

Interculturality and Education in Argentina from a Comparative Perspective

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ABSTRACT – Interculturality and Education in Argentina from a Comparative Perspective. This article compares two different research cases, one carried out in Mbyà Guaraní villages in northwestern Argentina, and the other in a Buenos Aires city suburban site inhabited by Bolivian migrants. Despite the differences, both groups live in situations of poverty and displacement, wager on identity continuity, and present profound discontinuities in terms of generational transmission. Focusing on family and community spaces, we rebuild the meanings of practices strongly related to identity processes that are transmitted to children and youngsters. We also observe the tensions between these practices and educational expectations, and current school mandates.

Keywords: Interculturality. Family-Community Formation. Indigenous Peoples. Migrants. Comparison.

RESUMEN – Interculturalidad y Educación en Argentina desde una Perspectiva Comparativa. En este artículo ponemos en relación dos investigaciones, una desarrollada en aldeas mbya guaraníes del noreste de Argentina, otra, en una localidad cercana a Buenos Aires habitada por migrantes provenientes de Bolivia. A pesar de las diferencias, en ambos casos se trata de colectivos en situación de desplazamiento y pobreza, que apuestan por la continuidad identitaria y advierten profundas discontinuidades en la transmisión generacional. Centrándonos en espacios familiares y comunitarios reconstruimos los significados de prácticas que se transmiten a los niños y jóvenes fuertemente vinculadas a los procesos de identificación. Advertimos las tensiones entre estas prácticas y expectativas educativas y los mandatos escolares vigentes.

Palabras-clave: Interculturalidad. Formación Familiar-Comunitaria. Indígenas. Migrantes. Comparación.

Introduction

In this article, we wish to demonstrate the potentialities of anthropological comparison for research in the educational field. Comparative studies in education frequently focus on macroprocesses: they compare national educational systems based on some common guideline with statistical data and the analyses of documentation or regulations. The comparison of processes on a microsocial scale has been one of anthropology's disciplinary brands, providing education the consideration of the actions and reflections of the subjects who express the social production of these major political guidelines on a daily scale.

Our advances are supported by the work done with different groups since 2004, marked by specific ethnic and national references in contexts of poverty in Argentina (Novaro, 2011). In this article, we address the educational situation of the Mbyà Guaraní, an indigenous population that lives in rural contexts in the country's northwest region (Province of Misiones), and of Bolivian migrants living in the urban conglomerate of Buenos Aires. We focus on the family and community formative experiences of children in both groups and their relationship to processes of social identification.

In this study, we understand comparison in two ways: one that we could define as more general, and another more specific to the situations we investigate. In the more general sense, the comparison between the family and community educational situations of the indigenous and migrant children provides educational debates with tools for decentering them from certain constraints that limit education to schooling (Levinson; Holland, 1996). The consideration of formative spaces that coexist with school based on the situation of groups for which education in family and community contexts is fundamental, enables the construction of a broader vision of what is educational, and the creation of a dialogue between academic situations and other instances of intergenerational transmission of wisdom and identities.

Furthermore, and more specifically, the comparative perspective that we adopt in this article refers to the formation of relationships between the educational situations of two groups in community spaces. This comparison allows us to give an account about how populations that see themselves as diverse from hegemonic ethnic-national knowledge and identification parameters project the formation of younger generations¹. Our study attempts to give an account of how the particularities of each group are differentially reflected on non-academic educational spaces: in one case, ethnic identification references (Mbyà Guaraní), in the other national identities (Bolivians) in Argentina.

Contributions of Anthropology for the Analysis of What Is Educational: comparison in the observation of what is similar and what is different

Comparison in Anthropological Tradition

Debates in Anthropology about what is similar and what is different based on universalist and individualistic positions have been taking place since the origins of the discipline, focused on mankind's common traits in one case, and on the recognition of cultural diversity and identity in the other. In historical terms, the evolutionary paradigm that hegemonized anthropology in its first steps in the mid-XX century gave way to cultural relativism. In this second perspective, the findings regarding the *rescue* of the cultures that were being lost due to western capitalism's expansion converged with the resistance to the fascist political and cultural expressions of the previous decades. The formulations of relativism, with an individualistic tone, were summarized into two cardinal questions. The first referred to the relative nature of each culture's value and the subsequent need to understand cultures in their own terms. The second referred to the respect for rights and subjectivities in all sociocultural contexts. In this regard, authors such as R. Linton attempted a summary between a universalist focus (fundamentally from its reference to a *social inheritance* that is expressed in a *social experience of mankind*, of a general nature), and another individualistic type focus, mindful of the particularities how said social inheritance is expressed (Neufeld, 2004).

Half a century later, in a context marked by globalization, the controversy between universalism and individualism has not lost its relevance, updating itself in new historical contexts; this controversy proposes a debate between the search for common values and the criticism of any kind of ethnocentrist biases. As an example, some authors have indicated the need for an *ideal diversity* understood as a guarantor of a supposedly essential individualistic identity (Levi Strauss, 1999); from more generalist approaches, however, paradoxical situations have been recognized, situations such as those where stigmatized minorities demand the right to *undifferentiated equality*, making historically hegemonic cultural standards their own, and in this way indirectly crediting the universalist positions (Juliano, 1997).

