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What (cultural) difference does it make? Children of immigrant background between colour-blind and culturalist ideologies at primary schools in Catalonia

Beatriz Ballestín

One of the main features that have characterized primary state schools in Catalonia (Spain) during the last decade has been the reception of pupils coming from migrant families of very diverse sociocultural backgrounds. Drawing on the findings of a comparative ethnographic fieldwork carried out in two different primary schools, the paper tries to cast light on the following questions: How do schools deal with the new sociocultural differences? What is the role played by the school's structural features, teaching practices, *ethos* (ideologies and values), and images of immigrant children and their families? Which effects do they have on pupils' social experiences and dynamics?

The exploration of these questions converges in the identification of two modalities of institutional *ethos* that appear opposed to each other: in one of the schools community members consistently denied the local salience of ethnic-cultural variables, regarding themselves as *colour-blind* (Lewis 2003), while in the other school, more polarized in terms of class composition, national origin and linguistic diversity, culture in an essentialist conception (Franzé 2002) was raised as the key factor to explain academic trajectories.

Eventually, it is shown how these two apparently antagonistic institutional *ideologies* contributed to a differential construction of the *distance* between family culture and school culture (Spindler 2000), beyond *objective* characteristics of pupils and their families. And how this constructed cultural distance had consequences not only for pupils' academic outcomes[1] by increasing inequalities in school trajectories, but for the very core of the children's dynamics of sociability, although we cannot view them simply as a *reproduction* of adults' attributions and expectations: children generate their own dynamics of inclusion/exclusion rooted in the unique logics of creation and transmission of infantile cultures (Connolly 1998). The depiction of these peer

[1] For specific results on children's academic outcomes see Ballestín (2010).

dynamics fostered by the *colour-blind* and *culturalist* ethos is worth a last section of my contribution before its conclusion.[2]

The social and educational context: a brief overview of immigration and education in Catalonia (Spain)

Catalonia, one of the wealthiest areas inSpain, has not traditionally been an immigrant-receiving country. In recent years, however, it has experienced a very rapid influx, particularly in regions along the Mediterranean coast.[3] Nowadays, 15,7 % of the total population[4] (7.565.603) are from a foreign country: more than 31 % of them come from Central and South America, mainly from Ecuador and Colombia; the second largest group is from European countries (30 %), and nearly 27 % of the immigrants come from Africa, the large majority of these from Morocco, but also from West-African countries (Gambia, Senegal, Mali, etc.). The least contingent in quantity, but a rapidly growing one, form Asian immigrants, who make up 11,3 % of the total foreign population.

But for a better understanding of the complexity of the social context in this territory we have to go back to the 1950s, 60s and 70s, when Catalonia received a large contingent of workers from other places in Spain, attracted by the demand of labour force in the industrial areas. Great numbers of internal immigrants concentrated in the surroundings of towns, so that urban growth and a certain urban segregation consolidated. These are the quarters where also most of the immigrants from poor extra-communitarian countries have settled down, repeating some of the patterns of the former (internal) immigrants.

In Catalonia, Catalan is a prestigious minority language which is used as the main language of local administration and school. In contrast, Spanish is a powerful state language but commonly

[2] This chapter is based on the author's doctoral research (Ballestín 2008), which focuses on the intersections between primary schools' treatments of pupils' cultural backgrounds and their experiences and dynamics of academic dis/engagement. It is situated in an area on the Mediterranean coast (El Maresme) that receives migrant families of very different sociocultural origins: mainly from extra-communitarian poor African, Latin American and Asian countries, but also *luxury* migrants from European Union countries who first came as temporary visitors and became permanent residents.

[3]In fact, Spain occupies the second rank among the world's countries after the United States in the overall number of immigrants received annually, with the immigrant share of the population increasing from 1,6 % in 1998 to 12,1 % by 2012. The sharp growth in immigration is due to Spain's rapid economic and social development since joining the European Union (EU) in 1986, to its location on Europe's southern border, which makes it a major gateway for immigrants from Africa, documented as well as undocumented, and to the ease of incorporation of immigrants from Latin America wishing to return to the »mother country«, some of whom also enjoy special legal advantages. Moroccans and Ecuadorians today form the largest non-EU immigrant groups.

