Reproducing racism: schooling and race in highland Bolivia

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Bolivia is one of the few Latin American nations with a majority indian population. Strong assimilationist policies over the past fifty years have meant indians have been discriminated against in many areas of social life. Rural schools have been a principal tool in assimilation. Over the past decade political and education reform have shifted policy away from an assimilationist model to a multicultural one. Of great significance is the requirement for use of indigenous languages in school and, as a consequence, large numbers of teachers who themselves come from indian communities. Despite these policies, schoolteachers are still a major source of assimilationist cultural ideology and are principal agents in reproducing hegemonic racism in indian communities. It cannot be assumed that indian teachers will be positive models for indian children in a racist society; indeed, the ambiguous racial and cultural position of the indian teacher may mean quite the opposite. This paper, based on anthropological fieldwork, examines the role of teachers and schooling in an Aymara-speaking highland village.

Introduction

Much of the literature on race and education in the Europe and the US assumes that most teachers are from the predominant white culture. Some of the central issues under investigation are consequently teachers' perception and behaviour with respect to pupils of the minority communities and vice versa (Foster, 1990; Gillborn, 1990; Irvine, 1991; Mac an Ghaill, 1988; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993; Merelman, 1995; Wright, 1998). There continues to be concern that white teachers from the hegemonic culture predominate in classrooms (Revel, 2003). In the context of multicultural teacher education it has been argued that educating white teachers is no substitute for having large numbers of non-white teachers (Sleeter, 1993) and there is a widespread assumption that minority students benefit from having minority teachers from the same background as role models.

Recent research which has focused on minority teachers has increasingly noted that

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even if there is a widely shared perception that teacher and pupil share a cultural identity and background, teachers and pupils may be aware of considerable difference between their identities and position vis à vis each other (Mirza, 1998; Rakhit, 1998, p. 65 & *passim*). Those seen to suffer from racism are visible minorities in a majority white culture. Minorities may be multiple and internally differentiated but the salient category is that between white and non-white, however the latter may be identified. The relationship between education and racism where the subordinate community is in the majority and where all teachers and pupils share a common background, is a neglected concern for research. It is nevertheless one which can reveal the unsatisfactory nature of essentialist assumptions about common background and the complexity of the teacher's position in transmitting dominant, if unacknowledged, values in a racist society.

In the Andes few scholars have explicitly explored issues of race and racism in education. Cliche & García (1995) explore some aspects of discrimination against indian¹ pupils in Ecuador although chiefly in the context where indians are recent migrants to towns. There are no studies which look at the issue of racism in schools where indian pupils predominate and where teachers share the same ethnic background as their pupils. There is, however, considerable research on bilingual education (see Arnold & Yapita, 2000; Hornberger, 2000) which touches on related themes such as intercultural education and the low value given to indian cultures. Bilingual education has been seen as a means of restoring and strengthening indian culture (Hornberger, 1994) but insufficient attention has been given to the teacher's role, not only in delivering bilingual education, but in teaching in an educational context which devalues pupils' culture and way of life.

The study presented here is of a highly homogeneous community of highland Aymara-speakers in Bolivia² where teachers and pupils are both from the majority, although subordinated, ethnic group. The issue of racial identity and designation is central to the discussion but no single term adequately describes the highly complex social, historical and political differences between people in the Andes. People in Pocobaya do not generally describe themselves as indians, Aymaras, or indigenous but as Pocobayaños or *jaqi*, an Aymara word which means 'people', but who are distinct from *q'ara* (white) and *mestizo* ('mixed race') Spanish speakers and typically urban dwellers. I use 'indian' to talk about those notionally 'indigenous' people, chiefly rural dwellers, generally identified as being culturally, racially and ethnically different from the dominant whites and *mestizos* in Bolivia. The schoolteachers are all Aymara-speakers from agricultural communities on the highland plain, known as the *altiplano*, close to the capital city, La Paz. Teachers and pupils share a language, a cultural background and are phenotypically similar. Furthermore, since 1993, the Bolivian government has initiated a series of Education Reforms which include a policy on bilingual and intercultural education and production of teaching materials considered to be more appropriate to indian communities.

Teachers from the same cultural and linguist background as their pupils are deemed most appropriate for delivering this kind of education. Not only are they speakers of indigenous languages but are expected to have sympathy with the cultures

in which they teach (Yapu, 1999). The essentialist assumptions are most in evidence in those cases where, for example, Quechua-speakers are expected to deliver a curriculum in Aymara, their 'indian' background making up for their inability to speak the native tongue of their pupils. Even when pupils and teachers share a cultural and linguistic background we should not expect the teacher to enable and valorise the skills and knowledge children obtain outside the classroom.

Teachers have taken a decision to leave a 'traditional' rural life and to adopt one where knowledge is obtained and valued in a very different way; indian teachers very often have had to struggle extremely hard to obtain a level of social mobility through formal study and often do so precisely to leave behind a way of life that is identified as 'indian'. Such teachers are perhaps those least likely to impart an intercultural educational programme which valorises indian culture because they have been so personally invested in distancing themselves from it. The expectation that indian teachers will be proponents of indian culture and forms of knowledge is most likely to be disappointed under the circumstances where intercultural education has been explicitly mandated and teachers are, in effect, expected to undermine their status founded on a particular, non-indian, base of knowledge.

