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Schooling and Critical Citizenship: Pedagogies of Political Agency in El Alto, Bolivia

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This article explores the formation of citizenship as social practice in a school in El Alto, Bolivia. I examine interactions between “banking” forms of education, students’ responses, and embodied practices of belonging and political agency, and argue that the seemingly passive forms of knowledge transmission so criticized by critical pedagogy need not preclude the development of critical citizenship in young people. [citizenship, El Alto, schooling, political agency, critical pedagogy]

In 2006, Evo Morales, the first Indigenous President of Bolivia, took office and quickly began a major series of constitutional reforms, as part of an overall political project of “decolonizing” the country through the recognition of its “multinational” nature. One of those was a thoroughgoing attempt at educational reform, acknowledging the fundamental role of schooling in inducting young people into Bolivian citizenship. Although schooling is of course not the only place for the political and civic socialization of young people, I focus on it in this article because the school is a central arena for the promotion and contestation of different state-led citizenship projects. I examine this through an analysis of two aspects of schooling in the city of El Alto since the late 1990s: first, pedagogical practices in the classroom and second, participation in civic parades and demonstrations outside.

As such, this article seeks to contribute to a growing body of ethnographic work that examines citizenship as social practice (e.g., Holston 2008; Lazar 2008; Ong 2006; Postero 2007). An aspect of this work that is of particular relevance to the anthropology of education and schooling is summed up in Aihwa Ong’s argument that citizenship is a process of “subject-ification in the Foucauldian sense of self-making and being-made by power relations...in relation to nation states and transnational processes” (Ong 1996:737). Certainly, schooling has long been understood as about the creation of (national) citizens (Gellner 1983; Rousseau 1968), and this is a particularly tense question in multicultural contexts. Kathleen Hall’s study (2002), for example, discusses the experiences of Sikh youths in a multiethnic school environment in Northern England. How they negotiate being and becoming British in the context of tensions between the retention of specific manifestations of cultural identity by immigrants and the demand to “integrate” enjoins us to pay attention to the processes of (political) subjectification operating in schools. Maria Elena García (2005) brings out similar questions in her discussion of intercultural and bilingual education of highland Quechua communities in Peru, where national identity is closely associated with

integration into a dominant model of citizen subjectivity, phrased especially through the learning of the Spanish language. Aurolyn Luykx's (1997, 1999) work with trainee rural teachers in Bolivia similarly focuses on language as a contested arena for schooling in national citizenship (see also Arratia 1997; Canessa 2004; Hornberger 2000).

The aspirational nature of citizenship is crucial to most discussions of it as a concept, both scholarly and policy oriented, and the responsibility of the ethnographer is to investigate the interplay between aspiration and local realities and perceptions. In the case of education and citizenship, this comes out in the assertion that there is some (better, more democratic, or more critical) kind of political culture or subjecthood that can and should be achieved through schooling. Perceptions of what that culture of democracy might consist of are variable; for example, along the default lines of individual or collective values. Some school programs in Mexico moved beyond their nominal focus on liberal democratic practices precisely through their emphasis on collective values (Levinson 2005). Other Latin American scholars have advocated a notion of democratic culture achievable through education that is particularly relevant to multicultural contexts, for example, the introduction to a special edition of the adult education journal *Decisio* on citizenship education, which argues that a democratic culture is "a culture of participation, of recognition of the Other, of recognition of diversity, of acceptance of other identities, of participation in the turn towards sustainable development" (Caruso Larrainci 2007:6, my translation; see also Lima 2007). However, local realities may not always converge with such laudable aims. Sometimes local notions of citizenship have even been constructed in ways that surprise activists, or the anthropologist herself, such as in Sri Lanka, where children, parents and teachers formed understandings of "local, peripheral citizenship" based not on the demand for universal equal citizenship but on participation in patron– client relationships (Sørensen 2008; cf. Lazar 2004). Another example is where indigenous parents across the Andes demand monolingual education in Spanish for their children (García 2005).

My study discusses a distinct set of local citizenship formations in a school in a poor neighborhood in the city of El Alto, Bolivia. I focus in particular on those that have to do with the learning of political agency; and I ask how some practices of political socialization in schools enable or stifle the development of critical citizenship among young Bolivians. Historically, citizenship regimes have been the ways that societies organize and challenge political participation and exclusion (historically, of workers, women, illiterates, and children). Therefore, local forms of political agency are central elements of the experience and construction of citizenship, as well as very important practices of "self-making." I frame this analysis within a discussion of the concept of critical citizenship as

understood within critical educational theory, exploring the connections between that and the “banking forms of education” so condemned by Freire (1996). I then move to discuss the relationship between citizenship and education in Bolivia more historically, before moving to the bulk of the ethnography within this article. This addresses school practices and the spaces they leave for the development of critical citizenship. I focus on three aspects in particular: transmissive education and the hierarchical relationship between teacher and pupils in the classroom, pupil responses to these experiences, and finally the embodied forms of political agency taught in school ceremonies, parades, and linked to street demonstrations. Throughout, I emphasize how ethnicity shapes these experiences and relationships.

Critical Pedagogy

The interplay between established and newer vocabularies of school practice illustrates some of the complex ways the Bolivian schooling system promotes its citizenship projects; and to frame my analysis of this I draw on theories of critical pedagogy. Starting from Paulo Freire’s enormously influential work (esp. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [1996]), critical pedagogy theories share common ground in the combination of a critique of the political economy of schooling—especially in the contemporary neoliberal context—with a “language of possibility,” or a vision for what schooling should and could be (see, e.g., Darder et al. 2003; Ellsworth 1992; Freire and Macedo 1999; Giroux 1992, 1997a, 1997b, 2005; McLaren 2007). It is the latter that distinguishes critical pedagogy from theorists of schooling as reproduction (e.g., Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Willis 1977) although implicit in such a language of possibility is a critique of what is already.

One of the most important aspects of that vision views school teachers and other educationalists as “transformative intellectuals” promoting the development of “critical citizenship” among their students (Giroux 2005; McLaren 2007). Giroux (2005) for example argues that education is reduced to training when it does not seek to extend democracy.

The idea of the school as an agent for radical democratic transformation is not new, in its U.S. incarnation drawing heavily on the work of John Dewey (1916) and the practices of early to mid-20th-century radical educational projects, such as those of Horace Mann and Myles Horton (Darder et al. 2003). The equivalent in Bolivia was the indigenous school program in Warisata in the 1930s, a central influence for the current legislation, which is indeed named after its two founders. Across Latin America the most important educational tradition in this vein, which produced Paulo Freire himself, is known as the popular education tradition. This is a radical tradition of educational praxis

as social and political transformation, albeit not focused on the school, indeed often rejecting formal school-based education (Illich 1971). It has been enacted mostly through nonformal education, particularly the tradition of adult literacy programs that started in late 1950s and early 1960s Brazil, where Paulo Freire began his work (Kane 2000). On his exile from Brazil after the 1964 coup, Freire moved to Chile to work alongside Chilean educators in the period up to 1970, and the radical adult literacy programs there continued until the coup of 1973 (Austin 1997).

Such initiatives spread across Latin America, to Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, Ecuador, and Grenada, among others (Hammond 1997; Kane 2000; Núñez Hurtado 2005). As well as the more immediate influences of the Cuban revolution and Liberation Theology (esp. after 1968), they were also part of a longer tradition of concern for literacy and national development going back to Simon Rodriguez, the educator of Simón Bolívar, and running through figures such as “José Martí,... Félix Varela,... José Carlos Mariátegui, . . . Sandino,... Lázaro Cárdenas and...Che Guevara” (Núñez Hurtado 2005).¹ Combined with the example of individuals such as these were other radical education projects of the early 20th century, such as the Workers’ Education Movement in Chile in 1890–1920, educational programs in Argentina, and popular universities in El Salvador and Peru in the 1920s (Kane 2000:26), as well as indigenous education projects such as the Warisata schools in Bolivia mentioned above.