[4] All statistical figures in this chapter have been extracted from Idescat (http://www.idescat.cat/en/). The Statistical Institute of Catalonia is the regional institution specializing in providing local sociodemographic statistics.

associated with the ›former immigrants‹.[5] There has been a weak language immersion programme for 23 years (following the Quebec model), and recently we have seen the beginning of a new educational policy built upon linguistic cohesion: LICS (Llengua, Interculturalitat, Cohesió Social)[6], a programme addressed to the whole student population *at risk of social and educational exclusion*, which includes especially the children of immigrant families.

The education system of Catalonia follows the Spanish national law of education, including the major educational reforms implemented in 1995, which extended compulsory schooling from age 14 to age 16 and changed the structure of primary and secondary education. Today, free public schooling begins at age 3 and most children (97 %) attend pre-school for three years (P3, P4 and P5). Compulsory schooling begins at age 6 and continues until age 16, or the 4th year of ESO (*Educació Secundària Obligatòria*).

The ethnographic study: research sites and methodology

The present research is based on two ethnographic case studies with the goal of comparing two different immigration settings and school models in the same area of Barcelona:

Mataró is an industrial town in the metropolitan area of Barcelona; it is in a process of transformation into a service sector due to the delocalization of textile industry. It has been a pioneer in the reception of African immigrants, who first arrived in the 1970s to work in the intensive agricultural sector which still survives in the area. Today (2011) 17,2 % of the total population (123.868) have a foreign nationality, with an increasing diversification of origins, though Moroccan and Sub-Saharan origins (Gambia, Senegal, Mali) are still predominant.

The public (state) primary school chosen in Mataró, named *Icaria* (fictitious appellation), was located in a multicultural working-class suburb inhabited mostly by immigrant population, first internal immigrants and then progressively immigrants from Morocco, Sub-Saharan and South American countries. At the time of the fieldwork (2001-2003) nearly 500 pupils were enrolled in the school, and the ratio of children from foreign immigrant families was only 7,4 %, mainly

[5] Since its linguistic *normalization* after Franco's dictatorship, Catalan is now trapped in the *paradox* of *Authenticity* and *Anonymity*. According to Woolard's studies: »As a rare threatened minority language that makes a bid not just for survival but to become a principal public language, Catalan is indeed in a paradoxical position. Ethnic authenticity and identity value contributed to its survival under conditions of subordination. But now this value is in conflict with the universalistic ideology of anonymity that typically characterizes hegemonic public languages« (2008: 13).

[6] The LICS (Language, Interculturality and Social Cohesion teams) form part, in Catalonia, of a second attempt (the first was a proposal called LOGSE – Ley Orgánica General del Sistema Educativo – in 1995) to develop a comprehensive reform in Spain after the counter-reform instituted by the conservative Government (PP, 2003).

second generation. It was an institution with a good reputation in the town based on a long *progressive* and *Catalanist* (nationalist) trajectory fostered by a teaching staff involved in the democratic *transición* following Francisco Franco's fascist dictatorship (1939-1975). In fact, Icaria was one of the first schools in Mataró to adopt as a leitmotiv the principles of *active pedagogy*[7] and the programme for Catalan Linguistic Immersion, acquiring in the 1980s a certain elitist status in the context of the quarter. However, the »Immersion« policy that was erected as a progressive emblem during political *Transición* had fossilized in (*Catalan*) monocultural practices that didn't empathize with families and children from non-mainstream cultural backgrounds.

The second setting of the research is *Miramar* (fictitious name), a small traditional coast village living on tourism and associated services. This village, unlike the quarter in Mataró, has the particularity of attracting migrants and residents from much more diverse origins, not only in cultural terms but also in economic ones. In 2011, 15,2 % of the total population (2.800) were of a foreign nationality. Although Latin American countries are most salient (56,5 %), it is important to note the presence of immigrants from the European Union (27 %), while Africans represent »only« 14,4 % of the contingent.

