

Stricture and Solidarity: Agency and Community Development in Huancarani, Bolivia

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ABSTRACT

This article is the culmination of ethnographic research carried out in a small rural farming community called Huancarani and other contexts in the surrounding area of Cochabamba. The majority of this analysis is concerned with a small work-for-food group started in Huancarani known as the Pirwa. The general theme of the research is an answer to the question “what is it to develop?” The more specific research question is as follows: Can human beings act, collectively, to improve their lot, or must they once again accept that development is ineluctably determined by forces over which they have, in general, little or no control? The question of agency is important because it elucidates just how people may maneuver within a system of limitations (globalization) to improve their lives. Globalization is understood as a system of limitations in this article insofar as it reduces community sovereignty. The main phenomenon that this ethnographic analysis addresses is solidarity. Solidarity is how people unite in responsibility and in common interests. This analysis finds two possible ways of describing the phenomenon of solidarity that constitutes a single field (as in the Bourdieuan use) of possibilities. Solidarity, in its two uses, is the reply to the question of agency. An analytic description of solidarity is an analytic description of one way in which residents of Huancarani and members of the Pirwa maneuver within the terribly unequal system of globalization that provides the pretext for community action. Agency will not be defined as completely free or as fatalistic determinism but rather as possibilities afforded to people thrown into a system of globalization.

Keywords: development, agency, solidarity

INTRODUCTION

The foundation of this article is posed as a basically comprehensive question: *What is it to develop?* This is the general theme of my research. Of course, to remain within this question would be impossible for an article of this scope. Nevertheless, this article asks this question (although it can only provide partial responses) of the *Pirwa*, a communal work group in Huancarani, Bolivia. This article is the result of ethnographic research carried out in the summer of 2009 in Huancarani and Cochabamba.

Quickly, in asking this question, it becomes obvious that to ask “what is it to develop?” implies a series of complications that form a sort of impasse for a simple response. These complications became abundantly obvious upon the realization that members of the *Pirwa* and residents of Huancarani are not acting in abstraction from *other* and perhaps *more or less complex* answers to the question of development occurring at the *national* and *international* levels.

Many times the whirlwind of ideas that occur at all three of these levels (the local, national and international) about how to answer the question of development form *strictures* for Bolivians, other times they may even be *empowering*. But what is certain is that this article cannot address such a question in generality, it must focus itself onto something more specific. Leys (1996), in *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, provides such a question: Can “human beings act, collectively, to improve their lot, or must [they] once again accept that it [development] is ineluctably determined by forces over which they have, in general, little or no control? (p. 1)”

So what is at stake is not a definition of “development,” but rather, what is at stake is the constitution of *agency*. This article will not ignore the influence of national and international ideas about development; *this article seeks to show how members of the Pirwa and residents of Huancarani work both within and beyond the larger context of nationalist rhetoric and a global economy*. What I call “local,” “national” and “international” is what, as a whole, Schuller (2009) refers to as *globalization*. That is, “a multifaceted set of phenomena that construct a global

economy...and flatten(s) [community] sovereignty.” (p. 1). The question then becomes, how do members of the *Pirwa* and residents of Huancarani act collectively to improve their lives in conjunction with and/or in spite of globalization?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Until now, two scholars have conducted research in Huancarani, Bolivia. I have selected two chapters from Christine Hippert's (2007) dissertation *Identity and Development in Rural Bolivia: Negotiating Gender, Ethnicity and Class in Development Contexts* and several sections from Céline Geffroy Komadina's (2002) *La Invención de la Comunidad*. Also, I will use a short article entitled *Counter-Development in the Andes* by Frédérique Apffel-Marglin (1997) to more fully provide a review of the prior research in the greater Andean region. Apffel-Marglin does not specifically address Huancarani, but rather writes about a Peruvian non-governmental organization called PRATEC (an acronym for *Proyecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas*, or the *Andean Peasant Technologies Project*). Apffel-Marglin provides a relevant lens to analyze events in Huancarani.