The popular education movement remains extremely vibrant in Latin America today, focusing mostly on adult nonformal education but also influencing the construction of education policies more generally.² Some recent initiatives in this movement have focused explicitly on the relationship between education and citizenship, following the adoption of the concept of citizenship by many social movements in the region since the 1990s (Caruso Larrainci 2007; CEAAL 1995; Dagnino 1998). The common element across the history of Latin American popular education is its explicit linking of education to political and social transformation in favor of the popular classes. Pedagogically, they emphasize, to quote Oscar Jara Holliday, a Peruvian student of Freire’s, a “new educational paradigm, one which is opposed to a model of education that is authoritarian, reproductivist, predominantly school-based, and that dissociates theory from practice” (2004:110, my translation; see also Austin 1997; Bartlett 2005; Hammond 1997; Kane 2000; Núñez Hurtado 2005; Torres 1990).

The concept of “critical citizenship” encoded in the different visions of critical pedagogy makes possible an analysis of how particular modes of teaching function in practice to promote or suppress students’ abilities to critique the social and political context in which they are located. Giroux (2005)

for example argues that most contemporary educational practice constructs teachers as technicians who transmit and often impose a hierarchical and positivist construction of knowledge that serves the interest of the dominant culture and leaves no space for the readings and experiences of subaltern groups. Knowledge thus becomes an object that can be measured, quantified, and passed on from teacher to student, rather than something produced situationally through power relationships. Teaching is transmissive, rather than emancipatory. In a blistering critique of such methods, Paulo Freire calls this the “banking” model of education, arguing that the teacher–student relationship has a

fundamentally *narrative* character.... Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into “containers,” into “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher....Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.... The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. Oppression...is necrophilic; it is nourished by love of death, not life. The banking concept of education, which serves the interests of oppression, is also necrophilic. Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power. [1996:52–60]

He advocated “problem-posing” education, where students draw on their own experiences, and “background awareness” to “develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (Freire 1996:64).

Critical educationalists do explicitly acknowledge the complex nature of public schooling as a space of empowerment as well as domination (Darder et al. 2003; McLaren 2007). However, in their arguments, the emancipatory nature of schooling is usually presented as a potential, consequent on a genuinely radical model of education. Critics of critical pedagogy have tended to base their

criticism on an understanding of the particularities of subjectivities (both of students and teachers), much of which owes a great deal to feminist poststructuralism (Ellsworth 1992; Gore 1993; Luke 1992; Orner 1992). Jennifer Gore (1993), for example, criticized the abstract nature of the writings of key figures such as Giroux and McLaren and, along with others, has advocated a more contextual analysis of what is actually possible in particular institutional and classroom situations (Bartlett 2005; Ellsworth 1992; Orner 1992). Feminist theorists have also critiqued Freire's privileging of class and a more general failure to theorize gender within the dominant (male-authored) works of critical pedagogy (Bartlett 2005; Luke 1992). Common to much of the criticism is the demand for contextualization, and microlevel analysis of the conditions of possibility for the development of critical citizenship in particular educational contexts.³

However, both critical educationalists and their radical critics advocate a political project that implicitly and explicitly critiques current pedagogical methods in favor of more critical future ones. The assumption latent in such a critique is that "banking"-style pedagogical approaches create for the students a form of political being-in-the-world that is passive and unquestioning. This raises the possibility, then, that passive students are more likely to become docile subjects and therefore passive, unquestioning, citizens, and educational practices are thereby linked with theories of cultural reproduction through schooling to explain the perpetuation of relations of domination and subordination.

However, the paradox of the case that I discuss here is that Bolivians (educated and not) are not generally noted for their passivity, despite an education that is on the whole very "traditional" and "authoritarian," as I discuss below. Their lack of passivity is (partly) illustrated by the antigovernment and antineoliberal mobilizations of 2000–05 that culminated in the election of Evo Morales, usually known simply as "Evo." Indeed, as I argue in the latter part of this article, different aspects of the students' experience of learning in school help to prepare them very well for active, critical citizenship. Although I would not argue that the students' experience of transmissive modes of education necessarily creates this kind of critical political agency, it certainly does not inhibit it; and under certain political and historical circumstances, it might even facilitate it.

Bolivia: Citizenship and Education

In Bolivia, the dominant lines of contention over citizenship and national construction have been ethnic since the Conquest. Bolivia has a very high indigenous population: 62 percent of the

population over 15 years old self-identified as indigenous in the census of 2001,⁴ and that indigenous majority was governed by a white, or Creole, minority from Conquest through Independence and until 2005. The period since independence has seen three main top-down or state-led citizenship projects. First, during the 19th and early 20th century, the prevailing version of citizenship presented to the indigenous peoples by the political elites was essentially exclusion from the imagined nation of Bolivia, even though the indigenous peoples themselves consistently resisted that exclusion.

By the mid-20th century, the project of assimilation had become dominant, as evidenced in the legislation that followed the 1952 revolution, principally the agrarian reform and the introduction of universal suffrage and primary education. The revolution's "citizenship option" for the indigenous peoples was that of assimilation—as workers and peasants who would eventually develop into modern mestizos through education; and individual property-holding citizens who participate in politics by means of voting. This was combined with some important corporatist state projects, such as the formation of peasant unions and the strengthening of the Central Obrera Boliviana in the initial period of "co-government" (Whitehead 2001). Both exclusion and assimilation are consistent with the Liberal focus on homogeneity among the citizenry, which is how the idea of universal citizenship was translated into practice across Latin America. One of the consequences of this was the growth of important indigenous rights movements from the 1970s onward in a number of countries, especially Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, and Ecuador. Across the region, social movements including indigenous rights movements took the opportunity presented by the return to democracy after the period of dictatorships in the 1970s and 1980s to demand significant constitutional reform.

As a result, by the mid-1990s, Bolivia was at the forefront of Latin American moves to design a new relationship among individuals, communities, and the state that took into account a more differentiated citizenship. Part of this was an educational reform in 1994, which promoted "intercultural" and bilingual education.⁵ Nonetheless, differentiated citizenship through multiculturalism has proved very hard to achieve in practice, not least because the political will to make the reforms work has been lacking. The multiculturalism of the educational reform has also been critiqued: Felix Patzi argues that where implemented,⁶ the attempts at intercultural and bilingual education in fact meant that indigenous people were drawn into complicity with an integrationist cultural project. Hence he characterized it as state ethnophagy (*etnofagia estatal*), rather than outright ethnocide, as the suffix *-phagy* means "being eaten" (Patzi Paco 1999). His outlook might be overly stark, however, as other research with trainee bilingual teachers on their

notions of “interculturality” has found more grounds for optimism that the reform may not simply be “enlightened assimilationism” (Hornberger 2000). Research into intercultural and bilingual education across the Andes has highlighted the complexity of such reforms— particularly with regard to teacher training—but also the potential for positive outcomes in terms of indigenous peoples’ citizenship (Arratia 1997; Comboni Salinas and Juárez Nunez 2000; García 2005; Hornberger 2000; Lòpez 2005; Luykx 1999; Mengoa 1999; Talavera Simoni 1999).

Evo’s electoral victory in 2005 heralded a new citizenship project, currently still under construction, which represents itself as multinationalism in contrast to multiculturalism, as evidenced in the 2009 constitution. One of his first actions was to suspend the 1994 educational law, and one of the first proposals of his government was the educational reform law initially published in 2006. This is yet to be ratified, not least because of widespread opposition from teachers, among other groups. For Evo’s government, recognizing indigenous “nations” is an ambitious political project that seeks to “decolonize” Bolivia in a way that the three citizenship projects of exclusion, assimilation, and multiculturalism failed to do. In practice, however, all of these citizenship projects coexist and overlap in contemporary politics, and have done so in recent decades. Post-1994 education practice is a good example of this, since the legislation of 1994 was not fully implemented across the country, especially in urban areas, and teachers continued older schooling practices. However, they also tried to incorporate newer practices that they had come across as a part of the process of implementing the reform, especially those who trained as teachers after 1994. Many of the teachers I knew were very excited about those practices, particularly the ones involving more student directed learning. However, it would be very difficult to disentangle the pedagogical practices that resulted from the 1994 reform from ones that came from teacher training beforehand, or from experiences of popular education practice, teachers’ own schooling, and so on. Multiple pedagogical practices are layered on each other in complex ways, and the latest educational reform project is likely to be an additional source of inspiration for teachers.