The only primary (state) school in *Miramar* therefore offered a unique *scenario* for the comparison of inclusion/exclusion dynamics: more than 30 % of the total 110 pupils enrolled in *Muntanyà* (invented name) were of immigrant background, with the confluence of children from »autochthonous« local families, affluent European families, which in many cases first came as tourists and eventually became residents, and children from extra-communitarian countries (mostly Morocco and the Dominican Republic), whose families had or sought a job in the tourist sector and domestic service.

In marked contrast to *Icaria,* at *Muntanyà* there were no clear identity features or no distinguished institutional trajectory for the school to lean on, and this was due in great part to the instability of the teaching staff, many of its members being temporary personnel waiting for a permanent position in another school. This made it difficult to establish and maintain a coherent and stable educational project. In compensation (and unlike *Icaria),* local and affluent immigrant families got easily engaged in the school's practices and activities, and their participation was prominent. Teachers were more accessible to the school population than the apparently committed and

[7] In Catalonia and Spain *active pedagogy* refers to the contributions of constructivist psychology to education, especially contributions adopting the perspective of members of the Institute Jean Jacques Rousseau in Geneva (Piaget, Claparéde, Ferriére, Decróly and Montessori) and of the »pragmatics« developed by Dewey and his followers at the University of Chicago.

activist staff at *Icaria,* who actually displayed quite bureaucratized and distant interactions with the families.

The methodology applied in the ethnographic research included participant observation as a support teacher in nearly all classrooms (from P3 to 6th grade, ordinary and for pupils »with special needs«) at both schools during the academic year 2001-2002 (I could follow and interact with 56 pupils from immigrant families), complemented in 2003 by semi-structured interviews with teachers and other relevant actors (»compensative« education programmes, social services, community representatives, etc.) inside and outside the schools. I also used sociodemographic and statistic data, and consulted documents from the local authorities and from internal circulation within the schools (curricular projects, pupils' academic files and reports, etc.).

Colour-blind and *culturalist* ideologies at primary school in Catalonia: two case studies[8]

The comparative ethnography conducted in the schools introduced above gave shape to the emergence of two seemingly opposed symbolic and relational modalities of facing cultural diversity in relation to pupils from immigrant origins: on one hand, it was possible at *Icaria* (Mataró) to identify what some researchers term *colour-blindness* (Gillborn 1990, Sefa Dei 1999, Lewis 2003), an educational ramification of a *progressive* ideological rhetoric supposedly indifferent to pupils' »colour« and, by extension, to their cultures of origin. On the other hand, the school *Muntanyà (Miramar)* revealed an antithetic pattern based on *culturalist* ideologies and imageries (Franzé 2002) that identified the culture of origin as the core element for making sense of the inequalities and differences that divided pupils' academic trajectories of academic success and failure. While culturalist dispositions at *Muntanyà* implied congruence and continuity between teaching discourses and practices, colour-blind ideologies at *Icaria* entailed important inconsistencies and contradictions. Let us characterize the two modalities in some ethnographic detail:

In the context of the Mataró's multicultural working-class quarter, teachers at *Icaria,* with a progressive purpose (integrating all children), tended to assimilate the new immigrant pupils coming from long-settled Moroccan and (more recent) Gambian families (Latin American pupils

[8] For a more extended presentation and illustration of these *colour-blind* and *culturalist* ideologies at primary school see Ballestín (2011).

were not present yet) to the autochthonous pupils from working-class families of the former internal migration. They felt uncomfortable when talking about immigration and cultural issues:

> »At the moment the majority of children coming from immigrant families are born here, or they came when they were babies. And I would say all the families are very similar in terms of school unconcern. All is masked by economic resources and life conditions!« (4th grade teacher)

The teaching staff shared the vision that »all children here are now locals«, a clear indicator of a colour-blinded point of view: academic failure of immigrant pupils was attributed to socio-economic inequalities, as they all were supposed to share »the same« opportunities of access to learning content and to participation in formal and informal school activities. As also witnessed by Lewis (2003) in her ethnographic study at *Foresthills* (USA), they consistently denied the local salience of race. Yet, this ideological statement masked an underlying reality of racialized practices and colour-unconscious practices and understandings.

