

Re-Shaping Kids Through Public Policy on Diversity

Lessons from Madrid



Margarita del Olmo



Margarita del Olmo

Re-Shaping Kids Through Public Policy on Diversity

Lessons From Madrid

navreme / publications

Volume 11

June 2010

This book was carried out within the framework of the research project “Participation Strategies and Racism Prevention in Schools II” (FFI2009-08762)



Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Austria

You are free:

- to copy, distribute, display, and perform the work
- to make derivative works

Under the following conditions:



Attribution. You must give the original author credit.



Non-Commercial. You may not use this work for commercial purposes.



Share Alike. If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under a licence identical to this one.

- For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the licence terms of this work.
- Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.

Your fair use and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

Vol 11 - Re-Shaping Kids Through Public Policy on Diversity. Lessons from Madrid.

Margarita del Olmo Pintado

Series navreme publications I "research for practice" No. 11. 222p. Introduction by

Bernd Baumgartl

ISBN-13: 978-9989-192-19-7. EAN: 9789989192197.

Madrid/Vienna, June 2010

For

Marius, Cristian, Sergio, Floris, Vlad,
William, Li, Ilona, Elisabeth, Wei,
Xinji, Slava, Roman, Hugo, Cristian,
Alexandra, Denis, Yura, Jei Fei,
Luza, Souhaib, Marya, Tsveta, Raul,
Mateus, Dumitru, Sukaina, Carolina,
Ana Maria, Eliseu, Marius, Andre,
Andressa, Denisa, Flavius, Alana, Naiade,
Victor, Jonathan, Ángel, Caridad, Carlos,
and Ana Carolina,

and to their resilience

**and in memory of Bernd Baumgartl,
and his inspiration**

Unequal Opportunities for Immigrants in Europe

Introduction by Bernd Baumgartl.....I

Chapter 1: Questioning (the reasons behind the ethnography)

- Goals of this book and the people who made it possible..... 1**
- Reasons why I started doing fieldwork in a Linking Classroom in the first place..... 7**
- Questions I wanted to address through my fieldwork..... 10**

Chapter 2: Contextualizing (the public policy)

- Introduction to the Spanish school system..... 13**
- The “Welcome Schools” Policy 18**
- Similar policies in other parts of Spain..... 26**
- Programs in other countries with more experience in immigration 29**

Chapter 3: Participating (the classroom)

- What is the classroom like? 41**
- Who are the teachers?..... 44**
- Who are the students and what are they doing in the Linking Classroom?... 53**

Chapter 4: Challenging (unresolved issues)

- Beyond the Linking Classroom..... 73**
- Methodology in the Linking Classroom..... 81**
- The issue of the Maternal Language..... 85**
- The process of learning Spanish..... 88**
- Expectations: students’ own and those of others..... 93**
- Opinions about the Program..... 96**

Chapter 5: Reflecting (on my own role)	
-Problems in gaining access to the field.....	101
-Framing my fieldwork in the classroom.....	105
-Framing my fieldwork among policy-makers.....	113
-In search of further reciprocity.....	118
Chapter 6: Re-questioning (conclusions for further debate)	
-An introduction to shaping the discussion.....	121
-Does the Program aimed to attain participation for immigrant students on equal terms as the rest of society?	124
-Does the Program remove the obstacles to fair participation?.....	125
-Which obstacles does the Program remove? How does it removethem?.....	129
-Which obstacles remain after the Program? Why?.....	133
-What can policies do to make immigrant students' participation in society fairer?.....	136
References.....	145

Unequal Opportunities for Immigrants in Europe

Introduction to the Book

“Re-shaping Kids” by Margarita del Olmo Pintado Bernd Baumgartl

*When Dr. Del Olmo and I first met, we were attending a **session on “Race and Ethnicity” at the Salzburg Seminar (1999)**. This Seminar is a high-brow, US-funded meeting place for mid-career officials, business people – and academics. One member of the prestigious faculty was Lani Guinier, a leading scientist on “race” relations in the United States. Her book on equality, “Lift Every Voice,”¹ had been published a few months before the Seminar, and she told us the story of the canary - people who suffer themselves from racial discrimination develop a sixth sense for all kinds of situations where discrimination is a danger. Like the canaries, introduced by miners into mines because these birds are the first to smell and react to poisonous gases, discrimination victims “smell” structures, settings, and situations, where people are treated unequally and unfairly. The book *Re-shaping Kids* is a product of the project “**Integration Strategies and Racism Prevention in Schools**” (2007-09), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Education. The project aims to study the processes embedded in the arrival and adaptation of immigrant children in the schools of the Community of Madrid. It is particularly focused on students and teachers. At the centre of attention are their needs and difficulties in implementing the schools' strategies to facilitate the adaptation process of immigrant students. In the view of the research team, the integration of immigration students should be understood as a way to make all students “fit for everyday life,” so they are in a position to achieve their own (changing) objectives. A previous output of the project,*

¹ Gunier, Lani (1998). *Lift Every Voice. Turning a Civil Rights Setback into a New Vision of Social Justice*. Simon & Schuster: New York.

an analysis of racism in Spanish schools, was published by navreme as [Volume 6](#) (Racism: A Teenagers' Perspective).² Building on these in-depth interviews with youth in schools in Madrid, and their analysis and research, a "Guide to Talking about Racism in Schools" was produced, published as [Volume 8](#) of the navreme series.³

However, this project (and the present book) continues and deepens a series of joint projects, events and work on intercultural education and racism.

*The first project, **INTER-Comenius – A Guide for Intercultural Education (2002-5)**,⁴ focused on developing, using and validating a practical guide that facilitates analysis, implementation and improvement of intercultural education in schools. The resulting Guide book for initial and in-service teacher training⁵ was published in seven European languages, and is at present in use in a number of teacher training academies throughout Europe.*

*The academic **INTER conference in April 2005** with some 200 participants from Europe and the USA discussed and disseminated the findings to a wider audience. In 2005, INTER was awarded the **European Award for Intercultural Education** by the [Evens Foundation](#)⁶ in Antwerp (Belgium). This European Prize is awarded to a project or organization deemed to have made an outstanding contribution to European social integration in the field of intercultural education, and that has demonstrated determination and creativity. In 2006, it was also awarded*

² **Racism: A Teenagers' Perspective. Results of Research from Madrid [El Racismo desde el punto de vista de los adolescentes. Resultados de un trabajo de investigación preliminar realizado en Madrid]**. Grupo INTER - UNED/ Universidad Complutense/CSIC. Bilingual edition, with a prologue by Bernd Baumgartl. Series navremepublications No. 6, ISBN 9989-50-051-7. 252 p. Madrid/ Vienna, February 2007.

³ **Racism: What It Is and How to Deal with It [A Guide to Talking about Racism]**. INTER Group - UNED/Universidad Complutense/CSIC. Series navremepublications No. 8, ISBN 9989-50-054-1. 166 p. Madrid/Vienna, July 2007.

⁴ <http://inter.up.pt/>

⁵ **Culture Is Our Focus, Diversity Is Our Normality [INTER Guide for Intercultural Education]**. Series navremepublications No. 4. ISBN 9989-50-041-X. 226 p. Madrid/Vienna, March 2006 (1st edition)/July 2007 (2nd edition).

⁶ www.evensfoundation.org

the “**Premio Aula**” for the best educational materials of the year by the Spanish Ministry of Education.

INTER-Alfa (2007-9) expands the engagement of the group in the field of education and training, peace, xenophobia and racism studies to the level of post-graduate higher education, and beyond Europe – to Latin America. The work plan foresees identifying and locating teacher training materials on intercultural education developed for Chile, Columbia, Ecuador and Mexico, starting in early 2007 and the joint development of an M.A. curriculum on “Intercultural Education,” to be implemented thereafter at participating universities in Europe and Latin America.

Finally (so far), the establishment of the “**Inter-Network - European Network on Intercultural Education**” (2007-10) is financed by the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) of the European Commission, under the Comenius scheme (for general education), and is being implemented with a group of some 40 Spanish and European partners, including schools.

At present, a reflective scientific paper on “**Crashes of Racism**” (2008), to be published soon, analyses the diverse understanding, role and function of racism in Europe and the USA, by questioning the principal political measures applied to compensate for systemic racism, which can be framed as follows: affirmative action (positive discrimination) in North America, and de-ethnicisation of (ethnic) conflict in Europe. The paper, which is co-authored with a United States historian, also questions our own roles as members of societies which still consider the question of skin colour to be a relevant characteristic of human beings. Finally, it tries to explain the misunderstanding between U.S. and European academics as yet another clash of intercultural relations.

A new project proposal, which is being developed at present, aims to design a **European Guide to Talking about Racism** in schools and other education and training settings. Drawing on a proven method at the European level, it will enlarge the first “Guide to Talking about Racism” published in English and Spanish, with the help of expert organisations from a range of European countries, in order to produce teacher training materials for use throughout Europe.

Clearly, the issues of intercultural education, competences, relations, and cooperation have gained relevance since 1989, the European watershed. In particular, over the last decade questions of immigration and

*integration have moved from the marginal and exotic wishful thinking of a few to the top news of newspapers, television and political discussions. The “**foreigner question**” (which is nothing other than a variant of what Tzvetan Todorov in 1984 called “The Problem of the Other”) is shaping political discussions at municipal, national and European levels. Immigration and the ways to manage it, and integration and the measures for dealing with it, have become crucial and decisive questions in the kind of societies we will be living in. Political reactions range from naïvely ignoring foreigners and stubbornly wishing to kick them all out, to blue-eyed visions of a multicultural society, and un-reflected claims for a borderless cultural relativism. They all have one thing in common: they do not offer feasible or desirable solutions for **immigration and integration**. Despite convinced populist rhetoric from all sides of the political spectra, there are only question marks when it comes to sustainable and future-oriented solutions for the major challenge of what kind of Europe we want to live in, in the future. How much immigration, from where, by whom, under what conditions, etc., and what kind of integration, into what, until when, how, and by whom?*

Of course, neither this book nor the series of projects on similar questions pretend to know the all-encompassing answers to these questions. But they at least attempt to focus on the right questions, and they try to understand, in a nutshell, the mechanisms which (do not) work. And, project after project, experience is gathered, and specific solutions are found which may help in dealing with the growing diversity which we - and Europe! – definitively cannot and must not ignore any longer.

As I was offered the opportunity to read and benefit from the ideas contained in this monograph, I was reminded of the picture of the canary again: as an anthropologist, Del Olmo in fact identifies (i.e., “smells”) the flaws and the strength of action on individuals, which is taking place in order to implement a certain policy (of “integration”). True, this policy may be, and often actually is, well-intentioned. However, under her magnifying glass of participatory observation, the researcher also finds counter-productive mechanisms, suboptimal processes, and systemic failure.

Obviously, such consequences at a meta-level have nothing at all to do with the (bad or good) intentions or professional capacities of the people busy in implementing them. Even more, people who act according to their best knowledge and their conscience perpetuate and ameliorate a

system which, without them, would perhaps have failed sooner. This is the dilemma Del Olmo is after: a programme which is designed to eliminate unequal opportunities, and its failures or successes.

Working in one single class with a limited group of (changing) students over more than three years, she made a methodological choice, in clear contrast to most of the research funded by the European Commission, which aims at big quantities, national comparison, and statistical relevance. Del Olmo takes the opposite direction: while indeed sacrificing representativity, she gains in depth and empathy. She is not working on numbers or cases, but on people. She is, thereby, sharpening our view of the very humane and often miserable conditions and feelings of people who move to our supposedly rich, social, and inclusive societies. Her methodological perseverance maintains the focus on individual people, and this is precisely what involves the reader, too; in her own words: “nevertheless we [as anthropologists] do know that the people we work with are part of a broader category and that their behavior is significant enough for the questions we choose to deal with. Our work is not fit to represent but it is an excellent tool to document how people deal with their everyday lives.”

Moreover, something that is highly unusual for scientists, she is also concerned with the future fate of her “objects of research”: she wants to “give back” and “share knowledge” – perhaps a poetic description of what European research programmes often call applied research or action research; but maybe again a different notion of warm interpersonal relations, which goes beyond the odd policy-brief.

In her self-reflective Chapter five, she tell us that she provides these kids with “a detailed analysis of what a policy promises, and what it actually gives, and why.” We tend to forget that policies, often designed on a table, against the other party, or in parliamentary battles, do impact the individual lives of people; but they hardly inform them, let alone, involve them. Consequently and rightly (although still unusual for many inhabitants of the ivory towers of the social sciences), her last chapter offers some suggestions for policy and practice, at least as far as the Linking Classroom programme is concerned.

In conclusion, in my opinion Del Olmo’s book presents a thorough threefold interdisciplinary analysis at the meta-level:

- *Firstly, it contains her (personal) conclusions from the viewpoint of an anthropologist.*
- *Secondly, it discusses the (scientific) question of how the 'Linking Classrooms' programme excludes or includes findings of modern education methodology - and of contemporary integration management.*
- *Thirdly, it clearly inserts the 'Linking Classrooms' into a broader (political) context and discussion - whether the programme excludes kids from or includes them in the community, whether it achieves the 'integration' objectives for which it was established, whether these objectives were the right ones - and what suggestions, if any, an anthropologist can and wants to formulate.*

Nevertheless, and despite her refusal to formulate general therapies and solutions, Del Olmo's work contains meaningful food for thought, and implicitly generates highly concrete recommendations for action, for several levels of decision-makers and policy-makers:

- a) At the operational level: for teachers and school directors working with 'Linking Classrooms.'*
- b) At the programmatic level: for administrators and managers of 'Linking Classrooms.'*
- c) At the political level: for policy-makers at the respective levels of government who established 'Linking Classrooms.'*

Some of the resulting recommendations for teachers and school managers could be:

- *To organise training on intercultural education and competences for tutors in the Linking Classroom Programme.*
- *To test incoming students about their specific level of knowledge and academic gaps, and design an individual plan for each student to achieve the objectives of the programme.*
- *To introduce sessions which address the specific difficulties of immigrant children due to their change of country of residence, and*

support them in dealing with this traumatic experience on a case-by-case basis.

- To allow for individual decisions on the duration of attendance to the Linking Classroom Programme, so that kids exit the programme only when they have achieved their (personal) learning outcome and are prepared to join regular classes.*

Emerging recommendations for administrators of the programme could be:

- To add academic content to the curriculum of the Linking Classroom programme, in order to fulfil predictable gaps of knowledge relating to Spanish history, culture and society.*
- To investigate the reasons why half of the Linking Classroom alumni only make it into Special Schools.*
- To reform the Linking School programme along these lines and establish the target of reaching the same percentage of schooling in general education for immigrants as for native children.*

Eventually, consequential recommendations for policy-makers could be:

- To commission a comprehensive cost-benefit assessment of the suboptimal integration of immigrant kids and their families, including long-term costs and alternative/comparative settings.*
- To introduce additional measures, apart from the Linking Classroom sub-programme, in order to reach other integration objectives of the Welcome Schools programme also.*
- To explicitly redesign the Welcome Schools programme in order to value the (diversity of) immigrant students and their previous knowledge, in order to empower them and prepare them to face the specific challenges and difficulties they are confronted with on the labour market and in society.*
- To rephrase the objectives of the programme, so they include the concepts of “education for democratic citizenship,” “valuing*

diversity,” and “equal opportunities and possibilities” as desired outcomes⁷.

The English writer Tim Parks, in his novel “Europa,”⁸ finds the (metaphor of the) European Union in a coach transporting a group of teachers to a study trip in Brussels. Margarita Del Olmo finds the millions of immigrants – who contribute to the richness of Europe – in one classroom in a district school in Madrid.

When reading Del Olmo’s story and the stories of these kids, the faces and fates of these kids emerge before our inner eye, and we as readers can feel their crashed expectations, their restrained fears and their merciless lack of future along with them.

This is what makes her small-scale findings relevant again - for a larger group of policy-makers, school administrators, teachers – and makes readers interested in the dominating themes of immigration and integration in Europe.

⁷ See, for example, the objectives of “Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights” (EDC/HRE), agreed to by all 46 member countries of the Council of Europe, i.e. “a set of educational practices and activities designed to help young people and adults to play an active part in democratic life and exercise their rights and responsibilities in society.” (<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/>). Diversity in this context “implies moving beyond the idea of tolerance to a genuine respect for an appreciation for difference. It is central to the idea of pluralism and multi-culturalism and therefore a cornerstone of EDC. EDC therefore must include opportunities to examine perceptions, challenge bias and stereotyping. It must also aim to ensure that difference is celebrated and embraced within the local, national, regional and international community” (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/What_is_EDC/Glossary/KeyTerms_en.asp#191_7008).

⁸ Parks, Tim (1998). *Europa*. Vintage/Random House: London.

Chapter 1: Questioning (the reasons behind the ethnography)

Goals of this book and the people who made it possible

I am not among those who think that education can change societies and the fate of people –the way my grandfather, Sidonio Pintado, did as a teacher, a principal, a newspaper writer, and adviser to the Ministry of Education of the government of the Second Republic in Spain.⁹

As an ethnographer, I think that educational institutions aim to reproduce societies with the smallest number of changes possible, even changing in order to avoid really changing. I admit that these types of cosmetic changes sometimes have a positive effect upon the fate of some individuals, but this is always an exception, never the rule.

But I do think ethnography can change me, and it did. My fieldwork showed me, day by day, step by step, how schools demand meaningful transformations from kids¹⁰, and re-shape them deeply because they are never good enough, twisting the fate of the ones who were around me for the worse.

This book will try to show how this is being done in the everyday lives of forty-three kids who were not born in Madrid, but have arrived recently from different parts of the world. Since arriving, they have gone to school (almost every day) to a special class for foreign kids only, where they are taught by a sensitive teacher who is deeply convinced that empathy is her first and most important tool. Their classroom is called a “Linking Classroom,” and it is part of a broader program –the “Welcome Schools

⁹ His commitment to these ideas led to his assassination by the Franco government.

¹⁰ I use the term “kids” because they are not children and it reflects their perception of themselves better than “teenagers”.

Program”¹¹- implemented by the Community of Madrid as the main policy to address diversity in schools.

This is the context which I will use in this book to show how schools as institutions, faced with a variety of diverse kids (and what I mean here is that every kid is diverse), select differences among them, assign a particular social meaning to these differences, and based on these differences, legitimate social inequality, re-shaping these immigrant kids and their expectations, in order to make them fit into the lower part of the structure of Spanish society. All of this happens under the caring eyes of the teachers who, despite their hopes for exactly the opposite results, are the main tools of the process!

I have organized my arguments into six chapters. Chapter 1 *Questioning (the reasons behind the ethnography)*, speaks about the reasons why I did this work and who helped me. It analyzes the reasons why I started my fieldwork in a “Linking Classroom” and explores the initial questions I wanted to address with it, and why they did not work.

Chapter 2, *Contextualizing (the public policy)*, introduces the reader to the policy of the ‘Welcome Schools Program’ which was developed by the Community of Madrid to address the needs of recently arrived kids who have accompanied their parents and their immigration project. It focuses on what the policy aims at, the general regulations of the whole policy, and, in particular, the specific regulation concerning the Linking Classrooms –the main branch of the program. This chapter will also try to put this specific policy into a broader context of analysis, comparing it with similar programs in other Autonomous Communities of Spain, first, and afterwards in Austria and the US, both chosen as examples of countries with a longer and broader experience in immigration than is the case for Spain.

Chapter 3, *Participating (the classroom)*, places the reader inside the classroom, speaking about the people affected by the program: the teachers and the students. It addresses questions such as who they are, where they come from, what they do, or what their expectations are, as I perceived them during my fieldwork. This analysis relies on the

¹¹ In Spanish, the words used for the classroom are: “Aulas de Enlace,” and for the Program, “Escuelas de Bienvenida.”

ethnographic material I gathered during the three school years I shared with the students and the teachers in a Linking Classroom – a class set apart for recently arrived immigrant students by the “Welcome Schools” policy - of a school located in one of the two districts with the greatest number of immigrants in the city of Madrid.

Chapter 4 *Challenging (unresolved issues)*, deals with what I think are the most important issues left unsolved by the policy: the transition into the regular school system once the Program is over, the methodology used in the Linking Classroom to reach the goals of the Program, the question of the children’s mother tongue, their process of learning Spanish as I see it, relying on social mechanisms which have to do with students’ role as adolescents, the expectations regarding their future – their own expectations and the teachers’ expectations, and, finally, what the people involved in the program think about it and why.

Chapter 5, *Reflecting (on my own role)*, focuses on the methodological questions of the study, on my role, and on the conflict of interests my role provoked throughout the fieldwork, in the classroom and among policy-makers. At the end, it deals with the question of reciprocity from an ethical point of view.

Finally, Chapter 6, *Re-questioning (conclusions for further debate)*, builds on my final conclusions and their use in a broader debate on public policy. It places the issue of integration in a broader framework. On this basis, it analyzes the goals of the policy and, according to them, what the Program solves and what it leaves unsolved. It ends with a general discussion of immigrant students’ opportunities to participate in the host society on equal terms with native students.

This final chapter is related to my highest goal in writing this text: to make a contribution to the discussion of education policies in Europe, especially to those that deal with diversity. My contribution aims to unmask the relationship between diversity and inequality, pointing out with particular interest the mechanisms that legitimate the transformation of children from diversity to inequality, and the convictions and mindsets of those who steer this transformation by blaming the victims (Ryan 1972).

This last goal was transformed from a hope into a necessity, inspired by my colleague and friend, Dr. Bernd Baumgartl, who teased and pitied my

selfish idea of transforming myself, and always reminded me that I am being paid for something else beyond that. I owe the process of transformation of my original perspective for writing this book to him, as well as innumerable conversations sharing cigarettes, heated discussions, generous advice, a peaceful place to work in Vienna,¹² and on top of everything his trust, which has inspired me even more.

There are others to whom I am also in debt.

The funds for my work came, in the first place, from the Ministry of Education in Spain, which provided economic assistance for three years to develop our research project “Integration Strategies and Anti-racist Education in Schools.”¹³ In second place, the Department of International Relations of my institution, the Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC),¹⁴ gave me three grants to fund my one and a half month stays in Vienna over the last three years, thanks to the CSIC agreement with the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaft.

I feel privileged to be part of an international research team called the INTER Group,¹⁵ which has loose boundaries but a close-knit core. Dr. Teresa Aguado, Patricia Mata, Dr. Beatriz Malik, Inés Gil, Dr. Belén Ballesteros, Carmen Osuna and Dr. Caridad Hernández are the ones who are at the center of this team and make it possible and flexible for the rest. They provide my own work with further meaning, friendship, additional trust, lots of fun, and sometimes unbearable pressure.

My colleagues, Dr. Matilde Fernández, Dr. Traude Müllauer-Seichter, and Dr. Alicia Re Cruz (with Dr. Baumgartl, as well) have jumped with me into the opportunity to develop the research project on integration in schools. We work in close contact, and benefit from each others' ideas,

¹² I was a researcher in residence hosted by navreme, Vienna (www.navreme.net) during my stays in 2006, 2007, and 2008. In 2006 I was also a visiting researcher in the Zentrum für Soziale Innovation (www.zsi.at).

¹³ The Project was funded by the I+D Program of the Ministry, which assigned it the reference: HUM2006-03511FILO. The project website is: www.navreme.net/integration.

¹⁴ www.csic.es

¹⁵ www.uned.es/intergroup

experiences, frustrations, hospitality, and friendship. They provide me with the opportunity to place my own work in a cross-society comparative framework, an opportunity from which this book has benefited.

I owe many coffees to my colleagues and friends at the CSIC, Dr. Elvira Martín Contreras and Dr. Mirian Galante. I cannot survive the day without coffee at ten o'clock in the morning. Elvira and Mirian share not only coffee with me but our daily obsessions, good news, complaints about the latest paperwork, and especially our fears about uncertainties, thus enabling us to live comfortably with them the rest of the time. I have also shared moments like these with Dr. Esther Hernández and Dr. Pura Fernández, who have sustained me through good and bad times, especially through our responsibilities and frustrations as chairs of our respective Departments.

I also want to thank all the ideas which inspired me while reading, talking, discussing, and thinking with a beautiful sentence by Pablo Neruda: "The world of the arts is a great workshop where everyone works and helps each other, even if they do not know it or think so. And, first of all, we have all received help from the work of those who have gone before us." (Neruda 1968: 1103)

Dr. Nancy Konvalinka has carefully edited my limited Euro-English and made it just English. I have profited from her being an anthropologist, and from her excellent knowledge of Spanish which she has used to understand my English.

My husband, Dr. Fernando Monge, an anthropologist himself, has always given me what human beings desperately search for: respect. On top of it he has trusted, encouraged, and even pushed me up when I was about to touch the stars but lacked a bit of courage.

My son, Guillermo Monge, who is not an anthropologist but a mathematician-to-be, has let me share my fieldwork experience with him on a daily basis. He was the only one who easily understood my boredom in the classroom and he has provided me with meaningful comments on school life and with the very reason to start working in schools: I wanted to share his interesting life a little more.

The teachers with whom I have done my fieldwork have accepted me in their lessons with an ease that surprised me after so many unsuccessful attempts to start ethnographic work in a Linking Classroom. They put up with my erratic schedule and my prolonged sojourn and just gave me love in exchange.

The 43 kids I shared the classroom with (twelve at a time), have come and gone. I have lost track of many of them and am still in touch with some. They always discovered and gave meaning to my stay, and to me - but were never fooled by my somewhat equivocal introduction as a teacher. I learned painfully from them that exercises in the classroom have no end, ever, and that there is no need to rush to finish them because there are always more to come. I learned that schools have a purpose that is different from their own, but one has to make the best of it. I hope I will be able to pass their wisdom on to the reader. I want to dedicate this book to their resilience in enduring boredom, deep changes, struggles, difficulties, loneliness, the loss of their maternal languages, relatives and friends, and the love and care of teachers.

Vienna, May 26, 2008.

Reasons why I started doing fieldwork in a Linking Classroom in the first place

From 2002 to 2005, I was working with the INTER Group in an EU funded project on Intercultural Education.¹⁶ The first leg of the project was to map cultural diversity in the school systems of the participating countries¹⁷: to assess how they understood diversity and how they addressed it.¹⁸

At that time, the principal of one of the schools I was visiting pointed out a policy that the Community of Madrid¹⁹ had just designed and which was about to be implemented. It aimed to deal with diversity and identified diversity with immigrant students. The Program was called the “Welcome Schools” and started in February 2003. But even before it was effective, there were already rumors about it. The principal of this school told me about complaints from both parents and teachers even before it started. In particular, the parents did not want their kids set apart from the rest of the school (which was about all they knew at that time about the program), especially because their children were going to be taught separately from Spanish kids.

From an Intercultural Education perspective, which was the one we were working from (Aguado 2003), classifying some students as diverse because of their origin and setting a classroom apart from the rest of the school for them was just the opposite of what was desirable. It is objectionable for a variety of reasons which we have learned not only from our experience, but from many studies in different countries:

¹⁶ www.uned.es/interproject.

¹⁷ Austria, Czech Republic, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

¹⁸ The results of the study were published in Spanish and English (Aguado ed. 2006)

¹⁹ In Spain, except for the main Law of Education which plays the role of a general framework for the state, the responsibility for designing and implementing school policy relies in the Autonomous Government; in my case that was the Board of Education of the Community of Madrid Government .

- a) All human beings are diverse, but what we have in common is greater than our differences.
- b) Education should be based and built upon kids' diversity; their differences should be the building blocks of a teaching/learning process.
- c) There is no better way to learn a language than to be part (and feel like part) of an environment where that language is spoken.
- d) Any kind of education policy which sets students apart because of their differences will show (them and others) a negative image of these kids, and have consequences for their self-perception.
- e) Dealing with differences only as if they were shortcomings creates a negative image of differences, instead of a positive one.
- f) Conceiving education as a process targeting homogeneous groups is an illusion.
- g) Trying to homogenize groups of students by separating the ones who are perceived as different, and for that reason, unfit to receive a regular education, is not working.
- h) No school policy inspired by the idea of compensation ever compensates anything, but rather creates unequal groups.

With these ideas in mind, my opinion on the program about to be implemented was not good and my expectations for its results were very low, but my interest never waned.

So far, I have spoken only about the first phase of the European INTER project (i.e. the needs analysis), but it had two more phases. The purpose of the second one was to design a useful tool to introduce the Intercultural Education perspective in schools in the participating countries (INTER Group 2006),²⁰ once we had assessed what we thought were the needs. But the third phase was the one which was most closely related to this present study, since it challenged my previous assumptions and was the reason I started doing fieldwork in a Linking Classroom.

The purpose of the third phase was to put our Guide into practice in all the participating institutions and countries. This was the reason I organized a Specialization Course as part of the Postgraduate Course

²⁰ This tool, which was developed as a Guide, received the European Evens Award for Intercultural Education in 2004 and the Aula Prize from the Spanish Ministry of Education in 2005.

program at the CSIC. The course took place in 2004, many colleagues from the INTER project participated as teachers, and its results were to be evaluated as part of the project. I approached the evaluation from an ethnographic perspective, keeping a regular fieldwork journal. In this way, more familiar to me than Excel programs (where we had to gather our final results), I learned significantly from the experience.

The students of the course at the CSIC were themselves teachers in schools, some of them senior teachers (one was a principal) who wanted to change how they were teaching (the principal wanted to change the whole school!). Some of them were being trained as teachers for the first time, but they had already had experience in schools as part of their *practicum*. They were all familiar with the Linking Classrooms Program that had already started at that time. Some of them had even taught in Linking Classrooms. Their opinions were always in favor of the program and they systematically disagreed with my views, arguing that the only way Linking Classrooms could work was from an Intercultural Education perspective. They told me: “The only way to work in a Linking Classroom is using an Intercultural methodology.”²¹By this they meant that it is necessary to consider differences in the process of learning, both as a starting point and throughout the whole process.

I was very puzzled, and this was enough to start me out on ethnographic fieldwork.

These teachers offered me my first contacts for entering classrooms, and I paid some visits to their classrooms, but it would take me a whole year to finally gain formal access to a Linking Classroom as a base for my fieldwork.

I continued to be puzzled for the first year of my fieldwork, and during the second, my confusion was even broader and deeper, but this story belongs to Chapter 5 of this book, the chapter which deals with my role in the Linking Classroom.

²¹ Evaluation Journal, March 7, 2005.

Questions I wanted to address through my fieldwork

My first interest was to see how the Program worked with the kids on a daily basis. Next, I was interested in the design, regulations and goals of this policy. Finally, I wanted to test my ideas and the teachers' arguments in favor of the Program.

