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To cite this article: Gabriela Novaro (2018): Dances in migratory, community and school contexts: identity marks and folklorised presences, *Ethnography and Education*, DOI: [10.1080/17457823.2018.1452040](https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2018.1452040)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2018.1452040>



Published online: 16 Mar 2018.




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# Dances in migratory, community and school contexts: identity marks and folklorised presences

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## ABSTRACT

In this research, I analyse the practice of caporales dances in community and school contexts. I put forward some debates around the position of dances in the processes of education and identity definition. I delve into the identification of the caporales with Bolivian migration, poverty and contexts of discrimination. The references are centred on the teaching and performance of these dances in workshops and festivities held by organisations of Bolivian migrants in a town near the city of Buenos Aires. I continue with the analysis of the practices of this dance in school situations and its coexistence with current trends of nationalism in Argentine schools.

## KEYWORDS

Dance; identification; migration; community organisation; schools

## 1. Introduction

In this text, I study the relation between dance practices in community spaces of a migrant group with dance practices in school spaces. Throughout the text, I call into question the link between dances and national identity in both contexts.<sup>1</sup>

The references are based on research that I have been doing since 2010 in a town on the outskirts of Buenos Aires where immigrants from Potosi-Bolivia and their descendants make up a significant portion of the population.

In the community contexts, I keep a record of the expectations adults place on teaching dance to younger generations. I note how dance practices in Bolivian celebrations are affected by both the discrimination and the affirmation of identity that Bolivian immigrants experience in Buenos Aires. I argue that dancing in community situations constitutes a practice where national and ethnic references are passed on and where the continuity of the Bolivian community outside Bolivia is manifested.<sup>2</sup> In the population I work with, this is particularly observable in the caporal dances. Very popular among young people, caporal dances are not only danced in community contexts, but also in nearby schools.

The text makes evident the different meanings of identification with the national of artistic formative practices in community and school contexts.

In community situations, the teaching and practice of dance are linked to processes of collective affirmation and visibility of an immigrant group that lives situations of

subordination. To tackle this issue, I look to authors who have addressed the relationship between dance practices and the affirmation of membership to a community (Turino 1999; Desmond 1993–1994; Davida 2011; Buckland Theresa 2010). I am interested in works about the importance of dance to the construction of community in the Andean region<sup>3</sup> (Poole 1990; De la Cadena 2001) and about the meanings of celebrations and dances in contexts of migration (Giménez 2008; Revilla López 2006).

In school situations, artistic practices have been strongly connected to the assimilationist and nationalist mandate of the Argentine educational system (Novaro 2014; Hecht 2015; Padawer et al. 2017). It is equally important to consider recent debates that have legitimised intercultural focuses and recognised diversity in education, along with the integration of dance to the school curriculum in recent years.

I explore the critical potential of teaching caporal dance in school contexts, where it draws attention to presences, images and aesthetics that are traditionally overlooked in the education system. My ethnographic registers show that many strategies aimed at recognising diversity ultimately restrict the teaching and practice of dance to festive and folklorised spaces. Current Argentine models of identification, which tend to exclude any other models, are thus questioned in a cursory fashion only. In the case of dance and other practices, this exclusion is evident in schools' inability to engage children's transnational backgrounds.

It is my understanding that schools continue to make use of modes of teaching which differ from the types of education characteristic of student communities and family contexts. I note this distance in the context, contents and form of school transmissions (Levinson and Holland 1996; Vincent, Lahire, and Thin 2001).

For these reasons, it is important to grapple with the central place of artistic practices in the education and the identification processes of immigrant groups with a stake in a distinct community. It also enables reflection on the scope of so-called intercultural policies and on the role of new presences in Argentine education. I am particularly interested in addressing the limits to these policies and practices in schools, and the way that the particularities and history of various communities are revealed, paradoxically, through what they conceal. This approach connects my research to traditional debates in anthropology on the meaning of the traditional, on visibility and concealment processes, and on the transmission of national references in contexts of inequality, change and conflict.

In that, I address an issue that has received little attention in migratory studies in Argentina: the relationship between dance practices, education and the process of social identification. This approach necessarily considers the tension between policies of assimilation in the receiving societies and the affirmation of distinctness in the immigrant communities – an issue tackled by many analyses, particularly in relation to so-called second generations of immigrants.

This text is divided into two sections. In the first, I provide a general overview of the social and educational situation of the migrant population and briefly present the guiding principles that will be used to analyse caporales dances in contexts of subalternity and migration. This section mainly draws from existing literature and school documents on dance teaching. The second part presents the ethnographic findings of the investigation. First, I provide some details on the fieldwork done in the town before turning to the description and analysis of teaching situations and how the dances play out in community and schools contexts. In the conclusions, I compare the teaching situations and the

development of the dances within the poverty and discrimination experienced by the Bolivian population in Argentina before addressing my initial queries and setting out new questions for future research.