The defence of an »equal treatment« for everybody regardless of their sociocultural origins was frequently in contradiction to some practices - the obligatory use of »only« Catalan language, the externalization and lack of inclusion in linguistic support for foreign immigrant families, the lack of recognition of the traditions that many Muslim pupils followed and which became totally invisible at the school ...- all this led to an implicit favouring of cultural assimilation and separation between »home-family culture« and »school (mainstream) culture«, as one teacher declared:

> »Children know how to separate what they do at school and at home… and which are the traditions that they ought to celebrate at home and the traditions and celebrations we have in the school[9], there is no problem...«.

Other inconsistencies were centred on some pedagogical practices: the use of *tracking* (Davidson 1996, Mehan et al. 1996, Dauber/Alexander/Entwistle 1996, Carbonaro 2005) had relevant effects in terms of exclusion: apart from the overrepresentation of immigrant pupils in the lowest ability groupings (Hallam/Ireson/Davies 2005) and special education services, it was really shocking to discover the existence of a specific withdrawal group called *»Ni-nis«* (*Neither* speak Catalan *Nor* Spanish), i.e. pre-school (P3, P4 and P5) children of African newcomers that started school

[9] In that school, similar to the majority in Catalonia, the traditions celebrated were only those seen as »emblematic« for Catalan culture, depurated from their religious connotations: *La Castanyada* (autumn celebration); Christmas based on rural traditions such as *El tió* or the representation of the play *Els pastorets*; *Sant Jordi (*Saint George), etc.

»*without* knowing either the Spanish or the Catalan language«, labelling them with a sense of »handicap« while these children were developing multiple bilingual abilities at home.[10]

Moreover, there was some unequal treatment according to stereotyped cultural origins: while pupils from Moroccan families were seen as troublesome, victimist (always complaining without *real* reasons), and mischievous, West-Africans were regarded as »primitive (instincted)«, impulsive, and handicapped in academic work. In correlation with these dominant imageries, the children of Moroccan and (to a lesser extent, as they were also seen as »honest«) Sub-Saharan families were subject to an additional degree of control and *suspicion* according to some stigmatizing social stereotypes[11] of their culture of origin; therefore they were exposed to disciplinary treatment and punishment more frequently than their autochthonous mates. In addition, as no important cultural differences between children were recognized, the perception of segregation among peers was diminished:

> »Then, it is not that native born pupils leave aside immigrant ones deliberately. What happens is that you go with peers with whom you know you will have a better communication. And if immigrant children have problems in understanding the language they are naturally going to be set apart. If these children are lively, if they are keen to learn and have initiative, this is a temporary situation. But if they are the ones saying ›they don't want me‹ (there are many of these here), they become excluded. It's something natural« (Quotation from an interview with a pre-school teacher).

When these children protested against peer aggressions and harassment they were accused of »playing the race card« and were not taken seriously by the teaching staff.

In significant contrast, the *scenario* of discourses and practices at *Muntanyà* school in the small village of *Miramar* was more transparent and consistent: in spite of an epidemic positive discourse accepting cultural diversity as constitutive of the school's history, the *culturalist ethos* shared by the teaching staff clearly distinguished dispositions and expectations of teachers towards immigrant pupils depending on their geographical origins:

Top expectations of success were placed on children from European countries (in fact they remained *invisible* as immigrants in the eyes of the teaching staff) and relatively affluent Latin American countries (Paraguay, Uruguay, etc.); in contrast, all attributions of »cultural

[10]Such skills were neither supported nor fostered in the classroom, even when teachers recommended that mothers speak their own language with their children.

