

Inter**C**ultural  
**E**ducation  
perspectives and proposals





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[ editors ]



# InterCultural Education

perspectives and proposals

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## INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES AND PROPOSALS

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This book gathers a series of documents that we think will be useful for encouraging reflection on what an education that is intercultural is, what objectives it has, what it is good for, and what challenges it involves. The authors of these documents are professors in the Euro-Latin American Master's in Intercultural Education, designed thanks to an ALFA Project (European Commission, 2007/2009) in which institutions from Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Austria, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Latvia, and Spain have participated ([www.programainteralfa.org](http://www.programainteralfa.org)).

The term "Intercultural Education" frequently has appeared frequently in recent academic papers on Education and on contemporary society. Nor is it hard to find in the texts of educational policies and regulations, and the communications media have also finally started to use it. Its rapid spread and use, however, have had one negative effect, confusion: it seems to be treated



as a magic word, the very use of which has the effect of invoking modernity. But often, beyond the concept itself, what is being discussed is other kinds of measures that until a few years ago were given different names: compensatory education, special programs, education for indigenous peoples, education for immigrants, events to celebrate cultural differences, etc.

However, the authors of this book have agreed on claiming:

- That Intercultural Education is not just about cultural differences, but about all of our characteristics as individuals and as members of groups, beyond religious or ethnic customs, because all human beings have a lot in common, but we are diverse.
- That acknowledging Diversity must be the basis of Education, not the exception. This will avoid a homogenizing approach as well as hypertrophying differences and forming special groups according to social categories that are established “a priori” (nationality, age, language, religion, social class, gender, etc.).
- That Education is a process that lasts throughout life. It does not only happen in school, but in a variety of times and places; that is, all spaces and moments are learning opportunities.
- That everyone, teachers and students, is involved, as active agents, in teaching/learning processes.
- That we all have an obligation to contribute to make teaching and learning processes significant for the lives of the people involved in them.
- That evaluation is part of learning and that the process as a whole, and teaching in particular, should be evaluated, not just the students.
- That the practice of Education depends on each context and that there are no universal recipes because Education involves a process of daily, contextualized change.
- That Education cannot contribute to legitimizing social inequality but, on the contrary, must contribute to unmasking the mechanisms, such as racism and xenophobia, sexism and classism, that perpetuate social inequality.
- That thinking that we are all equal and acting as if this were so does not make us all equal; rather, the disadvantages and the privileges continue to determine the process, and remain unmasked.

- That it is necessary to constantly experiment, reflect on, and imagine Education, using whatever useful resources we have at hand to change the traditional educational approach that fails more and more students (and teachers) every day, not only immigrants and indigenous people.
- Finally, that the diversity of individuals, groups, skills, and points of view enriches education itself, cooperation, and professional collaboration, because it allows us to think up more varied and/or alternative solutions.

We believe that the articles gathered in this book will encourage reflection on all of these ideas from different angles, different languages, and different priorities, reflecting the diversity of the authors themselves. In order to make this task easier for the reader, we have classified the articles into two parts according to the axes that we have made explicit in the book’s subtitle: Perspectives and Proposals.

Under the subtitle *Perspectives* we have grouped the most theoretical papers. Three of these focus on the subject of diversity because we consider this to be the cornerstone of an intercultural approach. However, each one approaches diversity in a different way: as a metaphor for thinking about education, as a paradigm of intercultural discourse, and from the perspective provided by the discipline of Anthropology. Two articles focus their attention on the subject of racism, from the angle of identity and pointing out the “benefits” that a racist perspective provides. One author proposes a reflection on intercultural society from a critical perspective of citizenship. Two authors approach the subject of interculturality as a necessary “skill” for living in the 20th century. One author contributes a reflection on the subject of cultural relativism. Finally, a group of authors incorporate gender perspective.

It is evident that any classification is quite arbitrary when it comes to drawing the line on one side or the other. Our intention in the section that is subtitled *Proposals* is to put together the chapters that direct our attention toward practices, but this does not mean that the authors have given up theoretical reflection. One author proposes an analysis of several primary education schools in the Community of Madrid as scenarios that come close to or move away from the intercultural approach. Another chapter shows the advantages of cooperative/collaborative learning and how to put it into practice. There is also a reflection on the construction of an intercultural curriculum, a critical

review of the advantages of the new technologies for approaching Education from an intercultural perspective, an analysis on how racist mechanisms operate in a specific context, and life histories of people with “exceptional” school trajectories. Attention is also given to youth cultures and their praxis, as well as to the textbooks used in the Community of Madrid with a critical reading of how they reflect social diversity. Another author approaches the subject of evaluation from an intercultural perspective, and, finally, a discussion about the subject of female genital mutilation is also included.

The immediate objective of this book is to facilitate the work of the students in the International Post-Graduate Program of Intercultural Education that has been designed thanks to a project financed by the European Union through the ALFA Program (<http://www.programainteralfa.org/proyecto.htm>). Twelve institutions from nine different countries<sup>1</sup> have been involved in designing this post-graduate degree and two years have been invested in it (2007-2009). The majority of the authors of this book have contributed to this process. Above all, we want to underline the importance of developing intercultural skills for the 20th-century job market and the benefits of training in this area that can be applied to international tasks, projects, and jobs, as well as in an enormous variety of different political and job sectors, even beyond the sectors of education and training.

Another more ambitious, less immediate objective is for this book to be useful to a broader public. Anyone interested in contributing in a critical fashion to analyzing education in contemporary society (which involves increasing diversity in all places and contexts), especially anyone who dares to try to change education, will find ideas here that will provide a starting point.

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<sup>1</sup> Mexico (Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural), Spain (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universidad de Huelva), Latvia (Latvijas Universitāte), Colombia (Fundación Universitaria Panamericana), Austria (Navreme Wissensentwicklung), Ecuador (Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja), Ireland (University of Limerick), Chile (Universidad de Tarapacá) and Great Britain (Nottinham Trent University).

# PERSPECTIVES





# THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH AS A METAPHOR FOR DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

TERESA AGUADO ODINA



## ABSTRACT

The intercultural approach is proposed as a metaphor for diversity. That is, as a view that contemplates and allows us to think about diversity and, therefore, about the complexity of social and educational situations. We resort to the idea of a metaphor because it helps us to understand how the way we think about things makes us do and say some things and not others. At the same time, these metaphors or ways of thinking about something prevent us from doing and saying some things, but not others. In this chapter, the elements that shape the intercultural metaphor in education are described: diversity as opposed to difference, culturality as opposed to culture, interculturality as hermeneutics and practice, as communication and relation, and the link between diversity and equality in education. Finally, some recommendations for training educators are deduced from this.

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## 1. THE INTERCULTURAL METAPHOR

The intercultural approach is proposed as a metaphor for diversity. That is, as a view that contemplates and allows us to think about diversity and, therefore, about the complexity of social and educational situations. We resort to the idea of a metaphor because it helps us to understand how the way we think about things makes us do and say some things and not others. At the same time, these metaphors or ways of thinking about something prevent us from doing and saying some things, but not others (Lizcano, 2003). Thus, some metaphors that we use to think about what happens around us help to legitimize the present order of things and contribute to delegitimize other possible orders. This happens in the sphere of education, both in schools and outside of them.

"...in a certain Chinese encyclopedia, it is written that animals are divided into a) those belonging to the Emperor, b) stuffed animals, c) trained animals, d) suckling pigs, e) mermaids, f) fabulous animals, g) stray dogs, h) animals included in this classification, i) animals that tremble like madmen, j) animals that are innumerable, k) animals drawn with a fine camel-hair brush, l) etcetera, m) animals that have just broken a jar, n) animals that look like flies from far away. In our astonishment at this taxonomy, what leaps out, what appears to us as the exotic enchantment of another way of thinking, is the limit of our own thinking: how impossible it is to think this." (Foucault, M.; *Las palabras y las cosas. Una arqueología de las ciencias humanas*)

The reflection that we propose is about how the metaphors we use to think about educational matters condition our actions and discourse, the way that we classify and order things, and the way we imagine events and people to be linked (or not). The intercultural approach is shaped as a theoretical approach that works as a metaphor insofar as it allows us to think about human diversity and to formulate alternative paths of action and thinking in education.

Interculturality, as a way of thinking about complex matters, that is, diversity, involves distinguishing between diversity and difference and between being cultural and culture. At the same time, it means acknowledging its practical and hermeneutic character. This intercultural perspective imposes specific ways of talking about and acting in specific social and educational situations. From this perspective, it is not possible to do and say certain things regarding what should or should not be done in specific social and educational situations.

### 1.1. DIVERSITY VERSUS DIFFERENCE

*"This logic of difference is inscribed in the framework of a monodic logic that isolates entities from the point of view of a non-egalitarian relationship. Difference is not apparent on the level of realities but it is apparent on the level of symbols. Difference legitimizes distance, even rejection."*

(Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006:20)

Distinguishing between diversity and difference is decisive when we consider studying human diversity and analyzing it in the educational sphere. We must be aware that the visions that the social and educational systems commonly offer refer to the idea of cultural differences and contribute to hypertrophy the differences, in a condescending way and with more or less intentional purposes of classification and social hierarchization. One dangerous consequence of this is stigmatizing derived from the proliferation of special classes, support groups, logopedia, review classes, special needs students, compensatory classes, etc. Which students are assigned to these classes? How are they selected? Who makes the decision? What results are achieved? (Aguado, 2007). From an intercultural approach, it does not make sense to talk about "attention to diversity"; diversity should simply and plainly be acknowledged as a human characteristic.

It is common to establish differences and to "recognize" a priori cultural groups. Cultural diversity gets confused with social categorization. An obvious, very frequent example in the Spanish context –but not just in the Spanish context– is to identify cultural diversity with national origin, mother tongue, economic level, ethnic group, religion, or gender. These social categories provide information about the social groups individuals are inscribed in or ascribed to; but they do not give us information about the people themselves.