Certainly, despite the trenchant criticism of the assimilationist politics of the 1994 reforms, including the educational reform, it is notable that the latest legislation to “decolonize” education comes after the election of an indigenous President of Bolivia with over 50 percent of the vote. Despite subsequent problems in implementing legislation and, indeed, in governing the country, Evo’s election was widely understood across Latin America and globally to represent an astonishing achievement for the country’s social and indigenous rights movements. His own inaugural speech in January 2006 proclaimed the end of 500 years of colonization with his assumption to the Presidency.

Moreover, the election of December 2005 was the first election since 1982 in which a single political party had gained more than 23 percent of the vote. Prior to that point, Bolivia's president had been elected by means of coalition pacts between the three main oligarchic (Creole) parties. Since then, Evo's electoral popularity has increased, and he won 64 percent of the vote in the Presidential elections of December 2009.⁷ Such a remarkable accomplishment clearly raises the possibility of some kind of "decolonization" beginning well before the most recent educational reform was designed and despite the "colonizing" citizenship projects promoted by the schools and other major institutions in Bolivian society (esp. the military) over the last decades, if not centuries.

Citizenship is evidently a highly contradictory social practice in contemporary Bolivia, and schooling is no exception. In this article, I discuss the ways in which schooling there is a site of both domination and (potential) liberation, whatever political regime is in government. Rather than view Bolivian schooling in citizenship as inherently unidirectional—namely, colonizing—ethnographic investigation shows how this process pulls in contradictory directions. One of the aspects of schooling that make this paradox especially visible is the way that schools are sites for both active and passive forms of agency and citizenship. In everyday practice, contemporary educational and political theories that stress critical thinking, choice, entrepreneurship, and individual agency, and that were an important element of the 1994 legislation, come into conflict with historically grounded forms of collective political agency and dominant values of conformity, obedience, and respect for authority, as promoted by teachers, both conservative and radical (the dominant urban teachers confederation is notoriously Trotskyite). In highland Bolivia, all these tensions and struggles are saturated with and made evident through ethnicity.

The city of El Alto in the highlands of Bolivia is a reminder of the failure of all of the citizenship projects discussed above. Neither fully assimilated nor fully excluded, its residents are a constant presence for the political elites of La Paz, looking down threateningly and reminding them of the fragility of their privilege on a daily basis. Part of this sense of danger is to do with their very ambiguous positioning within the highly complex set of ethnic formations in the Andes (Abercrombie 1991; Bouysse-Cassagne 1996; Canessa 1998; de la Cadena 1996, 2000; Orlove 1998; Weismantel 2001). Neither fully Indian nor fully white—Creole—or even mestizo (mixed indigenous and white), they are *cholos*. "Cholo" is an ethnocultural category that has been used since colonial times to describe an Indian who has moved to the city, and who is therefore somewhere between Indian and mestizo. It is still a highly politicized racial and social category, and like many words for ethnicity, the term alters its meaning according to the speaker and context, but it is usually pejorative. Its negative

associations have much to do with the threat that cholos represent, as Linda Seligmann (1989) argues, because of their “in-betweenness” in ethnic and political terms. This in turn is linked to the association of cholo ethnicity with particular economic activities, especially transport, commerce, and, in earlier times, mining. The *chola* is stereotypically a market woman, and the cholo often transports the products to the markets. These stereotypical activities are a good description of what the residents of Rosas Pampa do for a living. They are “in-between” in terms of cultural categories, but also economic positioning, as the intermediaries between rural peasant producers and urban consumers. Their familiarity with the peasants means that they are often “on their side,” a situation that has done much to shape El Alto’s role in recent political upheavals (see Lazar 2007 for further detail on this).

Methods and Field Site

My field site for this discussion is a school in the neighborhood of Rosas Pampa, in the Andean city of El Alto. Rosas Pampa is a middling zone of El Alto. It is poor, but its residents are generally fairly well-established migrants, many of whom came to the city from the Aymara speaking countryside or moved up from La Paz in the 1970s, a time of expansion for El Alto in general and Rosas Pampa in particular. People’s migration stories vary, from those who came individually as children because of mistreatment by their parents to those who came as a couple because their land in the countryside was not producing enough, or because the husband found a job in the city. Some moved straight into commerce, others worked for several years as domestic servants in La Paz before marrying and moving up to El Alto. Most of the houses in Rosas Pampa are built from adobe, with corrugated iron roofs. They consist of three or four separate one-room buildings clustered on one level around a courtyard. As people have time and resources they add more rooms to their compounds, which are surrounded by high adobe walls. Each time I return to Rosas Pampa, more red-brick two-or three-storey houses have appeared. During dry weather, everything is covered with dust. The sun reflects off the light-colored and dusty streets, and everything seems faded in comparison with the intensely blue sky above. For most of the day, those streets are filled only with the muted conversations of women and children going to make purchases at one of the stores along the main street that runs through the center of the zone, along with the odd dogfight and occasional bus or minibus. Four times a day, though, that street fills with children and noise, as they go to or spill out of the yellow-walled school. Their uniform is navy blue and white, and the little ones wear white lab coats to protect (and perhaps disguise) their clothes. Older girls walk arm in arm with their friends, boys hang

out in small groups; they buy sweets, jelly, and lollipops, and make their way home for lunch or tea. After about half an hour, the zone settles down again.

The majority of families in the zone send their children to the state-funded primary and secondary schools, which operate out of the same building, called the Unidad Educativa Bolivia (U.E.B.). The only local competition is a Lutheran private school, which charges fees, limits class sizes, and only covers children from the ages of five to 14. After the age of 14, there is only the state-funded secondary school. Parents place a great deal of emphasis on education, and are prepared to expend much money and effort on their children's schooling. Indeed, one of the main reasons that people migrate to El Alto and La Paz has been education, either for themselves or for their children (Albó et al. 1981, 1982, 1983). El Alto itself is a city that began as a slum district of La Paz, the capital city of Bolivia. As a result of several waves of migration during the 20th century, it grew to the point where it became a city in its own right in 1985. Today it has around 700 thousand inhabitants, most of whom are first- to third-generation migrants from villages in the Aymara-speaking Andean plain, mostly in the department of La Paz. In the census of 2001, over 74 percent of its residents self-identified as Aymara. It is a poor city, and is now known for its political radicalism especially during the early 21st century (Lazar 2008).

I spent a total of 18 months living in Rosas Pampa, in two main periods from 1999–2000 and in 2003–04; and have visited the zone for short periods before and since. The bulk of the research discussed in this article was conducted in the period 1999–2000, when I was conducting my doctoral fieldwork. That was conceived of as an ethnography of citizenship, and so I conducted participant-observation and formal interviews in various “spaces,” from the local neighborhood council to the school parents' association, internal family discussions, microcredit groups, the neighborhood fiestas, and so on. The school quickly became an important conceptual and practical space for my research, not least because it was such a central institution for the neighborhood, as I describe below. I made friends with a number of young people in the neighborhood through the local church group, another collective space that structured my research activities, and in that way gained access to their lives outside of school. I also saw contributing my skills to the school as a means of providing some small benefit to the neighborhood from my presence there. So, for three months, I was a substitute English teacher, giving classes to schoolchildren from ages 14 to 18; as such, I participated in school activities more generally, such as teachers' demonstrations, Children's Rights Week and school ceremonies. Just by being known to the school, after my formal period as a teacher ended, I was often called on to participate in similar activities, such as the public Social Sciences Fair, where I

was a judge, festivities for Carnival, or ceremonies on other important dates—the *horas cívicas* I discuss below. I was also very close to the treasurer of the local parents' association, and participated with her in meetings, community work schemes, and so on. I conducted many informal conversations with school children about their lives and schoolwork, and taught English to children of my friends.

Toward the end of my first stay there, I also conducted several specific exercises with groups of 17–18 year olds, which were tape recorded and used techniques influenced by Participatory Rural Appraisal (Chambers 1994). They served to explore knowledge I had gained more informally, including during my time as a teacher, but in a format that was explicitly part of a data gathering exercise without being a formal taped interview. Participation was entirely voluntary and the young people were therefore fully able to consent, in a way that was a gray area when it came to those school pupils I taught in my capacity as substitute English teacher. Because their lessons were obligatory, I decided that full informed consent was not possible, and so I do not discuss those lessons here. Where I refer to situations in the school I discuss either my own activities as a teacher, situations that were entirely public, or conversations that I had with young people outside of school and in my capacity as a visiting researcher. This article therefore is an ethnography of citizenship as taught in schooling but outside of the classroom, partly for methodological and ethical reasons, but also for theoretical ones, as I discuss below.