Methodology

Schools have a political character as much as they do social and cultural ones (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Cliche & García, 1995, pp. 21–22) and I follow Ogbu's (1981) suggestion to look at schools and schooling through multiple levels of analysis. In this case I look at schooling both in the context of the recent political and social history of Bolivia and through a study of one village school. I present a brief sketch of schooling and reform in Bolivia in the context of an exposition of how ethnic and racial categories affect schooling generally and in particular the position of the school and teacher in an indian community. The subsequent analysis presented here is based on data drawn from numerous classroom observations as well as interviews with teachers, parents and children between 2001 and 2003, although I have conducted anthropological fieldwork more generally in the same community since 1989.

Pocobaya is located at an altitude of 3,000m above sea level in the province of Larecaja (La Paz). The total village population is 206 according to the 2001 census and all the children attending the school are from Pocobaya, apart from a small number from neighbouring Thikata.³ No road leads to Pocobaya but it is a few hours' walk from the provincial capital of Sorata with a population of 2,217, according to the 2001 census. Sorata is the most important market town in the region and is on the road which connects the Bolivian highlands with the tropical lowlands and is approximately four hours by bus from the capital, La Paz.

I have visited Pocobaya almost every year for more than a decade. When I visit Pocobaya I stay with one of my three sets of ritual kin (*compadres*). This relationship is a form of 'godfatherhood' based on the sponsorship of the first haircutting of the child. I generally bring gifts such as shirts, skirts, and machetes to my 'compadres' to whom I also contribute my labour. People in Pocobaya are generally very willing to speak to

me and aside from giving some coca leaves to the individual at the end of a formal interview I also like to make some kind of a gift to the community as whole. This may take the form of a set of shirts for the football team or, as mentioned below, a chalkboard for the classroom. Although formal recorded interviews can be very useful, most of my ethnographic data were acquired through conversations whilst herding, working in the fields, around the cooking fire and through general participation in the quotidian affairs of life in Pocobaya. In these contexts speech is always conducted in Aymara. When attending funerals or feasts in other communities I travel with people from Pocobaya and participate as a member of the community. This is the case when the whole community goes to the village of Ch'exe once a year to celebrate the 'Day of the indian' (see below).

In the three years between 2001 and 2003 I sat in on classes, often for the whole day. I also made formal and informal interviews with teachers, all of whom had been trained since the Education Reform. More formal interviews with teachers were always conducted in Spanish. Teachers preferred speaking to me in Spanish, especially if the conversation was 'technical', i.e., relating to pedagogy. In less formal situations and especially with other people, we often spoke in Aymara. Interviews with parents and children were in Aymara.

In combining detailed ethnographic data with a broader social and cultural perspective, the paradoxical position of indian school teachers becomes easier to understand for, despite the shared ethnic background and teachers' expressed sense of political solidarity with villagers, they do not provide positive models in terms of indian cultural identity. In fact, they are unlikely to identify themselves culturally or ethnically with community members at all.

Bolivia: indians, peasants, teachers and pupils

As is well known, it was Christopher Columbus who decided the inhabitants of the islands he discovered were 'indians'. Since then the ethnic and racial designator 'indian' has gone through major transformations in Andean history, from the native population at the time of the Conquest, to a fiscal category through much of the colonial period, to a poor, rural and marginalised people during the Republican and contemporary periods. Although the boundaries of ethnicity may be fluid and dynamic, what is clear is that indians occupy the lowest strata of society and are subject to considerable structural and quotidian racism (Harris, 1995, p. 371). The term has always referred to an unequal power relation; be it between conqueror and conquered, the ruler and the ruled, urban and rural, Spanish-speakers and speakers of indigenous languages, and generally all of these. It is precisely because of its inherent political nature that I prefer it the term to the more neutral 'indigenous', which I choose to reserve for designating non-European American languages.⁴ To be an indian in Bolivian today is to be considered backward and less 'civilised' and indians are still discriminated against in areas such as employment,⁵ despite the language of multiculturalism and plurinationalism which pervades political discourse.

Bolivia is nevertheless often described as the most 'indigenous' country in Latin

America with the indigenous population widely described as being in a clear majority (Brysk, 1994, p. 31; Diez Astete, 1995, p. 31; Luykx, 1999, p. 1). Estimates vary considerably because ethnic boundaries are notoriously fluid and it is common for people to change their ethnic designation in their lifetime (see de la Cadena, 1995; Canessa, 1998; Harris, 1995; Paulson, 1996). People directly descended from pre-Conquest ancestors may not be seen by themselves or others as indigenous or indian. After five hundred years of contact the boundary between what is 'indigenous' and not 'indigenous' culturally is, in any case, very difficult to sustain. Indian ascription is consequently highly contextual: the school teacher may be seen as *mestizo* or white by Pocobayños but may be considered an indian when he travels to the city; women may be considered more indian than men in the same community (de la Cadena, 1995). This ambiguity inherent in indian identity contributes to the problematic relationship between teacher and community.

One of the reasons for the lack of clear ethnic boundaries is the strong assimilationist policies of governments since the 1952 revolution which have had a profound effect on Bolivian society. A key feature of this social revolution was the dismantling of the large *haciendas* and a land reform, which gave most of the *hacienda* land to the indians who worked it. At the same time, the serf-like status of indians was abolished according to a model of inclusive citizenship and the category 'indian' was replaced by '*campesino*', 'peasant'. A stated aim was to create an ethnically homogeneous nation where all would be *mestizos*.⁶ This new Bolivian race would be based on a mixing of Spanish and indian achieved through economic liberalisation and cultural change.⁷ This was the promise of the 1952 Revolution which sought to remove ethnic divisions by making everyone Bolivian: '*Somos todos bolivianos*' ('We are all Bolivians') being one of the slogans.