It was not so simple. The first two interests were more or less achievable by fieldwork, but the third one was not even useful for outlining and developing research. So when, at the end of the first year of fieldwork in the classroom, the teacher came up with the question "How is your work progressing?" and even though she did show no intention of pressing or rushing me, I felt devastated. I quickly answered "slowly," but I was plainly prevaricating.

Nevertheless, at that point I was able to start asking more useful questions:

- What does "integration" mean, even though everybody takes the concept for granted?

- Are the Linking Classrooms a useful mechanism for helping to prepare kids who come from outside of Spain to live in the society they are living in now? If so, how?

- Are there better tools for facilitating their transition?

- How do they manage this process in other Autonomous Communities of Spain? How about other countries with more experience in immigration, such as Austria or the US (to name the two that we could reach within the framework of our research project)?

- What could be improved in Madrid? What kind of mistakes could have been avoided based upon experiences elsewhere?

- What should the main perspective in orienting this kind of program be?

- Is school the only place where integration policies could be implemented? If there are other social contexts where this could be done, what are they?

- Is education the only arena where integration could be effectively achieved, as the rest of society seems to think? Or is it simply a way for the rest of the society to avoid responsibility?

These questions became the starting point of my second year of fieldwork, the 2006-07 school year.

Nevertheless, in the end, the analyses and endless discussions²² brought me back to the starting point (i.e., the question: Why did I start working in the Linking Classrooms in the first place?), but from a different, broader, and more useful perspective.

Why is integration necessary? Why is the state interested in the integration of immigrant kids in the Spanish school system? Is integration an appropriate way to speak about the process of learning to manage their lives and themselves in Spanish society? Are the Linking Classrooms an adequate policy for integrating kids?

My provisional answer to these questions is the following reasoning.

There has been no discussion about children's right to education in Spanish society, regardless of their parents' legal situation, and even regardless of their parents' right to reside in the country. This has to do with two ideas that are firmly rooted as social values: a) education should be a universal right and a duty, and b) kids under the age of 18 are minors and, as such, entitled to universal rights no matter what their situation.

These two ideas – deeply rooted and broadly shared in Spanish society - paved the way for extending education to all children living in Spain, even if their parents' situation is irregular. But these kids arrived at Spanish schools when the school system was going through a crisis nobody was able to explain. The fact was that teachers, school staff, students, and sometimes even parents were not satisfied with the efficacy of the system, especially at the point when kids reach adolescence and problems of violence, dropping out, and alcohol and drug abuse were reported, with no clues for seeking definitive answers. So at the very

²² Here I want to acknowledge the collective discussions of the Seminar “La integración a debate. Una perspectiva desde la escuela” (A Debate on Integration. A Perspective from the School), organized by the research project “Integration and Anti-racist Education in Schools,” took place at the CSIC, Madrid, January 31-February 1, 2007. The seminar results have been already edited Matilde Fernández and Müllauer-Seichter (2009).

moment immigrant kids started enrolling in schools, the unresolved general discussion on integration in Spain entered the classrooms.

Especially due to the fact that immigrant kids happened to be concentrated in public schools, they became the perfect scapegoats for the crisis in the school system: from then on everybody blamed, not the kids, but their “cultural differences.” It is no coincidence that the authorities decided to design a policy specifically oriented to solve the problems associated with immigrant students from the very same perspective that any kind of difference is addressed by the school system at large (Aguado ed. 2006): always associating this difference with shortcomings that prevent students from following regular (homogeneous) classes. According to this logic, immigrant kids’ lack of knowledge and sometimes their academic gaps were to be blamed as obstacles for their integration into regular classes. In other words, the sloppily-defined integration policy for immigrant students was interpreted as the need for a limited period of language instruction.

This was the framework in which the “Welcome Schools Program” was born, and I was interested in analyzing how it worked and what it worked to achieve.

Chapter 2: Contextualizing (public policy)

Introduction to the Spanish school system

The first I heard about an education program for immigrant kids did not explicitly mention a “Linking Classroom.” It was more ambitious but also more ambiguous: the “Welcome Schools Program.” As such, it could easily have been interpreted as separate schools. I think this was the idea against which people, especially parents, were reacting when they first heard about it. But that was not the intention.

I suspected from the beginning that it was aimed at redistributing the population of immigrant students, a population that was mostly and unevenly schooled in public schools.

At this point, before speaking about the reasons for and characteristics of a Linking Classroom, an excursus on the different types of schools and the pupils who usually attend each of them is necessary. In Spain, there are three kinds of schools: public, private, and subsidized. Private schools are privately owned, privately regulated and economically sustained by tuition paid by families. Public schools are financed with public money and totally regulated by the state: teachers are hired through a public examination by a designated committee and paid by the state, a specific salary corresponding to each category.

Subsidized schools are something in between but, as an inheritance of the Franco dictatorship which placed the responsibility for education in the hands of the Catholic Church, the number of subsidized schools in Spain (depending on the geographical area) is easily comparable, even nowadays, to the number of public schools. Not all subsidized schools are Catholic, but most of them are. During the political transition to democracy, many of the former parochial schools signed a contract with the state: they would be financed by public money and, in exchange, they

had to follow state regulations strictly in terms of academic curriculum and student enrolment. Nonetheless, they still retain the right to manage themselves by hiring teachers whose salaries, even though they are paid by the state, are managed by each school. Many of them ask families for a certain amount of money to pay for tuition, materials, extra activities, etc., and the schools can make school uniforms mandatory (like private schools, but in contrast to public schools).

This kind of contract had, at the time, different advantages for both parties, the state and the schools. Among others, it eased the transition of education from the hands of the Catholic Church into state administration, it made it possible for many of these schools to survive (once primary as well as secondary education was granted by the state free of charge), and it guaranteed access to a Catholic education after Spain had been declared a non-religious state by the 1978 Constitution.

It was supposed to be a transition, but the last Law on Education of the last Socialist Government (LOE, Organic Law on Education, 2006) has prolonged the same situation. I see two main reasons behind this decision. One is lobbying by the Catholic Church, which sees this status as a way to keep a strong hold on education. But there is also a powerful reason for the state to guarantee such a large number of subsidized schools: the cost of education per student in a subsidized school is usually significantly cheaper. This is because they usually pay teachers less but, in addition, they administer their resources in a way that lets them continue to provide an education some families value more than a public one.²³ Moreover, they have a more stable system for substituting

²³ Some families send their children to Catholic schools even when they are not Catholic.

teachers on leave.²⁴ But on top of everything, in general terms, they favor a stricter education, a firmer hand to control the kids, which is what many families demand.

There is one more important reason behind the success of subsidized schools: even though they should strictly apply the same procedures as public schools do in order to enroll students (which means favoring proximity of residence, low incomes, and number of siblings in the same school), they do not follow these provisions.

One of the researchers on our team was on a school board and thus able to observe the process of managing a school, including the enrolment process. This allowed us to document through fieldwork what we had all suspected: despite state regulations, there is enough wiggle room in state regulations to deny or provide enrolment, *and* deviation from the regulations is very difficult to prove.

Managing enrolment is the way subsidized schools have been discouraging access by immigrant kids, and this is why these kids have ended up in public schools in relatively higher numbers. There are many subtle ways to do this: by requiring fees in one way or another (such as paying for a school uniform), by not implementing the regulations regarding religion (alternative classes should be provided for students whose families do not want them to be brought up in the Catholic religion), by not offering alternative menus to kids with dietary restrictions (something which public schools also frequently fail to do), by signing special agreements with daycare institutions to automatically grant enrolment to the children who attend these institutions, as well as many other ways, including plainly denying access.

²⁴ Each year, more candidates pass the public exam than the number of teaching positions to be filled. When a public school teacher needs to be substituted for a period of time, the Ministry of Education, following a strict order, sends a new teacher from this pool of jobless but approved candidates. This provides a way for the teachers-to-be to start working in the system, but when a classroom teacher takes more than one leave in a school year, the Ministry cannot send the same candidate, because they have to follow the order of the list strictly. While this is an important difference between public and subsidized schools, it does not, however, play a very significant role because many parents are not aware of it.

Through these many subtle and illegal ways to impede access to private and subsidized schools, immigrant students became concentrated in the public school system. And this, in turn, had an attraction effect on those few who were previously enrolled in subsidized schools and felt completely isolated.²⁵ Let us take a look at the figures of enrolment by type of school before the “Welcome Schools Program” was implemented. (See table below; note that the subsidized schools are included as private schools):

Distribution of immigrant students in the Madrid Community
1999-2000 school year

	All schools	Public schools Total	Public schools %	Private schools total	Private schools %
Total	30,365	21,744	71.61	8,621	28.39

Source: UGT (2002)

²⁵ In previous research done by the INTER Group analyzing teenagers’ perceptions of racism in their everyday lives (Inter Group 2007a), many adolescents with migratory backgrounds told us about negative experiences in subsidized schools, especially Catholic schools. They felt they were the target of racist behavior and attributed being bullied to the fact that, being alone or one of the few immigrant kids in the whole school, they became easy victims. In our study we found a pattern which surprised us: teenagers said that they did not usually ask adults for help, because they think grown-ups, including teachers, are not effective in dealing with racist incidents, or mess up the situation even further. So the way kids tend to protect themselves from these kinds of racist aggression is to go discuss them with peers. They consider their peers to be other victims of the situation, kids who have also suffered from being abused in a racist way. In schools where there is only a handful of immigrant kids, they felt that they were isolated and had nobody to ask for help. They concluded their story by telling us that one of the ways to fight back against racism was to be enrolled in a school with kids they perceived as similar to them, and on whom they could count in case there were racist problems.

This uneven distribution, and the effective power subsidized schools have shown in enrolling only the kind of student population they want, even against public regulations, was loudly denounced by the Ministry of Education, the public schools themselves, and the mass media, who alerted the population to the dangers of ghettoization.

The warning was very effective. Any idea close to the concept of “ghetto” is charged with a sad but powerful history, and when summoned, it usually has the effect of ringing a social alarm.

Subsidized schools, when they felt attacked, fought back with a commonplace justification: “immigration is a new phenomenon in Spain, and we don’t know how to deal with it.”

I have always suspected that the creation of the Welcome School Program was the answer provided by the Board of Education of the Community of Madrid to this complaint, but since none of the staff has ever admitted that to me, I have only one piece of evidence to support my reasoning. The school could request association to the Linking Classrooms Program, or it could work the other way around, with the Board of Education recommending it for the school. In the 2004-05 school year, this difference was distributed as follows²⁶:

School type	Public	Private ²⁷	Total
Requested by the school	39.3%	61.0%	48%
Recommended by the Board	60.7%	39.0%	52%

Keeping in mind the uneven distribution of immigrant students between the two types of schools, my interpretation is that the Board of Education was attempting to achieve a fairer distribution.

²⁶ Unpublished information facilitated by the Secretary of Inspection on the Board of Education of the Community of Madrid.

²⁷ Here, private schools refers only to subsidized schools, since real private schools are not entitled to the program

The Welcome Schools Policy

The Welcome Schools Program is one of the Community of Madrid's policies for addressing the increasing number of immigrant students in schools.²⁸ It was implemented for the first time in February 2003 and administered by the regulations of the Board of Education of the Community of Madrid for the 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08 school years.²⁹

An official internal document of the Board of Education of the Community of Madrid justifies the Program as follows³⁰:

When sons and daughters of immigrant families enter the schools, they find it more difficult to achieve the objectives of the school system due to several factors. One of the most important factors is a lack of knowledge of the language of instruction, when their mother tongue is not Spanish. In a similar way, the previous schooling in their countries of origin conditions the process of integration into the Spanish school system. It is necessary to point out that these processes are characterized by a broad variation, depending on the social group and on the fact that some of the students come from less developed countries. In some cases, the schooling process could be inexistent or irregular. Finally, it is necessary to consider the socio-economic situation of the

²⁸ In fact, it is the main program, but it is listed in an internal document with the rest of the agenda of the Community of Madrid to address diversity. This list is not public and was kindly made available to me by a worker of the Community of Madrid who prefers to remain anonymous. See Del Olmo (2007).

²⁹ See Consejería de Educación (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007a).

³⁰ This document was made available to me thanks to special permission from the head inspector of the Community of Madrid on May 11, 2007.

immigrant population, and the fact that they often live in precarious and poor conditions.³¹

According to the official data of the Ministry of Education (MEC 2007), during the 2006-07 school year, there was a total of 7,081,682 students in Spain (excluding universities), and 637,676 of them belonged to immigrant families.

The Community of Madrid registered 113,328 immigrant students in all levels of education, excluding the university, for the same 2006-07 school year.³²

The Welcome Schools Policy is a program especially designed to address the needs of immigrant students who arrive during the school year. Originally, it was implemented through three different, and differently managed, sub-programs:

- Linking Classrooms
- After school and leisure activities to facilitate integration
- Teacher Training

³¹ The original in Spanish says: “Cuando los hijos e hijas de las familias inmigrantes se incorporan a los centros docentes, se encuentran con mayores dificultades para alcanzar los objetivos educativos debido a diversos factores, entre los que cobra especial relevancia el desconocimiento de la lengua vehicular del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje en aquellos casos en que la lengua materna no es el español. De igual manera los procesos de escolarización anterior, en los países de origen, constituyen un factor condicionante para la integración del alumnado inmigrante en el sistema educativo español y, en este sentido, hay que señalar que estos procesos se caracterizan por la variabilidad entre unos colectivos y otros, así como, en el caso de los procedentes de países menos desarrollados, por su carácter irregular o inexistente. Por último, hay que señalar que la situación socioeconómica de la población inmigrante, en condiciones de precariedad y de pobreza en muchas ocasiones, constituye un factor básico que debe considerarse.”

³² This data was made available to me thanks to special permission from the head inspector of the Community of Madrid on May 11, 2007.

Linking Classrooms is the more widely known program, sometimes the only one known. Under certain conditions,³³ it provides funds to the schools selected for hiring teachers (in the case of subsidized schools³⁴) and buying books (Spanish as a Second Language manuals and reference books), other kinds of classroom materials, and a computer.

A classroom facility equipped in this way awaits the students' arrival at the beginning of each school year. These kids should be immigrant students who have arrived recently³⁵ from outside of Spain, whose families approach the schooling commission in their neighborhood to have their children sent to one school or another.

According to an interview with the staff of one of these commissions,³⁶ the criteria for selecting children are the same as in regular schools. Sometimes families ask for a particular school because they have

³³ As I said before, this sub-program could be requested by the school or recommended by the Board of Education. According to the regulations, the prerequisite conditions for schools are: a) to accept the terms of the Welcome Schools Program, b) to have adequate space, c) to provide the kids with the opportunity to enroll in the regular program at the school after they leave the Linking Classroom, d) the school should be located in one of the geographical areas with a high concentration of immigrants, e) it should have previous experience in schooling students with no knowledge of Spanish, f) it must have a lunch program, an after school program, and the possibility of using the facilities before, after, and in between classes, and g) the number of Linking Classrooms should be balanced between rural areas and cities, and between primary and secondary education.

³⁴ In the case of public schools, one and a half teachers (that is, one full-time teacher and another part-time one) are provided directly by the Board of Education, which also selects the applicants.

³⁵ They should arrive within the school year, except in the cases when they have not completed their maximum stay in the previous school year, and the teachers think they had better stay a little longer. One student of mine, a teacher himself in a public school, reported that his own school had requested the Program for the immigrant population already present in the school. When the Program was finally granted, new students came along with it, with the prohibition to enroll foreign kids already attending the school in the Linking Classroom. This teacher told me that because of this imposition by the Board of Education, the whole school was boycotting the Linking Classroom!

³⁶ December 14, 2006.

relatives and acquaintances whose children attend it, and I was told that the commission listens to this kind of request. Kids are not only sent to a particular school but assigned to a reference course, according to their age and academic level.³⁷ This level is never definitive, and once they finish their six-month period in the Linking Classroom, the tutor will also have a say about the level to which they will be assigned. This school level can never be more that two years under or above the actual age level; however, I have never seen any kid assigned to a level above her age, even though this is a right that also exists in the school system.

The Welcome Schools Program is not mandatory. Parents are advised to send their children to a Linking Classroom if the students are not able to speak Spanish or, even if they can, when they have significant academic gaps. But families have to sign a form granting the authorities permission to place the kids in the Program. Since these exchanges are not always carried out in the presence of a translator,³⁸ I am not sure that parents are always aware of what they are signing.

Kids are supposed to stay in the Linking Classroom until they know enough Spanish to follow regular classes and up to a maximum of six months. Only students coming from a totally different cultural background (e.g., those using another alphabet, for example, from China or Morocco) have the right to a six-month extension. The regulations for 2006-07 (Consejería de Educación, 2006) extended the maximum regular stay from six to nine months.

Linking Classrooms are classified into two types: primary and secondary ones. Primary Linking Classrooms school children from 3rd to 6th grade of

³⁷ Determined on the basis of previous school certificates and a preliminary test.

³⁸ Translators should be provided by the Community of Madrid, but only upon previous request and if they are available. It is more usual for families who cannot communicate in Spanish to go to the commission with a relative or friend who serves as translator. Many parents do not need translators since they are already able to speak Spanish.

Primary Education (from 9 to 11 years old). Secondary classes gather kids who are 12 to 18 years old.³⁹

After the first weeks, the students in the Linking Classroom are supposed to attend some classes with their reference course, such as Physical Education, Music, Technology and Plastic and Visual Education. In the last two regulations, Math was also added. This is mandatory by law.

Nevertheless, this program *does not officially school students*. I was surprised when I found out through fieldwork that these pupils do not appear on the schools' official enrolment lists. Strangely enough, the regulations do not regulate this aspect at all.

The whole sub-program is regulated by the Board of Education of the Community of Madrid, and after it was implemented experimentally in 2003, it was the subject of a three-year evaluation carried out by a commission of inspectors. The evaluation, which was supposed to be continued one year later (but never was), was totally positive about the sub-program and issued some recommendations for improvement.⁴⁰

There is much less to say regarding the other two under-developed supports of the Welcome Schools Program. Their most remarkable characteristic is their lack of coordination, due to the fact that they belong to different administrative branches of the Government of the Community of Madrid, the after-school activities to facilitate integration even fell under a different Board, the one addressing youth issues.

³⁹ However, only those youngsters who are not yet 16 when they finish the Program can enter the regular school system. Older ones could remain until they are 18, but after their stay in the Linking Classroom, if they want to pursue further education, they have to follow programs for adults. This difference is marked by rule of mandatory schooling until age 16 in Spain.

⁴⁰ For a long time the website of the Program (http://www.madrid.org/dat_capital/bienvenida/ae.htm) had a section devoted to the evaluation, but nothing was ever published, either there or elsewhere. In order to find out about this evaluation, I went through an ordeal where each institution sent me to a different one. In the end, the head inspector allowed me to take a look at the documents on May 11, 2007, and I copied most of them into my computer. On March 8, 2007, I was also able to interview the person who chaired the Evaluation Commission.

During the first years, these activities outside of the classroom to facilitate integration were hardly implemented, even though each Linking Classroom is entitled to at least one per school year, but only if they ask for it. This fact was also reflected on the evaluation, but the report attributed its near non-existence in practice to the fact that tutors from the Linking Classroom, and tutors for any other classroom participating in the activities, had to remain with their students. That meant extra time for teachers without further pay. Therefore the Commission then made the recommendation that these activities -which they thought were a way to get the students of the Linking Classroom and those in the regular ones together, and thus facilitate integration, be organized not outside the regular class schedule, but within it.

In this way, external facilitators from NGOs or even profit-seeking associations, financed by the Board of Youth Issues of the Community of Madrid, arrive each year at the school for a period of some weeks to teach immigrant kids pottery, face painting, balloon sculpture, theater performance, circus activities, painting t-shirts, jewelry making, etc., to name just some of the activities I myself attended.

This sub-program also includes weekend trips, but I found it impossible to attend any, and I seriously doubt they are actually put into practice, for the very same reasons the evaluation report pointed out: the unpaid overtime the teachers had to contribute.

Finally, the Teacher Training sub-program, which is the responsibility of the Official Center for Training In-Service Teachers, is not coordinated in any way with the rest of the sub-programs. It works on a different basis: teachers receive bonus points if they follow any of these official programs –despite the fact that they relate to a variety of activities which are not linked to the activity of the teachers. The points they earn can be rewarded in two different ways, but only to teachers hired within the public school system. They can apply for an evaluation of their follow-up training and if they get a positive evaluation (which mainly depends upon these kinds of points), they are entitled to a salary raise. The other way is when they apply for a transfer. Such transfers have to be requested through a public process, which assigns a position on competitive terms

according to rank, seniority, and the points earned in teacher training programs.

What I mean by this is that there are many reasons for teachers to continue their education, and the programs are free of charge. The problem is that the incentives only push them into the programs but there is no further coordination. One can choose a cooking course or a photography course; they all have the same results for climbing the ranks.

On the other hand, in order to be a teacher in a Linking Classroom, no special training is required.⁴¹ The regulations state the following: “Teachers assigned to these classes should have adequate and specialized training, the professional profile necessary for the task, and previous experience in it” (Comunidad de Madrid, 2006). But this vague provision is hardly operational. In contrast, the system favors senior teachers in order to provide the kids with stability, which is not guaranteed in the first place. In addition, by favoring senior teachers, what they often get are people who are well advanced in their careers, and who were trained a long time ago, for a different society. Fortunately, this is not always the case, and many of these volunteer teachers are very conscientious and aware of their need for further training. The fact that the position is a voluntary one almost always has positive effects; in spite of a lack of training, these teachers are usually very enthusiastic and have a very positive attitude.

This fact was also acknowledged by the evaluation, but unfortunately, what was recommended was that Linking Classrooms should be led by people trained for Special Education or Compensatory Education, a completely different education specialization. The evaluators even explicitly justified this recommendation by observing that many of the kids

⁴¹ The person in charge of the program in the Community of Madrid told me, in an interview on October 2, 2006, that an initial course is required for teachers to be in a Linking Classroom, but none of the teachers I worked with or met had ever heard about it. They told me they only have a regular meeting with the staff in charge of the Program once a year. But it is also true that schools themselves organize round-tables and seminars focusing on Linking Classrooms, especially in recent years. The Community of Madrid sponsors a Conference on Linking Classrooms once a year.

from Linking Classrooms would end up in Compensatory classes afterwards!

As a key result of the evaluation, the Welcome Schools Program today is no longer based upon the three previously mentioned subprograms (even though its actual implementation continued more or less the same). The Community of Madrid defines it as:

A program focused on facilitating the schooling of immigrant students who lack knowledge of the Spanish language or who have a significant academic gap due to irregular schooling in their countries of origin. It is based upon four actions: Linking Classrooms, immersion in the school, social, cultural, and linguistic environment, the development of active coexistence, and teacher training.⁴²

Linking Classrooms have been defined by a working team of the Board of Education as:

Educational communities aimed at the Intercultural Education of all students, based upon knowledge, comprehension, and respect for each other, and encouraging socio-cultural integration and the development of favorable attitudes for different cultures.⁴³

In conclusion, despite the fact that the Community of Madrid's Program is rather comprehensive and speaks of (or simply evokes) an integral (social and cultural) process of adaptation, as we will see in this book, in reality it focuses only on learning the language.

⁴² Unpublished internal document made available to me by the head of the program. The original in Spanish said: "Programa dirigido a favorecer la incorporación al sistema educativo regional del alumnado extranjero con desconocimiento de la lengua española o con desfase curricular significativo debido a la escolarización irregular en su país de origen. Se compone de cuatro acciones: aulas de enlace; inmersión en el contexto escolar, social, cultural y lingüístico; desarrollo de la convivencia activa y formación del profesorado."

⁴³ Boyano Revilla et al (2004:13)

Similar policies in other parts of Spain

All of the Autonomous Communities have, at this point, developed some kind of recommendation or partial programs to address diversity. As in the case of Madrid, these programs define diversity as a lack of something: language of instruction, physical or psychological handicaps, behavior disorders, academic gaps, or immigration background. They usually group the students thus defined together and afterwards apply the programs developed for diverse students.

However, only Murcia, Andalusia, and Catalonia have a program similar to that of the Welcome Schools or Linking Classrooms. My knowledge of these policies is not as in-depth as my knowledge of the Madrid policy. But in a different context, I had the opportunity to read their regulations, interview some teachers, and compare them to the one in Madrid.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, I would like to point out their main differences in order to provide the reader with a broader context to better understand the case of Madrid.

In **Andalusia** the program is called ATAL, which –in English- stands for Temporary Classrooms for Linguistic Adaptation. The very title of the policy shows a difference compared to the Community of Madrid program (which in theory refers to a broader concept of adaptation). The

⁴⁴ This review of programs for addressing diversity in Spain was done, together with my colleague Inés Gil Jaurena, as part of our responsibility in a current EU Project: the ALFA – INTER Project. The final goal of this project is to design a Postgraduate Course in Intercultural Education to be jointly offered in Austria, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Ireland, Latvia, Mexico, and Spain. The part of the work I am using here corresponds to the already finished Needs Assessment Report. In this context, the website of the CREADE (Resources Center to Address Cultural Diversity in Education) of the Ministry of Education in Spain (<http://apliweb.mec.es/creade/index.do>) has proved to be an immensely useful resource website for providing materials, statistics, and regulations. We presented the conclusions of this work in the Conference of the International Association of Intercultural Education *Celebrating the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue: Theory & Practice in Intercultural Education*, Warsaw, July 2008, with the title “Educational Policies Regarding Cultural Diversity in Compulsory Education. Analysis of the Spanish Context.” I am indebted to my colleague for her share in this work.

Community of Andalusia makes this explicit right from the beginning, which has the advantage of not fooling anybody.

In 2005, together with the rest of the INTER Group, we organized an International Conference on Intercultural Education (INTER Group 2007c) which took place in Madrid. I served as co-chair of a panel on “Diversity in Education.” Some of the panelists spoke about the ATALs in Andalusia, and they had two complaints which were significantly different from the situation in the Community of Madrid. The first one was the fact that the ATALs were designed for a two-year period, even though the regulations encourage teachers to graduate kids as soon as they are ready. The panelists complained that students in ATALs were being ghettoized since they were cut off from the rest of the students for such a long time, and that teachers preferred to work with kids for longer periods of time since they found it easier. The second complaint had to do with the specific origin of the students, as many of them live in towns along the Mediterranean shores, and come from the UK and Germany. Society does not consider these kids immigrants, nor do they consider themselves immigrants. And so the same lack of communication causes a further difficulty.⁴⁵ While English and German are not perceived to be languages that should be discarded (and I am now giving my own point of view), the system, as we will see, considers languages like Moroccan, Chinese, Bulgarian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Portuguese, Polish, and many others, as not worth preserving. In contrast, English and German enjoy a higher status in Spain, even higher than Spanish itself.

The Autonomous Community of **Murcia** has developed three different policies to address diversity in schools:

- a) A bilingual program. (Unfortunately, these programs are only in Spanish-French, and Spanish-English; as is the case for the Community of Madrid, they are mainly for Spanish pupils whose families want them to grow up bilingual because of the prestige of these languages, not because there is a significant population of English- or French-speaking immigrants. (In the Community of

⁴⁵ Unfortunately I have been not able to document this aspect with concrete references. I encouraged panelists to publish their findings about this interesting process, but to my knowledge, they have not yet done so.

Madrid this program is not listed with the programs to address diversity as in Murcia.)

- b) A “Compensatory and Intercultural Education” program (whose terms are plainly contradictory).
- c) A “Special Needs Education” program (for students with physical or mental handicaps).
- d) *Aulas de Acogida* (Host Classrooms) for students who do not know the language of instruction, i.e., Spanish.

These *Aulas de Acogida* have a three-phase program:

First, an intensive course to teach Spanish, a maximum of 21 hours per week and up to three months, including a peer tutor activity.

Second, learning Spanish in different academic courses. For a maximum of one whole school year, some of the subjects are to be taught in the reference courses corresponding to the student’s age level.

Third, different groupings to solve academic gaps after the second phase.

Even though this program is more concretely developed, in practice it is very similar to that of the Community of Madrid program. Perhaps the main difference is the peer tutor activity. Another difference is what the regulations say about teacher training: teachers for the *Aulas de Acogida* are required to have been previously trained in Intercultural Education, and in Spanish as a Second Language – something which is encouraged but not required in Madrid.

The Government of the *Generalitat* of **Catalonia** has designed the most extensive, best developed program to address diversity in schools, and it is the one which is most different from the Community of Madrid program.

The first significant difference is that the policy to address diversity in Catalonia is included within an Integral Plan of Citizenship and Immigration. This Plan defines citizenship based upon three concepts: a) pluralism, b) equality, and c) community spirit.

The second striking difference is that there are published documents⁴⁶ and documents ready to download from the website⁴⁷ which define the principles and guidelines for what is called *Pla d'acollida i d'integració* (Integration and Host Plan) for schools. These documents clearly define what should be done, how, and when.

The third difference I want to point out is that the policy places students coming from outside Spain and students from other parts of Spain together in the Aulas d'acollida (Host Classrooms). This is because the language of instruction in Catalonia is Catalan instead of Spanish, but I think that, this way, immigrant kids are not automatically labeled as foreigners/others and set apart from the rest.

As for differences in content, the documents speak about addressing emotional needs, they reinforce the relationship of the Host Classroom students with their peers in the reference group, and they make interactive methodology within the classroom mandatory.

However, it is peculiar that none of these programs, not even the ones in Catalonia, ever speak about the students' mother tongues or pay any attention to them. This is one of the main differences between the systems in Spain and the cases of Vienna, Austria, and Texas, USA, which I will now discuss.

Programs in other countries with more experience in immigration

Austria and the USA are represented in the research project "Integration Strategies and Anti-racist Education in Schools" because we thought that the opportunity to put the case of Spain in a comparative framework with

⁴⁶ Among the published documents, I would like to mention Carbonell (2006).

⁴⁷ www.gencat.net/benestar/immigracio/web_ac/index.html

other countries with deeper and broader experience in immigration would definitely enrich our perspective and the depth of our analysis.⁴⁸

Austria has been a country that has received immigrants since the 1960s (Ösdterreichischer Integrationsfonds 2008: 9) when, its shortage of workers in certain slots of the job market caused its government to sign the Raab-Olan treaty with Spain, former Yugoslavia, and Turkey, seeking to attract the first wave of a) workforce –young and male- from these impoverished countries.

