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An Ethnographic Study of the Relationship Between the Renta Dignidad and Wellbeing in the Bolivian *Altiplano*

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Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the *comunarios*[1] of the two communities which feature in this study for giving me permission to research there. It was an absolutely fascinating experience for me to spend time in the two communities, and I cannot express enough thanks to all the *comunarios* who spoke to me, allowed me to work with them and eat with them, and to accompany them to *fiestas* and other events.

I would also like to dedicate this to my two grandmothers: Marny, who has always encouraged me to discover and learn about new things, and Pam, who sadly passed away earlier this year, who always supported me and whose knitted jumper kept me warm throughout the fieldwork in the *Altiplano*.

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[1] Throughout this thesis I will be referring to the people in the communities as *comunarios* (community member), which is the term they use to describe themselves. Occasionally I will refer to them also as 'peasants', which is a technically correct and objective term, but I will avoid referring to them as 'indigenous' in spite of the fact that they are Aymara speaking and are descendants from groups who inhabited the land before the Spanish conquest, firstly because there are differences in Bolivia regarding who is indigenous and who is not, and secondly because they do not use this term to describe themselves.

Summary

The objective of this thesis is to study the impacts of Bolivia's non-contributory pension, the Renta Dignidad, on the wellbeing of older peasants and their families. Literature on social protection has had a tendency to propose social protection policies as contributing to a broad range of objectives, and non-contributory pensions are no exception. Studies have found them to contribute not only to 'obvious' needs such as increased consumption and income security but also to investments in productivity, social relationships, health, increased access to credit and savings, while it has become common to claim that they contribute to intangible goals such as dignity and citizenship. Moreover, because they do not impose conditionalities on recipients and are often relatively broader in their coverage than other social protection policies, social pensions have generally avoided critiques that have been aimed at conditional cash transfers and public works programmes. The danger of this literature is that it assumes that wellbeing is heavily responsive to monetary wealth, rather than other areas. To study this, an ethnographic methodology, based on participant observation and semi-structured interviews was employed in two rural communities located in the La Paz department in the highland *Altiplano* region of Bolivia close to Lake Titicaca. My analysis shows that older persons' wellbeing depends heavily on a combination of elements, going beyond material wellbeing into areas such as their relationships with their spouses, children, grandchildren, and the other people in the rural communities in which they live, their ability to contribute their labour and maintain their daily (agricultural) work, to participate in collective social political and religious activities, and to maintain good health. For example, older people work hard for as late in life as possible largely because it is meaningful for them to work the land and produce food. This means that health problems, which are often exacerbated by hard work, are particularly damaging to wellbeing because they inhibit older persons' ability to do this. Meanwhile, ideas and values about how older people should live are continually being negotiated and contested between older people and with their younger family members, often leading to disputes. These are not driven solely by material interests, but concern the ways in which people should live and seek cultural, social and spiritual fulfilment. This is not due to a particular conception of wellbeing held by these people because they are indigenous, as might be inferred through the romantic lens of the *vivir bien* concept, but because human wellbeing more generally needs to be understood in relational terms, rather than exclusively in terms of peoples' capacity to satisfy their basic needs. While the Renta Dignidad increases older persons' ability to consume, maintain livelihood security, and in some case to participate in exchanges of food and gifts with other family members, it does not respond significantly to these other areas of wellbeing, contributing little to healthcare for example. The policy implications of this are that a more integral approach needs to be adopted to older persons' wellbeing, going beyond cash transfers to greater efforts to bring healthcare services to older people in remote rural areas.

Contents

Glossary

Spanish

Alma	Spirit
Altiplano	The highland plateau of Bolivia
Apio	Type of herb
Aporque	Hilling, the act where earth is pushed up into furrows to surround the stems of crops
A partir	Farming arrangement whereby different actors plant on alternate furrows on the same land plot, dividing the other costs and responsibilities between them
Boliviano	Bolivian currency, equivalent to 0.14USD
Camino	Road/path
Casera	Regular buyers or sellers who have agreed commercial relationship with another
Chacra	Land plot
Cholita	Young indigenous woman
Comunario	The term most commonly used by people in the village to describe themselves (literally, 'commoner')
Desencuentro	Disagreement/misunderstanding
Fiesta	Traditional party
Flojo	Lazy
Gringa	Foreign woman
Junta escolar	Collective village organisation responsible for ensuring the maintenance of the schools, organising social events connected to schools, and making sure that the teachers comply with their responsibilities.
Machismo	Male chauvinism
Mi Agua	My Water (Government programme)
Minifundio	Extremely small land parcels

Naturista	Shop selling 'natural' (non-pharmaceutical) remedies
Normal	Teaching college
Oca	Sweet-tasting tuber
Pasantes	Sponsors of *fiestas*
Prestes	Sponsors of *fiestas*
Patrón	Literally, 'the boss' or 'the patron', refers to large-scale landowners who owned the fertile land in the *Altiplano* prior to the 1953 land reform
Posta sanitaria	Health clinic
Quinoa	Grain grown in the Andes
Renta Dignidad	Dignity Rent
Residente	People who own land in the villages but live in urban areas
Ponchos Rojos	Red Ponchos
Semana Santa	Easter
Susto	Shock
Sindicato	Collective village organisations (literally, 'syndicate' or 'union')

Aymara

Awayu	Blanket used by women for carrying things
Chuño	Freeze-dried potato
Chuñoña	Space of grass used specifically for converting potato into *chuño* during frost season
Jayra	Lazy
Jucos	Malevolent birds
Kaya	Freeze-dried
Kharisiri	Someone who steals human fat
K'isa	Dried apricot from the valleys used to make sweet drink.
Pachamama	Earth Mother
Pito	Ground-up barley

Q'aras	Term to describe white Bolivians
Q'oa	Strong smelling herb growing in hills
T'inkha	Ritual drinking of two bottles of beer shared by vendor and buyer following a cow sale
Thaki	Road/Path
Tunta	Potato freeze-dried in water
T'una	Type of fruit
Tuitiris	Unmarried adults
Vivir bien	Good living
Yapu	Land plot
Yanqhas	Dancing girls associated with the devil
Yatiri	Spiritualist curer (literally, 'he who knows')

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAFOD   Catholic Agency for Overseas Development

CEDLA   Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral y Agrario

CENDA   Centro de Communicación y Desarrollo Andino

CEPAL   Comisión Económica Para América Latina y el Caribe

CIA   Central Intelligence Agency (US)

CIDES   Posgrado en Ciencias de Desarrollo

CIPCA   Centro de Investigacion y Promocion del Campesinado

DFID   Department for International Development (UK)

EPRI   Economic Policy Research Institute

FGD   focus group discussion

GTZ   Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH

IDS   Institute of Development Studies

IEG   Independent Evaluation Group

IEP   Instituto de Estudios Peruanos

IIED   International Institute for Environment and Development

ILO   International Labour Organization

INRA   Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria

ISEAT   Instituto Superior Ecuménico Andino de Teología

MAS   Movimiento Al Socialismo

NGO   non-governmental organisation

ODI   Overseas Development Institute

PIEB   Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia

PNUD/UNDP Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo / United Nations Development Programme

PRATEC	Proyecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas
UDAPE	Unidad de Análisis de Políticas Sociales y Económicas
UMSA	Universidad Mayor de San Andrés
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPEA	Universidad Pública de El Alto
WHO	World Health Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background

Social protection has gone from being a relatively peripheral area of international development to becoming deeply embedded within development agency and government policy-making circles (de Haan 2014). Interventions revolving around the direct transfer of cash resources to poor households, considered eccentric or even radical a decade and a half ago, are currently a staple among development professionals (DFID 2011; Barrientos 2013; Devereux and McGregor 2014; Devereux et al. 2015). Rough estimates suggest that between 0.75 and 1 billion people in developing countries currently receive some form of social transfers (Barrientos 2012).

The normalisation of social protection has also been accompanied by a greater awareness of the broader outcomes it could potentially have. Whilst in the early 2000s, programmes were advocated with fairly modest aims such as increasing school enrolment, or helping the poor to manage their risk, they are now advocated as potentially contributing to a much broader and comprehensive set of objectives, including adaptation to climate change (Godfrey Wood 2011; Davies et al 2013), respect and prestige (Kidd 2010, cited in KfW 2014), governance in countries afflicted by the 'resource curse' (Moss 2011) and new forms of global citizenship (Leisering and Barrientos 2013). The enthusiasm generated by social protection is best encapsulated by the self-explanatory title of the book *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South* (Hanlon et al. 2010). Among the most enthusiastically promoted social protection interventions are non-contributory pensions, which provide money to people in later life regardless of whether they have previously been in formal employment and without having paid into a pension scheme. In general, the evidence suggests that these schemes have positive outcomes, for instance contributing to recipients' income, as

well as the ability to make productive investments and to contribute to informal support networks (e.g. Martinez et al 2004; Neves et al 2009; Du Toit and Neves 2009; Lloyd-Sherlock et al 2012a). Pensions are also sometimes shared out and benefit other family members, for example by allowing them to migrate to look for employment (Posel et al 2006).

This thesis aims to build on this literature by looking at the impacts of a non-contributory pension on human wellbeing in the context of a rural population in a low-income country. With some important exceptions (e.g. Neves et al 2009; Lloyd-Sherlock et al 2012a), much of the existing literature on social protection analyses its impacts in terms of linear changes (e.g. income increased), and with only limited consideration of how it relates to people's broader lives and the rest of society. The objective here is therefore to build on the evidence base but to look more holistically at the impacts social protection can have, and also at its possible limitations, in the specific case of elderly persons[2] in a rural, low-income country context. This requires a broad and detailed understanding of older people's wellbeing and how this interacts with wider processes of rural change, in order to place the pension in context. In order to do this, I discuss and analyse most aspects of older persons' wellbeing, and the ways in which a particular non-contributory pension, in our case Bolivia's Renta Dignidad, influences wellbeing, in order to answer the overarching question: 'In what ways does the Renta Dignidad contribute to the wellbeing of older people?'

This study attempts to reveal precisely the contributions but also the limitations of the Renta Dignidad in meeting older persons' wellbeing in two communities of the Bolivian *Altiplano*. These communities were located in the La Paz department in the highland plateau (*Altiplano*) region of Bolivia, close to Lake Titicaca. In this thesis, these are referred to as 'Community A' and 'Community B' in order to maintain the anonymity of the research participants.

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[2] This thesis uses the UN definition of older people, namely people who are 60 years of age or over, while recognising Lloyd-Sherlock's point that this definition potentially spans four decades, and can be experienced in highly variable circumstances (Lloyd-Sherlock 2000).

I should point out, however that my initial motivation to embark on this PhD was not to study the impacts of the Renta Dignidad on wellbeing *per se*, but rather to explore the impact of this non-contributory pension on people's ability to adapt to climate change. Drawing on the emerging evidence base of cash transfers' ability to respond to shocks, manage risk, and provide of capital to invest, and to facilitate mobility and livelihood transitions, I had argued in previous research that cash transfers would likely be a positive instrument to support adaptation to climate change (Godfrey Wood 2011). My original intention was therefore to extend this line of research.

I selected Bolivia as a low-income country (relative to the rest of Latin America) with a history of severe climate shocks (UNDP 2011), and because it is country which has made a relatively significant investment in social protection in the past decade. I have focused on the Renta Dignidad on the basis that it is the most significant cash transfer programme in Bolivia in terms of the quantity of money it pays out, amounting to 250 *Bolivianos* per month [approximately 36USD].[3]

However, although I took care to select a region which had already been identified by previous studies as being vulnerable to climate change, during fieldwork it became apparent that climate change was not such an overriding feature of people's lives as to justify a PhD dedicated to its interactions with social protection. Although most people, particularly older ones, commented on climate-related changes such as changing rainfall patterns, increased prevalence of pests, and unpredictable frosts, these were only some factors affecting the lives of the Renta Dignidad recipients within a broader context of rural change. Other key changes included the development of markets, the out-migration of younger people, technological changes in agricultural production, and the implementation of rural development projects. Although many of these could be linked to climate change, it became clear that framing people's lives primarily in terms of 'adaptation to climate change', as I had originally planned to do, would be

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[3] The amount was 200 *Bolivianos* until 2013. One *Boliviano* is worth 0.14USD.

misleading. At the same time I found that the Renta Dignidad was, as I had expected, one of the most significant interventions in the lives of older people.

I therefore felt I needed to embrace a broader view, considering those aspects of life that mattered to people and made their lives meaningful. Among the older people I spoke to, issues such as religious faith, cultural activities, political participation, and relationships with their family members and communities clearly played crucial roles in influencing whether their lives were satisfactory or not. As Sayer has argued forcefully, these areas of life cannot be reduced to instrumental objectives or different 'capitals', implying that life is simply a matter of accumulating as an individual, because this would overlook the fact that they also have an intrinsic value for many people (Sayer 2011). In particular, it is important to understand the relational aspect of people's lives, which has not always been sufficiently acknowledged in social science research and policymaking (ibid). Thus in order to genuinely understand the impact that the Renta Dignidad has on the lives of older people in the communities, I adopted the holistic concept of wellbeing as the underlying concept to structure my data analysis.

The relationship between wellbeing and processes of development and change has been a growing focus of development researchers and practitioners (e.g. Gough 2003; Gough 2004; McGregor 2006; Qizilbash 2006; Graham 2006; Gough et al 2006; Deneulin and McGregor 2010; White 2010). In this thesis, wellbeing is understood as the interplay between material, relational, and subjective factors (Gough and McGregor 2007; McGregor and Sumner 2010). Material wellbeing refers to the objective and concrete aspects such as income and health, which have traditionally been at the focus of development efforts. Relational wellbeing covers the interactions people have with other people and wider society, while subjective wellbeing covers the ways in which people understand their lives and the processes they are engaged in (ibid). The thesis also acknowledges the importance of rural change in relation to wellbeing out of a recognition that not only are the social conditions that affect people's material wellbeing continually changing, but the cultural values that underpin people's understandings of their own

lives are themselves subject to continuous renegotiations and challenges (McGregor 2006). Finally, it is important to emphasise the role of rural change in affecting wellbeing in order to avoid static or rigid understandings of the wellbeing of peasant societies, which have been shown to be highly problematic (e.g. Starn 1991; Spedding and Llanos 1999; Spedding 2010a).

In studying the impacts of the Renta Dignidad on wellbeing, this thesis contributes to improving our understandings of wellbeing held by Aymara-speaking peasants in the *Altiplano*, a group which has been historically excluded and exploited in Bolivia since the times of the Spanish conquest. In recent years, the concept of *vivir bien* ('to live well') has risen to the fore of much anthropological and development thinking in the Andes, and this concept is driven by the belief that indigenous and peasant groups maintain 'alternative' understandings of wellbeing which are qualitatively different from those of Western, middle-class, and elite society (Gudynas 2011a; Gudynas and Acosta 2011; Albó 2011; Medina 2011). As we will see, the ways in which indigenous and peasant groups' visions of wellbeing are understood (and misunderstood) by external actors have important political implications for development processes.

Within Andean countries, the idea that indigenous and peasant people have distinct visions of wellbeing is frequently employed to challenge development models and paradigms that are based around the ideas of progress and modernity (e.g. Gudynas 2011a; Gudynas and Acosta 2011). Meanwhile at the grassroots level, previous studies of social change in the *Altiplano* have shown that peasants often share fundamentally different criteria to sympathetic outsiders such as NGOs (Zoomers 1998), and this can lead to misunderstandings and clashes, or *desencuentros* ('disagreements') (Bebbington et al. 2007). In many cases, NGOs and some anthropologists have viewed peasant wellbeing primarily in terms of their relationship with their land and traditions while underestimating the desires of peasants to embrace 'modernity' through formal education and urbanisation (Zoomers 1998; Bebbington et al. 2007). This thesis will revisit and discuss some of these interpretations and shows how these are important elements to consider in order to be able to fully comprehend the impacts of the Renta Dignidad on wellbeing.

Beyond this, the thesis expands on research regarding the nature of wellbeing during later life, an area that has also been receiving increasing attention in development literature (Gorman 1995; Lloyd-Sherlock 2000; Barrientos and Lloyd-Sherlock 2002a; Gorman and Heslop 2002; Varley and Blasco 2003; Barrientos et al. 2003; Schröder-Butterfill 2004; Schröder-Butterfill and Marianti 2006; Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2012a; Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2012b). This contribution is necessary because I argue that much of the existing literature on older people in Bolivia (such as by Salazar de la Torre 2011; Castro Mantilla 2011; and Escobar 2014) is extremely pessimistic and aimed more at characterising older people as worthy recipients of policy interventions than revealing precisely how they live. In particular, these accounts are often based on the premise that older people in rural areas are essentially harmed by processes of modernisation, because they do not have the means, knowledge, or energy to adapt and may not be prioritised in family support structures.

Evidence from other countries suggests that the reality is generally more complex, and that social change has varied and intricate implications for older people (e.g. Kreager 2006). For example, phenomena assumed to be associated with vulnerability and exclusion, such as solitary living arrangements, can in fact be highly desirable for older people (Varley and Blasco 2003). As we will see, there is much to be revealed about the ways in which older people's wellbeing intermeshes with processes of social and economic change in Bolivia, and not all of this is negative. This includes both changes in material conditions brought about by modernisation and also processes of social change which alter the values held by different groups of people, thereby changing the meanings by which they understand their own wellbeing.

Moreover, while in general there has been much discussion of the vulnerability of older people with respect to younger generations (e.g. James 1992; Oddone 2001; Heslop and Gorman 2002; Barrientos et al. 2003; Salazar de la Torre 2011; Castro Mantilla 2011), there has been less focus on their vulnerability in relation to interactions between themselves. This gap is rather

glaring, because for many older people, the majority of their social interactions are with other older people, most notably their spouses. Thus there is scope for a nuanced and more balanced account of the wellbeing of older people, revealing the complex ways in which this is affected by their social relationships and by broader processes of change. This thesis attempts to achieve that through an ethnographic methodology, based on participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Historically, many of the studies that have shed the most light on the intricacies of rural life in the Andes have employed ethnographic methods (e.g. Spedding 1994; Buechler and Buechler 1996; Spedding and Llanos 1999; Harris 2000a; Harris 2000b; Tassi 2012). I discuss my methodology in detail in Chapter 3.

1.2. Key Research Questions

Based on this background the thesis will be structured to answer the following questions:

Key research question: How does the Renta Dignidad affect older people's wellbeing in the Bolivian *Altiplano*?

This question is deliberately phrased to capture the fluid and contestatory nature of wellbeing, and the fact that it is an ongoing process rather than a fixed state. Answering this question requires understanding all the factors which influence wellbeing within the Bolivian communities of my research, and the respective impacts of the Renta Dignidad on each of those.

Three sub-questions have been identified, each of which corresponds to Chapters 5, 6, and 7, which analyse the three key areas of wellbeing. The first question related to the Renta Dignidad and material wellbeing:

Sub-Question 1: How and to what extent does the Renta Dignidad contribute to the material elements of older people's wellbeing?

This question considers the possible impacts that social pensions can have on material elements of recipients' wellbeing. These potential impacts, which will be reviewed in more detail in Chapter 2, involve reduced poverty, as has been shown to occur in other low-income or emergent countries such as Brazil and South Africa (Samson et al. 2004; Barrientos 2004; Gaspirini et al. 2007; Liebbrandt et al. 2010); and, at the micro level, greater consumption, and opportunities to save and to invest (Martinez 2004; Neves et al. 2009). The intention is not simply to establish whether such impacts occur or not, but also how they fit into the overall trajectories of older people's livelihoods. In order to answer this, I lay out and analyse a broad picture of older people's material wellbeing in Chapter 5.

Sub-Question 2: How does the Renta Dignidad affect family and community relationships in ways that either facilitate or undermine the wellbeing of older people?

This sub-question responds to the growing evidence that social protection programmes have impacts not solely on the immediate needs of their recipients but also on their relations and interactions with their family and the members of the communities where they live. In countries such as Brazil and South Africa, there is widespread evidence of pension money being pooled collectively within households, for example (see Schwartzer and Querino 2002; Delgado and Cardoso Jr 2005; Lloyd-Sherlock 2006; Neves et al. 2009), and in some cases it is used to support family members to migrate in search of work (Ardington et al. 2009). Moreover, social protection programmes can also have multiplier effects in local communities, benefiting third parties like traders (Davies and Davey 2008; Staunton 2011). As with the previous sub-question, a broad picture of the relational element of people's wellbeing is built up and analysed in detail in Chapter 6 in order to subsequently locate the Renta Dignidad within that context.

Sub-Question 3: How are the key values that underpin the wellbeing of peasants in later life constructed and contested?

This sub-question, which will be addressed in Chapter 7, refers directly to the subjective values that people rely on to make judgements about what matters in life, what decisions to make, and what to prioritise. Although it does not refer directly to the impacts of the Renta Dignidad it does demand an analysis of the subjective determinants of wellbeing. It emphasises the need not only to identify particular values that underpin wellbeing, but also the importance of understanding the social and cultural contexts within which these are constructed (Deneulin 2009). In some cases, these values may constitute adaptations to conditions of adversity and exclusion, as was claimed by Bourdieu (1984), who argued that dominated agents embrace values that are adapted to the constraints imposed on them, valuing what is available and showing disregard for what is not. Therefore, beyond simply identifying the key values that inform the wellbeing of older people, this question demands an examination of the contexts within which particular values are constructed and the tensions that can arise between competing values.

Overall the three sub-questions investigate the key mechanisms through which the Renta Dignidad influences wellbeing, as well as seeking to understand the nature of older people's wellbeing in the respective villages.

1.3. Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I set out the literature review, covering the literature which is relevant for answering the research question. It begins with a focus on social protection and its impacts on wellbeing, followed by a review of the existing evidence on non-contributory pensions in developing countries. At this stage the Renta Dignidad, the pension scheme at the heart of this thesis, is introduced. In this chapter, I also discuss the literature on the wellbeing of indigenous peasants and older people. Subsequently, literature on later life in developing countries more generally is assessed, followed by the broader literature connecting

wellbeing with development and research on the understandings of wellbeing claimed to be held by indigenous people in Latin America. This involves critical engagement with the concept of *vivir bien*, which has been increasingly held up as an alternative concept of wellbeing associated with Latin America's indigenous people, particularly those living in the Andes. This discussion is then deepened with a look at how the literature to date has dealt with generational differences among Andean indigenous people with regards to their attitudes to wellbeing.

In Chapter 3, I describe the ethnographic approach employed for this research, including its advantages and disadvantages. Alternative methodologies that could have been used will also be outlined, with their relative strengths and weaknesses. The methodological difficulties that emerged during research will be discussed, as will the ethical issues regarding my own positionality vis-à-vis the two rural communities where the research was conducted.

In Chapter 4, I provide an overview of the two rural communities and the processes of rural change occurring in and around them, discussing the implications for broader understandings of wellbeing among the people in the communities and their attitudes towards these changes. This forms the background for the analysis of older persons' wellbeing in the three subsequent chapters. In Chapter 5, I focus on the material aspects of wellbeing and how the Renta Dignidad influences these, showing how it bolsters consumption and, to a lesser extent, savings among older people. In Chapter 6, I discuss relational wellbeing, namely the interactions older people experience with their spouses, children, grandchildren, and wider communities, and how they negotiate these, before showing what happens when the Renta Dignidad is injected into these social networks.

In Chapter 7, I look at the more subjective areas of wellbeing (although these of course overlap heavily with relational and material wellbeing) such as older people's attitudes to work, to material living standards, and to religious faith. Although the Renta Dignidad does not have a marked impact on the ways in which older people understand their lives subjectively, their

belief systems nonetheless need to be understood in order to build up a complete picture of their wellbeing. Finally, in Chapter 8 I summarise my findings and discuss their implications regarding the key research question about the impacts of the Renta Dignidad on older people's wellbeing in the Bolivian *Altiplano*.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Social Protection and Wellbeing

Having been a relatively peripheral area of development policy until the late 1990s, social protection has now become one of the fastest-growing areas of interest for policymaking among the development sector and developing country governments (De Haan 2014; Devereux and McGregor 2014). From its roots in the World Bank's 'social risk management framework' (World Bank 2001), in which it was advocated as a means of helping the poor manage their risk, definitions of social protection have broadened significantly. Rights-based frameworks such as the 'transformative social protection' framework (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2004) have identified a broad range of instruments that could be classified as social protection, and have widened the objectives of social protection beyond the minimalist goals of providing safety nets for the poorest. However, in practice the term has become heavily associated with cash transfers to mothers, non-contributory pensions, and public works programmes (Lloyd-Sherlock et al 2012a). Social protection has been particularly embraced in middle-income countries, where 'it was shown that pro-poor policies could become economically, politically and institutionally sustainable' (de Haan 2014, p313). In 2009, the United Nations endorsed the concept of a social protection floor, which would be comprised of a combination of tax-financed cash and health guarantees for children, people of working age, and older people (ILO 2012).

Social protection policies have risen to prominence at a time when international agencies have been under increased pressure to 'show results'. Because they have clearly identifiable impacts, cash transfers fit the bill effectively (de Haan 2014). Moreover, they have also helped shape, and at the same time been bolstered by, the growing field of impact assessment (ibid). Impact evaluations, which are mainly dependent on quantitative methodologies, generally show positive impacts for cash transfers, and this makes it far easier for proponents to advocate in

favour of social protection than it has been in the past. The most basic impacts, and the ones with the strongest evidence base, are reductions in income poverty and school enrolment (e.g. Samson et al. 2004; Veras et al. 2007; Miller et al. 2008; IEG 2011). Beyond these, it has been argued that social protection can have impacts even in areas of life that may be less obvious, for example by providing money for investments leading to greater productivity (Gertler et al. 2012), stimulating local economies through multiplier effects (Davies and Davey 2008; Barrientos and Sabates-Wheeler 2009; Staunton 2011)), improving people's social networks (Du Toit and Neves 2009), allowing family members to migrate to look for work (Hagen-Zanker and Leon Himmelstine 2012), and improving their health (Attanasio et al. 2005; Miller et al. 2008; DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012). In short, enough evidence can be collected to suggest that cash transfers and other similar schemes have positive contributions to make to a broad range of areas of wellbeing. This has been followed by further claims that social protection has major impacts even on less tangible areas of wellbeing, such as notions of citizenship (Leisering and Barrientos 2013), and feelings of dignity and self-respect (KfW 2014).

The euphoria over social protection has not gone without critique, however. Simply focusing on the most measurable impacts may make for good politics, but it also risks diverting the focus away from other critical concerns (de Haan 2014). Key social protection policies such as cash transfers have also been criticised for failing to respond to the structural factors that keep people poor and vulnerable (Ulrichs and Roelen 2012). In particular, social protection policies aiming to 'target' specific groups of people deemed to be poor and vulnerable have been challenged for excluding a lot of people who still need social protection, fomenting divisiveness and failing to create a strong political economy to guarantee their sustainability and long-term investment (Mkandawire 2005; Ellis 2008; MacAuslan and Riemenschneider 2011; Kidd and Wylde 2011; Cameron and Shah 2012; Kidd and Hura 2013; Kidd 2014). In particular, conditional cash transfers, whereby money is distributed to people on condition that they comply with certain obligations (such as sending children to school or going to health checkups) have been criticised

for imposing a burden on recipients and propagating the highly problematic idea that the behaviour of the poor is a key cause of poverty (Molyneux 2006; Freeland 2007).

However, it must be emphasised that none of these critiques actually questions the usefulness of at least some form of social protection.[4] This owes itself not simply to the evidence base of social protection, but also to its ideological attractiveness. Social protection can easily be justified from highly diverse ideological positions, including a neoliberal position which advocates minimalist, targeted social assistance to help the poorest people manage their risk (e.g. Holzmann and Jorgensen 1999), and more social-democratic, rights-based approaches which tend to advocate more universal, unconditional social protection (e.g. Kidd and Hura 2013; Kidd 2014; Knox-Vydmanov 2014). Indeed, even this dichotomy is somewhat stylised, because some of the strongest advocates of neoliberalism such as Hayek and Friedman supported negative income taxes as part of a broader project of stripping away the power of state bureaucracies and reducing alleged negative incentives to work (Friedman 2002 [1962]; Hayek 1981). More broadly, the different approaches to social protection increasingly agree on the importance of making direct income transfers to households, providing social protection with an unusually broad base of ideological support, which serves to reinforce its overall legitimacy within the development field.

2.2. Non-Contributory Pensions and Wellbeing

Non-contributory pensions, also known as 'social' pensions, distribute cash directly to older people regardless of whether they have paid money into a formal pension scheme. They have become increasingly popular in the last decade, and according to HelpAge International, 105 countries, 78 of which are lower or middle-income, currently distribute money in this way

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[4] Possible and partial exceptions are the critiques by Mkandawire (2005) and Adesina (2011), who argue that the social protection paradigm overlooks the history of social policy in Nordic countries and the East Asian 'tiger' economies, emphasising the need to link social policy with national developmentalist objectives and the generation of new productive capacities.

(HelpAge International 2013). However these programmes differ significantly in terms of their coverage, quantity, frequency, and stated policy intention. They are also conceptualised in different ways – while most of the literature refers to them as 'pensions', this is not always the case in the countries where they are implemented. For example, in Bolivia the Renta Dignidad is described in the rural communities simply as 'the money the Government/Evo [President Evo Morales] pays/gives', but not as a 'pension'. The terminology is not trivial, because the term 'pension' implies an amount of money that can actually cover people's living expenses once they have ceased to work, as a reward for their own labour contributions when they were younger. This is clearly not the case in Bolivia, where it is debatable whether anybody could live off the Renta Dignidad alone and the amount paid out is considerably lower than the pensions paid to retired formal-sector workers.

While, as we have seen, social protection has been criticised on a number of grounds, the critiques have generally left non-contributory pensions untouched or even strengthened their credibility, because of their lack of conditionality and in most cases their broader levels of coverage. Pensions also tend to be politically popular because older people are generally viewed as being 'deserving' of social protection in contrast with other groups such as the unemployed and mothers who are easily stigmatised (Grosh et al. 2008). This is largely because their vulnerability is rarely attributed to any moral failings on their own part and because they are not commonly expected to be working, meaning they are less subject to accusations of a 'culture of dependency'. Critics of conditional and targeted forms of social protection tend to advocate for broad-based non-contributory pensions as 'good' social protection which should be supported unconditionally (e.g. Kidd 2013; Kidd and Hura 2013; Knox-Vydmanov 2014).

Such broad support for non-contributory pensions is sustained by a strong and growing evidence base. Because they tend to pay out amounts of money that can be larger than other social protection programmes, the impacts of non-contributory pensions on income poverty are usually argued to be significant (e.g. Barrientos 2005; Gasperini et al 2007; Lloyd-Sherlock et al

2012a). In Brazil, the impact of pensions on poverty has been so significant that later life is increasingly associated with financial security (Lloyd-Sherlock et al 2012a). In the case of the Renta Dignidad's predecessor, the Bonosol, it was found that recipients increased their consumption significantly above the level of the transfer itself, and it was thought to be so because they had invested in fertilisers and livestock to increase the productivity of their smallholder plots (Martinez 2004). Meanwhile in urban areas, the Bonosol was often used to secure credit and in some cases to invest in informal enterprises (Skinner 2007). Pensions can also benefit third parties like traders, who have earned more from increased sales and an all-round business cycle, for example in Namibia and Uganda (Devereux 2001; Bukuluki and Watson 2012; Ibrahim 2013). Efforts to model a non-contributory pension in Bangladesh suggest that such multiplier effects would make positive and large-scale contributions to agriculture, services, manufacturing, and transport (Khondker 2014).

In Brazil, numerous studies have found that pension money is frequently pooled within households and shared with younger members (Schwartzer and Querino 2002; Möller and Ferreira 2003; Delgado and Cardoso 2005; Lloyd-Sherlock 2006; Lloyd-Sherlock et al 2012b). Studies in South Africa have found that such transfers have led the grandchildren of pension recipients to experience higher levels of school enrolment (Samson et al. 2004) and improved nutrition and cognitive development (Aguero et al. 2007), while in Brazil the pension has been shown to contribute to the reduction of the enrolment gap for girls (Evangelista de Carvalho Filho 2008, cited in KfW 2014). In some cases these direct and indirect transfers are also used to assist younger people in searching for jobs (Posel et al 2006; Ardington et al 2009). Pension recipients may also share money for instrumentalist reasons, for example, to ensure that they will be helped in times of need (Sagner and Mtati 1999), due to cultural expectations that they do so, and/or out of feelings of love and affection (Schröder-Butterfill 2004). Sharing pensions is particularly common in contexts where unemployment or underemployment is high and livelihood alternatives limited, such as South Africa (Schatz 2007; Schatz and Ogunmefun 2007). In some cases, however, it has also been hypothesised that older people may be

pressurised or even coerced into giving their pension money to other family members (Burman 1996; Skinner 2007).

Such evidence of money being transferred to younger family members has been employed by the NGO HelpAge International to advocate in favour of non-contributory pensions. HelpAge argues that non-contributory pensions are likely to have progressive impacts in low-income countries, reducing both poverty in later life and intergenerational poverty (HelpAge 2014). In Bolivia, for example, the Bonosol programme was defended partly on the basis that it was a 'prudent investment', benefiting not just the recipients but also their families and the broader economy (Aponte et al. 2007). Skinner even proposes that older people's life experiences, as well as their sense of responsibility towards new generations, means that they are particularly likely to manage resources prudently and use them in a relatively altruistic way (Skinner 2007, p151).

Moreover, as with the rest of the social protection literature, there is evidence that, in some circumstances, non-contributory pensions can contribute to a range of other aspects of wellbeing as well, such as subjective wellbeing, social relationships, and dignity. For example in South Africa, Neves et al (2009) find instances where people use non-contributory pensions to make expenditure on events such as weddings, which allows them to maintain moral claims vis-à-vis their friends and family. These 'investments' can be understood both as acts motivated by feelings of love and responsibility whilst also having an instrumental value in terms of strengthening kinship networks. In Zambia, pension recipients comment on the fact that other people in the community have begun to call them 'bosses' as a mark of respect (Kidd 2010, cited in KfW 2014). Similarly, Leisering and Barrientos (2013) emphasise the positive contributions that non-contributory pensions can make to older persons' autonomy and the respect other people give them. The Bonosol has been shown to have strengthened inter-generational links and informal support networks in La Paz (Skinner 2007). In Brazil, the increased income from the pension appears to translate into significant improvements in

subjective wellbeing as well as reductions in monetary poverty (Lloyd-Sherlock et al 2012a). Therefore it is perhaps unsurprising that, as Lloyd-Sherlock et al. (2012c) point out, academics, NGOs and policymakers place a very strong emphasis on pensions as the primary focus of policy towards older people.

However, this enthusiasm for non-contributory pensions carries dangers as well. First, it needs to be stated that many of these impacts are highly contingent on the local context. For example, while it may be the case that in some contexts pensions are invested productively, in many others this is unlikely to be the case. For example, Lloyd-Sherlock et al (2012b) found in Brazil that while pension money is invested in areas where recipients own their own land (and therefore possess an asset to invest in), this is not the case in a different region where recipients were not landowners. Similarly, Møller finds, to her surprise, that practically none of the money from South Africa's State Old Age Grant gets invested in micro-enterprise activities (Møller 2011). Within Bolivia, research on the use of money from remittances from migrants in Spain suggests that this money is far more likely to be used for consumption rather than productive uses (Spedding 2010c). Given that the quantities of money arriving in this form are likely to be similar to, or higher than, that paid out by the Renta Dignidad, this may suggest either that objective opportunities for investment are simply limited, or that investment is not prioritised by recipients. Moreover with regards to the impacts of pensions on social relationships within households, evidence from Brazil suggests that the internal dynamics of families is highly varied, and so is the likely outcome of pensions (Lloyd-Sherlock 2006).

2.3. The Renta Dignidad

Bolivia's non-contributory pension has its roots in the 1990s, when the government of Gonzálo Sanchez de Lozada declared that it would distribute some of the proceeds of the 'capitalisation' of public companies directly to people over the age of 65 through a social programme called

Bonosol. In 2008, under the government of Evo Morales, the Bonosol was replaced with the Renta Dignidad, now financed out of the surplus generated by gas extraction and profits from renationalised public companies. The amount was raised from 1800 *Bolivianos* per year with Bonosol to 2400 with Renta Dignidad, and this was increased again in May 2013 to 3000 *Bolivianos* (434USD) a year for people who do not have a pension. It is worth emphasising that while the Renta Dignidad can represent a significant amount of money for poor recipients in rural areas, the amounts paid out are still modest by regional standards. While countries such as Brazil and Venezuela pay out non-contributory pensions of equal value to the minimum wages in those countries, in Bolivia the Renta Dignidad was equivalent to just 17% of the official minimum wage at the time of writing.[5] In addition to the increase in the value of the transfer, another key difference is that whereas Bonosol was paid out as an annual lump-sum, the Renta Dignidad can theoretically be withdrawn at any frequency as desired by the recipient, provided they do so at least once a year. In reality, though, in the region of this study, the banks that pay out the money often pressurise recipients to make frequent withdrawals, a fact that may influence the way the money is used.

Like many similar policies, the Renta Dignidad is politically popular in Bolivia. Müller (2009) shows how political considerations led to the establishment of the Bonosol under the Sánchez de Lozada Government, and how the leftist Morales Government came to appropriate the programme, anchoring it more firmly in a social rights-based approach and separating it from the privatisation agenda that had become increasingly challenged and discredited. In the current context, it is worth emphasising that no political party has mounted a critique of the concept of a non-contributory pension, and indeed some of Morales's critics from the right actually advocate a more substantial transfer of gas revenues in the form of cash transfers (e.g. Laserna et al. 2011). This longevity and political support is crucial for this study for two reasons. Firstly, it increases the chances that some recipients have received the cash grant for enough time to have a long-term impact on their livelihoods. And secondly, the political resilience of the Renta

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[5] Based on the minimum wage at the time of writing (June 2014), which was 1440 *Bolivianos* per month.

Dignidad increases the possibilities that recipients and prospective recipients will have been able to plan around the grant, knowing that it is unlikely to be withdrawn. Research on South Africa's grants has shown that the regularity and predictability of payments in a context of diversified and fluctuating incomes can be a crucial factor in allowing the poor to lever the maximum advantage out of them (Du Toit and Neves 2009).

As Müller (2009) shows, the Renta Dignidad stands out for its relative universalism, as the programme is available for all Bolivians with the exception of those who have worked in the public sector. This universalism was to some extent inherited from the Bonosol (Müller 2009), and although it was questioned by some sectors early on during the Morales Government (see Aponte et al 2007), it was ultimately maintained under the Renta Dignidad. This universalism has been criticised in some quarters because it limits the redistributive potential of the programme, and means that the amount paid to the poorest is less than it might otherwise have been (Lustig et al 2013). However, universalism does have significant advantages, for example by removing the need for complex targeting mechanisms that are subject to both human error and corruption, avoiding of the divisiveness often associated with means-tested schemes, and ensuring a political sustainability for the policy in the long-term. In sum, the Renta Dignidad is a programme which could have a significant impact on the wellbeing of Bolivia's older people.

2.4. Later Life and Wellbeing in Developing Countries

The wellbeing of older people in development processes has attracted growing interest in recent decades (e.g. Gorman 1995; Lloyd-Sherlock 2000; Barrientos and Lloyd-Sherlock 2002a; Gorman and Heslop 2002; Varley and Blasco 2003; Barrientos et al. 2003; Schröder-Butterfill 2004; Schröder-Butterfill and Marianti 2006). Much of this literature has responded to a perception that older people have been sidelined from the development agenda, misunderstood or ignored by key policy-makers, and portrayed only in terms of their weaknesses and deficiencies (Gorman 1995; Gorman 1999).