Education Reform was a major plank of desired political and cultural change and in succeeding decades a school was built in virtually every indian community in the country. Education policies were directed at the transformation of indians into Bolivians (Choque *et al.*, 1992; Malverde & Canessa, 1995) with Spanish being the only official medium of instruction. *Mestizo* teachers were dispatched to rural communities and often held a very high position in rural society, frequently considering themselves to be the community leaders. *Mestizo* teachers clearly reproduced a hegemonic racist ideology that elevated *mestizos* above indians and equated Bolivian identity with being *mestizo*. In this context, the word *indio* (indian) was legally prohibited and replaced in most contexts by *campesino* (peasant) with the aim of obliterating any kind of ethnic and racial difference between Bolivians: it was the role of schools to turn indians into *mestizos*.⁸

In 1993 public policy took a dramatic turn in Bolivia with the election of the coalition government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and his Vice-President, Victor Hugo Cárdenas, the leader of an indianist party (Albó, 1995). Together they promised to effect a major change in how indians were perceived in Bolivia. Since the day the Vice-President gave his electoral address in Aymara, Quechua and Guaraní, the principal indigenous languages of Bolivia, the official national discourse has been one of a multicultural and plurinational state. Schools were at the forefront of this

policy change. One of the first actions of the Sánchez de Lozada administration was to introduce a major Education Reform in 1994, which mandated bilingual education in many areas of Bolivia. A decade later there are numerous text books in Aymara, Quechua and Guaraní (the principal indigenous languages) and in indian communities children should be taught predominantly in their mother tongues for the first three years of schooling.⁹ An implication of the introduction of indigenous languages in schools is that the teachers for these schools almost certainly come from indian backgrounds themselves, since very few non-indians speak indigenous languages.¹⁰ There was a clear expectation that having children taught by members of the same ethnic/racial background would serve to undermine racist ideology and spread instead the new valorised multicultural ideals (Yapu, 1999).

I now move to a discussion of a small Aymara community and examine how schooling and teachers deal with racist assumptions about indians.

School and schooling in Pocobaya

Schooling is the point at which the nation state enters the village space in many rural communities. The school has replaced the church as the main building on the village square and whereas during the colonial period the church was a major instrument of social control, nowadays the school has a similar function of bringing indians into a new moral and social order (see Illich, 1971, p. 31). Schooling in Bolivia, much more than the teaching of literacy and numeracy, is about the teaching of citizenship, about engendering a sense of national consciousness (Luykx, 1999; Yapu, 1999). At school, children are presented with an idea of the geographic nation and one of the key elements of a child's education in Pocobaya is the learning of the national boundaries and the manner in which they have been changed and territory lost.¹¹ What is learned is hostility towards Chileans and Peruvians; what is not learned is the cultural continuities between indian people on both sides of these borders.

The schoolteacher remains a very important figure in the community. Whereas in the past schoolteachers would be whites and *mestizos* from Sorata,¹² these days they are mostly from highland communities. These men (and they are almost always men in small, remote communities), far from being multiculturalists, are great proponents of the Bolivian Dream whereby through hard work and study one can 'whiten', 'progress' and become *mestizos*. Sometimes they effect this change in ethnic status for themselves by marking their difference to indians by, as in the case of one Pocobaya teacher, perming his hair and wearing tracksuits.

Many of these men may very well have entered teaching because it was the only profession available to them as indians from peasant backgrounds rather than because of a particular desire to teach (Luykx, 1999). The irony they face, however, is that their education and upward mobility places them in an even more 'uncivilised' and 'backward' community than the one they left. This, not surprisingly, produces deep resentment among teachers who are poorly paid, poorly trained and poorly motivated.

Here the teacher and pupils are largely in agreement for the children I spoke to were quite clear that it was better to be educated at school than to have no formal

education. They also broadly shared the teacher's views that one's personal success can be understood in terms of years of schooling. They are in Illich's words 'hooked on school, that is, they are schooled in a sense of inferiority toward the better-schooled' (1971, p. 7).

In Pocobaya the school day always starts with the pupils lining up in front of the flag for inspection before singing the national anthem and marching. Inevitably, the children are berated for being late, not lining up properly, for being inappropriately dressed, for being dirty and unkempt. Even though the school is officially bilingual, commands and scoldings are invariably given in Spanish. The effect of this is that before the children enter the classroom they are reminded of their inadequacies as individuals, as children, and even if the word is not pronounced, as backward indians who live in a small village far from the metropolis.

In focusing on personal hygiene, the teachers are echoing a long-standing concern on the part of elites for the physical and moral hygiene of indians. Since the reformist decades of the nineteen thirties, policy makers have seen indian bodies as a principal site where the battle for civilisation must be fought (Larson, in press). In particular, indians' proximity to earth and mud is often seen as a marker of their inferior nature (Orlove, 1998). Indians live in adobe houses with mud floors, eat from earthenware bowls and often work in close proximity to the earth. Earth, which is seen as 'dirt' in urban discourses, is inescapable in an indian village, where it isn't seen as dirt in the same way. Especially in the rainy season, children's feet simply get muddy and this is not a problem in houses with mud floors. For the teacher, however, muddy feet are emblems of indianness¹³ and reflective of the poor physical and cultural hygiene of his pupils: mud is the antithesis of clean, urban, civilised life, a major theme in many lessons.

