Attachment theory and culture: parenting in Latin America and rural Peru from an attachment theory perspective

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Chapter 2

Peruvian context

Location and main characteristics

Since 1821, Peru has been a constitutional republic (Basadre, 2015) when it became independent from Spain, from which it was a colony for 300 years (Cotler, 2016). Peru is located in South America's central-western region. The country borders Ecuador and Colombia to the north, Brazil, and Bolivia to the east, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and Chile to the south. The Andean mountain range divides the country into three physio-geographical regions: coast, highland, and Amazonian forest. Moreover, 25 political-administrative regions and 195 provinces make up the country. Peru's capital is Lima (Pan American Health Organization, 2012).

Peru is a multicultural and multiethnic country. Its diversity is due to the extension and geographical variety of its territory and the waves of migration that occupied the land and aboriginal populations in the last century (Ministerio de Cultura, 2014). Indigenous people constitute 24% of Peru's national population, making it the third country with the largest indigenous population in the Latin American region (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2014). Peru has 47 official languages, including Spanish, indigenous languages as Quechua or Aymara, and other indigenous idioms (Ministerio de Cultura, n.d.).

The Peruvian population consists of around 32.1 million people (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2019), spread across urban and rural settings. In Peru, rural areas are officially defined as settlements with less than 100 contiguous households (approximately 500 inhabitants). According to this definition, 20.7% of the Peruvian population live in a rural setting, while 79.3% live in an urban one (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2018). Furthermore, more than 55 organized indigenous groups live in nearly 1.5 thousand native communities, and there are also more than 6 thousand peasant communities (Ministerio de Cultura, 2014). The most spoken language by the rural population is Spanish with 61.8%, followed by Quechua with 37.4% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2018).

Some studies had questioned the method used to define a rural area. The local definition only considers the demographic agglomeration of households. However, internationally, a rural area is considered when less than 150 people live per square kilometer (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016), and indicators such as remoteness (living more than one hour away by car from an urban center), provision of services, among others, are considered (De Ferranti et al., 2005). Some estimations under international definitions of rurality indicate that approximately 48% of the Peruvian population lives in a rural setting

(Dirven, 2019). The statistical underestimation of the rural population is a significant issue. Given that the government depends on official statistics for the formulation and subsequent monitoring of public policies, the lower quantification of this population translates into fewer policies favoring its development and resource allocation (Dirven et al., 2011).

Social and economic situation

At the end of the 20th century, Peru went through military and democratic governments and an internal armed conflict, which generated significant social and economic instability for its population (Santos & Barclay, 2002), especially its rural citizens (Remy, 2014). However, the introduction of macroeconomic reforms and more effective social programs in the 1990s and 2000s (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015), and the process known as the "golden decade" of Latin America (International Economic Forum Latin America and the Caribbean, 2014) that lifted the whole South American region like a wave (Peery & Forero, 2014), led to a significant improvement in economic growth and well-being (Mendoza, 2013) in the past two decades. This improvement has caused the country to increase its per-capita income level, reaching the status of an upper-middle-income country (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015) and drastically reducing monetary poverty (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2015).

Despite having grown economically, the distribution of wealth in Peru has not been equitable, and significant inequalities in income and quality of life across people are evident (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). For instance, (extreme) poverty still affects 23.1% of the total population today (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2020c). Furthermore, even for those who have benefited from economic growth, the country's high rates of labor informality mean that 4 out of 10 Peruvian households live in conditions that are vulnerable to economic shocks and are at risk of falling into poverty (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, 2015). At the national level, around half of the people living in poverty do not have access to education or only go to elementary school, in contrast to 9 out of 10 non-poor people who manage to complete elementary school. Additionally, more than a third of people living in rural areas do not have access to potable water, a fifth do not have electricity, and about 8 out of 10 rural people do not access public sanitation (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2020b). Furthermore, approximately a quarter of students in rural areas are behind in school, and around a quarter of rural women are illiterate (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2020b). In terms of maternal and infant health, rural infant mortality and child mortality are higher in rural areas than urban areas. Likewise, the prevalence of low birth weight, lack of pre-and post-natal medical care, and frequency of

children's health conditions such as diarrhea are higher in rural areas than in urban areas (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2020a).

Poverty in Peru is related to social inequality that places rural and indigenous populations at a particular disadvantage (Barrón, 2008). Thus, although the population living in rural areas represents approximately a fifth of Peru's total population, it represents half of its poverty. Likewise, in rural areas, around 8 out of 10 inhabitants live in extreme poverty (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2015). Various studies have found that exclusion based on ethnic and rural background plays a substantial role in inequality and poverty (Figueroa, 2006; Barrón, 2008). Systematic social exclusion (Valdivia, 2011) and specifically exclusion in education (Barrón, 2008) have been studied as important factors to explain the higher poverty levels in rural and indigenous populations. Less access to education and public goods translates into fewer years of schooling or lower-quality education, limiting the populations' opportunities of entering the modern labor market, and confines them to labor-force associated with poverty (Céspedes & Guabloche, 2002; Barrón, 2008). Further, it has been proven that, even when rural and indigenous populations manage to access education, the ethnic discrimination prevalent in Peruvian society prejudice them, as they receive lower earning for the same work (Figueroa, 2006). Therefore, exclusion based on ethnic and rural background plays a relevant role in inequality and poverty for these groups (Barrón, 2008; Figueroa, 2006).

