

INDIGENOUS ARTISANS, GENDER ROLES AND BARGAINING POWER: A CASE  
STUDY FROM THE BOLIVIAN HIGHLANDS

By

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To the women of Candelaria –  
Your strength inspires me daily. Thank you for making Candelaria my second home.

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To combat gender inequality and improve family well-being in Latin America, the gender and development movement argues for the empowerment of women through access to assets, employment, political representation, and organization. Artisan projects are seen as one way to empower women. This study draws upon the literature on gender inequalities in peasant communities and craft production under globalization to further examine household bargaining power in a highland Bolivian community through an in-depth examination of asset ownership, remuneration to weaving and women's organization. Semi-structured and informal interviews and participant observation were conducted. Results suggest that the weaving project examined has provided an autonomous source of income for women. Women who are participating in the weaving project are also more likely to control family income. However, the return to women's weaving labor is lower than the minimum daily wage paid for manual labor in the area. Moreover, few weavers are able to accumulate assets from weaving income such as land or houses, as inheritance is the primary form of land acquisition in the community. The project has also facilitated leadership roles for women and increased

their political representation. Overall, the commodification of textiles in this community seems to be empowering women and increasing their bargaining power in the household by increasing income and social organization.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

Bolivia is a country of vast differences, with snowcapped mountains and tropical rain forests, 54 different languages, and vibrant ethnic diversity with over half of the population being of indigenous descent. However, colonization, resource exploitation, political instability and failed economic policies have resulted in Bolivia being one of the poorest countries in Latin America. Moreover, gender inequality is prevalent, especially in rural areas where over half of the female adult population is illiterate. These circumstances have attracted billions of dollars in international aid. The countryside is littered with NGO and government aid agency logos plastered on what represent both functioning and failed development projects such as schools, health posts, and housing complexes. Other development projects focus on poverty alleviation by attempting to diversify income generation to supplement decreasing agricultural incomes.

One focus of poverty alleviation projects has been on utilizing indigenous women's knowledge through the commodification of indigenous art as a form of promoting income generation. The effects of commodification on indigenous cultures, locations and crafts have been a source of concerned debate among researchers working with indigenous peoples, tourism, conservation, and craft development. The idea of commodification originated by Karl Marx, and later summarized by Allan (2007:52) is defined as "the process through which more and more of the human life-world is turned into something that can be bought and sold." Artisans are making the transition from the production of cultural crafts made for local use to the production of crafts for national and international markets (Grimes and Milgram, 2000). As Grimes and Milgram argue,

successful commodification projects can enhance ethnic identity, bring economic benefits, and foster gender empowerment.

Promoting gender equality through projects that create opportunities for women—such as autonomous income generation, improved education, access to land, political representation, and organization—can be an effective form of fighting poverty, as studies show that successful projects bring additional income to households living at the poverty level. Additionally, studies in Latin America have found that women are more likely to spend the money they earn to improve household and children’s nutrition (Engle, 1995; Thomas, 1990), while men are more apt to spend money on non-essential consumption and self-gratification (Bourque and Warren, 1981; Deere, 1990).

Researchers have shown that there are associations in Latin America between an increase in women’s education and employment and decreasing fertility rates through improvements in infant and maternal health, increased use of contraceptives, and knowledge of the advantages of limiting family size (Chant and Craske, 2003). Finally, increasing women’s opportunities and employment directly increases the pool of talent that is available in the work force for development.

Few studies have drawn upon economic theory and quantitative methods to examine whether artisan projects actually result in both economic benefits and the empowerment of women. To do this, it is necessary to examine the actual time spent and income earned by these women, as well as study household decision-making.

Feminist economists argue for the use of household economic models based on bargaining power theory. These models assume that household members bargain over decisions on income, expenditures, and labor allocation. The results depend on an

individual's fall-back position, which is the available options that determine how well-off a person would be if she separated from the household. The fall-back position and thus "bargaining power" is determined by the individual's access to income, assets, and kin/social networks, as well as, education, literacy, social norms, individual perceptions, self-interest, membership in organizations, legal rights, and bargaining skills (Katz, 1991; Quisumbing, 2010). Increases in women's bargaining power can lead to an overall increase in household well-being as well as to women's empowerment.

### **Research Approach**

The purpose of this study is twofold. The first objective is to examine a weaving commodification project and the benefits generated for women and households by this project in a Quechua-speaking community in the Bolivian highlands. The second is to ascertain the extent to which the autonomous income earned by women through a weaving project is changing gender roles and power relations within households in this community.

The research site for this study is Candelaria, Bolivia, where in the 1980's an anthropological non-profit group established a project to revitalize the local textiles and improve the quality of life of artisans and their families (Davalos *et al.*, 1992). Candelaria is a small village in the central highlands of Bolivia located 25km from Tarabuco and 60km southeast of Sucre in the department of Chuquisaca. This community is comprised of approximately 50 Quechua-speaking families with a population of around 200.<sup>1</sup> The economy is based on agropastoralism and textile sales supplemented by migrant and limited local wage labor.

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<sup>1</sup> My estimate from community mapping and household interviews.

This research was conducted during a six week stay in Candelaria during May and June 2010. I also incorporate observation and weaving knowledge gained during a two year stay in the community as a Peace Corps volunteer, from 2004 to 2006. I use both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the weaving project in Candelaria and the benefits generated for women and households by this project. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered orally to a random sample of 25 households. In these households, I interviewed the female head of household and any additional adult women, including both weavers and non-weavers. The questionnaire collected information on the ownership by sex of land and the dwelling, animals and household items, and household decision-making by sex. Due to the small sample size, frequency analyses were conducted from quantifiable responses; qualitative analysis drawn from informal interviews and observation were also used to interpret the results. Furthermore, I calculated the return to weaving labor by doing a detailed case study of three weavers.

### **Overview**

This research, through a case study approach, connects the discourse on the commodification of textiles to changes at the level of the household. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the scholarly literature on the commodification of crafts. It summarizes the successes and challenges of craft projects that aim to function as poverty alleviation tools as well as what is known about the effects of commodification of cultural crafts on indigenous people. Chapter 3 provides historical background and a current description of Candelaria, the people known as Tarabuqueños, and their customs. I describe the

textiles traditionally produced in this area and introduce the weaving project that led to commodification.

Chapter 4 has two objectives. The first objective is to examine the benefits generated by the weaving project. The second is to determine the extent to which income earning by women through the weaving project is changing gender roles and power relations within households. I begin with an overview of the literature on household bargaining power from a feminist perspective. I then propose some hypotheses and explain the methodology of this study in more detail. I then present and interpret the results from qualitative data. Chapter 5 summarizes the significance of the findings and provides suggestions with respect to further research on the commodification of indigenous crafts and household bargaining power.

## CHAPTER 2 COMMODIFICATION OF TEXTILES

Globalization has resulted in increased and improved communication and transportation systems, which have given once-remote artisan groups access to global markets (Grimes and Milgram, 2000). In addition, the demand for craft objects in the world market has been growing (Grimes and Milgram, 2000). In the past twenty years, scholars have given increasing attention to the growing phenomenon of the commodification of cultural crafts.

Often times through cultural expression, a need for self-provisioning, and/or a need to generate income, artisans create products that are considered cultural art. Other terms used include folk art, indigenous crafts, cultural products, handcrafts, and tourist art. These terms are used interchangeably for the purpose of this study. The craft products are often made in the home and supplement income from other activities such as agriculture, herding, hunting, and trapping (Grimes and Milgram, 2000).

In Latin America, textiles or weavings are a popular form of folk art and are the focus of this study. Other types of handcrafts include wood carvings, baskets, embroidery, pottery, and jewelry. Weaving has been important to peoples in the Andes since long before the Inca civilization. This revered art form survives today in many rural areas of the Andes. Textiles serve as a form of cultural expression, are important to racial and ethnic identities, and serve as utilitarian goods.

Throughout Peru and Bolivia highly skilled artisans are widespread mainly in rural areas. The regions around Cuzco, Peru, and La Paz, and Sucre, Bolivia have become well known centers for commercialized crafts (Alvarez, 2007; Zorn, 2004; Cereceda *et al.*, 1993). Other well-known indigenous artisans in Latin America are the Zapotec near

Oaxaca, Mexico, the Maya in central Guatemala, and the Quichua in Otavalo, Ecuador (Stephen, 1991; Little, 2004; Korovkin, 1998).

In this Chapter, I will describe the indigenous craft industry, identifying the markets through which indigenous crafts are commercialized, and provide a description of the consumers. Next, I will discuss the successes and challenges of implementing craft projects as poverty alleviation tools and then present studies that examine the effects of commodification of cultural crafts on indigenous groups, cultures, and the products themselves. I will end with a discussion of the role that women play in this process, including the benefits they gain and the problems they face resulting from the commercialization of indigenous crafts.

### **The Global Craft Industry**

Researchers studying the markets for handicrafts have found that artisans often make products for more than one market. These markets include local, regional, and international markets. In the local market, crafts are sold for everyday use to community members. Tourism can also create another local market for artisans. Tourism has been a driving force behind the increase in craft sales in many places. After the 1960s air travel improved, giving greater accessibility to remote areas where indigenous people live. Many artisans also have access to regional markets in capital cities. These regional and national markets can target both nationals and foreign tourists. Finally, international markets include craft fairs, museum shops, craft stores and wholesale trade shows. Well-known wholesale trade shows include the New York International Gift Fair, Ambiente and Tendence Lifestyle Shows in Germany, SARCDA in South Africa and the India Handcraft Gift Fair in New Delhi. In rare cases, artisans' goods end up in stores such as Pier 1 Imports® and West Elm® (Aid to Artisans, 2009).

Artisans target foreign consumers both in the local tourist market and in the international export market. There is a growing interest in crafts on the part of consumers in more developed countries such as Germany, the UK, the US, and France (Scrase, 2003). “Research on object attachment, craft consumers, and product authenticity provides insight on potential consumer demand for cultural products” (Littrell and Dickson, 1999: 49). Further analysis, including demographic analyses of the U.S. population, adds insight into the values of emerging consumers of indigenous crafts.

Studies have been conducted on consumer behavior with respect to indigenous crafts (Littrell, 1996; Littrell *et al.*, 1992). Littrell *et al.* compiled a list of seven criteria that consumers consider when purchasing indigenous crafts. These include workmanship, sensuous appreciation, functional value, daily contrast, cultural linkage, artisan interchange, and individuality. Consumers often claim workmanship as a reason for the purchase, searching for handmade products of high quality that can be used on a daily basis. Sensuous appreciation or multisensory attachment is another reason. In addition, consumers are looking for functional value or versatility across multiple settings. Acquiring products under unusual circumstances adds contrast to the buyer’s everyday life. Consumers often cite cultural links, expanding a worldview and experiencing a way of life different from one’s own. The purchasing of crafts directly from the producer to “transcend cultural differences” (Ibid:51) is an important reason for consumers to purchase the products. Finally, consumers are searching for unique products that add to their desire for individuality or creative expression.

