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# Negotiating Autonomy: Children's Use of Time and Space in Rural Bolivia

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## INTRODUCTION: NEGOTIATING AUTONOMY

This chapter, based on my empirical study of children's lives in rural Bolivia, exemplifies ways in which children as active agents can negotiate relative autonomy within the structural constraints of childhood in relation to more powerful, adult, social actors (see Harden and Scott 1998). The structures of adult society limit children's opportunities for asserting their autonomy. Children live in a world in which the parameters tend to be set by adults, especially in relation to children's use of time and space (Ennew 1994). Therefore it is important to see how they negotiate their position within the constraints of that bounded world. It is necessary to explore children's competencies and strengths, as well as their constraints and limits, and their strategies for negotiating with adult society.

Adult-child relations are based on unequal power relations between the generations but should not be seen in terms of independence versus dependence. Elements of exchange in reciprocal relations between adults and children should be considered (Morrow 1994). Adults' and children's lives are interrelated at many different levels; adults are often not fully independent beings (Hockey and James 1993). It is too simplistic to use the notion of dependency, whether of children on adults, or adults on children, to explain the often complex nature of the adult-child relationship. This chapter argues that adult-child relations should be explained in terms of interdependencies which are negotiated and renegotiated over time and space, and need to be understood in relation to the particular social and cultural context.

Finch and Mason (1993) explored the processes of negotiation of family relationships in adult life in the UK. Although their research is not about young children, it shows how people *work out* responsibilities and commitments in the absence of clear rules about precisely who should do what for whom: 'Family responsibilities thus become a matter for negotiation between individuals and not just a matter of following normative rules' (Finch and Mason 1993: 12). In the Majority World[1], where many children work, some parents are economically dependent on their children's contribution (Boyden et al. 1998; Schildkrout 1981). For example, Boyden (1990) noted that in some countries children can be the main or sole income-earners in the household. It could be argued that in much of the Majority World, children's economic contribution to the household means that family relations of interdependence tend to be stronger. The relationships of interdependence between children and adults, and between siblings, and how they manage the distribution of work for the household is largely ignored in the literature on the household division of labour. However, the notion of interdependence does not simply account for the exact ways in which responsibilities are met by individual household members. Thus, this chapter argues that even though the cultural expectation in rural Bolivia is that children should have a strong sense of responsibility and obligation to their family, the ways these are fulfilled in practice are negotiable.

Mayall (see chapter 5) relates negotiation to structure and agency debates (Giddens 1990) where people struggle to gain a better deal in their relationships within different structures. She identifies the concept of a 'continuously re-negotiated contract as a feature of children's relationships with their parents', suggesting that 'children seek to acquire greater autonomy through re-siting the boundaries, challenging parental edicts,

seizing control' (Mayall chapter 5). I would add that children's negotiation of a relative autonomy also occurs in their relationships with other children, especially siblings, and not just with their parents. Such negotiation varies according to the extent of interdependence between children and adults, between siblings, and between children.

Adults' power over children is not absolute and is subject to resistance (Hockey and James 1993; Lukes 1986; Reynolds 1991; Waksler 1991a; Waksler 1996). Children renegotiate adult-imposed boundaries and assert their autonomy, which can include decision-making, gaining control over one's use of time and space, taking the initiative to do something and taking action to shape one's own life. Thus autonomy is partial and relative, as no one lives in a social vacuum, and the ways in which one uses time and space, or makes choices, take place within social contexts involving other people, both children and adults. Autonomy is related to issues of power and control which is why it has to be negotiated within social relationships, especially by children who are faced with unequal adult-child power relations.

Relatively few studies have focused on children's strategies of resisting adult power and control (Goddard and White 1982). Waksler's research in the UK (1991b; 1996) indicated that children may lie, fake illness, have temper tantrums or act extra cute in order to cope with and control certain aspects of their lives. Reynolds' study of South African children (1991) referred to children's strategies of negotiating relationships in order to secure help for their future, and she also highlighted children's rebellion in defying adults' wishes, with reference to gambling, smoking and refusing to do certain tasks. However, it must also be recognised that children's reactions to adult power

range ‘from unquestioning acceptance to instances of resentful resistance’ (Mayall chapter 5). Within the two extremes of compliance and rejection, children’s strategies emerge as they manage their responses to adult control. Children may not be fully independent, but they negotiate a relative autonomy within the constraints which limit their choices.