[11] In Spain there is a conflictual historical relation with Morocco that has given shape to mutual stereotypes of mistrust. For centuries the »Moor« has generally been viewed as mischievous, treacherous, etc., which has left traces in everyday contacts between nationals and Moroccan immigrants.

incompatibility and distance« and »cultural handicaps« leading to academic failure were ascribed to, again, children from Moroccan families. There were clearly stigmatizing stereotypes about these pupils based on their cultural *distance*: they were supposed to have more handicaps and to lack interest in school; teachers often attributed to them resistance to curricular contents as well as to schools norms and values, as these statements of teachers reflect:

> »The integration of Moroccan pupils is very difficult: they have to struggle with economic problems, but also their culture is very far (from ours), and the expectations they have for the future of their children are very different from those of the local families…«
>
> »First we intended that they (Moroccan pupils) be integrated..., but now we are resigned to basic coexistence and only ask them to comply with school rules. They have a very strong culture...«
>
> »... One day we found all the Moroccan pupils praying in the library: some of them had brought their rugs from home and had gathered all the Muslim mates, even the pre-school ones! All together praying...«

Pupils from poor Latin American families (mainly the Dominican Republic) were (initially) seen as »easy-going«, because of their supposed cultural-linguistic proximity, but they were subject to low expectations in terms of academic outcomes, and characterized as »low-achievers«.

An important difference from the school in Mataró that can help understand the salience of this *culturalist* position is that a significant proportion of immigrant children had only recently arrived in the village as newcomers, while in Mataró there were mostly »second generation« immigrants. Also, we have to note the polarization in children's adscription not only in terms of culture but also of social class (at *Icaria* most of the pupils came from working-class families regardless of their origins and nationalities).

The hierarchization of *cultures* inside school and its impact on academic and social dynamics and trajectories can be summarized by referring to the treatment of languages: on the one side, the spontaneous use of English or German by children from European immigrant families was even admired among the teachers, to the extent that British mothers were invited to conduct out-of-school English lessons. On the other side, the Moroccan dialect of Arab was prominently and explicitly pointed out as an insuperable barrier for pedagogic contents and goals. Only the Moroccan pupils attended remedial linguistic classes designed for the »nouvinguts« (newcomers). European and Latin American pupils never were supposed to *need* linguistic support.

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In summary, the reflections of broad stigmatizing stereotypes within *Muntanyà* constructed Moroccan children as belonging to a »very strong Arab culture« which supposedly *collided* with the values of the school: »Their values and expectations are very far from ours. They don't appreciate the future that education can provide«. Claims like that were accompanied by low expectations and a sense of mistrust that ended up permeating social relations, including peer interactions, which in turn damaged these pupils' academic engagement in dramatic ways.

Impact on peer relations and pupils' experiences: dynamics of inclusion/exclusion

Similar impact at Icària and Muntanyà

The symbolic and pedagogic construction of children from (poor-extracomunitarian) immigrant backgrounds as some kind of academically »inferior« pupils had its correlation at the level of peer relations and cultures, following the findings of previous researchers (e.g., Gillborn, op cit., Troyna/Hatcher 1992, Griffiths/Troyna 1995, Hatcher 1995, Connolly, op. cit., Lewis, op. cit.).

At both schools, these pupils had weak and unstable positions in peer groups, and they were especially marginalised in informal contexts: in the playground during recess and in other leisure activities such as outdoors activities and excursions.

In every classroom at least one of the most rejected classmates was from poor immigrant origin, and the basic indicators of their devaluated position were two: in the first place, the display of *pollution* or *cooties* rituals[12] to avoid them: for example, the rejected children were told that they were infected with »peste« (black death disease), or that they were »de la muerte« (»belonging to Death«), frequently they were said to »smell«. In the second place, there was racist name-calling, as illustrated in an ethnographic scene: one spring morning at recess time, two outsider boys from 2nd grade, Fili (sub-Saharan origin) and Mohamed (Moroccan), decided to spend their time chasing some of the most popular girls. While I was observing them from a distance, the girls came icreasingly close to me and finally asked for my help shouting, in a very excited way: »¡Jo! ¡Dile al negrito i al colacao que paren de pegarnos y de perseguirnos!«. (»Hey!! Tell the little nigger and the ›colacao‹ – brown cocoa - to stop beating and chasing us!«).

[12]When pollution rituals appear, even in play, they frequently express and enact larger patterns of inequality, by gender, by social class and race, and by bodily characteristics like weight and motor coordination. Recoiling from physical proximity with another person and their belongings because they are perceived as contaminating is a powerful statement of social distance and claimed superiority (Thorne 1993: 75). See also Hirschfeld (2002).