In response to this, much research on older people has sought to visibilise them and their roles in developing countries. Much of this literature has had the clear intention of debunking myths about older people that are perceived to be harmful to their interests, and which might limit the political will to respond to their needs, contributions and aspirations. Researchers have questioned assumptions that older people would necessarily be well looked after by their children, highlighting the abuse and neglect that can occur, especially in contexts of deprivation (Gorman 2000; Gorman and Heslop 2002; Schröder-Butterfill 2004; Skinner 2006). In Mexico, Varley and Blasco (2003) find that, contrary to what is often assumed, older women may find their wellbeing benefits from living alone because they do not feel that they are a burden on their children and have more freedom and independence. In fact, an increasing number of researchers have challenged the idea that older people are net recipients of resources from younger generations, arguing that in many contexts they are independent, productive, and often net contributors of resources and services to children and grandchildren (Gorman and Heslop 2002; Barrientos et al 2003; Schröder-Butterfill 2004; Skinner 2006). Based on research in Java, Schröder-Butterfill (2004) contends that not only are older people active supporters of younger generations, but also that they provide this support without expecting reciprocal assistance in return, following social norms that dictate that older people should be 'never heartless' (p523) towards children. Meanwhile in urban Cochabamba in Bolivia, Bastia (2009) emphasises that grandmothers play a crucial, but unrecognised, role in caring for the children of absent migrants.

The idea of older people being productive and resourceful family members who contribute to younger generations has been employed by the NGO HelpAge International to advocate in favour of non-contributory pensions. HelpAge argues that non-contributory pensions are likely to have progressive impacts in developing countries, because 'not only do social pensions reduce later life poverty but they also reduce intergenerational poverty' and that 'pension income is spent on children in the household, leading to significant improvements in their education and health' (HelpAge 2014). In Bolivia, for example, the Bonosol programme which

preceded the Renta Dignidad was defended partly on the basis that it is a 'prudent investment', benefiting not just the recipients but also their families and the broader economy (Aponte et al 2007). Thus, while older persons' advocates criticise approaches that prioritise younger age groups on the basis of 'purely instrumental' concerns[6] and defend 'the intrinsic value of whole lives' (Barrientos et al. 2003), the contributions that older people can make to the lives of younger age groups is itself useful for bolstering the case for pensions (see also Gorman 1995; Gorman and Heslop 2002).

The danger here is that, instead of attempting to contribute to broad-based discussions about the relative needs, visions and interests of different population groups, a number of development sector professionals and academics are in fact attempting to elevate one particular section of the poor as the most 'deserving'. Most of the time this is done implicitly, through one-sided portrayals of the given population group. In some other cases, however, the competition between sectors is quite explicit. In Bolivia, while research financed by HelpAge International (Salazar de la Torre 2011; Castro Mantilla 2011; Medinacelli 2011; Escobar 2014) insists that rural, older indigenous women are the poorest and most vulnerable of the population, researchers from the think-tank INESAD argue that younger peri-urban families 'are much more likely' than older families to be vulnerable, and complain that the former have benefited excessively from development interventions (Andersen et al. 2014). At worst, these discussions can appear to be playing groups of the poor off against each other. While any of the sectors could argue that their approach is justified as a necessary corrective to the excessive sectorialism of a different group of professionals, there is a danger that this generates a self-perpetuating logic, and stymies an honest discussion about the relative situation of different population groups. These advocacy positions could even lead to major misallocations of development funds that are harmful for the poor, as Barder (2009) argues.

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[6] In particular, the concept of disability adjusted life years (DALYs) has been criticised for explicitly undervaluing the importance of older people (Barrientos et al 2003).

One area where it could be argued that sectorialist approaches have prevented a holistic analysis of the situation from emerging is with regards to the issues of family relations and abuse of older people. In the literature on older people, references to abuse or maltreatment of older people focus exclusively on the role of younger people as perpetrators of abuse, neglect or disappointment (e.g. James 1992; Oddone 2001; Heslop and Gorman 2002; Barrientos et al. 2003; Lloyd-Sherlock and Locke 2008; Salazar de la Torre 2011; Castro Mantilla 2011), missing the possibility that other older people could also be perpetrators of abuse. Therefore, in spite of defending the 'agency' of older people and also critiquing the 'segmentation' of people's lives into different age groups (Barrientos et al. 2003), gerontologist research implicitly maintains a segmentation of age groups, and denies agency to older people by framing them solely as the victims of abuse. In this way, while researchers of older people display an admirable pragmatism with regards to the limits of informal support systems and networks provided by younger generations, this pragmatism is not extended to older people themselves, who are generally portrayed as being a convenient combination of needy, resourceful, and altruistic.

As a result, in spite of general agreement in a number of societies on the role of men in controlling a larger share of household resources, having greater opportunities for self-gratification, and in many cases being responsible for domestic abuse (Kabeer and Joekes 1991; Chant 1998; Chant 2002), in the study of later life the 'oppressive male' often disappears from sight. Therefore, whilst on the one hand feminist research focuses mainly on younger women, thereby invisibilising the experiences of older women (Varley 2013), much gerontologist research is weak on gender inequalities, contributing to the idea that older people themselves are blameless in household disputes. As we will see, this omission is unjustifiable, and leaves unanswered a question that is vital for understanding the wellbeing of older people in a number of contexts: what happens to violent or abusive relationships as couples get older? Even if it is the case that older men are less likely to be violent than younger ones, a legacy of physical violence and/or verbal abuse is likely to be relevant for wellbeing as couples age together.

Therefore, what is required when studying any vulnerable population group is an open discussion not only of factors which have sympathetic connotations for the group of concern (such as poverty, vulnerability, agency, resourcefulness, and exclusion from policymaking) but also those which do not. There is no question that the approach of researchers examining later life and development in the last decade and a half has been effective in assuming the necessary task of critiquing assumptions that were often wrong, and which may have been harmful to the interests of older people. This may have contributed to the proliferation of non-contributory pensions across the developing world, which we will see generally appear to have 'progressive' impacts and have not, as yet, generated a political backlash against them. However there is a clear danger that by siding with older people vis-à-vis the rest of the population, researchers overlook areas either where older people are less vulnerable, or where they might come across looking less sympathetic.

This is particularly relevant at the moment, where there is evidence that, at least in some middle-income countries, older people may be enjoying more financial security than younger age groups. As we have seen previously, later life is increasingly associated with greater financial security in Brazil (Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2012a), while material living standards and life satisfaction of older people has also improved significantly in South Africa (Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2012b). Meanwhile, younger age groups are more likely to suffer from unemployment and lack of opportunities, and could in fact be facing greater levels of financial insecurity (Cotlear and Tornarolli 2011; Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2012a). Thus there may be a need to 'update' understandings of the lives of older people that move beyond strategic arguments that insinuate that they are the 'deserving poor', and place their situation more objectively within the broader context of social change. This would contribute to a more balanced understanding of the role of older people in rapidly changing societies, and would assist policymakers to consider the wellbeing of older people.

2.5. Wellbeing and Development

As I have outlined in the Introduction, my original focus was on climate change, but in the field it became clear that this was too narrow to understand the full range of impacts of the Renta Dignidad. Therefore, when analysing the data, I used the alternative concept of wellbeing as a tool to understand it.

The study of wellbeing in development has been a focus of growing interest in recent years as researchers attempt to bring together different strands of development philosophy, and link them more closely with empirical research (Gough et al 2006; McGregor 2006). The Wellbeing in Developing Countries' (WeD) research group at the University of Bath has developed a theoretical framework for wellbeing by building on three earlier analytical frameworks for understanding wellbeing, namely human need theory, the resource profiles framework and quality of life research framework. The WeD framework therefore goes beyond many traditional approaches to wellbeing that often implicitly viewed it strictly in terms of material consumption, and which have always been vulnerable to the criticism of being reductionist and having a narrow view of human motivation. In the 1940s, Simon pointed out that for most people, 'economic gain is not usually an end in itself, but a means of attaining more final ends: security, comfort, and prestige' (Simon 1997, p223). Sen builds on this point, arguing that processes of development should go beyond focusing on people's material assets and aim to increase the freedoms they enjoy (Sen 1999). At the same time, the WeD also avoids the trap of viewing wellbeing solely in utilitarian terms (e.g. Layard 2006), an approach which overlooks the role of unequal power relations and processes of adaptation in constructing subjective wellbeing (Nussbaum 2001; Qizilbash 2006).

The WeD framework, without attempting to substitute 'poverty' as a focus of development, aims to takes into account the aspirations of poor people themselves while also acknowledging that wellbeing is a 'state of being that arises from the dynamic interplay of outcomes and

processes' (McGregor 2006, p3). According to McGregor and Sumner, wellbeing is comprised of the interplay between three key dimensions: the material, the relational, and the subjective (Gough and McGregor 2007). The material element takes into account the more conventional 'dimensions' of development (relating to income, education, and health). Meanwhile, relational wellbeing is included to reject the methodological individualism underpinning much conventional development thinking. Acknowledging relational wellbeing goes beyond simply recognising the fact that humans have to cooperate to achieve given objectives, but emphasises rather that humans themselves are constituted by social relations. As Sayer argues, even individualist perspectives are themselves the products of social relations (Sayer 2011). It is not the case that humans are first individuals and then form social relationships, but rather they themselves are 'socially constituted' (Sayer 2011). Finally, the subjective aspect acknowledges the reality that humans' wellbeing is not simply generated by a set of objective resources, goals, or processes which they are involved in, but rather with the specific meanings which they themselves attach to these (McGregor 2006). This aspect is always culturally defined and therefore underpinned by broader systems of norms, rules and values, which vary across societies. Thus, analyses of wellbeing need to ascribe central importance to the roles of culture and values (ibid). Without embracing cultural relativism, the WeD group avoid proscribing particular values that should underpin wellbeing as Nussbaum (2000) has done, arguing that there is rarely likely to be cross-cultural support for a 'thick' set of normative values (Gough 2003; Gough et al 2006).

The three aspects of wellbeing are not, it must be emphasised, discrete spheres which are separate from one another. For example even apparently material elements, such as food or housing, are likely to be produced and consumed by humans living in broader social relationships, who may appreciate them in very different, subjective ways. Therefore, it needs to be recognised that the three areas of wellbeing are 'co-evolving, interdependent and dynamically interacting' (McGregor and Sumner 2010, p106).

By taking this broad and dynamic concept of wellbeing, the WeD group's approach shares Sen's opposition to the notion that a person's command over commodities or income alone could explain their levels of wellbeing (Sen 1999). However, the WeD approach parts ways with Sen by avoiding its ethical individualism and placing a stronger emphasis on the collective aspect of people's wellbeing. This also requires abandoning the assumption, often implicit in much of social science, that human actions are ultimately driven by some form of individual self-interest (Sayer 2011). Although this claim appears uncontroversial, Sayer points out that accounts which view human behaviour in such narrow terms – whereby even apparently altruistic acts are only hiding a deeper, self-interested calculation – persist in some parts of social science (Sayer 2011). This is in spite of the fact that few social scientists would accept such an explanation of their own actions and motivations. At the same time, wellbeing is often influenced by conflictive processes that affect those who manage to 'live well' and those who do not (Deneulin and McGregor 2010). Thus, a focus on wellbeing necessarily entails understanding inter-person relationships and also trade-offs, because while people's ability to live well together is likely to depend on their ability to accommodate each other's 'systems of meaning and value', in practice there are always likely to be tensions between different individuals and groups who dispute these systems (ibid). This also means understanding why it is that particular groups of people seem to be particularly vulnerable to 'wellbeing failures', which occur when people are denied opportunities for wellbeing, in some cases due to idiosyncratic causes but more commonly due to structural inequalities and injustices (Devereux and McGregor 2014). These issues are important to consider because, as we will see in the following chapters, rural livelihoods in the *Altiplano* are characterised by relatively high levels of tension and conflict at the community and household levels, as different individuals and groups look to advance their own wellbeing, sometimes at the expense of others.

The ways in which people understand wellbeing and give meaning to their own life goals are often determined by values. Deneulin (2009) argues that powerful groups in society are likely to promote particular values that privilege their vision and interests, meaning that changing those

values is likely to require confrontation and struggle. This struggle may occur through open confrontation or through more indirect means. In order to challenge dominant values at the local level, however, actors need to have a degree of 'critical autonomy', which is defined as 'the capacity to situate the form of life one grows up in, to criticise it and, if necessary, to act to change it' (Gough et al 2004, p302). In order to have critical autonomy, individuals need both the capacity to exercise critical agency, and also to operate in a context where the social preconditions allow them to do so (ibid). A case in point is the rise of Evangelism in much of Latin America and its popularity among women who embrace the values of Evangelism and encourage their husbands to convert in order to counteract 'traditional' patriarchal values that are harmful for women (Gill 1990; Brusco 1993; Drogus 1998; Lazar 2008). According to these accounts, Evangelism might be considered to be increasing women's critical autonomy by providing them with an accessible set of values that allows them to challenge dominant norms within the household. As we will see in Chapters 4 and 6, this indirect contestation of values is a key factor impinging on the wellbeing of many older people in the communities of this study.

People's understandings of their own wellbeing are likely to be highly responsive to particular social conditions, leading to discussions of the concept of 'adaptive preferences', whereby people's preferences and expectations for particular ways of life and levels of life satisfaction are responsive to the social contexts in which they have lived (e.g. Qizilbash 1997; Nussbaum 2001; Lukes 2005; Qizilbash 2006; Clark 2007; Deneulin and McGregor 2010). This is not an inherently 'bad' thing, because as Nussbaum points out, it is often important for people to be able to make realistic assessments of types of lives they may lead (Nussbaum 2001). Adaptive preferences become a problem, however, if poor and relatively powerless actors systematically adjust their expectations downwards in response to chronic adverse circumstances or structural inequality, thereby reproducing their own subordination and normalising their poverty and exclusion (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2001). This could also operate at the level of people's tastes and cultural preferences, which Bourdieu argues may be 'tastes of necessity' or 'internalised necessities', whereby preferences are generated by systems of dispositions ('the habitus') that

are themselves structured by broader social contexts ('the field') (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1984). For Bourdieu, 'dominated agents' are therefore likely to adjust their expectations to their objective chances of attaining particular goals and lifestyles and as a result celebrate values which fall within the constraints imposed on them by unequal social structures, such as being 'modest', 'humble' and 'obscure' (Bourdieu 1984, p471).

The 'adaptive preference' argument, which was strongly made by Sen and Nussbaum, has in turn been questioned for being 'paternalistic' (Layard 2006), and some see it as being akin to the concept of 'false consciousness', whereby dominated groups misunderstand their own 'underlying/hidden' interests (Deneulin and McGregor 2010). As Qizilbash (2006) points out, Nussbaum herself advocates 'moral education' for dominated actors (women in particular), so that their desires can be properly informed according to a particular set of (liberal) values, and this suggestion is potentially paternalist. Clark (2007) argues that the popularity of the idea of the 'adaptive preference' is likely to be due to latent elitism among some development professionals who are reluctant to acknowledge the agency of the poor in developing their own concepts of wellbeing.

However, while there are valid preoccupations that the concept of 'adaptation' may be employed to deny the agency of poorer groups from defining their own concepts of wellbeing, ignoring the adaptive nature of aspirations and desires risks overlooking the fact that the subjective understandings people have of their lives are changeable (Deneulin and McGregor 2010). In extreme cases, such adaptations may be necessary in order for poor people to deal with their marginalisation, yet simultaneously constitute obstacles preventing them from moving out of poverty, as was argued by Oscar Lewis in his controversial 'Culture of Poverty' theory (Lewis 1966). Although his theory is generally unpopular within academia, some of his key ideas have been vindicated by further evidence, namely that childhood poverty can cause psychological adaptations which are at some level necessary for survival but at the same time may constitute obstacles for people in the future (Fell and Hewstone 2015). By contrast,

celebrating the understandings of wellbeing that may be held by poor and excluded groups of people without explicitly acknowledging the role of inequality and injustice in generating those particular understandings of wellbeing in the first place runs the risk of romanticisation and thus overlooking the structural issues which generate different understandings of wellbeing. Therefore when studying a group whose culture has largely been developed in conditions of economic deprivation, exclusion and exploitation, as is the case with this study, it is necessary to acknowledge the possibility that the values held by actors may be the result of some degree of 'adaptive preferences' (Qizilbash 1997; Lukes 2005; Clark 2007; Deneulin and Macgregor 2010). Moreover, as we shall see, the adaptive nature of wellbeing also has major relevance for discussions of *vivir bien* in the Andes.

2.6. Indigenous People and *Vivir Bien* in the Andes

Any attempt to understand wellbeing in the rural Andes needs to engage with alternative formulations of wellbeing which are frequently ascribed to the indigenous people living there. For a number of years, various scholars have promoted the idea that indigenous people and peasants have a set of values and aspirations that are fundamentally different from those of Western and non-indigenous society (e.g. Temple 1983; Apfell-Marglin and PRATEC 1999). This idea has contributed to the belief that indigenous concepts of wellbeing could underpin an alternative paradigm for wellbeing, often called *vivir bien* (to 'live well')[7], which is advocated as an alternative to both neoliberal capitalism and to development paradigms that prioritise increasing material consumption and are therefore environmentally unsustainable (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 2009; Acosta 2010; Albó 2011; Medina 2011; Gudynas 2011). *Vivir bien* also has roots in postdevelopment critiques of the development paradigm (Escobar 1995; Rahnema and Illich 1998), and is seen by Thomson (2011) as being consistent with Western non-mainstream concepts such as degrowth and ecological socialism.

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[7] In some countries this is referred to as *buen vivir*. These are usually claimed to be a translation of the *suma qamaña* in Aymara or *sumak kawsay* in Quechua.

Vivir bien is described by its intellectual proponents as based around particular aspirations and understanding of wellbeing which are said to be held by indigenous and peasant groups. According to Albó, people from the Aymara linguistic group in Bolivia talk about 'living well' rather than 'living better' because they are not interested in having a higher standard of living than anybody else and because the latter implies living at the cost of other people's wellbeing (Albó 2011, p135). Medina argues that in contrast to western concepts which (allegedly) exclude 'work' from the meaning of 'the good life', viewing it as a form of punishment,[8] Andean concepts view work as something 'good and positive', representing 'contemplation, meditation and celebration' (Medina 2011, p55, author's translation). Meanwhile Gudynas, citing Yampara, says that *vivir bien* is:

> not restricted to material well-being, as expressed in the ownership of property or consumption at the heart of capitalist societies, but is a harmonious balance between material and spiritual components, which is only possible in the specific context of a community, which is social but also ecological (Gudynas 2011a, p444).

The idea that there is something fundamentally different about the motivations of indigenous people is not a new one, and can be traced back to colonial times (Ramos 1998; Mann 2005). On conquering new territories in the Americas, colonialists mistakenly believed that native peoples had made little impact on their natural environments, something which was considered to be a sign of backwardness, and was used to justify the seizure of lands (Mann 2005). In the 1990s, this idea was resuscitated and imbued with positive values, as environmental and pro-indigenous activists argued that indigenous people had always aspired to live in harmony with nature (Ramos 1998; Mann 2005). At the same time the idea that indigenous people are

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[8] This stereotyping probably emerges from conflating neoclassical economic theory with all Western thinking. Marxist and Anarchist theories in particular emphasise the possibility of work as a means of allowing human beings to express their creativities. See Chang (2014) for a summary of economic theories and attitudes for work, or Chomsky (1970) for a discussion of socialist and anarchist thinking on labour.

relatively unconcerned with material interests runs counter to much historical thinking on human motivation, given that they are usually among the poorest members of their societies and it has often been thought that poorer people would be more concerned with material interests than non-poor groups (see Galbraith 1971).

The idea that peasant and indigenous groups hold different motivations from those characterising Western culture has historically been popular in certain anthropological and activist circles, particularly those associated with indigenous rights and environmentalism (Starn 1991; Ramos 1998; Spedding and Llanos 1999). Isbell (1985), for instance, argues that Quechua peasants in the Peruvian highlands were not interested in improving their material living standards, but rather in maintaining their autonomy from the outside world (see Starn 1991 for a critique). Such claims raise the previously discussed problem of the 'adaptive preference', because even if one accepts Isbell's conclusions regarding the aspirations of Quechua peasants, these could simply have been the outcome of an adaptation to the severe structural constraints preventing peasants from becoming socially mobile. Indeed there is evidence that many of the people who remain in smallholder agriculture in the Andes do so because they have had no other alternative, rather than because they have deliberately rejected social mobility and material accumulation (Bebbington et al 2007).

As well as the dangers of ignoring the possibility of an adaptive preference, attributing particular values to certain ethnicities risks fomenting static views on culture, values, and wellbeing, which struggle to deal with evidence of social change (Spedding and Llanos 1999; Spedding 2010b; Stefanoni 2012). Spedding and Llanos (1999) remark that in much anthropological work in the past, when peasant or indigenous people have been found to be acting in ways that depart from idealised norms (e.g. by migrating, making money, damaging the environment, converting to Evangelism, eating pasta), the classic interpretation has been to

de-legitimise them as 'inauthentic' indigenous people.[9] Alternatively, modernisation is often presented as being caused by external forces and actors that encroach on communities from the outside, de-structuring them and creating havoc with the traditional way of living which is claimed to have been harmonious with nature, egalitarian, and based on reciprocity (Spedding and Llanos 1999; Arnold et al. 2009; Spedding 2010b). Thus, there is a real danger of forgetting the notion that 'societies and their cultures are constantly in flux' and that 'people in all societies frequently engage in the renegotiation of meaning in their efforts to address new challenges' (McGregor 2006, p13).

Even when the behaviour of indigenous people does appear to differ significantly from Western concepts, Spedding (2010a) argues that this is not necessarily due to a fundamentally different set of priorities or rationales. For example, traditional rituals may occasionally be used to ensure desirable rainfall patterns, but they are still employed on an experimental basis, and where possible in conjunction with the use of modern irrigation infrastructure (ibid). Similarly, in a recent critique of postcolonial theory, Chibber points out that while many peasant societies place a high value on collective organisation and social relations, this is heavily driven by material interests, because the harsh realities of surviving in rural areas force people to maintain strong relational ties with their community (Chibber 2013). Spedding argues that any empirically grounded attempt to establish elements of wellbeing that are valuable to peasant and indigenous groups is likely to move the discussion towards aspirations such as the desire to own one's own house, or to have stable, formal sector jobs with social benefits (Spedding 2010a).[10] These aspirations do not suggest a fundamentally different cosmovision and can easily be fitted into existing Western theories on wellbeing.

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[9] This approach is increasingly pursued by elements of the left-indigenist-environmentalist intelligentsia in Bolivia, who according to the Bolivian Vice-President Álvaro Garcia Linera often juxtapose highland-dwelling 'peasants', who are increasingly viewed as being capitalist, predatory and environmentally destructive, with the 'indigenous people' of the Amazonian region. The latter, by virtue of being less integrated in capitalist processes and national society (facts which are hard to separate from the parallel reality that they tend to be poorer and less powerful), are framed as being motivated by alternative cosmovisions, and harmonious in their relationships with the environment (see Garcia Linera 2012b).
[10] See also similar findings in Crabtree and Chaplin's (2014) discussion of concepts of *vivir bien* in the city of El Alto.

In spite of its academic limitations, the concept of *vivir bien* has attained a high level of popularity among academics, NGOs, and some government agencies in Andean countries in the last decade. It owes its rise to prominence largely to a particular group of urban-based Bolivian intellectuals, some of whom are Aymara, who were sponsored in 2001 by the German development agency, GTZ, to construct an understanding of wellbeing which would be appropriate to indigenous people (Calestani 2013). In Aymara it translates as *suma qamaña*, although it must be emphasised that this translation was constructed by translating the Castilian Spanish expression *vivir bien* into Aymara, rather than through translating an existing Aymara term into Spanish. As Spedding shows, the term *suma qamaña* is not part of daily Aymara language and does not actually make much sense (Spedding 2010a). *Vivir bien*, therefore, did not emerge precisely 'from below', or from the Aymara or Quechua smallholder peasants it purports to represent. It then achieved greater stature through its virtually wholesale adoption by much of the NGO community in the Andes,[11] and its further promotion by academics seeking to pressurise leftist governments arriving to power in Bolivia and Ecuador (where it is known as *buen vivir*) to avoid environmentally destructive paths of development. This culminated in its formal, recognition in the new constitutions of these countries and its incorporation into numerous policy documents of these governments, albeit with a significant dose of tokenism.

The extent to which *vivir bien* is an intellectual construct is well summed up by an anecdote related by critic Carlos Macusaya (Macusaya 2015). According to Macusaya, a foreign researcher decided to do a project on *vivir bien* in El Alto, a city mainly made up of people of Aymara origins, in order to understand more about its meaning. They began by asking a group of younger people about it, who responded that it was, as the researcher had expected, about rediscovering the values held by their grandparents and ancestors. However when the researcher asked the parents and grandparents themselves, they said that they had not heard of it before,

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[11] As Fabricant (2013) notes, NGOs such as Oxfam have increasingly come to discursively root much of their development work in Bolivia in 'ethno-territorial models' seeking to legitimise what are perceived to be 'authentic' indigenous identities.

and told the researcher to ask their children and grandchildren because they were studying and might know (Macusaya 2015). This illustrates the reality that *vivir bien* is not actually based on the knowledge and identity of previous generations of indigenous people, but is rather a fashionable discourse encouraged by certain NGOs and educational institutions.

In addition to understanding the roots of *vivir bien*, it is also important to assess its political implications. In particular, the idea that indigenous and peasant groups are motivated by a set of principles that are fundamentally different from those which motivate people in Western society is politically controversial, because the concept of *vivir bien* is frequently employed to oppose oil, mining and in some cases road projects in Bolivia and Ecuador (see, for example, Gudynas 2009). Indeed, Gudynas suggests that social programmes financed by resource extraction (such as the Renta Dignidad) are inimical to *vivir bien* regardless of whatever positive social impacts they may have, because they depend on deepening fossil fuel extraction (Gudynas 2011b). Interpretations such as this have been opposed by the leftist Ecuadorian and Bolivian governments, who, as we have seen, have incorporated *vivir bien* into their policy documents. They argue that the assumption that this should entail opposition to large-scale extractive activities is flawed, because that would entail limiting the amount of resources to fund development projects.[12] This stance is not particularly surprising, given the fact that large numbers of the people who are indigenous or of indigenous descent in Bolivia (whose votes are essential for the government) are in some way dependent on resource extraction (Fabricant 2013). These governments have in fact mobilised *vivir bien* to strengthen a narrative in favour of the exploitation of non-renewable resources in order to achieve poverty reduction and social justice.[13] In Bolivia, although the Foreign Minister and President Evo Morales's speeches in international conferences often appeal to rather idealistic interpretations of *vivir bien*, in

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[12] See, for example, the section of Bolivian Vice-President Álvaro Garcia Linera's interview with Atilio Boron regarding 'mining and *vivir bien'* (Garcia Linera 2012a).

[13] See, for example, Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa's speech '...so we have to take advantage of our resources appropriately. There are people who want us to keep living in misery and think that is 'Buen vivir'. That is not buen vivir, poverty is not buen vivir, the base of buen vivir is to have overcome poverty' (Correa 2013, p38) [My translation].

domestic policy the government mainly uses the term to lend justification to 'conventional' development interventions such as building roads, improving healthcare, and encouraging people to pay taxes.[14]

This official interpretation of *vivir bien*, and in particular its defence of oil, gas and mining activities has in turn led to accusations that they have ignored or excluded indigenous understandings of wellbeing. These criticisms have become popular in sections of the intelligentsia in Bolivia and Ecuador (Gudynas 2011b), and among foreign activists and academics who had seen *vivir bien* as a necessary and audacious alternative to environmentally destructive development paradigms (see, for example, the criticisms of the Correa and Morales governments in Deneulin 2012 and Klein 2014). Thus the validity of *vivir bien*, and arguments about how it should be interpreted, are not simply questions of academic debate but have political implications relating to the development pathways of Andean countries.

2.7. Indigenous People and Peasants, Wellbeing, and Generational Differences

All of the pitfalls regarding wellbeing and social change in the rural Andes become arguably more pertinent given that a significant part of this study will focus on older people. In rural societies, people in later life are generally perceived to be more closely linked to agriculture and 'traditional' culture in comparison to younger people who may aspire to move out of agriculture, meaning some research in rural areas can favour the visions of older people, and/or miss younger people out altogether. According to Starn (1991), many anthropologists operating in Peru in the 1960s and 1970s, in their zeal to discover 'traditional' communities and practices,

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[14] See, for example, the advertisement of the Bolivian tax collection office, which uses the slogan 'with the payment of your taxes we keep growing, to live well' (Impuestos Nacionales), or from the Ministry of Health and Sports which highlights 'health, a right to live well', (Ministerio de Salud y Deportes 2012) [My translation]. Stefanoni (2012) notes that Morales's speeches directed at domestic audiences rarely refer to the term at all and never to the romantic interpretations of it, focusing instead on public works and projects.

failed to identify a generation of younger people who chafed under poverty and limited opportunities.

In this study, which will focus strongly on the values held by people in later life, it is important to understand not only the values they hold but also to analyse the way in which these are constructed and contested over time. In the literature of the Andes, where researchers have considered generational differences in values and understandings of wellbeing, they have often concluded that there are major differences across generations, and that these are largely due to differences in access to formal education. Drawing on discussions with older people over three decades, Canessa (2008) argues that they share world views that are closely linked to agricultural work, a profound knowledge of history and ancestral myths, and a strong sense of ethnic identity. By contrast, younger people, who have been influenced by the ideological nature of formal education which promotes urban concepts of 'modernity', appear to have no interest in ancestral myths and aspire to leave the village at the earliest possible opportunity (ibid). Canessa's view is partly supported by Zoomers, who argues:

> In many communities, before the arrival of the NGOs, the word poverty was hardly used. When poverty is mentioned, there is a clear difference in perception by the different generations. For the older generation, poverty often does not exist: someone is poor because they do not work, poor because they want to be, because if someone wants to eat and dress well, the land supplies them; it is a question of knowing how to work. It is the younger generation which speaks about poverty (Zoomers 2006, p1035).

Zoomers (2006, p1037) does qualify this by showing that different communities have tended to have their own classifications of wealth (e.g. who has a house in an urban area, who has better education, etc.), suggesting that even if older people do not refer to poverty directly, concerns about material wealth nonetheless predate the arrival of NGOs and discourses about poverty. Even so, both Canessa and Zoomers seem to agree that younger generations are fundamentally

more likely to prioritise material living standards and 'modern' concepts of wellbeing than older people.

More broadly, it is clear that different generations are likely to share distinct values, based on access to varying ideas, expectations and possibilities, and indeed this has been found in a number of contexts (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Spedding and Llanos 1999; Jackson 2011; Leavy and Hossain 2014). Spedding and Llanos (1999) find key differences across generations in highland Bolivia due to the experience of education, which privileges urban lifestyles and leads younger people to have a sense of superiority vis-à-vis their parents. Thus, assessing not only changes in attitudes but also the sources and possible outcomes of any changes must be a key task for any assessment of concepts of wellbeing.

However, the fact that there may be major differences in the stated aspirations and discourses of different generations still leaves some key questions unanswered, and there is a need for qualification. Firstly, it is important to note that people's discourses are often contradictory, and people might say and do quite distinct things in certain moments (Spedding and Llanos 1999; Canessa 2007), suggesting a need for caution when interpreting them. Second, it is unclear if generational differences in attitudes towards poverty, land and traditions would be due to growing up in particular generations, or due to preferences that adjust in later life. Older ethnographic work in the Bolivian *Altiplano*, such as that by Carter and Mamani (1982), shows that there were also major distinctions between generations several decades ago, when the school system was also said to lead young people to become arrogant, attracted to urban livelihoods, and ashamed of particular traditional customs. Thus it is possible that those older people who may appear to Canessa and Zoomers to be the embodiment of 'traditional' values and concepts of wellbeing were themselves both receptors and agents of 'modern' concepts of wellbeing and agents of cultural change when they were younger. Third, although at a national level in Bolivia there is a trend towards urbanisation, migration movements are far from linear. As Spedding and Llanos (1999) show, people often re-migrate to rural areas after spending time

in the city, and those who do live in the city can maintain links with their rural communities for long periods of time (see also Lockley et al 2008 for similar findings in Peru). This suggests that while people might aspire to leave their communities in a given moment of their lives, this does not necessarily entail an absolute rejection of rural livelihoods and values, and their aspirations could change at another moment, requiring any researcher to explicitly recognise the fluid nature of concepts of wellbeing.

In sum, what this review suggests is that rather than seeing changes in attitudes across generations as a fundamental dichotomy between 'traditional' values associated with the people who are currently older and the 'modern' values of younger people, it is probably best to see social change as being a continuous process where the latter are more likely to challenge established social norms and predisposed towards opportunities for change. There are also likely to be major continuities across generations as well as differences, and instances where the attitudes and actions of earlier generations facilitated those of the current 'younger' ones. Understanding the change and continuity of values across generations is important, because, as we will see in Chapter 7, these play a key role in influencing the ways in which older people understand their lives, and thus are crucial subjective determinants of wellbeing. The following chapter will now explain the methodology used for this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines in detail the ethnographic methodology which was employed for this study. In qualitative research, there is sometimes a lack of clarity over the precise details of research methods. For example, according to Nielsen and Lise D'haen (2014), many qualitative studies of responses to climate change impacts omit crucial detail, such as the amount of time spent in the field, the role of assistants, and the use or otherwise of recording devices. According to these authors, demanding more clarity does not imply imposing mandatory rules on how qualitative research is undertaken, but means that researchers do need to allow the reader to make an informed judgement of the possible advantages and disadvantages of different approaches. Similarly, understanding the advantages and limits of ethnographic work requires information about issues such as the role of research assistants (De Neve 2006) and the way in which particular respondents have been selected (Allen 1988; Canessa 2012).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a sufficient level of detail regarding the methodology that was used for this thesis. I therefore discuss first the selection of the communities in the Bolivian *Altiplano*. I next set out the ethnographic methodology and the reasons for its selection against other alternative methodologies. In the second part of the chapter, I describe the fieldwork itself, reflecting on my positionality vis-a-vis the subjects of my study, and the logistical challenges and ethical implications of the fieldwork.

3.2. Site Selection and Ethnographic Methodology

I conducted fieldwork in two rural communities in the La Paz Department of Bolivia over the course of ten months from November 2012 until September 2013.[15] I chose the first of these on the basis of my original study topic, climate change, because it was located in a municipality where three studies had identified climate change as a major threat to rural livelihoods (Chaplin 2009; Nordgren 2011; Jiménez et al. 2013). I selected the community itself because it featured in one of these studies. Meanwhile I selected Community B after consulting local contacts on the basis that it was in the same region and provided a contrast with the first community A.

I used a primarily ethnographic methodology for this study, comprised of participant observation and loosely structured interviews. Although I had not studied anthropology as part of my undergraduate studies I chose this approach in part because, in Bolivia at least, studies using ethnographic methods seemed to be among those that had gone the farthest in revealing and analysing aspects of rural life that had previously been poorly understood (for instance, Spedding 1994; Buechler and Buechler 1996; Spedding and Llanos 1999; Harris 2000a; Harris 2000b; Tassi 2012). Moreover, I was motivated by the desire to establish a level of trust with local people which would allow me and my assistant working with me to build up a rapport with older people and their family members to facilitate the collection of accurate and nuanced data. As Spedding and Llanos (1999) note, outsiders entering rural (and often urban) areas of the Andes frequently provoke rumours and suspicion of diverse types. Overcoming the mistrust of local people has long been a challenge for ethnographic researchers in the Andes, who have had to confront accusations of working for the CIA (Isbell 1985; Starn 1994), of causing droughts, or being *kharisiris*[16] (Abercrombie 1989; Harris 2000), gold diggers (Isbell 1985; Spedding and Llanos 1999) or tax collectors (Isbell 1985; Abercrombie 1989). Conversations with other

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[15] In order to ensure the absolute anonymity of all of the research participants, all local and regional place names are omitted from the thesis. The communities will be referred to as 'A' and 'B', the largest town in the region (where the main market is) will be referred to as 'the intermediate city', while the two small towns that are close to Communities A and B will be referred to as 'the small town' or 'the local town'.

[16] *Kharisiris* are people who steal people's fat for their own purposes. They are said to exist in the region where I studied, and sell the fat to hospitals, although I was never accused of being one.

researchers and with the assistants I worked with confirmed the view that gaining trust would be particularly important given that I was studying areas relating to household economies, and ethnographic methods would be the most appropriate way to achieve this.

3.3. Alternative Methodological Techniques

Ethnographic methods are not the only techniques that could be used for researching the Renta Dignidad and climate change or wellbeing. As White and Jha note, most studies to date on subjective wellbeing have been done using highly quantitative methods (White and Jha 2014). This allows researchers to make generalised statements about factors contributing to wellbeing in particular contexts while controlling for other factors, as well as comparing wellbeing across different countries. However, the use of quantitative methods is also limited because many aspects of wellbeing cannot be reduced to 'points on a scale', and such methods can obscure major cultural differences in how people respond to questionnaires, tempting researchers to compare statistics without adequately contextualising responses (ibid). In addition to quantitative methods, a series of other techniques are available to researchers investigating wellbeing, and these will be outlined here.

Different techniques are not mututally exclusive indeed there has been a proliferation in the use of mixed methods to combine nuanced understandings of local wellbeing with empirical tests to find broader trends. For example, in Peru, a research team has used mixed methods involving initial qualitative research by anthropologists living in communities for over a year to establish the profiles of different communities, surveys to establish levels of poverty, semi-structured interviews on attitudes to wellbeing, and then further surveys to attempt to quantify findings (Copestake 2008). These surveys (known as WeDQoL) are then used to identify the relative importance and satisfaction of different goals (e.g. 'a place to live better') and their components (such as a 'clean and nice environment'). Modelling can then be used to estimate relationships between different variables. Meanwhile, in a study of older persons' wellbeing in urban La Paz,

Skinner uses a combination of surveys, focus group discussions and life histories to investigate different aspects of wellbeing. Aware that statistics may conceal or simplify the nature of older peoples' poverty, Skinner uses qualitative techniques to explore the social constructions behind exclusion and vulnerability, and quantitative data to provide a context within which to place her findings (Skinner 2006, p83). In some cases, using mixed methods may provide contradictory results, as in the case of Davis and Baulch's study in Bangladesh, where quantitative surveys lead to positive results and qualitative ones picked up more aspects of illbeing (Davis and Baulch 2011, p132, cited in White and Jha 2014). Meanwhile, Camfield and her colleagues found discrepancies between the scores people assign to areas of their own lives and what they say in interviews, suggesting people would be more willing to open up about more negative aspects in interviews when they can build rapport with researchers or feel that they can contextualise their answers (Camfield et al. 2009, cited in White and Jha 2014). Thus there is a case for considering a broad range of methodological techniques when researching wellbeing.

3.3.1. Socio-Economic Household Surveys

Some studies on wellbeing that contain a strong qualitative element nonetheless use surveys in order to provide background data. For example, in wellbeing studies, surveys can be used to establish basic demographic information on households and to provide a baseline for resource distributions and levels of needs satisfaction in given households (McGregor et al. 2007). Where data are missing, complementary household surveys may be necessary to collect information on the social and cultural context which is often missed in standard surveys, and in order to collect information on a larger sample of households within selected communities (McGregor et al. 2007).

The challenges of using household surveys lie in the danger of the researchers coming across as being too direct and intrusive, leading either to mistrust or to misleading answers. This has occurred in some cases in the Andes when ethnographic researchers have attempted to conduct

surveys (such as Isbell 1985, p9; Carter 1964, p4; Spedding 1994, p204). Many of the challenges in collecting data relating to wealth arise from people's sensitivity about sharing information which have relevance to their wealth and household economy (Spedding 2010a). This may even be the case when the surveys focus on apparently innocuous issues relating to household size or assets because they may carry implications for wealth and could be used in tax assessments (Goldstein 2004, p43). In her survey of older people in urban La Paz, Skinner (2006) reports that people were extremely suspicious of her efforts to collect data, particularly regarding wealth, and many of the poorest people refused to participate.