This chapter begins by outlining the social and cultural context in which the study children live their childhoods in rural Bolivia. The division of labour and the nature of daily work in rural households are illustrated whilst highlighting the opportunities and constraints which shape children’s everyday use of time and space within their community. The chapter then examines the ways in which children in rural Bolivia manage their unpaid work for their household by using a range of coping and avoidance strategies. Children’s ability to negotiate and bargain with adults varies according to the extent to which adults depend on children in particular social, economic and cultural contexts. This chapter concludes by exploring household negotiations between children and parents, and between siblings, in relation to their household obligations and responsibilities.

## CHILDREN IN CHURQUIALES

This chapter draws on my ethnographic study of children’s daily lives in rural Bolivia which explored how children negotiate their autonomy within and between the four main arenas of their everyday lives at home, at work, at school and at play (Punch 1998; Punch 2000). The study took place in the community of Churquiales, in the Camacho

Valley of Tarija, the southernmost region of Bolivia. I visited a sample of eighteen households regularly in order to conduct semi-participant observation and semi-structured and informal interviews with all the household members. At the community school, I carried out classroom observation mainly with the eldest thirty-seven school children aged between 8-14 years. I also used a variety of task-based techniques at the school which included: photographs (which the children themselves took), drawings, diaries and worksheets (see Punch Forthcoming 2001).

Churquiales has a population of 351 spread amongst 58 households, with approximately four children on average per household. The community is 55km from Tarija, the regional capital, a journey of about four hours on the local twice weekly bus. Most of the families own two or three hectares of land, which they mainly use to cultivate potatoes, maize and a selection of fruit and vegetables. They also tend to own a small number of pigs, goats and chickens, as well as a few cows. Most of their agricultural and livestock production is for family consumption, but any excess is sold in local and regional markets. The community has a small main square, where there are three small shops, a church, a medical post, a small concrete football pitch and the village primary school, and around the square there is a cluster of households. The other households are more dispersed throughout the valley, up to about an hour and a half's walk away from the village square.

Most of the children in Churquiales face the same broad constraints of relative poverty and geographical isolation. The opportunities for waged employment are limited, and schooling is available only for the first six years of primary education. The community

is relatively isolated, having limited access to the mass media, as there is no electricity and no television, and communication networks are not extensive. The main form of transport is on foot and there are no cars. There are no push-chairs for young children, so they are tied by a shawl and carried on their mother's back. As soon as they can walk they are encouraged to get used to walking long distances and from as young as three years old they can be expected to walk several miles if necessary. Children cover a lot of ground everyday as they walk between their home and school, go to the hillsides in search of animals or firewood, fetch water from the river and carry out regular errands for their parents to other households or to the shops in the community square.

Children spend most of their daily life outdoors, facilitated by the temperate climate. In contrast, the indoor space of their household is very limited, usually consisting of three mud huts with tiled roofs: a kitchen (cooking with firewood), a bedroom (where all the household members sleep together in three or four different beds, with sometimes two or three children to one bed) and a room to receive guests (and eat when it is raining). This contrasts with many children living in colder urban areas in the Minority World where their use of outdoor space is restricted and controlled, and most of their time is spent inside the household.