Ray (1999) terms a typical consumer of indigenous crafts a “cultural creative.” Characteristics of this group include being college educated, usually in their early 40’s,

female, with an average household income of \$52,200. These consumers are involved in volunteer activities and are interested in global issues. They “want to know where a product comes from, how it was made, and who made it” (Ray, 1999:32).

Growing markets and an increase in consumer interest from developed countries has not only attracted the attention of local artisans but also agencies dedicated to poverty alleviation and income generation for women in Latin America.

### **A Poverty Alleviation Tool**

In many parts of the world, artisan production constitutes the second largest sector of rural employment after agriculture (Herald, 1992). An increase in craft production is sometimes related to a decline in agricultural production, caused by a decrease in family land holdings due to inheritance, adverse climate conditions, and the negative effects of neoliberal policies (Eber, 2000, Nash, 1993). For many of these reasons, NGOs, governments, and policy makers are implementing indigenous craft programs as a form of poverty alleviation. Eversole (2006) cites several reasons why artisan programs are good targets for income generation: (1) artisans’ products generally utilize people’s existing skills, (2) the technology is accessible and low-cost, and it usually involves local materials, and (3) artisanal products are produced by hand, creating an “exotic” or unique market appeal. However, for this development strategy to be successful, it usually requires the presence of highly skilled artisans, an identified market, and an ability to successfully market the products. Many artisanal development projects fail because they lack one or more of the above three criteria.

Other challenges impede the establishment of successful income generating craft projects. For example, women artisans often lack formal education and are rarely previously organized (Scrase, 2003). Artisans and even development practitioners lack

knowledge of market structures and business skills (Littrell and Dickson, 1999). The global market controls demand and is often difficult to access. Another challenge artisans face is the tough competition from modern machine-made textiles. For example, cheap clothing and other items that are mass-produced in factories create competition for their products (Scrase, 2003).

Different organizational structures of craft projects and levels of dependency have developed in response to commercialization and the difficulties that exist with tapping a variety of markets, including more difficult international markets. Often weavers work through piecemeal contracts and have little control over the production process. In other cases individual weavers sell crafts directly to tourists or local merchants. Commonly, weaving projects create artisan cooperatives. These cooperatives may be managed by NGOs or the artisans themselves.

Utilizing the commercialization of cultural crafts as a form of poverty alleviation presents opportunities and challenges. Furthermore, the effects of commodification on the crafts and the cultures that produce them must also be considered.

### **Commodification Effects**

The effects of commodification on indigenous cultures, communities, and crafts are a point of debate among researchers working with indigenous peoples or studying tourism, conservation, and craft development. Studies show that commodification has created positive benefits such as an increased sense of pride and identity (Cole, 2007), decreased racial prejudices against indigenous producers (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1999; Zorn, 2004), a revitalization of craft forms (Nash, 2000), economic benefits (Grimes and Milgram, 2000; Zorn, 2004; Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1999), better political positioning, and gender empowerment (Grimes and Milgram, 2000). Others studies highlight negative

consequences such as alienation, loss of culture, community conflicts, and the alteration of ancient weaving traditions (Nash, 2000; Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1999; Zorn, 2004). Here I present a summary of studies that demonstrate the transformation of traditional products and cultural identities throughout Latin America as a result of the commoditization of craft production.

As cultures struggle to locate themselves between modernity and tradition, textile forms change greatly. Communities move away from laborious processes such as producing hand-spun yarn and natural dyes. Yardage or new materials are imported from other local peasant communities or from other countries around the world. Technology that increases production efficiency is utilized. Traditional products are altered and new products are created to suit tourist and export markets. This raises questions of responsibility. How much change is acceptable to the design, color, and eventual use of a traditional textile form? Where should the product fall on the spectrum between the needs of the maker and the wishes of the consumer (MacHenry, 2000)?

In some cases, product consultants are brought in to help the artisans address these questions. Product consultants are used in many cases to “mesh a group’s skills and available materials with market trends” (Littrell and Dickson, 1999: 252). They use their expertise on changing fashion in the western world to assist artisan groups who have little knowledge of the world market. Many of these consultants focus on maintaining traditional aspects of the culture in the new products that are developed. Depending on the consultant and the organization, product differentiation can range from little or no adjustments from the original product to a substantial adjustment to meet consumer demands (Littrell and Dickson, 1999).

One example from Teotitlán, Mexico shows how frequent contact with foreign importers has influenced the designs and colors of the textiles produced (Stephen, 1991). Stephen explains how most weavers in Teotitlán can describe how American consumer tastes have changed over the years and that they have tried to accommodate these changes. While the weavers still value their traditional designs aesthetically, they produce what sells.

Another example of product modification can be seen in Guerrero, Mexico. The painters of Ameyaltepec have altered their traditional products for the tourist market. Before the 1960's, artisans in this area would paint and sell pottery in traditional tourist centers such as Acapulco and Taxco. Eventually, they found that *amate* bark as a support for their painting was a practical alternative to pottery because of better portability. They have successfully marketed this new product locally and internationally, exporting to the U.S. (Stephen, 1991).

As textiles are altered in communities, ethnic identities are being modified and sometimes created. In some areas, increased textile sales have resulted in decreased racism against the indigenous producers, increased pride and identity amongst the producers. Other studies show how the commodification process has created community conflicts.

In Otavalo, Ecuador tourism has revitalized the use of traditional clothing for both men and women. A new identity is being created around the integration of western and traditional clothing. Popular *fajas* sold throughout the city and worn by young indigenous women as a modern fashion statement are helping to revitalize this art form. Young men are taking on worldly styles from their travels but are still maintaining

aspects of their traditional culture such as long hair and traditional hats (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1999). In Taquile, Peru, textile sales has increased regional, national, and international recognition for the indigenous people living on the island, which has improved treatment of Taquileans by people of higher classes in Peru and led to a decrease in racism (Zorn, 2004).

However, through artisanal production both Taquile and Otavalo have witnessed increased social stratification with a small number becoming wealthy and many others falling behind. According to the authors cited above, tensions are growing between generations. Children are caught between the traditional and the modern in a vastly different context. They are changing their clothing, losing traditional customs, and seeking education and modern jobs. Tourism also brings conflict between outside travel agents, middlemen, and locals for control of the profits. These issues are just a few of those that communities are dealing with in their attempts to navigate between tradition and modernity.

### **Women's Empowerment**

Nearly all scholarship on indigenous cloth and textiles in Latin America addresses the issue of gender. Women have traditionally been seen as the producers of textiles. Women in the Andes have been weaving since long before the Inca empire. During the Inca reign, weaving was generally associated as a female role. The Inca even collected young girls to serve *Inti* (the Sun god). These girls were called *acllas*. *Acllas* took on different roles for the empire but one of the main roles included becoming master weavers (Murra, 1962).

Today, women are still seen as the main producers of textiles in Latin America. In many rural communities, “weaving is part of the very essence of being a woman”

(Kellogg, 2005:113). Producing weavings can also serve as an important form of gender and ethnic identity. Studies show that in some communities women retain the use of indigenous clothing longer, helping to maintain both their own and their communities' ethnic identity (Kellogg, 2005)

Women often choose to commercialize textiles and other crafts as a way to generate additional family income (Lynd, 2000; Nash, 1993). The production of these products usually complements domestic work. Women are able to make the crafts in their homes while tending to the children and performing of other household chores such as cleaning, gardening, and gathering water (Stephen, 1991; Lynd, 2000).

Many studies report positive benefits as well as the potential for women's empowerment through the commercialization of crafts. Empowerment is a term utilized in both development and feminist scholarly literature. In development circles it is often associated with participation and integrated planning and development (Ibid). In a feminist sense, it can be defined as "people acquiring control over their own lives and defining their own agendas; it is usually associated with the interests of those dispossessed of power and assumed to be an expression of desired change" (Deere and León, 2001:23). To better understand empowerment, Rowlands (1997) identifies four categories of power: power over, power to, power with, and power within.

Power over is a zero-sum game where someone has power over someone else and uses it to influence or coerce the other person. For example, in a patriarchal society men exert power over women. As women become empowered the result may be to decrease the overall power of men. This discourse may be threatening to men since it challenges societal norms. Thus, the women's movement more often focuses on power

to, power with, and power within. Power to is “generative or productive power which creates new possibilities and actions without domination” (Rowlands, 1997:13), power with is power gained through group participation, and power within is internal power often associated with self-respect and confidence. Thus empowerment considering power to and power with is “concerned with the processes by which people become aware of their own interests and how those relate to the interests of others, in order to both participate from a position of greater strength in decision-making and actually to influence such decisions” (Rowlands, 1997:14).

In the literature, there is substantial agreement that “process” and “agency” are essential to women’s empowerment (Malhotra *et al.*, 2002). The “process” refers to the progression or manner through which a woman is empowered. Agency is the “ability to define one’s goals and act upon them.” This is connected to an individual’s “power from within.” Agency is often thought to be operationalized as “decision-making” but can also take the form of bargaining, negotiation, deception, manipulation, subversion, or manipulation. Agency is also connected to “power to” and refers to people’s capacity to define their own life choices and pursue their own life goals (Kabeer, 1999).

Women’s empowerment is difficult to measure because it is context specific and difficulties exist in measuring a “process” (Malhotra *et al.*, 2002). There is no set framework for measuring empowerment. Many studies have been conducted that measure empowerment at the household or macro levels. Few studies investigate empowerment at a multi-level approach; however at the household level, frequent indicators used are domestic decision-making, access to or control over resources, economic contribution to the household, management/knowledge, and freedom from

violence. At the macro-level, most of the indicators tend to measure the pre-conditions for empowerment in terms of labor force participation, labor laws, literacy, education, characteristics of marriage and kinship, and political representation by women (Malhotra *et al.*, 2002).

Studies of craft commodification have highlighted the benefits for women and argue that these benefits empower women. One of the main benefits of craft sales is that women begin to contribute to family incomes and this increases their self-esteem. Teresa Ujpan Pérez, an indigenous weaver from San Juan Guatemala, states, “with the money from weaving, we can maintain our children, pay for clothing and education....Now our weavings are valued” (In Lynd, 2000:68). They are also taking a more prominent role in public life. They travel abroad, and study in schools. In some cases, women become responsible for decision making and money management. Further, there is evidence that women are choosing to leave abusive relationships (Nash, 1993). Women artisans have been described as “dynamic mediators between their community and the outside, agents of transformation, playing an active role in the negotiation of ‘traditional’ and ‘modernity’ within their societies, active agents in development, and play a key role in adapting to globalization” (Zorn, 2004:157).

The commercialization of textiles and other crafts is also an example of how women have adapted to the difficult economic situation that has plagued most Latin American countries for decades by taking on more income generating activities, becoming more active in the community, and still maintaining households through their domestic labor. Researchers have found cases where these conditions may create further challenges for women. Overexploitation of female labor (Deere and León,

2001), harsh working conditions (Mills, 2003), growing informal economies that lack income security (Babb, 1998), and growing household conflicts are realities for women in Latin America. Time poverty is another issue, defined as “working long hours without choice because an individual's household is poor or would be at risk of falling further into poverty if the individual reduced her working hours below a certain time-poverty line. Thus women lack enough time for rest and leisure after accounting for the time that has to be spent working, whether in the labor market, doing domestic work, or performing other activities such as fetching water and wood” (Bardasi and Wodon, 2010:45).