The most serious dangers of describing people, students, or groups according to their differences is that this implies a moral assessment (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006). Evaluations of better or worse, good or bad arise immediately. The consequence in education is that a deficit model is adopted and used to justify compensatory and remedial models. By reifying difference, we draw barriers that are sometimes insurmountable, we define a problem that has no possible solution, because the only possible solution would be to "stop being the person you are." This is the case of a teacher in compensatory education who said *"the compensatory program doesn't do any good, it's not going to make him stop being a gypsy."*



Diversity is a constant for humans and it is part of life itself. It is defined more as a process than as a category. Cultural diversity is a fact, heterogeneity is the norm. What should worry us, what should set off all the alarms, is homogeneity. Homogeneity is always the product of a deliberate act that creates an order, classifies, and controls (politically, socially, psychologically, or educationally).

The vision that allows us to classify, organize, and name things, experiences, and people, is not unique, nor is it the same for everyone. Diversity has to do with acknowledging the other and acknowledging other ways of seeing the world: it is about all kinds of classification and their consequences. By imposing a classification, a name, or a designation upon something, we possess it; it is a way of exercising power over others.

## 1.2. CULTURAL DIVERSITY VERSUS DIFFERENT CULTURES

*"Cultures are transmitted by individuals and cannot express themselves without their intervention."*  
(Linton, 1936:42)

The concept of culture, like other concepts in the social sciences, is polemical and is always polysemic. Its use is never neutral; it is always used in one way or another to a specific end, to justify or to explain visions of social reality and of the individual's role in society (Abdallah-Preteuille, 2006). In the educational sphere, both in official discourse and in teachers' daily expression, the idea of cultural diversity is confused with the idea of different cultures. What is the difference? Why should we make a distinction? And what are the consequences of making this distinction?

Defining the cultural reality of people and of their groups of reference by establishing structures and isolated traits (language, religion, nationality, traditions, etc.) as the starting point for this definition is not useful. We must remember that no single individual is familiar with all of the "culture" that she is part of, with conditions and cultural characteristics that serve in a certain way and influence her, that modulate her behavior and her interpretation of reality (people, events). So it does not make sense to associate interculturality with celebrating gastronomic festivals, exhibits of typical costumes and "customs," dances, etc. By doing this, we risk offering a superficial, touristic vision of culture.

Talking about different cultures as if they were watertight compartments, analyzing cultures as if they were fixed, closed territories, defining the characteristics of a culture as if they were fixed norms, is an error, an out-of-date approach. It does not allow us to understand present-day realities and, in education, it makes it impossible to attain valuable educational achievements. This is true, of course, if we accept ideals of social justice and equal educational opportunities. Cultures are neither realities nor operative concepts.

Cultures are dynamic concepts and this dynamism is always difficult for us to visualize, to understand, and to manage. Cultures cannot be understood to be independent beings separate from their social, political, and communicational updating. The concept of culture is not appropriate today for explaining the complex mixtures and exchanges that take place. Culture, like language, is a space that appears in a relational context where a person himself relates to others.

What we propose is to distance ourselves from a descriptive approach and place our bet on analyzing representations. These representations that we, as people, have and "cultural characteristics" are not sui generis identities; rather, they update a context, the relationship with others. Cultures are defined less by their own traits (norms, customs) than by the conditions in which they are produced and emerge. Present-day cultural scenarios are changing and open.

The idea of culture as a dynamic process, as a relationship between social acts, takes over when we try to explain present-day changes. Cultural traits are used in communication, in interactions, in "staging" daily life. We should not define an individual outside of himself, outside of any relationship to him. Acknowledging cultural diversity means acknowledging the other, avoiding previous, fixed, categorizing classifications.

The idea of culture is being replaced by the principle of cultural diversity as the central concept of research on culture in education. It is the only way to take in the cultural complexity of today's societies and school scenarios. As Martine Abdallah-Preteuille (2006) points out, we are arriving at a paradox: in the world we live in, in our society, the importance of the cultural variable, and of the concept itself, is once again becoming apparent and it is necessary to go beyond this concept. It is not describing cultures that is essential, but



analyzing what happens among the individuals and groups that say they belong to different cultures; analyzing their cultural and communicational usage. The variable culture is present in social and educational phenomena, but we do not know how it is present.

### 1.3. INTERCULTURALITY IS HERMENEUTIC AND PRACTICAL, IT IS COMMUNICATION AND RELATION

Nothing is intercultural on its own and this quality is not an absolute quality of the object. Only an intercultural analysis can give it this nature. The eyes of the beholder create the object. Insofar as we place less emphasis on the form, the culture, and more on the subject who acts and therefore interacts, we are in the sphere of practice. It is not an issue of seeking hypothetical cultural realities, but of understanding how culture is created in complex situations. Cultural signs are polysemic and they can only gain meaning by avoiding the use of a semiotic repertory. It is like translating with a dictionary, literally, word for word, or by interpreting, contextualizing, and interacting.

Using the intercultural metaphor, educators de-emphasize culture as something that determines behavior and emphasize the way people use cultural traits to talk and to talk about things, to express themselves verbally, corporally, socially, and personally. Teachers do not devote themselves to “all” of the other person’s culture, they lean on a partial, specific knowledge of the culture, depending on the context and on the actors’ “actions.” So the action of teaching rests less on knowledge of what is assumed to be cultural reality than on the gradual knowledge of significant elements.

Learning to distinguish, in any given situation, the elements that show what some call a cultural specificity from those that are the expression of a person’s own individuality is the object of the intercultural approach. In the words of A. Schutz, we will say that *“the cultural model of the group is not a place of refuge but a field of adventure, it is not proof but a question mark to investigate, it is not a useful instrument for clarifying complicated situations but a problematic situation that may even be hard to control.”*

How can we think about present-day social situations: the multiplicities, the mutations, the short-cuts, the transgressions, the alternative resources, the social outcasts?

It is necessary to deconstruct/reconstruct “traditional” concepts, beginning with their discursive, pragmatic nature. Thus, notions of family, lineage, codes, and community structures derive from the very interpretations that the members of the community internalize.

“...thinking about the configuration of cultural forms as fundamentally fractal, that is, as lacking borders, structures, or Euclidean regularities...”  
(Appadurai, 1992)

Interculturality is part of these paths that try to think about hybridness, segmentariness, and complexity. Practice that is coherent with interculturality aspires to generate social spaces that do not exist now, governed by norms of joint negotiation and creativity. Thus, relation and communication become the very center of intercultural practice.

## 2. DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

*“Exclusion at the top is not only as dangerous for public space and common solidarity as exclusion at the bottom; it is intrinsically linked to it. So limiting the voluntary exclusion of the elites is essential for creating a society that is more inclusive at the bottom.”*  
(Giddens, 1999:125)

We need to think starting from the condition that we are all equal in terms of dignity. It is necessary to stop using “diversity” as a pretext for social exclusion. This is a challenge insofar as diversity is evident but equality is the fruit of a moral conviction. Today, this acknowledgement and conviction are not present in the way political power acts and carries out economic distributions in the public sphere. This accents the rhetorical nature of these approaches when they are limited to educational initiatives and educators are given nearly exclusive responsibility. The priority should be to guarantee a distribution of the material and human resources that would make enriching educational experiences possible for everyone. In this sense, the people who become teachers and the way to become a teacher become especially relevant issues.

A very effective strategy when it comes to “legitimizing” discourse on diversity as exclusion is to locate “social action” in what we could call more or less aseptic spaces: classrooms and offices. These spaces, which are not places, work like machines that substitute concrete reality with other spaces ruled by criteria of “rationality”; in these spaces, knowledge is expert and abstract and

unauthorized voices are silenced. They are meaningful for planning, not in the present or in concrete places. They are serious, they do not joke, and they use an artificial jargon associated with abstract concepts of expert knowledge that come from outside and from above.

Education should be good for everyone. Obligatory school attendance for certain educational levels means that what each student receives during his or her schooling will be good for him or her. In this case, good means that the student will achieve the objectives that school and society feel are valuable and that are made visible in academic grades and qualifications for gaining access to other educational options. The figures, indicators, and data of official reports in the Spanish and European contexts give an implacable diagnosis: not all students benefit from the school system. Which students come out worst? What characteristics do they have? What are the processes, decisions, and relations according to which some students are excluded from the system and from academic success? How are cultural variables related to academic achievement?

We realize that it is not possible to achieve complete equality of opportunities; but it is possible to fight to increase, favor, and extend this equality. We understand that equal educational opportunities means guaranteeing educational opportunities that will allow students to obtain the best results, results which are determined not so much by equal resources (inputs) as by the power of these resources to achieve results (Coleman, 1990). What makes it possible to improve results is wanting to do it, putting all the available resources into serving this achievement for everyone. And making it a priority. Is this what is happening in our schools today?

As Coleman points out (1990: 29):

"The concept of equal opportunity refers to the relative influence of two sets of influences: those that are the same for everyone (what happens in school) and those that are different (influences at home, in the neighborhood, friends)... achieving greater equality of opportunity is determined by the intensity of the influences of the school in relation to diverging external influences."

Thus, we can distinguish between converging influences (school influences) and diverging influences (the neighborhood, the family, friends, the community). However, this distinction is not so clear when we contemplate how schools work and the processes that are generated in them to attend to

students' diversity. This diversity frequently serves as a justification to offer different resources and procedures to students who are classified, a priori, as different. What are the effects of this way of doing things? Who benefits and who does not? The school's responsibility moves from "increasing and distributing its quality" to "increasing the quality of its students' results" (Coleman, 1990: 29). Taking on this responsibility involves making notable changes in school practices.