'Civilisation' constantly crops up in lessons in the Pocobaya school. One example out of many was when the schoolteacher was giving a lesson on the political geography of Bolivia. He brought out a map and the students repeated after him: 'This is the Republic of Bolivia. What is this? The Republic of?' He proceeded to go through all the departments in this way and then the neighbouring countries bemoaning the fact that every one of Bolivia's neighbours had taken a piece of Bolivian territory at one time or other in its history. Then followed a description of the three climactic zones of Bolivia, cold, temperate, and hot, which is so important a part of the national imagining. From there he noted that Bolivia was formed in 1825 and then all of a sudden the lesson was about progress or, more accurately, about backwardness. 'We were poor and backward in 1825 and look at us! We are poor and backward now. We are poorly dressed and poorly fed (*mal alimentados*). Who has an adequate house here? No one. We still use rubber sandals, our houses are like the houses of animals. Here we only eat maize, maize, maize (*mote*).' The 'lesson' continued in the same vein for some time and it was quite clear that since the teacher lived in a 'proper' house, was well fed, and most certainly did not wear rubber sandals the 'we' here was really 'you'.

That Pocobayenos' diet is better and more varied than many urban people, that these sandals (Sp. *abarcas*, Ay. *whisku*), which are made from recycled car tyres last much longer than the shoes the teacher was wearing,¹⁴ that their adobe houses are

very sound and provide good insulation against the cold, was a perspective that the teacher, so well-versed in the discourse of progress and civilisation, did not offer. And so, a lesson in the political geography of Bolivia becomes a lesson in indian poverty and backwardness.

These themes of civilisation and progress are rehearsed in all kinds of lessons, even in mathematics—in one instance students were counting tractors in a picture and the teacher, Celestino, asked how many children had seen a tractor. Hardly any child had and this occasioned a speech on why they were so backward as to never have even seen a tractor. Their brothers on the highland plains used tractors so why couldn't they? The pupils listened in silence and no one pointed out to the teacher that Pocobaya had no road so the tractor had no way of getting there; there was no source of petrol for miles; and, in any case, the fields were far too steep for a tractor. That the teacher did not consider these details implies that he really didn't think anyone had business living in such a community at all, a view he expressed on a separate occasion.

Such themes of progress and civilisation are also formally addressed every Monday morning in the *hora cívica* (civic hour). Children first march in front of the flag, sing patriotic songs, are inspected as in a parade line-up and are subsequently lectured by the teacher. These days, following the Education Reform, the speech to the early years is supposed to be in Aymara although on most occasions it was mixture of Aymara and Spanish with Spanish predominating. Nevertheless, the themes have remained the same. Children are reminded of their backwardness, that they live in a village without a road or electricity, that they work their fields by hand rather than with machines. A comparison of schoolteachers' speeches in Pocobaya before and after the Education Reform shows very little difference in content¹⁵ and perhaps only a small increase in the amount of Aymara spoken. Basilio, the teacher between 1990 and 1992, was relaxed about speaking Aymara and spoke it informally in the classroom as well as in his speeches.

'Progress' and 'civilisation' are words that function as codes for racialised social difference. Their constant, almost mantric, use in the classroom have the effect of instilling in children their inferior status, which they themselves quite often understand in ethnic and racial terms. One girl, Agustina, told me that 'white people are better because they are clever and live in cities and are wealthy; we indians (indios) are poor and stupid but we are better than black people.' From this and many other comments it is clear that children are learning the lesson of their inferiority despite the aspirations of the Education Reform. In these *horas cívicas* and in numerous other instances in their education children learn that the space they inhabit, the land which they work and which sustains them is unequivocally devalued by their teachers and by non-indian Bolivians in general.

A particular teacher's attitude to schools is neatly illustrated by an incident which happened on a recent visit in 2002. On a previous visit I and some community members had noted the poor state of the school chalk board and I suggested I might acquire one the following year: I wished to provide something for the school as a way of reciprocating the general hospitality of the community. The gift was graciously received by the new schoolteacher, Eulogio, who had just left teacher-training college

the previous year, 2001.¹⁶ He was enthusiastic and keen to be modern and up to date. Next year, he wondered, could I possibly bring a flagpole? I was rather taken aback by this request. Not only did the school sorely lack teaching materials and furniture, but it had a flagpole already. I pointed this out to him and he replied, 'Ah, but that is a wooden flagpole, we need a metal one.' When I told him that I wasn't about to bring a metal flagpole for the school he became somewhat irate and said, 'We need a metal flagpole. The wooden flagpole has to be brought down to attach the flag; a metal flagpole is always erect. How can we have a proper school without a metal flagpole? Nowadays education is based on science and reason: we need a metal flagpole.' For the teacher progress, science, reason and modern education, in other words, 'civilisation', were all embodied, rather phallically, in a flagpole which should be 'modern' and made from metal, rather than the perfectly functional wooden flagpole created by the villagers.

Even though all of the schoolteachers in Pocobaya are native Aymara speakers and speak ungrammatical Spanish, they are frequently ambivalent about the way of life of the community in which they have been posted. I had many conversations with Eulogio as with the other teachers, either in the morning before school starts or in the evening. When they are not teaching there is very little for teachers to do other than wash their clothes and listen to the radio. They almost never visit people in their homes and send for people when they need to speak to someone such as a member of the school committee; but it is also the case that they are rarely invited into people's homes. The teacher's position in the community is dependent on his *not* being a member of the community, that is, of representing a different world the ways of which he imparts to children. According to Yapu, for this reason many people prefer a certain social distance between themselves and the teachers in their community (1999, p. 76).

