

Bolin, Inge (2006) *Growing Up in a Culture of Respect: Child rearing in Highland Peru*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. Available in hard or softcover (232 pages, \$19.95)

Bolin's volume is a very welcome addition to the anthropological literature on childhood. Relative to other areas of the globe, the lives of families in the High Andes are not well documented and this work is thorough and extremely rich. The ethnography also adds to two areas that have been theoretically important in recent comparative research on children in culture—indulgent v. harsh treatment of children and patterns of craft skill acquisition.

Bolin describes a harsh environment where people make a living—as they have for centuries—as agro-pastoralists. However, her Quechua-speaking subjects treat their children with the affection and indulgence more commonly found among foragers such as the Aka, Ju'hoansi, Inuit or the Canela. When children die, they are mourned by the community. Even rarer, she records that “There is little difference in the way parents in Chillihuani treat their male and female offspring, and there is scant segregation of children’ activities according to gender (p. 36).”

Indeed, the nurturing attitudes of people in the Chillihuani area of Peru serves as the major theme of this work and leads the author to conclude: "...children in Chillihuani grow up in poverty. Yet...there are values that offset the poverty-related disadvantages (p. 151).”

This benign treatment of children rests on two favorable circumstances. One, the folk pharmacopeia—as yet undisturbed by missionaries—evidently includes one or more effective contraceptives. Children are wanted and population numbers have not overrun carrying capacity. Second, there is a well-established ethos that emphasizes harmonious relations and mutual respect between the sexes and within the community at large. Children are easily socialized to meet these norms.

Bolin's description of children learning to weave will appeal to those who are interested in the comparative analysis of craft acquisition. Compared to the formal apprenticeship found elsewhere, craft skills are learned quite informally. We see these Andean children learning to weave—as they learn other aspects of their culture—gradually, in stages, through trial and error and, with little adult intervention or instruction.

I found many other gems in Bolin's ethnography description including: her description of the first haircut rite of passage; children's make-believe play and; the relatively stress-free adolescent period.

Lastly, Bolin's description of the nature of public schooling available to these children—the crowded classrooms, language difficulties, long arduous walk to school, disdain of *mestizo* teachers—all strike a familiar, if unpleasant chord.

Inge Bolin has given scholars, interested in viewing children in comparative perspective or those interested in Andean society, a wonderfully nuanced, thoroughly documented case study to draw on.