## 2. Migration, dances and education between Bolivia and Argentina

### *2.1. Bolivian immigration to Argentina: socio-educational exclusion and inclusion*

Argentina was consolidated as a nation-state during a wave of European immigration. Around the start of the twentieth century, nearly 30% of the country's population was foreign-born. Various authors have analysed how social discourse depicted the assimilation of European immigrants as desirable for Argentina while Latin American immigrants were undervalued and characterised as difficult to assimilate (Novick 2008; Pacecca and Courtis 2008).

For the purposes of this text, the meanings of nationality among Bolivian immigrants in Argentina are also relevant. Several authors have noted how feelings of national belonging deepen significantly in contexts with a negative attitude towards border immigration (Grimson 1999; Caggiano 2014).

It is necessary to briefly consider certain aspects of the situation of Argentina's Bolivian migrants, who constitute the second largest migrant collective.<sup>4</sup> Mainly settled in urban areas, these individuals often plan to remain in Argentina permanently. A great number of these immigrants suffer from job insecurity, human trafficking, abuse of authority, territorial segregation and discrimination (Pacecca and Courtis 2008). While many remain poor and are barely meeting basic needs, a certain percentage has enjoyed rising social mobility.

The modification of migratory legislation in 2005 (Law No. 25,871/03) brought attention to national and ethnic particularities and guaranteed certain rights for the migrant population (for example, access to education).

It is also essential to consider that in this population, as in many others, references to 'nationa' are not limited to the meanings the state attributes to the term. Specifically, the markers of national identification among Bolivian immigrants coexist with ethnic markers. The relationship between ethnic and national is a topic of intense debate, and Bolivians, especially those who migrate to Argentina, acquire a strong sense of ethnic identification. The ethnicity of Bolivia is defined in hegemonic discourse – with its tendency towards folklorisation – but also by the immigrants who strengthen the awareness of their collective by identity as Bolivians (Grimson 1999; Pizarro 2013). I understand that these processes are at work in the practice, meanings and transmission of dances like the caporal, which is strongly associated to nationality in contexts of migration.

When establishing roots in a new country, bonds with one's country of origin are important for social reproduction, as are transnational practices, particularly the links with productive ventures and political organisations in Argentina and in Bolivia. In this setting, the strong expectation for the continuity of certain artistic manifestations in new generations can be partly understood.

Regarding education, it is important to bear in mind that school was an institution that historically conveyed an identification with the being 'Argentine'. In certain periods, nationalistic mandates took on xenophobic nuances in which the other (indigenous,

migrant) was expected to assimilate or be excluded. After the last military dictatorship (1983), critics of this push for uniformity and of the segregated character of nationalism grew. International migrant and indigenous associations have also worked to allow for other perspectives. In educational policies, this was reflected in a new rhetoric of intercultural rights that mainly referred to the indigenous population. The particularities of certain collectives like Latin American migrants continue to be omitted or denied in an educational system that not only in terms of intercultural education but in common learning as well (Novaro 2015).

Indeed, traditional forms of teaching and learning have yet to be revised in Argentina, where specific spaces and times sharply divide school from other areas of training and experience (Levinson and Holland 1996; Vincent, Lahire, and Thin 2001). This aspect of the educational system differs from the forms of teaching and learning that characterise many families, especially Latin American migrants.

## **2.2. Dance, education and processes of identification**

In the town where I conduct fieldwork, recurring teaching practices and dance recitals in the Bolivian collective led me to explore the relationship between artistic practices and identification processes.

To address these issues, a brief mention of some theoretical debates is necessary. Investigations like those by Turino, Desmond, Buckland and Davida are undoubtedly precursors to an approach to embodied experiences that links practices with cultural meanings, one that explores the relationship between corporal movements, sociocultural experiences and identification processes (Turino 1999; Desmond 1993–1994; Davida 2011; Buckland Theresa 2010).

It is also necessary to move away from Eurocentric assumptions in the analysis of dances and body senses (Buckland Theresa 2010; Reed 2012) and to take a critical approach to the definition of certain dances as ‘classical’ or artistic and others as ‘ethnic’, ‘traditional and ‘exotic’. In our case, these are relevant issues because in the community and the rhetoric of schools, Bolivian dances in Buenos Aires are categorised as traditional.

In analysing dances, the meaning of artistic expressions depends on the experiences that their staging generates (Canepa Kosh 2001), which means that the context and process of their performance are significant aspects.

For the Andean area, I draw on Poole’s work on the political meanings of dances, which are viewed as a way of obtaining individual status and power (Poole 1990). Arnold and Yapita hold that in the Andean region of Bolivia, celebrations and dances are particularly important to collective life; they take on ritual meanings and functions that generate community well-being (Arnold and Yapita 2005). We shall see how the coexistence of community affirmation and hierarchy are replicated in migratory contexts.

In Argentina, the work Silvia Citro and Patricia Aschieri on the dances among indigenous groups from the northeast provide a roadmap to group expression of dancing and to the generational transmission in contexts where continuity is difficult (Citro and Cerletti 2012).