On some occasions there may only be one teacher present, as was often the case in 2003,¹⁷ and under those conditions a visit from a resident anthropologist is welcome. On one such occasion I entered his room wearing sandals and, having come from the fields, had some earth on my feet, which I shook off before crossing the threshold. The subject of my footwear had come up before and Eulogio was clearly bemused that I should wear sandals. Eulogio was born and brought up in a farming village near Lake Tititcaca and he described the village to me as being rather similar to Pocobaya except that it was near the road, had brick buildings and was generally 'more advanced'. He had doubtless worn rubber tyre sandals in his youth. On this occasion Eulogio interviewed me as much as I him. He asked me a lot about my life in Europe, how much I earned, etc, and once I described my living conditions he asked with some amazement how I was able to live in Pocobaya. My response that I was by now used to life in Pocobaya and that Pocobayaños were good people didn't quite seem to satisfy him. He told me that the lack of 'facilities' such as running water and electricity was difficult and that 'they are very backward here'. I didn't respond but asked him why he was here. He responded that he was there to 'raise my peasant brothers' and to 'guide their learning' so that they may progress.

Eulogio did not share the cynicism of many of his colleagues and was still passionate

about education and its capacity to improve people, to allow them to progress. On more than one occasion he told me emphatically that he 'was like them', i.e., Pocobayefios, but now he had 'progressed'. In some senses Eulogio presented a very positive image of indian personal progress but it was a model that depended on formal education leading to an urban lifestyle.¹⁸ His aspirations for himself are very much like those of any young person in Pocobaya who wants to study in order to leave the community and part of that desire to leave is produced by the very education system, directly in the form of the values imparted and indirectly by not affording children the time to obtain the necessary agricultural and ritual skills to run a peasant household.¹⁹

Eulogio and the other teachers in Pocobaya did not identify with any of the indigenous movements in Bolivia, much less identify themselves as Aymaras and when I asked about discrimination he was very clear that the best way to avoid it is to be educated. Eulogio demonstrates his commitment to education in Pocobaya. Of the three teachers in Pocobaya he is the one that is always there on any school day and he is the one who concerns himself about the 30% absenteeism, trying to persuade parents to bring their children to school. He is however, also, someone who will make the members of the school committee come and see him even when it is inconvenient for them and he will also insist on speaking Spanish in committee meetings even though half its members in 2003 did not speak Spanish. In 2003 I attended school committee meetings, on the invitation of the chair of the committee, Pastor. When facing opposition in meetings Eulogio uses Spanish to silence people (knowing they do not understand or understand poorly), cuts them off when they speak in Aymara, speaks of members of the committee in a disparaging tone as 'este abuelito no entiende' (this little grandpa doesn't understand) or the women members as 'las mamitas' (the little indian ladies). He uses the very same tactics and tropes that *mestizos* use to silence and belittle indians perhaps because he sees himself as a *mestizo* just as the villagers clearly see him as one.

Eulogio is not unusual in his ambivalence towards the members of the community in which he works. He works hard, in difficult circumstances to educate his charges, as do many other rural schoolteachers. But even dedicated teachers such as Eulogio represent a very particular future for their students, one that involves their leaving their communities and becoming more urban, more *mestizo*. Schoolteachers are not the only source of this vision of upward mobility and many people with no schooling expressed such ideas as well. People in Pocobaya often talk of their desire to move to the local market town, Sorata, or to the capital La Paz and be more 'civilised.' Some, of course, do; many do not. It is worth noting that the reason why many do not is because of the great difficulties people have in making ends meet in town. Not only is housing expensive and poor but work is very difficult to come by. On top of this, people are subject to daily racism for being indian. In practice, women can gain work as domestic servants, working long and isolated hours for low pay, and men get the most low-paid and menial jobs that are available. As Harris (1995) has noted, many men in particular strive to disguise their indian identity in order to avoid the effects of anti-indian racism and this may be as true for school teachers as it is for labourers. Migrants are at a considerable disadvantage because of their poor rural education.

After six years of schooling no child in Pocobaya is fluent in Spanish and only some will have the most rudimentary literacy.

One of the key elements introduced by the 1994 Reform was intercultural bilingual education. There is, however, considerable resistance to the higher status given to Aymara, even by Aymara-speaking teachers.²⁰ Even those teachers who are committed to its implementation find considerable difficulties in doing so as the materials used are often inappropriate. One issue is the standardisation of Aymara, so children may not understand the particular dialect reproduced in their textbooks or the neologisms used to replace words of Spanish origin (Arnold *et al.*, 1998, pp. 17–20; Arnold & Yapita, 2000, pp. 120–122). As a result, the ‘Aymara’ in the books is very difficult to understand and causes great confusion, not least because children are berated for ‘not even speaking Aymara properly.’ Children learn not only that they are incompetent in Spanish, but in their native tongue too.

Another issue is that schooling in the Andes is produced with crass disregard for indian cultural practices and forms of knowledge; in fact, ‘knowledge’ is increasingly defined as that which is learned in school. Indeed, the amount of time spent in school means that many children are failing to acquire the traditional knowledge of crafts, skills and accompanying rituals, which make rural life meaningful and sustainable. In contrast, the way rural life is presented at school is at some remove from children’s own experience: the new materials dedicated to intercultural education present indian culture as rural, colourful and *mestizo* culture as urban and quotidian. The stylised images of houses, fields and mountains contrast with the much more realistic images of urban life. Indian culture is once again reduced to folkloric representation rather than a lived reality. In the words of van Dam and Salman, ‘Interculturality is reduced to a kaleidoscopic categorisation of stereotypes and arbitrarily chosen attributes’ (2003, p. 24).