Even if these children were apparently »well integrated« into their peer groups inside the school, they had to face an evident »fracture« of relations outside the school walls: this was much more visible in the small village of *Miramar*, where networks of school friendship were extensive and permeated children's social relations outside, leaving apart children from Moroccan and Dominican families.

Pupils from long-established immigrant families showed clear patterns of avoiding newcomers of the same origin: Moroccan children who were *second generation* immigrants or/and had been enrolled in the school from the beginning displayed *acting white* (Fordham/Ogbu 1986, Fordham 1988, Ogbu 2003) strategies to avoid being associated with the (allegedly) »dumb« newcomers of the same origin.

Sometimes these positionings were very subtle, as this scene depicts:

> »Today they were doing maths and while they were working on their sheets, Salah (Moroccan origin), Marc, Sergi and Laia (the latter three from 'autochthonous' families) talked about their activities during the past weekend. The conversation has derived in commenting which things they could do ›alone‹. Sergi claimed: ›My mother still has to accompany me to school because she's afraid of the moors‹; Salah didn't react to this allegation, neither did he respond to the next one by Laia: ›I'm frightened of them, the moors always steal sweets in shops‹.«

The appellative »*moor*« is very derogatory, but the local children did not seem to consider or identify their friend Salah as one of *them*, while Salah did not seem to regard these comments as an offense to his cultural origin.

The stigmatization and the unequal access of Moroccan (and Sub-Saharan, although their bad reputation wasn't as visible) children to ordinary curriculum in the schools led the most advantaged ones to strive for assimilation with majority pupils at any price.[13]

(Moroccan) Boys were more hard-hitting in adopting unsupportive attitudes, regardless of their age, than girls. In fact, the big exception were Moroccan girls at *Muntanyà* school: due to the fact that most of them had arrived as newcomers and to the subsequent experience of sharp collective segregation, they had built a supportive inter-age network which functioned as a buffer for new girl mates, helping and taking care of them especially in informal activities and contexts

[13]At Muntanyà, for example, veteran children even tended to avoid their mother tongue inside the classroom, as they were quite aware that their occasional use of dialectal Arabic to communicate with newcomers resulted in disturbance and isolation, making access to peer groups more difficult. In an implicit but nevertheless unequivocal form, separation from kids of their same origin was a condition sine qua on to raise their status in the popular peer groups.

(playground, excursions and school parties).[14] This last observation on gender leads us to summarize some other gender divisions and inequalities in the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion of the immigrant pupils from stigmatized cultural backgrounds:

In the playground, boys of Moroccan and Sub-Saharan background appeared more integrated than girls due to their physical abilities for team sports such as football or basketball, which were the most frequented leisure activities. Girls of the same origins, by contrast, were more isolated from their peers because of their own dynamics of interaction: as they used to socialize and play in little groups or pairs of the same sex (Renold 2005), cultural minority peers were often ostensibly segregated from the different *cohesion* rituals displayed by autochthonous girls (singing infantile rhythms or adolescent pop hits together, dressing in the same type of clothes, mutual invitations to birthday parties etc.) and were kept apart from the *underground economy of food and objects*[15] the others shared.

Most salient differences in the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion

In spite of all the shared patterns described in the previous section, the schools' different social context and *ethos* gave shape to specific experiences and dynamics:

Being situated in one of the town's poorest suburbs, *Icaria* accumulated some of the features of *oppositional culture* (e.g., Fordham/Ogbu 1986, Gillborn 1990) attributed to pupils in schools at urban peripheries. Most of them were born and raised in the same working-class quarter and immigrant parents, whether they came from internal or foreign flows. Their home and family backgrounds showed significant distance from the mainstream school culture personified by a teaching staff that originated mainly from the middle-class ranks in the center of the town. To some extent, pupils tended to share certain academic »anti-school« attitudes (Gillborn, see above).