Studies have also shown that men are taking an active role in the production and commercialization of textiles. In some areas men are the primary producers of textiles and women become secondary producers when the demand for labor increases (Colleredo-Mansfeld, 2002). In other areas, textile production is shared with men as they become more involved in their production as the commercialization process increases (Zorn, 2004; Kellogg, 2005). Additionally, men may take a more active role in the marketing of products made by women in order to retain control over income (Nash, 1993). Additional conflicts between male and female heads of household may exist as women become income earners and participate in commercialization activities outside the home. For example, in Chamula and Chenalho, two small villages in Chiapas, Mexico, “women weavers try to balance the need for income generation against the negative reaction of their husbands and the wider community to their entry into the market” (Eber and Rosenbaum, 1993). Others cite that this process has led to domestic violence (Nash, 1993).

Few studies have used quantitative methods to analyze income generation, asset accumulation, and household power relations within weaving communities. In one of the available studies, Stephens (1991) presents an analysis of weaving households and gender relations in Teotitlán, Mexico. She explains that weaving was traditionally done by men but the commercialization of textiles pushed women into weaving as a result of a growing demand for labor. Women appear to be receiving equal rates of return to men. However, this process also added to the number of hours women must work, since they remain responsible for housework and other traditional chores. Stephens describes how the successful commercialization of textiles has increased the average level of income for households in Teotitlán and created a petty capitalist merchant class that buys textiles from pieceworkers and then sells them in local and international markets. Through a household survey, she found that in households where family members act as merchants, women have been marginalized from conducting business transactions and controlling money because they lack experience and education and are limited by their social roles as wives and mothers. Older women are especially disadvantaged because of their low levels of education. However, households with female weavers and no merchant activities reported higher levels of female control of household income. Thirty-five percent of the respondents reported that the women alone control income, with 62% reporting joint control (Stephens, 1991: 152).

Eber and Rosenbaum (1993) provide an ethnographic account of changing gender relations within weaving households in Chiapas, Mexico. They argue that women's participation in weaving cooperatives has helped women play a more significant role as income providers, as men's role as principal breadwinners is diminishing because of the

lack of productive land. However, Eber and Rosenbaum report that women's remuneration from weaving is well below the minimum wage. Furthermore, while participation in the weaving cooperatives has increased women's political power, it has also caused tension in the household as women struggle to divide their time between household chores, weaving activities, and participation in the cooperatives.

Lastly, Colledo-Mansfeld (2002) conducted a study on the ownership of household assets in weaving families compared to nonweaving families in Otavalo, Ecuador. The weaving families produced belts with traditional designs on the more mechanized treadle looms to keep up with a growing demand. He found that the median value of household possessions among weavers was more than double that of nonweaving households. This study, however, does not provide an analysis of household gender relations nor of who in the household owns the assets.

### **Summary**

The craft industry is made up of local producers and national and foreign consumers connected through a globalized market. This Chapter has documented the successes and challenges of indigenous craft projects and illustrated ways in which they have become a tool for poverty alleviation in Latin America. Anthropologists have provided ethnographic accounts of how the commodification of crafts and indigenous cultures is creating positive benefits such as the revitalization of textiles, the creation of new identities, and decreased racism. Studies also show negative effects such as increased community conflicts, alienation, and the alteration of ancient weaving traditions.

Additionally, women, as the main producers of crafts, have benefited from the creation of craft projects. These projects have resulted in an increase in women's

decision-making and provided women with a source of income, leadership roles, and educational opportunities. However, there is also evidence that these may lead to additional hardships for women such as an even longer working day and very low returns on their labor.

## CHAPTER 3 A CASE STUDY: THE COMMUNITY AND COMMODIFICATION

Candelaria, the site of this research, is located in southeast Chuquisaca, Bolivia. This Chapter describes its people, culture, textiles, and the textile project, as well as outline the primary gender roles. The aim is to provide background for the data analysis in Chapter 4. The information in this Chapter was collected using a combination of sources, which include a literature review and ethnographic data that was collected during my six week stay in Candelaria in the summer of 2010 and during my two year stay as a Peace Corps Volunteer in 2004 through 2006. My research methods include semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, observations, and detailed discussions with a trusted friend and valuable informant.

### **Candelaria: History and Culture**

The 200 residents of Candelaria<sup>2</sup> (in the province of Yamparaéz) share similar dress, rituals, music and dances with surrounding communities in the Yamparaéz, Zudáñez and Tomina provinces. The people who practice this culture are referred to as Tarabuqueños (Davalos *et al.*, 1992). They are recognized throughout Bolivia for their distinctive multi-colored hand-woven ponchos, mantles, coca bags, and their helmet-styled black leather hats. They perform annual ceremonies and dances such as *Phujllay* and *Ayarichis*, practice similar agricultural customs, and share religious beliefs. This shared culture has evolved over centuries. The Yampara peoples inhabited the area before the time of the Incas.<sup>3</sup> During the Inca expansion period,<sup>4</sup> the Inca royalty

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<sup>2</sup> My estimate from community mapping and household interviews.

<sup>3</sup> Early Yampara period 400 A.D. – 800; Classic Yampara 800-1300 A.D.; (Alconini, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Yampara-Inca Period 1300-1536 A.D.

allied with the Yampara to protect their southeastern frontier from the encroaching Chiriguano-Guaraní from the tropical lowlands and the Chaco (Alconini, 2010). To further protect this frontier, the Inca state sent large contingents of military *mitmaqkuna* into the area. These groups included Canchis, members of an Aymara-speaking tribe from the area near Cuzco, Collas, from an Aymara speaking group at the north end of Lake Titicaca, and Chichas, who spoke their own language and were part of the Charcas Federation (Meisch, 1984). Over time, these groups united in this region and developed a shared culture that can still be appreciated today.

During the Spanish colonial period, most of the land remained indigenous-held until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1855 the land in Candelaria and the surrounding communities became part of a grain hacienda owned by members of the Sucre mining elite. In 1900, the hacienda was sold to Doña Candelaria Argandoña and subsequently was renamed after her (Langer, 1989). Her daughter married Néstor Rojas. The Rojas family still owns and operates a small portion of the original hacienda lands near Candelaria, as well as the hacienda housing complex and its chapel.

Under the hacienda system, local indigenous peoples were forced into a system of peonage. Agrarian reform in the 1950's destroyed this system and divided lands into individually owned plots. Over a multi-year period, local villagers were relieved of their work obligations for Rojas and received titles to the land that they occupied (Langer, 1989).

Quechua is now the only indigenous language spoken in the area and Spanish is becoming widely spoken. Today only a small portion of the people from the communities in the Tarabuco region wears traditional clothing daily, but most still own

hand-woven clothing and use it for special occasions such as traditional festivals. The majority of people who still wear traditional clothing on a daily basis live in Candelaria or the surrounding communities of Puka Puka, Pila Torre, Pampa Lupiara, Molle Molle, Pisili, Paredon, Q'illu Q'asa, and Quillpa Pampa. Candelaria and most of these smaller villages are located on a dirt road between Tarabuco and Icla. These two towns are provincial capitals boasting government and NGO offices, large schools, hospitals, churches, police stations, markets, and other businesses. Candelaria only has one school, a small health post staffed by a nurse, evangelical and catholic chapels that priests visit on special occasions, and small dry goods stores run by local families.

The economy in Candelaria is based on agropastoralism and textile sales supplemented by migrant and limited local wage labor. The landscape consists of high desert valleys and plateaus, making agriculture difficult. Agricultural plots are small due to limited availability of fertile land, and large portions of land are only suitable for grazing. In addition, the land that is available for agriculture has been divided through inheritance over generations. The elevation, 3000 to 3500 meters, is slightly lower than that of the *altiplano*, or high plains, associated with llama herding, mining, and the production of *chuños* (freeze dried potatoes). The traditional agricultural products grown in these high valleys are potatoes, high altitude grains, and corn. Animal husbandry is also an important practice in the community. The typical animals owned by most households include sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, cows, horses, donkeys, oxen, and mules. Llamas and other camelids are not kept in the region.

Villagers travel to Tarabuco on Sundays to purchase supplies or sell agricultural products and animals. Sucre, the departmental capital, is also frequently visited to

purchase supplies since these are usually cheaper than in Tarabuco, to process government papers, or to visit family members who have migrated for educational or employment opportunities. Transportation to Candelaria from Sucre takes less than two hours in a private vehicle, but often requires over four hours due to delayed public transportation, frequent stops, and accidents often caused by drunk drivers. Buses and *camiones* (large grain trucks) operate on daily schedules while many villagers also catch rides with vehicles passing by.

There are approximately 50 housing complexes in Candelaria. Typical housing complexes feature small adobe rooms with dirt floors and individual straw roofs surrounding a *kancha* or open courtyard. Each room serves as either a bedroom, kitchen, or storehouse. Kitchens are equipped with a handmade adobe wood-burning stove and low bench seating around the perimeter. Recently some residents have replaced straw roofs with Spanish-style tiles, installed cement floors, improved kitchens with gas ovens and sinks, and added latrines and showers to their complexes.

### **Textiles**

The weavings in this area are primarily made using the oblique frame loom of pre-Columbian origin, which has undergone few modern adjustments (Figure 3-1). Women are the sole producers of textiles with these looms. Textiles are made for practical and ritual purposes. Both men and women wear the hand-woven clothing for everyday purposes and as part of ritual costumes that are used for special festivals. Other cloth is woven for functional uses as blankets, seed bags and grain sacks. A traditional costume for women includes an *almilla* or solid black calf-length dress made from *bayeta* (rough wool cloth)(Figure 3-2). A woven *ak'su* (overskirt) is attached at the waist with a *chumpi* (woven belt) and pinned over the shoulder. In addition, women wear a

red hand-woven *llijlla* (mantle) and a black hat. Adult married women wear a *pacha montera* or helmet style black leather hat, while young unmarried women wear a *juq'ullu*, a black crocheted hat elaborately decorated with sequins. The traditional costume for men includes white calf-length pants and a black shirt both made of *bayeta*, a small poncho called a *kunka unku*, a corresponding square piece of woven cloth worn to cover the back side called a *sik'i unku*, a large poncho worn on the outside, and an intricately woven coca bag, known as a *chuspa*. In Quechua, the word *unku* means tunic. In Inca times, this was the word that was used for the traditional male tunic. However, this tunic was longer with sides sewn together but leaving arm holes (Cereceda *et al.*, 1993). The *unku* worn in Candelaria only covers the chest and is not sewn together on the sides.

The textiles are made using a variety of techniques. The *bayeta* is purchased in Tarabuco today but was once made locally on mechanical looms introduced by the Spanish. The other items are made on the traditional vertical loom. The ponchos, *unkus*, and *llijllas* are primarily made using a simple plain weave referred to as *llano* (Spanish for plain). Only the color stripes made by using different colored warp threads are visible. Apart from their striping, these textiles do not feature patterns or motifs. The *ak'su*, coca bags, and belts are made primarily using complementary-warp weave<sup>5</sup> with three-span floats called *pallay* (pickup) in Quechua. This technique is much more difficult, with elaborately woven patterns and motifs.