These nuances, the result of more than a century of anthropological debates, are, however, frequently trivialized, adopting dichotomous positions that, in the form of stigmatizations or idealizations, seem to block an adequate understanding of cultural diversity. Thus, academic and political studies with classic focuses of comparison aimed at ordering cultural similarities and differences in terms of evolutionary gradients continue to be produced (Boivin; Rosatto, Arribas, 2010), while texts supporting idealized and romantic views of cultural otherness continue to persist, and tend to conceive this cultural otherness as an essentially exotic condition, generally characterized as an *experience of the unusual* (Krotz, 1994).

In this context of disputes, the summary proposals have allowed fundamental advances in terms of social and human rights: for example, defending cultural diversity while criticizing practices such as infanticide. In this regard, the possibility that shared and individualistic dimensions between different social groups exist simultaneously has been proposed, thus integrating the general and the specific in intercultural comparisons. Research has also advanced, including the dimensions of inequality and power into intercultural relationships in an increasingly evident manner (Juliano, 1997).

In our field of study, questioning that western and self-proclaimed modern forms of schooling were the universal (and best) educational devices, propitiated the deployment of strongly comparative perspectives in other dimensions of social life associated with education. It is noteworthy circumstances such as the possibility of thinking about different ways to define infancy and child-rearing, the relationships between generations, and the social production of knowledge.

Ever since the very first anthropological texts, many authors made interesting comparisons between the educational systems of children in *western culture* and in other sociocultural and historical contexts. The expansion of the educational institution as a specific space dedicated to education coincided with the universalization of the modern State's forms and colonial and neocolonial expansion themselves. These contexts generalized the educational form as the main formative device of the younger generations, even though other formative spaces, of course, continued to exist. Hence, anthropological tradition currently allows us to be able to relativize the definition of school as the only formative space, and the figure of educators as the only adults in charge of transmitting legitimate knowledge to the new generations. The comparison both between and within a specific sociocultural and historical context, enables to observe the importance of other educational figures, and the central nature of many non-academic spaces in the formation of the younger generations that are in a situation of dialogue (sometimes harmoniously, sometimes in conflict) with the formative experiences that children and youngsters live through in schools.

Anthropological comparison thus contributes attention to the relationship between the notions of education and schooling. More specifically, to the recognition that academics, as a broad notion that includes and transcends the educational sphere, is in fact limited to specific historical contexts. In this regard, the fact has been pointed out that the idea of *educated person*, recognizable in all societies, is a broad notion that exceeds the corresponding educational scope and forms, and is also specific to the sociohistorical context where it occurs (Levinson; Holland, 1996). In these terms, the Latin American tradition of educational ethnography in formal and informal academic spaces has been a response to what is known as the *cultural dimension of academic phenomena*, with a focus on the need to recognize the academic as a dimension inserted in significant contexts that pass through it and in which it intervenes (Rockwell, 2009). In general, numerous research

studies about Latin American educational ethnography have coincided in pointing out the need to pay attention and reflect about the existence of alternative formative experiences that coexist with school, about which we will focus in our study.

Comparison in a Specific Sense

As mentioned in the introduction, this article's specific reference is the family and community educational situation of two different groups: one marked by its references to an ethnic identity (Mbyà Guaraní), and the other by its sense of national belonging (Bolivians) in Argentina. However, the adults of both groups share strong expectations in the intergenerational transmission of identity, the observation of discontinuities in this transmission in contexts of territorial mobility and social exclusion, the demand for access to certain rights (such as educational) under conditions of greater equality, and a history of complex relationships with the different agencies of the State (among them, with schools).

In the advance of our field work² we observe that the ways which Mbyà or Bolivian identities are intergenerationally transmitted in a context of migration in Argentina become particularly visible in some dimensions of social life: among the Mbyà, they appear associated with the transmission of wisdoms regarding social reproduction in the bush, handicrafts, and religious songs; among the Bolivian migrants, in the participation in popular marketplaces, horticultural production, and the celebrations of the country of origin.

The comparison between these two groups allows us to argue that the visibility acquired by these different scopes of practices associated with identities, are associated with the sociohistorical context in which they are found, with the activities related to social reproduction (the Bush and horticulture, respectively) relevant in both cases, as well as the expressive dimensions (handicrafts, religious celebrations, and national holidays). In the case of the Mbyà, these are villages located in rural contexts (thus the emphasis on the social reproduction activities associated with the Bush) that are visited by tourists (therein lies the importance of handicrafts and choirs that are exhibited as samples of its own culture). In the case of the Bolivian migrants, these are peri-urban neighborhoods where certain economic activities are carried out (therein lies the importance of horticultural belts and the marketplaces), where families with different national and ethnic senses of belonging gather (therein lies the importance of the national holidays, where certain visible plurinational and pluriethnic traits are portrayed in cosmopolitan spaces).