These considerations are important to grappling with the meaning of dances not only in community contexts, but also in schools.

In Argentina, artistic education has been a part of school curriculum since public education was implemented in the late nineteenth century.

In certain periods, the teaching of folklore has been a focus in education. Since its origin, folklore at schools has been tied to conservative nationalism whose origins lay in a large number of European migrants flowing into the country. In this context, patriotic festivities and dances were institutionalised and standardised. The compilation and dissemination of expressions of Argentine folklore were part of an effort to construct a scholastic nationalism that often excluded other voices and images. Recent debates surrounding the teaching of the arts and various artistic movements in schools have taken place in the context of an education system that, as mentioned above, has been questioning the mandate of uniformity upon which it was constructed.

These debates have brought about a gradual repositioning around the meaning of folklore, the popular and the traditional, legitimising different aesthetics and calling attention to various ways of interpreting and revaluing Latin American productions. Many of these changes were expressed in recent Ministry of Education documents, while the education policy enabled other presences, voices and images. Education debates on dance now approach it as an appropriate space for new proposals, despite the conservative tradition that links dance to its nationalism and folklore.

We will later examine how many of the new policies take on different meanings in specific school contexts.

### ***2.3. Caporales dances between Bolivia and Argentina: artistic practices in transnational code***

Some authors ask whether the ethnography of dance fits into a geographical, social and cultural world that is increasingly mobile (Buckland Theresa 2010, 338).

In this regard, Revilla Lopez's work on how transnationality impacts the traditions of mixed migrant populations is particularly insightful. This author asserts that in transnational situations, music and dance are associated with the struggle for power and the negotiation of identity. He argues that, rather than reinvent their traditions, immigrants modernise them without forfeiting the ritual and festive sense that sets them apart from the hegemonic culture (Revilla López 2006).

Dances in the Andes have gone through a deep transformation throughout their history conditioned by the processes of colonisation, *mestizaje* and mobility. Among the various dances of Bolivian origin, the references are centred on caporales, although brief references are made to other dances.

The caporal originates in the Bolivian Yungas and is strongly associated with Afro-Bolivian culture. Some people think of caporales as a mestizo dance that conveys the way in which dances, movements, steps and choreographies were greatly transformed on their journey through different regions (Benza Solari, Mennelli, and Podhajcer 2012).

In her analysis of caporal dances practised by indigenous migrants in Cuzco (an Andean city in Peru), Marisol de la Cadena argues that choreographic practice is one of the spaces where new identities are constituted, identities that problematise binary oppositions between the traditional and the modern. Dancers simultaneously uphold their rural origins and evidence what they envision as urban forms (De la Cadena 2001).

At certain moments, the caporal dance in Bolivia was associated with a middle-class practice in the east. In recent years of growing nationalism, the Evo Morales administration worked to revitalise, draw attention and promote all types of Andean expressions.

In 2011, several dances including the caporales were officially declared a Bolivian cultural heritage. Currently, the caporales are one of the central dances in festivities such as carnival.

Today, the caporal has become a group dance widely practised among youth and has also become particularly popular among Bolivians abroad.

The caporal is usually danced in the streets in groups separated by gender. The visuals and performance aspects are two key aspects of the dance (Educa Bolivia 2017).

Dancers perform the same movement time and again, as uniform movements are part of the choreography. The African element is especially present in the percussion. A man usually leads the group, marking the rhythm and the steps by blowing a whistle and wielding a whip. Men do acrobatic moves and impressive jumps, while women perform constant hip movements.

Some of its differences are associated with gender (differentiated steps and gestures for males and females) and generation (grouping of dancers by age). It aims to show the skills of men and the sensuality of women. The lyrics refer mainly to love. All in all, it could be characterised as a strongly sexualised performance.

For many authors, the caporales symbolise hierarchy, power and authority: the man who cues the steps evokes the plantation overseer with his whistle and whip. Some have suggested that this is a critical reference whose ultimate purpose is to mock this historical figure.

The caporales in Argentina – and as we will see, in the neighbourhood where I conduct fieldwork – are closely related to being Bolivian. Highly popular, they can be seen in Bolivian parades and other collective gatherings (Grimson 1999). Unlike other Andean dances, the caporal is repeatedly performed outside the migrant collective, for example, in patriotic Argentine parades. Parents integrate young Bolivians in the artistic activities and in other cases, Bolivian descendants themselves start caporales groups (Gavazzo 2016). Besides, they arouse great interest among teachers and children at schools with many Bolivian students.

In the context of Bolivian migration to Argentina, poverty and discrimination are all too common. I thus believe that the body skills, bright colours, collective nature of the dance and the importance of Bolivian celebrations could be interpreted as an attempt at visibility, calling attention to one's presence in a context of rejection and belittlement. To quote one of the most popular caporales ('I am caporal' by the group Kjarkas), 'All these people watching me because I am caporal ...'

