THE WAYS IN WHICH VOLITION IS ENCOURAGED AND LEARNED THROUGH MAPUCHE EARLY SOCIALIZATION

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About the study and LOPI
We explored how rural Mapuche parenting practices and the process of socialization during early childhood involve and transmit a sense of volition that is intrinsic to Mapuche notions of autonomous personhood (sho). We observed parenting practices that privilege children's personal experience and avoid stifling their volition. At the same time, these practices enable children's initiative and intentionality in exploring, learning, and socializing with others. Our findings fit with the model of Learning by Observing and Pitching In (LOPI; Ragoff, 2014) in several ways, mainly by tackling how learning processes involve the constitution of a subject with the competences to be responsible and a collaborative member of the community. Throughout these processes adults facilitate children's access to observe and take part of various family and community endeavors.

The aforementioned features of parenting and socialization contrast with those found in contexts where “paternal parenting” (Faircloth et al., 2013) and the model of “assembly-line instruction” (Ragoff, 2014) are observed, which are characterized by adult control and forms of unilateral social organization tied to the Western tradition and its approach to childhood.

Study Participants
The participants in this study are members of 15 rural, low-income Mapuche households living in 7 Mapuche communities in Ñaucún, located in the Araucanía Region of Chile. All of these households included women who were either about to give birth or had recently done so at the beginning of the study. Women’s ages ranged between 18 and 37 and children present in the households ranged from 0 to 10 years of age. These households combine a traditional gender-based division of work with waged labor (Bengts 1997; Saevedra 2009). Each household arranges daily duties separately from others in the community while maintaining a collaborative relationship when it comes to farming and child-rearing activities.

Relations to LOPI questions and facets
The questions related to LOPI that my research addresses refer to the importance of children’s autonomy in the learning process, as well as the direct relationship between these learning processes and constellations of cultural practices observed in a specific context.

The facets of the LOPI prism the research most clearly addresses are:
Facet 1: “Community organization of learning”
Facet 2: Learner’s motive to contribute and belong
Facet 3: Where learning is by means of a wide, keen attention and contribution to events

Findings related to LOPI
The findings of this study focus on three domains or situations of daily interactions in which volition emerges in the Mapuche community:

1. We observed how Mapuche children explore by themselves and initiate their actions with limited adult participation. Indeed, children’s volition is rarely oppressed, following an attitude of respect toward their exploration of the world. For example, when 18-month-old Amanda once picked up a chili (pepper) at breakfast, Valeria (1B) calmly told her “do not touch it, it’s spicy”, but she did not take it away from Amanda; instead she just waited. Amanda chewed the chili, tasted it, and suddenly started crying. “Water, water!” she had to taste it”, Valeria explained. This contrasts with adult control of children’s motivation, attention and pace in assembly-line instruction.

2. We observed how a sense of independence takes place in Mapuche children’s initiative to undertake learning, in a context in which children learn by themselves through observation and imitation, finding their own way of doing things and solving problems. As Paulina (2B, mother of three) suggests, Marí’s, her younger daughter (20 months old), helps with family duties by imitating: “Everything Maria observes, she imitates ( ). Sometimes she helps her father ( papa) collect some wood for the stove; when she sees him going out, she goes behind him and helps him with the wood, looking for animals. Everything we do, I do not tell her ‘Do this’—she does it by herself”. This is related to facet 5 of the LOPI prism, which deals with the wide and keen attention involved in children’s learning either in anticipation of or in the course of contributing to the endeavor at hand.

3. We observed Mapuche children’s early initiation to sociability, Parents and family members expect young children to learn how to relate to others and create new relationships beyond family ties through hospitality and sharing with known and unknown people from an early age. The crib is located in a central position for babies to interact with others, and they have a place at the table from the age of three months. Children are also initiated into sharing mate—an emblematic herbal beverage that is meant to be drunk under specific sharing rules. In this context, the act of greeting acquires a specific relevance (see Course 2011, p. 26-28) and is perhaps the only locus of a mandating attitude by adults: “Greet!” [“Saludá!”]. This finding is directly related to facet 1 of the LOPI prism about how community organization incorporates children in a range of ongoing endeavors involving families and communities. The prominence of greeting incorporates children as regular participants in the community, with expectations and opportunities to contribute according to their interests and skills, like everyone else.