The dimensions of social and expressive reproduction of the social life we mention are not essences, but rather historical products. Among the Mbyà, knowledge of the bush is recognized as an ancestral wisdom, even though the difficulties that exist in the transmission of this knowledge due to access limitations to the Bush are acknowledged

in most villages, while the importance of its continuity is simultaneously and contradictorily experienced, at odds with the possibilities of youngsters increasingly inserting themselves in paid State jobs or with non-indigenous bosses. Among the Bolivian immigrants, the knowledge of wisdom associated with horticulture has become an issue of identity definition, even though it constitutes a wisdom that in many cases originates in the new national context, contradictorily experiencing the importance of sustaining its intergenerational transmission because this is a poorly paid and low graded job.

Similar processes occur in the expressive dimensions of social life. Younger generations are visibly included in the context of cultural transmission associated with the identity transmission of their parent's group, but are also included in multiple spaces. Young Mbyà Guaraní produce handicrafts in basketwork or woodwork aimed at tourist sales, and participate in the choirs within the communities, but increasingly more so in cultural events organized in theaters, tourist spaces etc. Thus, the legitimized ethnic identity expressions coexist with unmarked and/or globalized expressions that are not integrated in the times when the Mbyà way of being is shown to outsiders. Something similar happens in the case of those defined as Bolivians or as children of Bolivians. These youngsters participate in their parent's and/or grandparent's country of origin's civic holidays that have an important deployment in the neighborhoods, and even on special occasions in the center of the city itself, but they also participate in other unmarked or transnational holiday expressions, music, dance, and art in general. These processes of unmarked and/or globalized expression occupy a relatively marginal (in fact, almost absent) space in the legitimized spaces for the expression of the Bolivian cultural identity, showing the historical tensions that individualisms and universalisms allow to anticipate.

Both spaces of practice (the transmission of wisdom about social reproduction and the participation in artistic and festive expressions of community life) have clear interlocutions (tensions) with dynamics, learning contents, and hegemonic identities in the schools where these children and youngsters study. In the case of the Mbyà wisdom associated with the Bush, or of the Bolivians in the fields, the teaching of knowledge about natural sciences and the prevailing position in the common academic sense in favor of the eradication of child labor. In the case of the wisdom transmitted in the participation in festivities and expressive dimensions of social life, the tension occurs with the nationalist forms that permeate the Argentinean educational system in social sciences courses as well as in the acts and celebration of national holidays. With the purpose of deploying both dimensions, and due to space, we have chosen to present social reproduction activities in the case of the Mbyà, and holidays in the case of the Bolivians.

Learning to be Mbyà in Argentina: the wisdom of the Bush

The Mbyà Guaraní population in Argentina mainly lives in the Province of Misiones located in the northeast region of the country. It is one of country's smallest indigenous groups³. Despite its small size, it is characterized by its strong identities, which are reflected on a very high linguistic vitality, populations located in rural villages, and a transnational citizenry because families are usually extended and have relatives in the neighboring countries of Brazil and Paraguay (Melia, 2004; Bartolomé, 2009). In Argentina, laws that protect the indigenous population were renewed in the past few years: a National Survey of Indigenous Lands was approved (Argentina, 2007), as well as other contributing regulations that defined the rights of the communities over the bush they use for their social reproduction. A Bilingual Intercultural Education modality was also created (Argentina, 2006), recognizing the rights of native peoples to educate in their own language and their cultural wisdom. Despite these regulatory advances, the Mbyà population continues to have limited schooling (in most cases, schooling finishes at the basic level) and continues to be progressively expelled from the jungle of Paraná, Brazil (which, due to forestry exploitation, has been reappraised in the past decades). At this time, Mbyà villages are generally small; most of them have no more than five or six extended families related to each other, although there are some larger communities that have gained access to land ownership generally through litigations or donations.

In this context, the participation of children and youngsters in the social reproduction activities associated with the bush is closely associated with the village's location. While a few of them that are located further away from local populations continue to carry out activities recognized as traditional – hunting and gathering in the bush, as well as slash and burn agriculture –, most of the villages have more or less intense relationships with the regional productive circuit – they are seasonal employees in sawmills, they harvest yerba mate, they work on the farms of colonists, they work in schools and health units located in the communities, they sell handicrafts to the tourists that visit them, or they travel to urban centers or natural reserves with consolidated circuits considering that the Province of Misiones is an international destination for nature and cultural tourism.

One of the central identifying features of the Mbyà today is recognizing themselves as *Bush people* (Padawer; Celín, 2015) or *relatives of the jungle* (Bartolomé, 2009): based on this they organize their religious practices and land claims; furthermore, the transmission of wisdom associated with social reproduction has a strategic place from the educational proposals of the adults in the villages. Considering that the Bush is increasingly inaccessible but simultaneously claimed as an emblem of ethnic identity, we ask ourselves how the social reproduction activities associated with the jungle lead to visualization and transmission spaces of what it means to be a Mbyà in Argentina, strained from the

recognition of the inevitable transformation in the ways of being and doing, which has been intensified in the past decades by the sociohistorical relationships with the locals.