If the educational system decides to place certain students in different classes, programs, or models because they belong to certain reference groups (nationality, language, religion, social class, etc.) or because they do not have a "strong enough foundation" or because they do not have "instrumental skills" or do not "reach minimum levels," it runs the risk of penalizing and stigmatizing students even before offering them an opportunity to learn (Grup La Font, 2006). A clear, persistent commitment is urgently needed. The student is not the one who must show herself "worthy" of an opportunity by achieving good results. The responsibility of achieving good results belongs to the educational institutions and to those of us who work in them.

Not shutting ourselves in or isolating ourselves in non-places, such as classrooms and offices, goes along with the requirement of not collaborating in creating or consolidating ethnocultural services. If we are all equal, we should all have direct access to public services without any intermediaries. Another requirement is to avoid rash judgments about families, communities, and their members. Prior hypotheses and beliefs close themselves off, they become unchangeable, and we no longer question their validity, even when reality shows us things that contradict these hypotheses again and again. The acknowledgment of our ignorance, prejudices, and stereotypes, and the need for permanent reflection become an inevitable condition in educational action.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING EDUCATORS

*The teacher's work with his students is the path by means of which all educational structures and policies have an effect or do not have an effect.* (Tharp, 2002)

The recommendations for training educators can be summarized in the following statements: a) an intercultural approach in education versus training in intercultural education, b) training in centers and networks versus

individual and group training, and c) reviewing beliefs and practices versus training in techniques and methodologies (Aguado, Gil, and Mata, 2007).

a) The common practice regarding introducing interculturality in teacher training, whether for teachers or social educators, is to include specific, elective courses or credits related to intercultural education in the curriculum. This practice indicates the status given to this approach, reflects the non-presence of interculturality in the centers, and promotes the maintenance of forms of attention to diversity that are far from this approach: specific education for specific groups, compensatory education, etc.

It is clear that teacher training in intercultural education does not involve taking on an intercultural approach that gives meaning, transversally, to the training program; the existing training is more an issue, in any case, of training teachers in intercultural education (Aguado and others, 2006a). It is necessary to stop talking to teachers about intercultural education and to start developing training whose contents and methodologies can stand up to an intercultural analysis.

b) Many of the training proposals are individual or group proposals, but they take place outside of the centers and of everyday practice. They are training courses given both in Teacher and Resource Centers and at Universities and other organizations. The courses given on intercultural subjects are highly diverse and, in the Spanish context, they are the main permanent training option for teachers interested in the subject. Without speaking unfavorably about the chance to update knowledge that these courses represent, we must point out that the main disadvantage of training carried out outside of the educational centers and programs themselves where educators are working is the decontextualization, the breach between the teachers' needs and concerns and the contents and methods employed in the training courses.

The basically individual way that the professionals carry out these courses does not make it easy for the learning and the reflection that take place to have any real repercussions in teachers' daily practice in their school centers. Considering that the intercultural approach involves exchange, cooperation, and the transformation of the school, it is hard for specific courses done individually outside of daily practice to contribute to profound changes in the structure and workings of the school system. Changes on this level require collaborative work.

One of the recurring demands regarding teacher training from an intercultural approach is that this training should contribute effectively to generate intercultural practices that affect what happens in centers and programs. Some of the strategies created to achieve this objective are related to developing training in the centers themselves and to cooperative work in a network by teachers, researchers, and other agents involved in education.

In-center training has a considerable transformational potential, because it happens in the context in question and it gets the school community involved. From the intercultural approach, this is considered to be a favorable circumstance. Going beyond specific centers, training through networks (institutional networks, like the ones pointed out earlier in the case of Almeria, promoted through cooperation projects such as Comenius or other less formal kinds of projects) is equally advantageous from the intercultural point of view: exchanging experiences, discussion amongst different professionals, knowledge of other ways of seeing similar realities, can all contribute enormously to revising one's own beliefs and practices, as well as updating knowledge, methods, materials, etc. Network training is, in itself, an intercultural experiment in collaboration which leads to enrichment and development on both the professional and personal levels.

c) Training in different techniques and methodologies is important, but it is only meaningful when it goes along with a review of the teacher's beliefs about his students, their capabilities, the way they learn and behave, as well as a review of how the teacher relates to the students and their families.

Today, achieving this is a challenge, for many reasons. One reason is that the institutions that train teachers are as conservative and slow to change in this sense as primary and secondary teaching centers are. The beliefs and models of practice in which teachers (and we ourselves, as teachers) are trained are as homogeneous as they were thirty years ago, or even more so. When changes in teacher training are considered, they tend to focus on training teachers in strategies that are considered to be "better" for attending to all of the students (e.g., cooperative learning, peer tutorials, using varied resources, etc.), but they are offered like recipes that are not even used for teacher training itself. From our point of view, no strategies or techniques are better than others. What is relevant is to resort to a variety of techniques and strategies, acknowledging the diversity of ways of learning and teaching that we, as teachers and students, have.



If we insist on the need to revise beliefs and practices, it is because we have confirmed (Aguado and others, 2007) that the majority of practicing teachers act, in their classrooms, as if they believe that their students' capacity to learn and their own capacity to teach were biologically determined. As Apple (1993: 64-65) says,

"...the commonsense practices of many educators are based on the best liberal intentions of "helping people"... the commonsense assumptions and practices about teaching and learning, about normal and abnormal behavior, about which knowledge is important and which is not, have "naturally" generated conditions and ways of interacting that have latent functions."

One of these functions is to keep people in their places, that is, to make it hard for the school to treat us according to what we can become and not just what we are or what our family represents. Becoming aware of and revising beliefs has to do with this and with questioning the routines that are simply accepted, just because this is how things have always been done (Gorski, 2000).

We think that reviewing beliefs, as the starting point and also as a recurring element in teaching practice, can be complemented with technical training and with methodological innovation, but this must be supported by a spiral plan of action-reflection-action. However, we do not think that training in methodologies, in closed guidelines, and in techniques is enough by itself, either to respond in a contextualized way to the educational needs presented by concrete educational scenarios or to consider that, with this training, we are training teachers in an intercultural approach.

Methodological training (cooperative learning, etc.) involves a restrictive view of interculturality as school practice, if the principles that guide teaching practice are not questioned and the practices themselves are not systematically reviewed in terms of equality/inequality and of the quality of learning for all the students. That is, we must ask ourselves if our educational work favors learning for all students or not.

Training based or focused on introducing teaching techniques, classroom work, or attention to specific groups (teaching Spanish, compensatory education), sees the teacher as a technician, someone who applies methods, not as a thinker, an intellectual, someone who designs and develops contextualized strategies based on her knowledge, knowledge acquired and rethought since her initial training, in her own practice, in exchanges with other teachers, etc.

In this sense, the teachers themselves insist on the training value of exchanging and discussing ideas. They also insist on the value of best practice repertoires, considered as complex narrations of effective and successful experiences in which the contextualization of these practices is underlined.

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# CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

CONCERNING THE CONDITIONS THAT MAKE INTERCULTURAL SOCIETY POSSIBLE

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If language is the material with which we construct “social reality,” we have to consider that when certain words are used repeatedly at certain times, it is not by chance but with the intention of shaping a different reality. This is, without a doubt, the case with the term “citizenship,” profusely quoted in recent years in relation to the profound revision that it is undergoing in thought and in sociopolitical practice.

The interest and current importance of citizenship are related to the need to explore the democratization of social processes, following the proposals of intercultural education. This text offers reasons for recovering the concept of citizenship, proposes a profound questioning of the traditional models of citizenship, explores some of the spheres where a new citizenship described as “active” and “intercultural” is reconstructed, and presents some issues regarding its possibilities as a factor of social transformation.



## WHY RESCUE THE CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP?

Inequality and exclusion have been defined by Boaventura Do Santos<sup>2</sup> as the “heavy issues” of our times, that is, the most serious problems that we face at this moment. We are talking about an exclusion that is no longer defined only in economic terms (corresponding to the traditional concept of poverty), but as an “*accumulation of factors and social deficits that are interrelated and feed into one another*” (Gómez Granell, 2008). Together with insufficient economic resources, unemployment, precarious jobs, educational inequalities, unequal access to the health system, deficits in social participation, and lack of power (Room, 1995; Estivill, 2003; Levitas, 2007), these are some of the factors that interweave and combine to give rise to what Miliband (2007) calls “deep exclusion.”

Deep exclusion is a phenomenon that is characteristic of our time. In the context of globalization and the exponential increase of what we call “wealth” (a concept closely linked to economic development), there is a paradoxical and alarming increase in social dualization: the number of disadvantaged people and the depth of their exclusion grows, while wealth is increasingly concentrated in a smaller number of individuals. This is all happening against the backdrop of social changes of a global scope that have an important impact not only on our societies’ composition but also on the way we relate to one another and on our own perception of reality. The social changes shape new *imaginaires* crosscut by different paradoxes: the virtual disappearance of distances, along with the reinforcement of borders, and the appearance of new scenarios and social actors together with the expansion of the number of groups excluded, particularly those groups stigmatized because they belong to certain ethnic groups or because of their cultural differences. García Canclini (2004:53) reminds us of the way differences provide an excuse for exclusion:

*We all know how often ethnic discrimination takes on forms that it shares with other conditions of vulnerability: the people are unemployed, poor, migrants without papers, homeless, unconnected. For millions of people, the problem is not how to maintain ‘alternative social fields,’ but how to get included, how to get connected, without*

<sup>2</sup> Inauguration conference presented in the framework of the International Conference “The Intercultural Dimension of Citizenship Education: The North and the South in a Postcolonial Europe,” organized by the Centro de Estudos Sociais (CES, University of Coimbra) and celebrated in Lisbon (Portugal) June 4-5, 2007.