None of this means that it is impossible to undertake surveys on some basic areas of people's lives, particularly after spending some time in the communities. After all, previous investigators have managed to collect data from Andean communities, even after their early efforts had been rebuffed. Skinner, for example, did manage to collect crucial data regarding patterns of living arrangements, family networks and exchanges of resources and services (Skinner 2006). Meanwhile, surveys can have unexpected outcomes, as was the case with Spedding's survey on productivity levels of coca in the Yungas. Whilst this was not helpful for actually determining how much people were producing, it did help her find out what people thought the socially acceptable 'norm' for productivity was (Spedding 1994, p204).

3.3.2. *Focus Group Discussions*

Focus group discussions (FGDs) have been used frequently in Bolivia to assess aspects of rural change, particularly climate change, usually as part of relatively small investigations lasting a few weeks (e.g. Chaplin 2009; Nordgren 2011; Balderrama Mariscal et al 2011). They have also been employed as part of studies on older persons' wellbeing (Skinner 2006).

Skinner (2006) uses focus group discussions to gather multiple views and opinions in a relatively short time frame, revealing not only people's behaviours and motivations but also the

factors which influence them. FGDs also facilitate potentially revealing interactions between different people and may allow excluded or discriminated groups to express their actual feelings due to the fact that they are in a group (ibid).

As with surveys, there is a danger that FGDs lead respondents to give responses according to what they believe the investigator wants to hear rather than ones which reflect reality (Spedding and Llanos 1999). Indeed, the use of FGDs in the same region as Community A to study climate change by Chaplin (2009) and Nordgren (2011) appears to have led to a rather 'catastrophic' narrative of climate change as playing a major role in destabilising peasant livelihoods, which is an exaggeration. Moreover, these studies do not capture some of the more positive developments which have occurred in livelihoods in recent decades. This danger can of course be countered by a good facilitator. FGDs do generate good opportunities to encourage people to discuss issues among themselves, but I had more than enough chances to witness this anyway through repeated observation of public meetings, *fiestas*, and informal conversations between different *comunarios*.

3.3.3. Life Histories

Many qualitative studies of wellbeing in later life use life histories to study individuals' life trajectories, revealing how their wellbeing in later life is influenced by events in their past (Slater 2000; Skinner 2006; Lloyd-Sherlock and Locke 2008). While life histories have been used in the past in development studies for understanding precisely the ways in which people interpret changing experiences, they can also be used for giving value to subjective life accounts in terms of what they reveal about wider institutional changes (Lloyd-Sherlock and Locke 2008). Life histories can also play a key role in humanising people's experiences of events, showing precisely how particular events affect different people while also allowing an open-ended conversation between researcher and research participants, in some cases allowing the latter to discuss issues they may not have talked about before (Slater 2000). Virtually by

definition they do not provide a perfectly objective account, because people can often order their lives in particular ways to make them more amenable to the researcher or to find ways to justify or blame themselves for events that have occurred; but they provide rich data on how older people understand their lives.

Perhaps one of the most compelling examples of the use of a life history to investigate livelihood change in the Bolivian *Altiplano* is the Buechlers' *The World of Sofía Velasquez*, which details the life of a market trader over a period of three decades (Buechler and Buechler 1996). Although focusing on an urban-born trader who traverses rural and urban areas rather than a peasant producer, the study reveals broader changes in rural society, such as rural-urban migration, the formation and reconfiguration of informal markets, changing aspirations and understandings of wellbeing among younger people, and how people respond to fluctuating economic and political circumstances. Key to the study is the long-term relationship established between the Buechlers and Sofía, who had worked for them as a research assistant since the age of nineteen before the writing of her life history (ibid). Much of Sofía's awareness and ability to narrate her own life history is enhanced by her own familiarity with ethnographic study, which might have increased her own reflexivity. Meanwhile, the fact that the Buechlers had known her for most of her adult life meant that they were able to record aspects of her life over a long period, allowing for a high level of detail (Buechler and Buechler 1996, pxxv).

However, for the purposes of this study, the intention was to focus primarily on the impacts of the Renta Dignidad and how it interacts with a broader range of factors in the present and recent past, rather than examining in details aspects of people's lives several decades earlier. At the same time, the nature of the ethnographic work meant that many of the positive features of life histories (such as the flexibility respondents have to discuss what they feel to be important), were present in many of the conversations I had in the two communities. Moreover, relevant details about older persons' experiences of their youth were nonetheless obtained through ethnographic work.

Therefore, whilst I was aware of alternative methodological techniques, I opted for an ethnographic approach combining participant observation and semi-structured interviews, because I felt that this was the best way to build the rapport and trust necessary to acquire the necessary data. I formed this view in discussion with both of the assistants who worked with me, as well as with colleagues based in La Paz and my supervisors, all of whom expressed the view that a patient, indirect approach would ultimately be the best for learning about older people's lives and about the ways in which they used the Renta Dignidad. Because I had a full ten months to conduct fieldwork, I felt that it would be worthwhile investing in a longer-term relacionship with the villagers in the two communities and that this would reduce the dangers of generating mistrust by using more direct methodological techniques. In particular, awareness of both the legacy of distrust towards outsiders in much of the Andes and the sensitivities surrounding the household economy that I was interested in studying led me to believe that this would be the best strategy.

3.4. Fieldwork Description

A calendar of my activities during fieldwork is detailed in Table 1. The majority of the *comunarios* (and in particular the older people) in Communities A and B were generally more comfortable speaking Aymara than Spanish, and therefore it was essential for me to work with a local Aymara-speaking assistant. I was able to learn a basic level of Aymara over the course of the year, but this still did not get me to the level of being able to conduct complex conversations. In the first month I worked with an Aymara-speaking teacher from the Universidad Pública de El Alto (UPEA) university, and she helped facilitate my initial entry into the community and early interviews between October and November 2012. However, my working relationship with her rapidly deteriorated within barely a month of beginning the research, leading her to resign, and I spent the following five weeks working alone. Those five weeks were valuable in terms of getting accustomed to living in rural areas, learning some basic Aymara and establishing an initial relationship of trust with some of the *comunarios*, but the

quantity and quality of data I collected in this period were nonetheless low. Therefore in January 2013 I started working with a new assistant, who came from another rural community close to the intermediate city and was a student at a branch of the UPEA there. Although she was younger and had less professional experience than the first assistant, she had a deeper connection with the realities of rural life and regional dynamics which allowed her to develop and maintain a rapport with the *comunarios*. Thus I established a stronger and ultimately more lasting working relationship with her, and she worked with me until the end of the fieldwork period in September 2013.

Table 1: Calendar of Activities

Date	October 2012	November 2012	December 2012	January 2013
Location	La Paz	Community B, Community A	Community B, Community A	Community B, Community A, La Paz
Research Activities	Getting visa, Aymara lessons, getting access to communities.	Establishing contact with people in the community, early research with first assistant, participating in sowing potatos and *oca. Working with first assistant*	Researching alone, participating in sowing potatos and *oca,* started living in house in Community A, grazing sheep. *Working alone*	Participating in hilling, One-week trip to La Paz for Aymara lessons, presented bookstand to community. *Started working with second assistant*

Date	February 2013	March 2013	April 2013	May-13
Location	Community B, Community A, La Paz	Community B, Community A	Community B, Community A, La Paz	Community B, Community A, La Paz
Research Activities	Participated in pea harvest, carnival, one-week trip to La Paz for Aymara lessons	Participated in pea harvest, early potato harvest, observed land titling process, reunions, Easter activities	One-week trip to La Paz for Aymara lessons, potato harvest, cutting barley, going to graze sheep	Participated in potato harvest, one-week trip to La Paz for Aymara lessons, *Trinidad* fiesta in Community B

Date	June 2013	July 2013	August 2013	September 2013
Location	Community B, Community A	Community B, Community A	Community B, Community A, La Paz	Community B, Community A, La

				Paz
Research Activities	Peeling *chuño*[17], *tunta*[18]*,* grazing animals	Peeling *chuño, tunta*	10 days in La Paz writing documents to present to communities, threshing and winnowing barley and peas, attending processions, reunions	Threshing and winnowing barley, peas, presenting gifts and saying goodbye.

Early on in the fieldwork period I attempted to talk to as broad a sample of people as possible in order to assess some general trends and consider who might be the most appropriate informants for the study. I gained a clearer idea on this after two months in the field, when I started working in January with the second assistant. One convenient factor was that I began researching during the sowing season, which meant there were groups of people working in the field who I could offer to help by planting potatos and *oca*,[19] and this was a good way of introducing myself to individual families. As DeWalt and Weyland (1998) point out, participating in activities is a common way for researchers to develop familiarity with the people they are researching. In Community B, it became clear that some of the older people were not particularly poor as they had children who had become teachers, or the men had earned a living in formal labour in La Paz, allowing them to retire with a pension and return to their home community to farm in later life. In Community B, I therefore focused on households with older people who had not benefited in this way, because I was primarily interested in the poorer members of the community.

Another key factor was that in Community A there was a spare room available beside the schoolhouse where I was able to stay, whereas in Community B there was no such room available and I stayed in the church in a nearby town, walking to and from the community each day. As a result, in Community A, the fact that I was living there meant I spent approximately

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[17] Potatoes that have been freeze-dried with frosts so that they can be stored for various years.

[18] Potatoes that have been freeze-dried by leaving them in water and can also be stored for various years.

[19] Sweet-tasting tuber grown mainly for self-consumption; can also be freeze-dried to make *kaya*, which can be stored longer (1-2 years) and can be sold.

10–12 hours a day in the company of *comunarios*. On occasions when my assistant stayed in the community as well, we would spend 12–16 hours a day there (9-12 in their company). Meanwhile, in Community B we rarely spent more than eight hours a day in the community itself, and sometimes this was only four or five hours if we had a lot of note taking to do which we would do in the parish where I was living. In the long run, the fact that I was living in Community A, while in Community B I was walking to and fro each day, did make a difference to the quality of the relationships I formed and the data that I was able to collect with my research assistant.

Over the course of the fieldwork my assistant and I developed an approach to collecting data which involved a combination of relatively unstructured interviews and participant observation. This allowed us to be faithful to what White and Jha consider to be the most important aspect of qualitative research: 'to pay attention to the way that people locally were thinking and talking about their lives' (White and Jha 2014, p269). This meant participating in a number of rural activities, including sowing potatoes and *oca*, hilling potatoes, harvesting peas, potatoes, *oca*, and barley; selecting potato seed; peeling *chuño* and *tunta*; threshing peas and barley; grazing sheep and cows; and attending community reunions and *fiestas* ('traditional parties'). As Canessa (2012) notes, particular places and contexts can be more or less conducive to discussing information. In his studies over three decades, he notes that people told things to him in kitchens that they would not have talked about anywhere else because of the informal and relatively intimate nature of the space, but he learned the most about village life from conversations in fields when people took breaks from working (ibid). Meanwhile, Spedding states that in Yungas, the coca harvest (which occurs four times a year) is a site of discussion about public affairs, predominantly among women (Spedding 1994, pp163–166). The type of information discussed in the harvests depends on who is present, with public discussions of non-personal issues occurring between people who happen to be working together (for instance, the coca price), and more confidential discussions being conducted between close friends or family members about more sensitive issues (such as loans of money or people's economic wealth)

(Spedding 1994, p166). In Yungas, the latter only take place when two or three people who know each other well are working together. Between these extremes are discussions about 'semi-confidential' information that can be shared within a circle of people, but not without care (for example, regarding issues such as adultery). In harvests, which in the case of coca require relatively large groups of people, the majority of discussions are in the 'public' category', and occasionally, in the 'semi-confidential' category (Spedding 1994, p166). This draws attention to the fact that certain types of situations, and indeed certain seasons, are more likely to allow a researcher to learn certain types of information, but these are only available to somebody who is spending a long period of time in the communities themselves. Unsurprisingly, the majority of data regarding the pea trade in Community A was obtained in the months of February and March as we helped families pick peas for sale. Meanwhile, data regarding local community politics were relatively straightforward to collect, requiring us only to sit through long community meetings whenever they occurred. By contrast, data delating to household spending were far more sporadic, proffered in certain unpredictable moments when we were alone with someone with whom we had already built up a degree of trust.

Much of the most important data collected were learned by being present and participating in people's lives, rather than asking precise, direct questions. As I mentioned in the introduction, when I began the study, my intention was not to study the impact of the Renta Dignidad on wellbeing, but rather to look at climate change, and as a result we did not ask the research participants directly what they thought about wellbeing. However I do not believe that significantly more information would have been gleaned if we had done so. Canessa (2012) argues that one cannot come to understand what it means to indigenous people to be indigenous by asking them that question directly, because there is no comparable word in Aymara. The same is true for wellbeing. As we have seen in Chapter 2, although *suma qamaña* has been proposed as a term for indigenous and particularly Aymara wellbeing, it has no real meaning in Aymara (Spedding 2010a). Wellbeing, meanwhile, is embedded in virtually all aspects of people's lives, and similarly to Canessa's approach to indigeneity, understanding it requires

other insights and answers gleaned from spending time with people as they go about their daily activities. Moreover, Abercrombie notes that Aymara-speaking people are often unaccustomed or unwilling to answer a series of direct questions around a given theme, forcing even the most curious of investigators to draw back from conducting direct interviews to more patient and indirect approaches (Abercrombie 1989, p75).

We did not use recording devices or notebooks during the interviews and participant observation, but rather stored information by recall and noted it down later in the day in my house in Community A or in the parish where I was staying in the town close to Community B. The decision not to use recording devices or notebooks in the field itself was based on the view (shared by myself and both assistants) that using such tools would discourage the *comunarios* from openly sharing their views and experiences with us. Our entire ability to collect data was based on establishing trust with the *comunarios* and using notebooks or recording devices in the interviews or participant observation could have generated either suspicion, or data distorted by the constant awareness of *comunarios* that they were being monitored. In this respect our approach was similar to that of Canessa, who notes that most of his investigations in his early years of ethnographic study did not involve using recording devices but simply participating in daily conversations, at the same time as attempting to steer these conversations somewhat (Canessa 2012). The extent of this 'steering' should not be overestimated. As Canessa states, 'what people want to talk about is often far more compelling than what the anthropologist wants to talk about' (Canessa 2012, p22). Meanwhile, Allen notes that it took people several months to become accustomed to talking in front of a recording device (it is of course hard to know if their subsequent narratives were distorted by it) (Allen 1988, p40). The downside of this is that the qualitative data were remembered for a few hours before being translated into Spanish by the assistant and then into English by me. Relying on an assistant's memory of course creates risks, because as Gudeman and Rivera detail, the memory even of experienced anthropologists can be prone to 'subjective' recall (Gudeman and Rivera 1990, p6). Despite this danger, I felt it was less damaging for the research than the dangers of either scaring people into not talking to

us or not talking about certain issues for us, or feeling that they had to present a certain 'narrative' assumed to be acceptable.

3.5. Details of Informants

Table 2 details the key informants who contributed to this research in the two communities: five of whom we interviewed a considerable number of times, four whom we interviewed fairly frequently and four who we interviewed occasionally over the 10 months of the fieldwork. In addition we also frequently discussed a number of issues with people from three households with teenage children and where the parents were in their fifties, as well as regularly visiting and interviewing two younger families (with children under ten years old). Finally we also had occasional conversations with over twenty other people of varying ages during the course of the year. I also made sure that we were in Community A on the last day of every month, which is when a communal reunion is organised, in order to maintain a continued observation of broader community affairs.

Table 2: Informant Households

	Older families interviewed the most[20]	Older families interviewed frequently[21]	Older families interviewed occasionally[22]	50-59 year old hhs interviewed frequently	Young families interviewed frequently	Total
Household number	5	4	4	3	2	19
Total people in households	10	9	11	15	8	53

The 13 households with people living in later life whom we interviewed will be referred to directly in chapters 5-7, which focus on the Renta Dignidad and wellbeing of older people, using changed names. In order to do this, I am presenting the most basic detail regarding each of

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[20] Spending entire days with and eating dinner with them (in Community A) at least once a week when we were in the relevant community.
[21] Speaking with them at least once every week and spending an entire day with at least once every two weeks.
[22] Speaking with them at least once every two weeks.

the households that are referred to directly in the analysis with their changed names so that they can be referred back to later in the rest of this thesis. Meanwhile other people who did not play such a key role in the study, or who were not older people, will be not be referred to by any name. The data provided by these people will be used primarily in Chapter 4, which does not focus on the lives of older people but rather on the broader context of rural change in the two villages.

3.5.1. Household 1: Juana and Ilda (Community B)

Juana, aged 86, was living with her daughter, Ilda, aged 60. Juana's husband had died many years ago, and her other children were living in La Paz and El Alto, working as a housewife, a sheep trader, a carpenter and a construction worker. Ilda had two children by different men but her relationships with the fathers had not lasted, leaving her unmarried, a fact for which she was judged harshly by other *comunarios* of Community B and also Juana, who saw this as proof of her 'bad character'. Juana and Ilda were not producing enough food to be able to sell except infrequently and in small quantities, and they were economically dependent on money from animal sales (cows, sheep, and pigs) as well as the Renta Dignidad which was drawn by Juana and by Ilda who started withdrawing it at the end of the fieldwork period. Juana, who was also an Evangelical, was to some degree incapacitated by health problems relating to old age, complaining often about different pains, was not going far from the house frequently, with Ilda doing all of the shopping for the two of them. They had a flock of about twenty sheep, although many of these were actually owned by Ilda's siblings living elsewhere. Juana told us that they planted a lot of oats (the year I did my fieldwork) in the hope of being able to sell some of it, and she used her Renta Dignidad cash to hire a tractor to harrow the land for this purpose. Heavy rains in January and February 2013 destroyed much of the produce. Nonetheless she stated that they would attempt to grow oats for sale in the following year.

3.5.2. Household 2: Francesca and Álvaro (Community A)

Francesca, and her husband Álvaro were both aged 62 at the time of fieldwork. During fieldwork it became clear that Álvaro had nearly the most land of any of the *comunarios* in Community A, and was also known as the most hard-working. As a couple, they were known for working together extremely effectively. They both stated confidently that they had benefited significantly from the NGO interventions in the community, particularly a project which brought in improved seeds, and Álvaro had been given extra seeds as reward for his cooperation on the project. Their four children worked as policemen and/or as migrants to Brazil, and had not shown much interest in working on the land, something which preoccupied Álvaro. Francesca had converted to Evangelism some years before, while Álvaro expressed cynicism about the Evangelical church and enjoyed drinking at communal events. In the past Álvaro used to visit La Paz frequently to sell potatos and *kaya* ('freeze-dried tubers') to his *caseras* ('regular buyers'), although this had been becoming increasingly uncommon in the previous two years since Francesca got hurt by a bull while looking after it, making her reluctant to do this job alone and forcing Álvaro to stay in the community. They were continuing, however, to sell peas to the intermediaries and potatos and *kaya* in the market in the local small town. Francesca had ceased to barter in the intermediate city on Sundays since her conversion to the Evangelical church.

3.5.3. Household 3: Juan and Valentina (Community A)

Juan (approximately 68 years of age) and Valentina (approximately 70) lived in Community A. Although Valentina often said that she 'had no money', it became clear throughout fieldwork that they had accumulated a degree of cash savings from crop and animal sales in the past. Due to their age Juan and Valentina were no longer selling potatoes or *kaya* to *caseras* in El Alto, and the local market where they used to sell was also too far away for them to go to sell products there. They were producing fewer peas than they had done in the past, although Valentina said that they still managed to accumulate 5,000 *Bolivianos* from peas during the year of fieldwork. Juan and Valentina had previously owned 50 sheep, but they gradually sold them all as they got older and it became more difficult to look after them. Valentina used to barter

extensively, although she had ceased to do that due to the difficulty of waking up at 4am to get the bus to the intermediate city. Both Valentina and Juan complained frequently about health problems, particularly muscular ones which were making it more difficult to go about their daily activities.

3.5.4. Household 4: Lucía, Emilio and Julia (Community B and neighbouring community)

Lucía was in her early seventies, and was married to Emilio, in his eighties. They were living in the community adjacent to Community B, but owned land in Community B. Julia, in her forties, was Lucía's niece, and had been adopted by Lucía as a baby when she was abandoned by Lucía's sister. Emilio was suffering drastically from illness and the effects of ageing, often leaving him incapacitated and unable to contribute to agricultural activities, so that Lucía and Julia had to do the majority of the work. Without irrigation, Lucía's family did not produce crops for sale, and their monetary income came from animal sales (they had one grown cow, a calf, three sheep and a pig), selling guinea pigs and cheese. With the exception of a cow sale, none of these were likely to bring in a large amount of money. They said that in some previous years they had sold some oats, but this year were not doing so as they needed to feed what oats they had to their own cows. Emilio had siblings who had become teachers, but we were told that the family lacked money at a crucial moment, preventing him from becoming one as well. Lucía did, however, make extensive use of the barter markets in the intermediate city, exchanging *chuño*, *tunta*, potatos and barley in exchange for products produced in the Yungas, as well as bread and coca.

3.5.5. Household 5: Marta (Community B)

Marta, in her seventies, was living alone in Community B. Her husband had died from drinking alcohol soon after having a medical injection, leaving her to raise her eight young children

alone. She owned three cows and about 10 sheep, which she was increasingly struggling to look after. She had been accustomed to bartering in the past, but did so less now. She stressed that she had a lot of *chuño* saved, and sold it in small quantities, but only when prices were high. Many of Marta's children still lived in the area, and she was particularly proud that all of them had graduated from high school. She said she had not had the money to help them study further, but nonetheless one of them, Marco Antonio, had taken the exam for the *Normal* ('teaching college') of his own accord, and had become a teacher. Later, he had become a councillor in the municipality, thus making him the one of the most politically powerful and best paid men in the area. By the time we interviewed her, she had divided all of her *chacras* ('land plots') among her children but continued to work on them as the children were absent. The children visited her often and cooked with her. She said she often exchanged some of the produce with her children who lived in the city or in Yungas in return for fruit, pasta, and rice.

3.5.6. Household 6: Fausto and Fortuna (Community A)

Fausto, aged 90 and Fortuna, in her early eighties, were the oldest of couple of all the *comunarios* during the year of fieldwork. Fausto died in March 2013. They were born in the pre-1953 period, and had vivid memories of the exploitation they had suffered under the *patrón* ('landowner') at that time. Fausto recalled that at one stage he had a vibrant business as an animal trader, but he had become accustomed to drinking excessively from doing the *t'inkha*[23] and regretted spending much of his profits on drinking. Fausto's son also impressed on me the problems caused by Fausto's drinking in the past, at some moments leading to the children going hungry. In the year of fieldwork, Fausto had one *chacra* of peas which did not grow productively, although later on he intimated that money was not so important to him at his age in any case. Before I met him, Fausto had been selling off his animals, and by the time fieldwork began they owned just one cow and one donkey.

3.5.7. Household 7: Alicia, Felipa and Saturnina (Community B)

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[23] Ritual drinking of two bottles of beer shared by vendor and buyer following a cow sale.

Alicia, in her early eighties, was living with her older sister, Saturnina, while Saturnina's daughter, Felipa, was in her late fifties and living in the house opposite. Felipa, along with Juana (Household 1), was one of the few Evangelicals in Community B, and as a result always sat slightly apart from the other women during communal events, abstaining from chewing coca or drinking alcohol. Her faith prevented her from going to the intermediate city markets on Sundays, meaning she could not participate in barter. Felipa's siblings continued to use the lands, taking *chuño* and potatoes with them back to La Paz, and they emphasised the monetary savings they could make from doing this. Felipa was selling oats every year, while Alicia had grown a lot of oats the year before I met her, which she had been intending to sell had rats not eaten them. Alicia was finding it increasingly difficult to participate in agricultural activities due to muscular pains, and had ceased to travel to the local town or the intermediate city often, except when she had to withdraw the Renta Dignidad, and said that she found it easy to get lost in the streets in the intermediate city. Saturnina was extremely old and struggled to contribute much to the household. She hardly ate anything, and her hands were partly deformed, preventing her from knitting or doing manual tasks. She was almost totally deaf so it was difficult to communicate with her.

3.5.8. Household 8: Pedro and Laura (Community B)

Pedro and Laura were in their eighties, living in Community B. Pedro was largely incapacitated due to health problems, while Laura was still active in agricultural activities. They had two daughters who were living in Community B, and three or four others who were in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, and who showed no interest in the land. Pedro had spent some years working in a formal-sector company in La Paz when he was younger, but missed out on getting a pension by one year, meaning he was significantly more dependent on the Renta Dignidad than he would have been had he received a formal pension. During the period of fieldwork, Pedro and

Laura were due to be leaders.[24] Because of their age, they had transferred the role to their son-in-law, who served as secretary general.

3.5.9. Household 9: Roberta and Elena (Community B)

Roberta, in her late eighties, was too old to leave the immediate vicinity of the house and was being looked after by her daughter Elena, who was in her fifties. Out of Roberta's six children, Elena was the only girl and the only one who had not become a teacher. At one point, she expressed resentment that, unlike with her brothers, she had not been encouraged to study by Roberta. As a result of becoming teachers, Roberta's other children were living outside of the community and had attained a significant degree of financial security. According to Elena they were living 'very well' in La Paz and El Alto while Elena was looking after the family's lands in their absence. The brothers often gave her money to fulfil the obligations to the community when it was the family's turn to act as an authority. When her brothers visited, Elena said they often brought both food and money, which they exchanged with Elena for potatos and *chuño*. She considered this to be a good deal for her brothers, as they were able to save a lot of money by not having to purchase these products in markets. Elena herself had a daughter, Sara, who was training to be a teacher in El Alto and visited when she could. Roberta was deaf and could only see out of one eye, and her knees hurt. She generally spent her time attempting to carry out odd jobs within the vicinity of the house, such as cutting oats nearby. Roberta no longer owned any animals and hardly ate anything, saying that there were days when she only ate one piece of bread with tea, and chewed coca continually throughout the day.

3.5.10. Household 10: Gabriela and José (Community A)

Gabriela and her husband José were in their mid-sixties. They both had children from their first marriages and two of their own. José's children had studied a bit and became policemen based

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[24] As we will see in Chapter 4, *comunarios* are required to do time as community leaders on a rotational basis.

in Cochabamba, while none of Gabriela's children graduated from high school, although her siblings, living in another community, had all become teachers and their children had themselves studied beyond high school graduation. During the fieldwork period Gabriela and José were looking after a grandchild, Elizabeth, on behalf of their daughter who was based in the city most of the time. They possessed less land than Households 2 (Álvaro and Francesca) and 3 (Juan and Valentina), and rarely sold much of their produce, with the exception of peas. They also had several cows, which José frequently took to graze.

3.5.11. Household 11: Mariela and Raul (Community B)

Mariela and Raul (brother of Lucía in Household 4) were in their early sixties, and had seven children living in Argentina, Brazil and La Paz. They received remittances from some of the children, although others had formed their own families and thus ceased to send back remittances. During the fieldwork period the household was involved in a major land dispute with Mariela's nieces.

3.5.12. Household 12: Octavio and Rufina (Community A)

Octavio and Rufina were in their early sixties. They had been living for 25 years in the city, and even during the fieldwork were not residing permanently in the community. Three of their children had died soon after birth and another when she was a teenager, while Rufina had previously had a son before marrying which she had given up to be looked after by her sister. Their other three children were living in La Paz during the period of fieldwork although returned periodically for *fiestas* and to produce food to take back to the city.

3.5.13. Household 13: Marco and Lara (Community A)

Marco and Lara, both in their early sixties, had both been living in urban areas for over two decades and were in the process of re-establishing themselves in Community A during the fieldwork period. As a result of having been absent for some time, they had lacked and electricity connection for a long time and did not have animals for production, meaning they had to borrow them from other people for crop production and transport.

3.6. Positionality and Reflections on Research

Prior to beginning research in the two Bolivian communities, I had previous experience of travelling to and living in other South American countries. However, I had not spent a sustained amount of time within a peasant or indigenous community and I only went to Bolivia for the first time in 2012. Being a tall and wealthy *gringa* from England, a country few of the *comunarios* had heard of, created both advantages and obstacles in engaging and becoming familiar with rural life. My early relationship with the *comunarios* was mainly characterised by mutual awkwardness, as we struggled to understand each other not only in terms of language but also in making sense of each other's intentions. I attempted to ingratiate myself by offering to help in rural tasks and frequently offering food, coca, and in some cases fizzy drinks to people. Like Harris in Northern Potosí (Harris 2000a), I gradually gained familiarity with most *comunarios,* and particularly from May 2013 onwards, when I started getting invited to people's houses to have dinner with them in Community A.

I believe that *comunarios* perceived me in a number of ways, including as a source of novelty and intrigue, a potential source of goods and resources (see below), a potentially troubled person needing sympathy and help (due to being alone in a foreign country), and in some cases a status symbol. The *comunarios* often took delight when I participated in the activities of rural life and started learning elementary Aymara, generally finding amusement in my mistakes and lack of proficiency at rural tasks. Because expectations of a Westerner doing manual labour are low, my inadequacy was a source of amusement, and any minor improvements I made provided

satisfaction. In this I believe my own experience was similar to that of Abercrombie, who believes that his total inadequacy at most tasks and activities (such as peeling potatoes, playing football, and drinking) served to dispel people's fears about who he was and what he was doing (Abercrombie 1989, p71).

Gender and language also make a major difference to the data one collects. For example, most of the anthropologists who have discussed issues such as domestic violence are themselves women, possibly because they have developed stronger relationships with women in rural areas, although Canessa (2007) is a major exception to this. Canessa's early months and years of research were spent communicating mainly with young men who spoke at least some Spanish, but once he learned Aymara he began to have lengthy discussions with women as well (Canessa 2012). Other researchers comment on the value of taking family members, particularly children, to research sites, because it serves to 'normalise' them and form bonds with people (e.g. Isbell 1985). Meanwhile, Skinner finds that older women were far more willing to converse fluently with her than men during life histories, because the latter were far more concerned with what she might think of them (Skinner 2006, p97). In my case I found that women were far more willing to open up about personal affairs than men, although men were far more informative about issues relating to political affairs and aspects of Aymara culture. This reflected the fact not only that women may have felt more comfortable in the presence of myself and my assistant but also that men and women have different spheres of social life in which they are encouraged to specialise (Spedding 1994).

Positionality is not simply an issue for the researcher, but also for research assistants, who often play a key if unheralded and poorly defined role in many ethnographic studies (De Neve 2006). As De Neve argues, the understandings which anthropologists form in the field are heavily influenced by the reflexivity of both their informants and also their assistants, but the role of assistants is often heavily hidden in ethnographic accounts (De Neve 2006, p68). In some notable cases, strong friendships have been formed by researchers and the assistants, who

themselves have taken an interest in social science research, becoming in one case researcher in their own right (Carter and Mamani 1981), and in another case the subject of an entire book (Buechler and Buechler 1996). Indeed, in the latter case, the Buechlers suggest that the voice of Sofía, their assistant, permeates the work of all of their research publications in Bolivia (Buechler and Buechler 1996, pxxiv). At the same time, as De Neve (2006) suggests, the data are still ultimately the 'property' of the principal researcher themselves, who steer the project, set the guidelines, and take virtually all the key decisions, rather than of the assistant whose role is in finding the best way to implement those guidelines. In other cases, though, the role of assistants is consigned to a footnote or the acknowledgements section, leaving the reader unaware of what precisely was their influence on the final study.

I feel that working with the second assistant provided an added dimension in terms of the way we were seen by *comunarios*. Whilst I offered mainly novelty and intrigue, she was someone who they could partially relate to; and, as someone from a rural community who had studied at university, aspire to emulate in some cases. Not only that, she was highly proficient at most agricultural tasks, which meant that *comunarios* who spent time with us could actually get significantly more work done with our/her help. While she had a healthy regard for many of the more 'traditional' aspects of Andean life, she had not been influenced by the romantic interpretations of indigenous culture that have proliferated at many of Bolivia's universities. Her involvement in university politics gave her a keen understanding of power relations and community politics, such that she was often alert to different people's hidden agendas, both in village meetings and also in disputes over other issues. Coming from a relatively well-off peasant family and with strong aspirations to move out of agriculture and into a professional job, she certainly had a positive view of modernisation, and the need for Bolivia to develop. Ideologically, these positions were not particularly different from my own upon beginning the research, and they have certainly contributed to an account which, I believe, avoids the trap of romanticisation.

Research assistants can, however, attract a different type of suspicion from local people, being subjected not to the slightly outlandish rumours which often surround foreign anthropologists but to local concerns regarding their own interests and motivations. For example, Spedding and Llanos discuss how one of the local researchers working for them was denied access to information because they were thought to be trying to favour their own nearby community (Spedding and Llanos 1999, p311). In this study, *comunarios* were often curious as to how much I was paying my assistant. Whereas I was reasonably forthcoming with regards questions about my own wealth, neither of us ever answered this question, aware that the truth would probably generate resentment once it was clear that the majority of my monetary spending for the projects was going to her, rather than to them. While answering questions regarding my own personal wealth, however uncomfortable they made me, did not make people judge me or become jealous, this was because as a white person and a foreigner I was already judged by slightly different criteria, which would probably not have applied to my assistant, as a local person.

3.7. Challenges

Spending large amounts of time with a small number of people had significant benefits, as we were able to go into much greater detail with these persons. Even then, some obstacles could not be overcome, or if they were, would only be overcome in a few cases. Even when we had established a strong relationship with a respondent, there were still areas of the respondents' lives which were 'off limits' to us, particularly regarding the issue of the household economy.

This raises questions about precisely why areas relating to wealth are so sensitive. A common explanation is the legacy of exploitative tax impositions on rural communities in Bolivia (Goldstein 2004, p43). However, the fear of taxation is only part of the issue. After all I was in these communities for ten months, during which it would surely have become apparent that I was not a tax collector and unlikely to have connections to one, yet the reluctance to share

information on the household economy remained. A deeper issue is related to the reality of inequality within communities. As previous studies have acknowledged (e.g. Fonseca and Mayer 1988; Spedding 1994; Goldstein 2004), Andean communities often maintain a fiction of equality which is reinforced continually through shared discourses, similar clothes, housing, and accents shared by all community members. In my own fieldwork, it was not until about halfway through that it became clear precisely which families were definitely richer or poorer than others. Many people who appeared, to my eyes, to be the very embodiment of rural poverty ultimately turned out to be relatively well off. This fiction of equality is not necessarily a negative feature, because it allows communities to maintain a level of organisation and capacity to act collectively in spite of their major internal differences (Goldstein 2004; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009), but it is nonetheless a fiction. Matters relating to household income and wealth, therefore, threaten to unmask the harsher reality that many people would prefer to go unspoken, namely that some people enjoy fundamentally more or fewer livelihood opportunities than others, and in some cases at the expense of others as well if they have accrued lands by questionable means. Such reticence to talk about wealth and inequalities is of course by no means exclusive to rural or Andean communities. As Sayer (2005) notes, issues pertaining to people's social class often provoke profound discomfort in the UK, precisely because they reveal the extent to which people's opportunities and lives are structured by profound inequality. However, in small, rural communities such as the ones studied here, local level inequalities are arguably felt in a more acute way because of the close contact people have with each other. Thus, the difficulty of obtaining data relating to the household economy is symptomatic of the fact that issues not only of wealth but also the moral values attached to it, namely whether it is 'deserved' or not, really matter to people (Sayer 2005).

By contrast, domestic violence, which as we will see in Chapter 6, damages the relational wellbeing of older people, has historically been very prevalent in rural Andean communities and is often treated by local people as something 'normal' which inevitably happens to women in marriage (Harris 2000a; Harris 2000b). Historically, anthropologists have not found major

problems in gathering data regarding this issue (see for example Stølen 1987; Allen 1988; Stølen 1991; Spedding 1994; Spedding and Llanos 1999; Harris 2000a; Harris 2000b; Lazar 2008; Canessa 2007). Harris argues that while more upper, or middle, class women feel a deep sense of shame when they are victims of domestic violence, in rural Andean communities it is discussed openly, sometimes even with doses of dark humour (see, for example, Harris 2000a; Harris 2000b). Allen (1988) suggests that women in the Peruvian village where she conducted ethnography openly enjoyed commiserating with each other about their experiences of domestic violence. Domestic violence has often been seen as an issue shared by all women in many rural Andean communities, making it less of a sensitive issue and more likely to be discussed, unlike with issues concerning wealth, which are related to inherently normative judgements about why some people are better off than others (Sayer 2005). This is problematic, however, because this openness may be due to a greater degree of normalisation of domestic violence.

Following Spedding and Llanos (1999), I felt it was better to focus on getting more detailed data from a smaller number of respondents than attempting to obtain a larger sample of responses and risk getting unreliable data or failing to build up the necessary rapport. There were of course moments of misunderstandings and moments of tension with the second assistant, particularly with only 2 or 3 months remaining and myself, the impatient researcher, applying pressure ('ask this', 'ask that', 'why can't you ask that?'), and her explaining that in many cases asking such questions would probably annoy the respondents. Ultimately, I had to accept that even within the confines of a year-long study, there would be certain areas of rural livelihoods that would remain unexplored.

In Community A, a situation of path dependency developed quickly with particular households, whereby we became accustomed to visiting them and they became accustomed to receiving us. Closer relationships were formed based on a number of factors, some of them circumstantial. These included the accessibility of certain people, because, as Skinner (2006) noted, older people can be easier to talk to if they are less mobile. This was certainly the case with two of the

informants (Juana and Ilda's household and Marta). I initially established contact with Francesca's household after she came to ask me to help her tie up a cow when Álvaro was absent, leading me to ask her if I could accompany her to look after her sheep. Juan on the other hand complained in January that we had not gone to visit him and Valentina, and we took him up on his subsequent invitation. In the case of Lucía's household I met them first early on and asked to help them sowing potatoes.

In addition to the older persons' households, we also spent considerable time with some younger families. This was also driven by a combination of research design (wanting to attain a broad understanding of the processes of rural change occurring), and also personal and circumstantial factors (for example, the fact that one family invited me to their wedding, and then asked us to work with them in the subsequent months). Meanwhile, with other people it was far more difficult because they were less willing to talk much or spend much time with us. For example, one man aged 60 would have been extremely interesting to talk to and engage with as he was, uncommonly, unmarried and therefore excluded from the *sindicato* ('union') system, but we could not talk to him because he was extremely hostile to us.

In response to this path dependency, I decided to make concerted efforts to break out and speak to other people in order to get a broader range of experiences. When we did this, we exposed ourselves to complaints from the more 'regular' respondents that we were not coming to visit them anymore. In some instances I felt I was not in absolute control over who we would spend time with, because when familiar respondents would ask us to spend a day working with them it was difficult to refuse on the grounds that I did not consider it the best idea from the point of view of the study. These dilemmas are not uncommon to ethnographic enquiry.

Personal relations between researchers and local people frequently have an important impact on the type of data which is collected. This means that difficult decisions often have to be taken between maintaining one's independence as a researcher and witnessing the realities of daily

life (Allen 1988; Canessa 2012). For example, Canessa's data were heavily influenced by the fact that he was quickly invited to live in someone's house, and he lived there for his first several years of research (Canessa 2012). Similarly, Allen collected a significant amount of information from three people with whom developed a friendship (Allen 1988). Although she was aware that spending time with these people was limiting the scope of her fieldwork, she also felt protected by them from the reticence and suspicion with which she was treated by many other villagers (ibid). Similarly, Abercrombie formed a close relationship with one family with whom he resided, but wondered if the fact that he was living with them would prevent him from witnessing a particular ritual in which they were not involved (Abercrombie 1989, p101).

Forming closer relationships with particular people also allows the researcher to gain potentially greater insights than would be possible in a larger sample, and some of the most detailed accounts of *Altiplano* rural life have depended on extremely small samples of people. For example, in order to understand how meat traders operate, Tassi bases his study primarily on three families in different economic conditions (Tassi 2012, p53). Meanwhile, as we have already seen, one of the seminal works of anthropology about the Bolivian *Altiplano*, *The World of Sofía Velasquez*, is based solely on the testimony of one person with whom the researchers had developed an extremely strong friendship (Buechler and Buechler 1996).