To answer this question, we resorted to the work we began in 2008 in two Mbyà Guaraní villages located in a rural area 60 km from the city of Posadas (capital of the Province of Misiones, approximately 1000 km from the city of Buenos Aires), called Andresito and Tava Miri. These are small villages that have certain social differentiations between chiefs, state employees (generally related to the leaders), and the rest of the inhabitants. Their activities are generally related to making handicrafts to sell to tourists, and the fields to supplement the state assistance to be able to survive in a social space where access to the Bush is very scarce.

The following reflections come from participating observations and open interviews where we had the chance to talk about and share the daily activities associated with social reproduction with children, youngsters, and adults. The first thing that arises in these conversations is that a central concern for the adults has to do with the possibility of teaching the younger generations the wisdom necessary for hunting in the bush. Traps for tatúes, coatis, and birds are part of a standardized repertoire of wisdom that must be transmitted to the youngsters, and to external locutors, such as tourists, who are interested in the Mbyà culture. Because of this, traps are central elements in the *trails* that different communities organize for visitors, an exhibition of their intention to continue with *before* activities, although the hunting, fishing, and honey collecting excursions in which children actively participate in *now* use non-traditional methods, as seen in the following field note excerpt:

We're talking to the second chief (Julio) and a teaching assistant (Adolfo) in the indigenous community of Andresito. I ask Julio if his eldest son knows how to look for honey.

Julio: Sure. There's honey from a bee that doesn't sting; we call it jatei. He goes to get honey from the jatei, not the honey bee; he's still afraid that he'll be stung all over. We teach him ourselves. We tell him: look in the trees, search slowly. He has to go out several times to learn. You must interest the boys to get them to go out. Some of them aren't interested, but all others want to do is roam the bush. As for my children, the eldest and this one (a boy who arrives where we're talking), they both like it. We're going to go look for takuara with this one, and he's going to go with me.

The boy brings a slingshot made from wood and rubber; his father explains:

Julio: This is for hunting birds. But it isn't the traditional way.

Adolfo: Here we have thrushes, yeruty, surukua, crows.

Julio: I eat them roasted. There are some in the Bush that are like chicken... we call them urui; the Paraguayans call them uru-uru; it's the biggest bird in the bush and it's very good with rice. We call partridges ynambu; or those that look like chicken, yaku.

Adolfo: Yakupoi (Conversation in Andresito, August 21, 2009).

The transformation of these forms of social reproduction is usually avoided when the traditionally recognized culture (for example, animal traps) that must be protected and, therefore, not altered from contact with locals for its intergenerational transmission, is exhibited.

In addition to verifying the relationship with bush animals, this also happens in the elaboration of handicrafts where those who make them for tourist sales represent animals that are no longer frequent in the area (such as jaguars, alligators, three-banded armadillo, and coatis that are no longer frequently seen there), Catholic iconography (because of their relationship with the Jesuit missions, main tourist attraction), and hunting instruments that they do not recognize as their own but that are vaguely indigenous (like the blowpipe). In this renewal of representations of animals and hunting artifacts, musical instruments, or different containers that the San Ignacio Mbyà manufacture with fibers found in the bush, we can see that the processes of transmission are not only from ancestors to heirs but also among peers; they learn from grandparents, parents, couples, and even from locals, adapting themselves to the demands of tourism:

I'm in Andresito talking to the chief and his wife, both of whom are making handicrafts. The afternoon passes slowly; they're making crosses using takuarembó, which they later sell to local marketplace locals with stalls located next to the Jesuit ruins. Next to them is a son and a nephew, 16 and 15 years old, respectively. I ask the chief's son if he knows how to make those crosses, and he tells me no, that he makes blowpipes. The chief describes how the crosses are made:

Abelardo: This is made from yvyra, a fiber found in these parts. The other part is made from takuapy.

His wife, Marisa, says that they also use takupay to make the blowpipes (she has several in a cardboard box together with the crosses). She says her grandmother taught her how to make handicrafts, and her husband adds:

Abelardo: She used to live with her grandmother because, in the past, if you were a woman it was your grandmother who had to teach you about culture, day-to-day living; grandmothers were more in charge of this than mothers. This was so because mothers had other tasks, such as searching the bush for materials for handicrafts; grandmothers usually stayed home.

Marisa explains that her grandmother taught her how to make baskets and bracelets, but that she learned how to make blowpipes from her husband.

Abelardo: We only make these crosses to sell them. In our culture, we believe in other things. This is just for selling. I learned this from an artisan in San Ignacio.

A: Mbyà?

Abelardo: Yes, Mbyà. A Parish priest gave a Mbyà family a model and we got it from there.

A: Do you use the blowpipe for hunting?

Abelardo: No. We use bows and arrows. We would go to the bush with my father and use bows and arrows to hunt fish and some animals.

A: And were you able to go with your children?

Abelardo: No, with none of them. You can't today. They know how to, but you can't hunt in the bush; almost nothing at all.

Another 19-year-old son is passing some wood carvings through the fire next to their house, to give them some color.

A: Is that a yacare? Did you carve it yourself?

Mariano: Yes.

A: Who taught you how to carve?

Mariano: I taught myself. You'd look at someone doing it; I can't remember his name. I think it was Pablo. I was in another village, Mbokajatu.

A: Are there any yacares around here?

Mariano: No, but the tourists like it.