*being run over by their difference or being condemned to inequality. To summarize, the problem is how to be citizens in an intercultural sense.*

Faced with the “heavy issues” of inequality and exclusion, Souza state that it is necessary to question what he calls the “available options,” that is, all of those “solutions” that we already know about, that we have already experienced, the options that have been used but have evidently failed, the ones that we cannot banish yet because we have somehow naturalized them, or have taken them on as the only possible solutions. It is necessary to question them and substitute them with other new solutions with the potential to transform things: intercultural education is proposed as a strong response to the failure of “the available options.”

One example of these exhausted “available options” are the political proposals and the institutional measures oriented toward “social integration.” Although no term is unambiguous or neutral, the term “integration” is laden with connotations that make us wonder how appropriate it is from an intercultural point of view. First, because it evidently gets confused, in common usage, with “assimilation.” We often hear that someone “is integrated” when we no longer perceive that person as “different.” This is a common way, as Carbonell (2005) points out, of confusing the part with the whole: by using the term “integration” to talk about assimilation, we are focusing the issue of exclusion on cultural aspects alone and facilitating an excuse to “forget” social, job, and political factors; this way, it is easier to identify “integration” with the submission of people who are “different.”

In addition, however, political-bureaucratic language uses the term “integration” to make proposals based on welfare as a strategy for social intervention. The measures, programs, and initiatives “to achieve integration” generally cover up paternalist types of action, based on the consideration of the individuals or groups at whom they are aimed as passive agents, lacking sufficient capability, initiative, or competence to “integrate” on their own. Welfare is based on asymmetrical relations – in which the majority group is the one that functions as an “actor”- and contributes to perpetuate these relations.

So “integration” is a weak response to our heavy issues. We must, therefore, seek alternatives, define new proposals for social intervention in the face of

deep exclusion. In contrast to assimilationism and welfare, strategies oriented to building a common space for citizenship, based on “accommodation” and the development of participation, are proposed.

By “accommodation” (Zapata, 2004), we mean the necessary transformation of social structures in order to adapt to changing circumstances. The changes in the composition of society, the new circumstances, expectations, interests, and needs must, in turn, provoke a structural change with the objective of “accommodating” to the new situation. Accommodation involves questioning and constantly revising everything that is established. It consists of defining global projects and avoiding improvised measures and problem-specific actions. The idea is to construct more flexible social structures that are capable of responding to new challenges and needs from principles of equity and distributional justice.

In order to promote participation, it is necessary to create conditions that allow individuals and different groups to intervene as social actors under real, not formal, conditions of equality; this means returning politics to the citizens, with politics meaning the construction of that which is shared, of a project for society in which the citizens are the actors, not the mere beneficiaries, receptors, and electors of pre-established projects that are foreign to them. What does participating mean? It means three things simultaneously: “being part of,” “having part of,” and “taking part in.” “Being part of” is belonging, being, and feeling yourself to be part of the community. “Having part of” is having equal access to resources and social goods. “Taking part in” is contributing actively to public life, to the construction of what is shared; it means having the capability, the will, and the power to act.

As a strong response to exclusion, intercultural education proposes a horizon that is a project for a future that has nothing to do with the reproduction of any preexisting system, but rather with the construction of a new space based on a social transformation. This transformation involves the development of processes based on real, effective, democratic participation. It is in the construction of these participatory processes that the recovery of the concept of citizenship becomes important, a citizenship that we will define as “active” and “intercultural” in order to differentiate it from the status of citizenship, strongly questioned for reasons that we will analyze below.

The relevance today and the interest of the concept of citizenship are related,

then, to the need to democratize the social processes that can lead us to an intercultural society. In this context, the condition of being a citizen appears as the only social condition that can, potentially, make us equal; beyond any kind of cultural, religious, or ethnic differences, the condition of citizenship should be a common characteristic of every human being, the condition that makes all diversity possible. Citizenship is not defined, however, as an *a priori* endowment of the human being, but as a historical conquest, just like the rights that are associated with it. It is, therefore, a concept that must continually be rebuilt and endowed with meaning and significance (Walzer, 1997).

## QUESTIONING CITIZENSHIP AS STATUS

We will begin by pointing out some of the limitations of the concept and practice of citizenship, related to the very history of its construction. Citizenship is institutionalized as such in legal, political, and social terms with the state formation process, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a process that was, in turn, linked to the development of the concept “nation.” National identities appear, forming along with the simultaneous creation of negative images of foreigners, of “the others.”

This citizenship is also framed in a patriarchal system which silences or excludes the voice of those who are different and, among them, women; so citizenship is also shaped as masculine citizenship, in addition to being nationalistic (Turner, 2001). Furthermore, this entire process is accompanied by the development and expansion of liberalism and capitalism. So the nation and the Market constitute the stage upon which citizenship is constructed.

In Sociology, it is Marshall (Marshall and Bottomore, 1998) who develops, in 1950, the concept of citizenship as status, associated to belonging as a member with full rights to a society located within the boundaries of a nation-state. His idea of citizenship is framed in the context of the configuration and progression of the system of rights. Thus, the status of citizen includes three elements that correspond to three historical moments in the development of rights:

- the *civil* element, regarding the rights that are called “civil” rights or individual freedoms: personal freedom and freedom of opinion and expression, of thought, religious freedom, the right to property and to establish contracts, and the right to justice

- the *political* element, which grants the right to participate in political power as an elector or as a member of the body invested with political authority
- the *social* element, which covers a set of rights that try to guarantee a minimum of material welfare for individuals; the “welfare state” is based on this element

The foundation of Marshall’s theory is the consideration of citizenship as a factor of social equality. His hypothesis is based on the idea that the combination of rights (civil, political, and social rights) associated with the acknowledgement of the status of citizenship makes it possible to reconcile the principles and values associated with liberal democracy with a redistribution of resources capable of compensating the negative effect of the capitalist market. Thus, the evolution of citizens’ rights in capitalist societies would end up leading toward equality.

Different authors have shown the weaknesses and inconsistencies of Marshall’s theory. Their main criticisms point out the ethnocentrism inherent in this idea of citizenship, which is dealt with as a uniform, unambiguous concept, despite being based on the analysis of a specific social context, on British society. Thus, it is only concerned with class differences and forgets ethnic and cultural differences. On the other hand, it does not account for the mechanisms and processes that can explain progress in rights and the subsequent expansion of citizenship.

Turner (2001) points out that citizenship as a status is not enough to guarantee effective rights. This conception of citizenship identifies it with a set of processes for assigning resources, obligations, and immunities within a political community. These processes can be inclusive insofar as they contribute to the redistribution of resources; however, they do, in fact, involve the construction of identities that are not only legal but that, based on real or imagined principles of solidarity, bring assumptions about ethnicity, religion, and even sexuality into play. In this sense, citizenship as status is constructed on differences, excluding “the others” from access to resources based on ethnic or national identity.

So the term “citizenship” drags a load of meanings along with it, meanings that link it to a physical territory and a specific political *imaginaire*, that of the nation-state, as well as the acknowledgement or denial of rights

depending on nationality. It is, thus, closely related to processes of inclusion and exclusion, drawing the frontier between those who are “inside” and those who are “outside.” And being outside means, among other things, not having rights, or having limited rights, and not having, or having limited access to, social resources and goods: “*the meaning, history, and content of the notion of citizenship as a way of acknowledging subjects in a society are marked by the predominance of capitalist markets and by the exclusion or invisibility of those who find their rights denied in order to guarantee the rights of others* (Junco, Pérez Orozco and del Río, 2006).

In short, the potential equalizing nature of status citizenship is limited solely (and not always) to a certain way of belonging and to a kind of concrete, specific participation. Status citizenship connects with a certain citizenship “model” that is defined according to criteria of homogeneity –we have already pointed out how what is different is avoided or excluded- and that, in the best of cases, is characterized by passivity and tutelage. In this market-state framework, we basically find three models of citizen: in the social sphere, there is the *client citizen*, in the economic sphere, the *consumer citizen*, and in the political sphere, the *voter citizen*. These models of citizenship respond to what we could call *output democracy*, based on the simple choice of products, packages, or predetermined proposals, that is, the opposite pole of *input democracy*.

Going beyond the concept of citizenship as status, as legal acknowledgement of rights and duties associated with the individual-state relationship, today there seems to be a tendency to define citizenship through social practices that are undergoing transformation. It is conceived as a dynamic, relational concept, a collective way of actively belonging to a community that involves the development of identities and feelings of belonging and involvement (Benedicto and Morán, 2003).

In this sense, Turner (2001) emphasizes the appearance in our contemporary societies of new spaces of participation and involvement, mainly through the rise in associationism and volunteer work. For this author, associations provide opportunities for social participation and for exercising active citizenship, and they fulfill important functions of democratic reinforcement, promoting experiences of cooperation and community involvement, and so acting as authentic schools of democracy. Luque (2003) also characterizes associationism and volunteer work as new ways of civic linking that fulfill

two kinds of functions: a “connective” function, generating social capital by means of cooperation and shared responsibility, and a “discursive” function, placing discourses that would otherwise be silenced out in the public sphere.

However, Turner himself does not fail to notice certain obstacles related to the associations’ chances for maintaining their independence and autonomy with respect to the state and the market. Cefai (2003) takes up the same idea; he adds nuances to the reasoning in favor of associationism as a space for developing citizenship, pointing out, among other things, that even if these are really spaces of reciprocity and solidarity, and even if they build networks for accumulating social capital, they also entail the risk of creating homogeneous groups and they can become pressure groups that are not always or not necessarily guided by democratic principles.

So it becomes necessary to point out the complexity and the multiple dimensions from which the concept of active and intercultural citizenship is being constructed. Different authors all emphasize this multidimensionality which, for Kiviniemi (1999), comprises three levels: a *formal* level, bounded by the framework of rights and obligations, an *ideological-cultural* level, related to the construction of citizen identities and the cultural criteria that give meaning to the community, and, finally, a *praxis* level, that includes the sociopolitical practices of government and of the citizens, within the framework of institutions and citizen cultures.