Traditionally, textiles were made with naturally dyed camelid fibers and cotton grown in the Pilcomayo River Basin at the southern edge of the Tarabuco territory

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<sup>5</sup> See Rowe (1977) for more details of weave structures.

(Meisch, 1984). Veronica Cereceda and her colleagues have done extensive research on traditional textiles in this area. Their studies show that little is known about textiles in the area before Spanish documentation. Pictures taken by Paul Walle in 1914 show clothing very similar to what has been described (Meisch, 1984). These older textiles consist of both plain weaves and more complicated weaves, which are warp-faced and warp-patterned.

Older *pallay* designs generally consisted of abstract geometric motifs representing aspects of nature, such as rivers, flowers, or animal eyes. These designs are referred to as *unay pallay* (antique pickup) (Davalos *et al.*, 1992). Older textiles from the colonial period, especially in the Candelaria region, might have also contained woven horse motifs. Modern textiles now include horse motifs and many other representational figures, as will be discussed below.

In the Andes, textiles have long been one of the most important forms of cultural expression, and they still maintain strong cultural value in Candelaria. Beyond their function as clothing, textiles are used in cultural celebrations to express emotion and pride, and to represent local and regional identities. For example, special textiles are made for festivals such as *Phujllay* or *Ayarichis* (Davalos *et al.*, 1992). Woven clothing is used to express mourning. Dark colors are worn during a yearlong mourning period and red colors are worn in times of non-mourning. Furthermore, women take pride in their weaving skills. They display their skill by making high quality *ak'sus* and *chuspas* for themselves and their husbands to wear to community and outside events. Women with high quality weaving skills are seen as desirable and intelligent.

Traditional dress are still worn every day by both men and women in Candelaria, although this custom is quickly deteriorating as all children have adapted to western clothing, all young men wear western clothing, and most young women wear *polleras*, pleated machine made skirts. Wearing *polleras* became common practice after the Spanish arrived. The skirts were imposed on indigenous women by the Spaniards to assimilate them towards the dresses that elite women wore in urban areas (Femenías, 2005).

Traditional costumes express local and ethnic identities. From an outsider's perspective, women who wear *ak'sus* are seen as indigenous while women who wear *polleras* are identified as mestizas or *cholitas*. However, women within the community describe women with *ak'sus* as *mamitas*, and women with *polleras* as “*de pollera*”. They consider women with *ak'sus* as more traditional and women with *polleras* as more modern. Outsiders may identify people who wear traditional dress as indigenous; however, the term “*indio*” is still considered derogatory in Bolivia<sup>6</sup> (Ambercrombie, 1991; Weismantel, 2001). Community members, instead, use either *runa* (people in Quechua), *originarios*, Tarabuqueños or *campesinos* for self-identification. Within the Tarabuco region, traditional clothing varies between community or *ayllu*<sup>7</sup> (Meisch, 1984). Weavers from Candelaria maintain a similar color-pattern and design that distinguishes them from that of other communities. Thus, textiles represent varying local identities.

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<sup>6</sup> In some areas in Bolivia, the term “*indígena*” is again being used for self-identification probably because of a stronger indigenous movement associated with the current President, Evo Morales who is indigenous.

<sup>7</sup> Community members in Candelaria do not recognize *ayllus* but other communities within the Tarabuco region may.

## Commodification

By the 1970s, indigenous merchants called *pancheros* were already buying old and new textiles from weavers in the Tarabuco region and selling them to tourists for relatively undervalued prices (Fernández, 2006). It was only in 1988, however, that the Chuquisaca Regional Development Corporation (CORDECH) began a regional development project in the Tarabuco region with a small weaving component intending to increase family income and preserve the cultural patrimony (Davalos, Cereceda, and Martinez, 1992). The project soon formed a partnership with Antropólogos del Surandino (ASUR), an anthropological non-profit founded by two foreign anthropologists, Veronica Cereceda and Gabriel Martínez. The goal of this partnership was to recuperate traditional textiles by commercializing them in select markets, thus promoting the dignity of the Andean culture, and fostering a system of self – management.

The project managers initially received hostile response from male leaders and community members in Q'illu Q'asa when they explained their intention to implement a project to promote textiles made by women. The men's reaction was that women should cook and attend to the children. They refused to collaborate in the construction of an access road to the community that was necessary for the implementation of the project. The men told the women that if they wanted to be artisans then they should construct the road. The women were indeed interested in the project as an alternate means to generate income, and decided to construct the road against the men's wishes. For lack of experience, errors were made and the road was nearly impassable. The men found this very humorous until the women put up a sign at the beginning of the road that said, "*Warmi Ruasqa Ñan*" (road built by women), inferring that there were no

men in the community. When negative rumors began to spread to nearby communities, the men decided to help make the road functional (Davalos *et al.*, 1992). The weaving project then supported the development of an organization of 20 women with elected officers. This was the first opportunity for women to hold an elected office.

ASUR's project identified women weavers who were interested in improving or learning traditional weaving techniques, as the textiles being produced in the community at that time were not considered saleable due to the use of synthetic yarns, poor weaving quality, and esthetically displeasing designs.

Over the next four years the project quickly expanded, creating five workshops serving 13 communities and with 329 female participants in the Tarabuco region (Ibid). The project's first goal was to revitalize textiles. In order to achieve this, ASUR carried out weaving training courses using already-skilled weavers in the area, and provided all interested women the opportunity to learn or improve their weaving skills. Products that were suitable for commercialization to tourists were developed. Wall hangings were made by altering the structure and design of the women's *ak'su*. *Pallay* designs were substantially altered. Master weavers were identified and they expanded on the horse motif to include various exquisite figural scenes representing aspects of everyday life, festivals, and fables. Examples include scenes representing marriage ceremonies, the agricultural calendar, and traditional creation fables. The tightly woven scenes depicting stories or festivals are placed along a center band and framed by two additional bands of *unay pallay* (traditional geometric designs) on each side (Figure 3-3). Women describe these *unay pallay* designs as representations of nature such as rivers, rocks, and animal eyes.

ASUR also promoted the use of machine processed wool. Hand spun wool is still being used in the community for weavings made outside the ASUR project, but is often substituted for cotton and synthetic yarns purchased in Sucre or Tarabuco. Nearly all yarn is dyed using chemical tints with natural mordents. Traditional knowledge of natural dyes still exists but is rarely put to use except for in the production of special clothing or special orders. Apart from these changes, new non-garments have been created such as purses, pillowcases, bookmarks, and placemats (Figure 3-4).

Today each workshop operates as a community organization with its own elected officials. The officers are responsible for local administrative tasks such as distribution of raw materials and limited record keeping. ASUR's paid employees, who are educated middle class workers from Sucre, control the quality, price, and design of the weavings. ASUR, through a *comprador* (buyer) who travels to the communities, distributes the raw materials or machine processed wool, stipulates the type, size, and quality of desired weavings, sets prices, pays the artisans, and markets the final product (Eversole, 1995). The *comprador* accepts or rejects weavings for purchase based on size and quality. A quality standard is applied using quality determinants such as the completeness of the stories depicted, the lack of errors in the weaving design, and aspects of weaving technique such as straightness of the edges, tightness of the weave, size and color.

Each product's value is determined by a different rubric. For example, the remuneration to the weaver for an *ak'su* is calculated considering size and quality. First, the area in centimeters squared is calculated. Then, the area in  $\text{cm}^2$  is multiplied by a

set price determined by the quality (Table 4-3). This price is then paid to the weaver, before mark-ups are applied and the final price is determined for sale to tourists.

ASUR, therefore, acts as a market intermediary, purchasing weavings directly from the weavers and selling them in local, national, and international markets. There is also a smaller non-profit organization, Inca Pallay, which broke off from ASUR and operates in the same manner by purchasing textiles from weavers in the community. This organization boasts self-management but still maintains a full time non-peasant staff member located in Sucre. Additionally, with the help of Peace Corps volunteers, the community established an autonomous weaving cooperative that operates sporadically. It has elected office holders who are female and holds regular meetings. The cooperative sells weavings to tourists who visit Candelaria's small weaving museum that was constructed by the cooperative, and also sells to tourists in Tarabuco. The cooperative has also sent representatives to local and international folk art markets. Today nearly all women participate in the local weaving cooperative. Additionally, out of the 25 surveyed weavers, 11 weave for ASUR, and 6 weave for Inca Pallay.

Tourists are the main consumers of weavings in this area. From my observations there are at least two distinct types of tourists in Sucre. The first group is similar to the "cultural creative" type described in the Chapter 2. They are mostly middle age travelers interested in the indigenous cultures and textiles in Sucre and the surrounding communities. The other group is commonly described as "backpackers." They tend to be younger travelers, seeking adventure that the rugged landscape has to offer in an affordable manner. Tourists such as these and others frequent the Sunday Tarabuco market to observe Tarabuco culture and purchase a variety of handcrafts such as

textiles. Small groups of tourists interested in learning more about the textiles and culture travel to Candelaria, mostly with guides.

Before ASUR's weaving project was implemented, weavers sold limited textiles in times of urgent need for low prices. Today, weavers have many outlets for their textile sales. Women weavers can sell textiles either to ASUR or Inca Pallay,<sup>8</sup> or on consignment with the local weaving association. Furthermore, textiles are sold directly to tourists who visit the community with outside guides or with the owner of a nearby hacienda, to local community intermediaries, or directly to tourists at the well-known weekly Tarabuco Sunday market.

Previous evaluations of ASUR's economic development project highlight many successes, such as increased cultural visibility and revitalized weaving traditions. This project is seen as a "reliable and low-risk cash-generating alternative in a geographic area that has few other economic opportunities" (Eversole, 2006). ASUR itself claims that the program has doubled family income by 50% or even 60% in some households (Healy, 2001). However, another study conducted by Fernández (2006) describes problems that have been created through ASUR's high level of control over nearly all aspects of the project.

Fernández' evaluation, conducted in 2004, examined the project's commercialization and production processes. Fernández conducted interviews with ASUR employees and community members in Paredón, Karallantayoc, Q'uello Q'asa, and Candelaria. He found that, overall, the commodification process has led to many

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<sup>8</sup> ASUR has a condition that the weavers must choose to work with either ASUR or Inca Pallay.

changes in the textiles and has created discontent among the weavers over their remuneration.