The school is central to the lives of the children of Rosas Pampa, if not dominant: it structures their friendships, their time, and their physical appearance, for example. Children attend school either in the morning or the afternoon for five days a week, depending on whether they are in the primary or secondary schools. The building itself is a large construction, with two floors of classrooms built around three edges of a plot, which has a concrete-covered basketball pitch in the center, and a latrine building at one end. At one side of the pitch is the stage, which is covered by a roof. The classrooms are large, each one housing around 30–50 children crammed into rows of wooden desks and facing the teacher, who stands at the blackboard—a part of the concrete wall of one end of the classroom painted black. The parents' association regularly raises quotas to pay for labor and materials to paint the building, or to build new classrooms, but the rooms have concrete walls and small windows so the classrooms feel dark. The children bring their own pencils and exercise books, in large backpacks; and if they have a textbook it is usually a photocopy. Because most children in the zone attend the same school, they form friendships with classmates, walking home from school, joining the same Church youth group or “hanging out” together. Outside of school-based friendship

groups, children socialize mostly with members of their extended family.

Investigating the way the school teaches citizenship need not limit us to the classroom, or the formal curriculum found in textbooks; as Birgitte Sørensen argues, “attention must be paid to children’s total experience of going to school,” conditioned as it is by wider social, political, and cultural systems (2008:440). In Rosas Pampa, pupils do attend formal civics classes, but they also learn in school about how to be citizens of Bolivia, El Alto, and of Rosas Pampa in many other ways during their school careers, not least in terms of the relationships that develop among the institution (represented by the teachers), the parents, and the pupils. Outside of school they are also subject to multiple socialization processes, which are beyond the scope of this article. Throughout, the pupils are constructing their own meanings, and the reconstruction or reorganization of their experiences adds to the meaning of the experience itself (Dewey 1916). As Christina Toren argues, physical learning is crucial to such cognitive processes, whereby “rule and practice, practice and cognitive scheme” (1990:231) interact to enable both the expression and constitution of an abstract concept—in Toren’s case, hierarchy, but in my case citizenship or political agency.

Learning Citizenship: The Example of Children’s Rights Week

The celebrations of the third annual Children and Young People’s Rights Week in the U.E.B. serve to introduce some of the multiple ways in which the school inducts children into Bolivian society, processes that should be understood as disciplinary techniques, or operations on and through the bodies of the children (Foucault 1977). The Children’s Rights Week of 1999 was scheduled for the week of September 27 to October 1, and was commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The theme of the week was “The Bolivia we want in the 2000s,” and UNICEF and the First Lady’s office funded a pamphlet with suggested activities for teachers to implement in schools over the whole country (Comisión Nacional de Organización de la “II Semana de los Derechos de la Niñez y la Adolescencia” 1998). The focus on neoliberal notions of individual human rights and an explicit pedagogical vision that emphasized the latest innovations in learning methods mean that the Children’s Rights Week is a distilled version of the 1994 reforms in many ways. Furthermore, the mixing of neoliberal pedagogies with more traditional learning methods as exemplified in the tension between the theory of the pamphlet and the actual practice during the week is characteristic of day-to-day education. The suggested activities included, for the first day, inauguration ceremonies, called horas cívicas; followed by debates in each form room on “What has Bolivia done for Our Rights?”; on the second day, the preparation of creative pieces of

group work, such as plays, posters, and poems on the theme of rights. On the third day, the pamphlet calls for pupils to design action plans for the exercise of their rights within the family, the community, the municipality, the state and civil society; on the fourth day, for them to develop mechanisms for pupil representation in their school's decision-making structures, and to organize delegations to visit TV and newspaper offices and publicize the situation of their rights in Bolivia. On the fifth and final day, the pamphlet declares that pupils should hold educational fairs in their zones, possibly visit local Councils and Mayors, and "mobilize" themselves on the theme of their rights.

That week, I was substituting for the English teacher in the U.E.B. On the Thursday, during the morning break and while the children were relaxing in their classrooms, the Children's Rights Week officially started in the school (3.5 days late), and I was told to go to my form room and "do" two pages of the pamphlet with the children for the last lesson of the day. These pages were entitled "Progress and Challenges in the Field of Children's and Young People's Rights in Bolivia." They explained by means of a table diagram various aspects of children's lives in Bolivia, and state responses to that situation, such as Bolivia's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, legislation such as the Children's Code, and the establishment of offices of Children's and Adolescents' Ombudsmen in local governments.

At the beginning of my experience as a teacher in a state school in Bolivia, I was not clear how to "do" these pages with my class of 13-year-olds. I was told that some teachers had been working on the theme of children's rights over their previous few classes, and certainly most of the teachers had at least had the pamphlets for longer than I had. However, I came to understand that many had decided to dictate the relevant information to their pupils during that particular class, and that I was expected to do the same. Instead, drawing on my previous teaching experience in the country, which had emphasized student participation, I chose to discuss what the children felt their rights and responsibilities were and how they could be protected. I stood at the front and asked them questions about their conceptions of their rights, writing up key words on the blackboard, and some of the students answered my questions. In these and later discussions with groups of young people, I found that the students had very concrete conceptions of what rights meant to them. On the one hand, rights were connected to law, and therefore distant and irrelevant; on the other hand, they had a clear notion of their rights to education, to play and to food, which are primarily the responsibility of their parents, in their view. Most children did not seem to feel that their rights in this sense were being violated. In the class context they spoke of the right to be born, the right to have a surname, and then the right to "study and progress in life" (*estudiar y salir adelante*). When

some groups talked about the right to food, they linked this to studying, in terms of the right to good nutrition to study.

Initially the students were bemused by me and by my style of teaching, but eventually we settled into an articulate discussion with a high degree of pupil participation. Although the pamphlet told me that I should “motivate an interactive and democratic dialogue,” my students were uncomfortable about expressing their own opinions. I also found it hard in those short lessons to create a participatory atmosphere while retaining what I felt to be a minimum of discipline, as the students chatted to each other, drew in their exercise books, did some homework from another class, and so on. As their teacher for these sessions, I felt that I should be able to control and direct their behavior and hold their attention on what I wanted them to concentrate on. In short, the pupils took advantage of my inexperience (in that setting) and the fact that the lessons were out of the ordinary to “mess around,” as I note somewhat desperately in my field diary.

During the first lesson of the following day we all prepared posters and placards in readiness for a demonstration later on, a process that went more smoothly than my attempt to “do” the pages on rights. Then we congregated in the playground for our hora cívica, which had been explained to me by one of the teachers as a “debate.” Some of the older children had prepared displays on rights using newspaper cuttings, pictures, and poems, which they pinned up behind the stage at the side of the basketball pitch for the rest of us to view. All the children lined up one behind another in their class groups in front of the stage, while some of the teachers sat on chairs on the stage. We sang the Bolivian National Anthem, listened to a speech by one of the Social Studies teachers, watched a couple of plays written and performed by the children and some dance routines, and listened to a poem recital. The children were tired, and had difficulty hearing and keeping quiet for the full two hours of the ceremony. The *Regenta*, a nonteaching member of staff responsible mainly for discipline, paced around the edges with her meter-long wooden ruler, occasionally hitting or threatening to hit children who were too rowdy. This was the first of several horas cívicas that I attended over the course of my time in Rosas Pampa, all of which followed this broad model, and that I discuss in further detail below. After the hora cívica, in an innovation peculiar to Children’s Rights Week, we went out to march around the zone with our placards in order, as the Headmaster told us, to “show the community” children’s demands for their rights.

As someone who had spent time thinking about and researching “rights-based approaches to development” (see Molyneux and Lazar 2003), I was struck by a number of ironies in how Children’s

Rights Week was enacted in practice: for example, the expectation that I would simply dictate information on Children's Rights; the difficulty, if not impossibility, of implementing a participatory methodology, and of conducting many of the activities outlined in the UNICEF pamphlet; the Regenta disciplining the children with her wooden ruler while they were learning about their rights and about to go out to demonstrate in favor of them; the debate that was in actual fact a theatrical performance. All of these seemed to me to militate against the development of pupils with a sense of their own agency or entitlement, their own rights. However, later, I came to realize that the stress on conformity did not necessarily imply a lack of agency on the pupils' part. In particular, I would argue that the demonstration was important as a pedagogy of political agency specific to the local context of El Alto.