I come back the following day and find the boys preparing hooks to go fishing.

A: How do you make the hook? With wire?

Abelardo: We buy it in the village hardware store and make them ourselves. Almost all the Guris like to fish. Some of them use fishing poles and others just use naked hooks.

Abelardo tells me that he's going to travel to Buenos Aires next week to work on financing from the National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INAI for its Spanish original).

Abelardo: There's a project that was presented last year, that has to do with Tourism with Identity. It already works in some provinces, but not here in Misiones. It consists in showing what work and community living are like... We plan to make a trail through the bush here, and make an ancient trap for animals, for birds, in the bush. We also want to make an opy, the traditional houses, like this one in the middle of the bush and show some music (Conversation in Andresito, November 22, 2013).

Showing ancient traps and community living to tourists is part of a visualization process that reconfigures the dynamics of intergenerational transmission regarding what it means to be a Mbyà in Argentina. The need to show certain forms of being and doing *without changes* is imposed; these are in turn tensioned by the recognition of the inevitable social transformations, intensified by the increase of the sociohistorical relationships with the locals in the past decades. If *leaving* the community was a challenge to those who are adults today, it is a somewhat paved road for the youngsters and children. This was narrated by an indigenous teaching assistant who lived his childhood in Andresito, talking to the second chief of Tava Miri:

Gustavo: I was 11 when I was in grade school; I didn't know anything. Our grandfather didn't want me to go; he said they were going to take away our culture; this was the Yacutinga community. That's why I finished school at 18. Father Javier brought us to Andresito back in 1976, more or less. The Bishop donated the land and convinced our parents to let us go to school. [...] When I was 22, I was the secretary of a Guaraní cultural association and I would come and go to Posadas, Buenos Aires, Formosa. Leaving the community is very important for us because we learn a lot from the white man, what the city is like, the people. You can bring things back to work in the community: the fields, fruit trees, how they're maintained. I left afterward because I dedicated myself to the teacher's course, as a teaching assistant (Conversation in Tava Miri, October 28, 2014).

The initial ways of *leaving* had to do with teacher formation or NGO work, both of which were added to the historical relationship par excellence: the informal salaried job. More recently, the dimensions in which they are associated are extended to sports and arts, especially football and choirs, as narrated by the second chief of Tava Miri during this same conversation:

Sebastián: I used to go play football at Atlético Jardín when I lived in Leoni. I went to school, I was 12, and I had four footballer friends, locals. That's how I began and continued until I was 16; I was the only Mbyà but they didn't treat me differently. I stopped going because I liked going to the farm. We have cassava, corn, and sweet potato. I would sometimes go work to Puerto Rico; I met a guy and we would talk in a bar. He worked on a farm; his boss had a lot of hectares; he was European and almost didn't speak Spanish. My friend looked after the animals and left me to clean the farm. It was a yerba mate plantation, 15 hectares of mandarins, another 15 of oranges. I go there for three weeks and stay here in the community for one week. I go whenever I want. Most of those who work are countrymen (Mbyà); we all know each other. There are four from Teyú Cuaré and two from here (Tava Miri), me and my brother in law.

Gustavo: The first time I did tarefa (yerba mate harvesting) was in Oberá. The boss would come to the community, talk to the chief, and we would be called. I was about 25; we were five or six people from Katupyry. He was Polish. After that, I went to Dos de Mayo, also to work with yerba mate.

Sebastián: We have a choir; a singer from Posadas invited us to Buenos Aires. I play the guitar, the chief plays the violin, then there are four kids who play the takuapu and four who play maracas. We pick those who sing well, who sing loud. The kids are 8 and older; two of them are older girls: one of them 15 and the other 17, my two sisters. The chief's daughter, the one who sings well, and the kids play the maraca. My father taught me how to play; he was the chief in another community, Guaporaity. We were also in Corrientes with the choir, in the Oberá theater. [...] Just a short while ago we sang here in the ruins (Jesuit) with Charo (he's referring to a concert where they accompanied the singer of Tonolec, an indigenous/electronic fusion group) (Conversation in Tava Miri, October 2014).

As we previously mentioned, this wisdom and practices associated with social reproduction strain the proposals for the transmission of tradition with the recognition of the inevitable changes associated with the ways of providing a livelihood which are the result of the social and historical transformations that have been occurring for several generations of inter-ethnic relationships.

It is important to consider that these strains are also present in the learning contents of schools: in previous work we observed multiple positionings of schools in this sense, but a certain recurrence in the trend to limit Mbyà knowledge to *traditional wisdom*, oppose them to what is considered academic (universal) knowledge, and therefore the difficulties of academic spaces to conceive the Mbyà as social groups who, as all groups, are in a situation of constant change (Padawer et al., 2013). For example, this prevents the incorporation of the transformations in productive bush activities in school, always seeking folksy expressions to exhibit animal traps, handicrafts, or choral singing in patriotic school holidays. As mentioned in the introduction, we also observed tensions between the family expectations of including the younger generations in domestic production and the Argentinean school system's position in favor of eradicating child labor. This is clearly an obstacle for the incorporation of knowledge about nature in the school curriculum, knowledge that is implicit in daily rural life and that could be strengthened and made more complex with work in the classroom.