Textiles, such as the *ak'su*, have been modified based on tourists' preferences. ASUR encouraged high quality weavings with elaborate recognizable and non-abstract motifs. One weaver stated:

Those from ASUR give the measurements and we weave what they want. They see what gringos [foreigners] buy, and this is what we make. The tourists buy more of the modern *axsus* and *sakas*. The tourists don't buy traditional *axsus*. For this, the ASUR employees made these new products. (Fernández, 2006:153)<sup>9</sup>

Another weaver describes a lack of agency in deciding what to weave:

you have to weave stories, you have to combine the colors well. One weaving has to have a story in the center of the weaving and the design can't repeat itself. You can't weave things that move, like cars, airplanes, and other modern things because that is not the culture, it doesn't have value, this will lower the quality and price. (Fernández, 2006: 154)<sup>10</sup>

Fernández also stated that ASUR's original plan was to train the weavers to take on greater control of the project by managing quality control, payment, and marketing, but that this has not been successful. ASUR claims that the original plan intended for the *técnicas* (master weavers) to take control of the project; however, most of these women left the association to sell their textiles individually before the transition could be made.

Fernández also found that the weavers felt that the income they received through textile sales to ASUR was unfairly low. One participant stated, "In ASUR's store the prices are high, from us they take them cheap, they buy them from us really cheap and they sell them at double the price to tourists" (Fernández, 2006: 156).<sup>11</sup> ASUR claims

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<sup>9</sup> As translated by author.

<sup>10</sup> As translated by author.

<sup>11</sup> As translated by author.

that approximately 60% of the final sale price goes to the weaver. The rest goes to purchase raw materials, pay taxes, maintain the store, and provide training courses. However, Fernández cites another study showing that the weaver receives less than half of the sale price. He concludes that weaving remuneration received through ASUR's project is lower than the wages being paid for other activities in the community.

Fernández argues that this labor system is characterized by a patron-client relationship. Most of the women continue to sell their textiles to ASUR because they lack other viable options. One woman states:

The people from the countryside are teaching the people from ASUR to see quality, and they are putting a price [on weavings] as owners. This is not good, because they tell us, this doesn't value like this, so by force we have to sell, we want to but we don't want to. Out of necessity we have to sell (Fernández, 2006: 155)<sup>12</sup>

Fernández concludes by suggesting that even though the income earned by the women through ASUR's project is low, it could be an important source of women's empowerment. He cites other studies conducted in Latin America that show autonomous income generation for women provides additional household income, greater economic independence from their husbands, an increase in the ability to make household decisions, and decreased to subordination in a patriarchal family.

### **Summary**

This Chapter provided historical background on Candelaria, the textiles, and ASUR's weaving development project. It showed how the commodification of textiles has revitalized traditional weaving but also modified traditional designs and created new products based on tourists' preferences. Few changes have occurred to ancient

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<sup>12</sup> As translated by author

weaving techniques, but changes have been made to the materials, motifs, and patterns. Previous evaluations show that the ASUR project created significant economic benefits for weaving households but that ASUR still controls all aspects of the commercialization process. This top-down approach with low remuneration has caused discontent with the project among the weavers. They have little agency in weaving and few alternatives for income generation. However, Fernández suggests that autonomous income generation for women may be providing additional benefits for them, such as greater autonomy and household decision-making. In Chapter 4, I will use a case study approach to calculate the remuneration to weaving and then examine whether women's autonomous income generation has led to women's empowerment.



Figure 3-1. Photo of a traditional loom. Weavings are made using the oblique frame loom of pre-Columbian origin that has undergone few modern adjustments. Photo courtesy of Woofter.



Figure 3-2. Photo depicting traditional clothing. A man and women from Candelaria wearing traditional clothing. Photo courtesy of Woofter.



Figure 3-3. Photo of an *ak'su*. This textile called an *ak'su* is a wall hanging that was made by altering the textile structure and design of the women's overskirt also called *ak'su*. The tightly woven motifs depicting stories or festivals are placed along a center band and accompanied by two additional bands of traditional geometric designs on each side. Photo courtesy of Woofter.



Figure 3-4. Photo of pillows. These pillows are a good example of how traditional textiles have been converted into products meant for tourist and international markets. Photo courtesy of Woofter.

## CHAPTER 4 WEAVING AND WOMEN'S BARGAINING POWER IN HOUSEHOLDS

The first objective of this Chapter is to examine the benefits generated for women and households by the ASUR weaving project. The second is to ascertain the extent to which the autonomous income earned by women through this project is changing gender roles and power relations within households in this Quechua-speaking community in the Bolivian highlands. I hypothesize that this weaving project, by increasing women's autonomous income, has increased women's ownership of assets, their role in decision-making, and thus their bargaining power. Increases in women's bargaining power can lead to an overall increase in household well-being as well as women's empowerment.

### **Household Bargaining Power**

Since the 1990s there has been a dramatic growth in research based on new household decision-making models, as a result of the realization that intra-household allocation is important to the design and implementation of public policy. Additionally, this growth is related to a growing availability of data, and the use of qualitative methods to study households (Quisumbing, 2010). New household decision-making models have been created to refute the traditional view that households operate as undifferentiated units of analysis. The traditional neoclassical model, credited to Gary Becker (1965; 1981), combines consumption and production activities of households and assumes that family decisions are based on a set of common preferences used to maximize family utility under common budget constraints subject to external factors. Households are thus treated as "black boxes" since this analysis fails to consider gender, age, and the differentiated economic status of individual family members.

The new household models consider a bargaining function (Nash, 1950; Nash, 1953; McElroy and Horney, 1981). These models assume that household members bargain over decisions on income, expenditures, and labor allocation, and that the results depend on each person's fall-back position. The fall-back position and thus bargaining power is determined by the individual's access to economic resources. These resources could include land, income, and other individual household assets. This model has received many critiques. Feminist economists argue that it treats individuals as equals and fails to account for gender, age, and individual preferences (Katz, 1991). Thus feminists argue that important sources of bargaining power go beyond assets and income and must include kinship, education, literacy, social norms, individual perceptions, self-interest, membership in organizations, state laws, and development policies (Agarwal, 1997; Sen, 1990).

Factors that increase a woman's bargaining power have been the focus of previous micro-level studies. In the Andes, households have been described as patriarchal, with men controlling income and decision-making processes (Deere, 1990; Reinhardt, 1988). It is postulated that income generating activities for women can lead to a greater control over their lives if they have control over this income. Engle (1995) and Thomas (1990) found that in Latin America women are more likely to spend money to improve household and children's nutrition (cited in Deere and León, 2001) while men are more apt to spend money on consumption and self-gratification (Bourque and Warren, 1981; Deere, 1990). Autonomous income generating activities for women not only benefit female-headed households but also contribute to overall household affluence in two-headed households. Sen argues, "These activities influence the

relative shares by affecting the “breakdown positions” of women and also the perceptions of women’s ‘contributions’ and ‘claims’ (1990: 148).

Further studies have investigated land ownership and its effect on bargaining power. It is argued that access to land can increase available credit and income generating options, provide exit options, as well as allow greater social and political participation (Agarwal, 1994). Studies find that women who have access to land are more likely to establish households with or near the wife’s parents. Women who reside away from kin and social networks have less bargaining power (Spedding, 1997). Unfortunately in Latin America there is a gap between men’s and women’s ownership of land. This gap is caused by family inheritance preferences, community social norms, state policies, and market inequalities (Deere and León, 2001). For example, “the social construction of masculinity and femininity such that men are defined as the producers and primary income earners and women as dependent housewives—have generated considerable gender inequality in the ownership of assets” (Deere and León, 2001:13). This convention has produced a bias in inheritance practices, favoring men, who are considered the main agricultural wage earners.

Human and social capital are additional factors that have been found to influence bargaining power. Quisumbing states, “Membership in organizations, access to kin and other social networks, and ‘social capital’ may positively influence a person’s power to affect household decisions” (2010: 163). “Education, literacy and fluency in the dominant language of the country could also be important measures of individual power, again partly because they strengthen one’s fall-back position and partly because they give a person greater access to economic, political and social opportunities which s/he

can use to influence the intra-household resource allocation process” (Katz, 1991: 44). There is evidence that increasing the mother’s education leads to an increase in her bargaining power within the household (Handa, 1996). Unfortunately, women are often excluded from local governing bodies, including community decision-making organizations. This limits their power to affect decisions in the household and community and resulting in limited access to economic and political opportunities that could increase their fall-back position and bargaining power.

In this study, I examine a weaving project that was designed to provide a source of autonomous income generation to women. I use a feminist approach to household bargaining theory that considers gender differences and factors beyond assets and income to determine a woman’s fall-back position and bargaining power within households. This project is providing not only income but enhancing the organization of women, and through NGO assistance is contributing to a growth in the human capital of the women participating in the project. These are all factors that feminists argue affect bargaining power. This study examines whether or not the presence of these factors is leading to increased levels of asset ownership and increased intra-household decision-making for women.

### **Methodology**

Primary data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire, participant observation, open-ended individual interviews, and case studies of individual weavers to gain information on income generation and distribution, asset acquisition, and household decision-making. The questionnaire was administered orally to a random sample of 25 households. A total of 35 women were surveyed, 25 of whom were weavers.

A detailed case study of three weavers was conducted to calculate weaving income levels. I chose the three women weavers non-randomly to participate in the case study based on their availability, varying weaving skill levels, and the different sizes of their textiles. I measured the time it took each weaver to complete one line of a weaving and then determined how many lines were needed to complete the piece. Earnings per hour were then calculated based on expected compensation for the finished product. Compensation for finished products was calculated using the standard system developed by ASUR.

For the purpose of this analysis, households were divided into three categories corresponding to the level of household weaving income: high, low, and no weaving income households. Women who are high quality weavers and sell textiles to various vendors, act as intermediaries for textile sales, or have more than one weaver in the family were placed in the high weaving income category. Low weaving income households include those where the woman does not participate in ASUR or Inca Pallay because she does not have the capability to weave complicated supplementary warp textiles with designs but still produces small quantities of lower-quality plain weave textiles for local consumers. This category also includes elderly weavers who no longer weave for the associations but still produce a small quantity of textiles for peddling. Lastly, households with no weaving income include those where the woman is not currently weaving. In some cases, the woman never learned to weave, but in others she has chosen not to weave and is engaged in other income generating activities. It is important to note that these categories do not correspond to poverty levels, but simply refer to the relative magnitude of weaving income.

The age range of women surveyed was 23-74 years old. The average age of non-weavers was 52 years old compared to 41 years old for weavers. Nineteen households were comprised of married couples, two households reported consensual unions, two households contained a widow living with her children, one household contained a separated woman living with her children, and one was a single woman with children who had never married (Table 4-1). The household size ranged from 2 – 8 people, with the average being 4.8. This is not comparable to family size, as many children have migrated or started their own households. Because of the small sample size, frequency analysis was conducted from quantifiable responses; qualitative analysis will also be used to interpret the responses.

### **Income**

In Candelaria, the commodification of textiles has created a source of income for women and provided an income flow for many households. Here I will first analyze overall household income sources by sex to gain a better understanding of the scope and importance of weaving income. Then I will calculate and compare weaving returns per hour to standard wages.