This reveals the fact that ethnographic researchers rarely select research participants solely according to objective research criteria, because the nature of the methodology means being far more heavily involved in people's daily lives, which brings in a whole range of other criteria. This inevitably involves trade-offs, for example, between the number of research participants and the quality of the material collected from each one.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethnographic work inevitably has major ethical implications relating to misunderstandings, and in some cases mutually unintelligible motivations held by researchers, assistants and research participants, and inequalities in relations of power (DeWalt and Wayland 1998). The history of anthropologists being accused or suspected of having various nefarious agendas in the Andes suggests that research participants understand that there are moral implications to academic research, and that there is a danger of outsiders taking advantage of them.

As happened with Skinner (2006) in urban La Paz, *comunarios* often asked direct questions related to my own personal wealth (such as how much the air flight cost to Bolivia, or where I got the money from to be there), which made me feel uncomfortable at the beginning because I assumed there was a suggestion of accusation in these questions, pressurising me to reveal explicitly the significant wealth differences between me and them. Over time I realised that the questions were not accusatory; but the basic reality of the inequality between us was not something that could simply be ignored as if it did not exist.[25] These questions demonstrate the difficulty in reconciling my priority as a relatively wealthy person aspiring to undertake research for academic purposes with local people's justifiable preoccupations with the glaring inequality of wealth between researcher and researched. These differences in wealth go hand in hand with a clear imbalance of power in that I, as a foreigner, had an expectation of being allowed to conduct ethnographic research into sensitive areas of people's life when they could not do the same in reverse.

During my time in the communities, the power relations were nonetheless quite complex and worked in different directions. Moreover, it would be wrong to give the impression that fieldwork is simply a matter of earning 'rapport' and proceeding smoothly from there, because doing so means generating relations with particular groups of people. Gaining familiarity with

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[25] This did not, however, mean that I could ask equally direct questions to them of an economic nature.

some people may not dispel suspicions and in some cases could generate new ones. Spedding for example discusses her shock at learning that people who had been nice to her face had also gossiped negatively about her and proposed expelling her from the community in the Yungas where she was studying (Spedding 1994, p176). It was not uncommon for *comunarios* to express a preoccupation that other local people would try to take advantage of me, particularly by getting me to buy them things. In Community A, I realised that establishing closer relationships with particular *comunarios* created gossip among others, who said that those people who had received me for dinner and spent more time with me were doing so with the intention of acquiring my belongings or getting me to pay for their living expenses. This was particularly the case with one woman who started taking me with her to a local market[26] and to political events involving the *Bartolinas* peasant women's organisation in the final months of fieldwork. It later emerged that this had generated gossip that I had been paying for her travel costs or buying her things, which in the view of some would have constituted her 'taking advantage' of me. These suspicions were justified to a limited extent, in that I had in some cases purchased small amounts of food for her and her family, which from my perspective were tokenistic and did not of course constitute my being 'taken advantage of'.

During *fiestas*, male non-Evangelical *comunarios* sometimes pressurised me to buy crates of beer to drink with them (I did so on four occasions), while women and Evangelicals were either silent or told me not to. Often this was on the grounds of faith, or out of concern for my own safety, but in some cases because they did not want their own husbands to get any more drunk. This raises an ethical question, because it is clear that male drinking often facilitates domestic violence against women, meaning that by purchasing beer I could potentially be increasing the chances of this happening. This is a problem and not one that I have an answer to: I did on those occasions purchase beer not only because I was under pressure to do so, but because I wanted to demonstrate that I was a 'good sport' and didn't want to come across as being distant, arrogant

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[26] Before that, *comunarios* had been reluctant to hang around with me in markets. This is it seems quite common in the experience of anthropologists in rural Aymara society, according to Nico Tassi (personal communication, 2013).

or untrusting. It can be considered rude for a non-Evangelical, and particularly a visitor, to refuse to drink with people, and then once one starts accepting people's offers to drink it obviously generates an expectation that at some point one will reciprocate and offer people a drink as well. Moreover I do occasionally enjoy drinking and wanted to experience participating in Andean *fiestas*. This shows how the researcher can never simply act as a 'fly-on-the-wall', and is likely to influence local dynamics in subtle ways.

In Community A in particular, material goods and resources were extremely important in negotiating and maintaining my own legitimacy as a researcher in the communities. As is suggested by Abercrombie, a researcher's relationship with local people can include both elements of reciprocity, on the one hand, and relations resembling patron-client ones, on the other (Abercrombie 1989), and flows of resources may play a key part in that. Canessa, for example, has written extensively about the request by a local teacher for him to give a metal flagpole to the school as a gift, not because of the practical utility of the flagpole, but because of its symbolising modernity and progress (Canessa 2004). The differences between the two communities in terms of what they requested of me is mainly due to pre-existing dynamics, which were visible from the outset when I introduced myself to the communities and requested permission to research there. In Community A, the *comunarios* asked that I make a contribution to the community at the beginning of the study (I gave a book stand), in order to make sure that they benefited out of my research project, while in Community B they requested a summary document of my findings upon completing the research. In Community A, I was also asked by the secretary general to purchase a football for the Easter football tournament in March. On leaving, I presented each community with a desk, a booklet summarising my research with photos, framed photos and (in Community B) a book for the community to register their affairs in. In Community A I purchased the desk in response to prompting two days before my departure by the authorities, while in Community B, I presented all of the gifts without any requests being made.

One complication that occurred concerns the goods that I accumulated whilst I was living in Community A, including the gas canister and stove I bought, pots and pans and bed covers. From very early on *comunarios* approached me in private to ask if I could sell them these goods (in particular the gas canister, which was highly coveted) when I went home to my country, promising to give me a good price and warning me that others would be pressurising me into selling to them (see also Abercrombie on being asked to sell his hiking boots, Abercrombie 1989, p53). These proposals increased in the remaining months, creating a dilemma for me, because by selling the goods to some people I would inevitably be favouring them at the expense of others, potentially creating resentment. Ultimately I decided to store some of them at my assistant's house on the off chance that I might one day return and need them, and gave the others to her as a parting gift. During my goodbye ceremony, I was then criticised for doing this by two or three of the *comunarios*, with whom I had not established a strong relationship, as they argued that I should have presented the goods to the community. They also insinuated that it was unfair that my assistant, as someone from outside of the community, should benefit in this way rather than the community itself. If this had been suggested to me earlier I would have agreed, but it was only at the last possible moment, once the *comunarios* realised that I was not going to sell or give the goods to them as individuals that they appealed to 'the community' as the morally superior entity which should have benefited from the goods. At this moment the woman who had taken me to the markets and *Bartolina* events announced that I had not given anything to her, in order to defend herself against any suspicions that I might have given her the goods in secret. Both of us then intervened in my defence, followed by two *comunarios* (with whom I had established good relationships) who defended me, arguing that material goods 'are not important' and scolded the others for spoiling the goodbye ceremony. Following this I then presented the goods I had purchased specifically to present to them, and with this the critics appeared to be placated.

These episodes also raise questions about the nature of the responsibilities that researchers and the local population have towards each other. The rules are essentially unwritten when

researching in areas where few people have researched in recent memory and local people may only have an extremely vague idea about what might be 'the norm' when receiving a foreign visitor. Not only did I find it challenging at times to understand the livelihoods of the *comunarios*, they also struggled to understand my own motivations. Some people had a vague idea that foreigners might come to Bolivia as part of their studies, often thinking that I might have come as part of a group of people, possibly as part of a government project or as a member of the Peace Corps. Some thought that maybe I had been 'sent' to Bolivia rather than that I was there entirely of my own will, and, initially at least, the general assumption was that I was doing the PhD in order to gain a better paid job rather than for any non-material motivation. I interpret this mainly as fitting into the general view of education as a means of gaining a better paid and more 'advanced' lifestyle. The assumption was correct in that I did have self-interested reasons for going to Bolivia, but incorrect in equating interest solely in terms of money rather than the cultural capital and social prestige potentially accrued through gaining a PhD in development studies. Thus there was arguably a lack of absolute clarity regarding my own interests and motivations from the perspective of the *comunarios*, adding to the difficulty of establishing ethical norms to mediate the relationship between us. Even though the completion of ethical guidelines are requirements of most developed country universities prior to fieldwork, these do not necessarily prepare researchers for the dilemmas likely to present themselves in the field, where conceptions of ethics may be quite different.

With regards to the *comunarios* of Community A, it is clear that the ethical question of my responsibilities as a researcher was mainly understood in terms of providing the appropriate goods in exchange for the benefits I was receiving from being able to research there. This should not be surprising because, as we shall see in Chapter 4, communities often see external actors in terms of the resources that they can bring into the community. This does not mean that they necessarily try to get as much as they can, and indeed in Community A the voices in favour of 'getting more' for the community were countered by those who warned against being too demanding out of fear that the community might gain a bad reputation. The goods that were

asked or requested of me did not have a large monetary value and lie within the 'symbolic' domain, serving the purpose of demonstrating that as a researcher I did leave some items that were tangible and would be owned by the community. They are not therefore on the scale of demands often made by urban residents of El Alto, who often try to convince researchers to finance development works such as roads and schools (Tathagathan Ravindran, personal communication). On the other hand these examples do demonstrate the importance of material goods as a measure of the nature of the relationship between researcher and researched: who receives what, and how much.

Simply offering the right type of gift to give people in exchange for research does not of course resolve ethical dilemmas. In some cases, anthropologists who have continued researching in the same communities for many years have found that their ethical dilemmas actually increase over time. Isbell found that, upon returning to the Chuschi region in Peru having gained a generous grant on the back of her earlier research, she was accused by local radical teachers of making money off the rural poor (Isbell 1985, p227). Meanwhile, following the publication of her books, Spedding was criticised by some people within the areas she has researched for writing publically about sensitive issues such as domestic violence and the manufacturing of cocaine (Spedding 2008). These cases raise questions about the researcher's responsibility to local people and how this relates to the broader objective of producing research which is both representative of reality and academically novel. It has become common for many researchers in Bolivia to present their findings to local people. However, as Spedding pointed out, submitting the content of the text for the approval of local community leaders would lead to an account which is not particularly loyal to reality and give a distorted picture (Spedding 2008). There are unquestionably aspects of the data I collected, and which I have used in this PhD, which could make me unpopular with some (although by no means all) of the *comunarios* in the two communities, but I feel that it would not be justified to omit them on that basis.

Chapter 4: Overview – Rural Change

4.1. Introduction

Having outlined the methodology in Chapter 3, in this chapter, I explain the rural change occurring in the two communities, in order to place the analysis of the Renta Dignidad's impact on older people's wellbeing in context. Wellbeing is constructed in societies which are in a state of constant evolution, altering the circumstances within which people attempt to achieve wellbeing and also the ways they understand their lives (McGregor 2006). Understanding the economic, social, political, and climate-related changes happening in the rural Bolivian Altiplano is therefore crucial for demonstrating the key factors which influence wellbeing, as well as ensuring against static understandings of wellbeing.

There are major differences in the ways in which rural change in the Andes is dealt with in the literature. While some (e.g. Canessa 2000; Regalsky and Hosse 2009; McDowell and Hess 2012; Valdivia et al. 2013) consider that phenomena such as marketisation, mechanisation and migration are forced on peasant society from the outside via a combination of structural and ideological mechanisms, others (e.g. Zoomers 1998; Bebbington 1999; Bebbington 2001; Zoomers 2006; Bebbington et al. 2007) argue that moves into off-farm livelihoods are necessary responses to an inherent lack of agricultural viability in many rural areas. Meanwhile, recent anthropological research (e.g. Laguna 2011; Tassi 2012) has increasingly placed more emphasis on the agency of peasants, positioning them as able not only to respond to opportunities but also to drive processes of accumulation in their own favour and according to their own criteria.

The findings outlined in this chapter are essentially in line with the second and third groups of literature, namely that peasants respond to and drive different forms of change both as necessary responses to a lack of rural viability and also as conscious initiatives to seize opportunities to

improve their own wellbeing. This happens through the use of a combination of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' techniques at both individual and collective levels. The general thrust of change is towards livelihoods that are characterised by higher material living standards and food security, and this is driven to a large degree by the desire of *comunarios* for modernity and material progress. The importance of material progress needs to be accepted as a key motivator of peasant actions, something which poses a challenge to some of the more purist interpretations of the *vivir bien* paradigm discussed in Chapter 2. At the same time, striving for improved living standards is not a solely individual process. In that context this chapter also discusses the roles played by *sindicato* ('union') organisations in demanding and managing public goods which are necessary to advance peasant interests.

The chapter begins by outlining the basic characteristics of the two communities and the region in which they are located, before moving on to discuss in greater detail the different components of people's livelihoods and how these are changing. It discusses the smallholder agriculture which historically constitutes the bedrock of rural livelihoods in Bolivia. It begins by discussing the more traditional aspects of farming, but proceeds to outline the ways in which agriculture is subject to change through long-term processes of mechanisation and marketisation. It then outlines the different off-farm activities, including temporary labour, the maintenance of urban livelihoods whilst maintaining a foothold in the countryside, the pursuit of public sector jobs as teachers, and long-term migration to neighbouring countries. It then covers the role of collective institutions in rural life, both in terms of political organisations and also social institutions and norms, focusing particularly on gender relations which, as we will see, have important implications for wellbeing in later life. As this chapter is focusing on rural change at the general level rather than on older people per se, it does not draw on the data provided by the specific households identified in Chapter 3, but draws more broadly on information provided by younger people in other households and general observations made during the fieldwork.

4.2. Community Characteristics

Both communities lie at altitudes approximately 3,800 metres above sea level, on different sides of a bay of Lake Titicaca, and both intersect at an intermediate city. They are small, with Community A being comprised of 31 households and over 120 people, and Community B having a slightly large numbers (see Tables A and B). Communty A lies in a district with a population of 13,136, while Community B is in a district with a population of 7,985 (INE 2012). Within the villages, In both cases, the number of people recorded in the village under the census is far greater than the number of people actually residing there on a regular basis, with many people living in urban áreas.

Table 3: Community Demographics in Community A (Absent members in brackets)

0-15 years	16-30	31-59	60-90	Total
10(23)	13(19)	23(11)	11(10)	120

Table 4: Community Characteristics in Community B (Absent members in brackets)

0-15 years	16-30	31-59	60-90	Total
9(45)	15(24)	15(42)	15(13)	178

Both communities have an individualised land system whereby households possess small, dispersed plots (*yapu* in Aymara, *chacra* in Spanish) and are obliged to comply with communal responsibilities, namely acting as leaders in the community organisations (known as *sindicatos*), in order to fulfil the 'social function' of land as required under the communities' rules. These land institutions have their roots in the 1953 land reform which dismantled the pre-existing neo-feudalist system whereby wealthy *patrones* ('large-scale landowners') owned large tracts of land and forced the Aymara-speaking *comunarios* to work three to five days a week, unpaid, for them. In the wake of land redistribution, peasants not only took over the land but also formed the *sindicatos*, encouraged by the government of the time in order to organise politically and manage their internal affairs. In the current era, the *sindicatos* are affiliated to broader, national

organisations representing peasant communities, namely the *Confederación Sindical Unica de Trabajadores y Campesinos de Bolivia* (Unique Sindicate Organisation of Workers and Peasants of Bolivia), its sister organisation the *Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia – 'Bartolina Sisa'* (National Confederation of Indigenous Originary Peasant Women of Bolivia 'Bartolina Sisa'), and the *Ponchos Rojos* (Red Ponchos), and these organisations in turn support the governing Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS).

The broader region enjoys a degree of fame or, alternatively, infamy for its history of rebellion, particularly between the years of 2000 and 2003 when the radical Aymara leader Felipe Quispe and the *Ponchos Rojos* led a series of blockades and irregular actions designed to destabilise the neoliberal economic model run by Bolivia's white elite. This period of radical activism and opposition to the country's elite manifested formally in the election of Evo Morales's leftist MAS in 2005. The region gave strong support to the MAS and in 2007 the *Ponchos Rojos* infamously demonstrated their commitment to radical change in the country by hanging several dogs as a warning to separatist governors threatening to break away from Bolivia in the east of the country. In recent years, this militancy has waned somewhat under the MAS government, with Quispe becoming politically marginalised and the *Ponchos Rojos* functioning as an organised support base for the government rather than as an opposition to the status quo as had previously been the case. These events have taken place in the region's main towns and the surrounding communities rather than the relatively poorer and more remote communities featuring in this study, but nonetheless provide the political context within which the *comunarios* of this study find themselves.

The regions surrounding Lake Titicaca are generally recognised to have slightly better agricultural productivity than many other parts of the *Altiplano* due to the effect of the lake, although this varies significantly across different areas and depends on whether irrigation infrastructure is available. Small-scale commercial milk farming has been successfully introduced into areas close to the intermediate town, helped by their proximity to the lake,

allowing farmers there to move out of poverty, but more remote communities such as those in this study have not benefited from this. In the two communities, *comunarios* produce potatoes, *chuño*[27], *oca*[28], and *kaya*[29] primarily for self-consumption and in some cases for sale and barter, as well as barley for self-consumption, animal feed and to barter, and oats for animal feed and (in Community B) for sale, as well as small amounts of *quinoa*[30] and maize (in Community B only) for self-consumption. Families keep sheep and pigs for self-consumption and for sale or as a source of wool (in the case of sheep), cows for animal traction, organic fertiliser, cooking fuel and for sale, and donkeys for transporting goods. In Community A peas are grown on a large scale and almost exclusively for sale, whereas in Community B small amounts of peas are grown mainly for self-consumption.

Community A is distinguished by its micro-irrigation infrastructure, which permits a greater and more reliable production of crops, one of which (peas) can bring in significant income during harvest (I estimate 5,000-10,000 *Bolivianos*[31] [729-1478USD] per household). The adoption of pea production is partly the result of a sustained interaction with a rural development NGO called CIPCA, which provided improved seed varieties not just of pea but also of potato and vegetables. Community A also has large areas of grazing land (known as *Qhota Pampa* and *Apachita*) which allow households to maintain large flocks of sheep (20-80 per household). Both communities have access to electricity, running water, and unpaved roads that link them up to local towns. Therefore, neither community suffers from the severe structural constraints caused by the lack of basic infrastructure which, as we saw in the introduction, have historically been identified as constituting major obstacles to accumulation in much of the rural Andes (e.g. Bebbington et al 2007).

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[27] Freeze-dried potatos, which can be stored for 6-7 years.
[28] Sweet-tasting Andean tuber.
[29] Freeze-dried *oca.*
[30] Andean grain.
[31] Bolivian currency, equivalent to 0.14 USD.

Community B has smaller plots than Community A, does not have irrigation infrastructure and has less grazing land. However, it benefits from its close proximity to the teaching college (the *Normal*) in the local town. This has allowed many of the children of *comunarios* to move out of poverty by obtaining relatively well-paid and secure jobs as teachers, with some families having sent four or five children to train to become teachers. Therefore, while Community A has a more dynamic agricultural system, Community B's geographic location has allowed many *comunarios* and their children to move into better-paid non-agricultural livelihoods. Even many older non-teachers in Community B are living off pensions equivalent to 1,600 *Bolivianos* a month (over six times the value of the Renta Dignidad) following a lifetime of work in formal sector jobs (usually in factories) in La Paz, something that is unheard of in Community A.

Both sites have seen significant out-migration to São Paolo in Brazil (mainly to work in the garment sector), Buenos Aires in Argentina (garment sector), and La Paz/El Alto (construction, housework, domestic work, transport, commercial activities). *Comunarios* in both communities also identify changing rainfall patterns and increased prevalence of pests as key trends threatening agriculture. Despite these changes, most of the older respondents report that overall material wellbeing and food security has improved over the course of their lives, and they generally remember the past as a time of hardship and scarcity. For the time being, changing rainfall patterns and increasing pest prevalence are posing questions for smallholder agriculture but not overwhelming it.

4.3. Smallholder Agriculture and Mechanisation of Agriculture

People in the rural *Altiplano* have historically depended on subsistence agriculture, a livelihood which is associated on the one hand with poverty and vulnerability (e.g. World Bank 2010), but which is also built around a number of strategies to minimise risk (Regalsky and Hosse 2009).

Historically, Andean societies have attempted to maintain access to land at different altitudes with different ecologies in order to reduce their vulnerability (Murra 1975). The *minifundio* system of land ownership in the communities of this study means that smallholders own small, dispersed land plots, and this dispersion has the benefit of reducing the risk posed by climate shocks (Earls 2008; Regalsky and Hosse 2009). For example, during the period of study many of the land plots close to the river in Community B were affected by excessive rain during the months of January and February, while those further up the hills were left undamaged, suggesting that maintaining dispersed plots does, as previous research has suggested, help people manage risk (Morlon 1992; Goland 1993). The impacts of pests also vary notably across plots in different areas even where smallholders are applying the same pest reduction techniques in all cases.

Comunarios devote considerable time and effort to harnessing frosts to convert potato into *chuño* in the winter months of June and July, which can then be stored for several years, providing people with a constant stock of foodstuffs that can be consumed, bartered or occasionally sold at any given time. This allows them to maintain a degree of resilience in the face of changes in the local weather patterns by guaranteeing a minimal level of food consumption across years. In addition to crops, livestock plays a key role in the smallholder systems of the two communities. Tassi (2012) identifies four roles played by cattle: animal traction, source of organic fertiliser, source of savings and income, and finally a source of meat once they are slaughtered; and we could also add the use of animal excrement for cooking fuel. Maintaining livestock therefore allows *comunarios* to maintain a stock of capital whilst at the same time contributing to their productive activities.

One key phenomenon deeply modifying the nature of smallholder farming in the region is the increasing use of tractors to plough and harrow land in preparation for sowing. This runs up against some of the thinking in the academic community in Bolivia, which tends to view tractors as being an inappropriate technology for smallholder *Altiplano* agriculture due to the

small size of the land plots and negative environmental impacts on the soil in the long term (e.g. Arnold 2008; Regalsky and Hosse 2009). The view that mechanisation is an inappropriate form of farming is also found in the purist interpretation of *vivir bien*, which contains a critique of mechanised forms of agriculture due to their dependence on fossil fuels and negative impact on soils (e.g. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 2009). In the two communities of the study, the small land sizes mean that tractors cannot be used to sow or harvest (as happens in communities closer to the intermediate city which enjoy larger land sizes) but they still play a key role in harrowing and ploughing. It is also worth emphasising that although the government does support the mechanisation of agriculture through soft credit schemes and direct handouts to municipalities, most of the tractor owners we spoke to had not received government assistance, suggesting that the mechanisation of agriculture is to some extent driven by the private sector. In particular, peasants from wealthier communities and teachers use their earnings to secure credit to purchase tractors, knowing that there will be strong demand across the region for their services. Moreover, even where state policies have had a key role in introducing tractors in some parts of the region, this has been in response to bottom-up pressure from peasant organisations, as was the case with the radical Aymara leader Felipe Quispe's famous demand for tractors from the government of Jorge Quiroga in 2002 (La Razón 2002).

Tractors are popular because they significantly reduce the time and labour required to harrow and plough, something that is particularly attractive in the context of substantial out-migration and also an ageing rural population. The other perceived advantage of tractors is that they increase productivity by ploughing further down into the earth than would be done with the yoke. By saving time, reducing the labour required for ploughing and harrowing, and increasing productivity, tractors have increased the viability of farming, partly counter-acting the loss of labour through migration and making it easier for people involved in off-farm activities to continue farming.

One noticeable disadvantage of mechanisation, however, is that it makes the *comunarios* dependent on outside actors and factors beyond their control. Because tractor owners usually live in small towns or wealthier rural communities, *comunarios* often have to beg them to come and plough or harrow at the right time. If they do not, *comunarios* are forced to delay sowing, in some cases harming their production that year. Thus the dependency on tractors moves smallholder production decisions away from being based solely around calculations of the weather, thereby limiting their autonomy in relation to the productive process (see also Gilles et al. 2013). This dependency also generates an asymmetry of power whereby tractor owners have a strong bargaining position in negotiation over prices vis-à-vis farmers.

Contraband in the region can also generate short-term scarcities of diesel which reduce the availability of tractors at key moments and gives the drivers an excuse to hike prices. Despite the fact that mechanisation has partly reduced the independence of the peasants by subjecting their productive cycle to the whims of tractor owners and diesel scarcities, there is no nostalgia for the days of manual ploughing or harrowing. As one man said, '*los pobres más sufrimos*' ('we, the poor, we really suffered'). When discussing the difficulties of getting a tractor at the right time, therefore, *comunarios* express hope that there will be an increased supply of tractors rather than a return to manual ploughing and harrowing. *Comunarios* are aware of the potential downsides of mechanisation, but opting out of it is simply unthinkable due to the real benefits that tractors bring.

4.4. Market Participation

As outlined in Chapter 2, markets are considered in varying ways in existing research on Andean livelihoods. While some researchers show a degree of scepticism about the possible outcomes of market participation of peasants (e.g. McDowell and Hess 2012), others emphasise the agency of peasant producers not just to participate in but to 'construct' and manage markets according to their own criteria and interests (e.g. Laguna 2011; Tassi 2012). This sub-section

will show that, in line with the latter view, market participation is actively embraced by peasants in the two communities as a means of improving their wellbeing according to their own criteria. As Laguna (2011) argues, however, acknowledging the agency of peasants to engage in markets does not entail embracing reductionist neoclassical understandings of market activity. Rather, where markets become established, they are regulated by various informal mechanisms, resulting in markets that are not 'free' in any meaningful sense of the word.

In the two communities most products are still grown primarily for self-consumption, while surplus produce is bartered or sold. Sales at the market are far more common in Community A due to the legacy of CIPCA's seed project and modern irrigation infrastructure, allowing *comunarios* to produce peas as a cash crop. Aside from peas, the extent of market participation in Community A varies across households according to how much land they possess and their labour availability. Those families with more land and more active members are able to sell potatoes to *caseras* in El Alto and sometimes at the market in the intermediate city, as well as *kaya* and onions in the smaller towns and other regional markets. Where families have been able to accumulate significantly from agriculture, they often invest the proceeds in urban areas (see also Zoomers 2006; Bebbington et al 2007), for example by purchasing land and housing in El Alto. The two families with the most lands are also the only ones who have managed to send children to study in university, while their other children have been able to achieve qualifications in institutes in La Paz.

The most significant case of market growth in the fieldwork sites is unquestionably the pea trade of Community A. This has grown in recent years following the CIPCA intervention that introduced improved pea seeds, a municipality-supported micro-irrigation project, and rising prices for peas. Households grow peas on two or three land plots, and each plot gets harvested two or three times during the harvest season depending on how productive it is. Our data suggests that seasonal income from peas ranges from 5,000 *Bolivianos* (850USD) per household to over 10,000 *Bolivianos* depending on the size of the family, age of inhabitants, and land

availability. Inequalities in land ownership mean that while some households only make enough to cover their current costs throughout the year, others can accumulate long-term savings. Despite these inequalities, all *comunarios* benefit from the pea trade and see its growth as a positive development. In fact several *comunarios* expressed an intention to dedicate more land to pea cultivation in the future to take advantage of rapidly increasing prices.

Comunarios do not use fertiliser for peas, and while some fumigate them with pesticides, peas do not require as much pesticide as potatoes, the traditional product for self-consumption, so that growing them does not increase dependence on chemical inputs. The upshot of the growth of the pea market is that the *comunarios* of Community A have been able to accumulate more cash, allowing for higher consumption, more investment in children's education, and savings to maintain a decent standard of living throughout later life.

Barter markets also play a key role in the region around Lake Titicaca (Orlove et al 1986). In the two communities, barter is used to exchange locally produced goods (mainly potato, *chuño* and barley) for those that are produced in the tropical Yungas region, such as tomatoes, oranges, *k'isas,*[32] *apio,*[33] *t'una,*[34] and mangos. These products are brought to regional markets by traders from Yungas and La Paz, and all barter transactions are undertaken by women. Barter can be attractive to *comunarios*, firstly because the 'prices' differ from those of the monetary market, and secondly because there can be more room for negotiation. The 'price' differences with monetary markets vary seasonally, so that at particular moments the demand for locally produced products on the monetary markets fall, making barter more attractive. Moreover, at times when cash is scarce, *comunarios* use barter to insulate it. Thus the existence of the barter market increases the options that are available to *comunarios*, allowing them to manage their consumption and optimise returns from their own produce more than would be the case if they were solely dependent on the prices of the monetary market.

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[32] Dried apricot used to make a sweet drink.
[33] Type of herb.
[34] Type of fruit.

In fact, market activities are so embedded in rural life that it is virtually second nature for *comunarios* to track the fluctuating prices of a wide range of products in a number of different markets. This market participation is not in tension with subsistence activities but rather complements them, as the risk-management mechanisms of 'traditional' farming provides a level of security (for example by providing a stock of *chuño* which can be stored) that allows producers to innovate in market activities and take some risks (e.g. moving into growing peas for sale).

4.5. Off-Farm Livelihoods

As a number of studies show, migration has played a key role in Andean rural livelihoods throughout much of post-conquest history (Harris et al 1995), with migration to urban areas increasing significantly after the 1953 land reform (Balderrama et al 2011). Off-farm activities are increasingly viewed as an essential aspect of rural life, and in many cases offer much more significant opportunities for advancement than farming (Zoomers 1998; Bebbington 1999; Zoomers 2006). In this section, the analysis will focus on the most important types of off-farm labour in the region: (i) temporary/seasonal off-farm labour, (ii) urban-based livelihoods with a foot in the rural domain, (iii) teacher training and employment, and (iv) migration to Sao Paolo and Buenos Aires.

4.5.1. Temporary Off-Farm Labour

Off-farm labour plays, and has played, a key role in the livelihoods of many *comunarios* in both communities, although it is worth noting that these jobs are exclusively available to men. This includes work that *comunarios* may have done when they were younger, for example in work in El Alto and La Paz, or as day workers in coca farming in Yungas, before returning to the community and dedicating themselves to the land. In parallel, *comunarios* continue to be

involved in short bouts of paid labour, often as builders in local towns, and most commonly as travelling musicians. Money from these jobs provides families with alternative sources of income which are relatively less dependent on the seasonal calendar. Because these jobs are available to men only, however, this means that men are more likely to have autonomy over the money earned (Spedding and Llanos 1999, p169), and in some cases women complained that much of the money earned by their husbands does not benefit the household.

4.5.2. Urban Livelihoods with a Foot in the Community

As noted by a number of studies in other contexts, historical out-migration from rural communities does not always result in a permanent and absolute separation from rural areas (e.g. Spedding and Llanos 1999; Lazar 2008). In our case, many *comunarios* in both communities live in urban areas (mainly El Alto) but maintain links with their rural communities. These people are commonly referred to as *residentes*.

Residentes work in a number of occupations, including commerce, transport, construction and domestic work. Construction workers in particular have an extremely positive view of the economic situation currently in El Alto, claiming that both wages and their own bargaining power have improved significantly in recent years.[35] At the same time, for many *residentes*, subsistence agriculture still plays a role in providing food security, with many of them continuing to use their land to produce food and thus reduce their spending on food. Owning land or having strong links to it constitutes an insurance policy which can be activated during periods of economic crisis, as was the case during the hyperinflation of the 1980s (see Buechler and Buechler 1996, p77) by individuals who have been unsuccessful in urban areas, or by those who return to rural livelihoods through marriage or following retirement from urban labour (see also Spedding and Llanos 1999). Where *residentes* are not using their lands, they often rent

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[35] According to Crabtree and Chaplin (2013), the day rates for bricklayers in El Alto rose from 50 *Bolivianos* to 200 *Bolivianos* between 2005 and 2012.

them to *comunarios* in the village, and in some cases convince siblings to keep some animals for them. Moreover, retaining a link with the community also has an intrinsic value to many people beyond the economic and food security that land ownership could provide. One wealthy trader originally from Community B, for example, told us that although he had no need for the land for food production, he wanted to retain his place in the community so that he could have the guarantee of being buried there. Often, people operate on a strong resolution not to allow their land to be usurped by others in the community, in order to be able to pass it onto their children.

Even though, in commercial terms, land has limited value (particularly in Community B, where there is no irrigation or possibility for producing surpluses), *residentes* often make significant investments in time and finances to ensure they do not lose their land. This is shown by their willingness to comply with their obligations as community members. In these communities, as in much of highland rural Bolivia, *comunarios* are required to act as authorities in the *sindicatos* on a rotational basis. In some cases, people return to the community for the year when they have to serve as authorities, while in other cases they continue to live in El Alto, interrupting their urban lives to return frequently to the communities. Because responsibilities rotate according to families and family lineages (often referred to as *persona*), siblings often come to agreements among themselves as to who should assume the responsibility for the family, in some cases meaning that *residentes* pay a sibling who still lives in the community to take on their responsibilities. The attachment *residentes* have for their land plots was most visible at one moment in Community B, when up to a hundred people returned to the community with only a day's notice to observe a land-titling process in order to make sure that they enforced their own rights as landholders. Community *fiestas* also generate both opportunities and pressures for *residentes* to demonstrate their commitment to the communities by participating in and often funding social activities. Commitments made by *residentes* to maintain land ownership can be disputed, however. In Community A it was often commented on that a number of *residentes* never attended any meetings and allowed large quantities of unpaid fines to accumulate, while

some people muttered that it was inappropriate for the secretary general to keep living in El Alto for his year in charge, as it meant he was less able to represent the community effectively.

4.5.3. Teacher Training and Employment

Until recently in Community B, a number of *comunarios* had been able to send their children to the *Normal* ('teaching college') in the local town to train to become teachers. Becoming a teacher meant that these children could earn a secure wage and receive social benefits, and some families were extremely successful in this regards, with up to five children becoming teachers. Recently, however, it has become harder for children to get into the *Normal*, and even when they do there is no longer a guaranteed job once they have graduated, leaving some trained teachers unemployed and migrating to São Paulo or Buenos Aires. This has happened because of the arrival of entrants from across the country, leaving fewer places available for local people. This has fuelled a suspicion of corruption in Community B, as *comunarios* now believe that the only successful candidates are those whose parents can bribe the directors. Meanwhile in Community A, where there is no *Normal* nearby, no *comunario* has ever become a teacher, although one 18-year-old young man from one of the slightly better-off families told us that his teacher had told him that if his parents paid some money, he could enter a *Normal* and have a guaranteed job after this. This is, however, a risky option, as it is claimed that individuals often take bribes from peasant families in return for false promises of places in the teaching colleges. In another instance, a woman also told us that she had paid bribes in order for two of her sons to enter the police force.

4.5.4. Migration to São Paulo and Buenos Aires

For at least a decade or more, increasing numbers of young people have been migrating from the region to Buenos Aires in Argentina and São Paulo in Brazil. Migrants to Buenos Aires and São Paulo almost always work in the garment sector of those countries, and by doing this are

able to earn amounts of money that are simply unattainable in rural areas in Bolivia, even in Community A in spite of the pea trade. Migrants work extremely long hours in the destination countries (over 15 hours a day in many cases) in small-scale garment workshops owned by Bolivians often from the same region, which operate outside the labour laws. In spite of this extremely arduous workload, which could be seen by many outsiders (including myself) as labour exploitation, returning migrants are almost unanimous that working in garment factories is more desirable than staying in the villages and working on the land. The objective of migrants is either to earn enough to establish their own small-scale garment workshop in the destination countries and/or return to Bolivia, where they often invest their accumulated earnings in different activities. According to some migrants, they are able to accumulate abroad not only due to the relatively high wages paid in the garment sector, but also because in São Paulo they are to some degree able to remove themselves from the pressures to spend a large percentage of their earnings on the *fiestas* that are common in the *Altiplano* and El Alto. No agriculture-based livelihood in this region offers this degree of opportunity for accumulation and upward mobility. Migration to Buenos Aires and São Paulo has become increasingly easy, due to existing social networks of Aymara migrants who return to the region and recruit friends and family members to work in garment factories, as well as agreements between the Bolivian, Brazilian and Argentine governments that facilitate the free movement of people, meaning that migration is not clandestine and does not cost large amounts of money.

4.6. 'The Community' and Rural Change

Comunarios do not simply respond to change as individuals, but also collectively, most notably through their community organisations known as *sindicatos*. Anthropological research shows that communal organisations provide a number of key functions, including conflict resolution, the management of communal resources, provision of supra-level infrastructure, organisation of communal work, and demanding schools and health services (Carter and Mamani 1982; Fonseca and Mayer 1988; Mayer 2002; Álvarez and Copestake 2008; Colloredo-Mansfeld

2009). *Comunarios* in the two communities of this study are required to serve time as members of the *sindicatos* on an obligatory, rotational basis, and these rules are common across highland Bolivia (see also Albó 2002). As Albó argues, these rules have the advantages of placing a limit on the possibilities for despotism by preventing any one person from exercising power for a long period of time, as well as sharing the substantial time and monetary costs of being an authority across all community members (Albó 2002, p1).

Researchers have noted the ability of communities to coordinate clearly planned strategies in spite of marked differences among their members (e.g. Mayer 2002; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009). Achieving this often depends on the maintenance of discourses that emphasise equality within communities and gloss over differences (Spedding 1994; Fonseca and Mayer 1988, p105), and the use of strategies such as list making, boundary making, and the very explicit and institutionalised use of punitive measures such as fines or threats to cut off services to enforce compliance (Colloredo-Mansfield 2009). In the communities of this study, fines are commonly used to ensure participation and compliance, and indeed the strength of the *sindicatos* is partially dependent on these.

During the period of fieldwork, the community authorities in both fieldwork sites carried out a number of functions, including conflict resolution, land titling (in Community B), managing pastoral land, maintaining drinking water and irrigation services and ensuring participation in local and regional social and political events. In this subsection, I will focus on the area which, I argue, has the strongest direct relevance for rural change, namely the ability of communities to attract projects that might be perceived as necessary or desirable with regards to accumulation. The case of irrigation in Community A will be used as an example in this regard.

In Community A, the irrigation system has allowed *comunarios* to significantly increase their yields, as well as sowing peas as a cash crop and insulating the productive system from the difficult *Altiplano* climate. The *comunarios* have been aspiring to improve the system in order

to further increase yields and sell more products in local markets. In response to this, the incoming secretary general for 2013 announced he was going to try to renew a dormant project to improve the community's existing irrigation scheme by accessing finance from the government programme *Mi Agua 3* ('My Water 3). After a discussion in one of the monthly reunions, the *comunarios* resolved to invite the local Mayor of the area to Community A, and presented him with gifts: 1 sheep, 2 large sacks of potatoes, 5 crates of beer, a meal, ponchos and woolly hats for him and attending councillors. The *comunarios* divided up into commissions to buy the gifts, and presented them to the mayor when he arrived in August. Having eaten and chatted for a while, the community's secretary general made a series of requests, the most significant of which was the improvement of the existing irrigation system. The mayor responded that he would approve the project, but the community would still need to provide its own source of finance. As my study period finished a month later, it was not possible to say how successful this particular community strategy was, but it is worth noting the *comunarios*' confidence and awareness of the informal rules of the game regarding interactions with local authorities, and also their ability to organise collectively to demand desired projects.

In many cases, defending the interests of the community leads *comunarios* to deceive the state by inflating or distorting statistics. The most well-known example is the phenomenon whereby community authorities put pressure on *residentes* into being registered in the national census in their rural areas, knowing that having a greater population registered will translate into more resources being made available (*La Razón* 2012). Thus *sindicatos* are potentially highly effective at generating and harnessing internal cohesion, and then playing by the 'rules-of-the game', to attract projects that may be necessary for improvement to occur. Importantly, the example of the irrigation project demonstrates in a very concrete way the 'enabling' potential of collective organisations in providing political capital to attract new infrastructure and public goods. These institutions make substantial demands on people's time and expenditures, much of which may appear to be economically irrational or in conflict with individual objectives in the

short term. In the long term however, these obligations and pressures may in fact be necessary to maintain the community cohesiveness that is required to provide these public goods.