Learning to be Bolivian in Argentina: wisdom and festivities

The Bolivian population in Argentina is, in numerical terms, the second largest migrant group⁴. The population's situation is generally characterized by its unstable insertion in the job market, its territorial segregation, and its recurring episodes of discrimination. This adverse context is associated with the strengthening of networks between migrants, the settlement in certain neighborhoods (in this case, Buenos Aires), and a strong process of association. Gathering in specific territories and the associative networks allowed the migrants to face the difficulties of displacement in conditions of poverty, while simultaneously maintaining the continuity of certain national, ethnic, and regional references. Having economic and political relations with Bolivia, the bond to relatives who stayed behind, and transnational practices are part of the ways those who see themselves as members of these groups in Argentina carry out the reproduction. It is important to consider that immigration regulations have recently changed, and at least in the legal scope (Argentina, 2004), a state political discourse regarding the recognition of rights associated with a certain identity valuation has been enabled in Argentina (Novick, 2008).

The Bolivian migrant population adds other marks to the marks of national distinction: ethnic marks associated with language, certain kinds of political-cultural groups, and some regional and religious festivities. In this way, in the context of transnational migration, the reference to what is Bolivian in terms of self-affiliation is not limited to the state meanings of what is national, but rather includes ethnic groups feelings. Immigration regulations do not make it possible to attend these groups' multiple identity interpellations which, when defined first as foreigners, are excluded from the regulations associated to indigenous otherness.

In this context, the Bolivian celebrations in Buenos Aires are spaces of visualization of national and ethnic affiliations, and spaces of recreation and transmission of what it means to be a Bolivian in Argentina. The active participation of children and youngsters in the festivities of migrant organizations is a relevant practice in terms of identities because the children are described as Bolivians (regardless of their place of birth, which is many times Argentina) during these celebrations, and different symbolologies declare the binational condition of the children and youngsters whose futures are generally projected in the new country of residence.

The observation of these processes focuses work that we have been developing since 2011 in family, community, and educational contexts in a neighborhood approximately 50 km from the city of Buenos Aires; a significant part of this neighborhood's inhabitants are migrants and children of migrants who come from the rural areas of Potosí (Bolivia). The space is characterized by the strong associative process, con-

centrated in the activities of the Escobar Bolivian Group, an institution that has nearly 1000 members and performs horticulture productive activities, commercialization activities through marketplaces, and strong associations to Argentinean and Bolivian State organisms.

The Group is essential in the locality as organizing and support entity of the annual festivities. The carnival, Bolivia's day of independence, and Potosí's anniversary are moments for the organization of multitudinous events that, according to the local discourses, seek to *maintain the Bolivian Identity alive, preserving the customs and traditions of the mother country... and the typical cultural manifestations of our Bolivian roots*. In this way, the nationalist speech and permanent reminder of Bolivia in these celebrations acquire very different connotations: agglutination, reinforcement of social and political bonds, resistance to, and reporting of, discrimination and violence. But they also acquire connotations associated with the dissolution of regional and ethnic loyalties, and the concealment of inequalities that are increasingly evident in the Group⁵.

The structure of the Bolivian national holidays in Escobar presents great continuity through time-based in a defined sequence: opening speeches, parades, food, artistic and sporting tournaments, awards, group dances. The inclusion of children and youngsters in these events is significant, especially so that they participate in certain activities organized by the Group that serve as visualization events of national belonging (and in some cases, ethnic belonging as well): football (where the jerseys that identify the Bolivian national team are often used), the dance and music groups that parade in the festivities with Andean rhythms, instruments and choreographies.

The following reflections are focused on an act organized by the Group in August 2015 during the celebration of the Bolivian day of independence. They are also supported on prior observations of Group caporal workshops, other celebrations (the carnival and national civic acts), and interviews with the families of the children who participate in these activities⁶:

We're arriving at the venue where the parade will take place. We see numerous stalls that sell products for cooking food that is usually recognized as Bolivian and/or Andean (chuño, quinoa, beans, and locoto). We see that kids are already playing football on the fields (during the afternoon, the Group's secretary of sports shows us the trophies for the winning teams).

On the street where the parade will take place, there are bleachers where many people are sitting; those who will make speeches are in the middle. The announcer says: 'Today is the day of Bolivians; all Bolivian brothers embrace each other today in this land... Bolivia is our country of origin; Argentina is also our country, the one that took us in'. After a while, the Bolivian Consul speaks; among other things, he says: 'With the greatest pride we want to tell you that you're helping this country grow, Argentina is growing with the support of the groups... Brothers and sisters present in this act, you should feel like true ambassadors; you are the true diplomats; you make Bolivia look good with your work. And that's how we want

Bolivia to be known: honest, hardworking, studious, that we're helping the great nation that our forefathers fought for grow'.

The parade begins after the Consul's speech. There are many Bolivian flags but also many Argentinean ones. In general, the groups march with both flags. Many participants have a large Bolivian rosette on their chests, and a smaller Argentinean one just below.