If the message to outsiders is focused on visibility and a national affirmation of the collective, what do the caporales dances transmit to the Bolivian collective itself? How does a dance that originally evoked inequality and oppression become a national emblem outside its land of origin? Reference was made above to the poverty that often affects Bolivian immigrants in Argentina, but some families are able to successfully find a place for themselves and achieve sustained social mobility. Perhaps the practice of the caporal gives visibility and represents the fragmentation of migration, an expression of both community and integration, conveying some expectation of social mobility and equality.

In the neighbourhood where I conduct my fieldwork, the teaching of caporal to children born in Bolivia and raised in Argentina and also to second-generation Bolivians provides insight into the relationships inside and outside the collective. The caporal dances

here are also one of the few expressions in which ‘the Bolivian’ is visible in the neighbourhood’s schools. For this reason, I explore which aspects of the community’s dance are included in schools and which are not.

### **3. Migration, dances and education in a migrant community of Buenos Aires**

#### **3.1. Fieldwork**

This section is supported by a research I have been conducting since 2010 in a mostly Bolivian neighbourhood in the town of Escobar in the province of Buenos Aires. This fieldwork takes me into family, community and school contexts.

In community spaces, I interpreted the meanings attributed to the dances in fieldnotes on dance workshops, the rehearsals and staging of caporal dances during national Bolivian festivities, and from dialogues with representatives of migrant organisations and with mothers of participating children (between 2012 and 2016).

My analysis of the local school situation draws from research done between 2013 and 2015 that included documentation analysis, the tracking of institutional projects, assistance for a dance workshop, school celebrations, and chats with dance teachers and parents.

The situations are mainly analysed from the perspective of an ethnography of education, which has been developed in Latin America by Elise Rockwell (2009). I describe the expectations associated with the teaching and practice of dancing in different spaces, focusing on what is said in public speeches (especially during celebrations) and privately (interviews and informal talks). In the teaching and festive performance of dances, I bring up the explicit or subtle allusions to national symbols and attributes associated with the Bolivian and the Argentine, the way in which ‘the Bolivian’ is rendered visible or concealed, and the relations between the different groups.

In the text, I apply the same scheme to community and school contexts: the way in which artistic expressions manifest an institution’s goals; fieldwork observations of situations where dance is taught; and the reconstruction of the celebrations where the dances are performed. These dancing practices are put into historical and sociocultural frameworks with information about the context of the Bolivian migration in Argentina presented in the first section of this text.

#### **3.2. Migrant organisations and schools in a neighbourhood near Buenos Aires**

Escobar is 50 kilometres from the city of Buenos Aires and is home to a great number of migrants and migrant children from rural zones in Potosi (Bolivia). The neighbourhood is referred to Lambertuchi or simply as ‘the Bolivian neighbourhood’.

In this neighbourhood, there is so much tension between the immigrants and their Argentine neighbours that verbal and physical violence often erupts. The migrants also view each other differently depending on whether they are landowners, merchants, tenants, labourers or small traders.

Community processes are important in this neighbourhood and the Bolivian Collective of Escobar (BCE) has around 1000 members and organises the production and sale of produce.



There are two schools in the neighbourhood. In this article, I focus on the observation of the school that is considered the better of the two, noting numerous practices of demarcating 'the Bolivian': speeches on equality, the multiplication of national symbols of Argentina and patriotic speeches.

### ***3.3. Generational relationships and identification processes in the town***

The migrant adults of the neighbourhood are part of a generation whose lives changed significantly; many went from being Andean farmers to market gardeners or small merchants in Buenos Aires. There are many children of Bolivian parents raised in Argentina at the local schools who never lived in Bolivia or experienced migration. Most intend to stay in Argentina. I suppose that their participation in 'Bolivian' practices (dancing, among others) aims to ensure the continuity of their identity.

In prior research, I have documented how adults in the same neighbourhood strive to transmit the memory and references to Bolivia. In this regard, I have noted adult interest in integrating youth and migrant organisations.

At the BCE, the question of how long new generations will continue to identify with Bolivia is a frequent topic of discussion.

Families also consider it important for children born here to meet relatives who stayed in Bolivia – as well as ensuring that their children act in certain ways associated with Bolivian children, i.e. more disciplined and respectful than the Argentines.

I developed the argument that phrase like second-generation Bolivians, as these children and youngster are commonly known to the community and family, occupy a space (Bolivia) and a temporal reference (generation) that reveal the adults' concern for generational transmission and their distinctiveness as a collective (Novaro 2015). The expectations of continuity seem to be expressed in the interest in artistic practices such as the forming of dance troupes for children and youngsters.

In this way, the relation between identity and education turns out to be particularly complex. National belonging is marked in a space that the adults have abandoned and where most children have never been, but adults still expect it to be present in their identifications.

It is necessary to consider that this concern for distinguishing the collective occurs in conjunction with a demand for the recognition of their equality. These expectations for integration and social mobility are expressed in the vindications of school access (Novaro 2014, 2015).

