition of social capital. The results also showed that both formal and informal networks benefited the respondents’ personal lives, work lives, and economic support. Experienced benefits in personal life were support and advice, inducing wellbeing of the respondents, while experienced benefits of work life and economic support included being able to start a business, find a job, and start to save money. Namely, with the support from their networks, many of the respondents can now earn their own money, which can be connected to Knack and Keefer’s (1997) ideas, that social capital impact economic performance. Saha (2015) considers that informal contacts by themselves are not enough, but that formal contacts are needed in order to reach a high performance. This aligns with our results as they showed that awareness and self-esteem are only achieved with the support of formal networks. This means, that the discussion of Arjmandi et al. (2011), that the social environment has an impact on one’s self-esteem, only aligns with our results in terms of formal networks, and not informal ones.
All the respondents reported to have some kind of trust in their social networks, which is supported by the ideas of Saha (2015), Grootaert (2004), and Knack and Keefer (1997). Knack and Keefer (1997) discuss the importance of trust and civic norms in the usage of social capital, which also can be found in our results. In contradiction, Putnam (2000) argues that the usage of social capital does not depend on trust, but that trust is a result of social capital. We argue that the women would not have been able to use their social networks in the same way if they would not have had trust in their networks, since their situation is so vulnerable.

Our results also showed that participation in formal networks improved gender equality in the respondents’ families, which was manifested through increased participation in the decision-making in the household. Most of the respondents stated that they make decisions together with their husbands or by themselves. We consider that this overall, shared decision-making in the household can be seen as an improvement after entering the support programs, as they seem to have an improved awareness about their own right as women to make decisions and also the importance of making decisions together in the family. In addition, the increased economic capacity from starting a business, has shown to increase the respondents’ self-esteem and in turn, increase the respondents’ decision-making in the household. Arjmandi et al. (2011) argue that self-esteem among women creates an independency, which in turn, gives the woman an improved role in the family. According to Alkire et al. (2013), this improvement in decision-making should become a contributing factor to the women’s empowerment. The respondents who answered that they make all decisions by themselves, are either divorced, widows or not living together with their partner, which obviously explain why they are making decisions on their own. Furthermore, Chant (1997) argues that there is a need for acceptance of women-headed households. However, it was interesting to see that no respondent did not even mention any opposition against women-headed households. We argue that this is because there are not so many women-headed household in Guatemala and, because of that, this topic is not that much discussed. Since there is no observed critique against women-headed households, we believe that it should not prevent women in their empowerment. However, the example we gave them when asking about the decision-making, that was to decide whether the children should go to school or not, may have influenced their answers as they might have agreed with each other on this particular question. We argue that it does not necessarily mean that they agree with each other in other questions. In terms of economic decision-making, we cannot draw any conclusions about how it is done. The respondents commonly referred to economic decisions as only buying the most necessary things, which we argue does not imply making decisions. Thus, we do not know how the process of economic decision-making would look like with a higher family income. However, if the respondents’ families accounted for an income high enough to analyze this aspect, we argue that it would depend on who
earns the money, since it appears to be that person who decides over it. In the case of our respondents, we believe that they would take part in the economic decision-making, since our results indicate that with the increased awareness they have through the support programs, they get more say in the decision-making process.

In terms of access and use of resources in general, the respondents showed to have access and use of the monetary resources. We can see that many of the respondents that have access to monetary resources, have this access due to the businesses they have started with support from the programs they are participating in. Hence, it is plausible that if we would have interviewed women that were not part of a support program, their access to monetary resources might have been lower. One of the respondents that stated that she has better access to resources now than before, explained that she now can buy things without her husband being involved. Various examples pointed out that the women gained more say in the household as their economic capacity increased, aligning with Chant and Sweetman (2012) and Blumberg (2005). Regarding their access to other resources, such as house and land, many of the respondents explained that they have access, either through owning it themselves, or having access through their marriage. The ones that said that they do not have access over their house and land, stated that either a relative own it or that they rent the house. In two of three cases, the relative was a man. This leads us to believe that in these cases, the non-access is due to either lack of money or traditional gender ideologies. The latter is mentioned by Datta and McIlwaine (2000) as something hindering total gender equality. This discussion also aligns with Rolleri (2013) who states that both women and men should have equal access and use of resources in order to achieve gender equality.