When the parade ends (after nearly two hours), the announcer says: 'Lunch for the special guests is offered in the hall. This is a holiday for Group members and marketgoers'. We can see that many of those attending the act and that are not invited to the hall, are eating at street stalls.

We enter the hall together with the guests. In the background, we will repeatedly hear the song: 'Long live my country Bolivia'. As in previous years, we see that the back of the stage has a Bolivian flag on one side and the Argentinean flag on the other. Several artistic song and dance numbers take place with the participation of adults and children. At some point, two groups argue about who's next on stage.

As lunch is finishing, dancing begins in the street and the awards for the selected dance groups are announced (the awards for the football teams are presented inside the hall). The dance groups parade by. The dances recognize different national origins. Tikus and caporals alternate with sambas and chacareras. The announcer says: 'this could be the winning team... of course, showing children what's traditional and what's patriotic (he welcomes the first dance group). These very young children already defend folklore. Take your hat off, teacher, because this is identity, this is tradition, and this is patriotism. Thank you, children, for teaching us to defend what's ours' (August 1, 2015, celebration of Bolivia's day of independence).

The act articulates and visualizes cohesive and unifying aspects among the migrants. Terms that reinforce feelings of containment and belonging are made clear, but practices that legitimize differential places are also observed. In the acts, we see (not in totally explicit terms, but not concealed either) the differentiation within the group. This differentiation is not mentioned in the speeches, but is seen in the observation of the dispositions of the people and the groups in the different celebration spaces, in tensions regarding access to the boxes and stages, in the presentation of open and closed spaces, in the division between those attending and special guests, in the competition and awards systems for dance and sports teams. In other celebrations, we also observe that strong tensions regarding who can access the boxes and those who make speeches are generated among the participants.

The acts are also deployed as spaces that symbolize the binational nature of the new references: the national symbols of Bolivia and Argentina adorn the boxes, halls, and streets; in repeated celebrations, we observe the same disposition, representing the generational differences that are recognized: adults marching with the Bolivian flag, children with the Argentinean flag. From outside the Group, the act is meant as a Bolivian gesture of affirmation and belonging. In school, teachers recurrently talked to us about *their* acts and *their* festivities, referring to the celebrations that the docents generally do not attend.

In this context, the transmission of identities would seem to consist in both marking a group's loyalty, and the acceptance of one's own

place in the group's internal hierarchies. If one of the main feelings circulating among adults in the festivities seems to be the coexistence of speeches of equality, together with practices of equality and differentiation, children are explicitly transmitted the importance of reproducing certain practices and attitudes that show their belonging to the Bolivian group. Numerous families belong to organizations, spontaneously or through more or less instituted callings, which results in their children participating in the community spaces and, in this way, in the Bolivian group.

Children are included in the dances and parades, they wave flags, eat Bolivian food, and play football, situations that are not exempt from ambiguities. They wear the green jersey of the Bolivian national football team during football matches, they pose for pictures wearing typical Bolivian costumes. However, we occasionally observe a certain degree of embarrassment in these situations where the children bear, on their own bodies, exhibitions of identity. Amid these activities, the children also make speeches of equality and practices of asymmetry their own, identifying the places they cannot (or will not) enter together with their families, the logic behind the competition of tournaments, and the dances that these processes of communion and differentiation go through.

We do not observe gestures or words that openly challenge inclusion in the group, nor to that order that simultaneously equals and differentiates. But the absences or intermittent presence, the search for other relating spaces by the youngsters, may be interpreted in this sense. For example, we repeatedly observe comments from adults regarding the limited involvement of the youngsters in the Group's daily activities (attendance to assemblies); also worth noting was the comment made by many youngsters regarding their opposition to practicing school sports on the Group's fields. In this regard, the participation of the younger generations in these holiday events (and in the associations that organize them) should be understood as part of processes that attempt to recreate traditions and belongings that an incorporation of adult traditions implies, but it is also important to listen to less explicit distancing acts and gestures from these traditions.

In Escobar we see how a population that is subjected to strong prejudices in its society of destination, living mainly in contexts of poverty, repeatedly showing its intention of continuing to be associated with the society of origin and, as we hear every year during the holidays, wagering on the new generations *carrying Bolivia in their blood*. Titles like *second generation Bolivians* condense a spatial reference (Bolivia) and a temporal one (generation) that reveals the dilemmas of the adults regarding the generational transmission continuity of their distinction as a group (Novaro; Diez, 2015).

Finally, and as in the case of the Mbyà Guaraní, we can briefly point out the continuities and distances with academic situations. Although the more instituted format of community festivities coincides with academic devices, the continuity of the aspects that represent and

exalt *what is Bolivian* in the community festivities differentiates itself from the fluctuation between the visualization and the devaluation of what is Bolivian in academic images and narrations. The distance with the locality's schools mainly occurs because of the forms of nationalism that permeate the Argentinean educational system, and that are particularly evident in *patriotic acts*, called to reinforce feelings of belonging to the national community (Argentina). In them, the presence of *what is Bolivian*, present through Andean rhythms, dances, and images, usually acquires a folksy and stereotypical format. Although new educational rhetoric proposes repositioning in this sense, the observation of the academic situations in Escobar indicates the continuity of the traditional educational mandates, an aspect that we have worked on in previous texts (Author, 2015). Faced with this, we also observe a generally passive presence of migrant families in school acts, complemented by the almost total absence of school actors (teachers and directors) in the locality's Bolivian civic acts⁷.