### ***3.4. Dance learning and practice in migrant organisations***

The BCE has organised several different caporales troupes. In general, they are expected to perform in the Bolivian festivities that are celebrated every year in the neighbourhood on 6 August (Independence Day) and 10 November (anniversary of Potosi).

Between 2012 and 2016, I observed the dance rehearsals and preparations for the celebration.

The following observation of the caporal workshop, preparing for the parade that is then described, is indicative of the involvement of children and families' support.

I went once on a Saturday to the BCE. It is a rainy day, so rainy that I suppose that the activity will be suspended, but I see many kids when I get there. A while later, Dora<sup>5</sup> arrives. The teacher is late. Dora decides to start organizing the class. She puts on music and stands in front of the group of boys; a 14-year-old girl, one of the oldest, stands in front of the girls and they start cueing the steps. A group of middle-aged women look on – some mothers of the dancers, others members of a dance troupe. The wife of the BCE's secretary of culture is there and she tells me that they are trying to organise to get the costumes and instruments: 'We are going to Bolivia to buy them.'

The teacher arrives. He smiles as he dances, seemingly enjoying what he is doing, and he treats the children kindly. The children's ages vary from six or seven to 15. The teacher organises them again and starts cueing the steps. Many children also smile as they dance. He cues the girls and boys separately. Dora continues collaborating with the teacher and tells the children to pay attention. The observations are for the entire group; they do not correct the children individually. Eleven girls and 13 boys dance all the time, others younger ones come and go. In general, the little ones follow the older ones ... At the end of the class they form circles and dance together. (Excerpts from the observations of a BCE rehearsal, April 2013)

This is a learning process that takes place in a community setting, one that engages children of different ages and different levels of knowledge of the dance. The adults' comments and observations are directed at the group, not as individuals. The adults do not dance but watch and help at different moments.

One interesting element is that neither the mother nor the teacher places particular emphasis on corrections during the rehearsal. It seems like practicing the caporal is more important than perfecting the technique. According to a Flemish dance researcher whose work I consider applicable to the caporal, these forms of participation create an affinity, which implies not only the capacity of understanding the Flemish but also of being part of its execution (Cruces Roldan 2002). This way, the practice of caporal conveys a belonging to the collective.

The children at the rehearsal later performed the dance at the festival for Bolivian Independence Day in 2013. Below are excerpts from the observations of that event, announcements regarding dance contests, and the competition of the dancing groups I observed the following year during the same celebration.

In front of the hall for events, they have set up stands where people sit, you can see whole families. In front of the main stand for the parade there is an Argentine flag and a Bolivian one. The national Bolivian and Argentine symbols decorate the streets and all the objects set up for the parade.

The outfits are uniformly decorated with big Bolivian rosettes and smaller Argentine ones. Speakers include authorities from the BCE, the municipality of Escobar, and the Bolivian consul. All emphasise the value of Latin America, anti-imperialism and the union: 'all Bolivian siblings embrace today in this land' ... 'This is our clothing, our colours, let's not be ashamed'. After the opening speeches, the parade begins. Many march with Bolivian and Argentine flags, also with wiphalas<sup>6</sup> and banners from the BCE and from other migrant organisations. A group of 40 or 50 people parade with caporal costumes.

In the afternoon, many people go into the space set up for the BCE. Only special guests, showmen and those who marched in the parade can go in. I am able to enter as I have been invited by an Association of Bolivian women. This lunch is served in a covered tent with a big stage in the front. There are performances by singers and dancers, old and young. The song 'Viva mi patria Bolivia' is played time and again. Many groups dance on the stage. The BCE authorities also dance. After lunch, the caporales are performed, 12 boys and 18 girls

dance, all dressed in colourful outfits. The announcer talks about ‘our sprouts’ and of the importance of transmitting ‘our customs to our children’. In the streets, the dancing contests begins and the award ceremony begins to recognise the best dance troupes. The contest dances are both Bolivian and Argentine. The tinkus and caporales alternate with zambas and chacareras.<sup>7</sup> (Excerpts from the observations August 2013, [Figures 1 and 2](#))

In 2015, during the same parades, I noted down the following words from the announcer.

‘May this dance never be lost’ These children, though young, already defend our folklore. Take off your hat, master, because this is identity, this is tradition, and this is homeland. Thank you, kids, thank you for teaching us to defend what is ours’. (Excerpts from the observations of the celebration of Bolivia’s Independence day, 1 August 2015)

In 2016, I observed a dance troupe competition at the end of the 6 August celebration.

Four men and a woman, the judges, sat in front of them. The dance troupes perform one after another; there are almost 25 troupes, many comprised of both adults and children. The announcer says ‘A round of applause that can be heard in Bolivia! Escobar is a piece of Bolivia in Argentina!’. (Observations of a party on the 6 August 2016)

For several years, I observed that after the morning parade and the afternoon competitions, many of the groups would continue dancing backstage for hours, drinking abundantly and doing Pachamama rituals.