Parenting in the Peruvian context

In Peru, half of the families are nuclear, meaning that they consist of a couple with or without children, or single-parent families. A fifth of households consist of extended families; that is, a nuclear family and other relatives. A man leads most nuclear two-parent families, and a woman heads the majority of single-parent families. Moreover, the country's fertility rate is 2.3 in urban areas and 3.3 in rural areas - with 2.6 for the Andean areas and 3.1 for the Amazonian areas (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2020a). As a recent nation-scale study showed, in about 9 out of 10 Peruvian households, the mother is in charge of correcting the children under five years old when they misbehave. Among the ways to correct their children, Peruvian parents are most likely to use verbal reprimands. As for punishment methods, the most common are the prohibition of something the child likes, spanking, hitting, and other forms of physical reprimand usually done by the mother (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2020a).

Some specific characteristics of parenting have been found in rural areas compared to urban settings in Peru. In rural societies, extended families of three generations are common, allowing parents to have support for caregiving tasks (Panez et al., 2000). Furthermore, as these communities tend to have collectivist values, a hierarchical system where older people have social power is practiced (Ministerio de Educación, 2002). This characteristic leads to a vertical relational system within families, in which children must follow norms obediently (Gavilán et al., 2006). In this context, attributes of submission and passivity in children are valued (Panez et al., 2000). Additionally, compared to urban contexts in which affection is expressed more verbally, the expression of parental affection tends to occur more physically (Ministerio de Educación, 2002).

On the other hand, it has been found that physical punishment for children under five years old is less used in rural areas. In those settings, women with lower educational levels and women belonging to the lowest quintile of poverty are less likely to use physical punishment with their children (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática & Ministerio de Desarrollo e Inclusión Social, 2019). In addition, ethnographic studies conducted in Peruvian rural areas describe harsh behaviors and physical punishment as infrequent for children under five years old. Adults assume young children do not understand the consequences of their actions; therefore, it does not make sense to physically scold them (Ames et al., 2010; Ames, 2013a).

Furthermore, it is essential to point out that parenting in rural areas has different peculiarities. In rural Andean areas, during the first two years of life, infants tend to spend almost all of their time with their mothers (Ames, 2013b), with whom they have a differentiated and special bond and share continuous physical contact (Gavilán et al., 2006; Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Aymara, 2002). Children are considered to grow up around 2 or 3 years of age, having their first haircut as their maturity milestone. The literature associates the first haircut with weaning (Lestage, 1999; Román de Silgado, 1990) or walking (Bolin, 2006; Isbell, 1997). After this milestone, children begin to more actively socialize with others, joining groups of siblings and relatives (Ortiz, 2001). They also start to spend less time with their mothers (Ames, 2013b; Panez et al., 2000). Around the age of 3 to 4 years, the progressive inclusion of children in a wide range of domestic and productive tasks initiates. Others start teaching them their roles in the future as adults (Ames, 2013a). For example, while girls learn household chores and textile jobs, boys learn to farm and other similar activities (Gavilán et al., 2006; Bolton, 2010; Chagnollaud, 2013).

Quechua infants, who are called *wawas*, spend the first months of life wrapped in a woven carrying cloth folded into a triangle, with two of its ends attached around the caregiver's

shoulder. These cloths are called *llicllas* and are used behind the caregivers' backs (Bolin, 2006). A person uses the *lliclla* to carry out all their daily activities in the company of the infant, which means that from an early age, the infant is introduced to the daily tasks of the community and shares common spaces with its members (Stomph, 2019). Infants can be carried in *llicllas* by different caregivers, both male and female, but it is more common for them to be carried by their mothers (Bolin, 2006). Thus, during the first two years of life, the mother remains very close to the infant while sharing together with the rest of the community (Ames, 2013b).

Interactions between infants and their mothers in the Peruvian Andean region have been described as not affectively expressive. This type of relation is linked to Andean cultural patterns, which dictate that affection should be manifested discreetly. When the person does not behave in this way, it can be considered by the rest as "passionate" or aggressive (Ortiz Rescaniere, 1989). Furthermore, ethnographers such as Bastien (1985), Flores (1979), and Stein (1961) have described that affection in various regions of the high Andes is expressed by physical facilitation and physical play, for example, when adults let infants pull their hair, play with clothes, and jump on their laps (Bolin, 2006).

Around the age of two or three years old, the rites of the first haircut and the change of clothes imply that infants are no longer considered *wawas* (Ames, 2013b; Ortiz Rescaniere, 1989). In addition, it is common for them to stop breastfeeding and, in general, to spend less time with their mothers to begin to establish other significant relationships (Ortiz, 2001).