Conclusion: contributions of comparison to the denaturalization of the academic processes

As previously indicated, the central purpose of our study has been the exploration of the possibilities of anthropological comparison on a local scale, emphasizing the actions and reflections of the subjects in family and community spaces. We also invite the reader to think of relationships with the academic mandates of the educational institutions of the localities where we work.

The comparison exercise has been organized as a function of different approximations or perspectives. One of them refers to the forms of identity of the Mbyà Guaraní and Bolivian groups described in the study, the first marked by its ethnic differences, and the second by its recognition of a specific sense of national belonging.

Regarding common aspects of both groups, these coincide in social and cultural distinction demands. In general, said coincidence is expressed both in demands regarding the right to inclusion in equal conditions as well as in their concern for cultural continuity in contexts where such continuity is perceived as questionable. The said continuity is occasionally supported on demands regarding traditional values, fundamentally appealing to a past that, built as a shared tradition, provides sustenance when faced with situations where identity continuity is perceived as threatened, but inadvertently becomes homogenizing.

In general, this social and cultural distinction demanded by the groups that we refer to does not respond to permanent guidelines, but is rather a historical construct that surges in relation to state discourses and policies that usually selectively appeal to individualistic or generalist forms. By virtue of the former, as indicated in both experiences, schools emphasize the distinctive nature, whether ethnical or national, of the groups, and even when the regulations and good intentions of

the teachers try to avoid these common places, the legitimate presence of what is individualistic is portrayed in practices and discourses that fluctuate between the exotic and the stereotypical. Regarding the forms tending towards generalization, apparently there are not too many variants of the schools' nationalist mandate.

In our study, we wanted to focus on formative experiences in non-academic community spaces. In this regard, and in reference to the Mbyà groups, we have especially alluded to the intergenerational transmission of Bush-related productive wisdom and practices, with the contradictions stemming from the transformation of social reproduction in the historical processes. As for the Bolivians, the formative experiences alluded to mostly refer to the construction of identity from participation in said community's civic festivities, strained between plurinationalism and pluriethnicism and the social differentiation processes of those who discursively identify as equals.

The significance of said community spaces is not only due to the discourses and practices done there, but fundamentally to the general questionings of the academic device and formation that said practices enable. In this regard, formative experiences in community spaces strain different educational provisions: for example, the participation of children in Mbyà productive practices questions the negative sanction of child labor done from school, while the hegemonic symbolic forms that the school deploys during national holidays find continuities, and contrasts, with the way national identities are portrayed and symbolized in the Bolivian community's national festivities.

Even though we have only suggested these tensions in this article, we understand that they are an invitation to reformulating devices and mandates that are strongly present in schools, despite the legitimization of rhetoric regarding interculturality and difference. These reformulations seem necessary not only to legitimize the non-academic educational experiences of the indigenous and migrant children, but also to build more inclusive academic proposals that pay more attention to the formative trajectories of all children.

Translated from Spanish by Tikinet Edição Ltda.

Received on September 30, 2016

Approved on March 31, 2017

Notes

- 1 These projections are inevitably associated with those that occur in the official educational system, a subject that we have addressed in other works (Novaro; Padawer, 2013). Both groups are associated with the State and schooling in very different ways: in Argentina, ethnic diversity is legitimized by educational law (Argentina, 2006), which establishes bilingual intercultural education, thus implying that in the case of indigenous peoples, and even with partial achievements, distinctive community educational processes are acknowledged to be pedagogically recovered by schools. The same does not happen with children who subscribe to a different national reference, as in the case of migrants.

- 2 We developed these studies in Mbyà communities in Misiones since 2008, and in a Buenos Aires neighborhood with a high population component from Bolivia since 2010. In both cases, we made observations, held talks, and performed non-structured interviews in family, community, and school contexts.
- 3 According to the Complementary Survey of Indigenous Peoples taken in 2004, the latest specific statistical instrument available, the Mbyà represent 1% of the indigenous population of Argentina (little more than 8,000 people). According to this instrument, four groups concentrated 60% of the indigenous population (Mapuches, Kollas, Tobas/Qom, and Wichis), while the rest were medium-sized and small groups such as the Mbyà.
- 4 According to the 2010 Census, the Paraguayan origin population represents 30% of all foreigners (550,713 people), while the Bolivian origin population represents 19% (345,272 people).
- 5 A strong differentiation between land owners, merchants, leasers, laborers and small merchants is observed; also among those with political ties to the Argentinean and Bolivian States, and those who do not have these relationships.
- 6 The interviews were basically conducted to migrant women of the Group, and to an association of neighborhood women.
- 7 The participation focus of the authorities and school teachers in the civic acts of the Bolivian localities that we could observe in brief instances in this country, contrast with their absence in the acts in the localities where we work.

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Interculturality and Education in Argentina from a Comparative Perspective

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