As happens when governments ask for workers, what they get is people: people willing to change their environment, the weather they are used to, their language, the taste of their meals, the structure of their families, their homes, etc., in exchange for the promise of a steady salary. Once they get the latter, they usually want to re-create to a certain extent the life they are used to, and they bring along their families: a second wave of immigration. In 1979 the Austrian Government set forth the means and the conditions for this project in the Family Reunion Law.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, could be used as a metaphor to think about the deep social transformations of the countries of the Eastern Block, ending their enforced isolation from the countries of Western Europe, and precipitating the need for a different geo-political organization in Europe. One of the consequences was that the Berlin Wall could no longer restrain the movement of people from the Eastern Block countries, who, after the fall of their political systems, saw how their lives were gradually deteriorating day by day, and their hopes for themselves and their children were shrinking, little by little. Immigrants from Eastern Europe (together with refugees from the wars in the Balkans) form the third wave of immigration in Austria.

These three moments shaped the immigration processes in Austria, the kind of people the country received at each time, and the different

⁴⁸ There were a number of different countries that could have served the same purpose, but Dr. Bernd Baumgartl, who (mainly) lives in and (sometimes) does research on Austria, and Dr. Alicia Re Cruz, who lives in and does research on Texas, brought their experiences and perspectives into the project, as well as the possibility of working together.

purposes they had in mind. Since then, the minds of politicians have changed, and they have tried to stop the process they had started. Although approximately 19% of the population is acknowledged to be “from a migratory background,” Austria has not –even today–acknowledged itself to be a country receiving immigrants.

In terms of education for the children of immigrants, policies were put into place in the above-mentioned law in 1979. That is a long history compared to Spain, where some immigration started in the mid-eighties. It had a significant impact on the population in Spain because they were used to emigration and immigration was a new and unexpected phenomenon. However, the statistics remained very low (although they grew steadily) until the beginning of the 21st century, when Spain’s share in the process rose to similar levels as in the majority of the Western European countries.⁴⁹ If we are to compare programs for immigrant children in schools, we have to bear these differences in time and experience in mind.

Compared to the Welcome Schools Program of the Community of Madrid, programs in Austria show two major differences: firstly, the programs themselves and, secondly, the Austrian school system.

The programs designed for “diverse” students in Austria focus on teaching and improving not only their German, but also their mother tongues. This perspective is the opposite of the program in Madrid, designed to teach the language of instruction (only). This specific focus is reflected in the definition of “diversity” among school population: Austrian regulations do not speak about immigrant kids, but about “students whose mother tongue is different than German.”

49

1991	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
0.91%	2.28%	3.33%	4.73%	6.24%	7.02%	8.46%	9.27%	9.99%

Percentages of immigrant population in Spain
 Source INE (National Statistics Institute), http://www.ine.es/inebmenu/mnu_cifraspob.htm

The reason for this different perspective is to be found in the history of the process of immigration itself: many of these “diverse” kids do not come from outside Austria but were born there. They have an immigration background, but they may be Austrian citizens, and the Boards of Education of the federal and provincial governments in Austria have had these children in mind when designing and implementing the policy to address diversity in the school system.

But there is still another main idea behind this different approach: in Austria, policy-makers are convinced, by their own experience and that of others, that learning and improving the students’ mother tongue, in the words of a person belonging to the Vienna Board of Education:

...guarantees swifter language acquisition in German and also plays an important role in supplying cultural background in formation for all students. (Gröpel 2004)

According to Gröpel (2004), in the city of Vienna and for the 2003-04 school year, the mother tongue of 38% of the students between the ages of 6 and 15 in public schools, a total of 37,000 children, was not German. As the Board of Education of Vienna⁵⁰ informed me, in the Mother Tongue (Mutterschpache) Program for the 2005-06 school year, there were 390 teachers paid to teach Bosnian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Croatian, Hungarian, Polish, Serbian, and Turkish, among other languages, to a group of 12 or more students⁵¹ for two hours per week. The preparation of the books for the classes is paid by the Board, and the teachers are hired among native speakers with either an Austrian certificate or a certificate issued in their own countries.

In spite of the government’s focus on the children of long-time residents, Austria has been receiving new immigrants since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Some of their children enter the school system with no knowledge or insufficient knowledge of German, and the Mother Tongue Programs do not solve their adaptation. Nevertheless, the philosophy of the Board

⁵⁰ In an interview with the person in charge of the program, Vienna, July 24, 2006.

⁵¹ The program is only funded with this minimum of 12 students, and will continue only if fewer than four students drop out.

of Education is that students learn language better among peers, and that is why classes where immigrant children are segregated from the rest do not exist. German language teachers are provided so that these kids can reinforce their language acquisition over a two-year period, when they can also take advantage of curricular adaptations, but they are supposed to attend regular classes.⁵² Their place within the school system and the future this place provides for them is a different matter. But in order to understand this, it is necessary to discuss the other main difference I mentioned above, comparing the Spanish and the Austrian school systems: the school system itself.

I will quote a very simple and effective description of the school system in Austria written by Linton-Kulveka (2004), using the same Vienna, Austria and Texas, USA comparative frame that I am using in this chapter:

The Austrian school system offers nine years of compulsory education, which starts when the children are six years old. After four years of elementary school, students have a choice of two different types of school, either a lower general secondary school (Hauptschule) or [an 8-year secondary school] (Gymnasium). After eighth grade, a student of Hauptschule has three choices. The first is to attend a vocational school, which is either a school in connection with an apprenticeship (Berufsschule) or a one-year polytechnic school (Polytechnische Schule). The second is to attend business school (Handelsakademie or Handelsschule). And the third is to attend an upper level academic secondary school (Realgymnasium).

Two explanations should be added to this description:

- a) Only the Handelsakademie, Realgymnasium, and Gymnasium lead to the university, the two other paths most often lead to blue-collar jobs or to vocational colleges
- b) Even though the author explicitly speaks about a “choice by students,” students do not choose anything, nor do their parents.

⁵² Recently there has been a discussion on the issue of Kindergarten: whether Kindergarten should be mandatory or not for children whose mother tongue is not German.

The selection is mainly done based on their grades and teachers' criteria.

In theory, horizontal moves from one system to any other are allowed, but in fact they hardly ever happen. Actually, children (both Austrian and foreign) who enter the school system, after four years and at the age of ten, will make a crucial decision: the first fork in the road sends the school populations along two different paths, and it is almost impossible, not in theory but in practice, for a student on the lower path to enter the Gymnasium or other upper secondary schools leading to the university. These highly selective schools could deny entrance based upon grades not being good enough or insufficient knowledge of German. And this is the reason that explains Linton-Kulveka's conclusion that:

Immigrant children are typically found in lower general secondary school [Hauptschule]. They make up 32% of the students in elementary schools and 40% in the lower general secondary schools. (Linton-Kulveka 2004)

And they are also overrepresented in special schools,⁵³ and in the program to get internships for students without a school certificate (Zeugnis/Abschluss Zeugnis).⁵⁴ Besides language problems, the predominant choice by immigrants in Hauptschule and vocational education is also due to immigrant parents' professions: they are often (unskilled) workers, and it may be easily assumed that their children should follow the same career paths.⁵⁵ The result is, at any rate, to reinforce the stratification of society between native Austrians and immigrants.

Even though the Spanish school system does not have these different paths, and all students (who have to be in school by law from ages 6 to

⁵³ According to the analysis of the Integrationsplattform Österreich coordinated by Dr. Gudrun Biffl (whom I interviewed in Vienna on July 14, 2006). See Baumgartl (forthcoming in 2009) for the complete analysis of the Integrationsplattform.

⁵⁴ Interview with a member of the Green Party in charge of the Program, Vienna, July 12, 2007.

⁵⁵ Interview with Dr. Gudrun Biffl, Vienna on July 14, 2006.

16) who get a certificate after the four mandatory years of secondary education⁵⁶ have the opportunity to get into the two extra courses of secondary education which lead to the university after an entrance exam,⁵⁷ we will see how, regrettably, the effect of the school system on the lives of immigrant kids in Madrid, is –in fact- almost the same.

The case of **Texas, USA** provides us with a broader frame of reference, representing the other end of the spectrum in terms of the numerical importance and historical perspective of the immigration process, with Spain at the other end and Austria in the middle.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimate for 2006 records a 15.9% foreign-born population in the state of Texas, who - in contrast to the variety of origins in Madrid and Vienna - come mainly from Mexico and Central America, that is, from Spanish-speaking countries (35.7% report Hispanic or Latino origin for the year 2006).⁵⁸

There are four programs supported by public funds to address diversity in schools, which is understood to be related to an immigrant background. And here “background” has a broad sense: it could refer to recently arrived immigrants or to third-generation ones. In contrast to Austria, with perhaps not many third-generation immigrants but definitely a lot of second generation ones, and also in contrast to Spain which has at least some second-generation immigrants, these four programs are aimed at the various needs of all these different people, as policy-makers have identified them: one provides funds for In-take Centers which take care of the newly arrived kids, the other three are all implemented in schools focusing on language acquisition, both English and Spanish.

⁵⁶ Those who do not could enter the program “Garantia Social” which, as we will see in this text, trains students to get into the job market. In order to get a Secondary Certificate, they must go through an “Adult Education Program” once they are 18 years old.

⁵⁷ “Selectividad” or the exam to get into the university. In some cases they have to do better than just pass, or even get excellent results, if the school of their choice has a big demand (as is the case with medical school and the Schools of Arts and Civil Design, among others).

⁵⁸ The estimate for 2006 is based upon the 2000 census (www.census.gov).

The first one is the “Welcome Program,” which receives families who are about to send their children to school in the United States for the first time, helps them with the procedures for choosing the appropriate school (depending on availability of enrolment, this is the parents’ choice), and gets kids ready to start school providing them with the required materials and medical examinations.⁵⁹ Thanks to the work of Dr. Alicia Re Cruz in the Program, I was able to visit one of these In-Take Centers in the city of Dallas and interview the staff in April 2008.

In-Take Centers rely on public funds but also on private donations, which the head of the staff of the Center I visited was particularly able to raise. In her own words: “I can get whatever I want. I don’t mind asking because everything is for the kids, and I can tell you, I am not shy when I’m asking for them.”⁶⁰ This In-take Center shared the premises of Bonham Elementary School, and its venue was built of portable modules of corrugated iron, but the inside atmosphere was colorful and comfortable, with tables and chairs for families to share their stories.⁶¹

The person in charge was a strikingly energetic woman, very elegantly dressed, apparently in her fifties, incredibly proficient in English and Spanish, languages which she uses, switching constantly. She had a dream for the Center: to transform it into an integral welcome center for families, where any issue could be addressed “because the needs of these kids should be taken care of holistically.” She told me that her main tool consisted of “empowering the children,” to make them “enter the schools with their heads proudly high.”⁶²

⁵⁹ The US school system requires all students who enroll to have their vaccination records, following a particular standard.

⁶⁰ Interview carried out in Dallas, Texas, on April 2, 2008.

⁶¹ The head of the staff told me that she always insisted that both parents go with their children, to show them that they really care about their education.

⁶² In fact she told me that part in Spanish, using a very illustrative metaphor: “¡Quiero que los chicos entren con la cabeza muy alta en la escuela!”(Interview carried out in Dallas, Texas, on April 2, 2008).

The program in Madrid, even though it shares the title with the Texan one, is totally different. The only places which I can compare this Center with are the “Comisiones de Escolarización” (Enrolment Commissions), distributed by school district, in charge of enrolling students. Families come to these commissions and have an interview with one of the staff. The final decision is made by the school inspector, who meets with the rest of the staff once a week. When I visited one of these commissions in Madrid, I remember thinking about the families and how difficult it must be for them just to locate the center: there was nobody at the door, and the place looked as if it had been deserted for a long time. Once they finally figure out the logic of the place, and find a tiny sign saying that the commission is actually on the second floor, there is a cold, dirty room with some plastic chairs in very bad condition scattered around. The staff may be friendly (although only in Spanish!) but the place is frightening. I wonder what impression it would cause if I were a mother with a recently arrived kid. The procedure of the whole interview is mainly administrative: instructions for getting the papers families need in order to enroll their children. Then a fax to the school and the “Welcome to school process” is over. The rest is up to the teachers.

The other three Programs in the State of Texas (and elsewhere in the United States) are the ESL (English as a Second Language) Program, the Bilingual Program, and the Dual-Learning Program. All of them have to do with language learning, of the mother tongue and of English, depending on the program parents choose, taking staff recommendations regarding kids’ proficiency in the languages into account. But in any case, parents must be aware that students will have to prove their academic proficiency in English before entering the universities.

The English as a Second Language Program is also called the “Immersion Program” since it places kids in regular English classes with extra reinforcement of English outside the classroom, for a few hours per week, and for a period of time which ends when students master the language.

My own son followed this program in the state of Massachusetts during the 2004-05 school year. It was recommended to us by the Board of Education because our plans were to live in the States for only two years

and then return to Spain. My son entered Kindergarten with no knowledge of English but with a deep desire to start school, and it was a total success. He had already mastered English at the level of his classmates during the first year. The following year when his teacher asked us why he was in an ESL Program, we told her that his mother tongue was Spanish and that one year ago he didn't know any English at all. His teacher could not help saying: "No way!" My son even succeeded in improving his English in Spain afterwards, without any help from the English classes in Spain where teachers never gave him any extra help to improve the language, and even told him not to speak or read aloud "because with this (American) accent nobody understands you." I think his ESL Program and his whole experience in the classroom left him with enough interest in the language to learn on his own for the rest of his life.

The Bilingual Program has been really controversial since the nineties in the U.S. It deals only with Spanish and English. In my view it is mainly an English Program with a flavor of Spanish (some classes are taught in Spanish, but much fewer and far less important ones than those taught in English). It is recommended for kids who are fluent English speakers but whose families want them to either improve their Spanish in an academic background (in contrast to the Spanish learned at home) or to learn it almost from scratch when they understand the language but are not really able to speak it (most of the times because families who speak Spanish as a mother tongue switch to English at one point or to a certain level). English speakers with no exposure to Spanish could also take the program, but in fact the majority of those who do have some background related to a Spanish speaking country of origin.

None of the schools I visited in Texas have this program anymore, even though their student population was more than 90% Latino, according to the principals. They favored the Dual-Language Program, which has far more classes in Spanish (50%, in fact) and a different approach: language does not switch by subject but by day: one day is English, the next Spanish. Classrooms keep a sign outside telling the language of the day.

These last two programs are similar in their goals (although not in depth and extension) to the Mother Tongue program in Vienna but contrast with

the “Welcome Schools program” in Madrid (or any other program in Spain), which only pays attention to the language of instruction and does not take the students’ maternal languages into consideration. There is a more varied range of languages available in Austria compared to Texas, which only offers Spanish. This has to do with the places where immigrants mainly come from, but whenever there is a focus on certain languages, this leaves kids whose families come from different places with no equivalent opportunities.

But even in the case of Latinos in Texas we discovered a similar pattern of representation of minorities, similar in its effects to the Austrian one. In spite of the fact that in the U.S., as in Spain, the school system does not classify students at an early age, Latinos are always overrepresented in the drop-out figures, and their performance in school in general is below average.

In the US there is a covert way of classifying kids: the tracking system. The tracking system classifies students into levels of academic performance, and sends them to different levels of the same subject, i.e. Math I, Math II, etc. Sometimes it works without parents being aware, especially of its consequences. The university system is highly competitive in the U.S., and in spite of affirmative action, which sets quotas for students from minorities, the tracking system undermines the school system’s slogan of equal opportunities. So it also tarnishes the “American Dream.” If a student is tracked in the lower segments of school subjects, he will not be able to qualify to enter a competitive university, even if he has good grades and good SAT scores.⁶³ In fact, the enrolment procedure for what is considered a “good” university is really complicated to manage; parents sometimes even hire counselors to do it, and entry into some particular universities is not guaranteed. This system works to put immigrants at a greater disadvantage.

During my visits to the schools in Texas, teachers and principals complained about the mandatory federal tests that children must take and

⁶³ The exam that most (but not all) universities require in order to apply is the SAT Reasoning Test, formerly the Scholastic Aptitude Test and Scholastic Assessment Test.

that are required by the recently implemented “No Child Left Behind” program⁶⁴. Federal funds for schools depend on the results of these tests, and teachers’ complaints had to do with the change of perspective these mandatory tests have introduced in education, by focusing more and more on taking tests.

⁶⁴ <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>.

Chapter 3: Participating (the classroom)

Now that the reader is familiar with the Linking Classroom Program and its regulations, the purpose of this chapter is to move into a real classroom where the program is being implemented and focus our attention on the people inside. But let me first speak about the classroom itself, in one specific school in Madrid.

What is the classroom like?

The “adequate space” the regulations speak about is a cold, humid, dark room in the basement of the building, a room that is spacious, painted white, and very poorly heated. It has a library shelf with reference books, Spanish as a Second Language manuals, reading books, and a locked cupboard with plenty of school material inside, a TV, a video, a DVD, and a CD player.

On the walls there is a map of the world, and a board where the week schedule of the classroom is pinned, along with the schedule of the classes kids are supposed to attend with their reference groups, and a list with the class norms:

1. We help our classmates
2. We do not speak loudly
3. We arrive on time
4. We cannot wear caps or use mp3s (in Portugal, this norm included cell phones)
5. We must not eat inside the classroom
6. We speak Spanish
7. We take care of all school material
8. We keep our classroom orderly and tidy
9. We respect each other
10. We go to recess slowly

11. We listen to the teacher

Each norm was written in Spanish and in other languages, according to the mother tongues of the kids of the classroom.

The art projects the kids made in the art classes are hanging on the walls, and everywhere in the classroom (hanging from the ceiling, on top of the shelves, etc.). More and more artwork is put up throughout the school year, but only some of these pieces, the ones that are especially valuable to the kids and the teacher, make it into the next school year.

The room has about fourteen desks and chairs (you never know how many kids might have been accepted until the day before). During my first two years of fieldwork, the desks were beige, very small, old, dirty, and sometimes in bad condition, but during my third year they were replaced by bigger, pale green ones with almost enough space for the kids to keep their work inside. (When they still had the old desks, sometimes kids “owned” two desks since there wasn’t enough room in one to keep their materials.) These desks were arranged into three rows facing the teacher’s desk, which is considerably bigger (although the teacher never sits down) and is placed in front of one of the blackboards. But two of the students’ tables are always placed on either side (with no separation) of the teacher’s table. I always perceived these two seats to be the students’ favorites.

The rest of the desks are arranged into three rows, but the order is very flexible, as is the place where kids sit every day. They have an assigned desk where they keep their belongings, but during class they change places according to the activities or their preferences. My presence in the classroom was a frequent cause for movement, since there were always kids who wanted to sit near me and arrange to have me between two friends, for example.

During my first year of fieldwork, there was a computer belonging to the Linking Classroom which was kept in a nearby room, with two more very old ones (which could not be connected to internet). The second year, the equipment of this room improved significantly and we spent hours surfing the web; the kids were supposed to do exercises, but when the teacher

wasn't looking they switched to their messenger programs or other pages to contact other people. In the third year, they moved some of the computers into the Linking Classroom and there was nearly one computer per student (depending on the number of students). The computers were kept on top of some tables arranged along the wall opposite the teacher's desk. When the kids sat down to work at the computers, they were facing the wall, with their backs to the room.

The door of the classroom is always locked during recess, lunch break and when classes finish. So, when kids arrive earlier than the teacher in the morning, they sit on the bench just outside the classroom to wait.

The Linking Classroom is the only class in that part of the building. There are no other classrooms nearby, but sometimes students pass the Linking Classroom to go to the dance hall (to the left of the Linking Classroom) or to the theater (to the right). Along the corridor, there are the student toilets (always dirty, with no toilet paper or towels and awful faucets), then the teachers' dining room, the kitchen, an exit to the recess patio and, at the other end, there is a big classroom where kids in *Bachillerato*⁶⁵ practice their oil painting and sculpture.

The school has two more floors above the basement, which house the rest of the classrooms. They are not as humid or dark since there is a window in each of them with access to one street or the other. On a clear day, the light in these upper two floors makes a striking contrast with the darkness of the Linking Classroom, without any natural light and only a rectangular window onto a totally dark space. Out of this dark area comes a sticky humidity that always made my stay in the classroom miserable with allergies. This window is usually closed but I remember a particular kid who always asked for it to be open, and was very sensitive anytime it was closed.

⁶⁵ The first and second years of *Bachillerato* are the two courses following Compulsory Secondary Education. These two courses are the ones that students should take in order to go to the university. Kids here are between 16 and 18 years old.

Who are the teachers?

The category of teachers is made up of a group of people with a very well-defined core but loose borders. I fit in these borders, and I benefited from this unclear setting as I was accepted as part of the group up to a certain point. I will reflect on my own role in Chapter 5 of the book; my only intention here is to show where I felt I belonged in the broader context.

The core of the group is represented by the **tutor teacher**⁶⁶ in charge of the Linking Classroom. In public schools, Linking Classrooms have one and a half tutors, one working full time and the other part time, but my school was a subsidized school and even though official regulations do not say anything about this distinction, or about any other difference between public and subsidized schools, all the subsidized schools I visited had only one tutor teacher, whereas all the public ones had two.

The tutor teacher is responsible (only) for the Linking Classroom kids. She welcomes them in the classroom when they arrive, fills in their progress reports and writes final reports for them when she thinks that the kids are ready to enter a regular classroom, or once their stay has finished according to the regulations. She speaks with parents and with the rest of the school staff at regular meetings or in informal conversations.

In my school, during my three years of fieldwork, the tutor teacher was a woman in her fifties, full of energy, very supportive, very kind, totally committed to the students' well-being, who went beyond her role to solve any kind of problem the kids might have. She uses empathy as her main tool in the classroom. She is the one who never sits down in the classroom and never feels cold. She holds a degree in Pedagogy and was trained as a teacher for students with special needs, but is committed to a lifelong learning approach and is always taking new courses (French, sign language, etc.)

⁶⁶ The tutor teacher is generally in charge of this group of students and teaches them certain subjects. Other specialized teachers come to the classroom to give their classes.

She is very happy in the Linking Classroom. She formerly pictured it as “a window into the world” but has recently changed the metaphor and now speaks of a “door into the world,” since she feels she can actually walk out into the world thanks to her experience with students. She is totally convinced of the benefits of the Welcome Schools Program but always pointed out to me that “teaching the language is not enough,” and that “these kids should learn academic contents on top of the language.” The single focus on learning the language is, for her, a shortcoming of the Program, and she does anything she can to fill in this gap.

The Linking Classroom Regulations do not say anything about academic programs or materials, which are the tutor’s responsibility. This teacher has spent much of her free time gathering the materials she uses in the classroom, from here and there. She now has a set of exercises that she uses as a method for every kid, but she adapts the rhythm to the students’ needs and previous knowledge. She has been gathering these materials together with other Linking Classroom teachers in other schools owned by the same people. I always encouraged her to publish this work but she has disregarded the idea because she thinks that this material does not belong to her. She has gathered anything convenient for her work, anything she thought could be useful in the Linking Classroom, from other school books of different levels.

In my view, she is very successful in her interaction with the kids. She always negotiates with the students, uses a very elastic kind of discipline, and has no problem in changing her mind and her expectations for the day, if she spontaneously thinks any other activity will benefit them more. Every single kid who was in the classroom during my three years of fieldwork showed love and respect for her, and they maintained contact with her, visiting her frequently, even after they had left the classroom and the school. When she really wants the students to do something and they really do not want to, she asks them to please do whatever it is and they always relent. In this way, I think she provides the students with THE reason to be in the classroom and do the work, even if they do not see any other practical benefit to the exercises.

I even saw her break the classroom rules many times (especially the rules about wearing caps, mp3s, telephones, and on speaking Spanish only) for the benefit of the kids, because she always cares first, and teaches afterwards.

She was the tutor teacher during the first and third years of my fieldwork, but in the second year she had an accident and broke her foot, and she was on sick leave for most of the school year. During her leave, the school hired a person who was at the time doing her training as a student teacher in the Linking Classroom, but was so fascinated and committed to the experience that she was attending the class not the one day per week required, but any day she could manage. That was the reason she was hired: the kids were really familiar with her, and her commitment was balanced against the fact that she had not finished her studies as a teacher. Spanish law requires only that a person hired as a secondary school teacher have a university degree, but does not specify which one. This person had a previous degree in Law and because of that she could be finally and legally hired.

This new teacher served as the tutor for most of my second year of fieldwork. She was in close contact with the former teacher by telephone, and very happy about the opportunity, although also a little bit frightened. We knew each other before she was hired, and thus she always asked me for advice and comments on how was she doing.

She was a woman in her late thirties, also very energetic and kind, with a very similar approach to the kids, even though she was a bit more insecure. She always arrived earlier than the kids, was committed to their well-being, and developed a close relationship with most of them. After the regular teacher took over the classroom again, she was hired as a Linking Classroom substitute teacher in another subsidized school owned by the same institution (which runs three more schools besides these two).

At the end of her role as tutor teacher in the Linking Classroom, and after attending one of my presentations at an event on Diversity and Education organized by the institution that owns the subsidized school I worked in, she reflected on her role and pointed out one mistake she thought she

had made with the kids. In my presentation, I had talked about the difficult time the kids of the Linking Classroom have when they have to enter regular classrooms, and she told me that she should have encouraged them to go to the classes with the reference courses more (as the regulations require). But since the kids were always protesting about visiting the reference courses, she was not firm enough to force them to go. She also said that giving in to the students' wishes (e.g. to spend recess in the classroom even though it is against the school norms) was also a mistake, and that she should have encouraged them to go to recess with the rest of the school, even if they did not want to.

Around the core of the tutor teacher, there are other **teachers who enter the classroom during the week on a regular schedule**. Some of them are from the same school, others are external teachers, thanks to different programs in the Community of Madrid, in the Municipality of Madrid, or as NGO volunteers.

One of these regular teachers is part of the school staff and teaches Math and Art in the Linking Classroom (even though, according to the regulations, the students should take both of these classes with their reference courses). She is a woman in her twenties, full of energy, and very kind to the students. In contrast to the tutor teacher, she sets firm norms and limits, and never lets the kids deviate from them, but she always kindly explains why, repeating the norms patiently whenever she thinks it is necessary. Students work on what they have to and soon learn that there is no room for negotiation here.

Her teaching method is very different: she addresses the students individually, and they have to work by themselves on the exercises she brings for each of them for the day. She moves from one pupil to another explaining, making suggestions, etc.

Most of the time, the kids complain that the exercises are too difficult, especially in Math. But I also saw the opposite: some kids were exasperated about the kind of exercises she gave them, and asked me in English to please explain to the teacher that they already knew how to do those easy exercises, and that they had solved them a long time ago. However, in this case her answer is always the same, translated by me.

This was the only time when she made an exception about the rule that students could only speak Spanish in the classroom: when I spoke English with students who could not communicate in Spanish. She also told them, “You are not here to learn Math but to learn Math in Spanish,” and she never relented.

She is the only teacher I saw that came regularly to the Linking Classroom with invitations to the students to join a trip, visit, or activity with other students of the school. Kids are never eager to go, and they make excuses to avoid going. One of their most frequently repeated arguments is that they do not know the other kids they are supposed to go with, but sometimes they finally go because of this teacher.

She represents an unambiguous figure in the classroom, with a style that is different, but predictable, as is her own presence. When she did not come, either because she was sick or on a field trip with other classes, it was always the tutor teacher who stayed with the kids; although this went beyond her responsibility at the school, it was apparently never beyond her idea of responsibility.

The students always have one hour per week called “Communication processes,” when they are supposed to improve their use of spoken Spanish.

During my first year of fieldwork, the responsibility for the class fell to an older teacher who was about to retire. He was also in charge of a special program in the school for students who had serious difficulties with their academic performance and who the school staff thought would have a very hard time completing the Certificate of Secondary Education in the regular classes. This man was very committed to this program and very kind to me outside the Linking Classroom, but I thought he was very rude and manipulative with the students inside, always disrespectful of them and showing off his low expectations for them. In my fieldwork journal, I

recorded sentences such as: “Please, stop speaking your unintelligible languages and start speaking in a Christian language.”⁶⁷

I remember once when he was stimulating a role-playing conversation about somebody who was going to apply for a job, he spoke as if the kids were not going to get into the *Bachillerato*.⁶⁸ Some of the kids protested and said that they would in fact be taking *Bachillerato* courses. And when one of the students said that he wanted to be a professional soccer player, he denigrated his wish by saying, “I suppose that it is because of the money. But if no soccer teams have approached you yet, I doubt that they will in the future.”

He was especially rude to the girls, sometimes made fun of the names of the kids, and never knew anyone by name.

I was really relieved when his role was taken over by a younger teacher in the second year of my fieldwork. I was relieved because, even though I had a good relationship with this older teacher outside the classroom (he always approached me to talk and tell me about programs in the school I was interested in and he even showed concern about the students in the Linking Classroom), he gave me one of the toughest times inside the class. I was often ready to stand up and confront him many times, but I never did, and this always left me very angry.

However, the kids never respected or cared for him. They just did what he asked when they thought there was no other alternative, but most of

⁶⁷ The expression “Speak in a Christian language” (“Habla en cristiano,” in Spanish) is a very racist but very common expression. It is used when someone does not understand what the other person is saying, and commands him or her to speak clearer. It is very disrespectful because it does not refer to the fact that the listener does not understand the speaker, for whatever the reasons, but that it is the speaker’s language that should be blamed. It is also a very racist expression since it means “in the proper way,” as if there was only one proper language to speak. Because of the religious word that is used, it most probably refers to the constitution of Spain as a Christian country in Medieval times as opposed to the Islamic rulers, using the Catholic religion as way to distinguish the group of “us” as opposed to the group of “them.”

⁶⁸ The two secondary courses after Compulsory Secondary Education that lead to the university.

the time they weren't really paying attention (which was very easy since the way this teacher spoke, only kids with a good knowledge of Spanish could understand him), but minding their own business.

The younger teacher – very shy, very respectful, and very interested in the kids' interests - who took over “Communication processes” was the only teacher in the classroom I ever saw bring materials in any of the children's languages, and they appreciated this very much.

There also used to be a teacher to teach Technology, but eventually the approach to this subject changed, and the kids attended this class with their reference groups. Before that, we⁶⁹ used to go to a special room to handle different materials and tools, and we were supposed to make something: flowers for the younger children's classrooms, etc. We were also supposed to figure out how to make the things and what kinds of materials we could use, out of garbage or discarded items, but it was the teacher who always figured out how to approach and end each project.