A central indicator was the continuous use of Spanish on formal and informal occasions, which emerged as an element of resistance to the formally hegemonic use of Catalan as the dominant vehicular language. This was not intentional, however, and resulted from living in a social environment where occasions to interact with mother-tongue Catalan speakers were fewer and

[14]In contrast, teachers interpreted the Moroccan girl clique as an obvious consequence of their cultural »desire to separate« from peers and to »impose« their culture on other Moroccan girls. As one teacher half jokingly said: »They want to do a Zoco in school«.

[15] This is how Thorne (1993) labels the clandestine circulation and interchange of objects among children, especially girls: dolls, little toys, school supplies, make-up, sweets and candies, etc., which embody peer exclusion/inclusion dynamics as well as strategies of resistance to adult norms.

the use of Catalan more restricted to public areas (Woolard 2003, 2008, Nussbaum/Unamuno 2006).

Such uniformities among children enrolled at *Icaria* led to more subtle dynamics of exclusion in comparison to what happened at *Muntanyà:* there was some *race* bias in the formation of peer groups, but not as pronounced as in the school at *Miramar*.[16] Pupils from immigrant background were more integrated into the different peer groups; but as I observed, it was easier for girls to participate and contribute during formal lessons in the classrooms, while the boys reached their optimum of inclusion during recess at playground, participating in team sports, basically football.

In vivid contrast, *Muntanyà*'s environment, composition and *ethos* favoured much more polarized dynamics of inclusion and exclusion according to the pupils' origins. Despite the great cultural and socioeconomic diversity that characterized the school, the most popular and influential peer groups came from relatively wealthy local and European families, which had many extra-school connections with each other and apparently took the education of their children »very seriously« (as the staff recognized) and were keen to collaborate and participate in all aspects of the institution.

At the school in *Miramar*, Catalan was the home language of the majority of both teachers and pupils, therefore there was a natural link between formal/academic and informal linguistic uses. The Moroccan children even learnt to speak, read and write in Catalan earlier and better than in Spanish, and for the *veterans* it was also the language of spontaneous interaction with peers. Ironically and in contradiction to teachers' expectations concerning the benefits of linguistic *immersion*, this did not warrant inclusion in the native peer groups.

The *continuity* (Spindler/Spindler 1994, 2000) between school culture and patterns of family socialization among majority pupils fostered a dominant *pro-school* orientation which easily triggered patterns of conformity and engagement in all the pedagogical activities proposed inside the classroom. In some ways, the pro-school climate also reached immigrant newcomers (there were more *resilient* identifications and identity constructions), but the school didn't have

[16]For instance, in the withdrawal classes for »slow« pupils in 1rst, 2nd and 3rd grade I discovered how pupils from native and immigrant families created, in some contexts, a warm climate that favoured good friendships between children from diverse cultural backgrounds, as this scene shows: »In the last minutes devoted to free drawing, Iris (native pupil) was making her own drawing and started admiring the ones of her peers: ›I like Moha's very much!, and Rachid's!!, and that one, and this one… I like them all!!!‹. Moha, very proud, replied to her: ›We all have done very nice drawings!!‹.« (1rst grade. fieldwork quotation).

Unfortunately, these beneficial dynamics of comradeship didn't continue into the ordinary classrooms, where the pressure for segregation diluted their impact.

discursive or pedagogical tools to avoid the stigmatization and low expectations that both teachers and native pupils conferred on extra-communitarian immigrant children, especially Moroccan ones.

As a result, it was possible to distinguish a clear cultural hierarchy in the experiences of inclusion and exclusion among pupils: at all levels, European (English, German and French) children were the most popular mates to be friends with, particularly boys. Latin American children had a more ambiguous and variable position in peer groups: pupils from relatively rich countries such as Argentina or Paraguay were more popular than those from the Dominican Republic, who had a more vulnerable and shifting status, always waiting to be integrated into locals' peer groups, and finding their chances of popularity on informal occasions where they could demonstrate valued (stereotypical) expressive abilities (playing, dancing, singing, etc.).