The purpose of the *Review of the Literature* section is to provide definitions of certain key concepts that would be required for a basic understanding of the *Pirwa*. These definitions will supply the background necessary for the *Findings* section. Many of the key terms can be equated (generally), and I will equate those terms at the end of this section. Also, throughout the *Findings* section I will appropriate many of these terms.

Apffel-Marglin

Apffel-Marglin claims to find three distinct responses to “officialdom:” “Officialdom from the point of view of the people native to the Andes is a colonizing entity: it not only covers all governmental organizations and opposition political parties and movements but includes also the knowledge system pervading schools and universities, the judiciary system and the Church” (Apffel-Marglin 1997:258). Officialdom, in this formulation, will serve as the first aspect of development for our purposes here. Note also, that officialdom is still considered a *colonizing entity*, meaning that even though explicit colonization has ended, another *form* of colonization is still manifest. This is colonization (by way of a certain notion of “development”) of economy, politics, religion and knowledge (*neocolonialism*). Our main concern here will be the *economic* aspect of officialdom.

As laid out by Apffel-Marglin, people have one of three responses to officialdom, and these responses provide our point of departure for understanding agency and development in Huancarani. The first response to the colonizing measures of officialdom is to become “good subjects.” A good subject will “accept the premises of the modern West without much question” (1997:258) or will accept the premises of officialdom. This is basically a response that will go along with the colonizing definition of development inherent in the definition of officialdom. Thus, even though people may despise officialdom itself, they will act in accordance with its premises. Conversely, the second response is to become “bad subjects.” A bad subject will revolt, however *this revolt is carried out within the confines of the economic, governmental, political, religious and epistemic system of officialdom itself*. That is to say, it is a reform of officialdom from within officialdom. Finally, the third response to officialdom is to become “non-subjects.” What is a non-subject? A non-subject is a subject whose notion of development and agency defy the borders of officialdom as previously defined.

The theoretical importance of viewing agency¹ in light of Apffel-Marglin's article is that in these three responses we resist three errors that could be made in understanding agency in Huancarani and as we will see as I discuss the *Pirwa*. The first error is to view any action as that of a bad or good subject. That is, we will avoid interpreting agency as in some way comprehensible *only* within officialdom. I will show that this cannot be the case. But, we also avoid understanding the agency of residents of Huancarnai as a “folklorized” or essentialist return to indigenous, Andean culture as if the influence of officialdom was negligible at best. Agency, thus, cannot properly be called Andean or defined within officialdom, but must be something else entirely. Understanding agency in this way also warns of the final error we need to avoid, that is, to think of agency as simply taking the “best” from officialdom and from the Andean. Apffel-Marglin's three responses give us a model to understand a *maneuvering* within stricture (which is the agency of a group such as the *Pirwa*).

The applicability of the Apffel-Marglin model is shown especially in the example of agriculture. Much of what was meant by the colonization of knowledge had to do with agronomy. PRATEC, in large part, is concerned with Andean farming technologies (that is, those particular farming practices that are understood as “non-subject”). The *Pirwa* is as well, however not monolithically. One of my key informants, Ronald, was an agronomist and what he had to share with me about farming practices in the *Pirwa* will be incredibly helpful to concretely explain the theoretical jargon in the previous three paragraphs. I will explain this in the *Findings* section.