All of these dimensions intervene to question status citizenship, whose sphere becomes even more problematic if we pay attention to the new legal, political, and ethical considerations that arise from a globalized sociopolitical context.

From the *legal* point of view (Siim, 2000, Stevenson, 2001, and Dobson, 2003), there is a clear need to extend the subjects of citizenship to include individuals and groups that are totally or partially excluded from citizenship: minorities, immigrants, women, and young people. There is also an increasing demand regarding the development of the rights associated with citizenship which, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ONU, 1946), considers both the extension of their scope (making the slogan “all human rights are for everyone” reality) and the acknowledgement of new generations of rights (mainly ecological and cultural rights).

On the other hand, the intercultural approach requires us to reflect on the meaning of human rights’ claim to “universality.” Anything that is “universal”

claims to be valid everywhere and always; human rights, however, arise in a specific historical moment and in a concrete sociopolitical context. This is one of the reasons they have been questioned, accused of being a western product and of being used as instruments serving the interests of that part of the world.

Based precisely on their historical nature, Bobbio (1991) defines the rights as **relative**, that is, variable and dependent upon the specific moment they are formulated, and **consensual**, reflecting the agreements that human beings are capable of establishing at that moment. In this sense, they are liable to revision and extension, depending on new consensuses. The foundation of the rights does not, therefore, reside in their universality, but in their practical implementation. Historicizing them makes both their achievements and the limitations explicit, reveals their instrumentalization and their contradictions, and identifies the obstacles to their extension and protection. The issue of their chances to act as a common reference, as a starting point for discussion and consensus, remains open. In this sense, their effective implementation could constitute a growing process of universalization that includes creating the real conditions that would make it possible to exercise these rights, linked to the development of citizenship.

Status citizenship is also questioned from the *political* sphere, which points out the need to overcome the concept of citizen as a mere subject of rights and obligations. Active, intercultural citizenship means citizens’ recovery of political space (Mouffé, 1999) and involves redefining what constitutes the public sphere, as well as alternative participation models that go beyond representation. Deliberative democracy, processes of community development, participatory budgets, self-management, new spaces of political participation promoted by information and communications technologies (e-democracy)... These are some of the stages upon which active citizenship is being rebuilt.

Finally, the *eco-critical* dimension of citizenship requires us to construct new models of co-existence that are capable of responding to the needs presented by the diversity that characterizes a global society. In this sense, it is necessary to question the instrumental, contractual conception of social relations fostered by neoliberalism. Interculturality bets on communication and positive exchange among individuals and different groups. It starts out by acknowledging the complexity of social reality, and accepting that all relationships are always located in a sphere with some uncertainty and ambiguity; the intercultural approach then affirms the possibility of dialogue

and communication, promotes participation and reciprocity, and defends the substitution of ethnocentrism by cultural relativism and by valuing conflict as a source of learning and a motor of social transformation.

Cultural relativism is a position, a strategy, a method that helps us to analyze cultural processes from a critical and self-critical position. It rests on the conviction that there are no universal truths, which does not in any way imply the assumption that “anything goes.” A quote from Munévar (1998) can help to clarify what we want to say:

Normally, the opposition to relativism is based on a very serious logical error: by denying the existence of an absolute and universal truth, the relativist commits to accepting the notion that all points of view are equally valid. This logical error has been accepted by the large majority of philosophers since Plato committed it. But the error is this: the denial of the existence of absolute truth does not imply that all points of view are equally valid. It only implies that several points of view can be equally valid.

The relativist posture involves both an effort to understand what is foreign to us and a revision of our own convictions. Politically, it is related to the concept of axiological or valorative pluralism (García Guitián, 2003), which reflects on the ethical consequences of acknowledging diversity. Political pluralism is already acknowledged in the liberal tradition; however, the historical attitude of liberalism regarding pluralism, especially with reference to diversity, has been somewhat ambiguous and can be better defined as a process of progressively expanding “tolerance,” understood first in a negative way, as a deliberate decision to not interfere, and later in a positive way, valuing a certain “reasonable” degree of diversity as an indispensable condition for the exercise of freedom, which would otherwise lack a space for action.

Valorative pluralism, in contrast, is defined as a sociopolitical theory that involves not only accepting but also valuing differences. It confirms the coexistence of a plurality of legitimate valorative positions<sup>3</sup> characterized by their incommensurability: they cannot be compared because there is no shared standard that is the reference for the comparison. The conflict

<sup>3</sup> It is a limited, not infinite, plurality. The position of valorative pluralism is as far from the moral universalism that tries to create a hierarchy of principles and values, as it is from the absolute relativism that denies the possibility of deciding rationally. Thus, the existence of several valid points of view is recognized, distancing it both from the affirmation of absolute values and from the thesis that states that all points of view are equally valid.

between the positions, however, cannot be solved by appealing to decisionism: valorative pluralism does not give up moral and political rationality, but rather tries to accept its limitations and investigate its conditions of validity. Doing the opposite would mean coming dangerously near to the phantom of absolute relativism, to values and countervalues coexisting in equality, and to the resulting imposition of the law of the strongest, with no chance for an intersubjectively valid ethical appeal to contrast the different positions. The conflict between valorative positions can and should be rationally founded, even though it must admit that rationality and moral judgment can only legitimize political order in an incomplete way. It is a matter of seeking the most appropriate balance in each case between valorative principles such as freedom, equality, and justice, and accepting that giving preeminence to some ends up diminishing others. It becomes necessary to reason and argue because “*when values clash, there will always be some loss*” (García Guitián, 2003:119).

The negative consideration of conflict, understood as the high point of a struggle between contrary interests that will result in the prevalence of some interests over others, is substituted, from the intercultural approach, with a positive vision of conflict as an opportunity for change and improvement, which requires us to adopt a new attitude oriented toward seeking solutions that start out from the acknowledgement of the expectations, interests, and needs of all the people and groups involved and reach agreements based on achieving maximum benefits for all.

## ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AS A CONDITION THAT MAKES AN INTERCULTURAL SOCIETY POSSIBLE

A new concept of citizenship that goes beyond the mere issue of status, of holding rights and responsibilities, and of national frontiers, is arising from different social groups. It is an emerging citizenship, a citizenship under construction that is being defined by a key dimension: “active” participation. This citizenship puts new principles, actions, and ways of relating and interrelating with others based on the proposals of intercultural education into play.

Interculturality means a way of analyzing cultural diversity starting out from processes and interactions, according to a logic of complexity, of variation (Abdallah-Preteille, 2001). It would be a “generative science,” in the sense

that the individual is not a mere product of his culture, but rather builds it and develops it using strategies adopted according to the circumstances and needs, starting out from a situation marked by plurality and by multiple references. Cultural differences are not data but dynamic relations between two entities that reciprocally endow one another with meaning. The relations are what justify the cultural characteristics that are attributed, the characteristics do not define the relations. Any *a priori* definition of groups, whatever the criterion of definition may be, engenders a discrimination process that is contrary to the desired effect. From the intercultural approach, interaction is the main element. What is important is the Other, not her culture. We cannot know others without communicating with them, without entering into relationships with them, without allowing them to express themselves as subjects.

On the sociopolitical level, the basis of democratic society can only be found in a consensus built on a plurality of objectives and points of view. It is necessary to construct shared spaces and to develop social links. The logic of the contract cannot replace social adhesion to a set of values that can only be expressed in a project (Abdallah-Preteille, 2001). The existence of an ethical deficit that results in a hypertrophy of legality to the detriment of sociality is also pointed out.

In this sense, education has a fundamental role to play both in the construction and constant revision of the meaning of citizenship and in its extension. We are referring to education in a broad sense, not only to the institutional educational system. We will speak of education as a constant learning process for all human beings throughout their lives. A process that takes place permanently, in a more or less intentional and planned way, or spontaneously, and that happens in the social sphere, through multiple relations and interactions that develop continually. This way we understand that any interaction is a learning situation, where knowledge and “values” are exchanged explicitly or implicitly. Education can contribute to social transformation if it is a dynamic process that goes beyond school learning and is linked to social and political reality (Bartolomé, 2002). Learning involves active participation in social communities, it means being included and participating not only in cultural products, but also in the social processes that create culture. Aguado (2002) points out that the traditional concept of citizenship has excluded the idea of culture, contributing to emphasize social exclusion. In this sense, cultural diversity should never be used as a pretext or justification for inequality.

The objectives of education, therefore, must be presented in terms of constructing and developing an intercultural citizenship, from the perspective of diversity. This idea of active, intercultural citizenship has to do with the development of certain skills, among other, a critical conscience, a will to ask difficult questions, confidence that changes can be brought about by action, and confidence in the collective capability to induce these changes by standing up to power structures (Schugurensky, 2005).

Skills that help to promote not only a new perception but also a deep comprehension of cultural differences are necessary. And understanding, as Abdallah-Preteille (2001) reminds us, is not only accumulating knowledge but making changes, movement. In this context, this means adopting a certain ethic of diversity that is situated in a symmetrical relationship among people, not in action in relation to the other. Any lack of symmetry in the relationship turns some people into actors and others into agents and involves a symbolic or real power relation that makes it impossible to progress toward an intercultural society.

## WHAT ANSWERS DOES INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION OFFER TO THE CHALLENGE OF DEEP EXCLUSION?

The contemporary world emphasizes velocity and acceleration, intense experiences and immediate results. In contrast, intercultural education is related to a slow, constant learning process, based on reflection, on becoming aware, and on the critical review of our ideas and our practices (Martinelli, 2000).