She seemed very strict and outspoken before I got to know her inside the classroom,⁷⁰ but with the kids she was loving, kind, and caring, even though she had a bit of a temper and exploded once in a while. She tried all the time to engage students in meaningful conversations on religion and politics, and she always wanted them to look at everything critically, but the level of Spanish this demanded from the kids was beyond their abilities and they did not really engage in the conversation (except when I told them what the teacher was saying in simpler and more engaging terms, and keeping in mind what they were interested in).

Some of the regular teachers of the school visit the Linking Classroom when they have to substitute for someone (and when the tutor teacher is

⁶⁹ I always felt I fit in with the kids in this class, because of my total lack of knowledge of the techniques, tools, and procedures; I did the same work that the students did, and the teacher never wanted me to do otherwise.

⁷⁰ In the beginning, the teachers' dining room was the place where I met the teachers before I saw them inside the classroom, but this was only in the first year of fieldwork. Once I started the second year, and until the end, I spent recess with the students and I only went to the teachers' room once in a while.

not available). And some of them engaged in conversations with the tutor in the teachers' dining room, always about a Linking Classroom student in their reference courses or in the regular ones in the case of the kids who stay in the school when they finish the Linking Classroom program. Their comments were usually negative regarding the students' performance: sometimes about behavior, but usually about academic gaps or their lack of understanding in the classroom. On some occasions, they balanced their negative comments with positive ones about their efforts or the way they were getting along with other kids. On these occasions, the tutor usually referred to the shortcomings of the program in the area of academic learning, where it did not prepare the kids well enough to follow a regular course. Only once did I hear very disrespectful remarks about the students, the program, and the tutor teacher. It was a teacher substituting for someone, and when the kids started to get noisy, she said to me, "You see, here in the Linking Classroom they let them do whatever they want, and when they go up to their regular courses, they are impossible!" I was very angry at this remark but didn't say anything, either to her to confront her opinion or to the tutor teacher afterwards.

The only person who visited regularly was the principal of the school. When she came, she addressed every kid by her or his name, and asked about their lives, showing her previous knowledge about them.

Next to this subgroup of teachers, there is the group of external **people responsible for the activities** implemented in the schools as part of the Welcome Schools Program or other similar programs. They usually belong to an NGO or some kind of association specializing in activities that are non-academic, but still considered educational. These programs are supposed to bring the kids of the Linking Classroom together with the kids of some other regular class. They do, but whenever I participated in one of these activities, there were always two clearly differentiated groups: the Linking Classroom students and the students from the other class. When the activity required an even number in both groups, some kids from one group would follow the activity in the other group, but they quickly came back to their former group when the activity had finished. That always shocked me, first out of curiosity, and then because of the very purpose of the program, which was meant to get them together I

also have to say that any time kids from one group addressed kids from the other one, they were very kind and polite.

In my opinion, the people in charge of the activity should have been responsible for blending the groups, since these kinds of activities are paid for by the Community of Madrid to encourage participation, but I was shocked when I found out that the teachers also had THE SAME opinion. On one occasion, after the activities were finished for the day, the tutor teacher approached one of the people in charge of the activity (this time it was a workshop to paint t-shirts). The tutor started complaining about the lack of any relationship between teachers in the Linking Classroom and the rest of the teachers. The other person told her that they often see no interaction at all, and that it was the responsibility of the people leading the activity, in particular (!!), or of the tutor of the Linking Classroom, in general terms. I could not understand what she was saying, after seeing the kids of the Linking Classroom separated from the rest during the activity THEY were in charge of leading.

The next and final circle of teachers in the classroom is the one that makes the boundaries of the category worse. They are **teachers in training**, doing their required training in their different areas: social work, pedagogy, psychology, etc. They come and go, for a few weeks, usually once a week, and help the tutor (never the other teachers), paying special attention to the students who are behind in the general classwork, who are usually but not always, the students who have arrived most recently.

These trainee teachers are almost always young, mainly female, and they sometimes propose new activities to do in the classroom, following different new approaches, almost always centered on conflict resolution techniques. They were usually surprised by my presence and my attitude in the classroom: I did not spend the class standing up, like they do, but sitting down at one of the student desks. I always felt the need to explain my role to them since, when they saw, me, they assumed I was also a teacher doing my training, but behaving in a very odd way. When I had the opportunity to tell them outside the classroom what I was doing inside, I always felt that they looked up to me because of my role as a researcher. I used these occasions to ask them about their training, their

studies, and their ideas about teaching, especially their ideas about teaching immigrant kids.

Some of them, after the wonderful experience in the Linking Classroom, set themselves the goal of becoming one of these teachers. These occasions proved to be very valuable to me, since I had the chance to ask them why. Most of them are fully aware of the kind of society we are living in, and they experience it as an interesting although challenging experience. This makes a sharp contrast to the regular teachers in the school with whom I had the opportunity to discuss this, and who consider immigrant kids to be a problem to be solved or, according to the most pessimistic ones, a problem that they should at least try to solve.

Who are the students and what do they do in the Linking Classroom?

Out of the total of 113,198 immigrant students in the Community of Madrid mainly from (in order) Ecuador, Romania, Morocco, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Dominican Republic, China, Argentina, and Bulgaria⁷¹, I met 43 kids in the Linking Classroom during my three years of fieldwork.

There were 25 boys and 18 girls: 14 from Brazil, 13 from Romania, 4 from China and Ukraine each, and 2 from Poland, Morocco, Bulgaria, and the Dominican Republic each. They were between 12 and 18 years old. Only 4 remained in the same school once they finished their stay in the Linking Classroom (less than 10%!!!), while one fifth of the total was schooled there for the first year, but went to another school for the second one.

They do not talk much about their lives or their families, and even less about their homes. Like any other kids, they talk mainly about music, cell phones, computer games, the girls or boys they fancy at the moment, the parties they have recently gone to, plan to go to, or wish they could go to, or simply complain about other boys and girls.

⁷¹ Data provided by the secretary of the head inspector on May 11, 2007.

Since I travel frequently,, they always took the opportunity to talk to me about the countries they had been in, mainly about the countries they came from. This was seldom encouraged in the classroom.

If there were other kids in the classroom from the same places, they communicated with each other preferably in their own languages, but they increasingly used Spanish to communicate with the rest of the group, especially with the same-sex group. They also used Spanish with teachers and with me. Some of them spoke to me in English (I was always the first to try that language when I could not communicate with them in Spanish), especially at the beginning, if they were able to. When this happened, they always developed a special bond with me, but reserved their unquestioning loyalty for the tutor of the classroom, with whom they maintained a very warm, respectful, and loving relationship that went beyond their stay in the Linking Classroom.

I will talk about their lives from the moment they entered the Linking Classroom to the point when I lost track of them, or not - I still keep in touch with some. I will use the ethnographic life-story technique as a metaphor⁷² which I will fill in with pieces and bits of their own narratives. This fiction will let me put together the fragments of the incomplete narratives I collected from their lives in informal conversations. However, their stories were always framed (and thus not encouraged) by my respect for their reluctance to tell me about their lives.

Apparently, this wish to communicate was often limited. I only remember one occasion when I tried to push the conversation with the girl with whom I developed the closest relationship: we were having lunch outside the school and talking about our lives, and this unusual occasion made me crave more. That was the reason I asked her about her house, but she did not answer. I repeated the question more explicitly: “Are you living in a room with your mother?” She was frozen in her silence and turned her face away from me, as if she were ashamed. I never repeated

⁷² I owe the idea of this metaphor that helped me put together my uncompleted ethnographic material to Dr. Bernd Baumgartl, who gave it to me once when we were discussing the design of this book.

this experience, and that is why I have to construct my narrative out of what they wanted to give me; I learned from that experience, and I never again asked for more.

By chance, I once met a woman in her forties from Romania who was trying to find the right gate at the Madrid-Barajas airport to fly to Vienna and from there take the connecting flight to Bucharest. I could see that she was really frightened, and since I was about to take the same flight, I suggested we keep each other company. When I said goodbye to her in front of her gate to Bucharest at the Vienna airport, I remember thinking to myself: “She could have been the mother of some of the kids of the Linking Classroom, just before they travel to Spain to join their families.”

She told me in perfect Spanish that she was from Romania where she used to work as an accountant and lived with her 12-year-old daughter from her former marriage. Her daughter had been diagnosed with a severe allergy and was told that in order to improve her health she should follow a five-year vaccination process. The mother was told that she should think about this process of vaccination carefully because once started, it should not be interrupted, and also that the cost of the treatment was 100€ per month. She was earning 80€ a month with her job, and the father could not help. This was when she decided to go to Spain and find a better-paid job, leaving her daughter with her grandmother.

She arrived in Madrid to live in a room she shared with another woman she was acquainted with. She found some short-term jobs taking care of sick people, until she finally met the family of the elderly lady she was taking care of at the time, earning 500€ a month, with living quarters and meals included. She found the job easy to do and the pay good, and she had a very good relationship with the son of the woman she was taking care of. It had, in fact, been the son’s idea that she fly to Romania instead of traveling by bus, as she had intended, because it was cheaper and saved her six days of her holidays. But she was frightened at the idea, as she had never taken a plane before and thought she was not going to be able to navigate the complicated logistics of the airport.

I asked her what the trip by bus was like, and she told me that it was easier but more tiring. Each way was 150€ and it took three whole days, making stops every four hours. Passengers had to bring along their own food or buy it at the places where the bus regularly stops. The bus has no toilet, only seats for the passengers - but it picks up passengers in Bucharest and arrives in Madrid with no further complication. When I met her, she was returning to Romania for the first time after she had left, and she was eager to see her daughter. She was carrying a lot of presents for her and for the rest of her family.

This daughter could have been any of the girls or boys in the Linking Classroom. After parents leave to search for jobs in Madrid, kids may remain in their grandmothers' care for some time. After parents secure a steadier income, they ask their sons and daughters to join them. Many times kids make the trip alone or with a brother or sister, sometimes by plane, sometimes by bus.

Some of the kids in the Linking Classroom wrote about their journeys like this:⁷³

When I arrived in Spain it was the first time I had seen my parents in three years. Then I saw the tall buildings and the subway, and I liked them very much. When we got off the subway I saw very big stores.

When I arrived home with my parents and cousins who had come here before me, I met my godparents and some new friends. We arrived on September 3rd, and we were very lucky, because the swimming pool closed down three days later. After many days I made some friends and I went to play soccer, hide-and-seek, etc. When I learned more Spanish I went to school, where I met the teachers and new kids. The kids in our classroom played together a lot.⁷⁴

⁷³ These stories, which I helped some of them write, were published in the section "Student Writings" of the school's Newsletter *Participando*, Num. 15, April, 2006.

⁷⁴A 12-year-old boy from Romania who was in the Linking Classroom from September to December 2005, after which he went to another school.

Everything started seven months ago, when I arrived in Spain. I didn't like the first impression, because it was summer and I couldn't stand the hot temperature, I was also tired after the ten-hour flight. On the other hand, I was happy because I had not seen my cousin and my aunt for the three years they have been living here. After my arrival I spent one month at home not going anywhere because I didn't know anybody, but after a while I met some kids from Aluche [the name of the neighborhood] and I started playing soccer in the park with them, and from then on I started to change the way I was seeing things. At the end of September I started going to the Linking Classroom, where I met different people from different countries and nationalities. I learned to speak and write Spanish there in only three months. In three months I also signed on with the school's indoor soccer team, and I have done things I could never have imagined in my country.⁷⁵

After a long three-day-trip by bus, I arrived in Spain with my mother. I was really paying attention to every kilometer of the trip since I entered this country, out of curiosity. The strangest thing for me was the weather: it was very hot, and the grass and trees were green. The soil was different from the soil in my country, Romania, but once I entered the big cities I realized that this country wasn't different from mine: the traffic is the same, some of the streets are narrow, some are big, and the buildings are more or less the same.⁷⁶

One of the saddest stories I was told was the arrival in Madrid of a 14-year-old girl from Bulgaria who had spent the last four years moving from one place to another in Bulgaria with her father, while her mother lived in Madrid, exchanging a job as a university teacher in Bulgaria for a job cleaning houses in Madrid. This girl told me, very regretfully, that, after saying goodbye to her loving father, she arrived in Madrid to be met at

⁷⁵ A 15-year-old boy from Brazil who enrolled in another school after the Linking Classroom.

⁷⁶ A 13-year-old girl from Romania who left the Linking Classroom and the school after a couple of months.

the airport by her mother - and that her mother told her that she did not recognize her.

This very same girl showed a lot of anger one day when she was asked to draw a picture of one of the Human Rights (an exercise scheduled to be done in the Linking Classroom once a year). When she read that every person has the right to live and work wherever she wants, she angrily confronted the teacher, and told her that she wasn't able to see her father because her father was not allowed to come to Spain until he got a work permit, and that he had been waiting for this work permit for several years and still had not received it. The teacher avoided the situation, even though I tried to make her answer this girl.

It is very common for teachers to blame the unstructured family situations for any problem the kids may have, and the situation then becomes a dead end, because they know they cannot do anything about it. One example was the case of a 14-year-old boy from Romania, who – according to the teacher – was diagnosed as hyperactive. The teacher told me that his mother came to school every week and was very concerned about him and his twin sister's education (both were in the Linking Classroom). But she was enraged when the teacher mentioned her son's supposed problem of hyperactivity. After some weeks, the mother came to the school in tears, telling the teacher that she did not even recognize her son anymore. He had been living with his grandparents in Romania for four years and he no longer resembled the loving boy she had left behind.

Other times it is the kids who come first, to be followed by their parents afterwards. This situation is not common, but there are some examples, such as the case of a 14-year-old boy from Brazil who had arrived to live with his cousin (also in the Linking Classroom) and his cousin's family, while his own parents had remained in Brazil. In this case, the teacher complained about the cousin's behavior, even though he was living with

his parents, and explained the “misbehavior” as a need to show off in front of the newly arrived kid.⁷⁷

The teacher told me that most of the kids are not living in houses or flats alone with their own families, but in rooms in apartments they share with other families. The kids do not talk about this, and they are very sensitive to this fact - which explains their lack of comments about their homes. When we talk about what they miss from their former countries, they always mention houses. When I first started asking this question, I thought they were going to mention friends, and sometimes they do, but what they say most often is the houses.

The kids’ arrival in the school is usually announced by a phone call from parents or relatives, so the tutor is expecting them and announces their age, sex, and nationality to the rest of the classroom before the new student arrives.

This always causes a wave of excitement among the students of the Linking Classroom. They are always hoping for more kids of the same age from the same country. In the case of older students, they also desire someone of the opposite sex, and hot (in Spanish, literally “que esté bueno/a”).

⁷⁷The tutor teacher has an explanation for the kinds of kids she is receiving in the Linking Classroom nowadays, compared to the ones she used to have when the program started. She has told me many times that in her opinion, at the beginning the immigrants were the most courageous and entrepreneurial, and that this kind of immigration was a whole-family enterprise. Afterwards these people called other relatives and acquaintances to follow, and these later immigrants, using the already-established network, started their own immigration odyssey, relying heavily on the former immigrants. She praises the people who started the movement very highly, but does not praise the ones that followed as much. In her explanation, the families of the first wave stuck to each other because they needed each other. According to this teacher, the kids who arrive now behave differently, because the newly arrived immigrants are more prone to leave close relatives behind – because they already have networks here.

I do not agree with her. As an ethnographer I always think that social relationships are much too complicated to be stereotyped so easily, but I think it is important to quote her explanation, since it plays an important role in the way she thinks about the kids she teaches.

When the new student actually arrives with a relative or friend, generally the mother herself, they knock on the door of the classroom, and the tutor leaves the room to meet and be introduced to the newly-arrived student by someone from the school staff. The conversation usually lasts about ten minutes. Meanwhile the kids inside the classroom get really wild with excitement. In most cases the teacher enters the room again with more information but without the new student, announcing that she will come to school the next day.

If the student stays, he enters the classroom with the teacher and the first impression is always a lot of noise with everybody speaking really loudly at the same time and the teacher telling them to be quiet and not to frighten the new student. It must, in fact, be a really scary experience for them. Depending on the student's ability to understand Spanish, the teacher will make everybody introduce themselves, telling their name, age, and country of origin. If the new student does not understand Spanish, the teacher will sit her next to someone who speaks the same language. If there is nobody who speaks the same language, the new student sits in a place by herself. In any case, they are given the first set of photocopied exercises.

The situations are very diverse, depending on the character of the new kid, what he expects from school, the way he is feeling about the whole situation of moving, etc., but when the new student has the chance to speak in his own language with someone in the classroom, I am sure that this makes a huge difference in helping him adjust to the new environment.

If this is the case, the new student usually has an easier time, since she is able to communicate with everybody else thanks to the classmate who can translate. If not, sometimes the student was already able to speak a few words in Spanish. If none of this worked, I tried English; if English did not work either, I sat down with the new kid and tried to communicate with her starting with our names and a few words. And then the teacher came along to see what we were doing and how it was going, bringing the first set of exercises, which she always had ready.

Some kids feel insecure and threatened for a long time. They tend to keep their coats, caps, and even backpacks with them, and sometimes they just lean their heads on the tables and try to shut out the world. The teachers do not say anything for a while, but eventually they will try to make them put the backpack away and hang the coat or jacket on the hangers with everybody else's coats. Some of them will totally refuse, and the teachers, will relent... for a while.

Most of the students I saw arriving in the Linking Classroom, made bonds with some other student within a week, especially if there were others from the same country. They would sit together and, encouraged by the teacher, speak their language... for a while. And after a time, the teacher would start complaining about their not speaking Spanish, blaming the one who had spent more time in the Linking Classroom. .

Since the places in the classroom are loosely assigned and kids can move their tables around and more or less sit down next to anybody they want, if the other person also wants to, I made drawings of where we sat every day I was in the classroom, twice. The first time at approximately 9 a.m. Classes start at 8:30 a.m. and since some kids arrived at school late, I took our positions half an hour after the class had already started. And the second time after recess. Recess starts at 11:15 a.m. and finishes at 11:45 a.m. When they had class after lunch (some days they finished school at 2:30 p.m., but other days they went home or stayed at school for lunch at 12:30 p.m. and then had class again from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.), if I remained in the school, I made a third drawing of where we were sitting, if we were sitting at all, since the afternoon classes are often devoted to workshops or other kinds of activities which do not require sitting down.

Based on the progress of my drawings, I was able to document ethnographically that kids tend to choose their seats next to other kids from the same places, but only at the beginning. After they get used to each other, they tend to organize themselves in same-gender groups. This is true even in the cases of brothers and sisters. There have been five cases of brothers and sisters (and two more of brother and brother), and they stick to each other closely, but even in these cases, I observed that same-gender groups finally won their loyalties.

There were some exceptions to this rule of gendered loyalties: in two cases, they were 18-year-old boys, and in the other two, 12-year-old boys, but even in the case of other 12-year-olds, the same-sex grouping was the rule. The majority of the kids in the classroom were 14 years old, the average age in the classroom being 13.8.

Besides my drawings, there were many other ways to document this process, when their loyalties shift from the same-language groups to the same-sex ones: who spends recess with whom, who waits for whom after a test (tests are always scheduled before recess or before the end of class, and kids are supposed to leave once they have finished), who sits together at the entrance of the classroom waiting for the teacher, or during school trips, and especially who takes sides with whom and why during conflicts.

It is the formation of these same-gender groups which creates the need for kids to start speaking Spanish, because it is then they have to communicate with each other across language groups and in order to argue with the other group.

The sharing and the arguing which leads to more sharing and, in turn, more arguing, occupies most of their attention, the rest of the activities are just interruptions to this gender-based sexually charged social flow. Kids are starting to play with sex, and the classroom is their playground. Only sometimes, especially in the case of some girls, are their interests directed beyond the classroom, mainly into the school, and occasionally even beyond it.

The use of computers is also closely related to this issue. Some of them keep contact with friends by "Messenger," others make contacts using sexually explicit websites, and in general they just use internet to feed their curiosity. Many do not have computers at home, so the time they spend in front of the screen hooked up to internet is precious, but it has to be played with double standards: they are supposed to be doing some required exercises or educational games (Math or Vocabulary), so they master the technique of quickly switching from one website to the other, keeping an eye on the teacher's movements.

This was one of the moments when I knew for sure that I was not perceived as a teacher, but as someone else that did not threaten their use of internet: they never switched websites when I was with them, and sometimes they even showed me conversations they were having with someone on the other side, which they wanted to share, and made me blush. They are teenagers daring to play with the dangers of powerful words, protected under cover of the anonymity of the net. Of course, the teachers did not know about this, and I did not think I had the right to tell them.

Some of the boys enjoy playing soccer very much (soccer is always the favorite sport, but sometimes we played basketball to accommodate the girls' wishes too), and some of them are really committed to it, thinking that they want to play as professionals in the future. They usually play among themselves, but soccer is almost the only activity they would be eager to play with other kids in the school, since there are never enough players in the Linking Classroom.

In the case of the girls, the activity that makes them go beyond the Linking Classroom and into the school at large is flirting (I never saw a boy flirting with girls outside the classroom). We spent many recess breaks looking for the appropriate place to look at a particular guy in the background (any boy who one of the girls in the classroom fancied at the time), as if we were there just by chance, and once he was located we would select a strategic position to see him as much as possible and for the girl to be seen just as much as she wanted. I felt like a periscope at those times, but enjoyed them immensely because I went to a segregated school, for girls only, and I never had the opportunity to experience these games myself.

Nevertheless, this playing is not only fun: the kids really suffer and think everything is lost forever when they feel rejected or simply do not get the attention they hope for. They live as if there were no tomorrow. It must be that we discover tomorrow, and even the day after, when we become adults. As a teenager there is only one person in the world, and one opportunity to love him or her. As a twelve-, thirteen-, or fourteen-year-old, the case is even more severe: they are always about to die, literally.

And so there is an urgency which rules their lives, and makes it really difficult for them to attend to other issues.

This flirting, when it takes place outside the Linking Classroom, is a useful activity for getting together with kids from the whole school - much more efficient than the activities paid for by the Community of Madrid. Along the same lines, the arrival of certain girls makes the Linking Classroom famous in the whole school, and boys keep coming to invite the whole Linking Classroom to share some activity. Kids in the Linking Classroom are always reluctant to accept these invitations but the boys who invite them could be very persuasive.

Except for these opportunities, the Linking Classroom is pretty isolated from the rest of the school. Kids from other classes come regularly to ask for some material from the locked cupboard (which is not locked during class time). The kids usually say that another teacher has sent them (this teacher is the one who teaches Math and Art in the Linking Classroom and she knows the school materials that are available in this classroom). I always suspected, even though teachers gave different explanations, that this had to do with the funding of the Linking Classroom Program. The money the school receives from the Community of Madrid to implement the Program supplies the classroom with more material and resources than the regular classes have. It is kept in the Linking Classroom, but regularly used by some other students. These exchanges are really short and always polite. When the kids from other classes arrive, they always ask if they could please borrow this or that; in five minutes, fifteen other students may also come seeking the same item. And even though these are very short visits with a clear purpose, in the minute or less that these exchanges last, they become familiar with each others' faces. If only for this reason, I think it is really positive that the program funds the Linking Classroom with more and better material, and that they share it with the rest of the school. (Only I do not know if an inspector or auditor would agree with me!)

All these moments are the sparkling moments in the classroom; the rest was plain boring, at least for me.

As a child and especially as a teenager, I always got bored in school, but I had forgotten about it! During the fieldwork, I was bored in class from the very first day, but remembering the dull time I had had at my own school, I thought I was projecting those sensations. But I was bored from the first day to the last, and I WAS actually doing fieldwork in which I have a very deep interest. The clock stopped at some point between 9 and 9.30 a.m. and we were condemned to do infinite exercises forever! I am not kidding.

My first and inexperienced approach to the fact that they (we) were supposed to do the carefully and patiently selected exercises to practice anything from Grammar to Social Sciences or Environmental Sciences, was to finish them as quickly as possible. But the kids soon taught me that this approach was a huge mistake, since exercises are just infinite – no matter how quickly they finished, a new one would arrive immediately. So the trick was to find the appropriate rhythm to keep us more or less in tune with the teacher's expectations... after just three or four warnings.

The students do not care about the exercises at all, they just do them because they love the teacher and she wants them to finish them. I was of some help to the kids for keeping up with this rhythm: I knew some of the answers, which they gladly shared with each other. This process does not require much of their attention, and thus they focus their effort on their main interests: music, cell phones, girls and boys, what they are going to do at recess or after school, and especially getting someone's attention, mainly by teasing.

I am good with words in Spanish, and this is how I could be useful, but the fact that I did not know many of the answers to the questions (such as: How long is the intestine? What is the name of the sound an elephant makes? Or how many rivers are there in the African continent? - to quote some questions I remember), and also the fact that I did not care whether I knew them or not, was what first raised students' suspicions about my role as a teacher (which is how the tutor teacher introduced me to them), and that is how I got some room to negotiate my role with them.

Nevertheless, I was not totally useless to the teacher either: I would focus my attention on someone who could not keep up with the level of the

class, and I taught them the dreadful Spanish verbs using a very simple, but very effective method - some exercises finish by selecting some verbs within the text and writing the present, future, and simple past, in the case of the newer students, or the more difficult past forms, in the case of the most advanced ones. What I did was repeat them until they caught the pattern, which they did quickly; I did not press them, but by repeating, they unconsciously got the structure, even with the irregular verbs.

The only activity they like regarding exercises is to read a fragment of a dictation aloud, which they take turns doing. But the problem is that when someone is reading aloud, the rest of the class is bored and often goes wild (they all usually read the same text over and over). This provides an arena to complain about each other and their lack of respect (because they are not listening to the one who is reading), which in fact was part of their favorite activity: teasing.

The tutor teacher sometimes even selects the exercises by surfing the net, trying to find some text related to the subject they are currently working on and that could also interest the kids. But they were never interested. Sometimes these texts caught my attention, but most of the time they did not interest me, either. That does not mean that the kids have no interests, as many teachers conclude, but rather that the teachers' assumptions about their interests are not in tune with their real interests. In fact I saw many opportunities when the kids were really eager to discuss something, but unfortunately, most of the times these opportunities were lost. Many times the students' interests are perhaps not at the center of the topic of the day, and for that reason are discarded, but most times I suspect that it has to do with the fact that teachers are afraid of dealing with controversial issues where it is not easy to give a clear answer. It is my opinion that these situations could indeed be difficult to manage (politics, religion, or sex), but I do think that, even if they are difficult, they should be used to benefit discussion and to teach the kids critical thinking.

There are other kinds of opportunities that in my opinion are also wasted: the students love to speak about their countries and compare what they see in Madrid with the cities where they used to live. These occasions are

seldom used in the classroom, even when the teacher herself introduces the subject, like when she asks the kids to bring meals from home. However, the kinds of conversations that these activities could lead to are easily discarded without much deeper thought. The root of the problem, from my perspective, is that kids are interested not only in plain differences but in inequalities between them and others. Teachers address the subject of inequalities always in theory, speaking about society in general, but never focusing on the lives of the students. We have seen an example of this, in one student's reaction to an activity concerning human rights.

Besides written exercises, there are other activities in the classroom, some of which I have already mentioned, such as computer-time or tests, but there are also general discussions about newspaper articles they read in class, visits to the library to check out and return books and movies, free time at a nearby park (kids' favorite), and a weekly movie - after which they are supposed to fill in more exercises.

The weekly movie is one of the activities of which the teacher is proudest. She thinks that kids get used to the vocabulary in real situations, so she always tries to show a movie related to the current subjects of the classes, and afterwards she assigns them comprehension exercises and grammar practice. For the kids, the movies have different goals. The first one is a long negotiation on the movie itself, complaining about other kids' wishes and preferences. At the same time, these long negotiations also have the advantage of avoiding further exercises. If they like the movie and they are able to understand the (horrible) sound quality of the TV, they can engage with it, but many times they are just left to their own business: sleeping, thinking, and even listening to music. As happens with the rest of the exercises, when they have to write about the movie, they share answers with each other in a way that made me think, at one point, that sharing answers is how they learn Spanish, not by actually doing the exercises.

Regardless of the fact that all these activities mentioned have a fixed schedule during the whole week, students also know that they always have some room to negotiate specific activities according to their own preferences.

Their first preference is to get out of the school, which means finishing classes earlier, going to the park near the school, to the library in the neighborhood, etc. Their second preference is to go to the school playing fields, even if they are not all planning to play but just want to chat. These two preferences sometimes conflict, when there are boys who really love to play soccer. In this case, they fight for this activity in the first place, but the rest of the class fights back.

Their third preference regarding activities is recess, which means starting recess earlier, or staying out of class longer. However, recess is also a ground for conflict: except for the boys and the occasional girl who want to play soccer, the rest want to spend recess in the school corridors just chatting. This is strictly forbidden by school regulations: students are supposed to spend recess in the patio if it is not raining (only the students in *Bachillerato* are allowed to leave the school). Kids use a lot of different strategies to avoid the rule, and this makes the teachers in charge of recess confront them. This was another advantage students saw in me: teachers would let them stay inside if they were with me, and after giving me a stern look, they would consent. In this way we were free to walk inside the school following our (mostly their) wishes, but always with an excuse ready, just in case.

During recess I was useful in another way: to get them snacks. This does not mean that they expect me to pay for them (although sometimes I do, but many times they also treat me), but just go to one of the two windows in the cafeteria which is reserved for teachers and thus less busy, and make the purchases for everybody. The person in charge of the cafeteria knows that I am buying things for the kids, but she never complains. The other window is actually frightening: there is always a huge crowd of students easily able to get the attention of the person inside the kitchen, or else they would end up with nothing. They do not line up or take turns, and since all of them have recess at the same time, it is crucial to get the snack or sandwiches (which take a lot longer to prepare) on time. After I got my coffee and the snacks for the kids, I greeted some of the teachers who I already knew and went to spend the rest of recess with the girls, and they shared whatever they had with me.

One of the reasons kids do not want to spend recess in the patio is that they are cold, the other is that, except when they fancy a boy from the school, they prefer to keep to themselves, apart from the rest. During my second year of fieldwork, the teacher who substituted the tutor teacher while she was on sick leave, gave in to the kids' wishes and let them spend recess in the classroom. This was experienced by the students as a right which they had won by wise maneuvering. There was a group of girls who wanted to practice a set of exercises for their Physical Education class, and they asked to use the Linking Classroom for practice during recess. Two of these girls in the group of four had been students in the Linking Classroom (although this teacher had never met them there). Their practice involved music, and the other girls wanted to watch them and listen to the music. No boys were allowed inside, even though they asked many times and stayed by the door of the classroom. After practice was over, the girls wanted to remain in the classroom and eventually they were allowed to.

