

## **Doctor of Social Sciences**

**Ser Familia Rural en un Mundo Globalizado.**  
*Respuestas y reflexiones desde Tiraque, Bolivia.*

**Being a Rural Family in a Globalized World.**  
*Answers and reflections from Tiraque, Bolivia.*

**Andrea Alejandra Vargas Calle**

**Supervisors: Prof. Gerrit Loots, PhD and Prof. Sylvie Gadeyne, PhD**

### **Abstract**

As part of a broader Transdisciplinary Community-Based Research (TCBR) program between the Universidad Católica Boliviana (UCB) and several Flemish universities, this PhD research investigated the contemporary dynamics of rural families within the context of globalization, more specifically, in the rural community Tiraque in Cochabamba (Bolivia) as a case study.

#### **Theoretical and Methodological Framework:**

Adopting a social constructionist perspective, the study acknowledges that family realities are negotiated within specific historical and cultural interaction contexts. Community-Based Research (CBR) was employed as the main methodology, implemented in four phases: (1) community engagement (entering and relating to the community), (2) co-construction of the research question (*¿What is it like to be a rural family in a globalized world?*), (3) co-construction of data collection (ethnographic field notes, collective and individual dialogues, and institutional reports) and thematic analysis, and (4) dissemination of findings.

Autoethnography pulses complemented the process through critical reflections on my researcher's role and positionings.

### **Key Findings:**

The thematic analysis identified three constitutive tensions within rural families:

(1) **Conflicting Family Models:** Families continuously negotiated traditional discourses (rigid gender roles, collective child-rearing) with modern expectations (labor mobility, individual autonomy). Parents expressed distress about the erosion of traditional parental authority, while youth critically reinterpreted these customs. (2) **Intergenerational Technological Gap:** Internet access created intergenerational asymmetries. Youth viewed it as a tool for progress, whereas adults associated it with moral risks. Educational institutions emerged as cultural mediators of this tension. (3) **Future Aspirations and Family Loyalties:** youth expressed migration intentions to urban areas, challenging the reproduction of peasant livelihoods. This tension generated competing narratives: some families advocated selective adaptation to globalization, while others reinforced ancestral practices as resistance.

### **Discussion and Conclusions:**

The findings challenge existing views of rural families as static units, demonstrating their processual and contradictory nature. Globalization operates not as mere external imposition but through creative appropriations, local institutions (schools) act as "cultural translators" of global changes, rural territoriality is redefined through transnational flows (digital information).

*Content Contributions:* These findings indicate that rural families face significant internal and external tensions. The fundamental role of youth as mediators of these tensions is emphasized, suggesting that their active participation is crucial for addressing current challenges. The analysis highlights the impact of social and technological transformations on the redefinition of contemporary interpersonal and familial relationships.

*Methodological Contributions:* The research underscores the importance of understanding family dynamics from the lived experiences of their members. It emphasizes

the gradual establishment of trust-based relationships with participants as fundamental to the research process, while inviting deeper exploration of these phenomena through qualitative approaches.

Finally, the study makes three interrelated contributions: it develops an analytical model that reframes rural families as *transformative agents*, challenging rigid tradition/modernity dichotomies; in a practical framework, it generates evidence to inform policy-making by documenting how families actively negotiate social change; and to achieve these insights, the study innovates methodologically by integrating Community-Based Research (CBR) and autoethnography pulses, thereby enhancing qualitative validity through systematic reflexivity.

***Keywords:*** *Rural family, Intergenerational Gap, New Technologies, Family Models, Community-Based Research.*