The following diary extract indicates a typical routine and daily movement for ten year old Maria in Churquiales:

> I got up at 5.30 in the morning and I went to get water from the river. Then I went to milk the goats. I brushed my hair and had my tea with bread. I changed my clothes and went to school. I read a book and afterwards we did language. We went out at breaktime and I played football with my friends. We came into the classroom

> and did more language. I went home and my mum gave me lunch. I went to get water and helped my mum make the tea. Then I went to bring in my cows and when I got back my mum gave me supper and I went to sleep at 9 at night.[2]
>
> (Maria, 10 years)

This extract describes a common school day: children get up early (usually between 5-6am), put on their old clothes, and do a few tasks, usually while their mother is making them breakfast (although some children make their own). Such tasks include fetching water and/or firewood, letting the animals out of their enclosures, feeding and/or milking them. They have breakfast, change into clean clothes for school, wash their faces, brush their hair and leave about 7.20am, depending on how far they have to walk to arrive for 8am start. When they arrive home from school about 2pm, their mother or elder sibling has lunch waiting for them (soup and a main dish).

In the afternoon, their household jobs vary according to the season and particular needs of the time. Afternoon tasks may include: looking after and feeding animals, helping with agricultural tasks, fetching more water and firewood, looking after younger siblings, washing clothes, or preparing food. If there is spare time children play or do their school homework. At approximately 5pm they have their tea, which is similar to breakfast: a hot drink and a small snack. Then the animals have to be brought in to the paddocks for the night. This may involve travelling quite long distances to round up goats, sheep and cows from the mountainside. Some of them may have wandered off and be difficult to find. Donkeys and horses also have to be brought in and tied up for the night. Pigs tend to be easier to manage as they do not usually roam far. Finally, at about 7-8pm they have supper, which is one dish, such as a soup or a stew, and tends to be the remains of lunch. Children go to bed shortly after supper, usually between 8-

9pm. Since it gets dark quite quickly at about 6.30pm, the rest of the day is spent with candlelight, doing kitchen tasks such as supper preparation, or washing up.

In order to provide for the family's subsistence requirements, the households in Churquiales have high labour requirements in three main areas of work: agriculture, animal-related work and domestic work. In the countryside many jobs have to be done everyday, such as caring for the animals, food preparation, and water and firewood collection. The household division of labour is divided according to sex, age, birth order and household composition (Punch 1999). Children are expected to contribute to the maintenance of their household from an early age. Once children are about five years old parental expectations of their household work roles increase, and children are required to take on work responsibilities at home. As they acquire skills and competence their active participation in the maintenance of the household rapidly increases.

Bolivian children in rural areas carry out many jobs without question or hesitation, often readily accepting a task and taking pride in their contribution to the household. In addition, some household tasks, such as daily water and firewood collection, are such a regular part of their daily routine that they accept responsibility without having to be told to do them. Water collection is a child-specific task, usually carried out by young children as it is a relatively 'easy' job which children as young as three or four years old can start doing. They may begin by only carrying very small quantities of water (in small jugs at first), but by the time they are six or seven years old they can usually manage two 5-litre containers in one trip. Since children are assigned this job from a

very early age and it has to be carried out at least once or twice everyday, children know there is no point of trying to avoid doing something which is very clearly their responsibility. I observed that children frequently accepted responsibility for such tasks and initiated action to fulfil them rather than merely responding to adults' demands. Their sense of satisfaction for self-initiated task-completion often appeared to be greater than when they were asked to do something.

So, children in rural Bolivia are not only expected to work and are given many responsibilities but they are also aware of the importance of their contribution and often fulfil their duties with pride. Parents encourage them to learn new skills by giving them opportunities to acquire competencies and be responsible. Parents do not expect to have to remind children constantly of their tasks and may threaten them with harsh physical punishment if their obligations are not completed. Children are encouraged to be independent: to get on with their jobs, to combine work and school, and to travel large distances within the community unaccompanied. In addition, children are also expected to maintain interdependent family relations by contributing to the survival of the household. Furthermore, parents teach their children to try to be relatively tough, for instance not to cry if they fall over and hurt themselves, not to sit on adults' laps or be carried on mothers' backs once they are over about three years old, and to be able to look after themselves and younger siblings when parents are away from the household.