It is quite clear that rural public education does not deliver the cultural capital for children to participate in metropolitan *mestizo* culture on anything like a level playing field. In fact, one Pocobayefio, Herculiano saw the situation quite clearly:

If a person learns to read and write at school s/he will not have learned well. We do not realise that if we continue with [this kind of education] we will stay behind, just like these schools.

We won’t even receive any useful qualifications because the education we receive is so poor that we cannot even read. There is no justice: how can one of us, after having received this education, come out as an engineer, as an agronomist or even a teacher. It is very difficult.

The frustration he is expressing is a clear illustration of what Illich (1971, p. 3) has called the modernisation of poverty ‘which combines the lack of power over circumstances with a loss of personal potency’. This poverty and loss of personal potency is evidenced in many areas. Whereas in the recent past people would weave their own cloth using the visually sophisticated language of Andean weaving, nowadays people are increasingly using cheap Western style clothing which tears easily and is not as warm. As cultural values become undermined, people who had a

rich cultural and political life feel increasingly marginalised. The rich set of rituals their parents use to make crops grow and cure animals, rituals which give people a sense of control over the vicissitudes of their lives, are becoming meaningless to young people. In the words of one young woman '[The mountain spirits] have left us' and another young man said they 'are not powerful anymore.'

Despite the best intentions of the current Education Reform it is quite clear that schools do not impart the cultural capital, which would allow indians to compete for resources and power with urban *mestizos*. Much less do they valorise indian culture. Where then do indians get positive images of themselves? What about the *Day of the indian*?

The Day of the indian

The name of this celebration is slightly misleading as it actually commemorates the founding of the first school for indians in Warisata by Elisario Pérez and Avelino Siñani on 2 August 1931. Elisario Pérez was a *mestizo* teacher who struggled hard to offer schooling to indians; he was imprisoned more than once for his subversive activities and his school was closed several times.²¹ The *Day of the indian* is really a celebration of indian schooling and is entirely under the control of the school teachers who, because of their social position, are able to compel attendance and marching from adults as well as children. Prominent in all of these celebrations are the kinds of militarism we saw in the *horas cívicas*.

Pocobayños congregate in the village of Ch'exe with five other small communities to celebrate together. Ch'exe is a relatively large village with a road and a high school, the Colegio Lindon B. Jhonson (sic), originally founded by American Lutheran missionaries, to which a handful of Pocobayños go. The Bolivian national holiday is 6th August, known as 'El Día de la Raza' (Race Day), but indians are not expected to participate in this public holiday. The 6th of August, I was told by Pastor, was for the whites and *mestizos*: 'That time of the 6th of August was when the whites and *mestizos* made the government of Bolivia appear. Since then the 6th of August has existed.' Indians had apparently no role in this and when the foundation of the nation is celebrated, indians are both physically absent and absent from any public discourse. In the early decades of the twentieth century indians were prohibited from participating in civic celebrations of the nation and were even banned from entering La Paz's main square and seat of government (Gotkowitz, 2000, p. 222). At the beginning of the twenty-first century no such prohibitions exist, but by making a distinction between a national day for indians and one for every one else, indians' marginality from the Bolivian state is underlined. The *Day of the indian* paradoxically serves to mark the exclusion of indians from the nation rather than their inclusion into the national fabric.

For *their* day, indian children spend weeks perfecting their military marches, their physical exercises and their folkloric dances. In the *Day of the indian* indian culture is presented as folkloric rather than being an integral part of life. The judges of these dances are chosen from highest-ranking outsiders. In 1999 I was asked to be a judge

even though I stated quite clearly that I knew nothing about folkloric dances. Knowledge of the dances was not a requirement; the high status of a (preferably white) outsider was, and no one seemed to think it inappropriate that a European be asked to judge indian cultural forms in this way. I politely refused and returned to my companions from Pocobaya.²²

One striking aspect of the *Day of the indian* celebrations is its militarism, which goes beyond simply marching. Children, boys and girls, spend two weeks perfecting their parade drills with the commands barked in Spanish. Day-after-day the children practice marching and gymnastics, dressing up in unfamiliar shorts and t-shirts for the physical exercises. For the marching routines the parents are obliged to make them special uniforms and the parents inevitably comply because their children will be paraded in front of several villages and made to compete against them.

In Ch'exe boys dress up as soldiers with wooden rifles and I saw one young lad dressed as a military policeman. Masculine militarism is, however, a key component of public education and is present in many aspects of school education. A poem to motherhood, which sings the praises of the loving, hard-working and self-sacrificing mother ends with a clear command to mothers that they give up their sons for their country. Women march behind the flag in these celebrations but they, of course, do not dress up as soldiers, although they do sometimes dress up as nurses. Nursing is an appropriate caring profession for women but it is overwhelmingly clear that men express their citizenship through military service and the militarism of the *Day of the indian* celebrations overshadows any celebration of indian culture.²³

Conclusion

Despite almost a decade of reform in Bolivia and the fact that Bolivia is now, in official discourse at least, often described as plurinational and multicultural, little has changed for the mass of indians who continue to live in the countryside. If 'the indian' has returned to public debate and political discourse, the reality for most indians is that the metropolitan discourse continues to favour urban over rural, Spanish over Aymara or Quechua, whiteness over indianness. This is evident in the popular imagery of Bolivians as white and urban as well as in the harsh economic realities of racial discrimination.