Most of the education that young people receive today gives priority to the answers and provides pre-developed concepts and simple explanatory patterns. The communications media and publicity also work with simplifications, strong stereotypes, and preconceptions. Intercultural education, on the contrary, deals with diversity and difference, pluralism and complexity. Open questions are considered, because the point, in the end, is reflection and change.

As citizens, we feel that we are powerless in public life. Public political debates tend to simplify the facts and they rarely inquire into the causes. It is difficult

to identify political responsibilities and opportunities to participate in the complex network of present-day realities. Intercultural education is a matter of democracy and citizenship, and it involves taking a stand against exclusion, domination, and their support mechanisms.

In short, intercultural education promotes educational and social transformation in the direction of constructing an active citizenship and an intercultural society, offering a “strong option” for the “heavy issues” presented.

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## INTERCULTURAL DISCOURSE FACED WITH THE PARADIGM OF DIVERSITY <sup>4</sup>

GUNTHER DIETZ <sup>5</sup>

LAURA SELENE MATEOS CORTÉS <sup>6</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, we have seen a spectacular increase in issues related to the multicultural nature of societies that have, until now, been considered “monocultural.” With this and other equivalent expressions, very different kinds of reflections and research by professionals from different fields, but especially from the social sciences, have begun to appear. Some hold that this new area of study is closely related to the resurgence and redefinition of indigenous ethnic identities in the context of the so-called Latin American “post-indigenism.” Others insist that the new migratory flows from the south to the

<sup>4</sup> Authorized reprint of the text published in Santiago Bastos (ed.): *Multiculturalismo y futuro en Guatemala*, pp. 23-54. Guatemala: FLACSO – OXFAM.

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north are what have forced us to reconsider more than a few of the aspects that shape our social and cultural life from quite diverse disciplinary spheres: law, history, sociology, genetics, anthropology, and pedagogy.

In one way or another, they all contribute to the national, international, and increasingly transnational debate about multiculturalism and interculturality. Because of this, the resulting “intercultural discourse” is not homogeneous. It is characterized by its different continental, national, and regional “accents” of origin, as well as by the disciplinary biases of its main characters. As such, it constitutes an emerging transdisciplinary terrain that cuts across each and every one of the disciplines that are contributing to this debate. We feel that this is one of the great issues around which the most virulent social, cultural, and educational disputes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will revolve.

Because of this, and because we are attracted by the growing confluence of studies about ethnic identities, migratory dynamics, and cultural diversity, in this chapter we propose to analyze intercultural discourse as a transnational phenomenon that ties together, fertilizes, and hybridizes different disciplinary and national traditions. Starting out with a brief balance sheet of the conceptual precedents that produce intercultural discourse, we will analyze, first of all, the close relationship that so-called “intercultural education” maintains, in each case, with the respective national identity policies and the identity structuring of the institutions that promote it. Since these structures underlie the implementation, adoption, and/or adaptation of the different “intercultural” educational models, this national and institutional background is crucially important in order to be able to evaluate the “translatability” of the educational discourses and models from one context to another. Secondly, we will use an empirical case study, from the Veracruz context, to analyze how intercultural discourse migrates among different academic and educational actors and certain political frameworks, and the impact that this “transnational discourse migration” has on the way supposedly intercultural educational models are put into practice.

## PRECEDENTS AND ORIGINS OF INTERCULTURAL DISCOURSE

Cultural diversity, conventionally understood to be a product of the presence of ethnic and/or cultural minorities or of the establishment of new migrant communities at the heart of “classic” nation-states of a European stamp, is

studied in school and extra-curricular contexts, in situations of discrimination that reflect xenophobia and racism in the different spheres of multiculturalized societies. These studies reflect the confluence of different academic currents that indicate deep transformations in the very business of the social sciences (Dietz 2003) along these lines:

- “Ethnic Studies,” which appear in the Anglo-Saxon context, attempt to overcome their initial phase of self-isolation as niches where the members of the minority study themselves (Gilroy 1992, Gutierrez 1994).
- Under the influence of critical theory (School of Frankfurt), “Cultural Studies” recover theoretical approaches regarding the conflicts that exist in contemporary societies, generating a new intercultural dimension (Honneth 1997).
- Within the “classic” disciplines of the social sciences and of education, studying cultural diversity and its relationship to the relations between minorities and majorities as well as between migrants and non-migrants promotes an interdisciplinary approach to “interculturality” (Hart 1999, Dietz 2007).
- New subdisciplines such as intercultural pedagogy, psychology, linguistics, and philosophy tend to develop a transdisciplinary research dynamic that allows them to bring their respective “objects” of study closer (Nicklas 1998).
- Finally, disciplines that traditionally have little affinity to the subject of cultural diversity, such as economy and business science, as well as political science, discover “interculturality” when they internationalize their sphere of study (Hofstede 1984).

In this way, the fledgling “Intercultural Studies” reflect multiculturalism’s success in its strategy of visualizing cultural diversity in any sphere of contemporary societies and turning it into an issue. The polyphonic and multifaceted nature of the phenomena that are classified as multicultural or intercultural make any attempt to cover them from a monodisciplinary perspective impossible. However, there is no unified academic field regarding studies of diversity and interculturality (yet); rather, the field continues to reflect its close interrelationship with the institutional and national structures that have given rise to it in each case.

## THE NATIONALITARY STRUCTURES UNDERLYING INTERCULTURAL DISCOURSE

As we have argued in greater detail elsewhere (Dietz 2003), so-called “intercultural education,” the aim of “interculturalizing” both the curriculum and school praxis in western societies, is not a mere adaptation of the “*de facto* multiculturalization” of these societies, produced by migratory movements, as classic authors postulated at the time (Glazer and Moynihan 1963). Multiculturalism is part of a broader, deeper process of redefining and reimagining the European-type nation-state as well as the articulated relations between the state and contemporary societies. While it originally arose at the heart of the societies that define themselves as “immigration countries,” in most of North America, Oceania, and Europe, the original multicultural discourse has become the main ideological basis of present-day intercultural education, understood as a differential approach to the education of allochthonous, immigrated minorities (Aguado Odina 2003, Giménez Romero 2003). However, as the century-old experience of the tradition of indigenism in the Latin American postcolonial context shows, and under non-multicultural nationalist ideological premises, the differential educational policies are meant for autochthonous indigenous minorities, not allochthonous minorities (Oehmichen Bazán 1999, Dietz 2005).

This paradoxical similarity of opposite approaches refers us to the need to analyze the different intercultural, multicultural, bilingual, and/or indigenist educational responses from a broader view than the pedagogical one: the scaffolding of normative, conceptual, and empirical relationships that are established between “interculturality” and “education” is not the exclusive domain of pedagogical work but rather requires a contrastive, interdisciplinary analysis. This is why we advocate an anthropological-pedagogical approach that covers intergroup and intercultural structures and processes of the constitution, differentiation, and integration of contemporary societies. In order to undertake this task, it is necessary to start out with the “identity politics” that characterize the actors who make up these supposedly “post-national” (Habermas 1998) societies and states and their respective educational systems.

At present, the debate, above all the Anglo-Saxon debate, raises the need to “multiculturalize” the educational systems by means of “affirmative action” and “positive discrimination” mechanisms that will “empower” certain ethnic

minorities, both autochthonous and allochthonous, in their processes of identification, ethnogenesis, and “emancipation” (Giroux 1994, McLaren 1997). In the continental European space, on the contrary, it seems urgent to develop intercultural education based not on the identity needs of the minorities but on the manifest incapability of the majority societies to face the new challenges of students’ heterogeneity, of growing sociocultural complexity, and, in short, of diversity as a characteristic of future European societies (Gogolin 1997, Verlot 2001).

In this sense, while there is a tendency toward an empowering education aimed at the minorities in the United States and the United Kingdom, continental Europe is opting for an education that cuts across the promotion of intercultural skills both for excluded minorities and, above all, for the excluding majorities. In Latin America and, specifically, in Mexico, on the other hand, intercultural education appears as its own particular discourse in a post-indigenist phase that is redefining the relations between the state and the indigenous peoples (Medina Melgarejo 2007). This new “intercultural and bilingual education” (Schmelkes 2003) has arisen with the desire to overcome both the political and pedagogical limitations of the previous indigenous bilingual and bicultural education, but it maintains a strong bias toward the preferential treatment of ethnic-indigenous issues. Thus, the old “Indian problem” continues to shape the nucleus of the identity concerns of the Latin American nation-state; this is even more the case under the impact of the new indigenous movements and their demands for autonomy.

Considering this emerging theoretical and programmatic watershed, it has become essential to critically “pick apart” the discourses about multiculturalism and interculturality, as well as the relationship that exists between these discourses and their respective practices, as they materialize in supposedly intercultural education. Given the political and pedagogical relevance of multiculturalism, there is an endless number of publications, from theoretical-philosophical treatises and anthologies, mainly by Anglo-Saxon authors, to concrete empirical proposals.<sup>7</sup> Apart from presenting the theory and practice of interculturality in the different educational (Glenn and deJong 1996) or political systems (Todd 1996, Favell 1998), we advocate a conceptual analysis of this “interculturalization” that is both diachronic and synchronic.

<sup>7</sup> See the exhaustive bibliographic review in Dietz (2003).

The differential treatment –whether assimilating, integrating, segregating, etc.- provided by officialized education systems and aimed at certain supposedly minority groups is an integral part of the nation-state’s “identity policies.” The perception of otherness is, simultaneously, the product of and the producer of identity. This close interrelationship between the conception of “own” and “foreign” is not only evident in the classic 19<sup>th</sup> century pedagogies of “nationalizing nationalism” (Brubaker 1996). The new pedagogies of multiculturalism –in both orthodox and heterodox aspects- must also be analyzed not as simple “responses” to the classroom’s internal diversification, but as contemporary expressions of the western identity project.