Hippert

Hippert's work aligns with Apffel-Marglin on these basic points. It is through a process of *negotiation* that Hippert describes the relationship between residents of Huancarani's "...self-described Inca past..." (Hippert 2007:197) and "modern" (equate this term with "officialdom") practice that forms the overall picture of community action in this microsphere. What is meant by *negotiation* is a process by which members of a community constantly redefine what it is to be a resident of Huancarani by way of participation in community development contexts. This process can be problematic at times, especially when, according to Hippert, ideology is incompatible with the material reality in which they must inevitably take part. *This process is incredibly important to my analysis because agency (community action) draws from the negotiated identity in consideration.*

In the section entitled *Ideology of the Communal Work Group* (2007:209) Hippert explains, in part, the ideology of members of the *Pirwa*. For the sake of coherence in the *Literature Review* section I will only briefly define the *Pirwa* as Hippert does, but in the *Findings* section I will carry out a more detailed description of the *Pirwa*, its functions, its funding and its members on the basis of my research. Hippert defines the communal work group (the *Pirwa*) as "...essentially a work-for-food program created to alleviate malnutrition in the area" (2007:209). The *Pirwa* meets once per week (on Fridays) to carry out *trabajo comun* (communal work) which, in turn, provides food for its members. But it is also important to note that the *Pirwa* has a function beyond simply supplying food for its members. The *Pirwa* is also a sort of safeguard for certain social norms. These particular norms will be discussed in the *Findings* section and also will have brief mention in Geffroy Komadina's work.

As I mentioned, at times the ideology of the *Pirwa* is incompatible with the material reality of Huancarani. It is here we begin to see the importance of an analysis that takes into consideration development work that is occurring at not only the local level of the *Pirwa*, but also at the national and international levels as well. Although some of the activity of the *Pirwa* is meant *ideologically* to preserve certain traditions and make extreme poverty impossible, it cannot always accomplish this due in large part to social and economic policy that is determined hundreds or thousands of miles away.

But herein we find the importance of something like non-subjecthood. If we equate non-subjecthood with what Hippert defines as the philosophy and mission statement of the *Pirwa*, that is, an emphasis on "group solidarity" and "the maintenance of reciprocal relations" (2007:211) we can begin to make sense of how a group such as the *Pirwa* may lessen the intensity of poverty, both materially and communally. Even if what is ideologically determined cannot always be fully accomplished in practice, the sheer importance of these ideas in understanding the entire field of social relations in Huancarani cannot be underestimated.

For members of the *Pirwa*, the two basic premises of group solidarity and the maintenance of reciprocal relations are defined as "traditional:" *communalism* and *cooperativism*. In preparation for understanding what I will present in the *Findings* section, these two ideas will be the last we take from Hippert. The *Pirwa*, and the communal identity that accompanies it, are founded on these two basic ideas. However, we should resist idealizing communalism and cooperativism. By way of the process of negotiation, sometimes conflict can result when, as mentioned, ideology cannot coincide with practice. For instance, communalism can at times be at odds with the individual desires of members of the group. Also, communalism is not easily guaranteed by a group of such diverse ethnicity (of which, the *Pirwa* is).

In the section entitled *Accommodation and Resistance in the Communal Work Group* (2007:230), Hippert describes the way in which members actually go about negotiating their identity and some of the problems that may result. Hippert's work acknowledges that *even at the local level* there is disagreement about group identity. The process of negotiation cannot be viewed as a clean and straight-forward process at all.

For instance, the single most important negotiation about the very existence of the *Pirwa* may be the tension between the *self-sustainability* (in an economically independent sense) insisted upon by some of the members of the *Pirwa* and *solidarity* (as in a united-community) that takes precedence for other members of the *Pirwa*. The tension between these two ideas is what forms, in large part, the basis of identity negotiation for members of the *Pirwa*. Although it may seem that these two ideas complement each other, unfortunately, a push towards a notion of self-sustainability that would have the *Pirwa* be completely economically independent from the strictures of officialdom may drastically increase the work load for members of the *Pirwa* and decrease, in many cases, the possibility of having a more tightly-knit system of community relationships.