Despite similar broad constraints and cultural expectations of children in the community of Churquiales, children in different households face distinct limitations, shaped by the household wealth and composition. Children in different households also have varying

opportunities available to them according to parental attitudes towards discipline, work and school, which have been shaped by parents' own education and life experiences. Furthermore, within households, children do not necessarily all experience childhood in the same way, and such differences are a result of their age, sex, birth order and personal attributes. These factors combine to shape individual children's life experiences, and the opportunities and constraints with which they can negotiate. Within the restrictions which exist at a community, household and individual level, children negotiate ways to make the most of opportunities. They make choices within the limited range of possibilities available to them.

Within this social, economic, physical and cultural context, it is now interesting to explore the ways in which these Bolivian children actively negotiate the fulfilment of their work roles within rural households. Despite the threat of punishment if tasks are not completed, or the feelings of pride and responsibility gained when jobs are carried out, children find some of their work very tedious or arduous or would rather engage in their own pursuits than do all their household chores. Thus, I shall show that, although children in Churquiales work as well as go to school, they do not merely carry out all of their work willingly, quickly and in immediate response to parents' requests. Children also have their own agendas and preferences for their use of time and space. They also expect to be able to play and pursue their own pleasures, whilst sharing out tasks with all household members including parents and siblings.

## AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES

When I asked children in Churquiales whether they could refuse to do a particular job if told to by their parents, half the children said they could say no, and the other half said they were obliged to do the job (see Table 1). They explained various strategies they used to avoid doing an adult-imposed task which they did not want to carry out. The most popular strategy was to send a younger brother or sister to do the task for them. Parents agreed that elder siblings were allowed to tell younger siblings what to do, regardless of their sex, and elder siblings could also punish younger siblings if they misbehaved. Sometimes younger children attempted to send an older sibling to do a job that had been assigned to them, but with a much lower likelihood of success.

**Table 1: Children's avoidance and coping strategies**

| Child | Age | Avoid? | How? |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Cira** | 9 | yes | Tell my sister to do it |
| **Benita** | 10 | yes | Tell my sister to go and do it |
| **Inés** | 11 | yes | Tell my siblings to help me, and Ernesto helps me |
| **Rosalía** | 11 | no | I have to do it, or sometimes my sister does it |
| **Luisa** | 12 | yes | I send my brother and sister |
| **Vicenta** | 13 | no | Get my brother and sister to help me |
| **Sabina** | 14 | no | If they tell me to do something, I have to do it |
| **Eduardo** | 11 | yes | I have to do it |
| **Julio** | 12 | no | I escape |
| **Dionicio** | 12 | yes | I want to learn other jobs |
| **Rafael** | 12 | yes | I have to do it because they tell me to, I can't say no |
| **Delfín** | 12 | no | I can't say no, I have to do it |
| **Santos** | 14 | no | I can send my brothers |
| **Yolanda** | 11 | no | No |
| **Alfredo** | 11 | yes | I get my brother to do it, Sebastián |

Half the children who began by saying that they could not refuse to do a task, extended their answer, indicating that sometimes they too used a particular strategy to avoid doing a job. The two main types of avoidance strategies which children use are delegation to a younger sibling and escape: "I can't say no, I have to do it. Or I do it

with José (elder sibling), or I tell Hugo (younger sibling) to do it and he goes"[3] (Delfín, 12 years). Sabina explains her strategy: "If they tell me to do something, I have to do it. When they tell me to do a job I don't want to do, I go off and visit my Uncle Carlos"[4] (Sabina, 14 years).

Escape can take several forms, such as pretending not to hear and wandering off quickly before the request can be repeated, or pretending to go and do the job, but then just going somewhere else to play instead. Alternatively if children are really defiant, they may refuse outright, and go off somewhere without taking any notice, but then will have to face the consequences (usually some form of punishment) on return. Parents recognise that their children do not always do as they are told: "They go off and play, and then they don't do it sometimes."[5] Some parents get stricter, threaten them with punishment, or shout at them to help 'persuade' them to do the job anyway.