The protagonism of children and youth in these activities is striking: they march in the parade, carry and wave the Bolivian and Argentine flags, eat Bolivian food, and play football with Bolivian national team jerseys.



**Figure 1.** Caporales dances in the venue of the Bolivian Collectivity, festivities for the Independence Day of Bolivia, 2013.



**Figure 2.** Caporales dances in the venue of the Bolivian Collectivity, festivities for the Independence Day of Bolivia, 2013.

There is an intergenerational dynamic at work in the selection and practice of the dances. On more than one occasion, I have observed that the caporal dances, along with the tinkus, are the most popular among young people. Adults dance to other rhythms like cuecas, morenadas and zampoñas. I did not observe any teaching of these dances, which leads me to hypothesise that their practice could be discontinued.

Besides the age of the dancers, other differences can be observed, such as who is invited on stage and enter the BCE assembly hall, who receives an award, and the varying skill levels of the dancers. However, discourses and practices all allude to the collective nature of the dance and the affinity in the celebration, especially in terms of a common identification with ‘the Bolivian’.

Furthermore, in the community context, the dance takes place alongside many other activities that inform its meaning. That simultaneity of these practices is part of the dynamic of the celebration.

The implications of dancing a Bolivian dance are understood in relation to the speeches that reiterate the presence of Bolivia, with the place where it is danced (lands owned by the BCE) and the moment (a patriotic Bolivian celebration). All contribute to a sense of belonging to the dance. What happens when the same dance is performed at school, in other spaces and times, and with other discourses?

### ***3.5. The teaching and practice of caporal dance at schools***

At schools, I noticed that even when art classes acknowledged certain aesthetics and actors traditionally overlooked in public education, there were limits to the critical analysis of these trends.

In the case of dances – particularly Bolivian ones and, more specifically, the caporales – I observed that they have a place in teaching and at school celebrations, but this is limited and conditioned by many school arrangements. I will point out these conditionings in three situations: the way in which dances appear in institutional projects, a dance workshop, and an assembly at the same school.

I consulted the school's records<sup>8</sup> and a book on the school's history.<sup>9</sup> Over a period of several years, the enrolment of students of Bolivian origin is not mentioned in school records. This is illustrative considering that since 1985, this school has always had a high percentage of Bolivian children or children of immigrants.

One of the most popular school celebrations is the Day of Tradition, on 10 November, a celebration generally linked to 'the Argentine'.<sup>10</sup>

The project files and albums show that this day is celebrated with 'native rhythms' (chacarera, pericon, milonga, chamame),<sup>11</sup> 'our dances' and 'creole dances'<sup>12</sup> with the intention of 'promoting the cultural heritage of the country and value the Argentine, 'to bring students and parents into our cultural heritage'.

In 2004, an institutional project called 'Integrating Cultures' presented a new set of objectives, and the school administration requested a subsidy for the programme from the Intercultural and Bilingual Education Program of the Ministry of Education. The application mentions the high number of Quechua migrants from the Bolivian highlands attending the school, an aspect entirely overlooked in previous projects. The 'Integrating Cultures' project statement mentions the need to recognise traditions, reach out to the collective and contribute to the respect of 'Argentine and Bolivian cultures'. That same year, on Tradition Day, 'the Bolivian community is invited to participate in traditions that aim to maintain the identity of both cultures'. The school's evaluation of the project praises that the school has identified foundational elements of the dances and their historical and geographical significance. The evaluators lauded the participation of a caporal group and the 'enthusiasm of students', but also pointed out the lack of involvement of both Bolivian community members and teachers from the school. The subsidy was used to purchase fabric to make Bolivian outfits. In later years, the project was suspended. An institutional project from 2009 is telling, as according the project descriptions that there are still 'students of Bolivian origin represent the majority ... that have few social-leisure activities and little interest in culture'.

In subsequent years, the dance teacher tried to continue with the instruction of Andean dances, but they were generally given only a limited role in celebrations.

In 2014, this same teacher developed the project 'Strengthening Ties'. 'This project focuses on two countries: Argentina and Bolivia ... they retain certain cultural similarities that create a close bond between us'. This was accompanied by a photocopy that was given to students in which the caporal is defined as '... a dance originally done by *negritos*<sup>13</sup> that represents the mulatto who supervised the black people. They turned their back on their own race and became the tormentors of their own people ...'

The same woman who had helped organise the caporales in the collective (Dora, the mother of a student) agreed to give the children classes on tinkus and caporales. The following excerpts from my observations allow us to form an image of the dancing classes and the school celebrations of the traditional day.

In a prior conversation, the dance teacher had told me that the children really enjoyed the class and complained when Dora could not go.