Additionally, the push towards self-sustainability is seen as a move towards "non-Bolivian, modern, Western ideals" (Hippert 2007:237-238) that replace the form of agency that draws from the traditional identity by many members of the group. To consider self-sustainability the most important outcome of the *Pirwa* would be tantamount, for many of the members, to making the first error that Apffel-Marglin warns us of (understanding agency as only comprehensible within officialdom). But recall, we cannot simply then constitute the action of the *Pirwa* as "traditionalism" either, lest we fall into the trap of the second error aforementioned (an idealized notion of

traditionalism). The error of an idealized notion of traditionalism is that all practice within the *Pirwa* is “traditional” insofar as it is *pure* and unaffected by modern, Western ideas. This frames an understanding of agency in which *everything aforementioned* is taken into consideration and within the complexity of negotiated identities we find a type of community action that *must inevitably confront officialdom while simultaneously remaining non-subject to it*.

Geffroy Komadina

Geffroy Komadina’s book *La Invención de la Comunidad* (The Invention of the Community) (2002) brings to light the more specific norms that are to be preserved by the *Pirwa*. Two of these norms are, in Quechua, *yanapakuy* and *ayninakuy*. These two norms are very closely related, however, Geffroy Komadina provides a fundamental distinction between them. Both *yanapakuy* and *ayninakuy* are aspects of *intercambio* (exchange). Thus what we require from Geffroy Komadina are definitions of *yanapakuy*, *ayninakuy*, *intercambio*, and *markets*.

Geffroy Komadina translates *yanapakuy* as follows: “*Yanapakuy*, literally ‘help’ in English, also conceived as ‘will,’ translates into help that is voluntary²” (Geffroy Komadina, Siles Navia, Soto Crespo 2002:50). This is not yet a definition, but is simply a basic translation of *yanapakuy* into “voluntary help.” The key component to the definition of *yanapakuy* is in the Spanish infinitive verb *cobrar*, meaning “to charge.” An acceptable way to characterize *yanapakuy* would be to describe it as voluntary help that *does not charge*. Except, perhaps, in the provision of some food that is offered in payment, *yanapakuy* asks for no help in return.

Ayninakuy, on the other hand, is described by Geffroy Komadina as “*intercambio simétrico*” (2002:53) (symmetrical exchange) meaning that help is lent, and in the future help of a similar type will be returned in exchange. While both *ayninakuy* and *yanapakuy* are forms of ‘help,’ only *ayninakuy* offers symmetry in help, and is thus fundamentally different from *yanapakuy* on this point. *Ayninakuy* is fundamental to the ideology of the *Pirwa* because of its function of preserving social relations while carrying out “economic” activity simultaneously.

Now, Geffroy Komadina describes both *yanapakuy* and *ayninakuy* as types of *intercambio* (exchange). However, as far as the definition of exchange goes, it can be thought of in a *market-based* sense or as part of an *economía de solidaridad* (economy of solidarity). While we can place market-based exchange within the locus of officialdom, the economy of solidarity differs from such a conception. An economy of solidarity takes into consideration not only economic activity (material exchange, of “stuff”) but is rather “*las económicas como emotivas*” (2002:81) (the economic and the emotional as one). These ideas are basic to the *Pirwa* and its philosophy, just as Hippert described the basic philosophy of the *Pirwa* by way of communalism and cooperativism.

As it applies to my analysis and the agency of members of the *Pirwa*, these ideas cannot always, as mentioned, yield perfect results in practice. However, Geffroy Komadina argues that these ideas are meant to open up the space for a non-subject form of agency (neither traditional nor modern) to become possible. Geffroy Komadina (2002) writes,

“La filosofía de la economía solidaria se basa precisamente en la búsqueda de una nueva solidaridad que fundamente la libertad, reconciliando esas dos formas de convivir; es decir, inventar una nueva sociedad en la que el individuo sea un actor activo y propositivo, no un sujeto pasivo, y donde, a través de su participación, se democratice la economía.”

“The philosophy of the economy of solidarity is based precisely on the search for a new form of solidarity that substantiates freedom, reconciles these two forms of coexistence [the traditional and the modern], that is to say, it invents a new society in which the individual is an active player and is purposeful, not a passive taxpayer, and where, by way of their participation, they democratize the economy” (p. 82).