## COPING STRATEGIES

When children are unable to use an avoidance strategy, they resort to a coping strategy in order to make a job more acceptable in their own terms, thereby making a tedious or arduous task more tolerable or enjoyable. One such coping strategy is for children to make their feelings known and openly state their dissatisfaction. Most parents say that their children often complain about doing certain jobs: "My children say: 'I'm not going to do it,' and then they do go and do it all the same."[6] Some children seem to enjoy protesting, but often give in and carry out the task. Their slight triumph is the complaining before doing the job, to make sure that the other person is aware of the sacrifice they are making by doing it, or of the effort involved, or of the valuable time it

is taking up. Children also make symbolic protests to ensure that their complaints are registered with the parent, in the hope that they will not be given further tasks to do.

A favourite strategy which children use when they do not want to do a job, but see little possibility of getting out of it, is to persuade a sibling to help them. Having company means the job is less boring and can be completed more quickly. Alternatively they may chat or play while doing the task and it may take longer to complete. It also gives the child added satisfaction that he/she is not the only one having to do something while his/her siblings are doing nothing. Combining a job with play not only makes a job more enjoyable, but can also be a useful strategy to prolong a particular task and therefore delay the next one. For example, ten-year-old Sergio offers to cook pancakes because he enjoys eating them and spends plenty of time playing and making the dough into interesting animal shapes. His mother remarked how he tends to complain before doing a job and that he seems to enjoy moaning about his responsibilities: "He likes to be begged to do things."[7] She sees her children as being quite lazy, but does admit: "When they want to do something, they do it well and quickly."[8]

The likelihood of a child complying with parents' requests also depends on the child's personality. Some children are more obedient and willing to work than others. Others can be more argumentative and rebellious. Parents often differentiated between their children, some as keen workers and others as lazier. For example, Beatriz commented that one of her daughters "complains a lot, she's very lazy and argumentative."[9] Similarly, another mother explained: "It also depends on whether the child is active when working, others are slower."[10]

However, it also depends on whether the children really *want* to do something or not. For example, cleaning out and feeding the pigs is definitely not something that Sergio (10 years) enjoys doing, but another job going on an errand to buy something from the local store in the main square is a task he offers to do, before he is even asked. He knows that there he is likely to meet some friends and can stop to play marbles for a while before returning home. This coincides with Reynolds' (1991) findings that young people often use tasks to escape surveillance and meet friends.

Sometimes children deliberately take a long time to complete a task, or they stay and play for a while before going back to their household, because they know that if they rush back home the chances are they will be given something else to do. This strategy is especially easy to employ when they are sent to check up on animals, since they can pretend they had to spend time looking for an animal that had wandered off, when really they were playing. Parents are often aware of their children's strategies for combining work with play. Sergio's mother indicates that she knows that her son prolongs his return home on purpose: "What takes Sergio a long time is in Churquiales (in the main square). He stays and plays, he doesn't rush to come back."[11] In summary, the three main types of coping strategies which children use are to complain, to enlist the co-operation of siblings and to prolong tasks to delay or avoid another one.

## HOUSEHOLD NEGOTIATIONS

For children to be able to use coping and avoidance strategies successfully, they must be able to negotiate their position in the household. This section highlights some of the ways in which children in Churquiales can negotiate with parents and siblings in order to influence particular outcomes.

> Felicia said to her four children: “Someone has to go and milk the goats. Who’s going to go?” They all quickly responded “Not me!” So she chose one of them: “Marco, you go.”
>
> Marco (14 years) responded: “No, I’m not going to go, because yesterday I helped grandfather sow.” The children argued amongst themselves until finally Dionicio (12 years) reluctantly went off. He complained more than usual that day, because the day before it had rained and the river was good for fishing. The siblings had been assembling their rods to go and fish. Dionicio went quickly up the hillside, milked the goats and ran back to join his brothers and sister.[12]