It is, however, also true that there is willingness at the centres of power to address some of the issues of indian cultural values. The 1994 Education Reform Act has been criticised for homogenising indigenous languages and introducing literate forms of knowledge which are not indigenous (Arnold & Yapita, 1999; Luykx, 2004). One of the biggest problems facing the implementation the bilingual education reforms is that teacher training colleges do not prepare their teachers well for the classroom (Luykx, 1999) and particularly in teaching a bilingual programme. There is, however, a much broader set of problems relating to bilingual education. The Education Reform Act stipulates that *everyone* in Bolivia should have a bilingual and intercultural education but to date this has only been implemented in indian communities. In its current form education for children in villages such as Pocobaya contributes to the devaluation of

indian communities and practices without offering compensating advantages in its stead: they are not being educated in their own language and within their cultural framework; nor are they learning the skills to allow them to compete successfully in a Spanish-speaking world.

It is through schools and teachers that the state has greatest access to these populations and the greatest opportunity to effect change. The teachers themselves, however, have worked hard at acquiring the language and manners of the urban *mestizos* to progress themselves and escape discrimination and are often at great pains to distinguish themselves from their less acculturated brethren. The state education system promotes a particular vision of civilisation and a hierarchy of knowledge and it is not surprising that teachers trained in the system will voluntarily participate in its promulgation whatever their ethnic background. The irony is that, as we have seen, they resist state policy in the form of the Education Reform by not teaching as much in Aymara as they are supposed to and by being much less focused on intercultural education than state policy would like to dictate.

Indian teachers are often very poor advocates for indian cultural values. By becoming teachers within the state system they have rejected 'traditional' life and are unlikely to be concerned about promoting the kinds of knowledge that is produced outside the schooled world they have joined. The teacher is involved in what Hannerz has called 'cultural welfare': 'trying to provide the citizenry with "good culture"; that is, meanings and meaningful forms held to meet certifiable and intellectual and aesthetic standards' (1992, p. 49). This 'good culture' has long been explicitly seen as a process of de-indianisation. The key concept of 'civilisation', which is so often used by teachers' has, for much of the twentieth century, been associated with 'changing customs, considered pernicious and retrograde, in favour of a way of life implicit in Western civilisation' (Soria, 1992, p. 50).

Because 'civilisation' is so closely associated with urban life in general and white people in particular, children's level of civilisation and, consequently their Bolivianess, will always be in doubt. It is perhaps for this reason that the militarism of schooling and the *Day of the indian* is so salient. In Bolivia and in many parts of the world, military service is one way that subaltern peoples can earn their membership in the nation-state, their citizenship, in other words. For men, military service, for all its unpleasantness, is what makes them *Bolivian* and they have the identity card to prove it. This model is extended to children and women who must parade in displays of patriotism to demonstrate their adherence to the state and 'civilised' values.

The 1994 Education Reform was enacted in large measure to promote a new multinational and pluricultural Bolivia. Why then has such little progress been made in providing indians with a positive view of their position in society? The schoolteacher's ambiguous and sometimes personally conflictive position (Luykx, 1999) in the racial and social hierarchy of Bolivia makes his position as a teacher in an indian school acutely sensitive. The teacher, even if from an indian background himself, is a major agent in the reproduction of a racialised social hierarchy and, far from effecting a change in ethos towards a new multiculturalism, plays a principal role in inculcating in children a negative racial consciousness.

Bolivia has enacted major education reform, including a policy on bilingual education, the production of teaching materials considered more appropriate to indian communities, and the recruitment of indian teachers. Despite this apparently propitious environment for tackling anti-racism, schools remain a principal site where children are exposed to and internalise racist ideas. Rural schoolteachers from indian backgrounds have successfully moved away from peasant lifestyles and chosen not to engage in the low-skilled urban jobs typically reserved for indians. School teachers have not only accepted the progressive ideal, they have also been successful in upward social mobility, moving from being 'indians' to being '*mestizos*' and should therefore *not* be expected to be strong proponents of bilingual intercultural education, especially when they are both frustrated by their situation and exalted to a particular status within the community. Teachers who share the same subaltern ethnic and racial background as their pupils are necessarily involved in the reproduction of racist ideas in their classrooms and schools. This will continue so long as being indian means being 'traditional' and rural and so long as rural lifestyles are seen as folkloric or miserably backward. That is, as long as the phrase 'indian school-teacher' is oxymoronic according to Bolivian social categories, schoolteachers will continue to reproduce racialised ideas in the classroom.

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Notes

1. In the American context 'indian' is an ethnic, not a national term, therefore I follow the usage of writing this term in lower case in the same way as other such categories, e.g., *mestizo*, *mulatto*, *black* (see Wade, 1997, p. 121).
2. Fieldwork was conducted in Pocobaya between 1989 and 1992, in 1993 and every year since 1998.
3. Previously children all the children from Thikata (population 65) used to come to school in Pocobaya. In 2001 a new school was built in Thikata and now only children in grades 4–6 walk to Pocobaya to school.
4. In its Spanish translation, the term has generally negative connotations although it has recently been reclaimed by some indianist groups. In the words of the Aymara nationalist, Felip Quispe, 'It is with the word "indian" that they oppressed us and it is with the word "indian" that we shall liberate ourselves.'
5. Employers continue to ask for people of 'good appearance' (*de buena apariencia*), a term which is widely understood to refer to non-indians. The exception here is advertisements for domestic work where often '*de pollera*' (referring to indian dress) is required. Domestic service is an area of employment closely associated with indian women (Gill, 1994).