Even with “perfection” out of reach, Geffroy Komadina understands the economy of solidarity to *invent* the space of participatory and non-subject agency (hence the title of the book: *La Invención de la Comunidad*).

As stated so far, the *Review of the Literature* points to three important frames of reference. First, I sought to establish working definitions of “officialdom,” “modernity,” and “markets” (the terms for each author, respectively) in order to show precisely what these national and international forces *are* that provide the pretext, either in the form of strictures or empowerment,³ for many community relations in the *Pirwa*. Second, I sought to frame an understanding of what “non-subjecthood,” “traditionalism,” and “the economy of solidarity” (again, using each of the author’s terms respectively) mean for members of the *Pirwa* that are based on the reconciliation and negotiation of the modern and the traditional. Finally, I attempted to show how *agency* (action towards community betterment) is affected by both of the previous points.

METHODS

As for my research, I conducted four weeks of participant observation in Huancarani, Cochabamba, Sipe Sipe, El Chapare and other areas in and around Cochabamba. I volunteered in the communal work group (the *Pirwa*) in Huancarani on Fridays for every week I was in Bolivia. I recorded my observations in the form of rich, descriptive field notes. Also, I engaged in language school in the Juan XXIII district of Cochabamba at *Escuela Runawasi*. This amounted to 25 hours of Spanish classes per week. Finally, I conducted and took notes on five interviews with three different people from varying perspectives.

Prior to arriving in Bolivia I completed funding applications and Institutional Review Board approval. Funding was provided in the form of an undergraduate research grant approved by the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse. IRB approval was granted under the expedited review category in accordance with 45CFR46, 46.110(a)(b).

Upon return, I proceeded to process my notes using contemporary qualitative sociological methodology. This involved first, *open coding* my typed and translated field notes, wherein I separated my field notes into discrete units. Secondly, I engaged in a process of finding phenomena that could be given similar codes by way of a *conceptualization* of the data. Third, I created *categories* (along with *properties* of those categories) and *rules of inclusion* that indicated what was required for any given piece of data to be included in any given category. Finally, I engaged in *selective coding*, wherein I put the data back together into a coherent whole and compared my “theoretical” results with those that I had expressed in the *Review of the Literature* section. All of the aforementioned steps are not exact steps in which I finished one and moved on to the next, but were done in continuity. Also, I recorded *analytic memos* of increasing degrees of complexity throughout the entire process. The process that I just described is simplified, but this is my basic methodology.

Theoretically, I will carry out a Bourdieuan-type analysis of agency in Huancarani. Mostly, I will appropriate his notion of a *field*. Although a *complete* analysis of agency would also include Bourdieu’s notions of *habitus* and *capital*, this article will not be able to address those issues. All of the aforementioned concepts will be defined in the *Findings* section as I describe my findings.

FINDINGS

Now we must restate the question posed in the introduction: How do members of the *Pirwa* and residents of Huancarani act collectively to improve their lives in conjunction with and/or in spite of globalization (national and international forces)? This section will confront this question in the form of several observations I made while carrying out my ethnographic research. First, I will address agency both *within* and *outside* of officialdom. Then, I will attempt to synthesize my results and show, more completely, the constitution of agency (action towards community betterment) using pieces of Bourdieu’s (1984) sociological formula, “[*habitus*] (*capital*) + *field* = practice (or *agency*)” (p. 101) that is, an expression of agency in complex and sometimes contradictory ways.

For the sake of brevity, Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* will not get mention in this article, although this would be necessary for a complete enumeration of any particular practice. Also, economic and social capital will not receive explicit mention. The article contents itself, again, in its brevity, with an analysis of social space. I define *field* as Bourdieu (1984) does, “the symbolic space marked out by the whole set of structured practices” (p. 101). More succinctly, I am simply trying to locate *actors* (those with power to act) within a social space (*a field*).