One very common result of a child being told to do a job that they really would rather not do, is a sibling argument and ensuing sibling or parent-child negotiation. For example, the appointed child suggests another should be told to do it, usually justifying why they themselves should not have to (because they are busy with something else, they are doing their homework, or most commonly “I did it last time” or “I’ve just done such and such so why doesn’t so-and-so do something, why’s it always me?”). This tends to provoke a sibling argument along the lines of “But I did such and such” or “But I did it yesterday, it’s his/her turn” or “But I always do it.” With this kind of back-and-forth argument, one of the parents or an elder sibling, usually has to intervene with suggestions of more jobs in order to divide the tasks between them. Sometimes the siblings themselves negotiate the outcome, often settling for going together so that “No-one gets out of it.” Children tend to have a strong sense of justice, wanting their siblings to fulfil their share of the household’s responsibilities. This can be seen in twelve-year-

old Luisa's question to her mother: "Has Carlos (8 years) been to get water yet? I've already been twice."[13]

The following conversation is an example of child-parent negotiation in a household where the mother and eldest daughter share many of the domestic duties, and frequently have to negotiate who will do what and when:

| | |
|---|---|
| Marianela: | "I'm not going to go." |
| Dolores: | "Now you have to go. Can't you take my place for just one day?" |
| Marianela: | "No, I can't." |
| Dolores: | "But I always do it during the week."[14] |

This conversation took place on a Saturday and refers to whether mother or daughter will take Ambrosio, the household's father, his lunch, which involves a half an hour walk each way. Dolores, the mother, usually does it during the week when Marianela (10 years) is at school, so feels that Marianela could at least do it at weekends. She tries to reason with and persuade her daughter that it is only fair that she do it for once. Yet Marianela is adamant, she has no desire to make the trip. In the end, her mother gave in and agreed to go on the condition that Marianela looked after Marcelo, her two year old brother, and kept an eye on the animals. This example indicates how parents depend on their children to carry out certain tasks but they have to negotiate how they will be divided.

The following example illustrates another strategy children use: to try to negotiate doing a different sort of job. They may say it is too difficult, or merely that they do not want to do that, or may offer to do something else instead:

> Angélica (10 years) was looking after the pigs. Her mother said to her younger brother Simón (7 years):
> "Go and take the donkeys to Uncle Serafín's house, or if not, Angélica should go."
> "Let her go," said Simón.
> "Okay," said his mum, "But then you'll have to go and look after the pigs, because that's what she's doing at the moment."[15]

This strategy does not always work, it depends on the urgency of the job needing to be done and on the parent's willingness to change the job for another one (and either leave the job undone for the time being, do it themselves, or convince another child to do it instead).

Parents also used strategies to encourage their children to carry out household tasks. One particular strategy was to tell their children the tasks they themselves had to do at that moment, appealing to their sense of responsibility and justice so that the children also do their share. For example, when 12 year old Dionicio complained about being sent to a neighbour's house to borrow some cooking oil, his mother became quite annoyed: "It's as if I were the only one responsible for making sure there is food to eat. You're not lazy to eat but you're too lazy to make sure there is some food"[16] (Felicia, parent). She persuaded her children to help by making them realise that she needed their help, she could not do the heavy workload alone.

## CHILDREN'S MECHANISMS FOR ASSERTING THEIR RELATIVE AUTONOMY

As has been shown, children in rural Bolivia develop a variety of strategies to avoid or cope with doing tasks. They learn negotiation strategies from their parents, siblings and other children, as well as devising their own. James and Prout (1995) suggested that children learn about appropriate strategies or forms of agency to employ in different contexts and 'some children become highly skilled and flexible social actors while others are less skilled, less flexible' (1995: 91). The ways in which children respond to adult control over their lives varies in different contexts, in response to different individuals, and depending on the type and location of the task. Thus, children have a repertoire of strategies and they way they deploy them is opportunistic. Such strategies also vary, not according to sex, but according to the particular competencies, personality and birth order of individual children.

The Bolivian children's coping and avoidance strategies must be understood within this specific context: children are expected to work and are active contributors to the household from a very young age. Many of their strategies are facilitated by children's high level of mobility within their community, it is their extensive use of space away from adult surveillance that enables them to employ such coping mechanisms. Children's multiple strategies are not merely used in resistance to adults' power, but are part of a complex process in which they assert their agency, creating time and space for themselves despite restrictions from a variety of sources, including adults, other children and structural constraints.