The dancing takes place in a classroom. Dora talks with the children about a party that the BCE had yesterday; some of them were there. She talks about the outfits worn for different dances. Then the teacher and Dora suggest they dance caporales and some of the children exclaim: 'yes, caporales!' They dance with a lot of enthusiasm. One of the girls who knows the steps dances alongside the mother and the others imitate her. The teacher and the mother seem to go together very well in the activity. Dora proposes they close their eyes and imagine that there is nobody there. 'You dance with your heart [she brings her hand to her chest], you have to feel it'. The teacher tells some of the girls not to be ashamed. When the class has finished, Dora asks the teacher if the children could perform at a school assembly. The teacher does not know because that year, there have been several teachers' strikes and many days of class were lost. Dora insists. (Observations of a dancing class, September 2014)

This is a learning context that differs in many respects from traditional schooling in Argentina: the atmosphere is relaxed and joyful; the observations are collective and generate feeling, enthusiasm, uninhibited expression, joyfulness and physical movement. Community celebrations – and a mother's knowledge – are both emphasised. In other ways, though, the traditional form of teaching persists: there is no regularity to the practice; a written text is included to lend legitimacy to the knowledge; groups are divided by age (the practice takes place in just one grade); and the school schedule determines the relationship between the teaching and the performance: by bringing up the classes missed, the teacher casts doubt on the possibility of the children shown what they have learned at a school assembly.

Finally, the children performed caporales during that year's celebration the Day of Tradition. The general reaction was 'everyone danced, you should have seen the enthusiasm of the Argentine kids'. The following year, the classes on tinkus and caporales were not offered.

We will now turn to caporales and the Day of Tradition celebration in 2015.

The assembly was held on a stage decorated with a big Argentine flag. It began with a speech by a teacher who said, 'Tradition is what gives us identity ... Let's sing the anthem today more patriotic than ever. Everybody look at the flag please ... Let's start with the artistic performances ... Our community has always maintained Argentine traditions.' The assembly will include a series of performances: stories, dances, songs of different origins and styles, principally the zamba, carnavalito and chacarera. This year the caporales, the only Bolivian danced included in the show, was danced by just three kids. (Figure 3)

All in all, the observed classes and dance shows enable other practices and aesthetics and introduce children to new places and experiences. However, traditional dance often has some bureaucratic aspects, as evident in the institutional projects. There is no regularity to their practice (as we saw, this varied from year to year) and they are preventing from altering traditional school styles and artistic contents. These styles and contents, which coincide with active school nationalism, are still focusing on 'Argentine', 'creole' and 'our' dances.

In this case, it is interesting to focus on the role of some intermediaries between the school and the collective, such as the mother who teaches caporales at school.

Dora has told me many times that her daughter likes to dance and she is constantly watching movies with Bolivian dances (I have observed this during my visits to Dora's house and the homes of other Bolivian women).



**Figure 3.** Caporales dances in the festivity for the tradition day, November 2015.

Dora once told me:

... my children are almost third generation, I don't want them to lose the culture, they know where they come from ... I told the teacher, 'I am tired of watching chacareras, chacareras, always chacareras at the assemblies ... at school, nobody cares ... people from the BCE ... they don't go to school'. (Interview with Dora, September 2014)

The role of these parents is meaningful. Parents at Argentine public schools are generally summoned only for fundraising events, informative meetings, the handing out of report cards and for school assemblies. In this case, they seem to have taken their experience to school as the owners of certain knowledge and at their own initiative. Their involvement at schools is, however, irregular and, as we can see from Dora's words, entirely personal, i.e. not endorsed by the collective.

The comparison of how dance varies in community and school contexts is the topic of this final section. There were similarities observed between the meaning of the caporal

dance in the BCE workshop and at the school: the dancing took place at a specific time and location; adults transmitted the dance to children; there was a certain planning and regularity in terms of what was transmitted. Yet there are also differences, fundamentally related to the regularity with which Bolivian dances are practised in the community spaces and the lack of any continuity in school contexts. In school, unlike what occurs at community celebrations where many activities take place simultaneously, here each practice is separate from the rest. People of different age groups gather to watch the dancing but do not dance together. The parents are mostly relegated to watching. There is an evident contrast between the willingness to represent both countries (Bolivia and Argentina) in the community celebrations and the almost exclusive representation of the Argentine in the school.

#### 4. Conclusions

The aim of this text was to explore the relationship between dance practices and national identifications in different educational spaces.

The fieldwork accounts for the fact that in community contexts, dances and many other practices constitute one of the ways of being Bolivian outside Bolivia, of recreating and staging a belonging to the 'Bolivian identity'. The interest in transmitting the dances to younger generations in community contexts is that they will continue to see themselves as Bolivian, no matter where they were born or raised. The memory of Bolivia in images, rhythms and movements is both an invocation and longing for an unknown space dear to adults.

This makes sense if the dance is placed in the framework of its community teaching, that is, within community organisations and as part of a community project, and in a context of other practices that also make reference to 'the Bolivian'.

This occurs in a society which, despite its rhetoric with regards to migrant communities and a certain multicultural government stance, continues to devalue or deny images of this collective. It is also found in school speeches that are still infused with strong mandates to assimilate even when they ostensibly refer to intercultural efforts.