Although I begin with observations *within* and *outside* officialdom eventually I wish to erode this distinction because that which is conceived of as within *and* outside of officialdom is more accurately described within an entire *field* of social relations. That is to say, even contradictory ideas, practices and disagreement in general make up the space of a field. Also, actors within this field will draw from *both* the inside and the outside when pretext dictates *and thus, despite contradiction, agency will make sense*.

Agency “within” Officialdom

Because even the *possibility* of acting to improve Huancarani can be so incredibly difficult due in large part to *systemic* forces at the national and international levels, we will begin with an observation of the national and international forces I have alluded to. Nationally, one example is the Bolivian Laws of Popular Participation (LPP). These laws divide Bolivia into nine *departments*, 112 *provinces* and 314 *municipalities*. OTBs (Territorially Based Organizations, which are formed within each community, for example, Huancarani) are charged with “identifying, prioritizing, and supervising public works and services” (Peirce 1997:3) by submitting yearly proposals to their county seat (municipality) in order to be granted funding for development projects. These proposals are highly competitive due to the scarcity of resources available at the national level. I mention funding proposals because the *amount of money available* is finite and something that residents of Huancarani have little or no control over. Even with funding help from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) not every proposal will be selected.

This leads to my first set of field observations (of *agency* or “maneuvering” that makes possible community development): Community solidarity, understood as a “maneuver” within stricture, can be seen as a strategy to secure funding of scarce resources. For instance, during a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Huancarani for a recently cobblestoned road speeches were made about what it means to have a “united” community. The recently completed (or more accurately, *nearly-completed*) road was used as a platform, and for us a metaphor, to show what can happen when a community unites. The importance of a strong collective identity, one in which communities can use as “leverage” when applying for development projects, cannot be overstated. A united community, with a strong sense of belonging (even if it is in plurality), is more capable of applying and receiving the funding aforementioned.

This was manifest in a speech by Feli, a resident of Sipe Sipe. Her speech was about what unity means for residents of Huancarani. Citing the accomplishment of the cobblestoned road (which started as a successful proposal to their municipality), Feli articulated what is possible in a community of solidarity, holding united action above other forms of action. Even with members who are largely uneducated and from diverse ethnic backgrounds community members were able to come together to create a coherent, consistent and (generally) agreed upon proposal to their municipality.

The agency Feli is speaking of addresses action that must necessarily be taken within the confines of officialdom. What Feli expressed was a technique, a way of maneuvering within the terribly unequal system of officialdom that uses the *invention of the community* to create an empirically verifiable proposal, and thus secures a concrete development project. The *metaphor* of the *nearly-completed* cobblestoned road elucidates the example with regards to stricture, however. Regardless of how unified Huancarani is, there will still only be so much money available. Simply uniting cannot always yield complete results when forces at the national and international levels run rampant, beyond the control of a small rural farming community. However, *although the development project remained incomplete, a partially-cobblestoned road was produced*. The road is immensely important, especially during the rainy season when people may have to walk in mud that extends to their knees!

Thus, the alternatives given to us by Leys are inadequate. No, of course people cannot act completely freely to “improve their lot” (Leys 1996:1). But this does not mean that people must resign themselves to the fatalism of “ineluctably determined forces” (1996:1). Residents of Huancarani and members of the *Pirwa* do *have some power to act*, but it is not an all-encompassing power. Feli’s notion of agency should be viewed within the locus of officialdom. However, what agency means remains still only partially defined.