Candelaria's economy has historically been based on agricultural production. Often farm products were traded for other necessary staples. As households became more integrated into the capitalist market, other forms of income generation became necessary. Today, there are few families, only six out of the 25 surveyed, who can produce surplus agricultural products for sale. Survey results show 13 other sources of income (Table 4-2). Weaving is one of the main income sources, with 84% of households reporting weaving income. Other important income sources include remittances and skilled and unskilled male wage labor. Those surveyed reported high

levels of female participation in income generating activities. Only two households reported no income generated by female household members. Other than weaving, women are active in other micro-enterprises and wage labor. These activities include managing small community dry goods stores, selling goods at the local Tarabuco market, animal husbandry, providing room rental and pension services for teachers, and lastly, working in the formal market as the advisor to the mayor.

Data on actual household income was not possible to collect due to the constraints of this study. Thus it is impossible to determine the relative share of income contributed by males versus females. However, I was able to determine estimated income per hour for weavers who make and sell *ak'sus*, which are the main commercialized product. *Ak'sus* are traditionally an overskirt worn by women, but have been converted into wall hangings as a result of commodification.

*Ak'sus* are made in two standard sizes: a smaller hanging measuring close to 20 cm by 30 cm is called a *saka* (quechua for a sample), and a larger hanging measuring approximately 40 cm by 80 cm is simply called an *ak'su*. Besides the varying sizes, the technique, yarn, and warp patterns are equal. *Pallay* designs vary by individual weaver's preferences and skill. The value of both *sakas* and *ak'sus* are calculated using the same price system that was described above. ASUR and Inca Pallay use the same system of determining weaving value while Unay Pallay pays slightly higher prices but sells on commission.

The labor time required varies by the weaver and depending on weaving speed, the thickness of the weft yarn, the degree to which the weaving is compressed, and the complexity of the designs. Results show that income per hour ranges from 3.51 to 3.78

bolivianos, the standard unit of currency (Table 4-4). The income per day for weaving was estimated to be 28.08 to 30.24 bolivianos based on an 8 hour work day. However, it is not customary for weavers to weave eight hours per day. Weaving is done in between other household chores such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children, or attending a family store. Weavers' responses to number of hours spent weaving each day varied. For days that they weave, their answers ranged from 1-7 hours, with 1-3 hours being the most frequent response.

The wage rate for unskilled male workers in agriculture or manual construction labor in this region is 30 bolivianos per day for approximately eight-hours. The local wage rate for skilled workers such as masons is 60 to 80 bolivianos for eight-hour days. These rates are higher in urban areas. The minimum wage in the formal sector in Bolivia is 647 bolivianos per month, calculated to be approximately 32.35 bolivianos per day using a 20 workday month.

Based on this calculation, the income earned through weaving by women is nearly comparable to the wage rate of men, as well as to the minimum wage in Bolivia. However, this calculation only includes the time spent at the loom and does not consider the labor hours needed to prepare the yarn (spin, ply, and dye), make and warp the loom, and add a border to the finished product. These tasks are often overlooked by outsiders and the women themselves often do not consider these activities as "work."

I was unable to measure actual time spent on these activities. For this study, I have acquired estimated labor hours for these tasks from a local weaver and information contained in ASUR's printed materials. Before the women can start

weaving, they must select pre-dyed commercial yarn or shear, ply, and dye yarn from sheep's wool. ASUR and Inca Pallay provide commercially spun yarn that has previously been dyed by a local weaver to the women who are participating in their organization. Weavers who are weaving textiles to sell individually must purchase yarns in Tarabuco or Sucre. In both cases, these yarns arrive in *madejas* (hanks) and are transformed into a ball called a *moruk'u*. Next, yarn is overspun to create very fine yarn. This yarn is then again made into a ball. Finally, the women warp the loom. After the weaving process is finished, weavers add a border called *awakipa* to the top and bottom of the unfinished edges of the weaving.

The weaver estimated that it takes two hours to select and prepare commercial yarns and much more to shear, ply, and dye sheep's wool. Additionally, women estimate that they can spin one to two *madejas* (hanks) of yarn (approximately 200 grams) in 10 hours depending on the spinning speed of the woman. Eight *madejas* on average are used in a large *ak'su*. My informant explained that it takes up to two days to make the yarn into balls in order to start the loom. ASUR estimated that it takes 5-6 hours to warp the loom for an *ak'su*, 10 hours for a poncho, and 3 hours for a *chuspa* (Davalos *et al.*, 1992). Additionally, the weaver reported that it takes 3-4 hours to warp a loom for an *ak'su*. This could vary depending on the size of the *ak'su* and the weaver's speed and confidence in warping a loom. Finally, three additional hours were estimated to add the *awakipa*.

Thus to make an *ak'su*, the additional labor hours required apart from actually weaving an item reach 62 hours at a minimum. If unprocessed wool is used, labor hours are drastically increased. A recalculated income per day for the large *ak'su* with

the additional 62 hours of labor equals 20.72 Bolivianos. This estimate shows that textile production in this community does not meet the minimum wage standards and is not comparable to wages earned by men in the local labor market. It suggests an income gap of 69% (20.72 bs vs. 30 bs) between women and men. In 2007, the wage gap in urban areas in Bolivia was 63.3%, and the estimated gender income gap in Latin America as a whole is 79% (ECLAC, 2010).

### **Human & Social Capital**

ASUR's weaving project and the other weaving organizations have facilitated investments in human capital. One of ASUR's primary goals was to revitalize textiles. In order to achieve this, they carried out weaving training courses using already skilled weavers in the area. They provided all interested women the opportunity to learn or improve their weaving skills. The second goal was to bring economic benefits to the community and thus improved weaving ability. This was expected to bring about the creation of an autonomous income generation activity for women.

The project also invested in education. Bolivia has one of the lowest female literacy rates in South America. The national illiteracy rate for adult women in Bolivia according to the 2001 census was 19.35% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2010). However, there is a large discrepancy between rural and urban and departmental illiteracy rates in Bolivia. The rural illiteracy rate in 2001 was 37.91%, while the illiteracy rate for rural women in the department of Chuquisaca is reported at 52.77% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2010). The regional rate is similar to my survey results, which found that only 50% of the women surveyed speak Spanish, and 53% are illiterate. Literacy rates in Candelaria are negatively correlated with a woman's age and positively with their educational level, but do not correlate with their weaving ability (Figure 4-1).

The average number of years of school attended by those surveyed who are 23-30 years old is 9 years; it is three years for those age 31-50, and only .33 years for those women ages 51-75. Various programs to promote Spanish and increase literacy rates operate in Candelaria. The state offers nighttime classes towards a high school degree to adults who did not graduate. The weaving association in Candelaria also supports nighttime literacy classes for women who do not speak Spanish or who cannot read and write.

Organizational participation is another potentially important tool for increasing women's bargaining power. At least three organizations, ASUR, Inca Pallay, and the local cooperative, were created to promote weaving sales and have mainly female participants. All three call regular meetings, elect a board of directors, and make decisions to advance the organization. These organizations provide women with some of the only opportunities to hold leadership positions in Candelaria. Women reported that as a result of their participation in these groups they have gained more confidence and the ability to speak out in meetings, take minutes, manage money, and operate a calculator.

The weaving projects have given the women the opportunity to travel locally, nationally, and internationally to promote their textiles and culture. This project has also catalyzed the entry of other NGOs and aid agencies such as Peace Corps that have given training and financial support, organizational opportunities, and funding to the women weavers. The weaving development project created by ASUR and the subsequent workshops have created important human and social capital gains for women in Candelaria.

### **Physical Assets: Land and Housing**

The Agrarian Reform legislation in 1954 gave all Bolivian citizens over the age of 18 (both sexes) who intend to work the land eligibility to receive a land grant (Art. 77). The right of preference for one individual to receive land in a given area was based on permanent residence in the area and upon his already being a farmer (Art. 81) (Flores, 1954). Thus women who were not seen as farmers were typically excluded from agrarian reform land titles. In the past few decades, equal inheritance practices have been practiced uniformly. This has resulted in an increase in land ownership for women. It is unclear when this change occurred, but new land reform legislation was passed in the 1990's that stressed gender equality. It is possible that the new law created greater gender awareness, which resulted in the practice of equal land inheritance for all children regardless of sex.

Today nearly all land, both agricultural and residential plots, is inherited. In only one case did a family purchase a small lot from the Rojas family and construct a house there. In this region it is customary for young couples to reside on the property of the male's family. Of the households surveyed, all male heads of household were from Candelaria, compared to only 40% of the women. Most of the remaining 60% of women were born in surrounding communities. Thus the majority (72%) of the houses were built on land inherited by the male and subsequently titled in the male's name (Table 4-5). Only three households were located on land owned by the female head of household. In these instances, two women were widowed and had inherited the house from their husband, and one woman was single and lived on land she inherited from her family. One woman reported joint ownership of the house; however, the home was constructed on land inherited by her husband. Lastly, three households reported that

the land belonged to another family member living outside of the household. This included land owned by the mother of the husband, father of the husband, and brother of one woman.

In 2008, a project to improve the houses in Candelaria was implemented in partnership with various NGOs, US AID, and the municipal government. The project provided a portion of the materials needed to significantly improve and expand houses in Candelaria. These improvements included new kitchens, latrine bathrooms, cement floors and patios, and finished ceilings. Each household was required to purchase additional supplies beyond those that were provided by the project. Eighty percent of the households surveyed participated in this project. All of the households in the no weaving income category participated in the project. Only 67% of the low income weaving households participated, compared to 80% of high weaving income households. This project required households to utilize cash for purchasing materials. Two women stated that their weaving income was used in this project, which resulted in an increased feeling of dwelling ownership on their part.

The cultivable land around Candelaria includes two large *pampas* or fertile plateaus located above Candelaria, and less productive small terraced plots near the residential area. Climatic conditions, as in most parts of the Andes, are volatile, with sporadic floods and droughts brought on by El Niño. Wealth is determined by the amount of land that a family owns, with land on the pampa being more valuable. However, agricultural production and income has diminished over time. One reason is small plot size, since parental lands are divided among all siblings of both sexes. Other

reasons include land degradation, changing weather patterns, and insects. Farmers must now purchase expensive fertilizers to maintain crop productivity.

Ownership of agricultural lands by women is very high in Candelaria because of inheritance laws and practices. Seventy-six percent of all women surveyed reported that they owned some type of cultivable lands (Table 4-6). These lands are often located in the community of their parents. In some cases, a woman and her husband travel some distance to cultivate these lands. In other cases because of the size and location, the women verbally gave their land rights to other family members still living close by. As expected, only two males within the households surveyed did not own cultivable lands.

This analysis thus shows that women have a very low ownership rate of residential property in Candelaria but a high rate of cultivable land ownership within or outside of Candelaria. The low ownership rate by women of residential property is due to the fact that the majority of households were built on land inherited by the male head of household as determined by social norms. The high rate of female ownership of cultivable land is due to inheritance practices where women are entitled to equal inheritance of land. Neither the weaving development project nor weaving income has had an influence on land or dwelling acquisition in Candelaria. However, weaving income in some instances has contributed to housing improvements and an increased sense of ownership by women.