Pedagogy and the Passive Citizen

In this section, I explore these contradictory effects by unpacking an aspect of the above description, which is a central part of the repertoire of ordinary school practice and bears on the children's education as citizens, namely the tension between active and passive learners. I focus mainly on the classroom, and the kinds of citizenship projects promoted in the pedagogical approaches and ways of constructing knowledge there, and I explore the implications for an ethnography of citizenship of the stated emphasis of the 1994 reforms on problem-posing and other "Freirean" methods. It is important to note at the outset that although supporters of critical pedagogy advocate learning as a dialogue between student and teacher, they do not argue that the teacher stop teaching and become purely a facilitator. The teacher's role is to elicit the students' critical capacities through valuing the experiences that they bring to the educational encounter, rather than impose their own version of knowledge and thereby enact symbolic violence through the devaluation or denial of the students' existing cultural capital. The Bolivian case shows how these impulses and ideas have been taken up by neoliberal policymakers and changed along the way (cf. Hale 2002), although this is of course a highly complex and contested process, as the literature on the educational reform makes clear (Comboni Salinas and Juárez Nunez 2000; Hornberger 2000; Lòpez 2005; Mengoa 1999; Talavera Simoni 1999). The subject of the present section is the transformation that occurs in the move from policymaking and legislative spaces to everyday school practice. My argument is that these changes run counter to some of the assumptions that are latent in much critical pedagogy, and the reason for this is the local political context, especially local counterhegemonic projects of Bolivian citizenship.

The legislation of 1994 states that the school curriculum should promote “a conception of education based upon research, creativity, questioning, horizontal relationships, hope and the construction of knowledge; *founded upon the most up-to-date learning methods*” (LRE 1994 Titulo II Cap IV Art 8, my emphasis). In the same vein, the Children’s Rights Week pamphlet proposes a work methodology that is “participatory, critical, flexible and integral, to be implemented through activities in a four-stage process, during which boys, girls and adolescents will enjoy active participation and will be protagonists, with motivation and support from their educators.” It describes a progression of activities that would in theory lead to effective, fun, and active learning of rights over the whole of Children’s Rights week. Supporters of critical pedagogy, including Paulo Freire, have lamented its “domestication,” when it is “reduced to student-directed learning approaches devoid of social critique and a revolutionary agenda” (McLaren 2003:161), and this is perhaps an example of such domestication. In practice, the U.E.B. did not reach the level of student-directed learning envisaged in the pamphlet, although as I argue below, this did not preclude education in democracy or rights. We had less than two days for the activities, and the part of the pamphlet that was considered the most important and that I was expected to “do” were the pages containing background statistical and legal information on rights, rather than activities using and developing children’s concepts of their own rights.

On the whole, the dominant model of schooling in Bolivia is transmissive, centering on the teacher as authority, and with an emphasis on dictation, copying, and repetition (Gottret 1999; Luykx 1999). This remained the case after the 1994 reform, as its methodological provisions took a considerable amount of time to filter down to everyday practice (López 2005), and it was certainly the case in 1999–2000.⁸ One illustrative example is a homework assignment given to a class of 13-year-olds in the Rosas Pampa school. They had to copy out a story from a textbook, word for word and from beginning to end. Another is the math assignment given to eight-year-olds that consisted of writing out all the numbers from one to 500 in their exercise books. Such exercises are not unusual. They are appropriate techniques for developing individual students’ copying skills, but they were regularly given to whole classes. They do not fit well with the emphasis of policymakers and many teachers themselves on encouraging students’ creativity and active learning.

Nonetheless, teachers in Rosas Pampa were enthusiastic about the newer pedagogical approaches that they were being encouraged to develop as a result of the Education Reform Legislation. One of the Social Studies teachers in particular was very keen on these new challenges. He argues that he now wanted to produce “critical, reflexive, analytic” students, and that he saw himself as a

facilitator, drawing on Freirean models of pedagogy. The reform had resulted in an increasing emphasis on more active assignments for the older pupils: “research projects,” about which students were also very enthusiastic. The usual pattern for such projects was for the pupil to carefully copy out photocopied pages of textbooks given to her or him by the teacher, ready to read them to the class when it came to presentations (see Luykx 1999 for a discussion of similar teaching methods).

The most important research exercises were set for the exhibitions (*ferias*) held at the end of the academic year. These represented the culmination of the pupils’ studies for that year, and were an opportunity for them to demonstrate their work to their parents. The dusty school playground in the center of the compound was set out with small tables where groups of four to six students had prepared displays and talks on the subject they had been given. Sweltering under the strong sun, they waited for judges to come round, listen to their presentation, and give them each marks (*puntos*), which contributed to their final grade for that term. As a judge, the Social Studies teacher mentioned above asked me to give credit for critical thinking and analytic ability. Many of the students showed considerable ability in their artistic presentations, exhibiting, for example, carefully copied illustrations of Renaissance and modern art, maps of Bolivia, portraits of key people, and pictures of the Bolivian flag and coat of arms. Education in the manipulation of the formal symbols of Bolivianness, such as the flag, or the map, is certainly thorough in Rosas Pampa. Nonetheless, the pupils had, without exception, copied their illustrations, and many of them may have been borrowed (or even bought) from older students who had used them in previous fairs, as in the case of one group I know of. The text of the students’ talks to the judge was almost always directly taken from the photocopied textbook pages they had been given by their teachers, with no attempt to hide the fact.

In another research-based homework assignment, 13-to 14-year-olds were told to research the following statement: “Art expresses human feeling and measures the cultural level of peoples.” That they were supposed to agree with this statement was made clear to them when the assignment was set. They were also to understand “art” as Western art, having learned in class that term about movements such as the European Renaissance and Cubism, and nothing about Bolivian artistic production. The implication of the research project and their lessons during the term was that Bolivia did not have art of a sufficiently high “cultural level” to be worthy of study. In this instance, Bolivian culture, particularly indigenous Bolivian culture, was not honored or revered, but ignored and by implication disparaged. This was reinforced for me during another group presentation about

“Integration projects” during the Social Studies exhibition, when one 17-year-old pupil told me that the Spaniards brought over a “better culture” (weapons, metallurgy, and the Catholic religion) when they colonized Latin America. This particular pupil also told me that the group had asked to research MERCOSUR and NAFTA, but had been told that they should stick to the historical integration projects in their textbook.

Such representative examples illustrate the construction of school knowledge as concrete and objective, something that the teacher can choose to reveal, an “authoritative discourse of imposition and recitation” (Giroux 2005:165) derived from dominant cultural narratives, which in this particular case are ethnicized, because they (implicitly or explicitly) denigrate indigenous culture. The absence of a critical approach to such knowledge and the hierarchical nature of the teacher–pupil relationship implied in the methods of dictation and copying constitute examples of the “banking method” of education, and as such do not in theory prepare the students well for critical citizenship. Certainly, it is not the case that students are encouraged to be critical of the production of knowledge and ideology, a crucial aspect of their potential ability to recognize and then criticize hegemonies and consequently change society in the view of supporters of critical pedagogy (see Darder et al. 2003).

Pupil Responses to “Banking Education”

That said, the objective of turning students into docile subjects is never fully achieved. This is in part because they learn critical citizenship in spaces outside of the classroom (although not necessarily outside of the school environment), as I argue in the following section. Furthermore, I would argue that the instability in or incompleteness of the pupils’ acceptance of dominant educational processes can also be seen in their immediate responses to such processes. These are of course very complex, and vary from boredom, criticism, and skepticism to accommodation and full incorporation of the notions of modernity, education, and knowledge that the teachers promote. Most of the young people I knew liked school. The “messing about” that so frustrated me as a teacher is not necessarily an indication of lack of interest or motivation. It may be a response to the hierarchical relationship that I was trying to create, as Giroux (2005) points out. It may also be an example of humor, burlesque, or mockery as resistance to dominant projects of cultural transmission (Mbembe 1992). Or the “messing about” may be the only, or at least the main, thing that keeps them in the school. School is an environment where children are socialized into communities, through their experiences

of making friendships, experimenting with politics, organizing collective activities, etc., and through the ways in which they construct meanings from those experiences (Dewey 1916; Toren 1990).