Becker (1991) argues that women will invest more in household competence as they are said to have a comparative advantage in the household work. In line with Becker’s theory, our results showed that household work is mostly done by either the woman herself or by the woman together with her daughters. One respondent, Gabriela, specifically explained that her mother taught her to work in the kitchen as she was going to get married anyway, which we argue further exemplifies the division of labor being explained as investing in what is said to be one’s comparative advantage. A surprising result we found was that when we specifically asked the respondents about their husbands’ contributions in the household work, they changed their answers and said that they do the household work together. These answers could be explained either by the women thinking of the paid work that their husbands are doing as a contribution to the household work, or that the women feel as if they have to defend their husbands, which in that case, according to Datta and McIlwaine (2000), indicate that there are overall structures in the society. We argue that the gender structures dominate the
division of household work, which can be further fortified by Bella’s statement that the women wash the clothes because it has always been that way. On the other hand, if the husbands actually are participating in the domestic work, as they are in some few cases, we could describe this change as a result of participation in the support programs, creating awareness of gender, and also making the women busy outside of the household. In the case that the household work would be equally divided, the women might experience, as argued by Gammage (2010), less time-poverty.

Relating back to Rolleri (2013), another part of gender equality is the right to feel safe and free from violence. In addition, Marrs Fuchsel (2014) argues that violence is linked to the ability to be empowered. Since our results showed that almost half of the respondents have suffered violence and around half of the respondents experience that there is a lot of violence, it can be discussed whether their empowerment is negatively affected. Relating back to Lindhorst et al. (2007), who express that even though the violence has occurred many years earlier, it can affect the economic capacity, which in turn, can affect the empowerment negatively. Three of the respondents expressed unsafety, which according to Rolleri (2013) clearly speaks against gender equality. In our opinion, this presence of violence, and specifically the domestic violence, could be influencing the women’s self-esteem and empowerment. Yet, many of the respondents expressed that although they have felt unsafe earlier, they now feel safe. We argue that this change can be explained by, for example, participation in the different support programs, in which the respondents have gained improved awareness and self-esteem. Since Marrs Fuchsel (2014) shows that domestic violence is linked with self-esteem and therefore the ability to reach empowerment, we argue that the respondents’ participation and their improved feeling of safety benefit their empowerment.

We argue that the expressed feeling of unsafety among some respondents partly derives from lack of trust in the systems. Guatemala is a country with high rates of corruption, large socioeconomic gaps and high levels of discrimination which create a difficult situation for the indigenous women, as our study confirms. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declares that taking part of one’s government is a human right and, according to Guaraldo-Choguill (1996), to have political influence, all individuals should be able to consider themselves part of the political process. On the one hand, the empirical results could imply that all respondents have political influence on a national level, since they are all allowed to vote, and they all use their vote. The act of voting, could, as Ferris et al. (1989) express it, prove that they actually have the possibility to influence their own interests, and would in that case, have political influence. In addition, the majority of the respondents said they feel that they have political influence in their community. Despite of this, some aspects could bring us to the conclusion that they still lack enough political influence that we consider is needed to empower
themselves. The respondents were all strictly unanimous about that the Guatemalan government does not protect their rights as indigenous women, at all. Their experiences and comments on this topic reveal a reality where the indigenous Guatemalan women are being discriminated, excluded, ignored, and forgotten. We argue that even though our respondents, as Guatemalan citizens, can use their vote in the elections, they still cannot vote with the aim to achieve their own personal interests. We argue that the lack of political influence in this matter, is due to non-representation of the indigenous women’s voices on the political arena and due to the high levels of corruption in the country. According to Ulbig (2008), the belief in one’s voice on the political arena is of importance, which can be related to political trust. We believe that this is the case of our respondents, as discrimination and exclusion indicate that their voices do not have much influence, generating mistrust towards the political institutions. Surprisingly, they all answered that they use their vote and take part in the elections even though they all feel excluded and ignored by the politicians. An answer to this could be that the respondents have learnt about the importance of participation and their right to have a voice from participating in the different support programs. We argue that even though their opinion might not be fully acknowledged, this can be a way for them to claim their voice.