6. 'Mestizo' originally meant someone of mixed European/American parentage. It is an ambiguous category defined largely by what it is not (Harris, 1995)—that is, not indian and not white Creole. This category, as with the category 'indian' has its ambiguities and historical shifts in meanings. 'White' too, does not necessarily mean someone who is exclusively of European decent: it should be understood that they are by no means clear and unambiguous categories. This racialised spectrum, moreover, overlays and informs hierarchies of rural vs. urban, small town vs. large city, Aymara language use vs. Spanish, male vs. female, and so on.
7. This idea of a new national (mixed) race has its roots in the Mexican revolution, which posited a cosmic race (Vasconcelos, 1961). In Bolivia Alcides Arguedes (1919) coined the phrase the 'bronze race' to describe what he hoped would be a new Bolivian identity, neither European or indigenous but a vibrant mixture of both. This movement was espoused by the rising middle classes, including middle-ranking officers. One of its implications, however, was the erasure of contemporary indians, who were deemed anachronistic (Brading, 1988).
8. These assimilationist policies were common to other countries with significant indian populations. For much of the twentieth century there was a wide expectation that the demise of contemporary indian populations through natural population decline or assimilation was simply a matter of time, even if it was considered by some to be regrettable. Over the past decade or so, however, the public profile of indian peoples in Latin America has become ever more prominent and given the lie to the belief that history would see their disappearance. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, from Mexico to Argentina, indian peoples have mobilised, made successful land claims, been recognised in national constitutions (van Cott, 2000) and are generally more prominent in national and international arenas. Indeed, more than one commentator has noticed the 'return of the indian' (Albó, 1991; Wearne, 1997).
9. According to the teacher, Eulogio, 70% of the instruction during the first three years of schooling (primer ciclo) are in Aymara, according to the Education Reform. I did not do a formal analysis of the amount of Aymara spoken in the classroom but even in the first year of school my impression was that it was well below 50%. By the third year of school hardly any Aymara was spoken by the teacher at all, although children always spoke Aymara among themselves, even in the classroom.
10. This was not the case in the recent past when everyone who lived in small towns spoke either Quechua or Aymara whatever their descent, partly because they were obliged to speak to their monolingual customers, servants, nannies and so forth.
11. For a discussion of a very similar process in Ecuador, see Radcliffe and Westwood (1996).
12. During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s the mestizo and Creole teachers from Sorata (two of whom I have met) were fluent in Aymara, even if it was not their mother tongue. Pocobaya has always had teachers who could speak Aymara; the issue is whether they speak it in the classroom.
13. As has indeed been noted by anthropologists working in other areas of the Andes (Weismantel, 2001, pp. 188–190; Colloredo-Mansfield, 1999, p. 187).
14. On a different occasion the same teacher complained to me of the poor quality of his shoes, which barely lasted a year in the mountainous environment.
15. In recent years the Education Reform itself has been an occasional theme although sometimes the teacher speaks against it, as for example on one occasion in 2002 when he argued that speaking Aymara was keeping Pocobayños back and that parents should speak Spanish to their children. This view is shared by the Director of the School District, based in the nearby village of Ch'exe, who was interviewed in the same year. He believed that the Reform was created by outside agencies and was not something produced in Bolivia. He saw it as a plot to keep people down 'para empantanar a la clase social' and saw the disappearance of Aymara as a necessary corollary of progress: 'the language (Aymara) may disappear as a consequence of science spreading across our territory ... (it is through) the spread of Spanish and science that

- culture will reach its triumph' (El idioma puede desaparecer; a medida que va avanzando la ciencia se va extendiendo el castellano en nuestro territorio).
16. That is, he entered teacher-training college several years after the enactment of the Education Reform and, indeed, most of his schooling would have taken place after 1994.
 17. Of the three posts only two had been filled four months into the teaching year. Eulogio's colleague was regularly absent, leaving him to teach all three classes and six grades of school.
 18. He had studied hard at night by the light of a candle whilst his family was sleeping. One of the very few professions open to indians is teaching and he worked hard to gain a place at the teacher training college. Even now he travels six hours each way to La Paz every weekend to study for his degree and he hopes to gain a scholarship to study pedagogy in Mexico.
 19. Until 1997 this was not much of an issue as children only received three years of schooling in Pocobaya. With the expansion of the school to six years and, as a consequence, access to secondary education in Ch'exe, there is very little time indeed for children to contribute to the household economy as they did previously.
 20. Many parents, too, question the point of teaching children in Aymara because, after all, they go to school to learn Spanish. See also Arnold and Yapita (1998, 2000) and Hornberger (1994) for further discussion on resistance to native-language education on the part of parents.
 21. It is the name of Elisario Pérez which is most widely known and the name of his partner and colleague Avelino Siñani is much less frequently mentioned in popular discourse.
 22. I was later asked to join the dignitaries (the doctor and health workers from the town and high-ranking teachers) to observe the parade. The dignitaries sit under a large Bolivian flag and each community marches by, saluting the flag and those seating beneath it. I declined the invitation and stayed with my companions.
 23. Indians, however, numerically predominate in the Bolivian army (Gill, 1997) and there is an historical connection between the army and the establishment of indian schooling. The disastrous Chaco War (1932–1935) against Paraguay saw the deaths of thousands of indian recruits, partly because they were unable to communicate properly with their monolingual officers. It was this catastrophe which persuaded a number of army officers, particularly those of middle rank, to consider the education of indians in order to create a more efficient army (Soria, 1992, p. 54); and, indeed, some elements in the army supported indian education in the 1930s and 1950s when important sections of Bolivian society were opposed (Luykx, 1993, p. 55).

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