Agency “outside” Officialdom

My second set of field observations show instances in which the agency of residents of Huancarani attempts to move beyond the limits of officialdom. Due to the fact that the *Pirwa* does not even apply for funding in the way aforementioned (only *communities* such as Huancarani do at monthly meetings due to LPP rules) the agency of the *Pirwa* as a work group *within* Huancarani can be initially constituted as *outside* officialdom. However, the *Pirwa* is not *completely* “outside” officialdom because even groups such as the *Pirwa* will ultimately fall prey to some systemic funding conditions (in the case of the *Pirwa*, the need to constantly appeal to donations from European friends). What is important to remember are the ideas that the *Pirwa* was founded on, for example, that charity from national and international sources *in no way constitute “community betterment.”*

I take this observation from an interview I did with a man named Ronald, a resident of Cochabamba and an agronomist who, in the past three years, was given the reins of the *Pirwa* by his father-in-law and founder of the group, Joaquin. Ronald stressed that when gifts are given nothing really has occurred. He stated that, “people will just stay at home and wait for another gift.” This logic extends to loans offered by international lending institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. Ronald defines the word *desarrollo* (development) in these terms. The “global” context of *desarrollo* is in no way suited for the “local” context of the *Pirwa*.

The ideas that attempt to transcend the limits of officialdom have a different name, according to Ronald. The ideas suited to the local context of the *Pirwa* were more aptly characterized as *educación* (education) and *producción* (production). That is, projects of community betterment carried out in the *Pirwa* have as their goal the sustainable economic and social support of its members by way of “learning through experience” and producing without the intent of market sales, respectively.

However, recall that the emphasis on sustainability complicates things because often times the workload of non-market-based work that is meant to supplement the thin incomes of members of the *Pirwa* becomes too much to handle when added to the regular market-based labor. Therefore, until now, the *Pirwa* has been unable to be an island unto itself; it must rely on external donations despite ideology that may wish otherwise. Other factors increase the necessity of external donations as well. For instance, during my stay in Bolivia, the communal corn crop for the year was harvested and amounted to little more than 20 ears of corn (roughly) per family. This food was supposed to be supplemental to a diet that is composed of food grown in an individual resident’s own parcel of

land and food bought in the market place. However, this amount of food is *hardly* supplemental to a resident of Huancarani's diet. Additionally, much of the corn was too small to be eaten and was merely given to their sheep or guinea pigs (*cuys*).

Nevertheless, I will now mention a few of the projects that the *Pirwa* is carrying out or wishes to carry out in the future. Again, the failure of any particular project does not mean much, for to expect perfection would be absurd. The function many of these projects have had are simply their positive effects, in terms of achieving reduced poverty in the region, increased supplies of food, and most importantly, opening the space for a type of agency that is not the fatalistic acceptance of oppressive external forces.

By and large, agricultural projects constitute the majority of the work load for members of the *Pirwa*. Contemporarily grown crops include corn, potatoes, broad green beans and even some onions. In the future, Ronald expressed to me that the *Pirwa* would like to grow carrots, lettuce and other vegetables as well to decrease the number of vegetables people would have to buy at the market or grow themselves. By Ronald's estimation, there is certainly enough land to support the needs for the members of the *Pirwa* and perhaps to even sell a little at the market in addition (although this is not the goal).

Another object of agricultural work is to promote the ideas of *educación* and *producción*, which recall, are "education through experience" and production without the intent of selling on the international market. The avoidance of the market is not at all a surprising maneuver. To sell goods on the market, *especially for a low-production country like Bolivia*, would mean that people would have to put themselves out there in competition with high-production countries such as Brazil and would mean a decrease in agency insofar as their livelihood would become dependent on prices that are set outside of their control.

But just because these ideas are adequately characterized as "non-subject," it does not follow that every practice is (based on Bourdieu's formula, we must consider the entire *field* before describing practices). For example, a future project that the *Pirwa* would like to carry out is the purchase of a tractor to increase agricultural yield and self-sustainability. We must consider this very "Western" project and the "Western" ideas of increased production and self-sustainability by way of technological innovation (Escobar 1995) to be a part of the field as well!