### **Other Household Assets**

Animals represent an important household asset in Candelaria. Nearly all households own animals, which can serve as investment, sources of food, or as means of production. Sheep, goats, pigs, and chickens are kept near the house and are

tended primarily by women. Cows, horses, donkeys, oxen, and mules are mostly kept in the lower pasture lands where water is more abundant for most of the year. They are brought to Candelaria during periods when they are needed for agricultural purposes or to be taken to market. These animals are mostly cared for by men. The highest incidence of household ownership was of sheep and goats, followed by chicken, pigs, and cows (Table 4-7). Low weaving income households on average owned more sheep and goats, donkeys, oxen, pigs, and chickens than both high and no weaving income households. This may be one of the reasons why females in these households don't dedicate more time to weaving, or women who do not have weaving income must invest in animal husbandry.

Other assets owned by households include items such as an automobile, refrigerator, cellular phone, television, DVD player, gas oven, and motorcycle. The highest incidence of ownership was of gas stoves, with 73% of households reporting ownership. A television (52%), DVD player (44%), and cellular phone (44%) followed respectively (Table 4-8). No weaving households reported the highest rates of ownership of a car, refrigerator, television, sewing machine, and gas stove. The four households in this category each have a steady income source which includes transportation service (male), textile intermediary (male), paid government position (female), room rental (female), and porter at the boarding school (male). There was no observable difference between high and low weaving income households in terms of ownership of these assets.

Qualitative data is also important to better understand household asset accumulation. There are two families in Candelaria who set themselves apart as the

wealthiest in town. These families own the largest houses, with rooms that have finished ceilings and cement floors, a kitchen with an oven, and showers. They also own the most assets according to the survey. These households, however, have earned these assets in different ways. The first family's wealth is based on parental ownership of large amounts of highly productive land on the pampa. This household farms its land jointly with other family members and has purchased a tractor and a grain truck to improve productivity. It also operates a small transportation service with the truck, offering public transportation to Tarabuco on Sundays. The family also rents the tractor and truck to other community members for harvesting. The husband and wife both take an active role in managing these ventures. Recently the wife was chosen to serve as one of the *consejeras* (advisors) for the municipal governor. She was paid a formal wage for one year. The wife learned to weave through the ASUR project but currently does not weave, as their other ventures provide more income.

The second family has earned the majority of its income through textiles. The wife is one of the most highly skilled weavers in the region. She was chosen as one of the original *técnicas* (trainers) for the ASUR project but has since left the association after she felt she was not receiving fair prices for her products. She was elected the first president of the local weaving cooperative. The family makes most of its household income by acting as a market intermediary, purchasing local textiles and selling them locally, in Tarabuco, or in La Paz to tourists. This family has successfully built connections with tour guides and foreigners that allow it to be a successful intermediary. The husband assists the wife in textile sales, farms the small family plots for self-provisions, and participates in unskilled wage labor when available.

This investigation showed that households with no weaving income have higher ownership rates of additional, more expensive household assets. All of these households participated in the housing improvement project. However, they owned on average the lowest number of animals. High weaving income households compared to low weaving households owned on average fewer animals, were comparatively similar in terms of the additional assets, but had invested at higher rates in the housing improvement plan. Case studies from two of the wealthier families in Candelaria, one with no weaving income and one with high weaving income, show that other income sources besides the production of textiles have resulted in increased asset accumulation. Thus, this suggests that relying predominantly on women's weaving income is not a great asset accumulation strategy.

### **Decision-making**

My results show that there is a larger percentage of women who control overall household income in high weaving households (Table 4-9). Seventy-three percent of women reported controlling income in this category compared to only 33% and 0% in low and no weaving income households. Additionally, no women in the high weaving income category reported that their husbands controlled household income. In the low and no weaving income categories, women most often reported joint control over income. The questionnaire also asked the women who controlled decisions with respect to agriculture, weaving, health of the family, children's education, and household purchases. The results show that in 48% of households men made the agricultural decisions (Table 4-10). Twenty percent of the households reported joint decision-making, 16% reported no agricultural lands, and in 8% of the households the women made the decisions but no men were present in these households. Women

reported making all the decisions pertaining to weaving. There was no difference between households with varying levels of weaving income. With respect to the health of the family and education of the children, joint decision-making was most common among all households. Roughly a quarter of the households reported that women make these decisions, with no households reporting that the male head of household was responsible for these decisions. There was again no apparent difference between households with varying levels of weaving income (Tables 4-11 and 4-12). Thirty-three percent of the households reported that women make the purchasing decisions, 52% reported joint decision-making, and only 12% reported that the male made the purchasing decisions (Table 4-13). These results also do not show a difference between varying levels of household weaving income.

Thus the results show that women who have weaving income are more likely to control household income partly because this income is the main or only source of steady household income. Overall, more women than men make decisions regarding the health of the family and education of the children.

### **Summary**

This Chapter examined the benefits generated for women and households by the ASUR weaving project and examined the extent to which the autonomous income earned by women through this project is changing gender roles and power relations within households in Candelaria. I hypothesized that this weaving project, by increasing women's autonomous income, has increased women's ownership of assets, their role in decision-making, and thus the bargaining power of women within these households. The results show that this project has not only provided an important source of income to the majority of households in Candelaria, but has also provided a source of

autonomous income generation for women and increased their educational and organizational opportunities. However, the study provided little evidence that the weaving income led to increased asset ownership by women. The main evidence related to women's empowerment was linked to the weaver's increased control over household income. Low weaving returns are certainly limiting household asset accumulation. Textile sales have led to women's control of household income, but other household decisions have not been affected by women's increased income generating ability. Finally, weaving income is providing households with money to purchase additional, more expensive household assets and to improve their houses. However, other ways of generating income besides weaving are associated with greater household asset accumulation. Households with low weaving income are investing in animal husbandry as a source of consumption and income. Other households that rely on weaving income or other income generating sources do not seem to place as much importance on ownership of animals.

Table 4-1. Household demographics

Married couple	19	76%
Consensual union	2	8%
Widow with single adult daughter	2	8%
Separated women	1	4%
Single; never married	1	4%
*Total	25	100%

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Table 4-2. Incidence of reported household income sources by weaving income levels

Income sources	Total incidence of households that report income		Incidence for high HH weaving income		Incidence for low HH weaving income		Incidence for no HH weaving income	
		%		%		%		%
Weaving	21	84%	15	100%	6	100%	0	0%
Weaving intermediary	2	8%	1	7%	0	0%	1	25%
Tinter	1	4%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%
Small dry goods store (female)	3	12%	2	13%	0	0%	1	25%
Market woman in Tarabuco	2	8%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%
Entel income	1	4%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%
Agricultural sales	6	24%	4	27%	0	0%	2	50%
Remittances	6	24%	3	20%	3	50%	0	0%
Unskilled wage labor - husband	6	24%	2	13%	3	50%	1	25%
Skilled wage labor - husband	5	20%	4	27%	1	17%	0	0%
Skilled wage labor - son	1	4%	0	0%	1	17%	0	0%
Truck operator	2	8%	0	0%	1	17%	1	25%
Animal husbandry	1	4%	0	0%	1	17%	0	0%
Political position	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%
Rent/Restaurant	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%
*Total households	25		15		6		4	

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Table 4-3. Textile pricing chart by quality

Quality	Price paid(cm <sup>2</sup> )
Extra-Extra (EE)	0.12
Extra (E)	0.11
Extra A (EA)	0.10
Extra B (EB)	0.09

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Table 4-4. Income per hour calculations

Weaver	Product	Size (cm)	Area cm <sup>2</sup>	Quality	Price	Income (BS)	Time: 1st pass in sec	Time: 2nd pass in sec	Time: 3rd pass in sec	Ave. time per pass in sec	# of passes per cm	# of passes per piece	Time per piece (min)	Income per hour* (Bs)	Income per 8 hours (Bs)
No. 1	Saka	26x40	1040	E	.11	114.40	320	417	240	326	9	360	1956	3.51	28.08
No.2	Ak'su	42x90	3780	EE	.12	453.60	469	435	535	480	10	900	7200	3.78	30.42
No.3	Ak'su	50x100	5000	E	.11	550.00	780	740	804	775	7	700	9042	3.65	29.20

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Table 4-5. Dwelling ownership by sex and weaving income levels

HH dwelling ownership:	Total	%	High HH weaving income	%	Low HH weaving income	%	No HH weaving income	%
Male (husband)	18	72%	11	73%	5	83%	2	50%
Female (wife)	3	12%	2	13%	1	17%	0	0%
Joint	1	4%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%
Other family member	3	12%	1	7%	0	0%	2	50%
*Total	25	100%	15	100%	6	100%	4	100%

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Table 4-6. Cultivable land ownership in Candelaria by sex and weaving income levels

Cultivable land ownership:	Total	%	High HH weaving income	%	Low HH weaving income	%	No HH weaving income	%
Male	17	85%	10	83%	4	80%	3	75%
	20		11		5		4	
Female	19	76%	11	73%	6	100%	3	75%
	25		15		6		4	

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Table 4-7. Incidence of household ownership of animals by income levels

Animals:	Total animals	Ave	High HH weaving income	Ave	Low HH weaving income	Ave	No HH weaving income	Ave
Sheep & goats	347	13.88	220	14.67	110	18.33	17	4.25
Cow	32	1.28	15	1.00	10	1.67	7	1.75
Horse	1	0.04	0	0	0	0	1	0.25
Donkey	11	0.44	4	0.27	6	1.00	1	0.25
Ox	6	0.24	4	0.27	2	0.33	0	0
Mule	9	0.36	8	0.53	0	0	1	0.25
Pig	34	1.36	19	1.27	12	2.00	3	0.75
Chicken	150	6.00	95	6.33	54	9.00	1	0.25
*Total	25		15		6		4	

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Table 4-8. Incidence of household ownership of assets by household weaving income levels

	Total households	%	High HH weaving income	%	Low HH weaving income	%	No HH weaving income	%
Car	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%
2nd house	7	28%	6	40%	0	0%	1	25%
Refrigerator	5	20%	2	13%	1	17%	2	50%
Television	13	52%	7	47%	3	50%	3	75%
Cell phone	11	44%	6	40%	3	50%	2	50%
Sewing Machine	5	20%	2	13%	1	17%	2	50%
DVD	11	44%	5	33%	4	67%	2	50%
Gas stove	19	76%	12	80%	3	50%	4	100%
Motorcycle	1	4%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%
*Total	25		15		6		4	

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Table 4-9. Total household income control by sex and weaving income levels

	Total	%	High HH weaving income	%	Low HH weaving income	%	No HH weaving income	%
Women control income	13	52%	11	73%	2	33%	0	0%
Both control income	10	40%	4	27%	3	50%	3	75%
Men control income	2	8%	0	0%	1	17%	1	25%
Total	25	100%	15	100%	6	100%	4	100%

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Note: Female participants were asked who controls household income.

Table 4-10. Agricultural decisions by sex and weaving income levels

	Total	%	High HH weaving income	%	Low HH weaving income	%	No HH weaving income	%
Women control ag Decisions	2	8%	1	7%	0	0%	1	25%
Both control ag decisions	5	20%	3	20%	1	17%	1	25%
Men control ag decisions	12	48%	8	53%	3	50%	1	25%
No ag land	4	16%	3	20%	0	0%	1	25%
No response	2	8%	0	0%	2	33%	0	0%
*Total	25	100%	15	100%	6	100%	4	100%

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Note: Female participants were asked who controls agricultural decisions in the household.