Humor was particularly important for this. For example, some boys from the graduating class put on a short play for the end of year literature fair. They dressed up in the full gathered skirts and bowler hats of cholos in the marketplace, amusing and, at times, shocking their audience with their colorful language. At one point, a girl walked by, dressed in a mini skirt, and the boys-as-cholos cackled at her and called her a “birlocha.” This is an extremely derogatory word for an unmarried woman who is not a chola, along the lines of “tart,” but ethnicized, because it would only really be used by a chola toward women of the same physical appearance but wearing western dress, who would otherwise usually be called “señorita,” or Miss. It is notable that the boys wanted to be the cholos, and that it was a girl who was the birlocha; through a complex management of gender and cultural codes the actors revealed the interplay of gender and ethnicity in power hierarchies that are part of the urban indigenous context. The students visibly enjoyed themselves, and were clearly not doing this play in this way because they had been told to, creating an expression of self that took account of the complexities of their class, ethnic and gender positioning. Thus, although at some points during their school career the students distance themselves from indigenous cultural codes, as I discuss in the following section, at the same time they use them, honor them, and make fun of them.

The young people often expressed to me their enjoyment of school, mainly because it was an opportunity for them to “hang out with friends.” They have space to play and to be with their peers. Much of their time in school is unsupervised, because classes with no teacher owing to staff meetings, staff shortages, or free periods are left to their own devices. For the older ones it may also be the case that school is an opportunity to be a child, and to escape the responsibilities of paid or unpaid work for part of the day. Children worked at home in cooking, cleaning, supervising younger children, and other domestic chores, as well as outside their home, selling in the street market with or instead of their parents, helping in their parents’ shop or working as helpers on public transport, construction workers, mechanics, or tailors.

Many young people also place great value on educational achievement, embracing—or at least appearing to—dominant discourses about schooling in Bolivia. Although graduation is a big achievement for the children, many of whose parents left school after primary level, for increasing numbers of children it is no longer enough. In group interviews and informal conversations with students nearing graduation from school, the ambition that they most often expressed was to “salir

profesional,” meaning to graduate from university. Only one student said that she was keener to go into commerce (in the informal economy) full time; and she was one of the more critical and politically sophisticated of her cohort. At school graduation ceremonies, the invocation to continue their studies was constantly repeated by godparents, teachers, visiting dignitaries, and students.

The slogan chosen by the graduating class of 1999 emphasized the fact that the pupils had not finished:

Este no es el fin del camino, sino, el principio del éxito porque volvemos a empezar. [This is not the end of the road, but the beginning of success, because we are going to start again.]⁹

A linked set of responses to schooling is what one might see as the development of quite an instrumental approach to learning. In this approach, school pupils become part of a set of notional exchanges: in the classroom, pupils exchange respect for the teacher for knowledge. Subsequently, knowledge is exchanged for qualifications, qualifications for pay, pay for goods and services (Willis 1977:64). The knowledge at the heart of this system of exchange is of a particular, measurable, and somewhat rarefied kind. If the pupils have an ambiguous relationship to that knowledge itself, the qualifications that result from its mastery are highly valued. Like schoolchildren everywhere, the pupils’ most important “educational” concern in school as expressed in informal conversations, interviews, and classroom practice itself is that they pass the evaluation requirements made of them, known as puntos, points. The fact that young people (appear to) participate in discourses about the importance of schooling and education does not mean that they fully endorse them.

That said, other students simply do not keep up the appearance of compliance. Over the year that I was there, I saw one 13-year-old boy who had been set the copying exercise as homework beginning to lose interest in school, indulging in drinking sessions with friends, playing around during school time, and saying that he wanted to go and work in Brazil. An extremely bright, funny, and creative boy, he was bored in school. At the end of that school year, he dropped out to work for a distant family member in Sao Paulo sewing clothes, and later he migrated to Buenos Aires. He had seen his older brother make considerable efforts to graduate from school and do his military service only to find it extremely hard to find work, and considered that he had far better economic opportunities outside of Bolivia, at least as a young man. He was not alone in leaving school early, even among the young people I knew personally. Exact dropout rates are difficult to obtain, but some of the younger year groups have as many as 90 pupils, while the graduating class of this urban school usually has up

to 50. Schoolchildren in El Alto drop out for many reasons, for example, for girls, pregnancy or other family responsibilities are important reasons to leave school; both boys and girls may have to leave early to earn money for their families. Girls tend to leave school earlier than boys, who are expected to need higher-earning jobs in the future.

Thus, schooling is crucial in attracting new members to the club of educated modernity, and to the consequent growth of a middle class with a stake in the hegemonic Bolivian State. But adopting that version of modernity is not a complete process. If humor, “messing around,” and boredom can be said to constitute a form of resistance, it is one that is ultimately not especially emancipatory, at least not in the way that critical pedagogy envisages. They are strategies to make the best of the hierarchical relationships among pupil, teacher, and knowledge, rather than to critique it or overturn it. Most of the schoolchildren who remain in school do appear genuinely to accept what they are taught about the construction and political economy of knowledge; they “adapt to the world as it is” in Freire’s terms. Nowadays that group consists of the majority of the young residents of El Alto, and at least for them the hegemonic processes of ethnicized neoliberal citizenship remain unquestioned for most of the time.

The Hora Cívica and Civic Parades: Embodied Pedagogical Practices

We can locate a second key to understanding why Bolivian schools fail to produce entirely docile subjects in the example of a form of collective political agency taught in schools through participation in civic events, practices that have been part of school life for decades. In this section, I discuss this with a focus on the embodied nature of learning that it entails, as opposed to more formalized content-based learning. A discussion of the particularly embodied pedagogical practices explores further the tension between the acceptance of an elite project of (ethnicized) modernity and nationhood and simultaneous popular appropriations of that project for quite different political ends. This operates through the promotion of a specific interpretation of history and Bolivian identity that seeks to erase indigenous particularities in favor of a national narrative based ultimately on Creole identities.

As in most countries, membership of the club of the educated in Bolivia is marked by particular “aesthetic dispositions,” which are oriented toward “legitimate culture” (Bourdieu 1986), as in the homework assignment on the relationship between art and the “cultural level of peoples” discussed earlier. What is particular to Bolivia is the way that those cultural markers and aesthetic dispositions

are ethnicized. Despite the 1994 policy of interculturality and bilingualism, the modernizing and civilizing projects of the school in the 1990s and 2000s required a fairly concentrated campaign during the child's school career to erase the indigenous part of their identity, or at least distance them from it, so that they become good Bolivian citizens (Canessa 2004). To illustrate this point, the analysis of this section moves its discussion of pedagogy out of the classroom to school ceremonies, crucial to the complicated citizenship projects of the school, particularly in their physical, bodily nature.

The hora cívica, one of which was the culmination of Children's Rights Week, is central to the more generalized process by which schooling distances children from the indigenous part of their identity. One student, when asked in a group interview to describe horas cívicas, said:

yo creo que estos sirven para demostrar las habilidades, los virtudes que tenemos; sirve también para mostrarle algo, como decir, fechas cívicas, como el otro día, nuestra Día de la Bandera, no ve, nos enseñaba la primera bandera, la segunda bandera, la tercera, como se maneja, como no hay que manejar la bandera, entonces nos demuestra muchas cosas.

[I think that they demonstrate what abilities, what virtues we have; they also demonstrate civic dates, I think. Like the other day, our Flag Day, taught us the first flag, the second flag, the third, how to use it, how you shouldn't use it, so it showed us many things.]

Her fellow student added:

Para empezar, las horas cívicas, es algo como, o sea, es para recordar un hecho que ha pasado hace tiempo; horas cívicas es dar honor a esa fecha, y a los personajes. [To start with, hora cívica, it's, well, in order to remember something that happened a long time ago; an hora cívica is about honoring that date and those people.]

Horas cívicas are usually held on important historical dates, as the quotes indicate. For 2000, there were 13 separate planned horas cívicas in the one school year, for dates as diverse as Independence Day and the Day of the Teacher. These official ceremonies would also be supplemented with one-off occasions such as the inauguration of new classroom buildings. The ceremony opens with the whole school singing the National Anthem, followed by speeches from the Headmaster, his deputy, and the teachers. After listening to the speeches, the children stand and watch various acts put on by fellow pupils and teachers. Usually, and especially if there were enough guest dignitaries sitting on the

stage, the action would take place in front of the stage, the children making a rectangular space (encouraged by the Regenta's large wooden ruler) for their fellow pupils to perform in. Sometimes the performers would be on the stage itself. The acts can include poems, plays, music, dance, or sketches, and it is not always easy to hear what is going on.