At the same time, while the irrigation example is a 'positive' case of a community using its resources to attain a worthwhile project, in other cases the desire to receive as many benefits as possible appears to trump concerns about the viability of the projects themselves. More than any other quality, the willingness to 'move', 'walk', 'demand' or 'mobilise' to gain projects is the most valued trait in a community authority. As Lazar (2008) points out, the focus on securing visible projects and resources also serves to quell suspicions that authorities are doing their job properly, rather than being lazy or corrupt. This often means that *sindicatos* privilege the securing of resources and projects more than ensuring the efficient use of those resources.

This was clear in Community A, where the *comunarios* were involved in a project with the municipality where they were given materials to build stables, with the prospect of receiving new breeds of cows at a further stage so as to produce large quantities of milk for sale. This project was flawed, in particular because looking after one of these new breeds would require a substantial change in the routines of *comunarios*. In addition, land would have to be set aside to grow alfalfa to feed the cows; and the stables themselves were not supposed to be used for looking after the breeds of cows already owned by the *comunarios*. Due to these problems some families did not want to be included in the project, but were required to because they were already on the list of participants, while other people complained about being excluded. Despite all these problems, the *sindicato* devised a strategy to secure more milk cows in addition to the ones already due to be arriving. In order to achieve this, male *comunarios* exerted considerable pressure on reluctant women to participate in the *Bartolina Sisa* women's peasant confederation, which was known to be implementing projects to bring milk cows to rural communities. Even though as individuals most *comunarios* expressed significant doubts about the viability of the project, these doubts did not get aired in the public reunions, as discussions regarding projects were underpinned by one key assumption: 'it's always better to get a project

than to get no project'. This is a fair assumption given that people usually find ways of making use of even inappropriate projects. For instance, many people were already using their stables to stores crops during the fieldwork period, and others expressed the intentions to convert the stables into houses in the future and sell any new cow breeds on regional markets.

Therefore, despite recognising the well-justified criticism of the idealistic treatment of the concept of 'community' that is still prevalent in many approaches to development (see Cannon 2008 for a critique), the argument here is not to downplay the relevance of community organisations, or their potential to deliver important public goods for their members (Agrawal 2008).[36] It is however necessary to complement these observations with the recognition that 'the community' is arguably as prone to governance failures, unequal power relations, and conflict as the state and other political entities (Cannon 2008). As Colloredo-Mansfeld observes, in the Andes at least, communities 'do not exist outside the state to be intruded on by it [the state]', but are themselves the 'synthesis of state principles and local political aspiration' (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 2009, p206). The implication of this is that while *sindicatos* like that of Community A are relatively effective tools at amplifying the voices of their members and delivering and managing necessary public goods, they should not be expected to be an antidote to governance failures, and could in some cases compound them. In sum, Andean community organisations are very much active agents in driving processes of rural change 'from below', not simply by responding to forces enforced on them from outside, but also by actively seeking out opportunities to respond to demands for material improvements to living standards and internal political pressures. Thus the material wellbeing of individuals and households, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5, is partly the consequence of these collective efforts, which are contradictory and in some cases inefficient, but which also allow individuals to acheive objectives that would otherwise be beyond their reach.

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[36] The role of community organisations in development processes is of course far richer than is presented here, but it is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore it in greater detail.

4.7. Social and Gender Relations

Previous studies of the Andes have shown that traditional parties (*fiestas*) play a central role in rural livelihoods (Harris 2000a; Harris 2000b; Álvarez and Copestake 2008; Lazar 2008). One study in rural Peru suggests that *fiestas* play an instrumental role in mediating access to key resources, requiring people to invest relatively large amounts of money into social events in order to legitimise their usufruct claims over land and water (Mitchell 1991). According to Mitchell's analysis, such events run the risk of losing their relevance once the economy changes, becoming more dependent on off-farm income. Other analyses, however, emphasise the intrinsic value of *fiestas* as a type of 'emotional regulator' for people living stressful and difficult lives, even in cases where they are no longer economically dependent on rural livelihoods (Álvarez and Copestake 2008). Lazar's analysis, for example, shows how important rural *fiestas* are to urban migrants to maintain contact with their communities and show their commitment to them (Lazar 2008).

One feature of *fiestas* is the role of ritual drinking, a phenomenon which helps to illustrate gender relations in the Andes. Drinking in the rural Andes is not exclusively a male activity, but men invariably drink larger amounts of alcohol, on a more frequent basis, and for longer periods than women, and domestic violence against wives often follows periods of drinking (Spedding 1994; Harris 2000b). Pressure on men to drink during *fiestas* is significant (Spedding 1994; Lazar 2008) to the extent that even when men do not want to drink they are often pressurised into doing so. This is a very clear example of the ways in which groups can have major impacts on the choices made by individuals (Stewart 2005).

Drinking during these *fiestas* fulfills various functions. Beyond the intrinsic enjoyment of drinking, it is also a way in which people establish and maintain bonds between themselves. This was quite notable from my own perspective, because in many cases people got to know and became more trusting of my presence once I had shared beer and alcohol with them during

fiestas. *Fiestas* also create opportunities for off-farm work for men as musicians, allowing them to travel and earn money back into the household.

Long drinking sessions negatively affect women in a number of ways. The most obvious is that drinking is often associated with domestic violence, which various anthropologists have identified as being prevalent in rural Andean communities (Harris 2000a; Harris 2000b; Stølen 1987; Stølen 1991; Spedding 1994; Spedding and Llanos 1999). In addition to this, drinking often leads to money being taken out of the household, deprives women of their husband's assistance in agricultural work at particular moments, increases the possibility of domestic violence, and imposes pressure on them to look after their husbands when they are drunk, often walking late at night to *fiestas* in other communities to bring their inebriated husbands home. If they do not perform this last responsibility and something bad happens to the man, the women may become the target of negative gossip for failing to look after their husbands. Therefore, as in many societies (see Chant 1998), relationships between spouses in the two communities are characterised by a patriarchal culture that encourages men to enjoy significantly more opportunities to gratify their personal interests (in this case via ritual drinking) than women, and which is relatively permissive towards physical violence against women.

These 'traditional' values of the Andean *fiestas* have been increasingly challenged by Evangelical churches, which explicitly prohibit drinking, dancing, and chewing coca (another integral aspect of communal life for many *comunarios*). I will go into the different motivations behind Evangelical conversion in Chapters 6 and 7, but at least one aspect of it is that the prohibition of drinking is attractive to women who want their husbands to stop drinking, and to some men who seek an excuse to escape from the pressure to drink (Gill 1990; Brusco 1993; Drogus 1998; Lazar 2008). As we will see, the contest of ideas between the 'traditional' social activities of rural communities and the more austere values of the Evangelical church have important ramifications for the relationships between spouses during later life, influencing their ability to attain wellbeing.

4.8. Conclusion

The material I have presented in this chapter points towards the following series of conclusions. The first is that desires for modernity play a key part in peasant concepts of wellbeing and this leads peasants to attempt to accumulate in a number of ways. The result is that they are doing more than simply reacting to change that is forced upon them by external forces and ideologies – they also seize opportunities to drive change 'from below'. Even when development processes do generate complexities, *comunarios* often respond by pushing for an acceleration of those processes rather than asking for 'more time' to weigh up the costs and benefits of development, as some anthropologists have recommended (e.g. Allen 1988). Where tractors create dependency, the solution is to seek more tractors; where a previous development project had disappointing results, the response is to bring in more projects. Even where the effects of development processes have ambiguous implications for wellbeing (for example, the loss of time due to the increased number of agricultural tasks caused by the dynamisation of agriculture in Community A), *comunarios* may still be prepared to continue accelerating the pace of change, in that case demanding an improvement to the irrigation infrastructure.

Second, it is clear that there is a broad trend towards improved material living standards in the long term, and these changes are appreciated by *comunarios*. They are generally not nostalgic about the past, which is associated with significant hardship, food insecurity and hunger. This is clearest in Community A, where many *comunarios* recall a time when they had to travel to wealthier communities to work for food to be able to sustain themselves. Currently, *comunarios* enjoy surpluses of food, and even in Community B where production was low during the year of study due to late rains and pest outbreaks, there was no real food security threat. Whereas in Community A, living standards have improved due to the dynamisation of the agricultural system through NGO and municipality interventions and market opportunities, in Community B the agricultural sector is stagnant and many *comunarios* have diversified into off-farm labour.

None of this is to say that peasant wellbeing depends solely or exclusively on material standards of wellbeing, and as we will see in the subsequent chapters, this is far from being the case. What it does reveal, however, is that *comunarios* are not motivated by a fundamentally 'alternative' concept of wellbeing which is in tension with, or opposed to, 'Western' concepts of development and material wellbeing, as is suggested by the *vivir bien* concept. On the contrary, they are in many ways pro-'modernity', driving progress and change even though they cannot be absolutely certain of the precise outcomes. This understanding constitutes the background to my analysis of wellbeing among older people and the impacts of the Renta Dignidad, which is the focus of the rest of the thesis.

Chapter 5: Material Wellbeing

5.1. Introduction

Having outlined the key elements of rural change in Chapter 4, I will now examine the material wellbeing of older people in the two villages, in order to subsequently analyse the contribution made by the Renta Dignidad. Although it is generally accepted that material wealth alone does not guarantee wellbeing, it is also recognised that it is important and can have major ramifications for people's subjective and relative wellbeing. However the precise links between material and subjective wellbeing are heavily disputed, particularly at the aggregate level where there are longstanding debates over whether economic growth delivers better subjective wellbeing (Easterlin 1974; Easterlin 2005; Kenny 2005; Deaton 2009; Easterlin et al 2010). At the same time the disputed 'paradox' at the heart of these debates, namely that greater wealth may not necessarily lead to greater subjective wellbeing, has more limited relevance to poor people, where significant basic needs are unmet and where levels of reported happiness tend to be lower than those reported for people in higher-income countries (Diener and Biswas-Diener 2002; Biswas-Diener et al 2004). In poorer contexts, the link between material and subjective wellbeing tends to be far stronger than in contexts of relative affluence (Kingdon and Knight 2006; Zhang et al 2008, both cited in Lloyd-Sherlock et al 2012a; Feeny et al 2014).

Unsurprisingly, attempts to propose different ways of looking at wellbeing still emphasise the importance of material factors to allow people to achieve other goals and participate in processes which are valuable (e.g. Sen 1999; McGregor et al 2006). Even in low-income countries, however, the precise link between material prosperity and other aspects of wellbeing is ambiguous, with evidence from China suggesting that it is possible for rapid economic development to occur alongside worsening subjective wellbeing (Brockmann 2009; Bartolini and Sarracino 2015). In many cases it may be relative levels of wealth, rather than absolute

ones, which have the most meaning for the majority of people, particularly at the local level (e.g. Fafchamps and Shilpi 2008; Asadullah and Choudhury 2012; Posel and Casale 2011; Corazzini et al 2012). In Peru, Guillen-Royo (2011) finds that people's appraisals of their clothes, housing, and children's education are largely determined by the comparison they make with people living in the same communities. Absolute standards are, however, more important in the cases of healthcare and food. Moreover, the precise importance of material aspects of wellbeing can vary significantly across individuals according to their personalities. For example, Rojas's study in Mexico reveals that while wealth may play a central role in happiness for some people, it may be irrelevant for others, varying significantly according to people's conceptual referents for happiness (Rojas 2007). Thus, even though this chapter deals with the more material aspects of older persons' wellbeing, these can only be fully understood in terms of their interplay with the relational and subjective areas of wellbeing, as addressed in the following chapters.

Gerontologists and advocates for older people have often argued that in income terms, they are likely to be poorer than younger age groups in low-income countries, and indeed that their poverty is probably hidden by official statistics (Gorman and Heslop 2002; Schwarz 2003; Gorman 2004). This argument depends largely on studies that show that older people may lose out from living alone and thereby miss out on economies of scale within the household (Lanjouw et al 1998; Deaton and Paxson 1998), leading to the overstatement of income poverty in households with children and an understatement of poverty among older people (Barrientos et al 2003). However, Cotlear and Tornarolli (2011) argue that these economies of scale are likely to vary considerably across countries, that available data are very limited, and that a consideration of the data in Latin America suggests that older people are not generally poorer than younger groups of the population in most countries. Beyond income, it is clear that healthcare is a major factor of older persons' wellbeing, and there is a large amount of literature on older people in high and low-income countries focusing on health problems which are specific to, or accentuated by, later life (Steptoe et al. 2015).

This chapter will begin by explaining older people's material wellbeing with regards to their productive activities, consumption habits and savings, before subsequently moving onto their health. It will then show how the Renta Dignidad contributes (or not) to these areas of wellbeing in order to address the first sub-question, 'How and to what extent does the Renta Dignidad contribute to the material elements of older people's wellbeing?'.

5.2. Later Life and Material Wealth

In the communities of this study, as people get older, they become progressively less able to generate income and produce food. This happens in a number of ways. Physical weakness makes it more difficult for people to work, so they gradually cultivate in fewer (or smaller) land plots, thereby limiting their agricultural surpluses and ability to trade. People distribute their land to their children when they marry, such that older people often have relatively less land remaining, as seen in Households 1 and 5. Moreover, in most cases older persons' children have left home to form new households, and often are no longer in the same community, limiting the physical labour they can provide to help their parents, according to a survey conducted by UDAPE.[37] Where they do produce food themselves, older people have a reduced ability to reach rural markets to sell and barter their products, reducing their market participation (Francesca, Valentina, and Marta). In Community A, older people who have previously taken surpluses of potato to La Paz for sale began to lose contact with their regular buyers (*caseras*) as they have grown older (as in Households 2 and 3).

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[37] The most common living arrangement is for older people to live with their spouses or alone. This can be seen from the data provided by Unidad de Análisis de Politicas Económicas y Sociales (UDAPE), which surveyed 22 households of people 55 years of age and over in Community A, Community B and two neighbouring communities. Of these 21, five contained members under the age of 55, while 12 were comprised just two spouses over the age of 55, with four cases of older people living alone (Chumacero et al. 2013).

Older people are negatively affected by reduced ability to walk and run and increased frequency of accidents. Francesca and Valentina had both suffered from accidents and others discussed the possibility of one, making it more difficult to maintain flocks of sheep, leading some households to sell off their flocks as they get older. Older people, particularly women, also find it difficult to access tractors at times when demand is high. For example, both Lucía's household and Marta planted their potatoes late because they could not get a tractor on time. Marta complained that older women like her are often ignored, while Juana enlisted the help of her niece to get a tractor on time. As their eyesight gets worse it becomes harder for older women to knit clothes and bedcovers, either for sale or as gifts. Valentina and Juana both commented on this problem but it was also clearly true for Roberta and Saturnina. Meanwhile, men become less able and less willing to travel around, instead working part-time as musicians or builders, which as we have seen are key off-farm sources of labour and income for male *comunarios*. Juan, for example, remarked that he had been invited to travel to Brazil to play as a musician, but felt he was too old to do this, and Valentina was reluctant for him to go. Likewise, José had finished his career as a musician some years before the fieldwork started. There is of course a spectrum of the extent to which all of these factors take hold, with households with members aged 60-65 remaining extremely active in agricultural work; whilst those with people aged over 80 find their ability to produce seriously diminished. The general tendency, though, is towards less productivity.

In spite of this, it is far from clear whether one could confidently assert that the older people of the two communities are economically 'poorer' than other age groups in a meaningful way. While they experience a reduced ability to generate income, they also have notably reduced consumption needs. They eat less food, travel less, no longer have to spend on their children, and have little interest in purchasing new consumer durables. In particular, a reduction in appetites was expressed by most of the older respondents, who reported not wanting to eat much food. In some cases, people struggled to adjust to their reduced appetites, and actually cooked too much, leading them to waste food (Households 2, 3, 5, and 11). This represents a significant

adjustment in the case of many *comunarios*, particularly men, because as Gudeman and Rivera (1990) note in Colombia, food has a central role in Andean peasant identities and is closely linked with hard work, which as we will see is crucial for people's understandings of their lives. Younger *comunarios* often emphasise the fact that eating lots of food gives them energy to work hard and sustain their families, and cooking and eating extremely large amounts of food during *fiestas* is an important communal activity. Therefore, adjusting to a more limited appetite can be a challenge for older people. Juan, for example, lamented that he had not appreciated the pleasure of eating so much until he started to lose his appetite in later life, while Valentina told us that one of the reasons she enjoyed inviting us for dinner was that it encouraged them to eat substantial meals together.

While reduced appetites can be a challenge, the fact that older people tend to have more food than they require is at the same time illustrative of a broader point which is that older people's wellbeing is not seriously affected by a lack of material wealth *per* se in the two communities. We did not come across any cases of older people who were suffering from hunger, as has been reported in the rural *Altiplano* in the past (Dusseau 2004, cited in Castro Mantilla 2011). Some people explicitly stated that they were content with their material situation. Lucía in Household 4, the least well-off household, did not complain about monetary poverty, in contrast to problems with health and her social relations which she commented on frequently. In contrast, younger families we spoke to stressed that they needed to make significant expenditures on their children, limiting their ability to accumulate. Valentina acknowledged this difference herself: 'there's only two of us so we don't need so many beans now. We are only going to grow a few next year. Those people who have children must lack money.' Therefore, the fact that older people have less ability to generate income should not necessarily be taken to assume that they are 'poorer' (in economic terms) than other age groups, as is sometimes suggested in other studies (e.g. Medinacelli 2011; Castro Mantilla 2011), particularly taking into account that they receive the Renta Dignidad, which will be discussed in the following section.

Throughout the research in the two communities it also gradually became clear that older people do maintain cash savings in their houses, and that they do this in order to retain the ability to make unexpected expenditures, and to maintain their purchasing power when they are extremely old and incapable of working. Members of Households 1, 2, 3, 7, and 9 all stated they had savings from a combination of animal sales, pea sales in some cases, and old withdrawals of the Bonosol. The primary source of cash savings was from cow sales, which can bring in 3,000-4,000 *Bolivianos* (434-579USD) per animal. In particular, Álvaro (Household 2) was known to take advantage of price differences for cows across different markets, buying some in one market and then walking several hours to sell at another for a profit. However, older households are not able to do this, and have far more trouble looking after animals. In Household 1, Juana was unable to walk significant distances any more, meaning that her daughter Ilda had to do the work of transporting cows to and from markets, making it impossible for them to exploit cattle markets in the same way. Marta, meanwhile, depended on one of her sons to buy and sell cows for her to make sure she could get a good deal. Thus, the way in which older people interact with cattle markets depends heavily on their own age and health, as well as relations with their family members.

In Community A, older people have been able to accumulate savings from selling peas, and continue to be active in the pea trade.[38] This was particularly the case with Households 2 and 3, both of whom expressed the view that they had benefited significantly from the pea trade. Francesca, for example, noted her feeling of gratefulness for the different NGO and municipality projects which had been implemented in Community A to boost productivity, most notably the improved seeds and irrigation provision. Three other households with parents in their fifties had accumulated savings from the pea trade. They noted that peas are a good crop for older people not only because they generate income but also because they require less manual labour than potatoes and do not need to be fumigated. Indeed, even Fausto, at 90 years

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[38] As we will see in the following section, the Renta Dignidad is generally used to cover current spending needs, and this may have the effect of insulating people's savings.

of age, had planted peas in one field in the year prior to his death, revealing that even households with extremely elderly people try to take advantage of income-generating opportunities as much as possible. Growing peas on a commercial basis is not however an option in Community B where there is no irrigation, limiting older peoples' possibilities to accumulate savings in this way. Some of the older persons (in Household 4 and 6) have grown oats for sale or collected fruits in the hills to sell in La Paz. Moreover, older persons' productive activities are bolstered by tractors to plough and harrow, allowing them to carry out activities in spite of having limited labour supply.

The finding that older peoples' households are often able to maintain savings is perhaps surprising, given that previous studies of older people in Bolivia have either ignored the possibility of informal savings or concluded that older people are simply too poor to make savings (e.g. Skinner 2006; Medinacelli 2011). This assumption may reflect to the difficulty of obtaining data about savings. As has been discussed in Chapter 3, issues relating to personal wealth are generally considered a private issue and it was not easy to gain precise information on this aspect of the *comunarios*' lives. During fieldwork, people often made contradictory statements at different moments. For example, Valentina said that she had 'no money' on two occasions, but later revealed that she had enough savings to be able to loan money to her children and pay a builder 3,000 *Bolivianos* for construction work. In addition to monetary savings, older people also maintain stocks of stored *chuño* which they have accumulated over time, providing them with a degree of food security in addition to the food they produce each year. All older people invest a significant degree of time into producing *chuño* during June and July, particularly those families who produce the most potato (Households 2 and 3 in Community A). Producing *chuño* and *kaya* requires not only tremendous physical exertion, but constant monitoring of the weather in order to ensure that the potato and *oca* is left out to freeze at the appropriate moment. The high level of effort that *comunarios* put into producing *chuño* reflects the importance of maintaining stocks of non-perishable food, and these savings play a key role in ensuring livelihood security for older people.

5.3. Later Life and Health

In general, older people are more exposed to ill-health than other age-groups (Lloyd-Sherlock 2006), and this can have major effects on other areas of wellbeing. For example, evidence from the United States shows that older people with disabilities report significantly worse subjective wellbeing than those without (Freedman et al. 2012). As we will see in subsequent chapters, health problems play a major role in contributing to wellbeing failures among older people in the two communities of this study. I will first discuss briefly the types of problems that older people suffer from, before moving on to the different methods that they employ to cure themselves. We will see that older people use a variety of solutions which combine Western medicine, homemade treatments, 'traditional' spiritualism and Evangelism, often in an *ad hoc* manner to resolve health problems.

Health plays a major role in older peoples' ability to carry out (or not) productive activities and experience wellbeing more generally. Along with problematic social relationships, health problems were the most commonly cited reason for wellbeing failures by the older people in this study. There is a subjective element to this in terms of the ways in which health influences people's wellbeing and the types of solutions used to address it (discussed in Chapter 7). In Bolivia, the vulnerability of older people to health problems and disabilities is demonstrated by a significant quantity of data collected in the survey by UDAPE that shows both are more likely among older age groups (Chumacero et al 2013). In the two communities, they particularly suffer from muscular problems, eye problems, skin irritations, and foot pain. Typical comments include the following (from Valentina): 'my body can't take this work anymore. I feel bad, really sick everywhere. I often struggle to get up this hill.'

The health problems from which older people suffer from are strongly related to manual work (discussed further towards the end of the chapter). This reveals the extreme differences between the dilemmas of older people living in rural Bolivia, and those in more affluent societies, where

sedentary living patterns are increasingly seen as problematic, and where physical activity is assumed to have positive impacts on healthcare in later life (Landi et al 2007; Steptoe et al 2012; Steptoe et al 2015; Musslewhite et al 2015). In the communities of this study, older people often blame their current health problems and physical weakness on having worked excessively when they were younger, a view which is supported by broader evidence across Latin America which shows how childhood social and health conditions influence frailty in later life (Alvarado et al 2008).

The practice of cooking with fuelwood and manure (the most common way of cooking) is also likely to cause health problems (WHO 2014). Fortuna said that she believed her eye irritation was caused by cooking with fuelwood and cow excrement, leading her eventually to cook with gas. While most *comunarios* combine gas with fuelwood and excrement to cook, older people (with the exception of Fortuna) generally prefer the latter, because the fuel is freely available and heats up the kitchen, and because the food cooked in this way is said to be tastier than if it were cooked with gas. Both Juana and Marta stated that they avoided using gas altogether due to a lack of familiarity and fear that the canister might explode. In sum, many key aspects of older people's lives in rural areas make them vulnerable to health problems.

To treat themselves for minor maladies, *comunarios* employ a mixture of homemade remedies, palliative *naturista* ('non-pharmaceutical') products purchased in the intermediate city, and, in some cases pain killers, and eye drops acquired from doctors and clinics. Use of these remedies varies significantly across individuals. Most older people are also registered for the free health insurance that is available for all over 60 year olds, but hardly any of them use it. The main reason given for not going is that they do not have time to attend the health facilities (the *posta sanitaria*), which in the case of Community A is in the nearest town, 20 minutes' walk away, and for Community B is in a local town, 45 minutes' walk or ten minutes' drive away. Also in the local town the church parish provides a health service which is popular among many people but was not used by any of the research participants.

In some cases, the claim not to have time to go to the clinic is unquestionably true, certainly in Community A where *comunarios* were frequently strapped for time. Underlying this, there is often a lack of faith in the effectiveness of the treatment that they will receive. When older people do use Western medicine, it is not always effective, leading to disaffection not just for the user but for other people who base their decisions on the experiences of others. In one case, doctors from the clinic in the small town had visited Community A, and had given eye drops to Fausto (Household 6), but he said that they had not been effective so he had ceased to use them, while another time Roberta (Household 9) had been prescribed eye drops but had not used them after hearing from a friend that they could make the situation worse. In Community A, there are also rumours of a woman whose illness got worse after taking a prescribed injection, generating further distrust in the clinic. Marta, for instance, expressed scepticism about the value of going to hospitals, criticising the fact that her daughter was cleaned with cold water after giving birth, and this had led her to be sick, while Gabriela (Household 10) voiced the view that medicines had made her sensitive to cold water. It is also possible that the types of problem older people suffer from are not ones that are easily remediable, and therefore, regardless of the quality of service, treatment may not always be effective. Another possible cause of the low use of health services is the alienation indigenous people can feel in health centres (Albó 2004). Most older women lack confidence in Spanish, and Lucía for instance said that she did not use the clinic in local town because the doctors there only speak Spanish and she could not therefore understand them. For serious illnesses, people go to official doctors or spiritualist doctors (known as *yatiris*), or they convert to Evangelism in the hope of getting cured. The link between health and religious faith reveals that there is a strong subjective element in the ways in which people attempt to maintain good health, as I explore in further detail in Chapter 7.

These findings reveals the massive problems that older people face not only in accessing quality healthcare, but also in being able to evaluate the quality of the healthcare they receive. The findings are similar to those of an ethnographic study by Carter and Mamani (1982) in a

community in the *Altiplano*, which found that when Western healthcare arrived in the 1960s, there was initially substantial support for it. However, a combination of inadequate funding, malpractice on the part of the health practitioners and inappropriate education on the use of medicines and injections led the facility to fall into disrepute, leaving many *comunarios* to return to homemade health solutions (ibid).

5.4. Material Wellbeing: Discussion

Overall, the empirical evidence from the two communities paints a mixed picture, which does not fit into either the characterisation of older people experiencing extreme deprivation as portrayed in some literature (e.g. Salazar de la Torre 2011; Castro Mantilla 2011; Escobar 2014), or the romantic accounts of some exponents of *vivir bien* (e.g. Medina 2011; Albó 2011). In income terms, older people are not necessarily the 'poorest of the poor' as they are often portrayed, thanks partly to the Renta Dignidad (discussed in the next section), but also because their own needs and desires for consumption are quite low. Although older people keep working for as long as they possibly can, this is not necessarily due to poverty *per se*, as is commonly believed (e.g. Escobar 2014), but to certain values and social norms which will be explored and discussed further in Chapter 7. This draws our attention to the importance of relational and subjective understandings of material wealth to fully comprehend its impact on overall wellbeing. After all, the importance of these absolute levels of material wealth may be due not solely to the satisfaction (or not) of basic needs, but also to their subjective meanings such as status concerns and comparison with other people in a given reference group, as is found by Guillen-Royo (2008) in Peru. These issues will be further analysed in the following two chapters on relational and subjective wellbeing.

Although material poverty *per se* is not a major threat to wellbeing, older people do suffer significantly from health problems which are generated and/or exacerbated by the hard manual labour that is an intrinsic aspect of rural smallholder livelihoods. The health services available

to them are inadequate and/or inaccessible (or perceived as such), especially for older women who are not always fluent in Spanish. As we will see in Chapter 7, these health problems can make significant contributions to wellbeing failures among older people, particularly women.

5.5. Renta Dignidad and Material Wellbeing

Non-contributory pensions are likely to influence wellbeing most via their direct impact on material factors, which could potentially feed into relational or subjective wellbeing. As was discussed in Chapter 2, there are a number of routes through which pensions could do this. At the most basic level, cash obviously increases the income of the poor, and it is unsurprising that non-contributory pensions are generally found to reduce income poverty (e.g. Barrientos 2005; Gasparini et al 2007). In the specific case of the Renta Dignidad, the programme has been found to reduce the incidence of income poverty by 13.5 percentage points (Escobar Loza et al 2013). Pension money is most commonly used for consumption, and evidence from Lesotho shows that it can have a major role in reducing hunger among older people (Vincent and Cull 2009), while in South Africa it has been used to purchase consumer durables and food (Ardington and Lund 1995; Neves et al. 2009). However, as we have seen, pensions can have more dynamic effects in terms of supporting livelihood change. Small but nonetheless reliable flows of cash may help poor households improve their long-term income-earning potential by helping people search for jobs or by providing money to invest in productive activities or to purchase productive assets (e.g. Lund 2002; Martinez 2004; Posel et al. 2006; Sabates-Wheeler et al 2008 and Gilligan et al. 2008, both cited in Hanlon et al. 2010; Lichand 2010; Gertler et al. 2012). This section will analyse the impacts of the Renta Dignidad on consumption, productivity and savings, before moving on to consider its impacts on health.

5.5.1. Consumption

My findings in the two communities suggest that the cash received from Renta Dignidad is generally allocated to five areas: foodstuffs, services (such as gas and electricity), healthcare, hiring tractors, and covering the costs related to communal obligations in the *sindicatos*. Of these, foodstuffs are by far the most common use of the money. This observation is supported at the macro-level by data from a recent survey by the Bolivian Government's Unidad de Análisis de Políticas Sociales y Económicas (UDAPE), which shows that in rural areas, for a sample of 933 Renta Dignidad recipients, 58.1% of the Renta Dignidad is on average spent on food items, while 6.9% is used for healthcare products, and 4.7% for services (Chumacero Viscarra et al 2013). Meanwhile, contrary to the findings of Martínez (2004), who, as we saw in Chapter 2 found that much of the Bonosol was invested successfully in fertiliser and livestock, no-one we spoke to reported using the Renta Dignidad in this way. This is also supported by the UDAPE data which shows only 2.6% being spent on agricultural inputs (Chumacero Viscarra et al 2013). Thus the data mostly suggests that, with the exception of paying for tractor hire, the transfer is used primarily for regular consumption needs rather than increasing on-farm productivity. These data do not tell us the additional impact of the Renta Dignidad (i.e. what the money permits people to do that would otherwise have been impossible), which may not be the same as its stated use. On the basis that food consumption falls significantly among older people and that many of the foodstuffs are often purchased for them by their children, it seems probable that at least some of the spending on consumption is not additional. This generates a question over what the counterfactual scenarios would have been: it may be the case that without the Renta Dignidad, some older people would simply have been forced to eat less. Alternatively they may have found it more difficult to accumulate and maintain their savings, or they would have received more monetary assistance from their children.

5.5.2. Productivity

Older people maintain active and productive lives as far as they possibly can, in spite of declining health and physical strength, and do not attempt to 'retire' by ceasing **the** work.[39] As we will see in Chapter 8, this is largely driven by work ethic and cultural norms rather than material necessity. Therefore, although the Renta Dignidad is used primarily for day-to-day consumption needs, it is nonetheless injected into livelihoods that continue to contain significant 'productive' elements, and maintaining productive activities requires continual monetary investments.

A clear direct link between the Renta Dignidad and productive activities was stated by a number of recipients: the hiring of tractors for ploughing and harrowing. This was shown in Chapter 4 to have become an indispensable activity for farmers in the communities.[40] Hiring tractors costs approximately 100 *Bolivianos* per hour, a rate that can be reduced for smaller *chacras*. Not only do peasants need to hire tractors, it is also important for them to be able to do so at very specific moments, or else they are forced to sow later, leading to lower productivity. As we have seen, this is often a challenge for older people who can find it more difficult than younger people to hire a tractor at the right time. Thus, having cash in hand to be able to pay for tractors is extremely important, and so the regular secure income provided by the Renta Dignidad is important for families to ensure cash availability and therefore maintain a certain level of productivity, particularly in cases where households have limited flows of income. This was the case in Lucía's household, for instance, where there were limited opportunities for generating an income and the Renta Dignidad played an important role in allowing them to hire tractors.

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[39] The only exception to this is in the case of older people who agree to move to urban areas to be looked after as they get older. However, people in rural areas continue working for as long as is possible.
[40] This is partly in line with Martinez's findings (2004), which showed that Bonosol recipients were 7.5% more likely to rent a plough. In the communities studied here, prior to the increase in use of tractors, hiring ploughs would have been far more common in rural areas, as they would have been necessary not only for sowing and harvesting (as they are currently used) but also for harrowing and ploughing, tasks that are now performed by tractors.

Whether or not an injection of cash effectively leads to additional increases in productivity among recipients is difficult to assess and likely to vary. In many cases, there is a clear upper limit to the level of investments that can be made on hiring tractors, because they are only worth hiring if the household has the labour to work extra land plots. Due to the fact that older people often live alone or with other older people, it may not always be possible for them to increase the area which they farm.

However, while it is possible to identify links between the use of the Renta Dignidad and productive activities, whether recipient households are liable to significantly increase their productivity upon receipt of the transfer, as Martínez (2004) appeared to show for the Bonosol, is a slightly different question. As mentioned earlier, unlike Martinez's findings, we did not see people using the Renta Dignidad for either fertiliser or livestock, and it is unlikely that the money leads to increases in investment in these areas. The fertiliser investments identified by Martínez (2004) are unattractive in these two communities because earlier experiments with them led to short-term increases in productivity followed by exhaustion of the soil and the spoiling of the taste of potatoes. Thus it is possible that some of the productivity gains identified by Martínez (ibid) were dependent on an unsustainable use of some inputs. Meanwhile, Renta Dignidad recipients are unlikely to invest much in livestock, because as we saw previously they find it increasingly hard to look after animals the older they get and in fact tend progressively to sell them off.

Moreover, comments made by recipients (e.g. 'It doesn't cover everything', 'it really helps us', 'it really saves us') suggest that they themselves conceptualise the programme very much in terms of its role in helping them cover their costs, rather than for investment. That a non-contributory pension is not used primarily for productive investments echoes findings in some parts of South Africa and Brazil, where pensions are not invested at all (Møller 2011; Lloyd-Sherlock et al 2012). This is not necessarily a sign of 'failure' of the Renta Dignidad, however. As a review of cash transfers by DFID argues, the use of cash transfers in some contexts to

invest in livelihood opportunities may reflect the lack of alternative policy arrangements supporting diversification and investment rather than the 'success' of cash transfers (DFID 2011, p35). Barrientos (2008; 2012) argues that cash transfers are likely to have greater impacts amongst households with deficits in 'productive' assets (e.g. of inputs, labour). Thus the fact that, in the villages studied here, the Renta Dignidad does not have major impacts on productivity or investment in many cases may simply reflect the fact that, with the exception of some households (e.g. Lucía's), deficits in productive assets are not severe.

5.5.3. Savings

As we have seen in this chapter, my findings suggests that a number of older people do maintain savings, accumulated primarily from cow sales, or, in Community A, from pea sales as well. It seems probable that the Renta Dignidad contributes to savings, albeit indirectly. In some cases it was quite clear that the Renta Dignidad had a role in covering current costs, while insulating these cash savings. For example, Juana stated:

> That money is fleeting. You spend it quickly. It's not like the money you yourself have earned. The money arrives, and it goes. So no, it's not possible to save money from the Renta. But I have other savings, from animal sales many years ago. So if they don't give me the Renta any more, I'd use the savings. So if they do take away the Renta, it wouldn't be difficult for me.

Meanwhile, Roberta expressed the view that, in light of the difficulty she faced in getting to the town to withdraw her Renta Dignidad, she could consider ceasing to draw it and depend on her cash savings instead. By contrast, many older recipients (Fausto, Juana, Roberta, Saturnina) stated that it had been easier to save money from the Bonosol as it was paid out in a lump sum. This is perhaps unsurprising given that many of the savings *comunarios* hold anyway are from lump sum amounts.

It is worth emphasising, however, that such savings should not be conflated with investment because, as has been shown, older people in the two communities mainly save money in order to guarantee their consumption needs as they get older. In addition, many 'investments' that are made are unplanned and in some cases forced, most obviously in the case of households which were obliged to participate in the stables project and therefore had to hire builders (Households 2, 3 and 7). Other uses of savings include the purchasing of gifts for family members.

5.6. Renta Dignidad and Health

As Lloyd-Sherlock and Agrawal (2014) note, it is common for claims to be made that pensions contribute to maintaining the health of recipients (e.g. Case 2001; Schatz et al 2012). Such claims are generally based on the understanding that older people often face financial barriers to accessing healthcare in low- and middle-income countries. For example, in Tanzania and Côte d'Ivoire it has been found that people over the age of 50 are significantly less likely to seek out healthcare compared to younger people (McIntyre 2004, cited in Lloyd-Sherlock and Agrawal 2014). Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, research suggests that pensions often lead to greater access to health services and better self-reported health (e.g. Schwarzer and Querino 2002; Lloyd-Sherlock 2006), although as Lloyd-Sherlock and Agrawal (2014) emphasise, this should not necessarily be equated with actual health outcomes.

In the cases of Households 2 and 3, both Francesca and Valentina spent a significant portion of the Renta Dignidad on *naturista* health products. There is a partial contradiction here in that although Francesca was an Evangelical, and attributed the good health of her husband and children to her commitment to the Evangelical faith, she herself was continuing to suffer from muscular pains. As a result of spending so heavily on these medicines, which only appeared to function in the short term, Francesca said she was unable to save the Renta Dignidad money, and indeed when the government announced the increase in Renta Dignidad payments she said

that she would spend the extra money on medicines as well. Valentina meanwhile bought bottles of medicine worth 90 *Bolivianos* with some of the money from her Renta Dignidad. The fact that Francesca and Valentina had more diverse and significant income than some of the other older people in the communities suggests that they may have used additional money available for these products, and their being more active led them to have more muscular pains which required some form of treatment.

This raises the question of the actual impact of these solutions and whether or not the Renta Dignidad can make a meaningful contribution to health. After all, both Francesca and Valentina clearly suffered major health problems in spite of taking the medicines. This draws attention to the quality of services actually available to older people. As Lloyd-Sherlock et al (2012) argue, the effectiveness of social protection for improving health depends heavily on the availability of services, which as we have seen are poor in the communities of this study, leaving older people dependent on traditional and palliative remedies. Meanwhile, it is possible that the cash money could also be used for expenditures which have negative impacts on health, such as alcohol. As we have seen in Chapter 4, ritual drinking is a key feature of rural life, and men are often pressurised into it, raising the possibility that the Renta Dignidad could relieve a cash constraint and facilitate alcohol consumption. This was probably the case with Juan and Emilio, who enjoyed drinking beer on social occasions; their wives suggested to us that they did use some of the Renta Dignidad money for this purpose. However, it was not a generalised pattern in the communities, mainly because most of the really heavy drinking tended to involve younger and middle-aged men. Nonetheless, the example reinforces the point that pensions should not be assumed to have positive impacts on people's health.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that, in material terms, older people obviously experience reductions in their capacity to generate income and produce food, but this is offset by a

combination of their own reduced expenditure needs (particularly in the consumption of food and travel) and, significantly, by the income of the Renta Dignidad. Their most significant challenge is in negotiating their declining health and physical strength, issues that are exacerbated by the peasant work ethic - I shall go into further detail on how they do this in Chapter 7.

The Renta Dignidad supports older people's livelihoods by providing cash mainly for consumption and covering day-to-day costs. The amounts paid out are limited and not enough, alone, to live off. The ways in which people talked about the Renta Dignidad reflect its use: if they were being optimistic, they said 'it really saves us', while those focusing more on the fact the quantity of money paid out by the state is limited stated that 'it doesn't cover everything'. There are some cases where it provides families with regular capital for necessary investments in tractor use (in Lucía's case), but it seems unlikely that it leads to major increases in productivity as was concluded by Martínez (2004) for the Bonosol. Meanwhile, there is not a great deal of heterogeneity in the uses of the Renta Dignidad. Although older persons' situations are not by any means uniform, the uses of the Renta Dignidad are not particularly varied. With the exceptions of those people who spend quite a lot of the money on palliative medicines, in all households the Renta Dignidad is conceptualised in a similar way, in terms of 'covering costs' rather than as an opportunity for new investment or livelihood transformation.