The highest levels of segregation concerned, as stated above, Moroccan pupils, in large part because of the school's culturalist acceptance and legitimization of the dominant stigmatizing imageries of their cultural origin, and their consequent construction as »dumb« and »handicapped« by local peers. I could observe numerous scenes where this was obvious, as recently arrived pupils were systematically excluded from the activities of the ordinary curriculum. On one rare occasion, in 5th grade, when the teacher of natural science gave Lamiah the opportunity to read a passage from the text book for the class, this was the reaction:

> »When Lamiah started reading aloud, slowly but self-confidently, there was a strong expectation among the rest of the pupils: everybody was surprised by her great fluency, to the extreme that one of the (native-born) boys exclaimed, expressing a general feeling: Wow!! How well Lamiah is reading!!!« (5th grade, fieldwork quotation)

Unfortunately, Lamiah and her Moroccan girl mates didn't have many chances of demonstrating their smartness and skills to their native peers, and always retained a sense of »not belonging«. At this point we should remember the encapsulated and segregated network that all the Moroccan girls at this school had developed to protect themselves from rejection and isolation. Even when some teachers tried to intervene in order to promote the mixing and inclusion of these children, the results were discouraging, as these intentions were easily undermined by teachers' (unconscious) pre-notions of cultural in/exclusion, as the following quote expresses quite dramatically:

> »At recess time, Rosa (teacher) was dynamizing the playground in order to favour shared playing. She suggested to some of the older girls a cooperative play with a ball. For a while they were all playing together but with time Rosa detected that Loubna, Lamiah

> and Rahma passed the ball only to each other, laughing in complicity. Visibly annoyed, Rosa cried out: ›¡Hey, girls, this game is both for Moroccans and for Catalans!, you must pass the ball to Anna, Cinta and Sarah‹ (English origin), who still haven't received it…‹.«

Such verbalizations solidified excluding ethnification processes that virtually made »Catalan« identity compatible with and assimilative to socially privileged cultural origins (European and affluent Latin American countries) but incompatible with depreciated cultural backgrounds (in my study Moroccan, Sub-Saharan, and, less clearly, Dominican).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a summary of comparative results from two cases studies on primary schools in Catalonia (Spain) with the goal of showing to which extent race and ethnicity are embedded in the schools' cultures, although *(re)production* (Bourdieu/Passeron 1970) dynamics and processes follow specific paths and patterns that must be discovered and analyzed ethnographically in each school in connection with their social and community context.

It has been pointed out that of the way children from immigrant backgrounds are conceptualized in a hierarchy of inclusion/exclusion of new citizenships, extraneous to but reproduced by schools, is based on the differential responses schools give in terms of educational expectations and attention to pupils from different socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds.[17] Nevertheless, the modalities and forms in which this symbolic and cultural hierarchy is constructed and maintained can vary markedly and significantly from one institution to another: contrasting the two case studies on Mataró and *Miramar* has revealed the functioning and the effects of such mechanisms on pupils' peer relations through a different and to some degree opposite school *ethos*: colour-blind *versus* culturalist. Both of types of ethos had a critical impact on the (re)production of pupils' social geographies and on their experiences of sociability and academic engagement.

In Catalonia and Spain, even though there is a growing awareness of and involvement in *intercultural education* issues, it is still necessary to go beyond soft and innocuous approximations to cultural diversity and to be conscious of the fact that »racism needs to be tackled as a critical part of a much broader project by schools, to help children to understand their own lives, relationships, experiences, ideas and social behaviour« (Hatcher 1995: 114), as

[17] Broader ethnographical accounts of the informal dynamics and formal strategies that segregate pupils within the school, including educational services devoted to early childhood through the end of compulsory education, can be found in Carrasco et al. (2011).

children actively understand *race* as a socially meaningful category and a significant feature of personal identity (Van Ausdale/Feagin 2002, Lewis 2003).

Therefore, as Davidson suggests (1996), it is critical for scholars to view schools as more than stages for cultural and social reproduction. Schools can make a difference so that, due to socially constructed unequal attributions to their ethnic or *racial* identity, pupils do not react to schooling in a neatly predictable way. Instead, schools have a potential to be important cultural sites for the empowerment of marginalized children and youth, so that they can challenge power relations and beliefs in the dominant culture.

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