Once practice was no longer necessary, it was really difficult for the teacher to reverse this new habit, and so she spent recess with them inside the classroom. At the end of the school year, she told me that it had been a mistake, since it had isolated the Linking Classroom kids, and that she wished she had done it differently. I doubt that the kids of the Linking Classroom would have gotten along with the rest of the school, even if they had been forced to spend recess outside - judging from what happened when they shared the patio with the rest of the school, i.e., they always talked among themselves, apart from the crowd.

Throughout this process in the Linking Classroom, there were always new kids joining and others leaving the group, as the time they were supposed to spend there came to an end. I have already written about their entrance; let me end this chapter by focusing on their exit.

Except for one 16-year-old boy from Romania - the very first student I met in the Linking Classroom, who was eager to finish the Program and become part of his reference group and to continue what he perceived as his real schooling, the rest of the students always had a tough time leaving the Linking Classroom – right from the first moment they learned about this unavoidable fact, to the very moment when they actually left.

Only one 14-year-old girl from Bulgaria was always aware of this, and she tried to play a very active role in the process, using different tactics to negotiate. The rest of the students usually became aware of this fact when they saw other classmates leaving. Then they started asking the teacher about their own situation. Since the teacher is in favor of them leaving the program as soon as possible, she considers two main factors in making her decision: the level of Spanish they are able to understand, speak and write, and their academic level compared to the reference groups they are about to join. Of course, the law also sets the limits – in the beginning, six months was the usual maximum, with the possibility of a six-month extension (in the case of students whose languages use very different alphabets), but in the last two years the minimum period was extended to nine months (the new regulations actually reached the Linking Classroom one year later).

What students see is that their time in the Linking Classroom is very different from one kid to another, and they almost always see in this variation some room to negotiate a longer stay for themselves. They complain, for example, if they come from China but are only allowed six months, and then the teacher argues back that the decision about leaving the Linking Classroom is not linked to the place of origin but to the knowledge of the alphabet (this particular girl indeed came from China, but had a very good level of English). Others argue for a longer stay, referring to their country's Cyrillic alphabet, but the law does not mention the Cyrillic alphabet, only Chinese or Arabic; they nevertheless keep on complaining, but to no effect.

I have seen students fail exams on purpose to remain in the Linking Classroom, but this is really easy for the teacher to find out. Sometimes, she grants a longer stay, seeing their anguish and giving them the extra time they need to get ready. But some of them are never ready; in the end, they just sadly leave.

This painful period is even more difficult when kids cannot remain in the school. Even though program regulations make this possibility a condition for allowing the school to have the program, the fact is that out of the 43 kids I met in the Linking Classroom, only five were actually formally enrolled in the same school. One of them had to leave in the second year

because, after getting his Secondary Certificate (only) in a Compensatory Program, he was told he could not enroll in *Bachillerato* and had to take a vocational program that the school does not offer.

Some of these kids, as was the case of a girl from Ukraine, preferred to enroll in a (compensatory) course below her age in order to remain in the same school. She was one of the students who failed the exams on purpose.

There are two main reasons for leaving the school: a) when there is no room in the school in the course the student should be in (that is why some of them prefer to enroll below their age), or b) the family prefers them to leave. The latter happens if they live far away from the school or if they already have brothers and sisters in a different school.

There were also some cases where the kids went to their countries of origin on holiday and then had to remain there. A boy from Brazil was not allowed to re-enter Spain since his family did not have their papers in order. In the case of an 18-year-old boy from Romania, his family wanted him to take care of his aging grandparents in Romania. And there was a 13-year-old girl from Bulgaria, who was very popular at school, and very intelligent, so she got bored at school and at the same time had a lot of opportunities to party. The night parties left her exhausted in the morning and she practically dropped out of school; that was when her mother sent her back to Bulgaria, asking her father to take care of her –more strictly– during the summer. She was supposed to come back at the beginning of the school year, but I was told by the teacher that since she could not be enrolled in the same school, she preferred to remain in Bulgaria.

Most of the students enrolled in different schools, but they almost all visit their old Linking Classroom any time they have the opportunity. Even in the cases where the teacher of the Linking Classroom is really proud of their progress, when I had the opportunity to ask them how they were doing, they always said, "Not well, it is very difficult." If such a dialogue took place in front of the rest of the classroom, the teacher would use the opportunity to tell them to "work very hard because, you see, she was a very good student, and even for her, it is very difficult." Conversely this advice usually raised a wave of panic among the students, and then they

asked about the possibility of enrolling in a compensatory course or in a course below their age level.

On one recent occasion, a 14-year-old girl was scheduled to leave the Linking Classroom soon, and she had definitely found out that it would not be possible for her to enroll in the same school, because her course was full. Another girl asked me to take photos of them together as a souvenir. When I asked both to pose in front of the camera, the girl who was leaving absolutely refused. We tried to make her change her mind, but she wrapped her arms around her legs and lowered her head, shutting the world out.

She looked really sad and angry, and she said that the reason was that that the other girl did not wait for her after the test. But I suspected that her anger had to do with the fact that she was about to leave the school against her wishes. I asked her directly about this and told her that in my opinion she had every right to be angry, that she had made a big effort trying to get used to this school, and that it was not fair that they were making her leave. She opened up to me completely. The other girl told her not to worry about it, since they were living close to each other and they could meet after school. I told the other girl that this was a very nice idea, but not the reason she was angry. She eventually asked me to take the pictures, a lot of them: with the other girl and in front of the door of the classroom, and next to some crafts they had done to decorate the class.

Since I was always trying to explain to students what I was actually doing in the Linking Classroom, I took the opportunity to explain to the two girls that my work was about the Program - to try to find out what was working and what was not working well. I told them that I valued their opinion, that I would write about it, and that I would try to do whatever I could to change what is not working.

In April 2008, just before I left the classroom to travel to Vienna, I spoke on the phone with the teacher, and she told me that she had decided to get an extra period in the Linking Classroom for this girl and her brother, due to their academic gaps. This decision will give the two kids some extra months in the Linking Classroom, and will postpone their exit, and with it the problem will just be postponed as well. But that is all.

Chapter 4: Challenging (unresolved issues)

In the last chapter I presented a general analysis of my ethnographic material. Let me focus here on what I perceived as the most important unsolved issues. What happens when students finish the program? How successful is the methodology used in the Linking Classroom? What about the issue of the students' mother tongue and their progress in learning Spanish? What are the initial expectations (of students and others)? And finally, what are the prevailing opinions about the program? These issues have already been introduced and in some cases, discussed in the previous chapter to a certain point, but due to their significance, I want to take a deeper look at them.

Beyond the Linking Classroom:

I ended the last chapter talking about the process of exiting the Linking Classroom Program, and how painful it is for most students.

The teachers, even though they are convinced that it makes a huge difference if the students remain in the same school or not, look on the bright side, in general terms. They know they have some very good and hardworking students; and they regret any time the school loses one of these due to lack of space. Whenever I asked them how students were doing after their stay in the Linking Classroom, their answers tried to focus on the most successful cases, usually the ones who remain in the school.

It nevertheless struck me that anytime the teachers talked as if everything were going fine with these kids, when I met the students and asked how they were doing, they, in contrast, gave me a very different picture: they mostly looked sad, sometimes depressed, and always perceived their academic performance to be unsatisfactory, at least by their own standards.

I am convinced that these different perceptions must be related to the issue of expectations.

The Welcome Schools Program, and the Linking Classrooms within it, are supposed to adjust students to and integrate them into the regular school system of the Community of Madrid. But when the kids show some kind of resistance to finishing the program, try to manipulate their exit by enrolling in lower courses, and sometimes fight desperately to remain in the same school, it seems to me that the Program is failing the students, or at least we can argue that it is failing to achieve its own goals.

Why, then, is everybody so satisfied with the results of the Program, according to the three-year evaluation? And I am not only talking about the tutor teachers, but about principals, the rest of the teachers, the psychologists who serve as counselors for the students, and supposedly even the students themselves.⁷⁸

Let me elaborate further on the six cases I was able to follow within the school, in order to present my reasoning:

The first student was a 16-year-old boy from Romania. He arrived with no knowledge of Spanish at all, but was able to speak astonishingly well in three months. He was the only one I saw who was eager to leave the Linking Classroom to begin his regular schooling. When he was in the program, he was always speaking about his future, dreaming about going to the university to enroll in an engineering school. He had not decided what kind of engineering he preferred, and was speculating about computer engineering, among other possibilities. We used to visit the second floor of the school where the grades required in each of the schools of different universities were displayed. Computer engineering was one of the schools which asked for the highest grades (8 out of 10), but he was not afraid of this fact. He graduated from the Linking Classroom Program in three months and entered the last course of Compulsory Secondary Education before the school year was over. He

⁷⁸ See Del Olmo (forthcoming in 2009) for an analysis of the evaluation process.

was able to pass the exams and at the end of the school year he could be seen regularly with Spanish kids, speaking very good Spanish. He played the piano and the teachers at the school helped him enter a music school to learn clarinet (since he did not have a piano to play).

During the second school year he was doing the first year of *Bachillerato*, which is a precondition to enter the University. He looked happy and when I asked him how he was doing, he told me that he had changed his mind about his education. The school had recommended that he not do the Science *Bachillerato*, but an Art one, due to the fact that he played music. He told me that after this advice he had tried to enter a *Bachillerato* in music, but that his grades were not good enough. He said he was happy in the Arts *Bachillerato* and then planned to go to the School of Art once he entered the University. I saw him regularly at recess time and any time he came to the Linking Classroom to pay a visit, and we spoke frequently about his expectations and his actual academic performance. At the end of that year he told me that he did not think he would be able to get into the School of Art at the university. I told him not to abandon hope and I went with him to check on the grades he would need in order to get into that School. We saw that he only needed a grade of 6 out of 10, and I told him I was sure he could make it. He was then speaking Spanish with no trace of a different maternal language.

In the third year, the first time I saw him he had already taken the first set of exams, failing everything. He told me he was really depressed and that life was really hard on him. I tried to raise his spirits but was unable to. He had passed the theoretical test to get his driver's license but he had already failed the practical exam once. Although his father was helping him, it was very expensive to pay for the new fees and extra classes. Some time afterwards, he told me that he took an exam to get into an orchestra, and that he had already passed it, but that this meant a lot of work and that he was thinking about dropping out of school. He said he needed to take a small job and that he was looking for a job as a DJ. When I spoke with him about his expectations, he told me that he was considering forgetting the whole plan to go to the university and going into a vocational program instead. His new hope was then to become a sound engineer, but he did not know how to pursue this career. I told him my brother-in-law was a sound engineer and that he had just been hired

by a recording company after he finished school. Once in the company, he had received on-the-job training as an engineer, but he was now doing something else because the world of music recording was undergoing a great recession. I offered to put him in contact with my brother-in-law, which I eventually did. The last time I saw this student, he was about to be hired by my brother-in-law's former company just for small jobs, and on a trial basis.

The second case was 15-year-old a girl from Ukraine. She was never a good student and had a very good time in the Linking Classroom, although the teacher warned her many times about her poor performance and her lack of interest. She started to get serious about learning Spanish and working in the classroom when she was confronted with the fact that eventually she would have to leave the Linking Classroom. She was doing fine for a while, getting good marks and the teacher was satisfied with her progress. She had made a friend at school, a Spanish girl who was a very good student and they were really close. When she was about to finish her stay in the Linking Classroom, her friend told her that she was going to have a rough time in the regular classroom and that she would not be able to understand the teachers. When she heard this, she totally panicked. She then tried to negotiate a longer stay using the reasoning that she had come with a different alphabet and so she should get the same treatment as kids whose language was Chinese or Arabic. When this did not work, she blamed her former school in Ukraine for the lower academic level and for the fact that she had been switched from learning German to learning French, and ending up with neither German, French, or English (which she was required to take in her reference course). When these arguments did not work either, she started failing the exams on purpose, making mistakes even in writing her name. The teacher granted her a longer stay just to take some of the pressure off of her.

Afterwards, she spoke with an older boy, an alumnus of the Linking Classroom, who told her about the Compensatory Program. She considered enrolling there, because this boy told her that this Program was easier than the regular one. She was finally granted a spot in the school once she agreed to enroll in a course below her age level, since the course which corresponded to her age was already full.

She is still in the same school and is now in the Compensatory Program, where she ended up after failing the regular Program, even though it was one course below her age level. I met her from time to time when I went outside the building for a break to smoke a cigarette and she was also smoking (against the regulations of the school for her course, even if not for her age). Anyway she said she was doing fine. She was aware that her Program would not let her enter the university, but this did not bother her, since she wants to get a job. She was speaking Spanish pretty well, and was always around other kids, especially her girlfriends.

A third case was a 16-year-old boy from Romania. He finished the Program after six months –the maximum stay at that moment. Afterwards he enrolled in the school in a Compensatory Program to finish Compulsory Secondary Education. And he did. He now visits the Linking classroom from time to time.

Last time I saw him he told me that he was not at the school anymore. Even though he got the Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate, the Compensatory Program he had followed did not qualify him to get into *Bachillerato*. Eventually he enrolled in a Vocational Training Program about computers outside the school. He was always a solitary person, and was hardly ever seen with other students, especially at the end of his time in the school. Teachers complained about his lack of Spanish comprehension and his apparent difficulties for making friends. But at the moment, he said he was pretty satisfied with his life.

A fourth case was a 14-year-old girl from China, a very hard-working girl with an outstanding academic level. She wanted to go to the university to medical school, and she was aware of the high grades she needed in order to get in (almost 9 out of 10). She was enrolled in extra Spanish classes in the afternoon, and reported having a family (father, mother, and grandparents) who expected the best from her. She was very friendly, and spoke good English, and for that reason had to leave the Linking Classroom after six months (even though at that time the period had already been extended to nine months, but the teachers were not aware of the new regulations). She was very scared about leaving the Linking Classroom, but the teacher was very confident.

During her last days in the Program, she was given the task of reading short excerpts on the History of Spain and I used to help her with them. Once she read them she would ask me about the concepts she did not know. On one occasion, after reading one of these texts, she asked me about the meaning of certain words she was having trouble understanding, such as "Constitution," "Senate," "Congress." She was also worried about the meaning of 10th Century B.C. or 10th Century A.C. I asked her if she knew who Jesus Christ was, and when she told me she did not, I tried to start by speaking about Christmas, which she did know about. In this way we established a common ground and we both did our best to get her ready to approach the subject of History of Spain.

I met her again the day after the Christmas holidays when she was supposed to go to the regular course for the first time. She was granted a place in the penultimate course of Compulsory Secondary Education, which corresponded to her age, not in the Compensatory Program, but in the regular one. For a long time, she cried and cried every time I met her. She said that it was really difficult and that she was having a very bad time. She finished her course failing only Spanish History and Spanish Literature, and with passing grades in the rest. Then she was promoted to the last course of Compulsory Secondary Education, but was still complaining about how difficult it was. Since I had a trip scheduled for the following summer to Shanghai, her home city, we planned on meeting there, but the last time I saw her she told me that she would only be allowed to go if she failed fewer than three subjects. I spoke with the inspector who did the evaluation of the Linking Classroom Program about her case. She told me she doubted that she could enter medical school, as she wished, and I asked if nothing could be done for these hard-working, outstanding students, with very good academic levels, who spoke different languages. She told me that many Spaniards did not get into medical school either.

A fifth case was also a very bright and hard-working 14-year-old from Romania. He stayed in the school and entered the regular final course of Compulsory Secondary Education. He seemed to be doing well, but he did not come to the Linking Classroom regularly, as the others did. This

may have been because he was very attached to the teacher who had substituted the tutor teacher when she had been on sick leave, and this teacher was no longer at the school. The rest of his classmates had left the school.

The sixth and last case was that of a 15-year-old girl from Morocco. She spent a whole year in the Linking Classroom in spite of the fact that she spoke Spanish very well, but she did not know how to write well, either in Spanish or in Arabic. This girl had been living with her grandparents in Morocco and apparently was not attending school regularly there. When she came to Spain, she lived with her parents for the first time in some years. I remember how, in the Linking Classroom she always had her head down on the table and was feeling miserable. She complained regularly about headaches and at one point she was sent to a family doctor who gave her a prescription for some strong pills, which constantly made her sleepy. The pain showed in her face and, even though she was a very nice person, it was very difficult to work with her. She would refuse to do anything she thought was beyond her reach, and she considered it impossible to do very simple addition and subtraction exercises – which I was sure she was able to do just because she was able to do shopping.

After one year in the Linking Classroom, she was able to write in Spanish very slowly and with some mistakes. When her time in the program was finished, the teacher thought about the possibility of enrolling her in a Program at a related school which was aimed at kids who would not get a Certificate of Secondary Education. The Program is called “Garantía Social” in Spanish (literally “Social Guarantee” in English).

It is a Program for kids older than 16 (i.e. beyond Compulsory Secondary Education) but younger than 18, who have not qualified to get the Certificate of Compulsory Secondary Education. It trains students for one year to get a job in the labor market, a job for which only basic qualifications are required. In the case of this particular school, they were running two programs: one to train students to work in the construction sector, and the other one for waiters and waitresses. Each program has 12 trainees; the construction program was filled with only boys, with

eleven out of the twelve being immigrant students;⁷⁹ the program for future waiters and waitresses had more girls than boys and ten out of the twelve were immigrant kids.

When I met this former student of the Linking Classroom in her new school being trained to be a waitress, practicing serving breakfast, she approached me. While she seemed surprised about my visit, she looked totally different: happy and confident. I asked her about her headaches and she told me they were completely gone. She told me she was totally satisfied and looked really satisfied and at ease.

During my visit to this vocational school with the rest of the Linking Classroom, a former student came along as well. She was a 14-year-old girl from Brazil who had left the Linking Classroom after only two months because the teacher thought she had a very good level of Spanish and also an adequate academic background to be schooled in a regular classroom. She was also one of the cases the teacher considered a big success. As the course she was to enroll in was already full, she left the school. During the visit she looked very sad and depressed, and said that she was not doing well in the new school. She told us that on her very first day in the new school, she was given an exam to test her academic level, and as a result she had been placed only in a compensatory course - which made it practically impossible for her to move on to the university.

The progress of each of these students after the Linking Classroom was different, with some of them really happy and well-adjusted, and others increasingly unsatisfied. But shockingly enough – at least for me! - was the fact that the ones who were in tune with their lives were the poorer performers with lower expectations (that is, academically speaking). AT THE SAME TIME those students who had reached a very high academic level and had outstanding self-discipline for hard work were the ones who increasingly felt they did not fit in, were even totally out of place, and they were visibly depressed. And even more peculiar: the difference

⁷⁹ According to the Ministry of Education data, the total percentage of immigrant students in the total student population is 8.35%, while it reaches 12.81% in the Programs of Garantía Social, a clear over-representation (MEC 2007).

between failure and success was completely independent of their level of Spanish knowledge.

Methodology in the Linking Classroom:

As I said before, although I may not have been explicit enough, official regulations for the Linking Classroom do not make any statement about specific teaching/learning methods or academic content. They only establish loose outlines, thus leaving the real task of filling the Program with content to the teachers – but without providing them with concrete guidelines, materials,⁸⁰ adequate training, or paid time to develop them.

Hence teachers do their preparation for the Linking Classroom during their free time, and for free. In the school where I worked were they lucky enough to have the opportunity to meet with other Linking Classroom teachers from the group of schools belonging to the same owners, and work together. So they were able to collect exercises from here and there, and thus compile what is now used as a general method: a set of ordered and structured exercises they give to every new kid, to be done individually, more slowly or quickly depending on the circumstances of the student until, little by little at first and then to a greater extent, they start working on the exercises together with the whole group.

The pattern is always the same and it has proved adequate for the teacher. It is structured along two different lines: from pictures to words to sentences to texts, learning Spanish as a container for academic content, and from themselves to their families to the class to the school to the neighborhood, the city, the country, and beyond, in terms of academic content.

⁸⁰ With the exception of some computer materials, which are available at the Program's official website. However, the teachers do not think they are much help for the classroom since they are designed to work only with Spanish and one other language at the same time, instead of the four or five languages they may encounter in their classrooms.

These exercises are presented to each student as series of Xerox copies, divided into units of knowledge. So on the first day a kid gets the first unit and works on it until it is finished. When he or she is done, the teacher provides the next unit, and so on. This method contributes to the students' perception that exercises have no end, since they do not know the sequence or steps of the process.

The word in Spanish for these sets is “fichas” (literally “index cards”), which is also used to refer to exercises in general. This word needs an historical explanation. When the LGE (General Law on Education) introduced compulsory education until the age of 14 for the first time in Spain in 1970, textbooks (a profitable industry) underwent a profound change in their structure and, thus, in the way to approach them. Books that had been revered and used only as a reference to read and copy from were, from that moment, transformed into something in between a reference book and an exercise notepad. I am sure that one of the reasons for this was that press companies wanted parents to buy a book for each kid (instead of passing them from sibling to sibling), and so sell more, and that was exactly why people started opposing the new method. It was then that exercises became “fichas,” as opposed to books, in a derogatory sense. The word “ficha” still carries a negative taint, which has been increased by a practice intended to fight against the profits of publishing companies. Parents and teachers advise students not to write directly in the book, but photocopy it and do the exercises on the copies. This is why the word “ficha” also carries a meaning of cheap material in black and white – mostly gray, usually with blurry letters. Little kids still do “fichas” and of course the students of the Linking Classroom also do “fichas.”

The “fichas” have the positive advantage that they are provided by the school and kids only have to buy a one textbook in the Linking Classroom, instead of several. The only textbook they have to buy is a Spanish as a Second Language textbook, which they use from time to time. The rest of the books they use are on the shelves of the classroom library, with enough copies for all of them or one copy for every two students (depending of the size of the group at the moment).

Even though materials and exercises are approached from a global perspective, practicing everything at the same time, the teacher of the classroom has organized their school time according to a schedule divided into one-hour slots for:

- Grammar
- Social Sciences
- Environmental Sciences
- Mathematics
- Art
- Technology
- Communications Skills
- Social Skills
- Physical Education
- Music

Grammar, Social Sciences and Environmental Sciences are the responsibility of the tutor. Math and Art are taught in the classroom by one of the school's teachers. Technology is taught by another teacher from the school, in a different room, but only for Linking Classroom students. Communications Skills and Social Skills are also taught in the classroom but by teachers coming from outside the school. Finally, Physical Education and Music were the classes students were supposed to take with their classmates from their reference courses. No English classes are scheduled for them, even though they will have to take English as a second Language once they finish the Program in the Linking Classroom, and despite the fact that some of them had never studied English in their countries of origin.

Most of the students hate going to their reference groups, and they use different strategies to remain in the Linking Classroom even during the classes they are supposed to take with their peer-group classmates.

Scheduling the classes with the reference groups is very problematic. In the first place, different groups' schedules have to be put together if they are to work properly, and this is very difficult, since kids have different reference groups. Secondly, reference groups usually already have more than the maximum number of students allowed in a single class; for this

reason, Linking Classroom Program students are sometimes assigned to different reference courses than the ones they belong to according to their age. All these issues downplay the whole purpose of attending classes with the peer group.

A third reason is that, due to the fact that during the first two or three weeks of their stay in the Linking Classroom, students are not required to go to their reference groups, in order to enable them to get used to their new environment; once they have become accustomed to it, they avoid further changes and try to stick to the recently conquered stability that the Linking Classroom provides for them. A fourth reason is the fact that they are not supposed to take exams or tests with their reference group: the Program students are sent back to the Linking Classroom when exams are given. The same thing happens with school trips or activities scheduled for longer than the hour of the class.

I want to point out one more reason in order to complete my reasoning. Whenever I went with the students to their reference courses, they were always sitting down and working – or not working, just listening - apart from the rest of the class. Teachers usually do not know how to make them participate with the rest, since often they could not even communicate, and teachers lack the training, the skills, and simply the time to create an adequate environment for smoother relations. In this way, kids from the Linking Classroom are usually powerless to work their way into the group.

All these reasons work together against students' participation in their reference groups and, what is more, they use different strategies to avoid going. The most common one is to forget the appropriate sport outfit at home; without it kids are sent back to the Linking Classroom by the Physical Education teacher who marks their attendance record accordingly. The tutor tries to keep an extra sport outfit in the classroom, but students refuse to wear it and she never presses them too much.

These negative experiences with the reference groups have a further effect on the process of getting the students ready to leave the Program. Only some of them eventually get acquainted with other kids at the school, but this even has a further negative effect when they have to

leave the school. Their struggle (in some cases, desperate) to remain in the Linking Classroom is the result of their craving a little bit of stability amongst the breathtaking changes in their lives in the previous months when they traveled from their former countries to settle down in Madrid, coinciding with the same moment of their life cycle when they are supposed to find their own place in the society that surrounds them.

The issue of the maternal language:

The regulations of the Welcome Schools Program do not state anything about the students' mother tongue; they only focus on learning Spanish as if it were a totally different process.

Teachers do not know how to deal with students' maternal languages, so they simply do nothing. The evaluation of the Program contains no reference to the question of the mother tongue at all.

Luckily, the tutor of the Linking Classroom places the recently arrived students with others who speak the same language whenever she can. In doing this, she is not considering their need to speak in their mother tongue; it is only a matter of practical communication, and this arrangement is totally reversed as soon as teachers think the time is right, i.e., according to THEIR (the teachers'!) own possibility of communicating with the kids.

I do not mean that mother languages are just forgotten, I mean that they are seen as an obstacle for learning Spanish, as if the capacity for learning a language was already fixed and a new language must be learned by SUBTRACTING from the former one.

This zero-sum model has been argued against in the countries with longer-term experience with immigrants, and their programs to address "diverse" students who speak a language different from the language of instruction have emphasized that the deeper the knowledge of the mother tongue, the easier it is for a person to acquire a new language. Programs in Austria and Texas, which I analyzed in Chapter 2 in comparison with

the Welcome Schools Program, focus precisely on teaching kids their mother tongues as well.

Policy-makers in the Community of Madrid and elsewhere in Spain have not paid attention to the academic works in the field, nor have they manifestly benefited from the experiences of other countries. I have no idea why they have not done so.

What they say is that learning the language of instruction is one of the main tools for a broader social integration, so they act and spend public money as if *learning the language of instruction were the only issue*.

If it were only a question of a shortage of funds, the zero-sum model for learning languages could have been discarded, if not in policy at least in the schools. But my experience in the Linking Classroom has never provided me with a single example by which I could honestly say that teachers care for the mother tongues of their students, or even that they are supposed to care.

They only play with them, as a tool to communicate, when they ask other students to translate for the newcomer, or when they display sentences from the different languages of the classroom on the walls of the room, as *a decoration*. Only once did a teacher bring a tiny magazine in Romanian to class, but merely for the Romanian kids to *produce abstracts of the articles in Spanish*.

As a general rule, mother languages are strictly forbidden in the classroom. However, only some teachers enforce this norm all the time. But they all try to convince the kids that it is better not to speak their languages, *not even at recess or at home!*

They spend a lot of time reminding the students about the rule, but they enforce this norm in much more subtle but efficient ways. Any time a conflict arises in the classroom, the question of the mother tongue is likely to be mentioned and blamed for problems such as lack of communication, lack of respect for one another, lack of respect for the teacher and for what she is teaching, etc.

Recently there was a conflict in the classroom, which apparently took more time than the teachers wanted to allow and which eventually led to physical violence among some of the kids. Resolving this conflict took over the work of the day and we completely forgot about exercises.⁸¹

In my opinion, the conflict was caused by a boy who fancied a girl in the classroom but, as usual, was only able to get her attention by picking on her. This and the boredom of the work took over and, starting from just a rude exchange of words between the boy and the girl, the whole classroom got involved and finally two boys (the one who is always with the girl and the one who fancied the girl) started fighting. There were many other complicated reasons behind the conflict but in my opinion these were the two main ones.

At one point, the teacher interrupted the class, and the trainee teachers who were attending that day proposed a conflict resolution activity with everybody sitting down in an imaginary circle, and spelling out their personal explanation of the conflict. I volunteered to take notes of the activity for two reasons. First, because taking notes allowed me to focus on discourses and have a record of them. Also, however, because I could see that the activity was about to generate for me a personal, hard-to-solve conflict of interests. I plainly did not know what to say myself; if I said what the teachers expected me to say, I would not have been telling the truth, but in order to say what I thought, I had to expose the kids, and tell everybody loud and clear that the kids were bored in the classroom and that I thought it was because the classes were boring. The final conclusion of the activity was drawn by the tutor teacher, who claimed that we should all respect one another, and that lack of respect had been the root of the problem. Along with this conclusion came the recommendation to *speaking only Spanish so that people who did not understand another language that was being spoken, could not legitimately think that they were being talked about!*

⁸¹ I recorded in my fieldwork journal, overjoyed, that this day was the first time I was not bored in the classroom, and in the next sentence, I wrote that it had been the first day we did not do any “fichas.”

I am leaving out of my arguments, on purpose, the frequent negative (and even racist) remarks of the teacher I quoted in Chapter 3 on the mother languages of the students. What I am using here is only what teachers of great good will, who really care about their students and focus on their well-being, say about mother tongues. Thereby I want to finish my view of their perspective by quoting the remarks once made to me by the tutor teacher regarding one of the students.

The tutor of the classroom told me one day during recess in the teachers' dining room, smiling while she spoke, that she was very proud of what one of the students just had told her: "He said he was forgetting how to speak Romanian, and for me that means that he is really speaking Spanish at last."

In contrast, I want to quote what another student, visibly sad and worried, told me on a different occasion: that she could no longer communicate with her grandparents, since she had forgotten how to speak Ukrainian.

The process of learning Spanish

As we have seen previously, the "process of immersion in the language" that Welcome Schools Program regulations rely on as one of the main tools to learn Spanish, seldom takes place, at least in the school where I did my fieldwork: the learning in the reference groups is not working and neither are the leisure-time activities to bring students from the Linking Classroom together with other students of the school. The students are thus left only with the time they spend in the Linking Classroom to learn to speak Spanish, so that, after a maximum of six months, they should be able to understand and follow the requirements of regular classes, like any other student born and raised in Madrid. Is that even possible?