Chapter 6: Relational Wellbeing

6.1. Introduction

In Chapter 5 I have analysed the material wellbeing of the older people in the two communities. In this chapter, I evaluate the nature of older persons' relational wellbeing and the impacts on this of the Renta Dignidad. Wellbeing is strongly linked to quality of social relationships (Camfield et al. 2009; White 2010), and this has often been found to be particularly the case for people in later life (Litwin and Shiovitz-Ezra 2006; Heehan 2010; Black and Dobbs 2014). Some studies have suggested that maintaining positive social relationships allows low-income people to achieve levels of life satisfaction that are comparable to, or even higher than, Western and high-income groups, despite their suffering from material deprivation (Biswas-Diener and Diener 2001; Camfield et al. 2009). This may be particularly the case in societies, such as the one focused on in this thesis, which have strong collectivist norms that might attenuate the harm to wellbeing caused by poverty (Borrero et al. 2013). There is, however, a need for caution, not only for the reasons identified in Chapter 2 relating to adaptive preferences but because there is also a long-standing body of evidence questioning the idea that poorer groups necessarily enjoy strong social relationships. According to González de la Rocha, the idea that the poor will 'pull together' and support each other in the face of adversity is often not supported by evidence, and constitutes part of a 'myth of survival' which dangerously assumes that low-income people possess unlimited moral resources with which to cope with poverty and livelihood shocks (Gonzalez de la Rocha 2003). Sayer (2011), who generally emphasises the compassionate aspects of human nature, even suggests that poverty and stigmatisation are unlikely to lead people to act generously towards one another. The potentially negative role of family and relative relations is vividly illustrated in the studies of Oscar Lewis in Mexico City, which show how feelings of resentment and loathing can be passed down through generations, negatively affecting peoples' wellbeing in a number of ways (Lewis 1959; Lewis 1961; Lewis 1969). More recently, Lloyd-Sherlock and Locke (2008) have shown in Buenos Aires that while older

persons' children and grandchildren can be sources of support and pride, they can also generate disappointment and resentment, and convert into sources of wellbeing failure. Feminist literature also raises questions about the nature of relationships between spouses, which are often characterised by asymmetries of power which then manifest in forms of violence directed against women (Kabeer and Joekes 1991; Chant 1998; Chant 2002). Even where physical violence does not occur, however, people may depend materially and emotionally on social relationships (often referred to, not unproblematically, as 'social capital') which can also be characterised by 'tension, conflict and disharmony' (Du Toit and Neves 2009, p23).

As discussed in Chapter 2, much of the existing literature on older people focuses heavily on their relationships with their children and grandchildren, but often overlooks the importance of relationships between spouses, despite the fact that they are likely to be spending more time with the latter. In addition, we have seen that rural lives in the Andes are also highly relational beyond the family, and thus the implications of later life for people's relationships with local social and political institutions need to be considered as well. This chapter first discusses relations between older spouses and then moves on to their relations with their children and grandchildren, before finally making some comments on the role that older people play with respect to the rural communities in which they live. Following this I will discuss the implications of the Renta Dignidad for relational wellbeing, and in doing so I will address the second sub-question of this research: 'How does the Renta Dignidad affect family and community relationships in ways that either facilitate or undermine the wellbeing of older people?'

6.2. Spouses

As we have seen the most common living arrangement for older people in the two communities is for an older couple to live alone together. The fieldwork data reveal that the relationships between older spouses are fraught, because of the physical challenges of later life, but because

of the competing values which inform their wellbeing. In this section, I first describe some of the quarrels that older spouses have, which are related to the ageing process, before showing the legacy of physical violence that often exists among older couples and which needs to be taken into account. The fact that this physical violence is linked to aspects of peasant culture (which encourages men to engage in ritual drinking during *fiestas*) is one of the key reasons why many women increasingly adopt the purist values of the Evangelical churches (Gill 1990; Brusco 1993; Drogus 1998; Lazar 2008). Thus, the values that influence the wellbeing of different older people are in tension with each other.

Adjusting to later life is a challenge for older people, who have to adapt to the impacts it has not only on their own body but also on the body of their spouse, who may experience it at a different rate or intensity. For example, in one case Francesca complained about her husband, Álvaro, sowing barley in too many places without taking into account that they were too old to harvest it all. Meanwhile, Juan and Valentina quarreled over issues such as how much food Valentina should cook in response to their declining appetites, how much coca she should purchase for Juan, and who should take the animals to graze. Some serious quarrels may develop over the appropriate division of work between older people, which may have to change in response to the debilitating effects of later life. When people are faced with a partner's physical weakness, they can make harsh comments. In one case Fortuna said that her husband Fausto had suggested to her that it would be better if she just died. This reveals how people's bad health in later life can have negative impacts on their relations with family members who become frustrated with them, as has been found in other contexts (Schatz 2007; Mudege & Ezeh, 2009).

Identifying 'abuse' in these situations is not easy, because harsh comments may go in both directions. Moreover, harsh words can be common in relationships that also provide vital material and emotional support in other ways, and it is clear that such tensions do not prevent couples from cooperating on key livelihood activities. At the same time, when we consider that

in many cases there is often a legacy of physical violence (discussed below), harsh comments may have an added venom, and could represent the maintenance of psychological abuse even after physical abuse has receded.

Regarding older peoples' wellbeing, there are key questions to be asked about how these occasionally violent relationships evolve as people move into later life. As I explained in Chapter 3, this question is generally overlooked by the global literature on older people, which does not consider the possibility that older people themselves could be in any way responsible for the wellbeing failures of other older people. The only clear ethnographic evidence comes from Spedding's studies in the Yungas region of La Paz, which suggest that domestic violence is far more common early on in marriage and is likely to become less common thereafter (Spedding 1994). This is partly supported by my own data in the two communities, where it seems that domestic violence mainly occurs when couples are younger. Not only that, as men get older they also have less strength to engage in ritual drinking and are increasingly unable to continue working as musicians, which means they travel less, and have fewer opportunities to drink. In this sense it seems that later life does lead to a certain calming of the more virulent aspects of *machismo*.

In spite of this, any transition is uneven and it should not be assumed that domestic violence ends just because people reach 60 years of age. In one incident in Community A, when a drunk man in his late fifties hit his wife during a *fiesta*, it was treated as an embarrassment, but he was not vilified. During the same *fiesta*, Valentina told us that she stays away from her husband when he drinks, because 'he can be harsh'. Even when physical violence has ceased altogether, there may still be an uncomfortable legacy of it in older persons' households, which in some cases women talked about explicitly to us. Lucía for instance, complained openly about the violence she used to suffer at the hands of her husband Emilio, who now found himself extremely debilitated due to later life and illness. Lucía, who was younger and more physically able, argued that she felt she had no obligation to look after him as he had never cared for her

before, although they were continuing to live together and she was effectively supporting him materially. In another case, Fortuna told us how Fausto used to hit her, and continued to abuse her verbally, criticising her because of her blindness and deafness, leaving her so sad she would go to the cemetery to the graves of her parents and ask why they had died without taking her with them. Similarly, Rufina, who was frequently scolded by her husband, stated:

> For me life is really quite difficult. Sometimes I don't know why my husband doesn't understand me. Since he's arrived he's been scolding me. Sometimes I'm just crying. This morning he scolded me, yesterday, the day before.

Subsequently, she said 'I just want to die, I want God to take me. Before he used to hit me, he used to make me cry. When we first got together we were fine for a year and a half but after that things got worse'. Rufina had seen four of her daughters die and had been forced to give up her son to be raised by her sister because he was born out of wedlock. The testimonies of Lucía and Rufina therefore reveal how a combination of mishaps and negative social relations can generate major wellbeing failures for women.

Francesca and Saturnina also stated at one point that they would like to die. One does not have to take these statements literally to appreciate the severe emotional pain these women were undergoing. Meanwhile, various other older women expressed a great deal of sadness and resentment about their lives. For example, in addition to her problems with Emilio, Lucía expressed resentment at her lack of support networks and her harrowing life history which involved not only domestic violence but also having had land taken from her by her brother, seeing all but one of her siblings die at younger ages, and the difficulty of having adopted her sister's daughter at a young age: 'I have no one. Look at how white my hair is. There are others my age who don't have any [white hair]. That's because I've suffered'.

Overall, all of the clear-cut cases of wellbeing failure were linked to both health- and age-related problems (such as blindness or disability), particularly in the case of those women facing major impediments to their mobility due to their age (Saturnina and Fortuna), as well as to their antagonistic relations with other family members. By contrast, the one older woman who was unambiguously happy with her life, Marta, was living alone, although in frequent contact with her relatively economically successful children living nearby.

Among the men, Fausto told us at one stage when he was extremely ill and inactive that he would prefer to die, but in general men did not seem to be experiencing the levels of trauma and sadness afflicting many of the women. Pedro (Household 8), Juan, Álvaro, and Emilio never expressed such feelings of despair in spite of their health-related problems. Moreover, they talked with much more fondness about their past, particularly their experiences travelling around as musicians or labourers in other regions. This suggests that older women, particularly when they are on the wrong side of antagonistic household relations, are far more likely to experience wellbeing failures than men. This is a different finding from that of Skinner's research in urban La Paz, which suggests that men find later life harder than women because their identity at a younger age is based on social networks, activities and practices which are difficult to maintain in later life, thereby undermining their sense of self-worth (Skinner 2006). In rural areas, however, men's ability to experience wellbeing into later life is greater than that of women because, with the exception of extreme cases, they are able to remain active in productive activities until relatively late in life as well as participating in the same public activities (e.g. political participation, going to *fiestas*) they did at a younger age, albeit at a reduced intensity. Both of these key activities are systematically biased against women, who simultaneously suffer from other disadvantages that have accumulated through their lives as a result of their gender, significantly increasing the likelihood of suffering from wellbeing failures. Not only have they suffered abuse in many cases, but they have also had fewer opportunities to enjoy novel experiences, in comparison with men who tend to have attained higher educational levels and to have travelled around more as musicians or doing other off-

farm work when younger. Older women's wellbeing failure, therefore, is not caused solely by legacies of physical abuse and health problems in later life, but also by historical inequalities in access to opportunities to experience wellbeing in different ways. The limits on older women's possibilities to experience wellbeing, and indeed their own awareness of that fact, are well illustrated by a comment that Francesca made to me after I had eaten dinner with her: 'I bet you go to sleep, you think and write all sorts of interesting things. I just feed the cats and dogs'.

It has been suggested that women involved in violent relationships could develop some form of adaptive preference by accepting violence as an undesirable but inevitable feature of marriage (Nussbaum 2001). Indeed evidence from the studies by Harris and Spedding suggests that, on the one hand, Aymara women in rural areas do indeed view such violence as a common feature of marriages, so that although they complain about it bitterly it is seen as almost inevitable (Harris 2000a; Spedding 1994). Harris (2000a) in particular writes that in the North Potosí region of the *Altiplano* women often sympathise with each other but do not intervene in each other's favour due to the perception that violence is simply an inescapable aspect of marriage. In our case, in both communities it is undeniable that many older women have lived the majority of their lives with husbands who, at one time at least, has hit them frequently.

The opportunities for older women to oppose domestic violence directly are limited, and it is very difficult for women to divorce in rural Aymara society. Many women do, however, employ covert strategies either to maintain their own economic autonomy or to reduce violence. In two cases we came across women (Valentina, as well as a woman in her forties) who maintained monetary savings without the knowledge of their husbands, and one of these women explicitly linked this decision to an incident of brutal violence to which she had been subjected by her husband. Another action that could be seen as a response to domestic violence is conversion to Evangelism, which expressly prohibits alcohol consumption. As we saw in Chapters 2 and 4, this has often been identified as a female-led effort to instigate a transition away from cultural practices that are associated with male drinking and domestic violence (Gill 1990; Brusco 1993;

Drogus 1998; Lazar 2008). In the two communities of this study, no woman said that she was trying to get her husband to convert to Evangelism precisely to stop him drinking and hitting her (as we have seen the principal stated reason is to be cured of maladies), but some clearly disapproved of their husbands' drinking and stated a preference for them to join the church. Moreover, one woman in her fifties whose husband had converted many years ago stated explicitly that her husband's behaviour had substantially improved after converting, resulting in a more harmonious household and a better life for both of them. The link between spirituality and the prohibition of behaviour that is not desirable for women is noticeable in the following statement by Francesca, commenting on the efforts of Valentina to convince Juan to convert, and in response to finding out that her own husband had been involved in a drunken fight:

> She has been trying really hard to get her husband to enter into the church but she hasn't been successful. Sometimes it's hard to get our husbands to enter but we have to try. They're always playing with the devil. That's why these sorts of fights happen.

The Evangelical challenge to traditional structures and practices creates tensions within households, because many men resist conversion, often stating how much they look forward to *fiestas* as an opportunity to drink beer, and they complain about the rise of Evangelism in the community and its opposition to traditional customs. They also retort that Evangelicals are hypocritical, alleging that they act as if they are morally superior, but are actually greedier when it comes to their interactions with the rest of the community. The fact that Evangelicals go to church on Sunday is used as evidence that they are lazy and want to avoid work, with Álvaro, for example, criticising his wife for 'escaping' from work on Sundays. During social events and meetings, non-Evangelicals sometimes offer Evangelicals alcohol, tempting them provocatively by holding the glass in front of them, and forcing the Evangelicals to actively refuse it. Therefore, while full family conversion to Evangelism does appear to lead to more harmonious households, Evangelism is deeply unattractive to many other *comunarios*, and this leads to tension within the communities and households between two different systems of values. One of

these, which is generally more popular among men, celebrates ritual drinking and a high participation in social events with the rest of the non-Evangelical community, while the other focuses on the Evangelical faith, the prohibition of particular social activities,[41] and the process of regularly asking God for forgiveness.

At the same time, these tensions and conflicts exist within relationships that also provide substantial material and emotional co-support. For example, while Álvaro and Francesca had a lot of tension between them regarding Evangelism and fiestas, they were also highly respected in the community for being extremely hard-working and efficient in their management of agricultural activities. Moreover, in spite of the difficulty of spousal relations, many older women do have affection for their husbands and feel a sense of insecurity when they are away. Both Valentina and Mariela said that they were afraid to sleep alone when their husbands were absent, and they would go round to another relative's house or invite one over to avoid sleeping alone. Mariela even speculated that if her husband died she might adopt a child to avoid being alone. Thus, we can say that relationships between spouses are characterised by a complex combination of petty squabbling, hierarchies of power, practical cooperation and emotional support.

6.3. Children

This sub-section focuses on the relationships between older people and their children and grandchildren. These vary greatly according to where the children are living. In particular, it can be seen again that relations between generations are also affected by differences in values, particularly when children live in the city. These differences, however, are far less destructive than those we have seen between some spouses, and could even be argued to have positive implications for the wellbeing of older people.

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[41] This does not extend to political activities, however, and the Evangelical men in Community A were extremely active in the village *sindicato*.

The majority of older people in the two communities live not with their children, but with their spouses or on their own, and this is part of a national-level trend. UDAPE data confirms that older people in Bolivia are more likely to live in nuclear households than they were a decade ago, while people are less likely to be living with their children when they get older (Chumacero et al. 2013; see also Escobar 2014). In the two communities, the norm is that children form new households once they marry. In the context of substantial out-migration to El Alto and neighbouring countries, the majority of these children do not live in the same communities or even region as their parents.

Where older people live with relatives other than their spouses, this is generally either because a child is unmarried (Juana and Ilda) or because the older people are so old they need to live with a child or another family member (Roberta and Elena, and Alicia and Saturnina with Felipa living next door). In these households, there is a high degree of mutual support and cooperation alongside tension and bickering between child and parent. Daughters (who are often moving into later life themselves) who live with older mothers expect them to work as hard as they possibly can, and both parents and children scold each other if they are perceived as failing to fulfill their responsibilities to the household. Mutual scolding was a prevalent theme of Juana's and Ilda's life during the fieldwork period, and virtually whenever we were left alone with one of them, they turned to criticising the other behind their back. They frequently argued over a number of issues, including the designation of responsibilities, as Juana complained that Ilda just 'disappears' to graze the sheep instead of attending to other tasks and that she does not cook. Juana expressed disappointment at Ilda's failure to get married, which she attributed to her laziness, unwillingness to cook, and tendency to scold others. Juana also claimed that Ilda was ungrateful to her, although she had helped her out during the fallout following Ilda's failed relationships, such as the time they had gone to the police to make the father of her child provide financial support. In the years leading up to fieldwork, Juana had been becoming progressively weaker and unable to contribute actively to a number of tasks, partly because of a damaged hand. In that regard, she felt that Ilda failed to appreciate this and support her. By

contrast, Juana said she enjoyed better relationships with her other, city-based children, who always brought fruit, pasta, and rice when they visited, leaving Juana with more than she required. Meanwhile, Ilda complained that Juana scolded her excessively, and on another occasion told us that she was suspicious of a time when her mother sold a cow, believing her mother kept the proceeds for herself. They also argued over what food to cook or whether to treat animals harshly or kindly.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this squabbling was the fact that Ilda herself frequently expressed frustrations about her own daughter similar to those Juana voiced about her. Her own daughter, Victoria, had become engaged to a man she believed to be of low social status (she often said 'he is a nobody'), and who frequently hit Victoria. Despite the violence, Ilda was not entirely certain of how to respond, stating that it was up to her daughter whether she left the relationship and insinuating that it was Victoria's own fault for having becoming engaged to him in the first place.

However, despite these squabbles and fights between Juana and Ilda, and Ilda and Victoria, it was also clear that they really felt affection for each other. On another occasion, Ilda commented how she had gone out into the night armed with a stick to find Victoria when she had not returned from a *fiesta*. Meanwhile, Ilda commented that Juana had cried when Ilda was late returning from the intermediate city, and Juana often speculated that she expected Ilda would cry when she (Juana) died. Ilda partly confirmed this when which she said, 'My mother is getting old quickly. The months, the years are passing really fast. I'm used to living with her, I really don't know what I'll do after she is gone'. Thus, even the most discordant of relationships can still contain a lot of compassion, even if it is not always visible.

In another case, Roberta (Household 9), who could barely walk, was reluctant to talk to us for too long because she was afraid of her daughter Elena scolding her. In that case there may have been a historical reason for the frustration, as Elena told us on another occasion that she

resented the fact that she had not been encouraged to study by her mother, unlike her brothers who had become teachers and now had nice houses in El Alto and La Paz. Meanwhile, in Household 6 Alicia made disparaging comments about her older sister Saturnina, who suffered a variety of disabilities. By contrast there was never any mutual scolding between Lucía and her niece and adopted daughter, Julia. Lucía, who as we have seen had a bleak view of her life and her wellbeing, nonetheless clearly cared for Julia, a woman in her forties who, by virtue of having a disability which Lucía blamed on her neglect as a baby, would probably never marry. She expressed worry that when she herself died, Julia would be abandoned once again without anyone to help her or protect her interests. Julia often referred to Lucía as her 'mother', although she did not regard Lucía's husband Emilio as her father; Emilio, as we have seen, had a historically conflictive relationship with Lucía. The care shown by Lucía towards Julia cannot be explained simply in terms of an 'exchange' or self-interested actions: humans are not motivated solely by egotistical motives but by a far broader set of concerns, including compassion, empathy and family affection (Midgely 1991, cited in Sayer 2011). These disputes share some similarities with the types of tension discussed in the previous sub-section on spouses, except that in this case they are tensions between parents and children or sisters rather than between spouses, and there is unlikely to be a historical legacy of domestic violence similar to that which often exists between spouses.

Where children are living elsewhere, in particular in the city, relationships are complex and variable. Many but not all children return to the rural communities to visit, sometimes to work on their own land, to help their parents with agricultural work, or to attend *fiestas* and play football during *Semana Santa* (Easter). For *fiestas* and other celebrations, older people take a great amount of time and effort to improve their houses and prepare food for visitors. This was particularly the case with Valentina, who took pride in her ability to cook for a large number of people, while for others, such as Pedro and Laura, *fiestas* represented the only chance to see many of their children. *Fiestas* also generate very high pressures on those people who are

obliged to sponsor them (*pasantes* and *prestes*)[42] to provide a good quality of service to guests, leaving them open to harsh criticism if they fail to meet expectations.

The frequency of family visits is extremely variable across families. In some cases children and siblings visit just to use their lands to produce food and take it to the city. The people we spoke to who were doing this were very clear that continuing to produce their own food allows them to keep their costs down in the city. There are also children who visit very rarely, or not at all, due to not having time or not wanting to return to rural areas. One possibility is that the more successful children are less likely to return because their attitudes have changed more significantly as a result of being upwardly mobile (Spedding 1994; Lloyd-Sherlock and Locke 2008).

Overall, however, older people maintain their links with their urban-based children and grandchildren, and they do so in a number of ways. One important way is through the exchange of food and gifts. Food exchanges see local products like potatoes, *chuño*, *oca,* and *kaya* being passed by older parents to the children, with pasta, rice, sugar and fruits passing in the other direction. Many of the older women (in particular Valentina, Juana, Marta and Roberta) emphasised that their children are extremely generous in purchasing food for them and insisted that they did not desire any monetary assistance. Household 3 stood out for having older people who made significant loans to their children in urban areas, and Valentina expressed her confidence that she would be repaid. She was, however, considered to be miserly by her daughter-in-law for not giving more food to her grandchildren, which shows the types of pressures that may exist when older people are perceived to be doing quite well.

Older people can also try to help and support their children at difficult times. In two cases that we were aware of, older people visited El Alto to look after their sick children. In one case, Mariela and José (Household 11) contributed money for a daughter to have an operation, as well

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[42] Sponsors of *fiestas*.

as consulting a *yatiri* to help cure her, and Mariela became extremely sad that her daughter was so unwell. In a second case, Álvaro searched for lizards to make a homemade remedy to help his son in El Alto recover from an operation. These cases were all for people in their late fifties and early sixties, but they show how older people can play crucial roles for their children during health shocks.

Another key way that older people maintain links with family members is by giving gifts, usually clothes and bed covers. Knitting is a regular activity for women of all ages, particularly in Community A where women knit while taking the sheep to graze.[43] Knitting is also the principal activity that older women turn to when they have some time. As people get very old, however, they become less able to knit so prolifically due to sight loss, and in these cases they buy clothes instead (e.g. Juana in Household 1, Valentina in Household 2) to give to their grandchildren.

This is not to say that older people do not have disputes with those children who live in urban areas, but the nature of these disputes does not fall into the category of 'abuse' or 'neglect' that features heavily in much of the literature on older people in Bolivia (Defensoría del Pueblo and HelpAge 2011; Salazar de la Torre 2011; Castro Mantilla 2011).

Often, differences emerge due to cultural and generational changes which unsettle older people, especially if the children have married people of a slightly different social standing. On one occasion, Álvaro complained about the fact that when his son visited Community A, his son's wife did not know how to harvest peas and appeared to be ignorant of agricultural tasks in general. In Community B, during the main *fiesta*, one couple in their late fifties commented on the independent spirit showed by their daughter-in-law, something that made them feel slightly undermined: 'we can't say anything to my daughter-in-law. She always just gets on with things, we can't scold her or anything like that'.

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[43] When men graze the animals, they tend to chew coca and listen to the radio.

Where more serious disagreements do occur, they are usually due to children attempting to convince their older parents to rest more or stop working altogether, which clashes with the parents' desires to remain active and productive. Children also try, with varying degrees of success, to persuade their parents to move to the city to live with or near them, a change which would require the parents to stop working in agriculture, as well as making it easier to look after them. The tension between the children's exhortations to work less and/or move to the city and their parents' insistence on maintaining their agricultural livelihood was reflected most clearly in arguments that occurred in two cases over clothes. In one instance, one of Marta's daughters had bought her expensive dresses, which she then refused to wear because she would get them dirty working in the field. To try to convince her to wear the new clothes, the children then told her that they would burn the clothes anyway when she died, so that she might as well wear them, a threat that led her to cry when she retold the story to us. In another case, Valentina's children bought new dresses for her, but she failed to wear them; as a result they threatened to burn her old clothes to force her to do so. In these examples, the desire of the children for their parents to wear new clothes seems to be because they believe their parents should not be working so hard and should 'enjoy' later life.

Thus the nature of disputes between older people and their children are fundamentally different according to whether the children are living in the same household, or who have migrated elsewhere. To a large degree, this is due to the co-dependency that exists between parents and children living in the same house, meaning that people's welfare is highly dependent on each other's actions. If we consider the squabbles between Juana and Ilda, many of these were over issues that had ramifications for both of them, constituting potential sources of conflict, but were likely to be less important to relatives living elsewhere. Moreover, it is logical in this context that the child would not insist as much that her mother rested and could even scold her to make her work to share the burden, or there would simply be less of a given good or service available to the household. Therefore, household members seem to have strong incentives to

ensure that other members, including older ones, continue to contribute their labour as much as possible, and these incentives are unlikely to be the same for relatives living elsewhere. Meanwhile, even the issues that are not necessarily related to material survival (how animals should be treated, what food to cook) are likely to be far more of a problem to someone living in the same house than someone living elsewhere.

There is also a third category of children who have formed separate households in the same community or area. These children play key roles in helping their older parents in later life, with their role increasing in importance the older their parents get. Older women such as Marta and Juana stated how much they enjoyed cooking together when their daughters could come and visit. A case in point is the final months of the life of Fausto (Household 6), the oldest *comunario* in Community A, who was assisted in a number of ways by his two sons living close by. Apart from encouraging him to eat and washing his clothes, they also attempted to help him recover from his maladies, albeit in radically different ways. One of the sons was a non-Evangelical and visited *yatiris* to get advice, but when their recommendations failed Fausto began attending the Evangelical church in his final months, a decision that was probably influenced by his other son, who was the pastor. Fausto also considered going to El Alto to visit his daughters, but eventually did not do so from a fear of being shut indoors, and because his daughters would pressurise him to eat. When he died, one of the sons started accompanying his widow Fortuna to the intermediate city to withdraw the Renta Dignidad now that her husband was not there to accompany her. Thus, this case shows that children living close by play a key role in looking after their parents the older the latter get.

It seems probable, therefore, that for older people to remain living in the rural communities when they are extremely old, they do actually need to have at least one child or close family member living in the community or nearby. In two cases people told us that they had returned to live in the communities specifically in order to look after their ageing parents. Spedding and Llanos (1999) write that there is often strong social pressure on children not to abandon their

older parents, so it is possible that social norms and a sense of obligation place a limit on the possibility of abandonment of older people.

These findings present a complex picture of older peoples' relationships with their children. They suggest that while rural-urban migration is not without its challenges for older people, it could also bring about some benefits. Many older people appeared to have better relationships with absent children than with ones that were living in the same household. Even though they have disputes with the former, it seems that the nature of these disputes is quite different from the mutual scolding that is prevalent among people living in the same households.

6.4. Grandchildren

Another outcome of rural-urban migration is that many older persons' grandchildren and great grandchildren grow up in urban areas. Older people take great joy in seeing their grandchildren. This was illustrated most vividly when Francesca's daughter visited her with a recently born grandson, and Francesca cradled him, saying 'who knows if I'll see you when you're grown up? I'll hug you now, I'll stroke you and in the future who knows what will happen'. Relating to their grandchildren, however, can be a challenge for older people, and in some cases a source of anguish, because the fact that many of them grow up in El Alto means that they rarely speak Aymara or pretend not to understand it.

Beyond linguistic differences, urban-raised children also have different attitudes that present a challenge for their grandparents and great-grandparents. On one occasion, Francesca's ten year-old grandson strongly resisted going to graze the sheep with her, while on another, Valentina and Juan's teenage granddaughter refused to eat any of the food offered to her. They were baffled and disappointed by the rejection of the food and continued unsuccessfully trying to convince her to eat. In another case, it was reported that two of their grandsons had voiced disgust that Juan and Valentina raise guinea pigs in the kitchen (a widespread practice in rural

Andean communities) and as a consequence refused to come to visit. On another occasion, Alicia's son and grandchildren came to visit her. One of the granddaughters, who was studying at the prestigious Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz (relatively unusual for people from these communities), was visiting for the first time in years at Alicia's insistence, but they ended up arguing when she refused to eat some of the food and Alicia became upset. In spite of these problems, grandparents want their grandchildren to visit, both for emotional reasons and for help look after animals, and they look for ways to encourage visits. On one occasion, Francesca paid her grandchildren small amounts of money to help her look after the sheep. In another case, Valentina made a proposal to a grandson living in the intermediate city that if he came to stay in the holidays and helped her look after her cows, she would give him a portion of the money from future sales.

These cases show that one result of rural-urban change is that grandchildren and great grandchildren usually grow up with attitudes that distance them from their grandparents living in the countryside. This shows that development can be a contradictory process. In many cases, older people themselves have actively facilitated 'development' and modernity in a number of ways, in particular by encouraging their children to aspire for more than a peasant life, but they do not have control over all the outcomes. These processes of livelihood change, therefore, involve a series of wellbeing tradeoffs which people have to negotiate throughout later life.

6.5. Other Relatives

Family relations are not, of course, limited to the household, and indeed Collins argues that the focus of many studies on the household as the key unit in rural Aymara societies is misplaced, because relations with siblings, godparents, godchildren, and with parents- and children- in law may be more significant than those within the household itself (Collins 1986). She emphasises in particular that siblings can form lasting bonds in Andean rural areas and that these can be as important as other family bonds and in some cases more so.

In the communities of this study, where older people still had siblings, they generally had complex in some cases conflictive relationships with them. Even when there was no outright dispute, there were often sentiments of resentment and disputes over family responsibilities. In particular, Ilda felt she had not been appropriately compensated for her efforts in looking after her siblings' animals and representing the family in the *sindicato*, and she admitted that she had had disputes over money with them in the past. She had also been growing crops in *a partir*[44] arrangements with them and claimed that her siblings had not been coming back to perform the *aporque*,[45] leaving her to do all the work.

More serious disputes tend to be related to land; they can be particularly ferocious between relatives. Lucía, in particular, had suffered throughout her life because her brother had seized a lot of land she thought should have been hers, to the extent that they had not spoken until recently. Similarly, Rufina, who, as we have seen, had given up her baby to be looked after by her sister, told us that the sister had then proceeded to take her land (unfairly in Rufina's view) as some form of compensation for looking after the child. The prevalence of conflicts between siblings was also revealed by another case involving a woman aged 40, who voiced a series of grievances against her brother, namely that although she had been the one to look after their mother her brother had seized land that was rightly hers.

However, the most intractable land dispute during the fieldwork period was in Community B, between a couple in their early sixties (Mariela and Raul) and Mariela's nieces, who were now living outside the community and accused her of seizing land that was theirs. The dispute, which had roots going back to at least the 1970s, flared up during the land-titling programme in Community B. Mariela had a reputation among *comunarios* of acting aggressively in protecting

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[44] In these arrangements, different actors will divide the responsibilities and production of a land plot between them, usually by designating every other furrow to one of them, splitting production costs (to hire the tractor, buy the pesticide and fertiliser if applicable), and providing the animal traction.

[45] This is the act of moving earth up to the foot of the plants with a pick. *Aporque* is carried out mainly in the month of January and is one of the hardest tasks on the agricultural calendar.

her interests and was regarded with suspicion by many. The accusation against her was that she had expanded her house over land owned by her now-deceased brother, thereby depriving her nieces who had been living in different communities for some time. The dispute quickly descended into a war of insults traded by both sides, many of them deemed excessively personal and vulgar by other *comunarios*. For example, Mariela argued that it was in fact her own father and not the nieces' father who had brought them up, and that therefore she had a more legitimate claim to the lands. A community meeting called to resolve the issue lasted all day but did not even come close to resolving the issue, although Mariela was fined for using bad language and insulting the *sindicato* leaders, while both parties were required to sign an agreement to cease trading insults or be whipped. The affair was highly polarised, leaving Mariela feeling that some key family members had failed to support her.

The long-lasting nature of land disputes, as well as the frequent mixing of claims and accusations regarding affective contributions (caring for children out of wedlock, caring for older people in later life) with issues relating to material interests, gives a rather Hobbesian picture of Andean life. This stands in apparent contradiction to the very significant collective and collaborative aspects of rural livelihoods discussed in Chapter 4, and indeed previous studies of Andean social structures have identified the same 'paradox' of high levels of cooperation and conflict existing side-by-side in the rural Andes (e.g. Albó 2002; Álvarez and Copestake 2008).

Unlike disputes between spouses, which are driven by behavioural flaws and cultural patterns that can be corrected through self-criticism and change (in particular through Evangelical conversion), conflicts between siblings over land can have long-lasting ramifications for people's ability to produce food and generate income. Land is not only a material asset, however, it is also linked to the ability to work, which, as we will see in Chapter 7, is itself a key part of people's identity and self-worth. Owning more land also allows people to have more to pass on to their children and grandchildren, thus contributing to their own affective ties with

loved ones. This is not, therefore, competition for competition's sake. As Sayer argues persuasively, many of the struggles of the social field are not just about particular goods, resources, power, or even distinction *per se* but about 'valued circumstances, practices, relationships and ways of life' (Sayer 2005, p96). In short, achieving wellbeing, even understood in the most holistic sense possible, often requires competition due to the circumstances in which actors find themselves.

6.6. Communities

As we have seen in Chapter 4, and as other researchers have also pointed out (e.g. Bebbington 1999), rural livelihoods in the Andes are highly social and closely intertwined with collective political and social organisations that carry both instrumental and intrinsic value. Andean wellbeing, it has been argued, is 'generated through the relationships between goals, resources, and values inside institutions such as collective work events and *fiestas*' (Álvarez and Copestake 2008, p175). In this sub-section, I discuss the three main sets of social institutions in the villages, namely the *sindicatos*, 'traditional' social events such as *fiestas*, and the Evangelical churches, and examine precisely how these influence people's wellbeing in later life. I then discuss the inequalities which mean that older people's interactions with the different institutions is differentiated and in some cases exclusionary, and finally I address the implications of this differentiation for a broader understanding of older people's wellbeing.

6.6.1. Communities and Later Life

As we have seen previously, the legitimacy of *sindicatos* is due largely to their ability to deliver projects that are expected to bring material benefits to people's lives. Virtually all older people have benefited from such projects (e.g. drinking water, electrification), particularly those in Community A who have taken advantage of interventions boosting agricultural productivity. These projects have indisputably had positive impacts on their material wellbeing and overall

livelihood security. At the same time, later life poses challenges for the nature of their participation. It is more difficult for older people to act effectively as *sindicato* leaders, which poses questions for the rotational system of responsibilities, and as a result some people in Community A suggested that people in later life should therefore accept some positions sooner so that they would not have to do it when they were older. In Community B, the secretary general for that year was in fact fulfilling the duty in place of his father-in-law, who was too old to do it.

Older people interact with new projects in contradictory and varied ways: benefiting from them, being obliged to take part against their will, and/or trying to adapt as best as possible to projects which are sometimes poorly thought out. Broadly speaking they have less interest in projects than younger families who are more enthusiastic about interventions that could improve living standards. Some of the households who had benefited from project interventions in the past in Community A (e.g. households 2 and 3) were forcibly incorporated into the stable project discussed in Chapter 4, which meant that they had to build the stables themselves. They were required to participate solely because they were already on the list of households to participate in project, and, once on the list, were obliged to build the stables. Both of the couples said that they would have preferred not to have been involved as the project imposed a cost in time and money (they both ended up paying money to builders to construct the stables), and they did not feel they needed the stables in any case. They also expressed the view that the fact that they were older people meant that the stables would have only a limited value for them. Similarly, Gabriela (Household 11) said she was afraid that she would not be able to feed the dairy cow if it arrived and suggested it might be best to sell it. As with other *comunarios* of other ages, however, all the households did discuss the possibility of converting the stables into houses at a future date, and José and Gabriela were already using theirs for storage. This alternative use of the stable was against the rules of the project, leaving José frantically removing the goods and tools from the stable when he heard that the engineer from the municipality was about to arrive to inspect the stables. Similarly, in Community B, Household 6 was involved in a similar

project and ultimately found that the 'stable' was useful as a larger building in which to receive visitors. This demonstrates the contradictory relationship that older people maintain with development projects: on the one hand they are disproportionately at risk of being incorporated into projects that are unlikely to benefit from, but at the same time, once involved, they are as capable as other *comunarios* of trying to turn 'poorly designed' projects to their advantage.

Older people also take a less active role in *fiestas* and are far less likely to dance in them. During the principal *fiesta* in Community B in May 2013, the older women sat at the side and looked on while chewing coca (except for Evangelicals), while younger people who lived in the city formed the main body of dancers. The difficulty older people face in dancing became a challenge for the community organisation at one point in Community A, when there was a reluctance among the ageing *comunarios* to dance in an upcoming event in a nearby community. Attending and participating in these sorts of events is important to maintain the community's standing in the local area, and in response the *comunarios* decided to hire a band instead of dancing. Meanwhile, older men continue to participate in ritual drinking, sometimes in response to the general pressure on men but also because of the pleasure of getting drunk with other male *comunarios*. For instance, Juan and Álvaro both expressed their enjoyment of communal drinking, although at another point Álvaro lamented the pressure he sometimes felt to get drunk. As mentioned earlier, however, older men find it progressively harder to participate in these events for the same length of time because they often get drunk quickly and have to come home earlier.

Meanwhile, older Evangelical women[46] are more removed from some key aspects of the 'traditional community' due to the prohibitions on drinking, chewing coca and dancing, but they do have access to the alternative community of Evangelical believers. The Evangelical church has its own set of meetings and rituals, including not only Sunday services but also annual and

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[46] There were no older Evangelical men among the research participants, with the exception of Fausto who converted shortly before dying.

quarterly meetings. Evangelicals are also required to make contributions to the Evangelical church in the form of small cash and food payments. Thus, although churches often encourage an ethic of accumulation and self-betterment, the act of converting to Evangelism and moving away from aspects of the 'traditional' communitarian life of the village does not entail becoming more individualistic (Lazar 2008). Rather, Evangelicals embrace a different 'community' which also makes demands on their time, and conditions their choices in important ways.[47] As we will see, one of the main driving forces of conversion is to cure maladies and recover from illnesses, but older people also derive satisfaction from activities such as singing hymns in church. Juana, for example, stated how much more she liked church music over the 'music for drunkards' that gets played at *fiestas*, a comment that suggests a link between enjoyment of the music and the values it is perceived to represent. Similarly, Francesca also showed her enjoyment of Evangelical hymns played on the radio on numerous occasions, and as well as dislike of other forms of music.

6.6.2. Differentiation and Exclusion in the Communities

The formal commitment to equality, the similarity of *comunarios* in terms of their clothes, speech, and housing, and the mutually enforced collectivism of Andean communities can give outsiders the impression that *sindicatos* are expressions of radical egalitarianism. For example, Álvarez and Copestake argue that Andean society maintains goals and feelings which are 'diametrically opposed to capitalist axioms' and actively prevents the formation of the inequalities seen in the global economy (Álvarez and Copestake 2008, p181). Such a perception is easily reinforced by the public discourses within communities, which gloss over differences and emphasise similarities among members (Spedding 1994; Fonseca and Mayer 1988, p105). These myths are not necessary malign; they could be interpreted as necessary for communities to maintain cohesiveness and advance collective interests (Spedding 1994; Goldstein 2004; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009), but they are myths nonetheless. During fieldwork, it eventually

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[47] In addition to ceasing to drink alcohol, chew coca, and dance, Evangelicals are also prohibited from going to markets on Sundays, although those with large families often send their children instead.

became apparent that there were major inequalities among different households in terms of their access to land, higher education, and opportunities for work off-farm. Moreover, older people themselves are not a homogenous group. As we have already seen, there are also major gendered inequalities in both the social and political spheres of rural communities, which often mean that men express a much stronger identification with 'the community' than women. As Colloredo-Mansfeld has pointed out, the massive economic contributions women make to their households do not translate into political power (Colloredo Mansfeld 2009, p102). In this sub-section we will look at the ways in which older people's relationship with their communities is differentiated, with some at risk of being excluded from some of the benefits of community life.