The pupils learn about the things, events, and people that they are honoring through speeches by teachers or the headmaster. Over their years at school, the repetition means that they are well informed by the end of their school careers. But such formalized content-based learning is only one aspect of the horas cívicas. At least as important are the associated bodily practices through which specific senses of Bolivian identity are inculcated through physical experience. One student in a slightly rowdy participatory exercise with a group of 17–18-year-old young men, said that horas cívicas were “in order to suffer a bit” (*para sufrir un poco*). He quickly qualified that with the assertion that “yes, well, remembering the loss [of Bolivia's access to the sea] of the 23rd of March, is to suffer” (*si, pues, recordar la perdida del 23 de marzo, es sufrir*). March 23, the Day of the Sea, is one of the most important days for horas cívicas throughout Bolivia. It commemorates the loss of Bolivia's coastline to Chile in 1879, an event that left the country land locked. However, I would argue that this student's comment can also be taken quite literally. Horas cívicas are particularly physical experiences for the schoolchildren, not least because they stand in rows in front of the school stage under the searing morning sunlight for the whole ceremony, which lasts around two hours, sometimes more. They can be seen as an especially physical set of pedagogical practices, which fall somewhere outside of the dichotomy of learning as either dialogical or transmissive that informed the earlier discussions in this article.

Parades are a crucial extension of the horas cívicas on most important national and local civic dates. They revere special anniversaries of the nation, city, urban neighborhood, or rural village through the bodies of their participants. On these particular days adults parade as well as children, although not in such great numbers. Adults march in blocks of, for example, union affiliation or neighborhood association. Children march along a defined route behind the school band, the baton-twirlers, and the school standard bearers (an honor for the best pupils of each year group). At the stage where dignitaries watching the parade sit the band stands at one side of the road, and the cheerleaders line both sides while the normal parade participants march through, in class groups, and separated by gender. Sometimes they salute the dignitaries with a raised arm. This is the moment when the marchers have to concentrate on keeping in time, the key moment of display. After the children have marched through, the teachers follow, walking in time to the rhythm of the band. When a

school has finished the band marches off and everyone disperses.

Schoolchildren are both the trainees and the bulk of the overall parade. Some of the youngest ones get to dress up as Republican heroes, so that little Simón Bolívars, José San Martíns, nurses, and soldiers elicit indulgent smiles from the crowds watching the procession. On Independence Day, each school has standard bearers holding the flags of each of the nine departments of Bolivia, usually accompanied by a boy and girl in the “traditional dress” of that department. The pupils do enjoy the parades, with the caveats that there are occasional complaints about their late start, meaning that everyone has to wait, and “become toast under the sun.” During an all-male group interview there were some mumbles about it being a bit boring; and I often noticed that attendance at parades was poor.

That said, another student thought that such lack of interest was down to lack of information, and what she called a “falta de civismo,” translatable as a “lack of civic virtue”; she even thought that there should be more horas cívicas, for example to commemorate the birthdays of each Bolivian president.¹⁰ In an important sense, for her, *civismo* was a physical experience, an expression of civic virtues through the body. Her interpretation of *civismo* showed an acute sense of respect for history, but it was particularly a history that privileges the Bolivian national past. That past is viewed as a mixture of Republican Creole history and a national revolutionary history that refers to 1952 and is oriented around the figure of the mestizo. However, what it is not is an indigenous past, however that may be conceived (Canessa 2008). Thus, the “social integration and cohesion” that the Bolivian school system aims to cultivate has for a long time relied on the exclusion of other competing citizenship allegiances.

Embodied Pedagogies of Collective Political Agency: The Demonstration

This interpretation of history and Bolivian identity as Creole through the embodied pedagogy of the parade is perhaps the more “colonizing” aspect of the parades. However, the civic parade also inducts schoolchildren in what has at some points of contemporary Bolivian history been a more “decolonizing” form of embodied political agency. The hora cívica is part of a process that teaches the children two crucial forms of adult political participation, namely the civic parade and street demonstration. As I argue elsewhere (Lazar 2008), these are forms of political agency that reinforce each other through mutual citation and even mixing. This move, from civic parade to demonstration, is made evident in the example of the march around Rosas Pampa that took place at the end of

Children's Rights Week.

The first time the school had done a march for Children's Rights Week was in 1999, and afterward some teachers worried that placards had disappeared, and the children played, rather than taking the demonstration seriously. The children walked the half-hour route around a few blocks in the zone with a good deal of enthusiasm, carrying their placards and chatting with each other along the way. One boy dryly commented that it was designed mainly to tire them out, but with the teachers supervising our class groups, there was little opportunity for the children to run off or lag behind. They were in theory supposed to march in lines, as occurs in parades and adult demonstrations, but the need to dodge the various ruts, puddles, and gasoline spills in the mud roads put paid to that, and the teachers were not especially concerned to enforce discipline to that extent. Curious people came out of their houses to watch us go by, as they do when adult demonstrations, civic parades, or visits from politicians come through the zone. The pamphlet had not envisaged this specific form of political agency, having timetabled "mobilization and educational fairs" on the theme of "The Bolivia We Want in the 21st Century" for the final day of Children's Rights Week. However, a march was the logical thing for the Headmaster to organize once he saw that we were supposed to "mobilize," probably drawing on his substantial experience of demonstrations throughout his career as a teacher.

During the year that I spent in Rosas Pampa conducting research for my PhD, adults I knew personally participated in demonstrations over at least the following issues: neoliberal reforms in public sector employment; demands for pay rises (teachers); protests about new taxes (street vendors); demands for more resources for education (school's parents' association); protests about the delay in El Alto's development (neighborhood council); protests about new regulations for collective taxis; demands for a university; demands for back pay for sacked local government workers. When I returned in 2003 to conduct research with trade unions of street vendors and students in the Public University of El Alto, I frequently found myself participating in street demonstrations. In October 2003, President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada was forced to resign by massive protests on the streets of El Alto and La Paz, a series of events that have become known as the "Gas War" (Hylton and Thomson 2007); and the pictures of masses of citizens of El Alto marching down to La Paz then were eloquent testimonies to the power of mobilization. Mass street protests were repeated in the first part of 2005, forcing Sanchez de Lozada's replacement to resign in turn, and precipitating the elections that brought Evo to power.

The street demonstration is a crucial citizenship practice for adults. Children grow up with the experience of accompanying their mothers on demonstrations, watching marches either on television or in the street, and hearing others talk about them. Older boys may represent their household on a particular demonstration called by the neighborhood council or parents' association. However, children are very rarely (if ever) the protagonists of a march. Thus, during Children's Rights Week the school teachers were teaching their students an extremely important type of oppositional political action, which the teachers conceptualized collectively. The individual, transnational, focus of human rights discourse was transmuted into collective, localized political agency, taught through bodily experience. From an early age, children thus learn about the collective, corporate belonging that characterizes citizenship of Bolivia (Lazar 2008), and about how to participate in Bolivian democracy through demonstrations. Indeed, there is even no contradiction in the fact that the children were being made to go out and demonstrate in the streets, as a more Anglo-Saxon understanding of (individualized) political agency would imply. In this instance, the students were learning another important aspect to collective political agency in Bolivia, namely its quasi-obligatory nature. As I have discussed in more detail elsewhere (Lazar 2008), in adult demonstrations members of trade unions or other civic collectivities are fined if they do not participate. This is not generally seen as an antidemocratic practice, as long as the fine is not considered to be too steep, or the mobilization against the wishes of the collectivity.