Policy-makers must have thought it was. But Program evaluators had a slightly different opinion. They said that the Program is not working for students coming from China or Arabic-speaking countries, and it is not working for them even after the six extra months that these students could remain in the program. They recommended more time in the

Program, and that a new program be developed to keep reinforcing Spanish among the kids who enroll in their reference groups. Policy-makers agreed to the first recommendation and extended the regular stay up to nine months, but did nothing about the second.

Is it still possible? They must think it is, since when they ordered an evaluation of the Program, and even with the exception of students from Chinese- and Arabic-speaking countries, everybody involved was satisfied and spoke about it positively.

In fact, when kids complained about difficulties after their stay in the Linking Classroom, they seldom mentioned Spanish as a problem, and when they complained they did it in Spanish, sometimes in almost perfect Spanish.

How do they do it? Teachers are unable to learn a simple sentence in any of the kids' languages, and kids sometimes graduate from the program complaining, in Spanish, that they have forgotten their mother tongues. How can the Program so deeply re-shape the language these kids use to communicate?

My own experience had just taught me the opposite: anytime I was in charge of some rebellious students who did not want to work, I tried a trick with them, a trick which worked wonders: I asked them to teach me in their mother tongues the words they were supposed to learn in Spanish. Given that I am much slower at learning the new words than they are, and since their effort gives them, in this particular relationship, higher status with respect to me, they learn more and more quickly. I showed them that when *we* are asked to do what is requested from *them*, we do not perform up to our expectations - but they do. And I gave them respect for how they were dealing with the process of language learning. I do not mean that I said I respected them, but I showed them my respect by acknowledging their higher capability, that they could achieve something that was far more difficult for me.

This technique works wonders because it is based upon the same mechanisms a social exchange works on. If we follow an old but useful argument by Fredrik Barth (1971), person A wants to exchange with B

only when B has something A wants and values more, and that the exchange actually takes place when the opposite is also true, when B wants what A has more. Erving Goffman (1959) added that changes are provoked by envying another person's status, and by believing that by imitating the other person's behavior one could gain the same aspired status. This technique has been profitably used by advertisers, when they want to increase the sales of a product: they know that by showing men attractive women next to a car, they are playing with the idea that, by buying the car, they can also get the pretty lady (the car is shown as a status symbol and the lady as part of the background of that particular status).

Respect and status are two concepts wrapped together in social relationships: one gets respect only when one achieves a desirable status. By the same token respect becomes the most important demonstration of what one is worth, in social terms, to some respected others.

Students in the Linking Classroom Program long for respect, just like everybody else (Bourgeois 2003). Adolescents need it even more, because they have not yet achieved it on their own. When a person moves from one place or country to another, at the beginning he is totally clueless about his worth to others, only eventually will he find out his new status by paying attention to his environment.

Now that these immigrant students are living in Madrid, wherever they look, everything tells them that they and their families are not good enough because they are not Spanish enough. In the words of a former student of the Linking Classroom, "Some people think they are better because they live in their own country."⁸² Similarly in the Linking Classroom everybody tells them - in many different and subtle but firm ways - that if they are looking for respect, they just have to learn Spanish and become Spaniards as quickly as possible.

This is the solution to another conspicuous puzzle: Why has nobody ever thought about putting English or French or German kids in the Linking

⁸² In Spanish: "Algunas personas se creen mejores por estar en su país."

Classrooms (as one kid once asked me with amazing perception)? Children from these countries attend bilingual programs at private schools, if their families have the money, or public schools with bilingual programs only in English and French (the only German schools are private, but German has been introduced as a third language in schools as an alternative to French).⁸³

Some public schools in the Community of Madrid are bilingual, with French and English, or they offer German because these are “valuable” languages to keep up or even acquire from scratch. Here the knowledge of a second language is seen as an asset, and thus, sometimes acquired at the expense of paying a lot of money.⁸⁴ But Bulgarian, Romanian, Chinese, Portuguese, Ukrainian, Polish, and Arabic are not only languages not worth keeping, but they are even seen as obstacles to learning Spanish.

Kids try really hard, they even change their names to make them sound more Spanish-like. And sometimes they dare to complain. Like the time a boy asked why he was not going to be allowed to attend classes with his twin sister, as he always used to; the teacher first told him that it was not possible, and when I pushed for an answer, she told him that it was a norm of the Spanish school system to make individuals independent. In the end, what they get as the key message is: “Here it is better. Why did you come here in the first place?”

None of the teachers ever considered the possibility of speaking about this openly. They never compared or discussed the norms, they just took them for granted. And even when students confronted them and they were shown, in an indirect manner, what is desirable, they claimed that fundamental values, such as education, are universal and should be

⁸³ No consideration is given to the dilemma that the acquisition of English or German as a second language for Spanish speakers requires a completely different methodology than learning Spanish for kids of other mother tongues.

⁸⁴ Private schools in German, French and especially in English are highly valued. But any middle class family will spend lots of money on different activities (private tutors, after-school programs, summer camps, expensive trips, etc.) to make sure their children learn English, particularly.

valued the same everywhere. Education, naturally, is only understood in the way it is being practiced “here,” as compared to the students’ former countries.

That is why teachers avoid confrontations with students on touchy issues related to their countries: of course, teachers also see the differences sometimes, but they never hold the slightest doubt about which place is better and which are the right norms – the Spanish ones. They just do not want to tell students loudly, and only dare to do so in subtle ways. This is not on purpose: nobody has ever told teachers about “cultural relativism.”

Once I was asked by the teacher to carry out an activity in the classroom in order to enable students to benefit from my being an anthropologist. Perhaps she was thinking about hominids or showing a movie on how humans discovered the use of fire. I tried to explain that I do not know much about either hominids or the discovery of fire, and I was thinking instead about an activity on “cultural relativism.” But no matter how much I tried to introduce this theme, “cultural relativism” plainly did not fit in the classroom.

Perhaps cultural relativism does not fit in any real school at all, but I do think it could be useful if it were introduced in teacher training, especially for Linking Classroom teachers who are confronted with contradictory norms on an everyday basis, without being aware of it. Cultural relativism could be, in my opinion, a good way to learn to deal with contradictory norms, by trying to understand that societies do not always value the same norms and for the very same reasons ours does. As an example, kids sometimes confront teachers when teachers complain about skipping classes. They say that in their former schools, attendance was not so important, especially when they had important family events. Or in the cases of siblings who were used to attending the same classroom and now they are told that it is the school policy to place them in separate classes on purpose as a way to develop their independence from each other. In these situations, I have never seen the teachers discuss the different norms or even raise the point; they just stick to the values that are familiar to them and lose an opportunity to discuss the underlying reasons.

Given these incentives, it is a wonder that kids do not learn Spanish even more quickly than in six months, although many times they do. But in my opinion, this process has less to do with exercises and nothing at all to do with the theory of the zero-sum model for learning languages. It has to do predominantly with the status they seek and are promised if only they will just learn Spanish.

The problem is that, even when some of them learn Spanish fast and follow all the rules of a model student and convert themselves into a nearly model Spaniard, this promise is never fulfilled. It is no wonder that sometimes they become depressed, or...

It only takes a look at what recently happened with angry adolescents and youths in the Banlieus of Paris to figure out some unpleasant alternatives to depression.

Expectations: students' own and those of others

Official regulations of the Welcome Schools Program do not include expectations for, by, and toward the students once they finish the Program. They just speak about "integration into regular programs." Policy-makers must have assumed that everything was going to be all right.

The evaluators of the Linking Classrooms do not say anything about students' expectations, either, but they clearly expressed their thoughts (and, hence, their own expectations) once when they were speaking about the opinion that the heads of the schools had about the Program. Explicitly, they issued the following recommendation:

It is necessary to provide adequate economic support for Compensatory Programs, since at least 50% of the Linking

Classroom students will be schooled in these programs for the last two courses of Compulsory Secondary Education.⁸⁵

If more than 50% of the students who attend the Linking Classroom are going to end up in Compensatory Programs for low-performing kids that only in theory lead to the university, then someone should tell the kids, and their families. Particularly considering that some of them came to Spain looking for a better education for their children!

The evaluators recorded the following data for students who were in the Linking Classroom from September 2005 to April 2006 whose reference course was the last year of Compulsory Secondary Education (in Spain, it is called 4th year ESO - the acronym stands in Spanish for Compulsory Secondary Education). Once they left the Linking Classroom, they were schooled as follows. Note that more than 50% of the students enrolled in 4th year ESO are following (in the words of the evaluator “will have to follow”) Compensatory Programs which would not get them into *Bachillerato*, the Secondary courses required to enter the university.

Students enrolled in:	Under 18 years of age	Over 18 years of age
4th year ESO	45%	---
Garantía Social	10%	---
Education for Adults	5.9%	2.5%
Drop outs	14.7%	21%

So if the Linking Classroom Program succeeds *only* in getting approximately 22.5% (the total after subtracting the number of students

⁸⁵ In Spanish: “Necesidad de un tratamiento específico en cuanto a la dotación de recursos de compensatoria porque cuando los alumnos salgan del Aula de Enlace, al menos el 50% de ellos deberá incorporarse a este programa en los cursos de 3^o y 4^o de la ESO.” Unpublished document made available to me by the head of the Board of Inspection of the Community of Madrid on May 11, 2007.

who leave the schools, plus the ones who enroll in Adult Education, plus the ones who drop out, plus half of the percentage that will finally be enrolled in Compensatory 4th year ESO) into *Bachillerato*, it means that *approximately 82.5% are sent directly, or after some vocational training, into the job market without a chance for higher education.*

Students born outside Spain represented only 2.1% of all university students in the 2007-08 school year (MEC 2007: 20), and this figure includes exchange students as well. I wonder if we can still speak about the Linking Classroom as a Program aimed at integrating immigrant students into the regular school system of the Community of Madrid. And if it leads students mainly into the job market, what do we need it for?

It is my opinion that the results of the Program show that it works well with kids whose expectations are set on the job market from the beginning: it provides almost half of them (of the 45% enrolled in 4th year ESO) with a Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate, which allows them to enroll in a vocational program. And that means that almost half of them could get some official training for their future jobs.

It also works with those who may expect to go to the university but somehow, while in the Program, change their minds and focus on getting job training or simply on jobs.

Based on these numbers, I also think that the Program not only does not help kids to get into the University but re-shapes or indeed crushes the expectations of those who came to Spain with a good academic level and hard-working habits. Even in the cases of the few students who get into *Bachillerato* courses, I perceived that they went through a process of dramatically lowering their expectations to adjust to the expectations other adults at school had for them, but I also perceived that they felt really bad about it.

This is the only way I can explain all the positive remarks about the program and evaluators' satisfaction with it, and this is also the way I can explain why the teachers think kids are doing well when they think otherwise and look depressed: it seems obvious for me that it is assumed that immigrant kids will serve as workers and are not meant to enter

higher education; their immigration process serves only as the cause to explain this negative consequence.

Of course well-meaning teachers never tell students this assumption explicitly: they really hope they will do their best, and they do everything they can to help. But right from the start, their expectations are very low.

Well-meaning teachers love and care for students and try hard to build a nurturing environment in which kids could feel at ease. But they still consider their circumstances to be powerful shortcomings for accomplishing high social expectations. They blame unstructured families, poverty, isolation, the amount of time parents spend working long shifts outside their homes, and thus leaving young teenagers alone with a dangerous power to decide about what they want to do in their free time. Even if the students are not actually experiencing any of these circumstances, they just blame immigration – as if immigration per se were a legitimate cause to explain the unequal opportunities education provides for Spaniards and immigrants. At the same time, they pretend that all immigrants, no matter where they are from, have the same opportunities within the school system in Madrid.

Fairly enough, they do not blame the language, the way the Program does.

Opinions about the Program

Apart from the very positive opinions on the Program gathered by evaluators among Linking Classroom teachers, school principals, other teachers in schools, the staff of counseling services, and students enrolled in Linking Classrooms which I have analyzed elsewhere (Del Olmo 2009), I would like to take a deeper look here at the comments on the Program produced during my fieldwork in the Linking Classroom. These comments stem from teachers of the Linking Classroom itself, teachers of the same school but outside of the Program, and students currently participating in it or who have already left it.

The teacher in charge of the Linking Classroom where I did my fieldwork is totally in favor of the Program, but she also had an important criticism to make. She told me from my very first interview with her on June 15, 2005, before she even allowed me into her classroom, that the Program is aimed only at developing students' communicative competence, but totally forgets about the academic contents which are required from kids to get into regular schooling. This is, according to her, a huge mistake.

She repeated this criticism in many informal conversations we later had, mainly in the teachers' dining room. Each time she pointed out the negative consequences of neglecting academic contents. She said that students should not only learn Spanish to communicate, but Social Sciences in Spanish, Math in Spanish, Environmental Sciences in Spanish, and so on. She also told me that methods for teaching Spanish as a Second Language also neglect academic content, and that a whole program should be developed to pay attention to academic content. She also stated she could do this, if only she had a leave from the classroom for several months.

However, she carried on with her job in the middle of this tension, between official expectations and her own expectations, and doing her best to manage both at the same time.

When she speaks about the relationship kids develop with the Linking Classroom and with her, she usually pictures it as an umbilical cord. And when she sees former students of the classroom come back for frequent visits and in search of her advice, she says that they are not able to cut this umbilical cord. In this way, she provided me with an image of what she thinks the Linking Classroom is: a womb where the kids are getting ready to be born into society, as if they were actually born there.

I have criticized this metaphor in a former paper (Del Olmo 2007b), because it provided me with meaningful ideas about her perspective towards kids: kids were re-born there - at the expense of their past. My main criticism of this idea was that students were already teenagers and to have them think about themselves as babies to be born (or to be considered as such by their teachers) does not help their process,

despite all the good intentions and excellent work, because what they have done or who have been until this moment is not taken into account.

The teacher who substituted for her for almost a whole school year never complained about the Program's lack of academic content. She also was totally in favor of the measure, and reflected on her experience in the Program as rich enough to orient her future career as a teacher towards it. She also had complaints about the program, and many self-criticisms regarding her own role.

She complained about being alone in the school, unable to speak about or share her worries concerning the students with anyone. She felt too isolated within the school. Regarding her own role, she felt that she had not done enough to push students to integrate with the rest of the school. She said that, for her, integration had priority over academic contents, but she often spoke about integration as if it were a two-fold process: first integration among the students of the Linking Classroom itself, and afterwards, with the rest of the kids in the school. I think this is what made her think about integration as her first priority, and hence her feeling of not pushing these kids enough to participate in the rest of the school, as well as regarding students' attendance to their reference courses.

Other teachers in the school seldom referred to the Program in general. Instead, they would bring forth the case of a particular student, what they thought were his or her problems. Only once⁸⁶ did I come across conversations in the teachers' dining room, which I recorded in my fieldwork journal, and which showed different criticisms these teachers had about the Program. This occasion was particularly important because it involved a heated and long-lasting discussion among an entire group of teachers.

One of them started complaining about the fact that students from the Linking Classroom are supposed to enroll in a regular class in spite of the moment of the school year. So some enter just three months before it is over. The teacher of the Linking Classroom explained that the goal of the program was to make students ready to join their regular corresponding

⁸⁶ On February 13, 2006.

classes as soon as possible. One teacher responded saying that this period of time might fill the expectations in an office but not in a real school. Then a different teacher complained that if you expect immigrant kids to finish a whole school year in three months, then something was wrong: either Spanish kids were really slow learners, or the immigrant kids extremely bright, and that he had no problem admitting that the last scenario was actually the case. Another teacher showed some evidence to the contrary, saying that when these students start their regular classes they do not understand enough, and for that reason, the whole class has to be stopped or slowed down to explain things to these kids twice.

Another teacher, on a different occasion, complained to me about the lack of discipline in the Linking Classroom, and the effect this lack of discipline had on students when they started their regular schooling. She concluded that these kids slowed down the rhythm of the class because of their behavior problems.

Students themselves had only positive remarks, whenever I asked them about the Linking Classroom. They always said they feel good, that they have good teachers and also good classmates. Some of them wish they had more classmates from the same countries who spoke the same language. They were not familiar with the Program regulations or with the Spanish school system, apart from the occasional experience of a brother or sister.

They did not complain, but in many ways they tried to delay or avoid going into a regular class, both during their stay in the Linking Classroom when they had to go to their reference groups, and when they were about to exit the Program. These could be some of the experiences which reinforced the tutor's idea of the Linking Classroom as a womb.

I may have criticized the metaphor of the womb, but I have to admit that it provides us with a very accurate idea of how the Program works. In spite of my criticisms, the Linking Classroom takes adolescents, treats them as babies who are not even able to speak, and completely *re-shapes* them, by changing everything: their past experiences, what they know, the language they speak, and even their expectations and their families'

expectations for them. After completion, the Program delivers them to a place where they see a huge door leading to the lower jobs of the labor market - and a winding narrow tunnel at the end of which there is supposedly a promise of a university education and after it, better jobs, even.

Is this fair? Do we care if it is? Should we?

Or to frame these questions from a different perspective: Is this the kind of program (and the kind of effects) society wants to put its money into? Is it working for the idea of the democratic and egalitarian society that we envision for the present and the near future?

Before addressing these questions in the broader context of Public Policy, let me first introduce the last piece of my puzzle: the role I myself played in the fieldwork.

Chapter 5: Reflecting (on my own role)

In this Chapter, I will focus on how my methodological perspective shaped the work. As in any other ethnography, I see this perspective to be closely linked to my role in the fieldwork.

I have placed this discussion at this point on purpose, being aware of the fact that it is different from the traditional sequence of an ethnographic monograph, which usually places methodological issues at the beginning. My intention with this “re-location” is to frame the final discussion of the conclusions for a broader debate on Public Policy starting from where, how, and why I approached the work.

Problems in gaining access to the field

I have been working on the subject of schools since the year 2000, and have been particularly involved with teachers since 2001, and with students since 2004, while I was contributing with my own research to the question of how diversity was addressed by the school system in Spain.

My contacts provided me with the opportunity to visit schools and to interview teachers and students, but once I was planning on long term ethnographic fieldwork, I was met with kind words and vague promises which were always postponed for a further meeting. These promises never granted me a definitive entrance for the long-term sojourn ethnographic research requires, with only a blurry end and dubious purposes –as my proposal was probably perceived by the real gatekeepers.

My purpose was to do fieldwork in a public school with a Linking Classroom Program, and once I received permission from the Ministry, from the principals, and from the heads of academic curriculum, I was confronted with the reluctance of the Linking Classroom teachers and their suspicious perception that I was going to judge their work in the classroom, without any useful compensation to offer in exchange.

After some unsuccessful attempts which followed the same pattern of good words, vague promises, and entry to the classroom postponed until after the next meeting, ending up finally with nothing, I blamed the exchange itself: as a researcher, I did not have anything valuable to offer these teachers, so I thought I had to frame the exchange on a different level.

One colleague of mine, Dr. Caridad Hernández, also a member of the research team, offered me her help. She is a professor at the School of Education in the biggest university in Madrid and in Spain, and in charge of different programs for Initial Teacher Training. Her university has regular agreements with schools in order to provide the students –future teachers - with schools to do their training. In this way, schools receive a regular pool of extra helpers, and teachers are less suspicious about being judged by them, or care less about their judgments.

This was an already-established exchange, following the rules of any other exchange, that is, both parties have something to gain. My colleague just included me in her scheme, eventually exchanging our places under the benevolent eyes of the teacher responsible for the Linking Classroom.

One of the schools involved in the exchange was the school where I finally carried out my fieldwork. But the fact that it was a subsidized school instead of a public one also played an important role in granting me access.

My colleagues and I (Del Olmo, Hernández and Osuna, forthcoming) have analyzed the differences in our opportunities for entering public and subsidized schools with the intention of contributing with our analysis to an anthropological discussion on the concepts of place and space.⁸⁷ I have to mention some of the conclusions of this analysis in order to allow the reader to understand its implications for my fieldwork and for the whole purpose of my work.

⁸⁷ We presented this work in Tirana, Albania at the International Conference *European Identity, Power and Space* (August 29, 2007).

A teacher in a public school has almost total independence and the right to teach the official curriculum as she considers appropriate in her classroom (we call it in Spanish “libertad de cátedra”). A subsidized school is administered in a different way (as we saw in Chapter 2): it is the school owner who has the ultimate right to say what is to be done in the classroom, up to a certain point. The owners, of course, usually pass this right on to school principals. In this way, when I was granted access into the school by the principal (who was not going to be the person dealing with me, feeling that I could observe and judge her work), the classroom teacher conformed to this decision to a certain extent.

I am not saying this to downplay the generosity of the teacher who finally let me do my fieldwork in the classroom, which I can never acknowledge sufficiently, but to give an important insight into the kind of relationship we eventually developed, to analyze the role my work in the classroom played on different dimensions, but especially on its consequences.

I have discussed my difficulties in gaining access to do fieldwork in a classroom with my colleagues in Catalonia, where there is a longer and broader tradition of doing fieldwork in schools. Dr. Silvia Carrasco, who is one of the pioneers, has worked in schools herself (Carrasco 2005) and directed many ethnographies of PhD candidates. Apparently, there they have far fewer difficulties and, in a conversation with me, she attributed the differences to the fact that policy-makers in Catalonia are seriously interested in and committed to research. The Board of Education of the Government of the *Generalitat de Catalunya* has, for example, created the staff position of a person responsible for implementing Intercultural Education, in charge of a group of four or five schools. Researchers play an important role there, even when they work independently, based at universities and research centers. A great part of the anthropological work done in schools in Barcelona has been carried out within the frame of the research group EMIGRA (<http://seneca.uab.es/antropologia/emigra/>), whose team leader is Dr. Carrasco, and which is based at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and at the CIIMU (website: <http://www.ciimu.org>).

In Andalusia, there is also a longer tradition of ethnographies in schools. It was started at the Universidad de Granada, and based on the *Laboratorio de Estudios Interculturales* (website: <http://ldei.ugr.es>) directed by Dr. Javier García Castaño (García Castaño and Granados Martínez 1999). They also have a well-established relationship with the Board of Education of the *Junta de Andalucía*, which funds and publishes the results of many researchers. Unfortunately, due to internal problems, Dr. Gunther Dietz who has also been a pioneer in the field (2003, 2007), and served as advisor for many PhD theses based on ethnographies there, has recently left for Universidad Veracruzana, Veracruz, Mexico, where he still carries out ethnographic research in schools. Luckily, he still serves as a reference in the field in Spain, regularly participating in workshops and teaching courses.

In Madrid, there was a pioneer researcher who did fieldwork for his PhD degree, Dr. Ángel Díaz de Rada (1996) but even though he still writes on the subject and participates in different events, his interests are now in other fields. The Universidad Autónoma de Madrid also has a group of researchers who are now very active.⁸⁸ It has formed around Dr. Adela Franzé (2002) and Dr. Maribel Jociles (1992), and now includes younger researchers who are very active. One of these Dr. David Poveda, starting in 2007, has organized a monthly seminar at the School of Education of the *Universidad Complutense* of Madrid to get people interested in the field together to discuss research. Many of them are researchers working for their PhDs. One of them is Pilar Cucalón Tirado (2007), who has published the results of the fieldwork she did in a Linking Classroom for her Masters' degree. She is currently working in the Federal District of Mexico, carrying out comparative fieldwork in a school there for her future PhD.

These groups from Catalonia, Andalusia and Madrid are now committed to the task of organizing an international Conference to facilitate exchange among researchers based in Spain and in other countries. Two of them have already taken place, the first in Talavera, Toledo, organized

⁸⁸ They have recently published a special issue on Anthropology of Education and School (Franzé ed. 2007).

by the Madrid team in July 2004, the second one in Barcelona in September 2007.

To my knowledge, there have been no PhD theses funded or published directly by the Board of Education of the *Comunidad de Madrid*, nor have they approached independent researchers in universities or research centers to carry out research or share their results in Workshops or Journals. One significant example, the work of Dr. Adela Franzé on immigrant students in the Community of Madrid *Lo que sabía no valía* (“What they already knew was useless”), very influential and broadly referenced, was published by a private foundation (Franzé 2002), was poorly distributed, and is now totally unavailable.⁸⁹

In this difficult context, my problems were not over once I gained access to a classroom. They have dogged me throughout my three years of work because my idea was to develop my fieldwork along two different lines: one was in the Linking Classroom itself, but the other was to carry out fieldwork among the people in charge of designing and implementing the Program in the Community of Madrid, as far as possible and the deeper, the better.

Framing my fieldwork in the classroom

The school I worked in was a subsidized school in the city of Madrid and in the district of La Latina, the district with the highest concentration of Linking Classroom programs (17 out of a total of 137 Linking Classrooms in the city of Madrid for the 2007-08 school year⁹⁰), along with the Puente de Vallecas district.

⁸⁹ As a contrasting example, once I received a call from the head of the Board of Education of the *Junta de Andalucía* herself, asking me for a contribution to their journal *Andalucía Educativa*. Their request was made without any previous contact and apparently based on their interest in my previous work. See Del Olmo (2007a)

⁹⁰ Consejería de Educación (2007b).

It is located in a working class neighborhood with a concentration of 17.4% immigrant population in 2007.⁹¹ Around the school there are mainly old public-funded apartment houses, which have been renovated over the last two years⁹².

The school has two different buildings. One hosts mainly Primary Education, and the other Compulsory Secondary Education (E.S.O.) and the two additional courses of Secondary Education called *Bachillerato*. Between both buildings - but independently located - are some recently built sport facilities, with soccer goals, basketball nets, tennis courts, and so on. These multi-purpose fields are surrounded by a metallic fence with a door.

The school belongs to a non-religious foundation which has four more schools in different neighborhoods and a school with a *Garantía Social*⁹³ Program.

According to the secretary, the school rolls do not register the students in the Linking Classroom since they are not considered to be officially enrolled, and they have also miscounted the number of students in the Compensatory programs.⁹⁴ Thus, the students I worked with are invisible in terms of the school lists. This was a surprise to me, but in a way this fact accurately reflects the position of these students within the school system.

I started my fieldwork in this school on June 15, 2005, and my last visit was on March 7, 2008, but my fieldwork journal covers a slightly broader period of time, including former visits to other different schools in the city of Madrid and other towns and cities of the Community of Madrid. It finished in Dallas, Texas, on April 2, 2008.

⁹¹ Anuario estadístico (2007) <http://www.munimadrid.es/UnidadesDescentralizadas/UDCEstadistica/Publicaciones/AnuEstadistico/>

⁹² See the map “Madrid migrante” (Migrant Madrid) for a contextualization of migrants’ residence in the city of Madrid. Observatorio Metropolitano 2007: 692-693).

⁹³ See Chapter 4 for an explanation of this program

⁹⁴ Interview with the secretary of the school on April 20, 2007.

I spent one day per week in the Linking Classroom of the school where I based my fieldwork, moving my visit over the week to cover the whole schedule and to accommodate my trips abroad. Besides the visits, I communicated by phone with some students and sometimes spent time with them outside school.

Even though I planned to visit their homes at the beginning of my fieldwork, I did not have the opportunity to do so and only had sporadic contact with their families, especially their mothers. There are different reasons for this, the main one being that the students did not want to show their homes and I respected that wish. Other causes are the fact that families work long hours outside their homes, and it was not possible to schedule my visits during the little time they spend with their children. The consequence for me was what I consider “patched” fieldwork, compared, for example, to the fieldwork of my colleague Dr. Jennifer Lucko (2008, and forthcoming in 2009) who went to live in a room for one year, sharing the house with the families of some of the students with whom she was working. My personal and professional obligations determined that I take a different approach to my fieldwork.

Luckily, I work as a researcher for the Department of Anthropology at the CCHS (Center for Humanities and Social Sciences) in the CSIC (Spanish National Research Council),⁹⁵ where, despite many other obligations, my main duty is to carry out my research.

I was introduced in the Linking Classroom by the tutor teacher as an additional teacher. She preferred to introduce me this way to avoid complicated explanations to the families, and I respected her decision. Over the years, we have developed a very good and close relationship. She has facilitated everything I asked for and even provided me with other information which she thought might interest me. She is a very flexible woman and has welcomed me with almost the same flexibility she employed with the kids, always accommodating my requests for changes in the schedule. She deferred to me in the classroom in many ways and on many occasions, even though I have not met her expectations all the

⁹⁵ www.csic.es

time. She expected me to do whatever I wanted to do in the classroom, but I always tried to ask her first what she wanted me to do.

I never took notes in the classroom, only some quick references to certain issues and drawings on where we were sitting, and so I was always free to participate in the activities with the kids. Only occasionally did she ask me to pay special attention to this or that student who was, in her opinion, far behind the rest of the class. But in general, I sat where kids called me to sit, usually with the girls who would move their places to accommodate me in between a pair of especially close friends, and attended to whatever was most interesting to me.

The teacher always facilitated my work, albeit without a clear idea of what was it about. I failed miserably whenever I tried to explain it to her. And she never had any use for my work, only the occasional information about future changes in the program. Only once was she really curious: when I spoke about the rumors regarding the possible termination of the Program, but I have been unable to satisfy her, even today.⁹⁶ On the other hand, she appreciated my stay in the classroom very much and every single day thanked me for my help.

I was introduced as a teacher once when an inspector came to visit, but since my presence, in addition to a trainee teacher, seemed to surprise him, from then on I tried to schedule my visits on the days when trainee teachers were not coming, in order to avoid problems with inspectors.

To the rest of the teachers of the school, to the school principal, and to the academic coordinator, I was introduced as a researcher working for the CSIC, which is a prestigious institution and has always given me a high status as a researcher, although this status is not always comfortable. This played a role whenever I had a conflict of interests with

⁹⁶ Throughout the entire school year, another member of our work team, Dr. Caridad Hernández, gathered opinions in different schools about the imminent termination of the Linking Classroom Program. I asked the person in charge of the program directly about these rumors, and she promised me an interview in the near future. More than five months have passed and the requested interview still has not even been scheduled. At this moment, the information I have is that funds for the Linking Classrooms and Compensatory Programs have been increased.

teachers caused by my “odd” behavior, and even when they may have wanted to object to my behavior on some occasions, they never did, satisfying themselves with just casting stern looks my way.

I had a very moving experience with a mother once. She was the only person to whom I voluntarily introduced myself as a teacher, and that was because she sounded to me deeply worried and totally helpless, and I did not want to compound the situation with the difficult definition of my role in the classroom. It was a telephone conversation, after she had made many unsuccessful calls to the teacher’s cell phone: the classroom is in the basement and does not have good coverage. The tutor teacher went to the entrance of the school to reach her by phone but after a couple of tries, she asked me to call the mother. When I finally spoke with her, she sounded very nervous and worried and I tried to calm her down. I was not able to, but after a while she told me that her 12-year-old daughter had not slept at home. She said that she worked the night shift and when she had come home in the morning, she discovered that her daughter had spent the night somewhere else, and she did not know even where she was at the moment.