This discussion can be related to Nikkhah et al. (2012) and Arjmandi et al. (2011), who state the importance of self-esteem and awareness in women’s empowerment. Our results showed that the respondents gained a higher self-esteem when they earned own money and when they learnt how to read and write. Also, they gained both awareness and self-esteem by participating in the support programs. In turn, the increased self-esteem and awareness made the respondents participate more in the politics and implement new gender perspectives in their families. This improved role in society can be related to the discussion of Nikkhah et al. (2012) and Arjmandi et al. (2011), saying that women’s role in society will improve as their self-esteem and awareness increase.

5.2 What is needed in order for the Guatemalan indigenous women to improve their conditions of empowerment?

The majority of the respondents stated that they have economic capacity with the help from someone else, which according to Blumberg’s (1984) definition, would mean that they do not have economic capacity. Blumberg (1984) argues that one’s basic needs should be covered with the access and control over one’s own economic resources. In our opinion, this means that the respondents should, if needed, be able to support themselves entirely on their own. Blumberg (1984) states that if you cannot be economically capable on your own, this will create a dependency, as we can see in the cases of our respondents. Therefore, we argue that a higher level of independency in terms of
economic capacity would be a crucial step in the empowerment. However, since none of the respondents receive solely economic support, our results cannot confirm Blumberg’s (2005) argument that economic independency by itself may be sufficient for women to reach equal power. Relating back to Swain and Wallentin (2009), there is a possible risk for the intended economic independency to be overtaken by gender roles and norms. However, our results did not confirm their ideas either. Instead, they showed that an improved economic capacity favors empowerment, since the respondents gained more say in the household. Hence, we cannot see any remarkable risk for the women to be more controlled by their husbands or other men only because having increased monetary access.

Goetz and Sen (1996) suggest, that the possession of monetary resources is not enough, but that it takes training and support to increase women’s consciousness about gender inequalities. We agree with this argument, since our results showed that a combination of monetary and educational support through formal networks can increase empowerment. We cannot confirm, nor reject if it would be enough with solely formal networks, since all of our respondents had both formal and informal networks. However, what we did find was that the respondents experienced only positive outcomes of both formal and informal networks, which makes us believe that a combination of the two is preferable for empowerment, in which, formal networks are essential.

The respondents mentioned that one of the obstacles for some women to participate in social networks and in society, is that they have to ask their husbands for permission. We believe that this obstacle can be compared to what Datta and McIlwaine (2000) call traditional gender ideologies, which they find hinder gender equality. In that case, this would also speak against Rolleri’s (2013) definition of gender equality in which both women and men should have equal participation. Some respondents argued that even though there is an improved awareness of rights of participation, all women are not practicing it because of fear and unwillingness. According to the respondents, the fear and unwillingness depend on their lack of knowledge and resistance of husbands; once again defined by Datta and McIlwaine (2000) as traditional gender ideologies. According to Acosta-Belén and Bose (1990), these perceptions of gender will make it impossible for them to be empowered, and that it further speaks for a need of a gender decolonization. Based on Acosta-Belén and Bose’s (1990) discussion, we argue that fear and unwillingness will be present as long as destructive structures of gender persist. We suggest that awareness is needed in order to break down old patterns of gender differences, and our results showed that awareness can be delivered through either human capital or social capital. Thus, in the case of our respondents, the participation in the support programs has given them knowledge and awareness to break the patterns and make them participate.
In terms of human capital, the present obstacle for the women to continue their studies, is responsibilities such as taking care of children, which supports Gammage’s (2010) theory that women often experience time-poverty because of unpaid household work. This can be exemplified by the statement made by Erica, who mentioned that if she had more time, she would have studied. This time-poverty and unpaid household work can be explained by Becker’s (1991) theory of household’s division of labor, saying that women are said to have comparative advantages in household work. We argue that more equal responsibilities in the household could improve the human capital of the women, and in that way, improve their empowerment.