Besides affirming the community's continuity in relation to the territory of Bolivia, the caporal has other meanings. In the Argentine migratory context where the Bolivian appears as a stigmatised category, performing a dance like the caporal may be understood as an act that draws attention to the presence of the other. The importance of performing and being seen, the corporal strength of the dance, seems to counter the stigma. In this way, their visibility in community spaces may be understood as a fight for the right to the own image and recognition.

Furthermore, it is essential to remember that the caporales symbolise the hierarchy, the power and the authority of a deeply fragmented community that tries to unite behind references to a territory that has been left behind. All can dance and appreciate the desire to form part, but not everybody has the same level of skill. In other words, not just anyone can be the central figure of the caporal, enter as special guests or form part of the selected troupe.

If the insistence on being visible outside of the community is evident, the symbolisation of the hierarchy is an important aspect of the community.



Maybe, and this is only a hypothesis, it is this hierarchy within the caporales that explains, at least in part, its popularity among young immigrants and the children of immigrants, who experience inequality both within the community and outside its confines.

I also believe that the hierarchical nature of the dance may account for its presence in an institution with such a marked hierarchy as schools.

In any case, the question is how the teaching and the staging of the caporal coexist with the strong nationalism at work in Argentine schools. The mere presence of these dances may be thought of as enriching traditional performances (focused on creole dances). In this regard, their presence may fulfil a critical function and a sense of integration in school. Although the integration seems to be a given and limited at the same time. Despite the traditionally homogenising model of Argentine schools, in recent years some significant changes have been made. Other voices and other images are appearing, Andean dances and caporales amongst others. However, in my fieldwork, the treatment of this otherness varied from overshoot to the denial of these presences and aesthetics.

In summary, many similarities were observed in both the collective and at school, but there was also a great difference between the regularity of the represented and exalted aspects of 'the Bolivian' at the BCE and its irregular treatment at the school. The importance of staging the dances on patriotic dates seems to be an aspect in common at both sites, but at school, the community context and the references to the meaning of the dance are overlooked. This context of community meaning is tied, to the dance's performance in conjunction with a whole series of other practices connected to Bolivia. We wonder if the workings of schools (activities organised by age, clearly defined spaces and times for each practice) in itself goes against the community meaning of certain actions.

In this text, I have focused mainly on the meanings that adults (parent, community referents, teachers) convey to children and youth through the caporal and in the national identities they project. Future investigations should focus on the meanings that these practices are given by young people. I venture that the caporal dance may be a space to stage the myriad identifications of these children: identifying with their parents' history, with being a Bolivian in Argentina, with the term second-generation Bolivian, with the way they are seen in Argentina, with the way they want to be seen ... future research may further explore this possibility of the dances to delve even further into their many meanings and possibilities.

## Notes

1. This research is part of an ongoing investigation project entitled 'Intergenerational Transmission, Identification and Memory Building Processes in Children and Young Migrants'. Universidad de Buenos Aires, Conicet-Argentina.
2. Even though the Andean dances are closely related to processes of ethnic and national identification, in this text, considering the strength of the transnational references of migrants, I focus fundamentally in the relation between the dances and the transmission of the identification with 'the Bolivian'.
3. The Andean alludes here to the Bolivian territory near to the Andes, but also to the reproduction of certain practices associated with the indigenous, such as the speaking of Quechua or Aymara, the way groups are organised, festivities, etc.

4. According to the 2010 census, 345,272 Bolivians were living in Argentina, representing 19% of the country's foreign population.
5. This woman (whose name has been changed) was born in Argentina, daughter of a Bolivian father and mother; nevertheless, she uses the first-person plural when referring to the Bolivians. Apart from helping in 2013 to organise the BCE workshop, in 2014 she collaborated with the dance classes showing Bolivian dances in the school her daughter attends.
6. Flag of the native peoples, recognized as a symbol of the Bolivian State in 2008.
7. The tinkus is a typical dance from Potosi, Bolivia. The zamba is a popular dance in South America. The chacarera is an Argentine folk music and dance.
8. In Argentina, education authorities require that schools set yearly objectives in their institutional projects.
9. This history was based on the school's the diminutive of the widely accepted term to refer to people of African descent (*negro*) is a phrase still broadly used in Argentina in a pejorative manner 'golden book' that was written on the institution's fiftieth anniversary.
10. This date commemorates the birth of the Argentine poet Jose Hernandez, author of 'El gaucho Martin Fierro' at the end of the XIX century. This celebration established the gaucho (the cowboy and vigilante of the Argentine Pampas) as the figurehead of Argentine folklore.
11. All types of Argentine folk music and dances.
12. The term 'creole' in the current school context refers to those who have lived in Argentina for a number of generations.
13. The diminutive of the widely accepted term to refer to people of African descent (*negro*) is a phrase still broadly used in Argentina in a pejorative manner.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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