I told her that her daughter was presently in school but that she was not feeling well. For that reason I had taken her out for chamomile tea. I asked the mother if she wanted to speak with her daughter and I was surprised when she said “no.” She explained that she was too nervous to do that and she asked me to please help her. She told me she was living with her daughter and her son (also in the Linking Classroom) in Madrid, divorced from their father who was living in Brazil. She also said that, since she was working nights, she felt helpless to make her daughter stay at home and concentrate on her studies. She literally begged me to help her by speaking to her daughter, hoping that she would pay more attention to me as a teacher than to her as a mother. I promised her I would do my best, together with the tutor teacher.

I spoke with the girl afterwards and tried to make her understand how worried her mother was. Being myself the mother of a teenager, I could easily empathize with her. But I felt totally powerless toward the daughter: I plainly felt that she was not paying attention, just patiently and silently listening to my words with a respectful attitude. Only much later did I

come to understand this type of behavior, which was what I was supposed to do in the classroom as a field worker.

On the other hand, the kids soon found out that I was not a teacher, and they questioned me many times about my real role. I tried to explain my work, but it was always difficult: they did not have a clear idea of what a researcher really does or is supposed to do. I tried to arrange a visit to my research center for the students, but it has not yet been possible to schedule it. Other kids in the school, in *Bachillerato*, came to the research center where I work during the open house week we have once a year. I accompanied students and teachers on the visit, but I barely knew some of the students and, unfortunately, none of them had been in the Linking Classroom during my fieldwork.

The students always treated me with respect and cordiality. I developed very close relationships with some, and when I entered the classroom two or three of them often came directly to embrace me and hang on me for a while – but only girls. Boys rarely dared even touch me, although they sometimes gave me the two polite kisses that are customary in Spain.

I had the impression that, in a way, kids inherited their relationship with me from one another. During the first school year, it took me a long time to develop close relationships with the students, but once I did, the kids who later arrived in the Linking Classroom, picked up on the relationships I had with the others quickly, and the process accelerated by itself.

They remained loyal to the tutor teacher, who is their reference person, but I sometimes developed closer relationships with them because my role fell somewhere in between a teacher and a fellow classmate.

I never used a teachers' authority with them the way a teacher does. When the teacher left the classroom and we were left alone, the kids would go outside against school rules, but I never knew how to make them come back in. At the beginning I tried, because it sometimes put me in a very unpleasant situation: when a teacher from the school would hear the noise, come, and force everybody to go inside the classroom again. Whenever this happened, they were totally surprised to see me

with them, expecting me to make them stay inside the classroom, at the very least! After a while I was confident enough in the classroom and their surprise did not bother me anymore. I just enjoyed the advantages of my role, and stuck to it even when it was not so pleasant.

There were other conflicts, as well, that were more difficult for me to solve. Whenever the students had an exam they expected me to help them behind the teachers' back. This was always an unpleasant situation for me, and most of the time I did not have a clear response. I knew I was on the kids' side, but I did not want to jeopardize my relationship with the teacher. So sometimes I did what the kids do: I cheated on the teacher and gave them the answers. Many times, I was lucky enough not to know the answers, and it was usually the teacher herself who solved the problem: she would finally relent and give them some of the answers. The times I was most comfortable with my behavior were the times I was able to help the students find out the answer by themselves, giving them some clues. Frankly, this was not always the case.

I had far fewer personal conflicts when they involved other teachers: we would wander the school with an excuse ready in case we were caught. I was completely on the students' side on those occasions. But with the tutor teacher this was not so easy to solve. I knew in the end my definitive loyalty was always with the kids, but that did not mean that I approved of what they were doing. As an anthropologist, I am supposed to leave my own judgment hanging outside the school and rely exclusively on cultural relativism, in order to learn through fieldwork how people make their own judgments.

For me, the dilemma was that there were, roughly speaking, two different sets of norms demanding my loyalty, and they were often in contradiction: the kids' norms (with a lot of conflicts among themselves also caused by contradictory values) and the teachers' norms (who supposedly have these norms for the benefit of the kids). I am not a teacher, and this is why I did not abide by that kind of thinking: teachers' norms are teachers' norms, and students' norms are students' norms, and I have no problem with this difference. But most of the time I had to relate to both sets of norms *at the same time*, even when they were plainly contradictory.

My deeper personal conflicts have always been among students' conflicts themselves. There I could not play the card of loyalty to the kids, because both sides were kids! On these occasions, I tried to stay outside the conflict, but this was not always possible, let alone easy to do, especially when I perceived them to be hurting each other in some way.

The problem is that kids hurt each other a lot, especially because what they are doing is learning about boundaries, but also because, like any other human being, their interests enter into conflict sometimes, and they do hurt each other. On these occasions, I suffered personally (surely less than the kids themselves), but I also suffered as an anthropologist, not knowing what to do, clinging to cultural relativism, holding myself back at one moment, and getting into the middle of the conflict and playing with my own norms the following moment. Both situations left me unsatisfied, learning only about myself and my resistance to putting up with suffering.

This fieldwork has provided me with plenty of occasions to suffer: not only when the kids were hurting each other, but when I perceived them to be receiving one more blow in their short battered lives, which stole a little bit of their hope. It is no wonder that, when girls were popular and intelligent, feeling they were worth more outside school, at parties and teenage relationships, they played this card a little too early, a little too dangerously – as was the case with the daughter whose mother I spoke with on the phone. None of the boys I met in the classroom were popular in the same way, but many times they perceived it to be easier to go and get a job, any job - they surely would be worth more with a job, or so they thought at the moment.

These situations, in addition to another situation where a girl was playing around with Latino gangs, were my most difficult times during the fieldwork. The only way I was able to cope with these moments was to retreat from the field into my own life. But then I felt I was deserting the kids, and in a way I was. The only way I have to solve these moments as a fieldworker is to search for further reciprocity.

Reciprocity is about giving back in exchange for what the people involved in fieldwork have given us for free, enabling us to build our academic careers and comfortable, interesting, well-paid jobs.

Surely relationships in fieldwork are based upon an exchange, and in these exchanges the people we relate to during the fieldwork get something from us: a helping hand in the classroom, a way to finish exercises quicker and the opportunity to pay attention to more important interests, a novelty in the classroom which breaks up the boredom for a while, some information, a favor, a contact, some books, etc.

I am not talking about these exchanges here, but about the general framework which places us as researchers face to face with the people we do fieldwork with and which makes us face our differences, especially when we belong to the same society, which is always the case - in spite of how circumstances may look.

I will leave my arguments here right now, to pick them up again at the end of the chapter, after analyzing my role among policy-makers and the people responsible for designing and implementing the Linking Classroom Program.

Framing my work among policy-makers

Since my interest was not primarily the kids themselves but how their lives were affected by the implementation of a specific policy intended to support them, my fieldwork had two sides, one which took place in the Linking Classroom itself, and the other one which was carried out among the people responsible for designing and putting this specific policy into practice.

Policy-makers and people in charge of designing and implementing the Welcome Schools Program in the Community of Madrid were, in my experience, a very slippery species: always there, and almost always out of reach. It was even more difficult for me to speak with them than to get access to a Linking Classroom to do my fieldwork.

My difficulties were due to two different reasons.

The first one was related to the people in charge of the Program, high-ranking within the structure of the government of the Community of Madrid and surrounded by different kinds of gatekeepers (assistants, secretaries, janitors, etc.), who forgot to pass along messages, lost my written requests or plainly told me to call another day since the person I was looking for was at that moment in a meeting, out of the building, on a trip, etc., with the same situation repeating itself the next time. They were understandably very busy, and I fought back with the perseverance I have been able to develop in the midst of my frustration. My status as a researcher in the CSIC worked in this case -no doubt- to my advantage, and I was able to meet almost everyone I wanted, even though in some cases it took me more than a year!

The second difficulty was connected with low-ranking people within the administration, precisely the ones who deal with the public, interview families, send kids to schools, receive requests for different programs or activities, etc. I was very interested in the role of these people who work as specialists, and they were a lot easier to locate, almost always kind and easily accessible, to start with... but only at the beginning. Here my role as a researcher worked against me: once they knew about it (and they always knew), they referred me to their superiors, and never granted me a formal interview. This obstacle proved more difficult to overcome since they felt that, by speaking directly to me without a superior's presence, their jobs could be jeopardized. My only chances then were to get to know these people through friends or other people they could trust. In this case, they would engage in informal conversations - with an explicit request not to quote their words, except in the form of general and vague opinions.

This situation in the Community of Madrid showed a striking contrast to the one in Vienna or in Texas, where I was able to speak with the people in charge of the programs with no difficulty or restriction, thanks to the network of contacts provided by my colleagues Dr. Bernd Baumgartl and Dr. Alicia Re Cruz. Even though my fieldwork in both places was very limited due to time constraints and to my own lack of social networks to reach the people whose jobs I was interested in, I always felt at ease and was able to hold longer and more interesting interviews there.

This contrast was like background music that made me wonder about my inability to carry out my fieldwork in the Community of Madrid, and at one point I was so frustrated that I introduced the issue in the agenda of one of our research project's general meetings,⁹⁷ asking my colleagues to help me reflect on my role. Their advice was oriented along two lines. First, they recommended that I familiarize myself with other fieldwork carried out in institutional settings in Spain (such as Velasco, Díaz de Rada and others 2006), its problems and limitations, and how researchers coped with them. The second line of advice was to reflect on my empathy with policy-makers as a fieldworker; they told me I had developed a useful empathy in the classroom, with teachers but specially with students, but that for some reason I was not able to do the same with the staff at the Community of Madrid.

I followed their advice as much as I was able. It really played an important role in my persevering pursuit of the contacts and interviews, but I have never been able to empathize with policy-makers in the same way I have with teachers and kids. For that reason, the focus of my fieldwork was always inside the classroom, and this fact has shaped my work profoundly.

Nevertheless, the analysis of my role among policy-makers has opened up a new line of reflection, which will provide a perspective to design my future research, benefiting from the experience and some principles of applied anthropology. This also has to do with my work in Texas.

I benefited from the opportunity to present and discuss my work among students and staff at the Department of Applied Anthropology of the University of North Texas in Spring 2007 and Spring 2008. On both occasions, I was a guest researcher of the Department, and participated with them in the Annual Meetings of the Society for Applied Anthropology (Tampa, Florida, 2007, and Memphis, Tennessee, 2008).

The exchange within the framework of applied anthropology provided me with many insights to view my role among policy-makers from a different

⁹⁷ The proceedings of the meeting are available on the project website: www.navreme.net/integration.

perspective, as a role aimed at the needs of society, where the anthropologist is a scholar hired for a very specific task by some “client” or “customer” who, in turn, expects concrete, tangible, and quick results. All this is quite distant from my role as a researcher at the CSIC and in Madrid society, where it is I who decide what to research and what for, usually in tune with my own interests, and my only task outside the institution for designing this kind of work is to look for financial resources.

The comparison between both perspectives also made me understand one of the most difficult issues of my work among policy-makers: their total lack of interest in my work.

I always introduced myself to the staff in the Community of Madrid as a researcher. I presented them with an outline of our project and made it clear to everybody that I was available at any time to discuss their own interests. I expected them to call me to comment on, discuss, suggest, etc. matters of policy, or just to write a report on the results. Nevertheless, these expectations were met only with humane kindness, not professional engagement, since they never called me back. I perceived that their *own* expectations were that my work would do nothing more than interrupt people who were trying to do their real work; the shorter the better and, anyway, it had no effect at all on their work.

I was puzzled, first, and angry a little later. And then, in the middle of my work on the Welcome Schools Program I had an experience which totally enraged my colleagues and me. It was the result of previous work with the INTER Group in Madrid, a piece of research for which we were hired by the education section of the largest labor union in Spain.

As the INTER Group, we were asked to carry out research on teenagers’ perceptions of racism in their everyday lives.⁹⁸ The work had a very explicit and short deadline, and we approached it as exploratory research. It was based mainly on open-ended interviews that researchers conducted, within the frame of their larger fieldwork whenever possible.

⁹⁸ I referred to this work in Chapter 2, speaking about the Spanish school system, the uneven distribution of immigrant students between public and private (and subsidized) schools, and quoting the reasons some teenagers gave us for preferring public schools (INTER Group 2007a).

After the interviews and the analysis of the discourses they produced, we wrote a report with our conclusions.⁹⁹ Some time afterwards we were asked to present our report at a press conference in Madrid. The press conference, organized and hosted by the union, placed us among the politicians in charge of immigration and education policy at both levels: the Community of Madrid and the national Ministry.

We approached the event with the idea that the press representatives were going to focus on the politicians and the current issues they were involved in, thinking that our own role would be a minor one. But we were completely shocked by what actually happened at the press conference: they used our report, which they clearly had not even read, *to justify their current policies, which were totally at odds with our results!*

After this experience, my hopes for a possible –and at any rate humble– effect of social research on policy design were completely crushed. My thought then was: “if the only way policy-makers use my – or in this case our - research is to legitimize their already existing policies, regardless of the research conclusions, then I don’t want to work with them anymore.”

The problem was that this conclusion opened the ground for questions that were more difficult to answer. What, then, is my role as a researcher on the public payroll? What are my responsibilities to society and to the people I work with? What, then, is the use of work on a specific public policy from an anthropological perspective? ONLY to publish it within academia and let my professional career benefit from it? These questions send me back again to the issue of reciprocity, asking for an urgent and sensible answer.

⁹⁹ We published our results in English and Spanish (INTER Group 2007a) some time after the report was written and it was clear to us that the union had no interest in publishing it themselves.

In search of further reciprocity

In both settings –inside the Linking Classroom and among the people responsible for designing and implementing the Welcome Schools Program- the analysis of my role as an ethnographer has made me come across the very same issue: the question of reciprocity. Its challenge has shaped the perspective of my work and, especially, its conclusions. Let me elaborate further on reciprocity first and deal with the conclusions in the next chapter.

Linda Tuhivai Smith has sharply, angrily, and clearly stated and proved that:

...research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions. (Smith 1999: 5)

And later:

There are diverse ways of disseminating knowledge and of ensuring that research reaches the people who have helped make it. Two important ways not always addressed by scientific research are to do with ‘reporting back’ to the people and ‘sharing knowledge.’ Both ways assume a principle of reciprocity and feedback. (Smith 1999: 15)

My fieldwork was possible because of three different groups of people: policy-makers, teachers and students. I should ‘report back to’ and ‘share knowledge with’ all of them.

In the case of the teachers, I have been able to involve them as partners in a current EU-funded project.¹⁰⁰ We are currently working on the “State of Innovation in Intercultural Education” of participant countries. This

¹⁰⁰ It is called the INTER Network, funded by the Comenius Program of the UE and is already functioning (<http://internetwork.up.pt/>).

Europe-wide project is giving the teachers of the Linking Classroom – the tutor teacher and the substitute teacher - the opportunity, the settings and the funds to share, contradict, and discuss our ideas on how diversity should be addressed in the classroom. And we do that as equal partners, avoiding the inevitable inequality of the relationship between the researcher and the people studied.

For policy-makers, I am currently designing a workshop to discuss the results of our work. We will involve the press, which always guarantees their interest, and we are going to offer them, as well as the teachers and the school principal, the opportunity to participate in designing our follow-up research. Now that we have worked on how students do in the Linking Classroom, we are interested in following their paths, especially into the Compensatory courses, which was one of the demands made by evaluators of the Linking Classroom Program. For our next research project, we want to build on this specific interest expressed in the evaluation report, as well as on other interests they might have regarding the design and implementation of policies to address diversity in schools. During the workshop, we will provide them with the answers to OUR questions, but we are also going to ask them for THEIR OWN questions. In this way, we hope to provoke the interest which proved to be so elusive during my fieldwork.

My main debt was with the kids, and this debt is, for me, the easiest to acknowledge but also the most difficult to pay back. I will probably never see most of them again: some have returned to the countries where they were born, most of them have left the school. This is why I can only give back to the kids who are presently in the Linking Classroom - if I think of the students as a generic and abstract population, a fictional ethnographic subject constructed out of a patchwork of kids who were once in a real Linking Classroom, and just by chance, crossed paths with me.

The students I met become an analytical category for me as subjects of the Welcome Schools Program. But they do not represent the whole population in this category, in the same way that no ethnographic work – as a qualitative tool – is designed to be representative. Ethnographers are used to this fact, and we have learned to live with the uneasiness of

its consequences. Nevertheless, we do know that the people we work with are part of a broader category and that their behavior is SIGNIFICANT enough for the questions we choose to deal with. Our work is not designed to represent but it is an excellent tool to document how people deal with their everyday lives. As such, it provides a privileged window onto how policies re-shape the social resources people have available to make decisions in order to meet the expectations they have for their lives. These individual expectations are framed –in turn – within the general picture of a person's perceptions of what society presents as desirable and undesirable.

In terms of reciprocity, what I could offer to the students and the teachers is a detailed analysis of what a policy promises, and what it actually gives, and why, analyzing these differences and unmasking the mechanisms which work against this promise. To say it in simpler terms, what I try to do is explain why one cannot get the prize even when one has followed all the rules of the game.

In other words, I try to present an explanation of why precisely the hardest-working students, with the highest academic levels, and with the greatest expectations, even when they fulfill all the requirements the Program demands from them with outstanding abilities, still cannot make their decisions with the same and equal opportunities a non-immigrant student has at her disposal.

Chapter 6: Re-Questioning (conclusions for further debate)

An introduction to shape the discussion:

A recent study carried out by the British Council and the Migration Policy Group shows the result of the MIPEX, “[which] measures policies to integrate migrants in 25 EU Member States and three non-EU countries” (Niessen, Huddleston and Citron 2007: X) .¹⁰¹ There the authors define integration as follows:

Integration in both social and civic terms rests on the concept of equal opportunities for all. In socio-economic terms, migrants must have equal opportunities to lead just as dignified, independent and active lives as the rest of the population. (Niessen, Huddleston and Citron 2007: 4)

Later, the authors explain that:

The process of integration is specific to the needs and abilities of each individual and each local community. Although government policy is only one of a number of factors which affects integration, it is vital because it sets the legal and political framework within which other aspects of integration occur. The state can strive to remove obstacles and achieve equal outcomes and equal membership by investing in the active participation of all, the exercise of comparable rights and responsibilities and the acquisition of intercultural competences. (Niessen, Huddleston and Citron 2007: 4)

¹⁰¹ This study analyzes public policy in all 25 member countries of the European Union plus Switzerland, Norway and Canada (www.integrationindex.eu). Unfortunately, education policies were not taken into account in the study.

It is within this framework that I want to place the conclusions of my ethnographic work on the Welcome Schools Program in Madrid in order to contribute to a broader debate on public policies in the European Union, taking Spain as a useful example to reflect on these ideas because of the rapid pace of immigration.

As we saw in Chapter 2, The Welcome Schools Program has been justified by policy-makers as follows:

When sons and daughters of immigrant families enter the schools, they find greater difficulties to reach the objectives of the school system due to several factors. One of the most important one is lack of knowledge of the language of instruction, when their mother tongue is not Spanish. In a similar way, the former schooling in their countries of origin will condition the process of integration into the Spanish school system. It is necessary to point out that these processes are characterized by a great variation, depending on the social group and on the fact that some of them come from less developed countries. In some cases, the schooling process could be non-existent or irregular. Finally, it is necessary to consider the economic situation of the immigrant population.¹⁰²

And the Linking Classroom sub-program has been justified thus:

Educational communities aim at the Intercultural Education of all students, based upon knowledge, comprehension and respect for each other, and encouraging socio-cultural integration and the development of favorable attitudes for different cultures.¹⁰³

Even though none of the official documents of the Welcome Schools Program ever stated explicitly what policy-makers understood by integration,¹⁰⁴ it is clear to me after the analysis of the regulations

¹⁰² An unpublished document made available to me thanks to special permission from the head inspector of the Community of Madrid on May 11, 2007.

¹⁰³ Boyano Revilla et al (2004:13).

¹⁰⁴ A criticism I made in Del Olmo (forthcoming in 2009).

represented by the examples quoted above that their intentions could be framed within the explanation of integration given by the authors of the MIPEX, quoted at the beginning of this chapter (Niessen, Huddleston and Citron 2007: 4).

This is my first reason in setting the context for the discussion. My second reason relies in the fact that the policy of the Community of Madrid cannot contradict general EU regulations on the issue, which state that:

In the context of the EU, policies aimed at favoring European cohesion and achieving a new concept for European citizenship linked – not always explicitly – to the intercultural focus, have been directed towards three main concepts, all related to the world of education:

- The development of linguistic competency, multilingual capability as a way of achieving an intercultural European identity
- The fight against racism and xenophobia
- The development of intercultural education, starting from seeking and constructing a new concept of culture

The first two core concepts have been most developed whereas the third is more implicit and still less developed. The various declarations insist on the defence of human rights, development of the principles of equality and the need to adopt measures against discrimination and social exclusion, addressing a series of different circumstances, among others, cultural diversity. This has given rise to what are called “immigrant integration policies” which initially have been based on specific measures aimed at immigrants from third non-community countries to help bring them closer to the languages and culture of the EU host country. These policies also contain recognition of certain rights, among them the right to be educated and to protect their identity by promoting knowledge of their mother tongue. (Aguado ed. 2006: 29-30)

My questions, then, to be addressed in this final chapter, are the following. Is the Welcome School Program a policy aimed at removing

the obstacles for fair and full participation of immigrant students in the society *on equal terms* as the rest of the population? And if so, does it remove these obstacles? Which ones does it remove, and how? Which ones remain, and why? And finally, what can be done to promote fairer participation of immigrant students in society?

I will try to address these questions relying on the analysis of my ethnographic material.

Does the Program aim to attain participation for immigrant students on equal terms as the rest of society?

The Program aims to achieve full participation for immigrant students on equal terms as the rest of society, although it does not say so explicitly, nor does it explain what policy-makers mean by their use of the term “socio-cultural integration.”

It does so by stating on its official website¹⁰⁵ that:

The Welcome Schools Program is a program of the Board of Education of the Community of Madrid to be applied in all schools funded by public money to facilitate integration of foreign students in schools and in society, and to ease their entrance into our school system.¹⁰⁶

But it also sets the same goal when regulations acknowledge that foreign students “find greater difficulties to achieve the objectives of the school system due to several factors.” They point to the following factors as disadvantages for their entrance into Madrid schools:

¹⁰⁵ http://www.madrid.org/dat_capital/bienvenida/ae.htm

¹⁰⁶ The original in Spanish says: “El programa Escuelas de Bienvenida es una programa de la Consejería de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid, de aplicación en los centros educativos sostenidos con fondos públicos, para facilitar la integración escolar y social y la incorporación a nuestro sistema educativo del alumnado extranjero.” (http://www.madrid.org/dat_capital/bienvenida/ae.htm, January 2008)

- a) Lack of knowledge of the language of instruction, when Spanish is not their mother tongue
- b) Former schooling processes; in the case of less developed countries, this process could be irregular or non-existent
- c) Economic situation of the immigrant population

The first and the second disadvantages are the responsibility of the Welcome Schools Program. But as I have argued, they are only addressed in practice by the Linking Classroom sub-program, which in a period of up to nine (formerly six) months is supposed to fill in academic gaps, and to teach students Spanish. After students' time in the Linking Classroom, there are no additional measures to fulfill the Program's aim to *facilitate their integration in schools and in society*.

The third factor is only addressed through a lunch budget program which for the 2006-07 school year spent 7,868,680€ on free lunches for immigrant students.¹⁰⁷

At this point, we shall consider my second question.

Does the Program remove the obstacles to fair participation?

My answer to this question is that it definitively and clearly does not remove the obstacles to fair participation. In spite of the Program's goal, it was not designed to address the differences. There are mainly two different kinds of reasons for this, which have to do with its design and implementation.

The first reason, which is easier to analyze, has to do with the **implementation** of the Program: *it states three different kinds of factors as disadvantages for immigrant students, and then it focuses on only one*

¹⁰⁷ Unpublished information made available to me thanks to special permission from the head inspector of the Community of Madrid on May 11, 2007.

of them: learning the language of instruction. There are no other Programs to deal with the rest of the obstacles.

The tutor teacher of the classroom complained - from the very first interview and then consistently throughout the duration of my fieldwork - about the Program's lack of academic contents, not only to solve previous gaps, but *in order to learn Spanish through academic contents*.

This puzzled me for a long time, since Linking Classrooms also school students whose mother tongue is Spanish. What, then, are they supposed to do there?

Nine months is hardly enough time to start filling any academic gap caused by previous irregular or inexistent schooling, because these gaps must be addressed individually and could not be dealt with in a classroom with more than eleven students.

The variety of the gaps cannot be known in advance or predicted, unless students suffer a process of stereotyping regarding the general rules of the school systems of their countries of origin. Teachers rely heavily on this stereotyping process because they are obliged to anticipate the behavior of their students without any help or previous knowledge of them. This is why it is common to hear teachers speak about students' behavior as if it followed a pattern directly determined by their countries of origin. This pattern surely takes into account social trends and school peculiarities, but it is constructed merely upon some basic assumptions and differences observed in the behavior of previous students coming from the same countries, and applied to the newcomers, as if a passport were a significant enough entity to determine the outcome of previous schooling.

Passports are not sufficiently significant categories to predict the individual variations of students' behavior. However, teachers do not rely on this type of process out of perversion or ignorance. On the contrary, they badly need to know something about their students *before they arrive to the classroom*, simply in order to prepare themselves and the rest of the class. If they are going to fill any gap, they must first know what the pre-existing gaps of each single student are. Unfortunately the

Program does not provide teachers with the opportunity to test or learn about any previous knowledge or experience. No wonder these students are nicknamed “fax students,” since they arrive to class with only a fax in their hands, with the instructions to be immediately admitted to the classroom.

Individual gaps and individual behavior cannot be stereotyped or homogenized if they are to be effectively eliminated. There is no shortcut to this process. Policy-makers must be aware of this, and be convinced that it takes time and patience to fill in individual academic gaps and that it must be done focusing on the individual – which is exactly how the law says education should be put into practice.

Nevertheless, there are other gaps which could easily be predicted, and thus taken into account in advance, allowing teachers to get ready for them: the logical lack of *academic* knowledge about Spain in general and Madrid in particular. That means that students *do not have the information to answer test questions on the* History of Spain, Spanish Language, Spanish Literature, Spanish Geography – to mention only the contents of the curriculum, and not the hidden curriculum which teaches how to answer the question.

No matter where students were born, they are surely unable to answer questions about the tributaries of the Ebro, the exact date Juan Ramón Jiménez was born, the Constitution of the Cadiz Parliament proposals to manage the Spanish colonial empire, or when the Civil War started, and many others. Obviously, unlike Spanish students, they have never heard about the Ebro, Juan Ramón Jiménez, the Cadiz Parliament, or the Civil War. Some of them have not even heard about the Spanish Empire, and the ones that already have – coming from the countries which were former colonies of Spain – must surely have heard a different but nonetheless *academic* history.

If, on one hand, the Program does not do anything to predict this second type of gap, on the other, it does not recognize - let alone compensate them for - their knowledge of Romanian Geography, Chinese History, or Arabic Literature, and surely not for their perhaps contested narrative

regarding the Spanish Empire.¹⁰⁸ Kids must wait until they enter the university to find out that this knowledge is also valuable - if they ever reach the university, and if they still remember any of their previous learning.

In conclusion, the Program does not provide any means to learn Literature, Geography, or History in Spanish, and the school does not reward students for their previous knowledge, even though nobody doubts the value of speaking Chinese, Arabic, or Romanian outside of school. I cannot explain why, because the problem would be solved simply by giving a group of teachers paid leave to prepare the necessary materials. It is just a question of money, but only a small amount.

So far, I have referred to the implementation of the Welcome Schools Program, but its **design** is also an important cause for its inefficacy in removing obstacles to the fair participation of immigrant students in the school system of the Community of Madrid.

It does not value the students. It does not empower the kids, and what is more, it does not do anything to explain to them the specific challenges and difficulties they are confronted with in society, compared to non-immigrant kids.

Kids received the *explicit* message at the beginning that their only disadvantage is their lack of the language of instruction, but once they master it, they receive frequent *implicit* messages that they are still not good enough. It is no wonder that *they feel confused and powerless and that their hopes were constantly battered and their self-image increasingly diminished*, at least inside the school.

In addition, teachers, out of accumulated experience, lower their expectations for these students. They follow the logic of readjusting their predictions for the (usually suboptimal) results and achievements of their students in the economic and social environment, a process that has to

¹⁰⁸ This is the main argument of Adela Franzé's influential work (2002), whose title is precisely "What they already knew was useless" ("Lo que sabía no valía." in Spanish).

do with how the formation of or identities works and what it is for.¹⁰⁹ In fact, students are judged and categorized on the basis of one single identity, i.e. their foreignness. And this fact only makes things worse for the students.

Which obstacles does the Program remove? How does it remove them?

My conclusions have dealt so far with the general goal of the Welcome Schools Program as an integration policy (first section of the chapter) and its effects regarding this goal (second section of the chapter). Now I would like to analyze its consequences in greater detail to show – from the perspective of my ethnography – what is really working and how, and what is not working and why. Let me deal with the first issue here, and consider the second one in the next section.

Students do perceive their stay in the Linking Classroom in a very positive way, and all of them exit the classroom with an amazing progress and ability to speak and understand Spanish, although – with some exceptions - not at the level of language and knowledge of a non-immigrant student. Nevertheless, the latter is what teachers will expect and require from them in the regular course.

Most kids arrive in the Linking Classroom with little ability to communicate. Some show a need to protect themselves from the environment, trying to shut it out, i.e., by keeping their belongings in constant reach around themselves and hiding under their clothes as much as possible. They often want to keep their coats on, even after teachers show them the place where coats should be hung during class. They tend to look downwards onto the table. Boys especially keep their caps on (which is also against school regulations) and if they can, they hide their faces as much as possible under hoods, preventing everyone from seeing their faces clearly. They cling to their cell phones, and if they dare, they turn them on to listen to music. But they rarely dare.

¹⁰⁹ See Del Olmo (1990).

They seldom dare to challenge the environment when the environment inundates them. In particular, they do not dare to challenge the teachers, even if they are forced to listen to them, despite the protection they build around their bodies. They just do what they understand is expected.