Another obstacle for human capital, both in terms of education and healthcare, is shown to be their economic scarcity. Our findings showed that the respondents would choose the opportunity to study if it was given to them. Therefore, we assert that an improvement in economic capacity could lead to an improvement in human capital. Aligning with Sen and Mukherjee (2014), Ogrodnik and Borzutzky (2011), and Kabeer (1999), who stress the importance of education in empowering women, the respondents found that they would have more opportunities and a higher economic capacity with a higher education. This discussion also aligns with Becker (1995), who argues that education is an effective way for poverty alleviation. This would mean that with an education the women would easier be able to climb the economic ladder and rise from poverty. According to Marshall (1920) and Smith (1776) this would not be possible without external help, which can be further strengthened with the women’s perception of the governmental support. The majority of the respondents specifically mentioned that they are lacking governmental support in terms of human capital.

Moreover, since many of the respondents answered that the inability to read, write and talk Spanish are some of the challenges for them, it is reasonable to conclude that a certain education in that matter could increase their conditions to be empowered. This is also recommended by Ogrodnik and Borzutzky (2011), as they discuss how poverty of women could be decreased by giving women education and healthcare through governmental actions. Our results showed that the limited access to healthcare and education partly was due to geographical issues. Therefore, the governmental actions in human capital should be implemented with this in mind, investing in schools and hospital in rural areas. Besides, since some women expressed age and sickness as an obstacle to further education, receiving governmental support of education at an earlier age, could solve this problem.

Hadenius et al. (2000) argue that in order to fully enable governmental support, it is crucial for a country to have a high level of trust in the institutions. The mistrust against the government was
discussed by almost all respondents. They said that the politicians make promises they do not keep and use the indigenous population in order to get votes. The unsafety experienced by the respondents can be explained through corruption in the juridical system and lack of knowledge and awareness, as the respondents stated that many women do not file complaints as they do not know their rights. Their perception of the Guatemalan society appears to be the opposite of what Hadenius et al. (2000) would call a well-functioning democratic society, since it lacks institutional trust and is corrupt. According to our results, this affects the indigenous women as corruption affects the poorest the most. Hence, the need of an increased level of trust and decreased level of corruption is inevitable.

The results of this study suggest that improved human capital and self-esteem, made the respondents more politically involved. The ability to read and write showed to boost self-esteem and facilitate the women’s political participation in the community and ability to vote in the national elections. Moreover, increased self-esteem was achieved by gaining awareness through participation in the support programs. This discussion aligns with Ulbig’s (2008) idea of the belief in one’s own voice, which we argue can be increased by an improved self-esteem. Therefore, we believe that the women’s increased self-esteem, broke down the gender ideologies saying that women do not have a voice.

Moreover, Goetz and Sen (1996) suggest that to be able to change the structures and increase women’s interests for decision-making processes, it is important to give women opportunities in the political arena, and that doing so could have a positive effect on empowerment. As many respondents expressed a will to be more politically involved, we can ask ourselves what obstacles they have to tackle in gaining more political influence. Our results showed that important obstacles they face are lack of knowledge, time, and gender discrimination. We argue that the lack of knowledge is related to financial limitations to Internet and education. Moreover, we argue that the obstacle explained as lack of time can be related to Gammage’s (2010) discussion about time-poverty among women and Datta and Mcllwaine’s (2000) discussion about traditional gender ideologies. Hence, we argue that with more human capital through financial resources and less gender inequalities in the family, the women will be able to gain more political influence.
6. Conclusions

Our findings show that the various components in our model are dependent on each other. For example, economic capacity is dependent on human capital, gender equality, and social capital. A higher education leads to higher income, gender equality leads to work opportunities for women, and networks bring selling opportunities and economic support to start businesses. We can also argue the other way around; as political influence depends on gender equality and human capital. Equality is needed for women to believe in their voices, and knowledge to read and write is needed to be politically involved. Moreover, we can see that self-esteem and awareness arise from the other components, and are also required in order to benefit from them. To summarize, the components of the model are empirically hard to separate from each other and should be considered as operating simultaneously. Thus, all components of the model are recognized as significantly influencing the empowerment of the indigenous women in Guatemala.