Parents may or may not know about their children's strategies. Children may attempt to hide their actions from parents or they may react openly in front of them. Even when children try to conceal their ploys to avoid work, parents may be aware of such behaviour. Parents' reactions to children's strategies may also vary from acceptance and compliance to restriction and oppression. They may appeal to their children's sense of justice and responsibility; they may remind them that they know about their strategies and encourage them not to engage in them; or they may threaten to punish them. Some parents are stricter and more likely to enforce punishment, others may be more willing to turn a blind eye. Parents' reactions, like children's strategies, also vary depending on their present mood, the nature of the task and the particular circumstances at the time. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that adults, like children, also operate with a particular set of structural constraints (Layder 1997).

Similarly, adults and children both negotiate what they do. Some tasks are more appealing than others for children just as they may be for adults. Certain household jobs are vital but others can more easily be postponed or delegated. However, because of unequal power relations children have less choice than adults, as they are more likely to receive a punishment. Adults have more power over children to delegate or delay tasks, but children also delegate to younger siblings and within their constraints they negotiate ways to avoid or alleviate boredom of tasks and obligations. The avoidance and coping strategies outlined here are not always appropriate, and sometimes they fail outright despite attempts at negotiation. Nevertheless, this chapter has indicated that children do not merely obey their parents passively or without question.

Household power relations consist not merely of power between adults and children, but also between children. For example, birth order and sibling composition not only affect the work which children do (Punch 1999), but also influence the strategies they employ and household power relations. Younger siblings are less likely to be able to delegate tasks, but can ensure that tasks are shared amongst the siblings. Middle siblings have a greater range of strategies to use since they can delegate, negotiate or carry out tasks with either younger or elder siblings. Power is ubiquitous and multi-dimensional, and should be seen as more complex than a one-way linear relationship of adult power over children (see also Lukes 1974).

This study of rural Bolivia shows that the transition from childhood to adulthood is not a simple linear progression from dependence and incompetence to independence and competence. This chapter has shown that children move in and out of relative independence and competence in relation to different people. It has argued that the notion of interdependence is a more appropriate way to understand relations between children and adults, and between children.

Household relationships are constantly being worked out and renegotiated through sibling negotiation and parent-child negotiation. Households are neither totally consensual units nor are they entirely sites of conflict (Cheal 1989). Household relations include a mixture of co-operation and competition. On the one hand, households function as units of mutual support and solidarity, where moral obligations and expectations are fulfilled (Friedman 1984). On the other hand, these are the result of

long-term relationships built up over time and are subject to negotiation, tension and conflict (Finch 1989; Finch and Mason 1993; Katz 1991b). Intra-household relations are based on simultaneous relationships of dependence and independence. Individual household members are dependent on each other for different things at different times, yet they can also be independent individuals asserting a degree of autonomy, controlling their own use of time and space, and pursuing their own self interests. Children use their resourcefulness to stretch adult-imposed boundaries to limits more acceptable to themselves.

Family expectations and obligations mean that most children have a strong sense of responsibility towards family members. Their sense of justice means that they try to ensure that all family members share the duties and responsibilities necessary to maintain the household. Families negotiate their intra-household responsibilities according to the different constraints and opportunities which exist, including household wealth, household composition, birth order, sex and age of siblings, and personal preferences of individual members. Children are competent at negotiating their role within the household, despite their inferior position in relation to more powerful adults.

Negotiation may include reaching compromises or balancing different interests, such as individual preferences and household needs. It may be co-operative or may involve conflict and tension. However, this chapter has shown that the ways in which these children create their own use of time and space do not all involve struggle. Sometimes children initiate their active participation in society, thereby asserting their relative

autonomy of their own accord rather than merely reacting to others or to situations. This may occur for example, when they take the initiative to fulfil their household responsibilities without being told to by their parents or siblings. Similarly, the children often accept being told to do things by their siblings or parents and do not attempt to assert their agency by offering any form of resistance. However, this should not be seen necessarily as passivity on their part, but can be quite the opposite. They may be making an autonomous decision to obey and contribute rather than resist. Since it has been shown in this chapter that children can resist, compromise and negotiate, they can equally chose to comply and accept. As we have seen, children in rural Bolivia are often proud of the contributions they make by participating actively in their household or community, and such contributions are sometimes the result of their own initiative. Therefore, it should be recognised that children, as competent social actors, may choose to respond to the requests or demands of others with a mixture of obedience, compliance, defiance and resistance. Equally they may act on their own initiative rather than just respond or comply.