This situation is certainly eased when they have the opportunity to sit next to other kids who speak their language. And eventually, some of them earlier, some of them later, they start feeling less threatened.

The teacher can help a lot to enhance this process. She empathizes with students and allows them to adjust, step by step. She gives them some exercises to do, but never presses them to finish them. She not only does not forbid the use of their mother tongues in the classroom at this point, but encourages all of them to make it easier for the newcomer to adjust. She always uses very kind words and a calm voice to address them, and she does not immediately require students to attend their reference courses. She waits kindly and patiently until the moment students gain enough confidence to start relating to other kids in the classroom.

This period is crucial for students. Kids who do not go to Linking Classrooms do not enjoy this kind of environmental cocoon, which softens and eases their arrival into the new school. And this is, for me, the greatest advantage of the Program: *it is a place for students to regain the confidence in themselves which inevitably has been taken away from them by the recent process of immigration.* After all, the decision to migrate for the kids is not a personal project but mainly one imposed upon them by their parents,¹¹⁰ for which they hardly have reasons or clues.

Therefore, the role of the tutor teacher is crucial at this point, even more than at any other moment during the Program. The fact that the Program relies on teachers who voluntarily apply for the position is – in my opinion – one of its merits. Even despite their lack of training for the situation,

¹¹⁰ The fact that kids – even as teenagers - do not participate in the decisions to emigrate and that they see the move exclusively as an adult project, was one of the results of our work on racism (INTER Group 2007a).

most teachers rely on empathy to deal with newly-arrived kids, and this could be one of the qualities any good teacher training program in Intercultural and Anti-racist Education should help them develop in depth.

Nevertheless, one of the most important advantages of the Program to ease the transition of the students into the school system of Madrid is the temporary fortuitous and artificial but highly productive environment it creates. For the very same reason, this advantage is also ephemeral. It has to do with the perception of themselves that the kids receive from the environment.

Most of the kids we worked with for our project on perceptions of racism (INTER Group 2007a), talked about how they dealt with the transition into the class at large in a two-fold process. Almost none of them were schooled in a Linking Classroom, but they unconsciously looked for the same effect. These teenagers told us that they first sought relationships with other kids of the same nationality in the school. When we asked them why, they always said it was because they had similar customs and values. Often I was surprised and confused when they spoke in the same way about immigrant kids from other countries. Clearly, it was only natural for them to consider Romanian friends as ideal first peers, even if they themselves came from Peru. My question then was, why would a kid from Peru think it is easier to become friends with a Romanian than with a Spaniard?

My colleague Jennifer Lucko was also puzzled by the same question and she oriented her fieldwork in Madrid in this direction. Her work, and my own, provided me with the answer: kids from Peru and from Romania, and China, and Morocco, and Ukraine, and Ecuador, and Bulgaria, and the Dominican Republic feel themselves to be equals in social terms – in contrast to French, English, or German students. They say they have similar behavior, needs, and preferences, but this is only part of the picture. *They must perceive that society values them in the same way, and for that reason, they see themselves as equals.*

The same process is at work in the Linking Classroom: all students perceive themselves to be, socially, worth more or less the same, and this perceived value is what they use to build a category of ‘us’ (inside the

Linking Classroom) versus a category of 'them' (kids in the reference courses). This also applies for kids who no longer attend the Linking Classroom, but already attend classes in their reference courses; they are still perceived within the category of 'us.'

This potential but powerful bond provides students with the capacity and the way to quickly erase national and language identities, and with a reason and even the need to learn Spanish (i.e., the only joint possibility of communicating among themselves) quickly.

In this sense, the Linking Classroom works as the setting in which they are able to build a common and useful social identity layer, which is based on their experience of how their new host society perceives and values them.

People build up identities to their advantage in real social arenas, which derive from the social relationships that are available to them. Even when what is available is a negative value, it is transformed into something positive - if it can be collectively contested. Sharing is a very powerful feeling, even when what one shares has little social value.

I do not think policy-makers considered these powerful social mechanisms of emerging group identities when they developed the Welcome Schools Program, but they are, nevertheless, one of its effects. In contrast, if they had thought about them, they would not have expected an easy transition from the Linking Classroom into the regular courses.

Whether kids follow the Program or not, they still need to cling to their identity as immigrants, which is what society imposes on them from the very moment they arrive. Once they build it, they use it as a tool to collectively challenge the low value society attributes to them as immigrants. But the Linking Classroom Program certainly facilitates and speeds up the process. And while schools – reflecting society – place less value on and less hope in all of these students because they are immigrant kids, they are obliged to answer back together, not as individuals, but as a group. This group provides them with some protection from the painful image they get about themselves from the mirror of the environment, from the time they arrive in Madrid.

If the Welcome Schools Program finished *before* this initial identification and group solidarity were overcome, kids would certainly be less protected from the pain left by the disintegration of their hopes. If they were prevented from sharing their experience in school, they would certainly seek to share it outside school. And some of these outside venues are without doubt far more dangerous and more destructive – not only for themselves, but for society as well.

Which obstacles remain after the Program? Why?

Obviously, the Welcome Schools Program does not remove economic disadvantages, and granting a number of free lunches is hardly a way to take the nature of these disadvantages into account as barriers to students' full participation in the school system.

The Program does not eliminate academic gaps either. Admittedly, it would take an individual and complex approach to fill in all the gaps immigrant children bring along from their countries of origin. But it would be far easier to prepare kids for a school curriculum which requires subjects related to the History, Literature, or Geography of Spain in general, and of Madrid in particular. Linking Classroom teachers already have enough experience to design useful academic materials to address these subjects, and I am sure they would be willing to do so if only they had enough time.

As I have tried to show, the Program works fairly well in providing students with an adequate environment for learning Spanish, even when it relies on a social dynamic which is far beyond the Program itself. But the problem is that, since teaching Spanish is framed by a zero-sum model of language learning, *kids increasingly lose their interest in their mother tongues, which they perceive as useless, worthless, and affecting the re-shaping process they undergo in a negative way.*

Nevertheless, the most negative effects of the Program - in my opinion - do not have to do with what it does, but with what it fails to do. Thus, it is

not only unable to remove the obstacles to these students' fair participation in society, but on the contrary, *it perpetuates, institutionalizes, deepens, and legitimizes their disadvantages.*

The Program does not value students at all as they are, and it values even less what they bring along. It never relies on their previous experiences, abilities, or knowledge (not even their languages!), and it never takes them into account.

For this reason, kids are left completely clueless to understand the transformation their lives have recently suffered after their (usually involuntary) migration. We are speaking about teenagers, and these teenagers are human beings who had already started the process of being aware of their place in society. It is easy to imagine the chaos they experience when they have started this process in one society, where they perceive themselves and their own families in a certain way, and afterwards they are removed to another place where this perception has significantly changed *for the worse.*

Students in the Linking Classroom do not learn anything to help them understand this process of transformation, but they do learn painfully and in many ways that what they are and know is not appreciated. The fact that the Program does not explicitly value them is one of the ways to *teach them that they have to change.* They are indeed “re-shaped,” and they do switch to the rules of the new societal environment, especially if they have good teachers they trust and can rely on.

After the Program, schools require immigrant students to know the official curriculum in the schools of the Community of Madrid, and *at the same level*, if they are to compete with non-immigrant students for the academic results required to enter universities. No program could reach this goal in six or nine months, not even in years. *The only way to give immigrant students a chance to compete fairly with their peers is to change this goal and value their previous knowledge and experience at the same level.*

The problem is that *in order to change this goal and remove the barriers to fair competition, we have to deal with the concept of fairness itself* and how the current school system conceives it.

Our analysis from an Intercultural Education perspective has already denounced that in order to be fair, education has to take into account individual variation. We cannot set the same goals for everybody and think that in this way we are FAIR. It is like requiring all the different animals in a group - i.e., a fish, a monkey, an elephant, and so on - to perform the task of climbing a tree (INTER Group 2006: 140), and we grade all the animals afterwards according to their ability to accomplish it.



“So that evaluation is fair, all of you are going to perform the same test: you have to climb that tree.”

Antiracist Education has made us aware of the invisible privileges some of us enjoy compared to others, and explains that if we do not take these privileges into account and we act as if we are all the same, we are blaming victims for their shortcomings, when they do not have the same ability to achieve the same goals (INTER Group 2007b).

The opposite perspective, that is, a homogeneous educational perspective that judges students in spite of their differences and the

obstacles they have for achieving fair participation, far more common currently in schools, is the one the students of the Linking Classroom have to deal with once they enter their regular courses. In this way, the only option left to kids is to lower their own expectations – which is exactly what teachers do and what most kids would eventually accept.

This is the reason why immigrant students with low expectations from the beginning or those who re-shape them quickly during the process have a far better time adjusting to the school system than those who stubbornly hold on to high expectations for themselves, challenging any decrease in their hopes because they perceive themselves – and to a certain point society perceives them, also - as intelligent, hard-working, and well-prepared academically, with equal opportunities as their Spanish peers.

Given that the Program does not value what kids already know and judges them according to what a student schooled from the start in the Community of Madrid knows, *it has the unavoidable effect of reshaping immigrant kids into students heading for lower education and from there to jobs with less status and pay.* It legitimizes this inequality blaming the shortcomings on the victims and on the process of immigration itself.

Let me turn at this point to the questions with which I ended Chapter 4.

What can policies do to make immigrant students' participation in society fairer?

Is the Welcome Schools Program the kind of program (with the kind of effects) in which society wants to invest its public funds? Is it working for the idea of a democratic and egalitarian society that we have in our minds for the present and the near future?

An excellent analysis of the transformations that have taken place in Spanish society during the last decades of the 20th Century, undertaken by Inés Alberdi, concluded arguing that:

A remarkable issue among the transformations is that – in Spain – *social inequalities have been significantly reduced*, and that Spain is currently among the countries which have the lowest level of inequality [...]. Spain ranks among the first positions [in Europe] as a balanced society, one in which the richest 20% get increasingly less of the total percentage of the income [...]. *Spaniards seem to be extremely sensitive to social inequalities.* (Alberdi 1999: 376)¹¹¹ (Italics are mine.)

Inés Alberdi published this work in 1999, when immigration to Spain was becoming numerically significant – compared to other EU countries. But it has been during the first years of the 21st century that public policies have started to address the issue of how this new population is participating in society, with a special concern about how institutionalized barriers prevent this participation from being fair and full.

The MIPEX (Niessen, Huddleston and Citron 2007: 164) clearly states that in Spain:

Migrants are more likely to be employed than Spaniards, although they are twice as likely to have temporary contracts.

The explanation of this – only apparent – paradox relies on the kind of jobs they get: mainly in the informal sector, with meager wages and no security in spite of their qualifications (Observatorio metropolitano 2007: 125-126). These are jobs Spanish citizens do not want, but which need to be taken care of by immigrants, because they are mainly related to the vacuum in the social and caregiving sectors left by women when they entered the job market.

When women left home to work outside (a recent phenomenon in Spain compared to other EU countries), they started demanding a more

¹¹¹ The original quotation in Spanish says: “Un aspecto a destacar dentro de estos cambios es que se han reducido enormemente las desigualdades sociales y que España se sitúa actualmente entre los países con menos niveles de desigualdad [...]. España se sitúa en las primeras posiciones como una sociedad equilibrada en la que el 20% de los más ricos se llevan cada vez menos porcentaje de la renta total [...], los españoles aparecen como enormemente sensibles a las desigualdades sociales.”

egalitarian share of gender roles at home: cleaning the house, preparing meals, caring for clothes, nurturing children, and taking care of the elderly. Their male partners, raised in a society where gender roles were more clearly distributed, assigning the work outside the home to men and the socially less valued tasks inside the home to women, have come to terms with the more egalitarian ideology only to a certain point. They accept the new balance of genders but are not willing to take over their share of duties at home, which they were taught to despise as males when they grew up.¹¹²

The tension between these two sets of values has been conveniently solved by hiring immigrants desperately seeking jobs and accepting the wages middle-class Spaniards can afford. These kinds of jobs have not been filled by Spanish citizens in spite of the high unemployment rate, because the pay is not enough to make a living that meets national standards. This new system of job distribution works only if one can profit from differences of currency value among countries. However, this implies living far below acceptable living conditions by *anyone's* definition – *immigrants included*; people can put up with these conditions only because they are perceived to be temporary.

The recent and rapid social transformations in Spain have taken place since – and no doubt influenced by – the entrance of Spain into the European Union in 1986. This fact made the country even more attractive for immigrant workers, and the kinds of jobs which were offered due to the transformation mentioned provided immigrants with the opportunity to enter the job market more easily than in other EU countries.¹¹³ The combination of these processes, and especially the possibility of transforming them into complementary ones, explains – as I see it – the accelerated pace of arrival of immigrant workers and their families that has been characteristic of the recent years in Spain better than traditional arguments.

¹¹² See Alberdi (1999) for a full development of this argument.

¹¹³ This is why the case of Spain is a useful example for thinking about recent social transformations in EU countries, since it is easier to detect and analyze them, due to the rapid pace of change.

This fragile but profitable (for the host society) equilibrium is challenged by the fact that immigrants are not only workers but social human beings who, like other human beings, already have families or wish to start families.

Despite Spain's high ranking in terms of integration according to the cited MIPEX (Niessen, Huddleston and Citron 2007:166), family reunion policies are far from being "good practices." In Spain, immigrants have the right to apply for family reunion after one year of legal residence and if they have a legal work contract longer than one year (note that due to the kind of jobs immigrants have, mainly in the informal sector, it is not as easy to get a one year legal contract as it may seem). On top of these requirements, immigrants have to prove that they have financial security and living conditions considered adequate. If the petition is not granted by the authorities, immigrants do not have the right to appeal (Niessen, Huddleston and Citron 2007:166).

Even if they are not granted the right to bring their sons and daughters – or other kin – to live with them, immigrants manage to reunite their families anyway, as is the case for most of the students in the Linking Classroom where I did my fieldwork. As soon as the kids arrive, and once they register in the municipality where no other proof than proof of residence is required (electricity bills, bank statements sent to the address, etc.), they have the right and the duty to attend school up to 16 years of age, regardless of their own and their parents' legal status.

Immigrant students enter a school system where it has been proved that:

Educational inequality and social inequality reinforce each other."¹¹⁴
(Contreras Hernández, García Martínez and Rivas Fernández 2000: 208)

This is because:

¹¹⁴ "La desigualdad educativa y la desigualdad social se retroalimentan la una a la otra."

The educational system plays the role of selecting [students] by filtering [their] differences - and legitimating them.”¹¹⁵ (Contreras Hernández, García Martínez and Rivas Fernández 2000: 209)

These statements were made after a general analysis of the school system – albeit centered on an ethnography of a Secondary School in Gijón, Asturias. The authors were speaking about any social inequality, paying attention to any student, and not particularly to immigrant students. But immigrant students in particular become easy victims of inequality, when not only economic, but social, linguistic, and sometimes even physical differences are at stake.

Let me quote Sherman Alexie at this point:

It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow *deserve* to be poor. You start believing that you're poor because you're stupid and ugly. And then you start believing that you're stupid and ugly because you are Indian. And because you are Indian you start believing you're destined to be poor. It's an ugly circle and *there is nothing you can do about it*. (Alexie 2007: 13) (Italics in the original.)

We only have to replace the word 'Indian' with the word 'immigrant' (or any other category at a disadvantage), to describe the same mechanism of exclusion in Spain (and indeed, all Europe).

When immigrant parents start the process of enrolling their children in the school system of the Community of Madrid, they are offered the option of following the Welcome Schools Program, which – like similar programs in other Autonomous Communities – was implemented on January 20, 2003, and aims at dealing with the differences policy-makers identify as the most important disadvantages that prevent immigrant kids from achieving fair participation in the school system.

¹¹⁵ “El sistema educativo cumple la función de filtro selectivo [entre los estudiantes] y de legitimación de [sus] diferencias.”

The Program provides immigrant students with a transitional environment which slows down and eases their full entrance into the school system, and where they learn Spanish. But in the same environment, unfortunately, kids also learn to perceive the unequal role and poor value society assigns to them, and the low expectations the system has for their academic future. As we have seen above, this is commonly legitimized by their lack of knowledge of the Spanish school curriculum.

Whatever the expectations they - or their families - come with, these are re-shaped, together with their self-perceptions, in order to prepare them for low-level academic training and, as a consequence, a low slot in the job market. All of this happens in spite of the fact that *Spaniards seem to be extremely sensitive to social inequalities*. (Alberdi 1999: 376)¹¹⁶ (Italics are mine.)

What, then, can policies do to ensure a fairer participation of immigrant students in society?

Policies need to set different objectives, inspired by the principle of equal opportunities for all, including immigrants; in order to be implemented, these new policies need to be followed up with concrete measures and programs (i.e. budget!); in order to enable teachers to execute these measures, they need to undergo training, including policies for intercultural education.

However, even the policies with the best intentions cannot do anything in schools without teachers. Evidently, their design and formulation requires the participation of all the stakeholders, most notably teachers. In such processes of consultation, all responsible and involved actors have to answer the question of whether they think the process of immigration - envisioned and articulated by parents - is a legitimate explanation for the

¹¹⁶ The original quotation in Spanish says: “Un aspecto a destacar dentro de estos cambios es que se han reducido enormemente las desigualdades sociales y que España se sitúa actualmente entre los países con menos niveles de desigualdad [...]. España se sitúa en las primeras posiciones como una sociedad equilibrada en la que el 20% de los más ricos se llevan cada vez menos porcentaje de la renta total [...], los españoles aparecen como enormemente sensibles a las desigualdades sociales”.

transformation of these students into second class citizens. This is especially true for teachers.

Thus, above all, teachers have to be involved in these processes of policy formulation from the outset, and – together with politicians, administrators, school managers, etc. – they also have to decide for themselves if their immigrant students should continue to be excluded from the main promise of equal opportunities the school system makes to all.

In such participatory processes, teachers have to, and certainly will, contribute to innovation, to imagining ways of changing their practices and to showing that they could be *extremely sensitive to social inequalities*, within their classrooms also. Policy-makers will have to pay particular attention to what teachers with experience in Linking Classrooms have to say, and make sure they put all their resources to work to make this transformation of the education system happen. However, we must avoid a situation my grandfather denounced in 1921:

A few days ago, Mr. [minister] published a proclamation [...]. This new order is another proof of our ministers' inconsistency in their legislation; they are not familiar with the primary school problem and want to solve it with simple royal orders or decrees. [...] If the minister had consulted the teachers, he would have one failure less on his ministerial slate. We would have told him: No specific programs, with time and work distributions, with detailed lessons. Rather, an indication of methods, leaving the field open to personal initiative. (Pintado 1921)

Hace pocos días el Sr. [ministro] ha publicado una disposición [...] Esta nueva orden es una prueba más de la inconsistencia con que legislan nuestros ministros; desconocen el problema de la escuela primaria, y quieren resolverlo con simples reales órdenes o decretos. [...] Si el ministro hubiera consultado a los maestros, contaría en su haber ministerial con un fracaso menos. Le habiéramos dicho: Nada de programas concretos, con distribución

de tiempo y trabajo, con lecciones detalladas; sí indicación de métodos, dejando campo a la iniciativa personal. (Pintado 1921)¹¹⁷

In the end, I want the same thing my grandfather wanted: to contribute to change the fate of some people who play at a disadvantage - in order to build a more egalitarian society. Only our means are different: he thought education by itself was a useful tool to reach this goal because it promises equal opportunities, but I think differently. *I think we have to transform education in order to not only promise, but reach the same goal - if education is to transform society.*

I have tried to show in this book why immigrant kids are subject to systemic discrimination, and why they lack equal opportunities. I am convinced that full and equal participation of immigrant children in society can only be achieved by valuing who these kids are and their individual diversity, instead of trying to re-shape them.

Needless to say, this is true not only for immigrant students, but for any kid.

¹¹⁷ I owe the opportunity to read this newspaper article written by my grandfather Sidonio Pintado to the excellent work done by my cousin Natalia Pintado in gathering my grandfather's Works. I am indebted to the people working at the archive of the Residencia de Estudiantes (Madrid) –where the complete works of my grandfather are available – for locating this quote, particularly to the kindness of the director, Miguel Jiménez.

Margarita del Olmo

References:

AGUADO, Teresa. 2003. *Pedagogía intercultural*. Madrid: McGraw-Hill.

AGUADO, Teresa (ed.). 2006. *Intercultural Education. Teacher Training Needs from an European Perspective*. (bilingual edition English/Spanish). Madrid: UNED.

ALBERDI, Inés. *La nueva familia española*. Madrid: Taurus. 1999.

ALEXIE, Sherman. *The Absolute True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. New York/Boston: Little Brown and Co. 2007.

Anuario estadístico 2007. Madrid: Ayuntamiento de Madrid.

BAUMGARTL, Bernd (forthcoming in 2009). "2008 <Año Europeo para la integración> ¿en Austria también?". In: *La integración a debate*. Müllauer-Seichter and Fernández Montes eds. Madrid: Pearson.

BARTH, Fredrik. 1971 [1966]. *Models of Social Organization*. London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

BOURGOIS, Philippe. 2003. *In Search of Respect. Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BOYANO REVILLA, Manuela; José Luis ESTEFANÍA LERA; Henedina GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ; y Montserrat HOMEDES GILI. 2004. *Aulas de Enlace: orientaciones metodológicas y para la evaluación*. Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid.

CARBONELL, Frances. 2006. *L'acollida. Acompanyament d'alumnat nouvingut*. Barcelona: Eumo Editorial/Jaume Bofill.

CARRASCO, Silvia, ed. *Inmigración, contexto familiar y Educación: procesos y experiencias de la población marroquí, ecuatoriana, china y sengambiana*. Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN. 2002. *Programa Escuelas de Bienvenida*. Consejería de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid. Madrid. (Instrucciones de la Viceconsejería de Educación por las que se regulan las Aulas de Enlace para el curso 2002-03).

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN. 2003. *Programa Escuelas de Bienvenida*. Consejería de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid. Madrid. (Instrucciones de la Viceconsejería de Educación por las que se regulan las Aulas de Enlace para el curso 2003-2004).

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN. 2004. *Programa Escuelas de Bienvenida*. Consejería de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid. Madrid. (Instrucciones de la Viceconsejería de Educación por las que se regulan las Aulas de Enlace para el curso 2004-2005).

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN. 2005. *Programa Escuelas de Bienvenida*. Consejería de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid. Madrid. (Instrucciones de la Viceconsejería de Educación por las que se regulan las Aulas de Enlace para el curso 2005-2006).

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN. 2006. *Programa Escuelas de Bienvenida*. Consejería de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid. Madrid. (Instrucciones de la Viceconsejería de Educación por las que se regulan las Aulas de Enlace para el curso 2006-2007).

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN. 2007a. *Programa Escuelas de Bienvenida*. Consejería de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid. Madrid. (Instrucciones de la Viceconsejería de Educación por las que se regulan las Aulas de Enlace para el curso 2007-2008).

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN. 2007b. *Centros docentes de la DAT de Madrid capital con Aula de Enlace. Curso 2007-2008 (información a 17 de Diciembre 2007)*. Document available at the official website of the

Welcome School Program (http://www.madrid.org/dat_capital/bienvenida/ae.htm). Data updated yearly.

CONTRERAS HERNÁNDEZ, Juan Antonio; Adolfo GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ; and Adolfo RIVAS FERNÁNDEZ. 2000. *Tristes institutos. Una exploración antropológica de un instituto de Enseñanza Secundaria*. Gijón, Asturias: Fundación municipal de cultura, educación y universidad popular.

CUCALÓN TIRADO, Pilar. 2007. "El desarrollo de un proceso de investigación etnográfica en un Aula de Enlace". *Gazeta de Antropología*: 23. Madrid.

del OLMO, Margarita. 1990. *La construcción social de la identidad: Emigrantes argentinos a España*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense.

del OLMO, Margarita. 2007a. "Los mecanismos racistas desde una perspectiva social". *Andalucía Educativa*. 60: 28-30. Cádiz: Consejería de Educación de la Junta de Andalucía.

del OLMO, Margarita. 2007b. "La articulación de la diversidad en la escuela. Un proyecto de investigación en curso sobre las <Aulas de Enlace>" *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares* 62:1:187-203. Madrid: CSIC.

del OLMO, Margarita. (2009). "Análisis crítico de las 'Aulas de Enlace' como medidas de integración". In: *La integración educativa a debate*. Müllauer-Seichter and Fernández Montes eds. pp.170-181. Madrid: Pearson.

del OLMO, Margarita; Caridad HERNÁNDEZ; and Carmen OSUNA. (forthcoming) "Challenging Space Limitations in our Fieldwork". *Cuadernos del Sur*. Bahía Blanca, Argentina: Universidad Nacional del Sur.

DÍAZ de RADA, 1996. Ángel *Los primeros de la clase y los últimos románticos. Una etnografía para la crítica de la visión instrumental de la enseñanza*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.

DIETZ, Gunther. 2003. *Multiculturalismo, interculturalidad y Educación: Una aproximación antropológica*. Granada: Universidad de Granada.

DIETZ, Gunther. 2007. *Las competencias bilingües y biculturales de los niños procedentes de familias transmigrantes hispano-alemanas: estudio de caso en Granada*. Granada: Universidad de Granada.

FRANZÉ, Adela. 2002. *Lo que sabía no valía: escuela, diversidad e inmigración*. Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid.

FRANZÉ, Adela ed. *Anthropology, Education and School. Revista de Antropología Social. Special Issue. Vol. 16*.

GARCÍA CASTAÑO, F.J.; and A. GRANADOS MARTÍNEZ. 1999. *Lecturas para educación intercultural*. Madrid: Trotta.

GOFFMAN, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.

GRÖPEL, Wolfgang. 2004. "Intercultural Learning – Concept and Implementation". In: *Das Verbindende der Kulturen. The Unifying Aspects of Cultures. Les points communs des cultures*. ARLT, Herbert ed. Vienna: Institut zur Erforschung und Förderung österreichischer und internationaler Literaturprozesse. Also: www.inst.at/trans/15Nr/08_1/08_1Inhalt15.htm

INTER Group. 2006. *Culture Is Our Focus, Diversity Is Our Normality. Inter Guide to Implement Intercultural Education*. Vienna: Navreme.

INTER Group. 2007a. *Racism: A Teenagers' Perspective. Results of Preliminary Research from Madrid (Spain)*. Vienna: Navreme.

INTER Group. 2007b. *Racism: What It Is and How to Deal with It. A Guide to Talking about Racism*. Vienna: Navreme.

INTER Group. 2007c. *Actas del Congreso INTER. Congreso Internacional de Educación Intercultural. Formación del Profesorado y práctica escolar (Madrid 15-17 de Marzo de 2006)*. Madrid: UNED.

JOCILES RUBIO, María Isabel. 1992. *Niños, mozos, casados a través de sus fiestas en La Rioja*. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos.

LINTON-KUKVEKA, Eva 2004 "A Multicultural Perspective on Integrating Non-Native Speaking Students into the Community in Vienna/Austria and Texas/USA: A Preliminary Report". In: *Das Verbindende der Kulturen. The Unifying Aspects of Cultures. Les points commus des cultures*. ARLT, Herbert ed. Vienna: Institut zur Erforschung und Förderung österreichischer und internationaler Literaturprozesse. Also: www.inst.at/trans/15Nr/08_1/08_1Inhalt15.htm

LUCKO, Jennifer. 2008. "La identidad emergente de los latinos en Madrid" In: *Educación intercultural. Miradas multidisciplinares*. J.A. Téllez ed.: 97-110. Madrid: Catarata.

LUCKO, Jennifer (Forthcoming in 2009.) "El papel del rendimiento escolar y la identificación en la segregación de los adolescentes inmigrantes latinos en Madrid." (In press) In: *La integración escolar a debate*. Müllauer-Seitcher and Fernández Montes (eds.), Madrid: Pearson.

MEC (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia). 2007. *Datos y cifras. Curso escolar 2007/2008*. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia. (also available in www.mec.es/mecd/estadisticas)

NERUDA, Pablo. 1968. "Latorre, Prado y mi propia sombra". In *Obras Completas*, 3.^a ed., tomo II. Editorial Losada. Buenos Aires.

NIESSEN, Jan; Thomas HUDDLESTON; and Laura CITRON. 2007. *Migrant Integration Policy Index*. Manchester: British Council. (also available: <http://www.integrationindex.eu/>)

OBSERVATORIO METROPOLITANO. 2007. *Madrid ¿la suma de todos? Globalización, territorio, desigualdad*. Madrid: Traficantes de sueños.

ÖSTERREICHISCHER INTEGRATIONSFONDS. 2008. *Zahlen, Daten, Fakten*. Vienna: Bundesministerium für Innere.

PINTADO, Sidonio. 1921. "Los programas escolares". *La libertad*. 25/1/1921.

RYAN, William. 1972. *Blaming the Victim*. New York: Vintage Books.

SMITH, Linda Tuhiwai. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London and New York/Dunedin: Zed Books Ltd/ University of Otago Press.

UGT. 2002. *Prácticas de educación intercultural*. Informe redactado por el área de Acción social de FETE-UGT. Madrid.

VELASCO, Honorio; Ángel DÍAZ DE RADA; Francisco CRUCES; Roberto FERNÁNDEZ; Celeste JIMÉNEZ; and Raúl SÁNCHEZ. 2006. *La sonrisa de la institución. Confianza y riesgo en sistemas expertos*. Madrid: Editorial Universitaria Ramón Areces.

This book is a product of the research project "Participation Strategies and Racism Prevention in Schools" (FFI2009-09762), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, and the research stays of Dra. del Olmo in Vienna as "Researcher in Residence at navreme's. It complements some of the books of navreme's series with a distinct anthropologist point of view. The project aimed at the study of the processes embedded in the arrival and adaptation of immigrant children in the schools of the Community of Madrid. It is particularly focused on students and teachers. At the centre of attention are their needs and difficulties in implementing the schools' strategies to facilitate the process of adaptation of immigrant students. In the view of the research team, participation of immigrant students should be understood as a way to make all students "fit for everyday life", so they are in a position to realise their own (changing) objectives. A previous output of the project, an analysis of racism in Spanish schools was published by navreme as volume 6 (Racism: A Teenagers' Perspective) . Building on these in-depth interviews with youth in schools in Madrid, and their analysis and research, a "Guide to Talking About Racism in Schools " was produced, published as volume 8 of the navreme series.

Series navreme publications "research for practice" No. 11.
ISBN-13: 978-9989-192-19-7. EAN: 9789989192197.
Madrid/Vienna, June 2010.