Furthermore, collective political agency that counters the dominant Creole citizenship project of the nation need not only be localist, that is, focused on the neighborhood or city. Returning to the earlier discussion of the promotion of national history, the investment of ordinary Bolivians in such a sense of belonging has also in practice had what might be viewed as decolonizing effects. This was especially evident in the demonstrations of October 2003. At the time the upheavals resulted from several different tensions and demands, but one of the important issues was that of the export of Bolivia's natural gas through Chile. Subsequently, this particular issue has come to dominate analyses and categorizations of the protests, which came to be known as the Gas War. This had direct resonance with the hurt felt by many Bolivians about the loss of their coastline to Chile in the War of the Pacific of 1879—remember the schoolboy saying that “remembering the loss of the 23rd March is something that makes us suffer.” Indeed, the new Education project states in its first article that Bolivian education “reaffirms Bolivia's right to its own free access to the Pacific Ocean” (Ley Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez, Título I Cap. único, Art. 1, no. 4).

Beyond that, even a cursory study of demonstrations reveals the presence not only of the

specifically indigenous *wiphala* flag of the highlands but also the Bolivian flag or colors. The two are both essential to highland demonstrations, even though commentators are more likely to notice the former (Dangl 2007; Prashad and Ballvè 2006). Radical indigenous projects that appeal to the example of Tupac Katari, who besieged La Paz in 1781, may at first sight appear to be the most authentic indigenist mobilization of history in the present. They are certainly powerful, but in practice they are able to mobilize fewer people than those that stress the Bolivian nature of the Bolivian nation or refer to the pain of the loss of Bolivia's coastline, or to the selling off of Bolivian natural resources through privatization initiatives. When I asked people in El Alto about the demonstrations of 2003, most of my informants felt not that they were repeating Tupac Katari's siege of La Paz, as some residents of La Paz interpreted it,¹¹ but that they were defending "our dear Bolivia" (*nuestra querida Bolivia*) against its contemporary guardians, namely the corrupt politicians. In interviews conducted soon after the events themselves, the dominant theme was not even the export of gas through Chile, but the nature of Sanchez de Lozada as a murderous president, as his government killed large numbers of the demonstrators (Lazar 2006, 2008). Their schooling, among other influences (such as the media, and in particular military service for the men), had undoubtedly managed to inculcate a sense of national belonging and desire for a democratic political culture; and they expressed this through massive street demonstrations that forced Sanchez de Lozada to resign and go into exile.

Conclusions

That assertion of democratic national belonging is citizenship at its most elemental, and this article has discussed one of the most important ways that such a sense of belonging is inculcated in Bolivian citizens. Indeed, it turned out to be crucial for the subsequent turn of events in October 2003, because what the demonstrators did was turn it against the elites who (they felt) were betraying the nation. I contend that this was an explicit example of critical citizenship, one that at that particular political conjuncture was remarkably effective, forcing the removal of a highly unpopular President. The subsequent election of Evo Morales can be seen as an attempt to make the Bolivian nation better, to give it a better guardian, someone who is more responsible, less corrupt and more "like us" (i.e., indigenous) than the previous ones.

Returning to the young people, the demonstration of Children's Rights Week and the more frequent civic parades throughout the year underscore the children's identities as members of a corporate entity, that is, the school, within the national entity of the Bolivian state. During both of these, the

children were rehearsing and performing the forms of corporate identity notable in adult demonstrations and parades, and such an important part of political agency for adults. Furthermore, although the school attempted to create “modern” pupils with allegiance to a Bolivian nation conceived of as nonindigenous, it is also the case that even that Creolized citizenship allegiance can have revolutionary implications, as the events of recent years have underscored. What both these aspects of collective political agency suggest is that it is possible that hierarchical, even at times authoritarian, relationships between leaders—adults and followers—students in school or on the streets can enable an effective form of critical citizenship.

This creates problems for both critical pedagogy and those critics who come from a more radical perspective. They criticize theorists such as Giroux, McLaren, and Freire for not being attuned enough to the particularities of different teacher and student subjectivities, but do not probe their basic criticism of current educational practice (e.g., Gore 1993; Luke 1992). However, taking seriously the call to contextualization made by such critics and enacted in the anthropology of citizenship education in schools has led me to propose that ostensibly “banking” forms of education may not always preclude the development of critical citizenship among students. This is because it is crucial to recognize the full range of ways in which young people learn citizenship. Even if we explicitly bracket off citizenship learning experiences outside of school, which would of course bring a much wider scope to the analysis (for which, see Lazar 2008), we must still recognize that in school pupils learn their citizenship in several different ways. Their understanding of curriculum-based knowledge (e.g., in civics classes) is of course important, but, along with other anthropologists of schooling, I suggest that an analysis of lesson content should be complemented with that of other elements of school practice (García 2005; Levinson 2005; Luykx 1999; Sørensen 2008). My specific contribution to this body of work has been a discussion of classroom relationships and of complex embodied practices of collective belonging and political agency as enacted in events such as parades and demonstrations.

Taking the argument further, it may also be that we need to revise our notion of critical citizenship to take into account situations where the (more individual) critique found in student responses of humor, boredom, or instrumentalism are complemented by other (more collective) modes of critical action learned at school. Thus, the Bolivian example shows that collective, hierarchical, and even seemingly authoritarian social organization has significant critical potential, albeit under certain political conditions. It then raises a further possible critique of critical education theory, which is that especially in its North American incarnation it falls prey to a kind of methodological individualism in

its failure to acknowledge the emancipatory potential within conformist collective forms of political agency. Anthropologists are uniquely placed to make the connections between schooling and political agency more widely while remaining attuned to the collective aspects of political life both inside and outside the school.

Notes

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1 These are all key figures in Latin American leftist thought and action. José Martí was a late-19th-century Cuban nationalist intellectual, and has been influential across Latin America, especially in revolutionary and prodemocracy movements. Félix Varela was a Cuban priest, intellectual, and teacher active in the early 19th century, in Cuba, and then later in the United States, where he was exiled after he made pro-Independence declarations. The Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui was one of the first and most influential Latin American socialist intellectuals, active in the early 20th century. Augusto Sandino was the leader of a rebellion against U.S. presence in Nicaragua in the 1920s and 1930s, and the inspiration for the Sandinista revolution of 1979. Lázaro Cárdenas was President of Mexico in 1934–40, whose attempts to carry out the social and economic policies of the Mexican revolution have meant that he is currently viewed as one of the most popular and progressive Mexican presidents.

2 The leading body coordinating popular education in Latin America today is the Consejo de Educación de Adultos de América Latina—CEAAL—or Council for Adult Education in Latin America. See <http://ceaal.org/>, particularly their journal *La Piragua*.

3 Although Freire’s publications do concentrate more on instructional practices than those of Giroux and McLaren (Gore 1993), contextual analysis of what happens in practice as educators strive to implement Freirean pedagogy also exposes problems, as the work of Lesley Bartlett (2005) indicates. Such problems may be that educationalists are not “getting Freire right” as Bartlett

implies, or they may be more profound questions about the possibility of implementing his ideas. This latter may be especially with regard to the tensions between directive teaching, or teacher authority, which Freire thought necessary, and teacher authoritarianism, which he condemned; or questioning the easy applicability of dominant conceptions such as the encouraging of student voice in the context of multiple and contradictory subjectivities (Ellsworth 1992; Orner 1992).

4. Source: Census 2001, National Institute of Statistics. Available at www.ine.gov.bo.

5. See Gustafson (2009) for a detailed ethnography of this reform, which explores both the central policymaking spaces in La Paz and intercultural education in Guarani communities and the interactions between the two.

6. The teachers unions were quite proud of the fact that their opposition has meant that the Education Reform law 1565 had only been partially implemented (CTEUB 2007). See Gill (2000) for a discussion of the teachers' initial resistance to the legislation.

7. Corte Nacional Electoral de Bolivia, <http://www.cne.org.bo/>, accessed December 16, 2009.

8. It is still a good characterization of schooling in Bolivia in 2009 (personal communication, Pamela Calla [expert in teacher training for intercultural education, Universidad de la Cordillera, La Paz], July 2009).

9. In a slightly different context, I participated in a graduation ceremony in a small rural school, in one of the villages from where many of the residents of Rosas Pampa had migrated. This was only the sixth such ceremony in the school's (and the village's) lifetime, and six pupils, all boys, graduated, a remarkable achievement in itself. In the different speeches, all of the speakers impressed on the students the fact that they had not achieved anything yet, other than to enable themselves to continue their education at university.

10. This is (unintentionally) quite an ironic comment, because Bolivia is famous for a succession of presidents at a rate of nearly one per year of existence as an independent nation.

11. Personal communication, Maggie Bolton, July 2004.

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