This is the reason that the origin of both the discourse and the practice of school interculturalization is to be found in multiculturalism, that precarious and ever-provisional discursive set that aims to integrate the broad range of new anti-establishment social movements into the common political-societal horizon (Dietz 2007). And precisely because it comes from the new mid-level groups, from the emerging intellectual elites of the ethnic, cultural, gender, or sexual minorities, its first and main objective and adversary is the nation-state’s established institutionality. The strategic step for academia and for the school, on one hand, weakens the counter-dominant rigor of its demands, while it reinforces its institutional impact and extends its margin of professional maneuvering, on the other hand.

From the start of this process of programmatic institutionalization, multiculturalist movements have generated their own academic theorization. For the Anglo-Saxon context, above all, the dialectic and increasingly contradictory relationship between the praxis of multiculturalism and its conceptual self-analysis has been illustrated by the two interdisciplinary fields mentioned above: on one hand, the evolution of so-called ethnic studies (self-study practiced by the ethnic-cultural minorities themselves with the purpose of “empowerment”) and, on the other hand, the appearance of cultural studies, understood as a critical heterodoxical “culturalization” of the reigning academic discourses in the whole of western social sciences and humanities. It is through this proposal of academic and political rupture, as well as its desire to overcome the old frontiers –not only the civilizing ones but also the disciplinary ones- that multiculturalism definitively takes root at the heart of pedagogy. Institutionalized and academicized throughout this process, the originally vindicating discourse reappears in the eighties and the nineties as

a novel contribution to the management of educational diversity. The alleged “school problems” of certain minority groups are now re-interpreted as expressions of cultural and/or ethnic diversity. The multicultural interpretation of educational problems thus indicates a strong culturalist bias, which refers to the need to readdress and reformulate what we understand, through anthropology, as culture and identity.

Therefore, as a theoretical starting point, we propose and draw up an “anthropology of interculturality” –an anthropological model based on the classic concepts of culture and ethnicity for analyzing the contemporary phenomena of educational interculturalization (Dietz 2003, Mateos Cortés 2007). In order to do this, we hold that it will only be possible to conceptually and empirically distinguish between inter-cultural and intra-cultural phenomena from a contrastive and mutually linked definition of culture and ethnicity. Thanks to the synchronic distinction between customary praxis and identity discourse (Bourdieu 1991), as well as its diachronic de-construction as a culturally hybrid product of continuous, linked processes of ethnogenesis and intracultural routinizing, we can manage to analyze the attention-getting coincidences and similarities that dominant nationalisms and anti-establishment ethnicities express on the structural level.

As Dietz (2003) shows in the case of both nationalist and multiculturalist pedagogies, both discourses are identity policies that resort to strategies of temporalization, territorialization, and substantialization (Alonso 1994, Smith 1997) in order to install, maintain, and legitimize frontiers between “them” and “us.” In our conclusions from a more extensive comparative-type analysis of the similarities between the supranational, subnational, and transnational challenges that the European-style nation-state is facing at present, we hold that these structural coincidences are not shared only by the state’s nationalizing nationalism and the “grass-roots” anti-establishment ethnicities. The very frequent political and academic distinction between aboriginal ethnogenesis phenomena, on one hand –which produce ethnic-regionalist or nationalist movements- and migrant ethnogenesis phenomena, on the other hand –which constitute diasporas and transnational communities- once again reproduces the biased distinction between “us” and “the others.” It thus ignores the evident similarities that both types of ethnogenesis share: they are both movements of collective identification that appropriate the space, time, and substance of their respective “imagined communities” (Anderson

1988) and turn their own habitual cultural practice and that of others into a network of meanings and markers of identity and otherness (Medina Melgar-ejo 2007).

## THE TRANSNATIONAL DISCURSIVE MIGRATION OF "INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION"

This structural homology between dominant nationalism, on one hand, and originally anti-establishment multiculturalism, on the other, not only makes it possible for the discourse on "intercultural education," once it has been institutionalized and academicized, to "migrate" from the sphere of social demands to the sphere of academic theorization and pedagogical "intervention." Programmatic interculturality also becomes "exportable" to other academic and educational contexts through increasingly transnational networks.

In order to understand a discourse, we must analyze the sociocultural conditions and functions in which it is generated, because the people who emit this discourse can assign different meanings to the terms used. This is why we must carry out reflexive, critical work in order to talk about interculturality, because it is a term that is constructed historically and contextually (Fornet-Betancourt 2004). The term is used in educational programs, practices, and policies, and its polysemic nature has made it "a catch-all for fashionable political discourses" (Cavalcanti-Schiel 2007). Depending on the context and the institutional interests of each of the actors involved, the range of what is defined as intercultural hardly seems to have any limits: "Thus, the polysemy of interculturality is installed, making it a field of political forces in which the different actors –whether strategic allies or antagonistic protagonists– find themselves constructing their meanings and practices" (Coronado Malagón 2006:215).

Reflecting this intrinsic contextualization of intercultural discourse, we will undertake a process of analysis that will allow us to gather, classify, and understand both the divergences and the confluences of intercultural education. We will achieve this by creating a dialogue between both the theoretical and the practical dimensions, both the prescriptive and the descriptive dimensions of intercultural discourse – creating this dialogue between both dimensions will make it possible to discover intercultural discourse's discursive grammar.

<b>Factic level</b> or the facts = what there really is	<i>Multiculturality</i> Cultural, linguistic, religious diversity	<i>Interculturality</i> Interethnic, interlinguistic, interreligious relations
<b>Normative level</b> or sociopolitical and ethical proposals = what ought to be	<i>Multiculturalism</i> Acknowledgement of difference 1. Principle of equality 2. Principle of difference	<i>Interculturalism</i> Coexistence in diversity 1. Principle of equality 2. Principle of difference 3. Principle of positive interaction
	<b>Type 1</b>	<b>Type 2</b>
	 <b>Cultural pluralism</b>	

Table 1: Pluralism, multiculturalism, and interculturality <sup>8</sup>

To shed light on the way certain actors appropriate intercultural discourse and "import" it and apply it to their respective academic, political, and/or pedagogical contexts, we will first resort to two conceptual distinctions proposed by Giménez Romero (2003). It is necessary, first, to distinguish between "the factual level or the facts" and the "normative level or the sociopolitical and ethical proposals," in order to conceptually separate the descriptive or analytic discourses from the interculturality or multiculturalism of the propositional or ideological discourses about multiculturalism or interculturalism. Similarly, in second place, we can distinguish between models of diversity management based on the acknowledgement of difference and models that emphasize interaction between the members of the different groups that make up a certain society. [Table 1](#) illustrates the concatenation of both axes of conceptual distinctions.

In the nineties, intercultural and/or multicultural discourses begin to migrate not only between their original Anglo-Saxon (and "multiculturalist"-oriented, Modood 2007) contexts and the continental European contexts (with their "interculturalist" tendencies, Abdallah-Preteille 2001), but also between these contexts and new contexts of "discursive importation" –both in the case

<sup>8</sup> Taken from Giménez Romero (2003).

of post-indigenist Latin America (López and Küper 2000) and in the case of southern Europe, which was suddenly challenged by new migrations from outside of Europe and outside of the European Economic Community (García Castaño and Granados Martínez 1999).

Thus, the emerging field of Intercultural Studies has been constituted transnationally, right from its origins. Because it continuously swings between multicultural and intercultural notions, as well as between descriptive and prescriptive uses, what is meant by intercultural education and what the institutions and the actors themselves call “intercultural” is often confused from a meta-empirical point of view. There is a crossover and exchange of meanings in which the participants in the discourse are continually changing from one level of comprehension to another. Thus, the interests and objectives of the meaning that interculturality acquires in education not only end up being different, but contradictory and antagonistic (Coronado Malagón 2006).

In addition, there is the specificity of the societal context from which the minorities to be served are “made problematic”: while in some cases the work is done from an intercultural education tradition with a discursive framework of post-indigenism or neo-indigenism and, thus, an indigenous subject (Schmelkes 2003), in others, the prototype-minorities that are the reference for diversified educational policies have migrant origins, either recent, as in the case of contemporary immigrants (Franzé Mudano and Mijares Molina 1999), or ancestral, as in the case of the gypsy collectivity (San Román 1997).

Faced with this growing interrelation and hybridization of concepts, discourses, and programs, transnational discursive migration has become its own object of study: how do the meanings, translations, adaptations, and/or distortions of the educational programs and models change when they leave a “migrantological” context and enter into a new “indigenist or post-indigenous” framework? What underlying identity policies respond to the adoption of a multiculturalist discourse that acknowledges ethnic differences, and what implications does incorporating an interactionist, anti-essentialist, cross-cutting discourse of diversity have? We must emphasize the usefulness of studying transnational discursive migration due to the role that discourse plays in constructing reality and its resulting potential for transforming this reality.

The theoretical perspective that we are proposing for studying discursive transnational migration combines elements and contributions from post-

Fordist and postmodern migration theories (Arango 2003, Ribas Mateos 2004) and transnational and cultural transferral theory (Charle 2006), as well as network analysis (Lomnitz 1994). We are moving the main contemporary migration theories –neoclassic theory, dual job market theory, and global system theory- to the discursive level in order to explain how actors acquire and transfer knowledge, concepts, and discursive elements. In contrast to modern and “Fordist” migration theories, which identified expulsion and attraction factors for migrants (and for discourse, in our case), a critical and comparative analysis of discourse about interculturality reveals that it is not an issue of mere “exports” and “imports” of discourse, but of new transnational and intercultural patterns for constructing discourse and concomitant knowledge (García Canclini 2004).