There are more community betterment projects that could be considered "Western." For instance, recently a *taller* (workshop) was built in Huancarani, although it remains empty. The workshop was constructed to provide a place to build wooden frames for windows and for iron working. The construction of break-and-entry proof windows (which, according to Ronald, are in high demand in Cochabamba) would be the object of iron working. Generally, despite the overtones of Western ideas, when there is work that is done in the *Pirwa* with the explicit intent of selling commodities in the market, the goods are *locally* needed goods, and are sold at *locally* set prices. Thus, in this way, modern practices, such production in a workshop, become amalgamated with traditional practices.

This is especially true of another project that the *Pirwa* carries out, the sale of *cuys* (guinea pigs). *Cuys* are not sold in the market place at a market price. This particular project manifests the logic and "philosophy" of the *Pirwa*, to create programs that will reduce the severity of poverty in the region while maintaining social bonds. *Cuys* are only sold *within* Huancarani to supplement the diet, especially with regards to meat, of residents of Huancarani. The tension between [1] the necessity of reducing the severity of poverty in the region and [2] the maintenance of close, reciprocal social relations will be our point of departure for a synthesis.

Synthesis

Now that I have shown just how difficult it is to talk about the inside and the outside of officialdom *without at least mentioning its connection to its opposite*, I will attempt a synthesis. Although many times any given social practice can seem to be either/or, if we take Bourdieu's equation seriously we cannot give such monolithic interpretations to any given practice. *This is because practice is carried out in a field of possible interpretations.*

Because residents of Huancarani are inevitably thrown into a world system constituted by necessary inequality much of their agency must be "to play the game." But additionally, to accept a fate of subjugation could not make sense for any actor. This is why ideas that could be understood as non-subject, and some truly novel ideas at that, must be developed.

The thesis of this paper, stated at the very beginning, was that members of the *Pirwa* work both *within* and *beyond* the context of nationalist rhetoric and global economy. By "synthesis" what I mean is that, when we look at the entire field, when agency is understood on the basis of Bourdieu's formula, we must take seriously *both* the "within" and "beyond." I have given several examples of projects of community betterment in this article. In a longer exposition the field could be constituted more completely. However, I have chosen these examples for a reason. Whether agency is best categorized as a maneuvering within the *strictures* of officialdom, or as categorized by the economy of *solidarity* inherent in the philosophy of the *Pirwa*, the field of actions and actors in Huancarani is

composed of both of these elements in synthesis. The title of this article is given sense in this synthesis: *Stricture and Solidarity*.

CONCLUSIONS

The Cochabamba Water Revolt of 2000, now a famous instance of an agency not deterred by fatalistic assumptions, showed the strength of a Bolivian challenge to a powerful corporation such as Bechtel. Shultz (2008) writes that this revolt “began in the countryside” (p. 16) and that “some of the most active people fighting the Bechtel contract weren’t even hooked up to the city’s water system” (p. 17). If we were to think that agency does not exist in the seemingly powerless Bolivian countryside, we would be sadly mistaken. Bechtel was ousted.

For future research in this area, there is much to say. My research was limited by time constraints. I was also unable to bring into play Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* and *capital*, which would have provided an even clearer picture of agency in Huancarani. But, merely taking into consideration the concept of a *field*, we can begin to describe the nature of agency in Huancarani.

It is true that agency is not unlimited and the forces of officialdom can seem hopelessly oppressive at times. However, I hope that, at the very least, in attempting to constitute agency in the *small, rural* farming community of Huancarani, I have brought to light the power actors have, maneuvering both within and beyond the economic structures of officialdom. Just as in the Cochabamba Water Revolt, agency is not empty, community betterment is possible.

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ENDNOTES

¹ What I mean by *agency* is action towards community betterment. That is, the power people have, either within a circumstance or despite circumstance, to alter their lot.

² All translations of the *La Invención de la Comunidad* text from Spanish into English are my own.

³ An instance of empowerment *within* officialdom (although it seems that it could never occur given the necessary inequality associated with such a system) could be, for some actors, a position of affluence either in government or commerce. I will not elaborate further on instances of empowerment because, generally speaking, officialdom is better understood as stricture.