From the case study households, generally those with more land (e.g. Households 2 and 3) and prestige accrued due to the success of their children (i.e. Marta) were the best connected and integrated into the communities' social networks. Other families who had spent a long time living in the city were at risk of being excluded from some benefits, as was the case with Households 12 and 13, who had recently returned to live in the community. Marco and Lara (Household 13) had recently returned to Community A and connected their house up to the electricity without asking permission from the *sindicato*, prompting criticism at one of the monthly meetings. Marco defended his right to do this by referring to the fact that he had worked to install the electricity system before and had danced in the inauguration party, and argued that he therefore had a right to connect his house up, although other people questioned this. Not long after, he also had an argument with other *comunarios* over the use of space to produce *chuño*, which is limited.[48] Because Marco had not lived in the community for some time, he did not have an established space to produce *chuño*, and *comunarios* accused him of encroaching on their space. Meanwhile, Octavio and Rufina (Household 12) were denied participation in the stable project and had to struggle to regain land that they had rented to other

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[48] To produce *chuño*, *comunarios* require a space of short-cut grass which is not sheltered so that the potatoes will be fully exposed to the frosts. In Community A, there are two such spaces which have this quality, which are known as *chuñoña*, and each family has their own area allotted which they can use to produce *chuño*.

people for many years. These events show that people who return to rural communities in later life can struggle to assert their claims over the services and goods necessary to achieve wellbeing.

By contrast, other households suffer relative exclusion simply because they have worse connections with the rest of the communities. In Household 1, Ilda's unpopularity in the community, related to the failure of her relationships with the fathers of her children, and Juana's lack of mobility meant the two women were poorly connected to the rest of the *comunarios*, and were often caught unprepared for obligatory community events. On one occasion, this meant that they were not on a list to receive agricultural tools to be distributed by the local authorities. Similarly, Lucía's family was often unaware of social events, while her adopted daughter Julia was ignored by Lucía's brother's family, as if she were not part of the family. This does not mean these families were totally isolated. Juana, for example, received help from her niece, whose daughter helped Juana get a tractor to plough her land, and from Felipa, the only other Evangelical in Community B, who helped when Juana's and Ilda's cow gave birth. Meanwhile, Lucía and Julia often enlisted the assistance of a cousin to support them in key agricultural activities.

Another way in which people may be excluded from aspects of the community organisations is if they do not conform to the Andean 'ideal' of a married man and woman with children. To some extent this was the case with Ilda, who was harshly judged by other *comunarios* and her mother for failing to marry either of the fathers of her two children. Moreover, a minority of people never get married at all; they are known as *tuitiris*. *Tuitiris* continue to live in their communities and can own land, but are excluded from the rotational *sindicato* system. In Community B, there was one *tuitiri*, a 60-year-old man, whom we were not able to interview because he was unfriendly and rejected our efforts to talk to him. During *sindicato* meetings, this man would sit just behind the semi-circle of men and would not participate in public discussions or exchanges of food or drink. Women in particular noted that, apart from his bad

temper, he was also known for what might be described as feminine behaviour, for example in some cases carrying things in an *awayu* ('traditional blanket') in a feminine way, and had been known in the past to ask to accompany women to the market to barter (an exclusively feminine activity). This suggests that while people who differ from traditional norms of gender and sexual relations can live in Andean communities, they do so in tension with the 'norms' of the communities.

6.7. Relational Wellbeing: Discussion

Beyond revealing the rather uncontroversial point that relational wellbeing is of central importance for older people, the data present a mixed message. The problem many older people face is not, in fact, one of abandonment caused by out-migration, discrimination, or exploitation by younger people, as is often emphasised in the literature (Salazar de la Torre 2011; Castro Mantilla 2011). Nonetheless, their lives are highly conflictive. Although the nature of these disputes varies and can be categorised as directly linked to material interests or not, they share a commonality in that they are fundamentally about what type of life to lead and how to achieve wellbeing. Many of these are the outcomes of differences between people living in the community, who reaffirm the desirability of hard work as a source of wellbeing, and people who live in urban areas or in non-farm livelihoods, who seem to believe that older people should retire from work. As Bourdieu has written, conflicts between generations may occur when different actors' 'habituses' (Bourdieu's term for a set of habits and dispositions upon which humans base their actions) have been 'formed under different modes of production', leading them to have different ideas about what constitute 'reasonable' practices (Bourdieu 1977, p78). The determination with which some people's children appear to have insisted that their older parents work less suggests that they have developed firm convictions about the nature of the ageing process that clashes with the conceptions held by their parents. This would be in line with the idea that urbanisation can lead to changes in people's values (Deneulin 2009), which can affect how age is perceived (Castro Mantilla 2011).

It is also clear that older people are not solely victims. Without making a moral judgement of the particular households discussed in this thesis, there is no doubt that some are as capable of acting in ways that are rapacious, miserly, or closed-minded as any other age group. This suggests that wellbeing in later life is not always as 'innocent' or ethically unproblematic as is often implied in the literature and reminds us to be wary of the dangers involved in integrating subjective dimensions of wellbeing into analysis.

Alongside this conflictive element of wellbeing, however, is a more compassionate aspect. For example, Lucía's concern for her adopted daughter Julia, the distress shown by Mariela and Marta when their daughters were sick, the joy older women experience in cooking with their daughters or in seeing their grandchildren, are all examples of human relationships which cannot be understood in instrumental terms. In many cases the wealth accumulated by older people is used in part to build or maintain these affective ties, as shown, for example, by the gifts they give to children or grandchildren or by Valentina's attempt to 'bribe' her grandson into visiting her. This supports Sayer's point that actors do not simply commit emotionally in relationships out of a calculation of benefits, even if that can sometimes be a factor (Sayer 2005, p40). Indeed, in many cases they do so even when there is a high chance that it could harm their wellbeing, not just economically but emotionally as well. For example, Bastia finds that in Spain Bolivian care workers often put their own and their families' material and emotional interests aside in favour of the older people they are employed to look after (Bastia 2015). In the United States, people who care for family members suffering from schizophrenia have been found to suffer from substantially greater emotional illbeing as a result (Magaña et al. 2007), and the same has been found for older people who care for HIV sufferers in South Africa (Nyirenda et al. 2015). Following Sayer, it would be absurd to apply economistic language (i.e. 'investments', 'capital') to describe such emotional commitments, because they often entail stronger, more serious attachments which go beyond a cost-benefit calculation and frequently involve sacrifices of wellbeing at a personal level (Sayer 2005, p40). It is true that in the data

presented here we see some cases where people refer to their contributions to affective relations in order to advance or defend their material interests during land disputes, but this is more the product of a sense of injustice than evidence of cynical manoeuvring.

Meanwhile, people's participation in collective institutions undoubtedly contains elements of exchange of people's labour, resources and organisational contributions in return for tangible benefits in the form of projects. All of the collective institutions discussed in this thesis are capable of providing major wellbeing benefits, usually in return for significant impositions on people's autonomy as individuals in the form of forced expenditures/investments, forced use of time, and prohibitions on certain behaviours. Most obviously, the ability of *sindicatos* to provide public goods goes some way to explaining their much commented resilience in the face of social forces (marketisation, migration, Evangelisation) which might have been assumed to destabilise them (Álvarez and Copestake 2008; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009). As Olson argues, successful social movements tend to be those which can bring tangible and frequent material rewards to their members (Olson 1965). As aspirations for modernity and material improvement grow, *sindicatos* do not lose their relevance and may even increase it (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009), given their role in bringing in the infrastructure projects that permit material advancement. *Sindicatos*' centrality in people's lives is also accentuated by the presence of NGOs and municipal authorities with the financial resources to implement small-scale community-level projects, thus justifying their continued existence.

However, this materialist explanation for the persistence of strong collective institutions in the Andes is not the full story. As the literature on public goods makes clear, there is rarely a strong correlation between people's contributions to a given project and the benefits they receive from it (Deneulin and Townsend 2006). Moreover, the permanent population of rural areas is dwindling and ageing and the most elementary infrastructure deficits have been met already. In some cases *sindicatos*' energies are even channeled towards projects which do not have clear

and significant benefits for community members, as can be seen from the case of the stables project.

All of this suggests that the intangible and subjective contribution of the collective institutions to people's wellbeing needs to be more fully understood. Citing Long (2001), Álvarez and Copestake suggest that Andean organisations are resilient due to their contribution to particular social arrangements deemed necessary for group wellbeing (Álvarez and Copestake 2008). Broadly speaking, people are often motivated by a desire to be socially useful and to contribute towards collective objectves (Sayer 2011; Keyes and Haidt, 2003, quoted in Huper 2005). This can be found across different societies, although it finds a particularly strong expression in much of the Andes. In rural Aymara communities, *comunarios* frequently maintain public discourses which extol collective ambitions such as 'the community' and 'the bases' (the community members) as representing higher institutions which should supercede the petty interests of individuals. Living in a community that is capable of pulling together to achieve objectives is understood as a good in its own right, beyond the value of the instrumental benefits obtained. The fact that *sindicatos* impose fines to ensure participation might be inferred as evidence that community participation is not motivated by 'authentic' public spiritedness because it is not genuinely 'voluntary'. Such a conclusion would miss the point, however, since fines for non-compliance are not simply imposed 'from above' but are actively demanded by the *comunarios* themselves as a means of ensuring the vitality of the organisations. It is true, of course, that *comunarios* often seek to remove themselves from aspects of community life, most evidently through conversion to Evangelism in order to avoid drinking at *fiestas*. Even in these cases, however, people are not doing this to increase their individual autonomy, because they assume a whole set of additional responsibilities relating to being an Evangelical.

This all suggests the fundamental limitations of understanding wellbeing solely in terms of individual freedoms and autonomy (Sayer 2011). Responsibilities to wider collective groupings are not simply exchanges in which individuals engage in order to attain particular benefits or

which are forced upon them, but rather constitute an essential part of human wellbeing itself (Sayer 2011, p225). However, these responsibilities generate dilemmas for older people, who often face difficulties in maintaining the high levels of participation demanded of them by the collective organisations. Not only that: as Cleaver (2007) argues, different groups' ability to participate and contribute is unequal, particularly along gendered lines, because some of the key collective organisations favour the wellbeing of men above that of women and of people who do not marry. This unequal and in some cases exclusionary aspect of some of the social institutions in Andean life is another reason why we should be wary of uncritically celebrating 'alternative' understandings of wellbeing as the *vivir bien* concept does. Rather, the enabling and nourishing aspects of Andean social and political life need to be considered alongside its potential to generate distinct wellbeing outcomes for different groups at different moments of their lives.

The temptation here is to argue that the strong role of relational and collective aspects of wellbeing is due to fundamental differences between Aymara or indigenous understandings of wellbeing and Western ones. Unquestionably, the collectivist element of wellbeing in the rural Andes is far greater than that of most people living in the UK, for example. This is unsurprising given the nature of agricultural economies and a history of ecological constraints and exposure to risk which requires people to maintain collective identities, as is argued forcefully by Chibber (2013). As Sayer points out, however, there is nonetheless a danger of employing rather simplistic understandings of what constitutes wellbeing in Western societies and thus overlooking continuities between wellbeing across distinct cultures (Sayer 2011, p182). Even in neoliberalised and materialistic societies, social relationships play an important role in people's wellbeing. One recent study for example shows that relational wellbeing and social capital play similarly important roles in people's wellbeing in both rich and poor countries (Sarracino 2013). In fact, there is strong evidence from developed countries that active participation of older people in socially productive activities contributes positively to their material and subjective wellbeing (Zunzunegui 2003; Meier and Stutzer 2007; Wahrendorf et al. 2008; McMunn et al 2009). There is also strong evidence of older people engaging in interactions with their

communities in order to reaffirm their personal identities and to demonstrate their own competence (Heehan 2010; Stewart et al. 2015). A study that compares understandings of ageing among older people in Latin American and European contexts finds that there are actually far more continuities than differences (Fernández-Ballasteros et al. 2010). In sum, while the findings here regarding the importance of collective identities and responsibilities for people in later life have certain aspects which are particular to the Andes, they also reveal deeper insights about wellbeing in later life more broadly.

6.8. Renta Dignidad and Relational Wellbeing

Given that the Renta Dignidad is being used by people whose lives and wellbeing are highly relational, it might be expected that it would have highly relational outcomes. As I have shown in Chapter 2, it is not uncommon for non-contributory pensions to benefit family members either through direct redistribution or through the 'crowding out' of transfers (Posel et al. 2006; Sagner and Mtati 1999; Schröder-Butterfil 2004; Lloyd-Sherlock 2006; Skinner et al. 2007; Neves et al. 2009). As part of these processes, pensions can contribute to the relational wellbeing of older people by making it easier for them to engage in networks of exchange (Barrientos and Lloyd-Sherlock 2002b; Sagner and Mtati 1999; Neves et al. 2009), although in other scenarios they may be pressurised into giving or loaning some of the money away (Burman 1996; Skinner 2007). In South Africa, there is evidence that rural households are effectively formed around the receipt of state pensions (Woolard and Klasen 2004). In this section I will first examine the extent to which the Renta Dignidad benefits the relatives of recipients, through either direct or indirect mechanisms, and subsequently I will look at the other ways in which it interacts with the relational aspects of wellbeing.

One implication of the relational lives of older people is that, as was outlined in Chapter 2, family members of the recipients of non-contributory and contributory pensions may be important secondary beneficiaries. Both of these effects has been found to occur in a number of

contexts, including rural and urban South Africa (Sagner and Mtati 1999; Du Toit and Neves 2009; Neves et al. 2009), urban Brazil (Lloyd-Sherlock 2006), rural Indonesia (Schröder-Butterfill 2004) and urban Bolivia (Skinner 2007). For example, Schröder-Butterfill argues that in Indonesia, 'pension and agricultural incomes serve to secure the livelihoods of whole family networks, and the accumulated wealth of older parents is crucial for launching children into economic independence and underwriting their risks' (Schröder-Butterfill 2004, p497). Thus in a context where older people participate in family networks of exchanges of food, gifts, loans and care services, there is strong reason to believe that any greater financial security on the part of older people could benefit younger generations through direct and indirect mechanisms.

In Households 1 and 4, the younger people living in the same household are almost certain to benefit from the transfer. For example, Juana was using her Renta Dignidad to meet shared needs for electricity and foodstuffs, while in Household 4 it is highly probable that Julia benefited in a similar way. In another case, an older woman from a neighbouring community told us that she looked after her granddaughter who had been abandoned by her mother. She also said that she spent most of her Renta Dignidad on the granddaughter. This finding is supported by the UDAPE study, which found that when an older person resides with a school-age grandchild, receipt of the Renta Dignidad is associated with reduced dropout rates (Escobar Loza 2013, personal communication). However, it is clear that these household arrangements are uncommon in the communities studied because younger generations do not generally live in the same households as Renta Dignidad recipients.

As mentioned earlier, indirect transfers of the Renta Dignidad could also occur if, as a result of older people receiving the Renta Dignidad, they are more able or willing to transfer more food or other goods to their children, or if the children transfer less money or fewer goods to them ('crowding out effect') (Cox and Jimenez 1995). It is not possible to know precisely whether or not this occurs, because the Bonosol and then the Renta Dignidad have been in place since the 1990s and thus have become normalised. With the exception of Household 9 (Roberta and

Elena), the older people themselves stated that they do not receive monetary support from their children, and do not expect to do so, because once children form their own families, they should prioritise those rather than their parents. Thus if there is some form of 'crowding out', it is not perceived by the Renta Dignidad recipients themselves.

Another way in which other family members could benefit is when the recipients of the Renta Dignidad are playing a function for the wider family by complying with community rules to maintain ownership of the land on behalf of the entire family, many of whom are living elsewhere. Relatives continue to use their lands in the community to produce food (e.g. Households 3 and 7), and in other cases may use them in the future. They often make transfers to their relatives in the community to ensure that the family claim on land is maintained. In Household 1, Ilda's intention to save some of her Renta Dignidad money to cover the costs of being an authority next year represented a forced investment not only in her own land tenure, but also that of her family as well. The disputes she had with her siblings about their relative contributions to the family's status in the community demonstrate that there was a network, albeit a conflicted one, linking her investments and land ownership with theirs. Meanwhile, Valentina (Household 3) had taken a payment from a son, Tomás, to help towards the costs of the event when the mayor came to visit Community A. In these cases, the existence of transfers to those living in the communities demonstrates the explicit recognition of the role being played to help the entire family maintain a link with the land. However, the extent to which it therefore constitutes a 'strategy' is questionable, because there is often no certainty as to whether future generations will have any interest in the lands. For example, Álvaro, who owned the most land of any of the *comunarios*, believed his children would not return for it and anguished over this. Similarly, Juana expressed doubt that her other children would return to Community B to farm, in spite of the fact that they were still contributing resources to help the family comply with their *sindicato* obligations.[49] Nonetheless, the point is that the Renta Dignidad is injected into

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[49] This phenomenon of older people suffering because their children do not value their land is, of course, not unique to Bolivia, and in fact constitutes a major finding from Bourdieu's *Weight of the World Study*

wider family systems which span both rural and urban areas, and it is likely to make a partial contribution to the flexibility of such systems.

6.9. Impacts on Social Relations

The Renta Dignidad could harm social relations if the money itself becomes a cause of dispute, but it could also improve them by relieving the pressures of poverty which could otherwise cause arguments. Fears that cash transfers could aggravate household tensions are based partly on fears that other family members might take the transfer money from their parents, in what is known as 'coercive pooling', which as we have seen has been found in some cases in South Africa (Burman 1996; Sagner and Mtati 1999), and in urban Bolivia (Skinner 2007). In addition the delivery of social protection may depend somewhat on family networks and relationships if recipients have to travel to withdraw it. This is not uncommon for social protection programmes, and indeed social protection schemes in other countries often have provisions whereby recipients can designate friends or family members to collect money for them (e.g. in Tigray, Ethiopia, see Berhane et al 2015).

In the communities of this study, a key challenge is getting registered to draw the Renta Dignidad, a task which requires interacting with Bolivia's notoriously inefficient bureaucracy. Many older peasants (particularly women who do not speak good Spanish) lack confidence and experience with this, and therefore they depend on assistance from relatives to help them, creating a challenge for people's family networks. For example, Juana was taken to the intermediate town by a daughter living in El Alto (not Ilda, who lacked the confidence to engage with bureaucracies and, as we have seen, had a testy relationship with Juana). On one occasion, when the bank refused to pay Juana because her finger prints had eroded, her daughter

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(Bourdieu 1999). Sayer points out that it is about more than just a devaluation of one's capital, to use Bourdieu's language, but about fundamental differences about what constitutes a good life (Sayer 2005, p102).

scolded the bank official, saying 'don't you have a mother?' thus convincing the person to pay Juana's Renta Dignidad. This shows that support from relatives can be important in ensuring that older people receive the money. Ilda herself also required assistance from the same sister to help her register for the Renta Dignidad when she became 60, which happened during the fieldwork. Similarly, Roberta was dependent on her daughter Elena, and Saturnina on Felipa for help collecting their Renta Dignidad. Fausto used to take his wife Fortuna to the town to withdraw the money holding her hand because of her blindness, and after his death she was assisted by one of her sons. These cases all reveal the importance of family relationships in facilitating the receipt of the Renta Dignidad transfer, but they also raise the possibility that a family member could take advantage of this dependence. There are rumours locally that in some cases such 'coercive pooling' might occur, although all of the people we interviewed emphasised that this did not happen in their case. It is, however, clear that recipients often choose to buy a gift with some of their Renta Dignidad money out of gratitude to their relative for helping them to withdraw the money. One woman in her late fifties commented that when she used to accompany her mother to withdraw the Bonosol her mother would buy her something, while Roberta made a similar comment. Fortuna started buying chickens to cook and share with her sons once they began accompanying her to the town when Fausto had died. It is easy to see how these occurrences might be interpreted by gossipers in the village as manipulation or coercive pooling, but that overlooks the fact that the recipients often genuinely want to reciprocate.

More broadly, it seems that if coercive pooling does occur, it is not widespread. The recipients of the Renta Dignidad do generally retain autonomy in spending it. The only other dispute over the use of the money observed during my fieldwork is that of Lucía (Household 4), who alleged that her husband did not contribute his Renta to the household, keeping it for himself, but even in this case she at least had autonomy over her own money. This should not be particularly surprising, because in the cases where mistrust over the use of money does occur and/or where the legitimate ownership of the money is ambiguous, it is usually when there is an opportunity

for someone to do something underhand. This occurs in the cases where one member of the family sells an animal in the absence of another (Households 1 and 4), and where money is earned by men as musicians (Household 3). With the Renta Dignidad, however, there is little room for such ambiguity, as it is clear who the appropriate recipient is and they must always be present to withdraw the money. This suggests at the very least that the Renta Dignidad money does increase the financial autonomy of recipients. Indeed as we have seen the disputes they have with their children are generally of a distinct nature, whereby the children try to get their parents to work less, suggesting they are not highly dependent on their parents for subsistence.

Meanwhile, the potential for the Renta Dignidad to improve relations depends to a large extent on whether disputes are deemed to have their root in economic issues. On the one hand, the comparison between Lucía's household (Household 4), and Valentina's and Francesca's (2 and 3) suggests that in these latter cases the impacts of drinking and violence on the parts of the husbands may have been limited by the higher and more diverse income provided by the pea trade. Valentina, for example, had almost certainly suffered from her husband's behaviour over the course of their life, but thanks to having relatively high and diverse income streams, she was still able to retain a degree of financial autonomy and transfer gifts and loans to her children and grandchildren. In Lucía's case, however, the legacy of her husband's violence towards her and his partiality for heavy drinking had more impact on the household economy because they had less substantial sources of income. Her husband's failure, or refusal, to share his Renta Dignidad money in the household caused her to feel resentment, even though she was retaining autonomy over her own Renta Dignidad payments. These examples reveal how greater material wealth can have positive impacts on relational wellbeing by limiting the possibilities for outright wellbeing failures generated by negative household relations.

While the Renta Dignidad money may reduce social tensions in some cases, it is also important to acknowledge that many such tensions cannot be reduced to a lack of income and are therefore unlikely to have a straightforward income-based solution. None of the different explanations

that have been given for domestic violence in the Bolivian Andes, such as low self-esteem (Canessa 2007), men's desire to ensure their wives maintain their duties (Harris 2000a), or the difficulties of early married life (Spedding 1994), suggest that receiving more money would address them. Ritual drinking, which is often linked to domestic violence, is not caused by economic poverty *per se*, and according to some people in the communities could even be worse among wealthier families where the men have more money to purchase beer and demonstrate their wealth in this way.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Renta Dignidad may allow particular men to drink more than they would otherwise have been able to. The use of money to purchase 'temptation goods' like alcohol has often been a key objection to the use of cash transfers, although at the aggregate level the evidence suggests that such preoccupations are usually exaggerated (see Evans and Popova 2014 for a comprehensive review). In this study it is worth emphasising that the Renta Dignidad is aimed at a population group whose consumption of alcohol and propensity for violence is reduced; the most significant drinkers during *fiestas* are usually younger people.

As was argued previously, certain aspects of 'traditional' peasant and indigenous culture do have major negative impacts on wellbeing, particularly of women, and this does pose a serious question for those who would argue that indigenous culture provides an alternative to unequal and unharmonious Western concepts of living. Indeed, it may be the case that particular areas of 'traditional' culture need to be challenged in order to reduce domestic violence and improve wellbeing within the household. Such a change would occur not through cash transfers or higher incomes *per se*, but rather through a substantial cultural change via improved education, greater awareness of alternative values, and the enforcement of national laws against domestic violence. Similarly, the types of intra-family land disputes discussed in this section are unlikely to be altered in any significant way by the Renta Dignidad.

6.10. Conclusion

The fieldwork data confirm the importance of social relationships to wellbeing in later life. This impact is not always benign. The legacy of abusive relationships, unequal access to education and off-farm opportunities, combined with the effects of later life on health and physical strength mean that women generally seem to be more likely to suffer from wellbeing failures than men. In particular, older people's wellbeing is often affected by the conflictive side of their relationships with their spouses or other family members residing with them. Because wellbeing failures are usually generated by long-standing historical inequalities and ingrained behaviour patterns, as well as the difficulties older people have in agreeing with their relatives about the ways in which wellbeing should be achieved, the potential for the Renta Dignidad to contribute significantly to overcoming them is, perhaps unsurprisingly, rather limited. The Renta Dignidad functions primarily at the level of the household, although it may benefit others indirectly because it is injected into networks of exchange between family members. At the same time, recipients depend on their family networks to register for it and in many cases to withdraw it due to the physical difficulties they face in reaching the banks where it is paid and their lack of confidence in interacting with the bureaucracy. Therefore in response to the second sub-question, 'how does the Renta Dignidad affect family and community relationships in ways that either facililtate of undermine the wellbeing of older people?', it is clear that the Renta Dignidad's impacts and use need to be understood within the context of people's relationships with other family members, although its precise influence on these is relatively limited.

Chapter 7: Subjective Wellbeing

7.1. Introduction

Subjective wellbeing refers to the ways in which people understand the goals and processes in which they are engaged in their lives, and the meanings they ascribe these (McGregor 2006). It includes people's feelings and emotions which are essential to how people feel about their lives, such as feelings of dignity, respect and self-worth. The implications of later life for subjective wellbeing are varied, and differ across societies. While studies have long shown that there is a 'U-shape' of wellbeing during people's lives, meaning that subjective wellbeing actually improves during later life, this does not hold across different geographical regions, and in Latin America wellbeing appears to decline (Steptoe et al 2015). Also relevant for this study is the widely held belief, discussed in Chapter 2, that rural-dwelling indigenous people tend to have understandings of subjective wellbeing which are more concerned with intrinsic values linked to customs, collective rights and ethnic-based identities (Deneulin 2012; Murphy 2015). There is some evidence to support this, for example in Peru where people in rural areas are more likely to identify wellbeing in terms of values such as virtue and acting well towards other people, as opposed to more materialistic understandings of wellbeing held by people living in urban slums (Rojas 2007; Guillen-Royo and Velazco 2012). However, there is also a clear danger of oversimplification and of overlooking the importance both of material determinants of wellbeing in indigenous societies, and of non-material determinants of wellbeing among older people in Western ones (e.g. Bowling 2005, cited in Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2012a).

As we will see, the subjective element of older people's wellbeing in the Aymara peasant communities of this study is (unsurprisingly) highly complex and evolving, with different people's own understandings of wellbeing often in tension with those of the people around

them, and being subject to change and renegotiation during later life. Distinguishing subjective wellbeing from material and relational wellbeing is of course problematic, and indeed many of the key contributors to subjective wellbeing have already been dealt with in the two previous chapters. In this chapter, I explore those additional elements of wellbeing that are particularly influential in the lives of older people, and which are understood in ways that are highly subjective. I discuss first the role of hard work in the identities of older *comunarios*, followed by the related issue of what it means to them to live in the countryside. Subsequently, I address older persons' attitudes toward poverty and accumulation, and finally consider how health problems are subjectively experienced, understood and addressed, beyond the physical manifestations of poor health discussed in Chapter 5, in order to address sub-question 3: 'How are the key values that underpin the wellbeing of peasants in later life constructed and contested?' This will allow for a more holistic understanding of older persons' wellbeing and give a better idea of the precise contributions and limits of the Renta Dignidad in supporting it.

7.2. Attitudes to Work

We have seen that older people in the communities maintain a relatively high level of physical activity well into their later life and that they only cease to work when they are genuinely unable to continue. Hard, manual labour is a defining feature of rural life, and, as Gudeman and Rivera (1990) find in Colombia, is simultaneously a source of both pain and suffering, on the one hand, and independence and vitality, on the other. Complaining about the tiredness and pain related to rural work is extremely frequent among *comunarios* of all ages but particularly among older people. As we have seen, many older people were born in an era of extreme exploitation and hardship, and they may have lasting negative health impacts as a result. During the pre-1953 period, *comunarios* were repeatedly accused of being 'lazy' by the managers working for the *patrónes*, who often enforced hard work with the whip. Recalling this particular period during one of our discussions, Fausto shed tears when recalling the exploitation he suffered in his childhood. It is possible that these early childhood experiences of hardship could have negative

impacts on subjective wellbeing as well as health throughout people's lives, increasing their exposure to depression and reducing their chances of being happy throughout their lives (Bertoni 2015; Fell and Hewstone 2015). The idea of work as a source of suffering was also reflected in one of the sermons I attended at the Evangelical church in Community A, when the female preacher argued that in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had enough to live off without working, but because they sinned, humans have to work as a punishment.

In addition to physical exertion, manual labour imposes major time costs on older people. This is more the case in Community A, where the agricultural calendar is far more packed with activities due to the role of irrigation in dynamising productivity and encouraging more activities (such as pea growing). Francesca was aggrieved that her work commitments were making it hard to attend the Evangelical church:

> All the time we work, we don't have time to graze the animals. There won't even be anyone to take the sheep. I will go to the church but I'll have to return at lunch to feed the animals. I haven't been able to go to the church in the last 2 days. But it's because there are so many things I need to do.

Valentina also made a similar comment: 'every day we walk tired. Why can't we have just one day of rest? Today I didn't even go to the church, as I wanted to finish the *chuño* and free myself of it'. The irony is that the time poverty experienced by Valentina and Francesca is an outcome of their higher levels of agricultural productivity and access to improved seeds and irrigation, which they have benefited from. Increased agricultural productivity means more work (e.g. bigger harvests require more time harvesting, sorting out the seed, converting potato to *chuño*, etc.), which is further compounded by social pressure to be active and not 'lazy'. All these factors converge into a sort of treadmill of hard work which has functioned to lift many older people in Community A out of the poverty and insecurity of the past but which does not necessarily increase their control over their lives. In the case of the peas, it is now necessary to

spend a significant part of the month of August, which used to be mainly a month of rest, engaged in threshing and winnowing the peas left over from the harvest and starting to sow seeds for next year. By contrast, in Community B, older people have far more time to rest throughout the year and particularly in August, which many of them (particularly Alicia and Felipa in Household 7) use to make bed covers. This reveals the types of wellbeing tradeoffs involved in development, because households like those in Community A were actively engaged in bringing about 'development' through their demands for community projects and decisions to start growing peas for sales, but also suffer the downsides of having less time. Similar wellbeing tradeoffs are likely to persist at all levels of development and in other societies. For example, in Kerala, George finds that female waste pickers rejected a project to increase their incomes precisely because they feared it would threaten their time for resting or childcare (George 2015).

At the same time, as other researchers in the Andes have noted (Gudeman and Rivera 1990; Canessa 2007; Harris 2007), hard work is also central to the identity and wellbeing of *comunarios* and in particular of older ones. Working hard is one way in which Andean peasants set themselves apart from urban-based and non-indigenous people, and it is often a source of pride and potentially of strength, with peasants occasionally ridiculing non-indigenous Bolivians (sometimes referred to pejoratively as *q'aras*) for not growing their own food (Canessa 2007). Valuing hard work, therefore, is a crucial part of who Aymara peasants are, and enables them to build up feelings of self-worth in the face of a history of exploitation and discrimination. This has political implications as well, with the discourses of the Bolivian President Evo Morales and Vice-President Álvaro García Linera frequently emphasising the fact that their government works harder than the 'lazy' neoliberal governments of the past.[50] When *comunarios* do complain about physical weakness and health problems the main reason that

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[50] Morales's political credibility rests partly on a reputation for the arduous working hours imposed on ministers. For examples of references to hard-working values by the Bolivian vice-president, see, for example, eju! (2012) and FM Bolivia (2013).

these problems are felt so badly is precisely because it inhibits them from working and contributing. This was clearest in the case of Fausto (90 years), who as we have seen died during the course of this study. In the final months of his life, his main complaint was being too ill and weak to be able to work or to be active. Despite his failing health he made repeated efforts to be physically active, for example by insisting on being included in the stables project even though he only had one cow, helping his son to build his own stable by passing adobe bricks to him, and buying a sheep and cutting it up even though he barely had the strength to do so.

Hard work has a significant moral value for *comunarios*, and the insult of being 'lazy' (*flojo* in Spanish, *jayra* in Aymara) is one of the commonest and, in some cases, the strongest. Harris has made similar observations, pointing out that men who are perceived as being lazy often find it hard to find a spouse (Harris 2007). In our households, Lucía's contempt for her husband was not solely because he had hit her in the past, but because his illness meant he could contribute little to the household. The fear of being labelled as lazy conditions people's behaviour and encourages them to work hard. The accusation can be quite unforgiving: Gabriela once commented that Rufina, who had lived much of her life in the city, deserved of the severe scoldings she received from her husband because she was lazy and physically weak. On one occasion when Marta was harvesting an extremely pest-infested field of *oca*, she told us that she did not really think it was worth the effort to try to salvage the *oca* but was doing it anyway to avoid being considered lazy. On another, when we went down to the field with Valentina to thresh peas one or two hours later than normal, she expressed the fear that she might be viewed as lazy for starting the work so late.

Working hard also gains respect and prestige, and the most respected people tend to be those who are perceived as being the hardest-working. In some cases, older people do have the financial and food security to work less if they wanted to, but they continue to work hard because they cannot conceive of being inactive and do not want to be considered 'lazy' by

others. As we have seen in Chapter 6, this can provoke arguments with *comunarios*' urban-dwelling children, who tend to have different ideas about how people should experience later life. The cultural and social significance of hard work challenges the assumption (e.g. Escobar 2014) that the fact that older people keep working is itself evidence that they are living in extreme poverty.

As Harris argues, productive activity is inherently relational: 'through work, people create themselves through their agency and at the same time create others for whom they work, or with whom they share the fruits of their labours' (Harris 2007, p143). Although Harris's observation is made with regards to rural Andean society, we should avoid the trap of thinking this is exclusive to indigenous people in the Andes, as proponents of *vivir bien* tend to do (Medina 2011; Albó 2011). While it is true that Western neoclassical economics generally frames work in a reductionist way as a means by which people earn money with which they can increase their utility, Western philosophers such as Marx, Smith and others have long emphasised the importance of work as a means by which people change themselves and their environment, and relate to each other (Sayer 2011, p118). Work is thus not solely of instrumental value to human beings: it can be fulfilling in its own right, and in many cases needs to be undertaken if people are to attain a decent level of wellbeing (ibid). It also affects people's ability to develop their senses and skills, to relate to each other and to be respected (Sayer 2012). As Harris points out, anthropologists in other contexts have also found that people involved in even the most menial of jobs can derive great pride from work (Searle-Chatterjee 1979; Day 2007, cited in Harris 2007). For example, George finds that 60.3% of female waste pickers in Kerala state (India) express satisfaction with their job in spite of the fact that it is one of the dirtiest jobs in society and offers no possibilities for advancement (George 2015).

There is, of course, a serious danger here of celebrating the 'adaptive preferences' of poor and excluded groups, whereby people internalise a set of circumstances that have been forced upon them (Qizilbash 1997; Lukes 2005; Clark 2007; Deneulin and McGregor 2010). Many older

people in this study had only limited opportunities for education, especially older women who were discouraged from being educated by their parents. Francesca, for example, said that she was always told to work on the land and look after the animals rather than learn, while Marta recalled being punished by the whip by her uncle for trying to study secretly at night with her sister. Some of the oldest *comunarios*, like Roberta in Community B, were born before there was a school in the community.

Not only that: as we have seen, some of the oldest people (Fausto, Saturnina, Pedro) explicitly stated that they had learned the values of hard work under conditions of semi-slavery in the pre-1953 period. In Community A, this period of history is uniformly described by those old enough to have been born during or soon after it (e.g. Fausto, and Juan) as uniformly miserable, as the *comunarios*' lives were at the mercy of the vindictive *patrón*. In Community B, older people have much more complex memories of the pre-1953 period, because their *patrón* was relatively paternalistic, offering medical services to the peasants and helping them find work in the city in the post-reform period. In Community B, the land was in fact transferred to the *comunarios* through sale rather than expropriation (as occurred in many other rural áreas). Indeed some families fled other communities in order to live there due to the relatively better treatment they would receive. Nonetheless, the period is remembered for hardship and exploitation, creating an ambiguity illustrated well by one older man's statement: 'The *patrón* was a good man. But we really suffered in those times. Everything we did was for him. Now we work for ourselves. But of course he gave us food to eat'. In some cases, the idea of the *patrón* in Community B as a 'good man' led to the view that people should be thankful for the values of hard work learned in that period, with Pedro remarking the following: 'At least back then [the pre-1953 era] people knew how to work. These days they are lazy.' These statements demonstrate the unequal and unjust conditions that contributed to the valorisation of hard work in rural areas. As Sayer (2012) argues, people's ability to achieve wellbeing is profoundly affected by the unequal distribution of different types of work. This does not mean that the peasant valorisation of hard work is simply an outcome of 'indoctrination' or the outcome of people having a lack of

awareness of other forms of work and wellbeing that exist. Rather, it is the outcome of arguably necessary adjustments to their context which allow them to obtain feelings of pride and dignity despite facing adverse circumstances (Clark 2007).

7.3. Living in the Countryside

As Fabricant notes, romanticised notions of alternative indigenous understandings of wellbeing such as *vivir bien* are almost always conceptualised with rural livelihoods and culture in mind (Fabricant 2013). Proponents of the idea argue that indigenous people in rural areas generally live their lives according to different criteria than those applying in urban áreas (e.g. Medina 2011). However, this idea is rather at odds with some evidence suggesting that, at low levels of development, people living in rural areas tend to experience low levels of subjective wellbeing (Easterlin et al. 2011). Previous research in the Andes reveals a more mixed picture, with peasants acknowledging important differences between quality of life in urban and rural areas, weighing them according to a variety of criteria (Buechler and Buechler 1996, pp36–37; Spedding and Llanos 1999, pp218–228; Lockley et al 2008, pp132–134). Broadly speaking, cities are generally associated with higher material living standards, opportunities to earn and get a better education and more entertainment possibilities, but also greater crime, pollution, and, in some cases, feelings of alienation. Meanwhile, rural areas are often viewed as places where people can attain food security and survive without needing much money, and where social links are stronger, but which can also be boring and stifle people's opportunities for personal development.

The extent to which these advantages and disadvantages influence people's preferences varies significantly by generations. As we have seen in Chapter 4, younger people generally seek routes out of the countryside, at least for the foreseeable future. By contrast, many older people's values and subjective understandings of wellbeing are heavily linked to their rural communities and rural identity. Closely related to the valorisation of hard work is the idea that

living and working in rural areas is more desirable than living in urban areas, an idea expressed by most of the older people we met. However, it is simplistic to simply equate the older generation with the countryside, because they are not a homogenous group and because their living circumstances are fluid and liable to change throughout later life. In addition, some older people used to live in urban areas when they were younger.

A number of older people visit urban areas frequently to see their children and in some cases to sell their products, albeit with less frequency than when they were younger. Older male *comunarios* usually have a degree of familiarity with El Alto and La Paz, having travelled there frequently throughout their lives to trade and visit relatives. Moreover, the fact that many older male *comunarios* have formally worked as musicians (Juan, José, and to a lesser extent Álvaro) means that they are relatively accustomed to travelling. Indeed, Álvaro had bought a house in El Alto when he was younger, which he had passed on to his children. The same was true of two families with parents in their fifties in Community A, who, like Álvaro, had benefited from having good lands and from the irrigation and improved seed projects, and had used some of the money to buy houses in El Alto.