## FOOTNOTES

[1] Minority World refers to the 'First World' and Majority World refers to the 'Third World'. Present terms used to differentiate the economically richer and poorer regions of the world are either incorrect or have negative connotations for the poorer countries by emphasising what they lack (since they are developing, less developed, etc.). The terms Minority and Majority World are the only ones to shift the balance so that the richer countries are described in terms of what they lack (population and land mass) which causes the reader to reflect on the unequal relations between the two world areas.

[2] *Me levanté a las 5.30 de la mañana y me ido a traer agua del rio y despues fue a sacar leche de los chivos y me peinado y tomado mi te con pan y me camviado de ropa y me ido a la escuela y hey leido un libro y despues amos echo las lenguage y salido a recreo y amos jugado la pelota con mis compañeras. Amos entrado al curso y hey echo mas lenguage y me venido a mi casa y mi mamá me a dado a almorsar y me ido a traer agua y hey ayudado a mi mamá a cer te y me ido a traer mis vacas y venido mi mamá me a dado a cenar y me ido a dormir a las 9 de la noche.* (Tuesday 15 October 1996).

Where quotations have been used from the children's diaries or worksheets, the original spelling has been left in order to capture the tone of the regional Spanish language.

[3] *No puedo decir que no, tengo que hacer. O voy con José o a Hugo lo mando y él va.* (Delfín, 12 years, November 1996)

[4] *Si me mandan a hacer, tengo que hacer. Cuando me manda acer un trabajo yo no quiero acer me voy a mi tio Carlos.* (Sabina, 14 years, November 1996)

[5] *Se van a jugar y ya no hacen a veces.* (Nélida, parent, December 1996)

[6] *Mis hijos dicen - yo no voy a hacer, después igualito van y lo hacen.* (Marcelina, parent, December 1996)

[7] *Le gusta que lo ruegan para hacer las cosas.* (Primitiva, parent, 5 August 1996)

[8] *Cuando quieren hacer, hacen bien y rápido.* (Primitiva, parent, 5 August 1996)

[9] *Se queja mucho, es muy floja y malcriada.* (Beatriz, parent, 17 September 1996)

[10] *También depende del chico que sea activo para trabajar, otros son más despacio.* (Felicia, parent, 17 May 1995)

[11] *Lo que se demora el Sergio es en Churquiales. Se queda a jugar, no tiene apuro para venir.* (Primitiva, parent, 5 September 1996)

[12] *Alguien tiene que ir a sacar leche de los chivos. Quién va a ir?*
*Marco, anda vos.* (Felicia, parent, 20 April 1995)
*No, yo no voy a ir, porque ayer yo ayudé al abuelo a sembrar.* (Marco, 14 years, 20 April 1995)

[13] *Carlos ya ha ido a traer agua? Yo ya he ido dos viajes.* (Luisa, 9 years, 17 August 1996)

[14] Marianela: *Yo no voy a ir.* Dolores: *Ya vos tienes que ir. Un dia-ito no me puedes reemplazar?*
Marianela: *No puedo.* Dolores: *Pero yo toda una semana.* (19 August 1996)

[15] *Anda llevar los burros donde tío Serafín, o si no que vaya la Angélica.*
*Que vaya ella, dijo Simón.*
*Está bien, pero entonces vos tienes que ir a cuidar los cuchis porque ella está cuidandolos.* (Beatriz's household, 19 October 1996)

[16] *Es como si yo fuera la única responsable para ver que haya comida. No tienen flojera para comer pero tienen flojera para ver que haya comida.* (Felicia, parent, 6 September 1996)

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