Children at two or three years are not fully assigned mandatory responsibilities, yet they are expected to cooperate with daily tasks (Ortiz Rescaniere, 1989). Bolin (2006) states that in Quechua societies, play and work are integrated. Thus, children help with family chores by playing and imitating their relatives. In this regard, Ames (2013b) points out that it is common to see two- or three-year-old Quechua children carrying buckets of water or branches for firewood to help adults, which at the same time functions as an imitation game.

Quechua children are generally assumed to become self-sufficient at a young age (Bolin, 2006). Specifically, at the age of three years, children's autonomy is extensively promoted, and it is common to see them walking alone through public places such as squares or fields (Ortiz Rescaniere, 1989). Throughout the remainder of childhood, children continue to be actively taught to consider and cooperate with family and community members (Ortiz Rescaniere, 1989). Therefore, they are progressively given more responsibilities (Rojas & Cussianovich, 2013; Ames et al., 2010). As time goes on, those responsibilities involve more demanding

tasks such as caring for younger children, helping with agricultural activities, knitting crafts, and helping with commerce (Save the Children, 2016).

Research location

The first empirical pilot study presented in this dissertation (in Chapter 4) was conducted in a rural Andean community in Tambillo District (Huamanga-Ayacucho) and a rural Amazonian community in Indiana District (Maynas-Loreto). The selection of these communities responded to convenience since one of the authors of that paper had contact with people already doing research and social work in those areas. In both cases, the contact person introduced the research team to health promoters and local community leaders from the areas, who helped us contact the families. Afterward, it was necessary to identify a similar place to design a more extensive study, although it was conducted in a slightly different Andean region. Thus, the main empirical study reported in this thesis (in Chapters 5 and 6) took place in Andahuaylillas District, in the Peruvian Cusco region, which is mainly a rural area (Dispurse Foundation, 2019) that belongs to the province of Quispicanchi (Presidencia del Consejo de Ministros & Regional Government of Cusco, 2010). It is located 36 km southeast of the city of Cusco, at a distance of approximately 45 minutes driving (Save the Childre, 2016). It has an altitude of 3,100 meters above sea level (Díaz, 2015).

Andahuaylillas district has 5,797 inhabitants (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2018) living in geographically dispersed households. Thus, Andahuaylillas has a low population density level, approximately 58.4 inhabitants per square kilometer (Díaz, 2015). Household dispersion is typical in the Peruvian Andean region, where people live in widely scattered settlements to provide enough pastureland for their animals (Bolin, 2006).

A quarter of its population is indigenous (Dispurse Foundation, 2019), and most of its residents have Quechua (one of the official indigenous languages) as their mother tongue (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2018). In 2010, Andahuaylillas was declared Cultural Heritage of the Nation by the Peruvian State due to its territory's cultural and natural value. Relatedly, the church of "San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas" has become an attractive tourist destination in the region in recent years (Díaz, 2015). An essential economic activity in Andahuaylillas is the production and sale of crafts related to tourism. Additionally, most Andahuaylillas residents are dedicated to agriculture, especially corn harvest (Dispurse Foundation, 2019). Cultivation of crops and herding of animals is central to Quechua life in the higher regions of the Andes (Stomph, 2019).

Regarding their quality of life, 7 out of 10 Andahuaylillas people live in (extreme) poverty (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2018), 4 out of 10 inhabitants do not have a sewer, and 2 out of 10 do not have electricity (Presidencia del Consejo de Ministros & Gobierno Regional del Cusco, 2010). As for access to education, Andahuaylillas has a nursery, elementary school, and high school. Overall, the life expectancy in Andahuaylillas is 12 years less than the national one. Furthermore, poor access to health aggravates the health problems that afflict them (Dispurse Foundation, 2019). Despite the hardships linked to poverty, inhabitants from Andahuaylillas report that their main sources of well-being include family togetherness. Also, aspirations for the future are related to family progress and the desire to get ahead in society; therefore, formal education of their children is deemed essential (Dispurse Foundation, 2019). In Andahuaylillas, 10.8% of the population is less than five years old (Save the Children, 2016). Most children live in extended families with up to 6 members (Dispurse Foundation, 2019). To help their families financially, many children start working at an early age. Children's jobs include knitting as well as helping with agriculture and herding animals. A task that is assigned more to girls is commerce (Save the Children, 2016).

Andahuaylillas was chosen to conduct the main empirical study reported in this dissertation due to the accessibility and closeness the leading researcher had with a local partner institution already working in the area. Furthermore, the home university of the leading researcher has been working in the area for over a decade in different heritage projects (i.e., architectural projects in the church) because, as previously mentioned, Andahuaylillas is an exciting heritage site. Also, the author had the opportunity to visit the community on previous occasions to assist other professors in their community-based projects, so that a relationship was established with the area and the local partner institution.

However, considering that this was a slightly different Andean region from the one included in the first empirical paper, a pilot study was conducted some months before the actual data collection to ensure the study protocols were appropriate to the area. Six infant-mother dyads were visited and evaluated. Based on challenges identified in the pilot study, in terms of observations, questionnaires, and interviews, adjustments were implemented, and the data collection was subsequently launched. Based on that information the empirical studies reported in Chapters 5 and 6 were conducted.

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