Notable challenges for empowerment were found in economic scarcity and dependency, which further limited access to healthcare and education. We also found that challenges for empowerment were further fueled by gender inequalities and discrimination, both from the government and the society. To facilitate their empowerment, women made use of informal, and especially, formal networks. The participation in these networks allowed them to start businesses, and to create greater awareness of gender equality and women’s rights. In their empowerment, the women also made use of previous knowledge and experiences, as it proved help in their daily occupation or in the success of their businesses.

We suggest that in order to improve the women’s conditions for empowerment, reduction in gender discrimination, access to healthcare, possibilities to education, and economic independency is needed. This may be related to both continuous support of NGOs and also improved governmental support. First, since our study confirms the positive effects of formal networks on empowerment, we recommend continuous support through programs and that these preferably should include both personal and economic support. Economic support should be brought either through small monetary assets or through sorts of non-monetary assets with the aim to generate income. Second, governmental support needs to be directed towards the indigenous women living in rural areas. Policies should preferably aim to promote infrastructure in rural areas and subsidize education and healthcare. Anti-violence and anti-corruption programs that aim to include the indigenous women in the Guatemalan society should also be given high priority. We believe that this study show that, even though there
are strong patriarchal and colonial structures, concrete work and actions from both NGOs and government can make a change and break these patterns.

In conclusion, we have empirically evaluated the empowerment of indigenous women in Guatemala; their perceptions, possibilities, and obstacles. We have also tried to identify the conditions that are necessary to ease their empowerment. Indigenous women in Guatemala have been neglected and forgotten for far too long. It should be in Guatemala’s best interest to ensure that these women, as soon as possible, reach their rightful position in the society. Otherwise, at least for the indigenous women in Guatemala, we dare to answer the question posed right in the beginning of this thesis by, yes, the collective memory is history, which means that the first step in empowering women is starting to listen to herstory.
References


Blumberg, R. L., 2005, *Women’s Economic Empowerment as the “Magic Potion” of Development?*, University of Virginia and University of California.


# Appendix

## Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Swedish NGOs</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Redmusovi</td>
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Appendix 2

General questions
1. Name and age?
2. Marital status?
3. Children?
4. Numbers of members in the household?
5. What do you do for a living?
6. Could you estimate your monthly income?
7. What is your level of education?
8. Could you simply describe how a typical day of your life looks like?

Economic capacity
1. Can you explain how your income covers your expenses?
2. What would you do with an increased income?
3. Who makes the economic decisions in your household?

Human capital
1. What is your level of reading and writing?
2. *Without education:* Describe in which way your economic well-being would change with an education?
   *With education:* Describe in which way your economic well-being has changed with your education?
3. *If working:* What kind of knowledge and experience do you have that are important in your occupation?
   *If not working:* What kind of knowledge and experience do you have that would be important in an occupation?
4. How is your access to healthcare?

Social capital
1. What do your networks look like?
2. What role do your networks play for your well-being?
3. To what degree do you trust in the people in your networks?
Gender equality

1. Who does what in your household?
2. Can you describe the decision-making process in your home?
3. Who accesses and uses the economic resources?
4. In general, how safe do you feel in your everyday life?
5. In general, what is the woman's role in your community?
6. In general, what do you think are the main differences between women and men in the society?

Political influence

1. Can you vote in the national elections?
2. How much political influence do you have in your community/on other levels?
3. In what way do you think that the government protects the rights of the indigenous women?

We don’t have any more questions. Is there something else you would like to add?