As we have seen, older women tend to have relatively less experience of travelling and are less comfortable in the city, although Valentina often went there to visit her children, while Gabriela had been to have medical treatment. Meanwhile, those who are poorer and/or have never developed strong links with the city (Households 1, 4 and 6) are extremely reluctant to visit urban areas, associating them with cold cement floors, the danger of getting lost or hit by a car, and a feeling of being useless. For example, Fausto and his wife had repeatedly refused requests by their daughters to go and live with them in El Alto because they did not want to be dependent on them and did not look forward to life in the city. Thus the mobility of older people is quite differentiated, according not only to their physical ability to travel but also to their gender, family connections and confidence in urban areas. This could have important implications for wellbeing, given the evidence that mobility has positive health and subjective impacts, by

allowing older people to stay connected with wider family networks and limiting their isolation (Musslewhite et al. 2015).

Whilst older people in the communities generally prefer living in rural areas, these preferences are frequently challenged and reconsidered throughout later life. Most older people have children and grandchildren living in El Alto who often attempt to convince them to move there so that they can rest more and be looked after better. In some cases they do move. For example, Roberta's husband had been taken to La Paz during his final years of life and had died there. Álvaro's wife, Francesca, suggested that even though she and Álvaro would be bored if they took up their children's request to live in the city, she thought one of them might do so when the other died. Meanwhile, Valentina, when she was talking about how little time and energy she had, speculated about moving to the city at some undefined moment in the future: 'We always go around in a rush. This life isn't fair, we don't even get a day's rest. What can we do? We're in this road.[51] Maybe we could be like you, in the cities'. Gabriela in Household 10 made a similar speculation, although she worried about losing her lands if she and José went to the city. Therefore, while older people in the communities have identities which are primarily based around rural livelihoods, these identities are not static and can be questioned.

Migration from rural to urban areas is not simply a one-way movement, and some people return to rural areas having lived for much of their lives in the cities. In Community A, this was the case with Households 12 and 13 as we have seen, but it was also true of some families in Community B, who had secured formal sector work in factories in La Paz when they were younger, and had qualified for pensions. These people had chosen to return to rural life out of a sense that they would feel useless or dependent in the city. However, one of them did say that they or their spouse would return to the city if the other were to die. Another couple had returned to Community B to fulfil their obligations as *sindicato* leaders and had then decided to

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[51] This refers to their livelihood pathway, signified by the Aymara word '*thaki*', which translates as 'path' or 'road' ('*camino*' in Spanish).

stay on for a further four years, but was considering whether to purchase cows and commit to rural livelihoods or move back to the city where they had a house. In Community A, another couple had done something similar, finding upon their return that tractors had made farming easier, and they were now splitting their time between the city and the community. The data show, then, that not all people in later life live solely in one place. There is a danger that researchers focus in particular on those people who are most accessible to research and genuinely more sedentary, but that would miss the reality that there are many older people who continue to move not only to urban areas but also back to rural areas, and who also make frequent short-term movements. Thus while there are unquestionably broad tendencies differentiating understandings of wellbeing between rural and urban areas, as other researchers have shown (e.g. Guillen-Royo and Kasser 2015), there is also substantial fluidity as well. Although there is a general tendency among older people to favour rural life due to its association with agricultural work and independence, this is not fixed throughout later life and is not true of all older people. Rather, older people are continually weighing up the benefits of living in rural or urban areas, and, in some cases, changing their residence.

7.4. Attitudes to Poverty and Accumulation

Having looked at the material wealth and poverty among older people in Chapter 5, in this section I now discuss the subjective attitudes that older people have towards these. We have seen in Chapter 2 that there is a significant body of literature arguing that indigenous people have fundamentally different concepts of wellbeing to non-indigenous people, encapsulated in the concept of *vivir bien* (Albó 2008; Albó 2011). However, the data presented in Chapter 4 show that these claims are not really supported by empirical evidence in either of the two communities, where people actively seek to accumulate and attain higher living standards and more 'modern' lifestyles. This still leaves us with the question of older people's attitudes, and whether these differ from those of younger generations. As we saw in Chapter 2, it has been argued that older people tend to maintain values that are fundamentally different from those of

younger generations, with Zoomers arguing that 'for the older generation, poverty often does not exist' (Zoomers 2006, p1036). Canessa, meanwhile, argues that older people have a deep relationship with the land, a great understanding of myths, 'a clear sense of what we might call indigeneity' and 'a sense of justice rooted in historical consciousness' (Canessa 2008, p366). He then juxtaposes this with the aspirations and values held by young people, who 'look to "progress" through moving to cities and speaking Spanish', and for whom 'the lived relationship with the land and spirits is irrelevant' (ibid, p366).

However, as was also suggested in Chapter 2, there are problems with making the inference that Zoomers and Canessa do, which is that because older people often maintain a discourse of wellbeing linked to hard work, the land and ancestral myths, without referring explicitly to poverty or progress, they are therefore uninterested in the latter. Firstly, there is a risk of making a judgement based on a partial and selective reading of older peoples' discourses. As Canessa himself shows in another article, *comunarios* are not always consistent in their views on a number of issues (Canessa 2007), and thus the full range of people's discourses needs to be considered in any analysis. In fact, I would argue that in the two communities of this study, older people do indeed recognise the importance of poverty reduction indirectly in a number of ways. This includes speaking approvingly of the material improvements that have occurred during their lives. As we have seen earlier, some of these have occurred through project interventions by NGOs or local authorities, such as the providing of electricity and drinking water, improved seeds and irrigation system (in Community A), while others have arisen through the development of the private sector and arrival of new technologies. In the latter group, we might include the introduction of plastic sheets for people's protection from the rain, aluminium pots, synthetic clothes, and mattresses, as well as the greater mobility afforded by buses and cars and the labour saved through the arrival of tractors. In some of these cases older people can have tinges of nostalgia for some of the older ways of doing things, but in general they view these technological changes positively, as they have reduced the drudgery of people's lives. By comparison, life before these technologies is not seen to have been particularly

satisfactory. For example, Juan described the past as a time when people slept on stones and adobe bricks rather than beds, were covered with lice, and used to wash themselves with urine rather than soap and shampoo to get rid of them. No older people voiced the idea (popular among researchers and intellectuals, e.g. Arnold 2008; Regalsky and Hosse 2009) that peasant agriculture would be better off without using tractors. In one case Valentina told us how her own grandmother had predicted that in the future there would be more cement, a higher standard of living and more transport, and even that poor people would have cars, concluding that this did seem to be happening. Similarly, my research assistant, from a community close to the intermediate city, had also heard of predictions of modernity from her grandparents. By speaking positively about these changes, older people vindicate the idea of continued material advancement.

At the same time, acknowledgement of important improvements in material wellbeing is sometimes matched with a reproachful comment on people's modern-day behaviour. For example, one Evangelical man contrasted the perceived material improvements with a decline in people's behaviour:

> [W]e used to suffer. Thanks to God now we live in a time of abundance. Before we only used to eat *pito*.[52] People had to travel for 7 days to get it and there still wasn't enough. These days the people don't show much respect, we don't even like *pito* now. One day all this will change. There will be hardship again.

In that instance, the prediction of difficult times in the future is related to the man's Evangelical values. The Evangelical belief in the Apocalypse, however, co-exists with a strong conviction in the importance of material advancement, which historically has been strongly promoted by such churches in Latin America (Stoll 1990). Indeed, in Community A, two of the male Evangelicals had used the church to improve their lives by reducing the need to spend time and money on

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[52] Ground-up barley eaten with tea.

fiestas, as Mitchell notes on a larger scale among peasants in Peru (Mitchell 1990). These two families had also been very prominent in securing and taking advantage of NGO projects, which provides partial support to the argument that Evangelical families are often the most ambitious in this respect (Córdova 2008). Conversely, some non-Evangelical older people expressed the view that Evangelism itself represents a form of moral degeneration and a loss of traditional rituals and values. One man in his late fifties lamented the negative impact of conversion to Evangelism on *fiestas* in Community A, while another suggested that the increased prevalence of pests was a punishment from *Pachamama*[53] for the abandonment of traditional rituals in favour of Evangelism. Thus, although the Evangelical and non-Evangelical groups disagree over some key aspects of wellbeing (namely, relating to *fiestas* and alcohol), they nonetheless share similar ambivalence in their attitudes to material progress, both extolling it and at the same time lamenting aspects of perceived moral degeneration that have occurred alongside it. Meanwhile, some older people do of course feel nostalgia for their youth, which is not the same as nostalgia for the (poor) material conditions they lived in at that time. Valentina, for example, talked proudly about how she overcame the lack of transport by walking long distances to engage in barter, often carrying her baby at the same time: 'where is that *cholita*[54] who could walk anywhere, carrying a baby, carrying everything?'

Older people often validate the importance of formal education as a means of getting out of agriculture. In the cases of older women, as well as lamenting their own lack of formal education, they also complimented my assistant on moving out of agriculture and being educated at the university. Slightly younger people (in the 45-60 age range), who still had teenage children who had not yet finished secondary school, frequently asked her questions, inquiring how she had got into university and what advice she might have for their own children. These comments did not value formal education explicitly for its potential for poverty reduction or accumulation, but rather as a means of achieving a more comfortable and higher-

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[53] The 'Earth Mother' central to a lot of traditional Andean spirituality.
[54] Young indigenous woman.

status lifestyle with less drudgery. However, the idea of poverty reduction is surely implicit in the expressed approval of long-term material improvement in living standards, as well as the desire for their children and grandchildren to move out of agriculture and into formal sector jobs. This suggests, therefore, that although middle-aged and older people have adapted to and constructed understandings of wellbeing based around small-scale agriculture, they do not actually see this as an ideal way of life.

The second problem with claims that older people share values that are more closely linked to the land and tradition than to progress and materialism is that their past and present actions also suggest a careful attention to material needs and aspirations as well. Older people in both communities have invested significant resources to ensure that their children have greater opportunities to move out of poverty than they did, for example by buying land and/or housing in El Alto to increase their and their children's access to urban livelihoods, moving into pea cultivation to boost revenues, and attempting to get their children into the *Normal* ('teaching college'). Moreover, in both communities previous generations have often been active in establishing and maintaining the schools that generate aspirations for urban livelihoods.

Even in later life, older people continue to make careful calculations about buying and selling animals, crops and others goods for the best possible price. A good example of this is the significant attempts that were made by *comunarios* of all ages, including older ones, to purchase my gas cylinder and other goods at a cheap price when I left Bolivia. In other cases older people specifically stated that only their physical weakness was preventing them from going to markets to trade and make sales, rather than a lack of interest in making money. Moreover, they also support and vote for the Morales administration based on the calculation that it provides stronger support to poor sectors, not only in the form of cash transfers but also through higher public spending.

None of these positions or actions is consistent with the argument that older people are unconcerned with material advancement. In fact, I would argue that attachment to the land and cultural 'traditions', on the one hand, and the idea of 'progress' and material advancement, on the other, are not actually mutually exclusive, and that any analysis of older people's understandings of wellbeing needs to consider both of these key elements. As Colloredo-Mansfeld argues, desires for modernity do come from within rural Andean communities and are not simply the outcome of external pressure or manipulation (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009, p56). Thus, there is no justification for arguing that older people are fundamentally indifferent to the concept of material advancement, even if they themselves have reached an age where they do not aspire for much social mobility. As I have argued previously in relation to land disputes, however, the fact that self-interested behaviour occurs does not mean that people are striving simply for material betterment, status, or power *per se*; rather, they value other aspects of wellbeing which can be attained with these.

7.5. Health and Faith

Good health, or lack of it, is a major determinant of wellbeing among older people, in terms of its impacts on not only material but also subjective wellbeing (Steptoe et al. 2015). As Lloyd-Sherlock notes, bad health has negative impacts on older persons' wellbeing beyond their productivity or material wellbeing (Lloyd-Sherlock 2006). A wide range of medical disorders are associated with higher levels of depression in later life (Steptoe et al. 2015). This relationship could work in both directions, because while bad health damages subjective wellbeing, psychological wellbeing can also have an important impact on people's health in later life (Steptoe et al. 2012). For example, evidence from Malaysia suggests that a combination of depressive symptoms and chronic diseases can have negative knock-on effects, increasing the prevalence of further health problems such as functional limitation (Hairi et al. 2011). Evidence of a complex relationship between physical and psychological health draws attention not only to the 'objective' factors which may affect people's health but also to the

subjective ways in which they make sense of their health, and in particular to the role of 'lay beliefs' in affecting how people respond to poor health (Schatz and Gilbert 2012). Even people's interpretations of 'good' and 'bad' health are likely to vary across societies, with reporting of health problems increasing with higher incomes and more education (Sen 2002). As we will see, health is understood by older people not simply as a physical condition but also as a spiritual one which frequently requires faith-based solutions as well as medical ones.

In rural Aymara society, there is ethnographic evidence that medicine and spirituality have historically been linked, with *yatiris* ('spiritualist curers') playing the role of both priest and doctor (Spedding 1994, p167). In both communities, people often have spiritual explanations for maladies: people can be hurt and even killed following encounters with malevolent spirits**,** or by having their spirit fall out of them during an accident (known as '*susto*', or 'shock' in English). Juan believed he had caught '*jayra alma*' ('lazy spirit') that explained why his leg was hurting. Roberta talked to us about *jucos*, malevolent birds that used to visit houses and threaten people that they would die unless they left, and other people discussed the threat posed by *kharisiris*, people who seek to extract human fat, and *yanqhas*, which are dancing girls who represent the devil. All of these creatures are believed to be capable of killing people, and *yatiris* are generally the first port of call in such cases. Meanwhile in cases of 'normal' maladies and injuries, *yatiris* may still be consulted to supplement treatment given by a doctor or at a hospital. However, if there is no improvement people often turn to Evangelism for a cure.

In both Community A and Community B the church in question is the *Misión Boliviana de Santidad 'Amigos'* ('Friends' Bolivian Mission of Sanctity), which practice an austere and purist form of Protestantism that was introduced in Bolivia via Quaker Missionaries from the United States in the first half of the twentieth century.[55] Seeking a cure for a malady is in fact the principal reason stated for conversion to Evangelism among women in both communities. Typical histories of people's conversions detail how they suffered from a major health upset, for

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[55] In Community B the church is located in a neighbouring community, not in the community itself.

which they sought out solutions from *yatiris* and in some cases doctors. When that did not work, they went to the Evangelical church, and they claim that after two or three weeks, all symptoms had then been relieved. This was the case with Juana, Valentina, Felipa and Francesca, as well as a number of younger female *comunarios*.[56]

By contrast, men's conversion is often driven by their own desire to curb aspects of their own behaviour, namely heavy drinking. For example, one Evangelical man in his mid-seventies had been a notorious alcoholic when younger, having acquired the habit as a factory worker in La Paz. He explained to us that he had converted after getting badly beaten up in a drunken brawl. After surgery, when he was crying in the street he was approached by an Evangelical who converted him. Another man in his mid-fifties compared his family's chaotic and often drunken lifestyle before conversion to Evangelism with the order and progress they had experienced since then.

The women telling us the histories of how they were cured upon converting to Evangelism did not detail precisely how they believed this had come about. The services, which I attended a number of times in Community A, last from approximately 10am until 4 or 5pm every Sunday, and are comprised of sermons, mainly in Aymara and delivered by Evangelical pastors either from within Community A or from the same region. Before lunch, and in the final hour of the service in the afternoon, believers beg forgiveness for their sins. These confessions, which can last for up to an hour at a time, often lead people to cry and wail and to declare their unconditional faith in God. As an atheist, I found this experience rather uncomfortable, not least because children were in attendance, watching as their parents wailed and cried uncontrollably for a sustained amount of time. However, Lazar argues that these forgiveness sessions are likely to be a cathartic experience for the faithful (Lazar 2008), and given that many *comunarios*,

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[56] Evangelical conversion does not always guarantee people that they will be free of ailments or maladies, and in at least two cases older ladies continued to combine regular church attendance with the use of *naturista* medication (i.e. non-prescribed 'natural' products which do not have a spiritual content) purchased in the intermediate city, as well as using traditional remedies prescribed by *yatiris*.

particularly women, live and have lived both physically and psychologically challenging lives, the church may provide a space to them to unload their feelings and revitalise themselves. In Community A, some women who were not yet converts expressed an interest in converting at some point, although possibly to a church other than the '*Amigos*', which some people reject due to the solemnity of the services.

The link between Evangelism and health is common and occurs in different parts of the world (Martin 2002, p105). For example, Schatz and Gilbert (2012) find older women going to a variety of Christian churches to cure themselves of maladies in South Africa, and even preferring these to conventional health solutions. As we have seen, there is also a cultural background that explicitly links physical health with spirituality; the idea that converting to the '*Amigos*' religion could cure ailments is perhaps a logical extension of this link. This health-sprituality relation is also found across other cultures, and particularly in indigenous ones such as the Maori (Tabetha Mark and Lyons 2010). While it might be tempting to build a dichotomy between 'indigenous' and 'Western' attitudes to health, this would overlook the evidence that health care is interrelated with emotional and psychological states across different societies, including Western ones. For example, it is generally recognised that psychological problems leave people more susceptible to health problems in later life (e.g. Ostir et al 2001; Steptoe et al 2012). Such factors partly explain the popularity of among affluent people in Western societies that often lack any scientific validity alternative medical solutions (Tabish 2008). Therefore, by offering a powerful spiritual experience that may provide people with the psychological resilience they need to overcome both emotional and physical traumas, it seems feasible that religious faith could deliver health benefits for older people. Moreover, the psychological impact of faith and spirituality could be particularly important in a context where, as we have seen, the available medical treatment is not always effective, and where many health problems may not have a straightforward medical cure anyway.

Beyond drawing attention to the role of religion and spirituality in people's wellbeing, this discussion forces us to ask difficult questions about what wellbeing really means, because there are aspects of the Evangelical faith that are potentially problematic for wellbeing in other areas. While Evangelism can improve women's lives in the private sphere, it does not challenge patriarchal behaviours in the public sphere. It also propagates conservative attitudes to women's reproductive rights and the rights of sexual minorities. As Lazar (2008) notes, services also have an authoritarian aspect to them, in that the preacher orders the faithful to submit themselves absolutely to God and plead for forgiveness for their 'sins' but does not encourage them to debate or to think for themselves. Therefore, Evangelism does improve the wellbeing of the faithful but in an extremely controlling way which may in some aspects constrain people's autonomy at different scales. It does this largely by promoting values and norms which are opposed to 'progressive' understandings of wellbeing based around the promotion of particular liberal values (e.g. Nussbaum 2000). Evangelism is not alone in this, as many of the cultural values and norms encountered in this study are potentially incompatible with liberal thinking on wellbeing, such as the use of fines and malicious gossip to condition peoples' behaviour, or the patriarchal aspects of 'traditional' peasant wellbeing. Given that all of these 'illiberal' practices nonetheless have a degree of functionality in the context of rural livelihoods, this raises questions about whether liberal understandings of wellbeing are even attainable or realistic in all social contexts. Traits which may be regarded as 'positive' in one context may in fact be unhelpful in hostile environments, as is suggested by Gough et al. (2006).

At the same time, it should be emphasised that not all older women have converted to Evangelism. Some of those who had not (Marta, Roberta and Mariela in particular) derived a lot of satisfaction from chewing coca on a regular basis, something which Evangelicals are prohibited from doing. Marta and Roberta had developed the habit at a younger age when their husbands had been *sindicato* leaders, requiring them to attend a lot of public meetings. Roberta, who was too old to do any significant productive activity, would consume little more than some bread and tea all day, spending the rest of her time chewing coca. She told us that she had

almost been persuaded to convert to Evangelism at a younger age after hearing the prophecies of the Apocalypse, but had been dissuaded by her mother-in-law, and was thankful for it, because as a non-Evangelical she was at least allowed to chew coca.

7.6. Subjective Wellbeing: Discussion

Older *comunarios* understand their lives and wellbeing in ways which are heterogenous, often conflictive and in some ways contradictory. In particular, the data reveal that processes of livelihood change involve a complex set of wellbeing tradeoffs. At a macro level, there is already growing awareness among researchers that such tradeoffs exist, as it is clear that certain forms of development which are 'successful' from conventional perspectives may have different implications when more subjective concepts of wellbeing are considered. As we have seen in Chapter 5, it is increasingly recognised that subjective wellbeing has fallen in China in recent decades even while poverty has been reduced, mainly due to major increases in inequality and the trauma of a rapid transition to a more consumerist, materialistic society (Brockmann et al. 2009; Bartolini and Sarracino 2015). Less is known, however, about precisely how individuals and communities face wellbeing tradeoffs at the micro level and how they negotiate these. Existing studies of subjective wellbeing tend to limit themselves to identifying the factors that influence it, using surveys to assess which ones are the most important and in what contexts (e.g. Graham 2006). While this is useful for identifying general trends, it does not help to understand precisely how contradictory and complex subjective wellbeing is. However, qualitative studies can bring out some of these nuances. For example, Lewis's history of a working class family in Mexico City reveals how the father is disappointed with most of his children for failing to achieve social advancement, but also with the most successful child because he believes she has come to see herself as 'superior' to the rest of the family (Lewis 1961). Meanwhile, Lloyd-Sherlock and Locke (2008) report similar findings in Buenos Aires, where the parents of socially mobile children come to feel abandoned by them. What I have tried to do in this chapter is to demonstrate precisely how 'messy' subjective wellbeing is within

rural Aymara communities and to consider the implications of this messiness for older people's wellbeing in general. This messiness reveals the limitations of concepts such as *vivir bien*, that push the idea of a fixed, relatively homogenous, 'authentic' understanding of indigenous wellbeing which is qualitatively distinct from Western understandings. However, it also challenges simplistic notions that material advancement leads to smooth and unambiguous improvements in subjective wellbeing, because many livelihood improvements generate their own contradictions and trade-offs, often in unpredictable ways. It also reminds us of the pitfalls of relying solely on measures of subjective wellbeing as the objective of development policy, because these cannot always be reconciled with other development objectives and because they can be based on retrograde ideas (Stewart 2014).

Older people have lived their lives participating in processes of social change in attempts to improve their material wellbeing, but they are not always in control of the outcomes. For example, improvements to productivity and food security may come at the cost of time to relax and do other activities. Similarly, helping one's children and grandchildren achieve a degree of social mobility may come at the cost of understanding them and relating to them. Moreover, older people venerate hard manual labour at the same time as suffering from the negative impacts it has on their health. Many of their children have bought into the 'modern' idea that older people should basically be resting, although that idea itself has been challenged within Western countries since the 1990s, with international agencies and care institutions promoting the concept of 'active ageing' (Marhánkova 2011). The contradictory impacts of processes of development and livelihood change, which in many cases have been facilitated by the current generation of older people, are therefore so complex and so contradictory that attempts to 'strategise' become virtually impossible. This supports the argument of Sayer, who claims that 'generally people do not plan and strategise very much; most of the time their action involves "protension" rather than planning, that is, an orientation to the future based on a feel for the game and an openness to contingency' (Sayer 2005, p95).

These findings confirm broader evidence, from distinct societies and cultures, that religious faith frequently plays a key role in contributing to subjective wellbeing (Diener et al 1999), particularly so among older people (Fehring et al 1997; Chida et al 2009; Inglehart 2010; von Humboldt et al 2015). All of the older people in these communities share spiritual or religious beliefs, be they those of the 'traditional' variety combining Catholic and indigenous beliefs or Evangelism. I have explained much of Evangelical conversion in terms of instrumental reasons such as curing or alleviating health problems and resisting elements of *machismo*, but there is a clear value in religious faith to many of the older people in the communities. I have also shown, however, that religious faith is contentious, playing a central role in disputes within families and communities about the appropriate values by which to live one's life and achieve wellbeing.

7.6.1. Renta Dignidad and Subjective Wellbeing

As we have seen in Chapter 5, the relationship between material wellbeing (the area most likely to be directly influenced by the Renta Dignidad) and subjective wellbeing is mixed. Previous studies of social pensions have revealed that they can increase people's sense of dignity and self-respect (Neves et al 2009; Kidd 2010, cited in KfW 2014). Indeed, in some cases the aspiration for such subjective feelings influences how pensions are spent for example, in South Africa they have been used to purchase furniture which demonstrates people's dignity and worthiness (Neves et al. 2009).

In Brazil, receipt of non-contributory pensions does lead to important improvements in the subjective wellbeing of older people (Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2012a), but as Lloyd-Sherlock et al. (2012b) argue a pension is unlikely to be the prime determinant of subjective wellbeing. Moreover, as we have seen, subjective wellbeing is often adaptive, such that where positive impacts are reported, they are not necessarily long-lasting. In another study in South Africa, for example, women appear to experience a 'honeymoon period' in the first years after they receive

a pension, during which they report greater happiness and less anxiety, but this subsequently wanes (Schatz et al. 2012).

As was emphasised earlier, the Renta Dignidad is set at a relatively modest level, and all respondents pointed out that it is insufficient to live off, placing a limit on its potential to change people's understandings of their wellbeing. Assessing what would happen to people's understandings of wellbeing if the payout was much higher, as is advocated by Escobar (2014), is difficult. A more generous transfer could allow a greater number of old people to move to urban areas and live in relative comfort without being dependent on their children. However, the data presented here reveal that subjective wellbeing is contingent on a series of complex wellbeing tradeoffs which older people have negotiated throughout their lives, and which they cannot always control. To assume that simply receiving more money would fundamentally alter how they understand their lives underestimates the extent to which many of the key ideas they hold are deeply engrained and collectively enforced. In particular, the idea of working hard in the fields is a central aspect of peasant identity and not one which is likely to be abandoned simply because people have more money. Even those people who receive real pensions, as well as those whose children have become wealthy (e.g. Marta), or who have accumulated significant cash savings, continue to work hard. For example, we asked Juan if the increase in the Renta Dignidad announced during fieldwork would make it easier for him and Valentina to rest more, given that they often complained of tiredness and muscular pains. He responded by saying 'with this new increase we'll be fine. Maybe we can rest more. But sometimes you just have to work the *chacra* anyway. It's boring to stay at home doing nothing'. Laura felt much the same: simply living off money without working would not be a desirable life. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Renta Dignidad is highly valued by the recipients, particularly following the increase in 2013. It does not fundamentally alter their outlook on wellbeing but it does help to make their lives easier.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1. Research Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to answer the question 'in what ways does the Renta Dignidad contribute to the wellbeing of older people?' As we have seen in Chapter 2, there is a large amount of evidence supporting the impacts of non-contributory pensions on the wellbeing of older people and also their relatives. They reduce poverty and financial insecurity (Barrientos 2005; Gasperini et al 2007; Lloyd-Sherlock et al 2012a), and increase people's ability to make productive investments (Martínez 2004; Skinner 2007) and to participate in social networks of exchange (Neves et al. 2009; Du Toit and Neves 2009). Moreover, the fact that non-contributory pensions tend to be less narrowly targeted than other forms of social protection and are not accompanied by the often-problematic conditionalities frequently attached to transfers to children and mothers means that they have justifiably earned a reputation as being a practical, cost-effective, politically viable and pro-poor development intervention (Ellis 2008; Kidd 2013; Kidd and Hura 2013; Knox-Vydmanov 2014).

The evidence presented in this thesis supports this broad view of non-contributory pensions as a 'good' policy intervention. In the two communities, the Renta Dignidad mainly influences people's wellbeing by increasing their ability to cover the day-to-day costs of living in a rural community and, in some cases, to build savings. In so doing, it contributes to older persons' livelihood security, which Wood (2006) has argued should be given greater prominence in discussions of human wellbeing and development, because insecurity is often a defining characteristic that distinguishes the lives of the poor from those of the non-poor. Due to their livelihood insecurity and political marginality, poor people often suffer from 'the fear which arises from not being able to control or significantly influence their immediate or longer term operational environment for survival' (ibid, p32). Thus, although the Renta Dignidad does not

cover all of people's needs, it nonetheless makes a valuable contribution to meeting them, guaranteeing a minimal level of consumption as well as making it easier to pay for necessary investments such as hiring tractors. There is no evidence of significant 'mis-spending' of the Renta Dignidad or of family members engaging in 'coercive pooling' to deny older people their pensions. Given that the amount of money paid out in the Renta Dignidad is limited, some of its positive impacts would undoubtedly be greater if the payouts were higher.

However, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, the wellbeing of older people goes far beyond their livelihood security and their ability to consume, reaching into areas such as faith, social relations, culture, and generational change. The complexity of human wellbeing therefore places a partial limit on the possible impacts that could be made by a non-contributory pension. At the most basic level, it is clear that bad health is a major source of illbeing, but improving health requires high quality and accessible services. In the communities of this study, any health impacts of the Renta Dignidad are limited by the inadequate health services available to older people. In response to poor services, some of the recipients use significant amounts of the Renta Dignidad to buy palliative medicines which have only a questionable impact. What is more, wellbeing goes not only beyond income, but also, in many cases, beyond material interests entirely. It derives not simply from considerations about how to accumulate in order to achieve wellbeing, but also from questions about how people should live during later life and achieve wellbeing (Sayer 2011). This is not because the people concerned are indigenous and therefore less focused on material wealth, as argued by proponents of *vivir bien*, but because wellbeing always depends on elements that are not responsive to money. Money may help people to consume, to save, and in some cases to spend on their loved ones, but it does not always help them overcome fundamental differences they may have with other people about how wellbeing should be achieved, how people should live, or what is right or wrong. Older women in particular are often at risk of suffering from major wellbeing failures arising from a combination of low levels of education and lack of livelihood opportunities when they were younger, experiences of physical abuse in some cases, and failing health. Some of these inequalities are

generated, or at least encouraged, by aspects of 'traditional' livelihoods that are built around key collective institutions (the *sindicatos* and festive celebrations) which systematically favour male wellbeing over female, demonstrating once again the limitations of the *vivir bien* concept as an alternative understanding of wellbeing. The potential for Renta Dignidad to overcome these problems is clearly rather limited. Indeed, even relatively well-off older people can still experience major difficulties in negotiating their wellbeing in later life, suggesting that the challenge is not simply one of gaining extra income.

In sum, if we revisit the research sub-questions, it is clear that the most important impacts of the Renta Dignidad are, perhaps not surprisingly, related to the first sub-question: 'How and to what extent does the Renta Dignidad contribute to the material elements of older people's wellbeing?' The answer is that the impacts are significant in terms of improving or stabilising consumption and in some cases promoting savings during later life. It makes fewer impacts on older persons' health, however, suggesting a need for a renewed focus on this area by policymakers.

The answers to the second sub-question, 'How does the Renta Dignidad affect family and community relationships in ways that either facilitate or undermine the wellbeing of older people?' are less clear cut. Some of the expected impacts, like the pooling of pensions or transfers to younger relatives, are far less significant than suggested in some part of the literature, because of the limited sums involved, and because there is not much demand for the money to be transferred in this way. Moreover, we have seen that people's relational wellbeing is extremely complex and influenced by a broad range of issues, such that the money from the Renta Dignidad alone is not sufficient to significantly alter things.

Finally, I revealed the values underpinning people's wellbeing, and the ways in which they build and negotiate these values through their everyday actions, thus responding to the third

sub-question: 'How are the key values that underpin the wellbeing of peasants in later life constructed and contested?'

In sum, in response to the key research question 'How does the Renta Dignidad affect older people's wellbeing in the Bolivian Altiplano?': the Renta Dignidad feeds into and bolsters people's efforts to achieve wellbeing. By providing people with a regular income and livelihood security in later life, it therefore justifies its name '*Dignidad'* (Dignity). At the same time, these impacts are necessarily limited, not just because of the relatively limited quantity paid out, but also because wellbeing is influenced by a complex and fluid array of factors, many of which are only partially responsive to money.

These findings require a partial rethink regarding the literature on non-contributory pensions. As has been outlined in Chapter 2, these have been identified as contributing to a vast range of social goods, with claims being gradually inflated from the more intuitive ones (livelihood security, increased consumption), to more transcendental ones such as subjective wellbeing, dignity and citizenship (Kidd 2010, cited in KfW 2014; Leisering and Barrientos 2013). While the evidence for the former category of impacts is strong, there are dangers in assuming that this then feeds into the latter.

It should be remembered that many of the other claims for pensions' contributions to subjective areas of wellbeing (for example, people's autonomy, social relationships, feelings of dignity, citizenship) are highly subjective, difficult to measure, and likely to vary significantly across different households. In this study, it is clear that the Renta Dignidad does enhance autonomy to an extent, particularly as recipients do generally control the money they are allotted. We can see this, for example, in Francesca's willingness to spend it on medicines against the advice of her husband Álvaro. In other cases, the Renta Dignidad increases people's ability to make gifts to children and grandchildren, thereby contributing to their social relationships, as was the case for Valentina. However, there are a whole range of policies that can be said to increase autonomy in

different ways (e.g. education, roads, electricity), so it is potentially misleading to single out pensions in this regard. In sum, there is a need for realism regarding the types of impacts non-contributory pensions are likely to have and where their limits lie. Without such realism, there is a danger of non-contributory pensions being portrayed, implicitly at least, as a 'silver bullet' type policy that can resolve all manner of ills. There are two dangers in such a portrayal.

The first, most concrete, danger, is that treating pensions as a 'cure-all' policy risks leading to an excessive focus on cash solutions at the expense of other policy areas that are crucial for older persons' wellbeing. The most glaring limitation of non-contributory pensions is in regards to health, which as we have seen is one of the most significant factors in the wellbeing of older people in Bolivia. Lloyd-Sherlock and Agrawal (2014) point out that while non-contributory pensions have frequently been advocated as a means of improving health (e.g. Case 2001; HelpAge International 2006; Schatz et al. 2012), this position is based largely on evidence that pensions are spent on healthcare (e.g. Lloyd-Sherlock 2006; UNICEF 2012), together with self-reported data showing positive health outcomes (e.g. Brenes-Camacho 2011). However, neither of these constitutes convincing evidence of genuine health outcomes, because as we have seen, spending on 'health' may simply mean spending on inadequate and possibly ineffective remedies, and self-reported evidence could be misleading (Lloyd-Sherlock and Agrawal 2014). Indeed, the capacity of pensions to improve health outcomes for older people is itself heavily contingent on health education, screening, and service provision and quality (Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2012c).

Aspects of older persons' health are also dependent on the healthcare they have received at a younger age, not solely during later life (WHO 1998, cited in Andrews 2001). Many of the older people in these communities were born in an era where modern healthcare services were absent or, even when they arrived, deficient. While these legacies of the past are hard to counter, it is clear that current health provision for older people is still inadequate or limited. In the communities considered in this study, older people do in theory have access to free healthcare

and some of them are registered to use it. However, many others were not aware of it, and even those registered do not use it, for reasons outlined earlier. These problems are not exclusive to Bolivia, but rather are indicative of a wider global challenge to health systems which are poorly prepared to respond to the needs of people in later life due to a combination of misplaced priorities and a lack of investment in outreach programmes (Prince et al. 2015). Lloyd-Sherlock and Agrawal, for instance, conclude in the case of South Africa that the government 'is good at giving older people money, but is not good at keeping them alive or in good health' (Lloyd-Sherlock and Agrawal 2014, p1583). Similarly, Matijascic and Kay argue that Brazil has placed an excessive focus on cash transfers for older people, with opinion polls showing high levels of public dissatisfaction with healthcare and education (Matijascic and Kay 2014). Between 1984 and 2004 the World Bank produced 200 loans and 350 papers on pension policy but nothing regarding any other projects relating to older people (Bretton Woods Project 2006, cited in Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2012c). Unsurprisingly, other areas crucial for the health of older people, such as long-term care, have been systematically neglected by researchers and policymakers (Lloyd-Sherlock and Agrawal 2014). In short, whereas older persons' wellbeing is complex and multi-dimensional, the policy response to date has not been, and there is a need for a far more integrated approach. Non-contributory pensions have their role, therefore, but need to be accompanied by a broader range of well implemented interventions to address aspects of older people's wellbeing, especially with regards to health.

The second danger of the excessive promotion of non-contributory pensions is that it risks contributing to a rather reductionist view of human wellbeing. As Lloyd-Sherlock and colleagues point out, the enthusiastic promotion of cash transfers is premised on 'an implicit view that cash income delivered through an old-age pension programme is the be-all and end-all of meeting the needs of older people in developing countries' (Lloyd-Sherlock et al. 2012c p54). In reality, the relationship between cash and wellbeing is far from straightforward (Lloyd-Sherlock et al 2012a). Even proposals for universal or otherwise broad-based provision of social protection, such as the UN's Social Protection Floor, are still rooted in methodological

individualism whereby needs are met through individually targeted transfers (Devereux and McGregor 2014). This methodological individualism overlooks the substantial relational determinants of wellbeing explored in this thesis, as well as broader political questions of justice and inequality.

In summary, there is little evidence from this thesis to detract from the broadly positive view of non-contributory pensions within the development sector. The Renta Dignidad pensions unquestionably make important contributions to wellbeing, they are implemented reasonably effectively, and they do not have any downsides. At the same time, there are elements of older people's wellbeing that require additional and complementary policies to address them, particularly regarding health, and some areas of wellbeing may not be responsive to any policies at all. None of this undermines arguments in favour of programmes like the Renta Dignidad, but it does call for a need for realism when assessing their potential benefits on wellbeing.

8.2. Future Research

In addition to summarising the conclusions from the data, it is necessary to reflect on the methodology, which comprised participatory observation and semi-structured interviews. The main advantage of this was that it allowed for the collection of a broad range of information, much of which was not directly part of what I had originally intended to research, but which proved invaluable to understanding the full nature of rural livelihood change and wellbeing in later life. In particular, it revealed the contradictions underlying people's wellbeing, as well as the complementarities and tensions between interests and visions at the individual and collective levels. Without the ethnographic component, there would have been a risk of collecting fairly conventional data regarding uses of the Renta Dignidad money and attitudes towards it and of overlooking the broader context. Moreover, the methodology also allowed for the observation of the legacies and impacts of other projects (e.g. the stables, irrigation, improved seeds) which had been implemented in the communities in the past. There is therefore scope for using

ethnographic methods to analyse development policies, particularly if it were possible to do so both before and after the introduction of schemes in order to capture the strongest effects. More than anything, ethnographic methods might reveal that even major policy interventions are not the only, or even the most important, changes happening in people's lives, and will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which policies interrelate with wider phenomena that occur and affect wellbeing.

With regards to the study of social protection, there is a need for further research not simply into the micro-level impacts of policies, but also the function these policies play within the broader political economies where they are implemented. As we have seen, social protection often operates through methodological individualism, whereby benefits occur primarily through the impacts at the household level. The danger here is that researchers interested in social protection thereby focus exclusively on the household without looking at broader systems of inequality and injustice. While it can be argued that social pensions inevitably contribute to justice by guaranteeing a minimal level of income security for the poor, they are also highly compatible with, and in some cases conducive to, otherwise highly exclusionary and unfair modes of development. This is an accusation commonly aimed at the South African government, which offers significant cash transfers to large numbers of people in a context of massive levels of unemployment, inequality, and other social ills. In this context, social transfers can become 'complicit with the hegemonic political and economic forces responsible for creating different forms of injustice and for obstructing more transformative routes towards social justice' (Hickey 2014, p334). This type of critique picks up on a tradition of neo-Marxist critiques of welfare states in developed countries which see social protection as a combination of the hard-won gains of the working classes and as a form of 'tribute' to maintain the viability of capitalism, albeit one which has brought its own contradictions (e.g. O'Connor 1973; Gough 1979; Offe 1984). Understanding the potential for even quite progressive social protection policies to legitimise unjust social pacts and systems does not entail calling for their withdrawal or downplaying the positive impacts they have on the lives of the poor. It does, however, remind

researchers of the importance of analysing social protection policies within the broader political economy in which they function. Although there have been studies to date on the role of social protection asking, for example, whether social protection helps incumbent governments to win elections in Latin America (e.g. Zucco 2008; Zucco 2013; Sanches-Corrêa 2015) this literature does not engage with their impacts on the broader social and political pacts they are embedded in, which may go beyond party politics. This thesis has focused very much on impacts at the micro-level, but future studies might seek to evaluate the broader role which cash transfers and other forms of social protection are playing in Latin American development processes, particularly under governments which are, ostensibly at least, attempting to provide an alternative to neoliberalism, such as Bolivia.

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