Table 4-11. Health decisions by sex and weaving income levels

	Total	%	High HH weaving income	%	Low HH weaving income	%	No HH weaving income	%
Women control	6	24%	3	20%	2	33%	1	25%
Joint control	15	60%	9	60%	3	50%	3	75%
Men control	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
No response	4	16%	3	20%	1	17%	0	0%
*Total	25	100%	15	100%	6	100%	4	100%

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Note: Female participants were asked who controls health decisions in the household.

Table 4-12. Education decisions by sex and weaving income levels

	Total	%	High HH weaving income	%	Low HH weaving income	%	No HH weaving income	%
Women control	7	28%	4	27%	2	33%	1	25%
Joint control	11	44%	5	33%	3	50%	3	75%
Men control	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
No response	7	28%	6	40%	1	17%	0	0%
*Total	25	100%	15	100%	6	100%	4	100%

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Note: Female participants were asked who controls educational decisions in the household.

Table 4-13. Purchasing decisions by sex and weaving income levels

	Total	%	High HH weaving income	%	Low HH weaving income	%	No HH weaving income	%
Women control	8	32%	5	33%	2	33%	1	25%
Joint control	13	52%	8	53%	3	50%	2	50%
Men control	3	12%	1	7%	1	17%	1	25%
No response	1	4%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%
*Total	25	100%	15	100%	6	100%	4	100%

Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

Note: Female participants were asked who controls purchasing decisions in the household

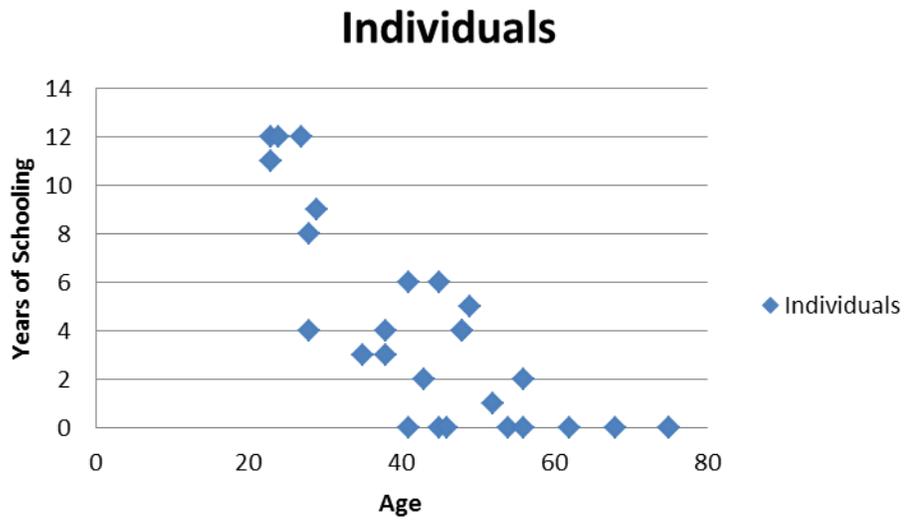


Figure 4-1. Relationship between age of women sampled and years of schooling  
 Source: Author's Survey, June 2010

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

In rural Bolivia where poverty and gender inequality are prevalent, indigenous craft projects are being used as poverty alleviation tools. The purpose of this study was to examine a weaving project developed by an NGO in Candelaria, Bolivia and determine if these benefits are improving household bargaining power for women.

In Chapter 2, I showed how the commodification of crafts and the income generation projects often associated with them have produced mixed results in Latin America. On the positive, side commodification of crafts has increased a sense of pride and identity for local communities, decreased racism, revitalized crafts such as textiles, provided economic benefits, and has led to gender empowerment. On the negative side it has led to a loss of culture, community conflicts, and the alteration of traditional crafts, and has caused economic stratification.

As gender empowerment is a main focus of craft projects, my analysis focused on this themes. Empowerment is the process by which people acquire control over their own lives and define their own goals. Although there is no uniform way of measuring empowerment, household level indicators often include decision-making, access to or control over resources, economic contribution to the household, management/knowledge, and freedom from violence. At the macro-level, most of the indicators measure conditions for empowerment in terms of labor force participation, labor laws, literacy, education, characteristics of marriage and kinship, and political representation of women.

Studies measuring gender empowerment through the commercialization of textiles in Latin America show how craft projects provided income to women to supplement

household income, and create greater opportunities for them such as education, public leadership roles, and travel. Some studies show that empowered women have left abusive relationships and have greater control over decision-making and money management. There are also negative consequences to some of these projects, such as men taking more control of the production process as income increases and conflicts between male and female heads of household which in some cases have led to domestic violence.

Few studies using quantitative methods to analyze income generation, asset accumulation, and household power relations within weaving communities have been conducted. Of the studies that do use these methods, one case describes equal remuneration from weaving for both men and women and states that women are gaining more control over household income, though only in households where the male is not involved in marketing the textiles (Stephen, 1991). Another study explains that remuneration from weaving is well below the local minimum wage and suggests that weaving is creating time poverty (Eber and Rosenbaum, 1993). A third study illustrates how weaving sales is increasing household assets of weaving families compared to non-weaving families, but no gender analysis was conducted (Colleredo-Mansfeld, 2002).

Chapter 3 demonstrated the importance of textiles in Candelaria and the Tarabuco region as important cultural forms of expression, ways to express ethnic and gender identities, and ways to excite pride. The weaving project that was implemented by ASUR in the late 1980's revitalized traditional textiles but also transformed them to meet tourists' demands. Previous evaluations found that the project has brought additional

income to households with few other viable options but has failed to transfer power from paid employees in the city to local weavers. This top-down approach has created discontent among the weavers who feel that the wages they receive for their products are unfairly low. Many of them continue to participate in the project due to a lack of alternative options. The study concluded by suggesting that the income earned by the women in Candelaria may be allowing women greater economic independence from their husbands, increasing women's ability to make household decisions, and decreasing subordination in a patriarchal family. This was the focus of the primary research that I conducted in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 4, I found that ASUR's project led to the development of additional markets, provided autonomous income for women, increased education and organizational opportunities for women, and empowered women through their increased control of household income. My analysis shows, however, that the weaving project has not increased women's ownership of assets or led to broader changes in household decision-making. Low returns from weaving are limiting women's ability to engage in asset accumulation.

The returns to labor from weaving are low compared to other jobs in Candelaria and is concerning. Given the high labor hours required and low returns received for weaving, it would be useful to examine the hours worked by women in non-weaving occupations to investigate the amount of time required for other female income generating activities. Long work days could lead to time poverty, suggesting that higher incomes may not be associated with women's empowerment or enhanced bargaining power.

There are three possible ways to raise returns for women weavers. One way would be to pay the weavers higher prices for their weaving, in order to raise income to 30 bolivianos per day. ASUR would either have to pass this increase directly onto the consumer or lower some of their costs. Another alternative would be to change weaving technology to reduce labor hours. To a certain degree, this has been done with the introduction of commercialized yarns; however, the use of spinning wheels could also decrease labor hours. Other advancements may be possible, but at the risk of completely changing the traditional nature of the products as well as their appeal. This has been done in other areas to advance textile sales. Colloredo-Mansfeld (1999) states that in Otavalo, Ecuador, “new commodities, cash, ‘rationalized’ relations of production, and consumption practices speed up and alter production techniques and designs” (167). He describes a process where Otavaleños have altered products and techniques to adjust to changing economic situations. Rarely do they use the hand spun yarns or natural dyes that are reported to have the lowest profit margins. He explains how traditional belts have been redefined so that they can be woven on a treadle loom to speed up production and meet mass-production demands.

Lastly, other products that require less labor because of higher yarn thickness, less detailed designs, or simpler textile structures could become viable options in order to generate higher earnings for women and their households. Higher earnings could contribute to greater household bargaining power for women through greater control of income and asset accumulation.

Further, increasing the return to weaving could present one of the only ways to maintain the weaving tradition. Today, textiles are mostly being made for

commercialization instead of functionality, as children are choosing to wear machine-made “modern” clothing instead of traditional hand-woven garments. Besides for commercialization there is little incentive for young girls to learn how to weave. Currently low returns for weavings are also deterring young girls from weaving as they seek other employment opportunities that have higher returns. In this case, the commercialization process may be modifying traditional textiles as described above but may also be the only way to maintain the weaving tradition. If the textiles can be modified so that the return from weaving provides fair wages and connections to other income generating sectors such as tourism, young girls may be interested in carrying forth this ancient tradition.

### **Significance of Findings**

The findings in this study contribute to the scholarship on both the commodification of cultural crafts and household bargaining power in Latin America. The goal of this study has been to connect the discourse on the commodification of textiles with household bargaining power. Using a case study approach, the study provided a description of the commodification process and provided micro-level analysis of women’s benefits gained through textile sales in a rural community in Bolivia.

The study also provided further ethnographic insights into the commodification process of textiles in Bolivia. It reconfirmed that textile development projects alter textiles, but also reaffirm identities and provide some benefits for women. As Fernández (2006) suggested, this study confirmed that income generated by women through textile sales has provided for greater women’s economic independence from their husbands, but on the contrary has contributed little to women’s increased ability to make household decisions. One could assume, however, that the project has

somewhat decreased women's subordination in patriarchal households. This study also shows how income generation is connected to asset ownership, decision-making, and thus the bargaining power of women within households in the Andes.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

I hope that this study generates further discussion and research on textiles in the Bolivian highlands from an anthropological, historical, and economic perspective, taking into consideration its potential for both women's empowerment and poverty alleviation.

On the micro-level, I would recommend further ethnographic studies in this area to investigate the weaving project's impact on women's self-perception and the perception of women in the community. I was unable to fully capture how benefits gained through this project such as greater education, management skills, self-confidence, and others are affecting women's agency in the community. The self-perception of women and the perception of women's ability in the community have changed. This can be seen by comparing the initial reaction of the male leaders in Q'illu Q'asa when the concept of creating an income generation project for women was introduced, to today's lack of resistance and even acceptance by men of women's participation in income-generating organizations. The power within that was created from this process will benefit women for years to come. A study that better captures these benefits would provide a stronger argument for how increases in household bargaining power and women's empowerment are associated with their ability to generate income and carry out their own independent activities.

This study also addresses women's time in relationship to their earnings and other household chores. Since most women in the Andes are still responsible for maintaining households, weavers are struggling to balance the demands of craft

production with their household responsibilities. I would argue that rural women's time and the concept of time poverty is limiting further advancements for women. I recommend that further studies be conducted to understand how this issue is connected to household bargaining power and women's empowerment. In addition, it would also be useful to have further studies that analyze the changing textile designs from an art history perspective.

In a larger context, I would encourage that further studies on weaving projects be carried out that utilize quantitative data on income, asset ownership, and decision-making as indicators of household bargaining power, to better measure weaving projects' effectiveness in reducing poverty and empowering women.

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