Because of this, we complement theorization on migrations with some categories from the study of knowledge transfer. In order to analyze transnational intellectual networks, Charle (2006) distinguishes among:

- “initial cultural divergence” among the contexts of diffusion that are involved
- the “internal cultural model” of the person who adopts and appropriates an exogenous discourse
- the “intermediaries” who intervene in the process of intercultural transferral and translation of discourse
- as well as, finally, the “linguistic screen” from which the transferred, translated, and appropriated discourse is finally incorporated

These categories allow us to understand the relations that often arise between the intellectual transfer that certain intermediaries carry out and the cultural resistance that some actors articulate, either because they belong to a different aspect of their tradition of knowledge or because they need to explore and reformulate this transfer relation from within the same aspect or tradition of knowledge.

Network analysis, as a final step, helps us to understand how the variety of participating actors, located in institutions, agencies, NGOs, and movements that represent often quite heterogeneous interests regarding intercultural education, connect with one another in order to exchange ideas, concepts, definitions, theories, and information (Lomnitz 1994). This kind of analysis allows us to capture the complex relationships and interaction that are woven

around both the actor-institution relationship and the actor-actor relationship in the process of signifying or resignifying interculturality.

## A VERACRUZ CASE STUDY: DISCURSIVE MIGRATIONS AMONG ACADEMIC AND EDUCATIONAL ACTORS

In the area of educational interculturality, transnational discursive migration has generated endless national, international, and multilateral documents, such as the 2001-2006 National Education Program, the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien (1990), the educational declarations and programs formulated by the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF, as well as certain international cooperation axis documents (López and Küper 2000). All of these documents, which express an important globalized conceptual confluence, acknowledge cultural diversity, seek to offer attention to groups that exist in conditions of vulnerability, or try to cover the educational needs of minorities or indigenous peoples through the so-called bilingual-intercultural approach. “Culturally pertinent” curricula, containing intercultural contents that are open to diversity, are increasingly promoted.

Regarding this proliferation of supposedly similar discourses, what meaning does intercultural education have in these different contexts? How do the local actors who are involved as academic, political, or pedagogical intermediaries signify or resignify this educational proposal? In short, what happens with discourse on interculturality when it migrates? In order to begin to address these questions through a regional case study, we propose to:

- (a) show and identify the different ways of conceiving intercultural education in both political and academic aspects
- (b) point out the factors that cause each actor to define intercultural education in a different way, as well as clarify the kind of interculturality under discussion in the different “discursive fields” (Télez Galván 2000)
- (c) discover whether there are contradictions among the discursive practices of the people who make up the different discursive fields

The case study, carried out from an interpretative-qualitative approach, based mainly on the ethnographic method (Hammersley and Atkinson 2001),

allows us to register, describe, and reconstruct the discourse of the different actors. The study was carried out with two groups of actors belonging to the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural (UVI) and to the Secretariat of Education in Veracruz (SEV), respectively. The first group is made up of instructors, “ideologues,” and course planners and people with degrees in cultural diversity, while the second group is composed of Technical Pedagogical Advisors (Asesores Técnicos Pedagógicos, ATPs) who belong to the indigenous education system and administrative staff from the Direction of Indigenous Education, normalist teachers, “ideologues,” and state employees of the SEV itself.

Among the general discursive characteristics that are analyzed in each of the groups in question, the fact that the first group emphasizes its work in training, research, and diffusion in higher level intercultural education should be pointed out. The second group, on the other hand, highlights promoting an education that satisfies equity and the basic learning needs of indigenous children, for which it adopts a “bilingual intercultural approach” at the level of basic and upper-level education.

The first group of actors and intermediaries is made up of people located in urban areas who do not speak indigenous languages and who have different training itineraries as anthropologists, pedagogues, philosophers, etc., as well as different academic degrees. In the second group, there are people who speak an indigenous language and people who do not, people who live in indigenous communities and people who live in urban areas; in this group, a normalist-type training predominates, complemented in most cases with degrees in primary education or in social anthropology.

The context of the actors studied is strongly influenced by the “tradition” of knowledge that they belong to and their training itineraries. We were interested in inquiring into the way intercultural education is managed in their institutions and their definition of it. However, to make the research operative, we started out with the definition that they themselves have forged of intercultural education, which does not mean that we have forgotten the endogenous and exogenous influences they have brought with them.

The data gathered through open and biographical-narrative ethnographic interviews was organized and categorized by means of a content analysis based on cluster technology (Bermúdez Chaves 1986), beginning with the assumption that discourse is made up of main propositions and secondary proposi-

tions which are inserted in a reference nucleus. Following this methodological proposal, the main nuclei of reference and their respective propositions were located and the number of propositions was reduced in order to reconstruct the discourse of the actor in question and to interpret its specific contents.

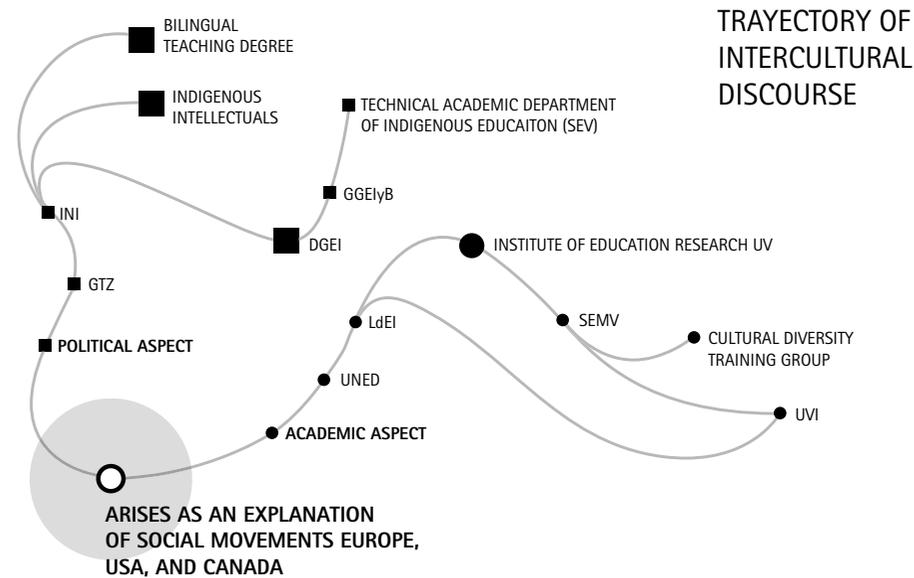


Figure 2: Trajectory of intercultural discourse <sup>9</sup>

Figure 2, the result of this analysis of the discursive networks involved, represents the different actors who intervene in this case study. We identified two clearly delimited aspects within the trajectory of intercultural discourse: one political aspect, within which different government institutions and NGOs stand out, and another academic aspect, in which teaching movements, institutions, and other educational actors are to be found. Within each of these aspects, actions in favor of intercultural education are carried out. A notion of interculturality that is constructed or delimited by the interests of the actors themselves underlies both; interculturality appears as a category that owes its existence to the domination of relationships that are often articulated between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples, as a discursive category constructed by the “whites” (Cavalcanti-Schiel 2007) to “explain” or “integrate indigenous peoples” (interview of ATP 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Taken from Mateos Cortés (2007).

POLITICAL ASPECT

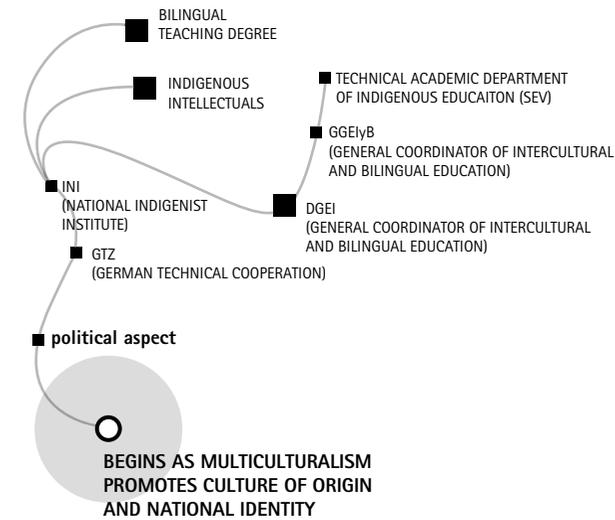


Figure 3: Political aspect of intercultural discourse <sup>10</sup>

The political aspect of the discursive migration regarding interculturality is summarized in Figure 3. This aspect is characterized by having the indigenist paradigm as its crucial precedent, and so it continues to promote learning Spanish and literacy (interview with an instructor in 2006). It uses a discourse that folklorizes culture and that stereotypes and emphasizes differences (interview with an instructor in 2006). As a result, its discourse on interculturality has essentialist tints – in the end, interculturality is made equivalent to and identified with ethnic groups or indigenous languages. Some actors see intercultural discourse as a “fashion,” as something external that promotes pedagogical innovation (interview with a normalist teacher in 2007), and that ends up questioning the traditional roles of teacher and student, fomenting community participation in training individuals (interview with state employee in SEV in 2007). In this aspect, interculturality shows itself to be a compensatory approach that, deep down, continues to give priority to integrating indigenous people into national culture (interview with a normalist teacher in 2007).

The academic aspect (Figure 4), on the other hand, attempts to distance itself from the indigenous approach, which it rejects as “paternalistic” and “ethno-

<sup>10</sup> Taken from Mateos Cortés (2007).

cidal” (interview with an ideologue in 2007). It promotes acknowledging that identities, whether they are indigenous or non-indigenous, are plural and heterogeneous. Here, interculturality is articulated by means of a discourse constructed in a multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary way, which ends up defining intercultural education in a transversal, constructivist, and contextualist way. This discourse is often closely related to alternative pedagogical practices and strategies (Salvador Trujillo 2003, Ramírez López 2007). Within this aspect, the capacity to recognize, reciprocally, the different diversities that exist is explicitly promoted, emphasizing that which is hybrid and interactive.

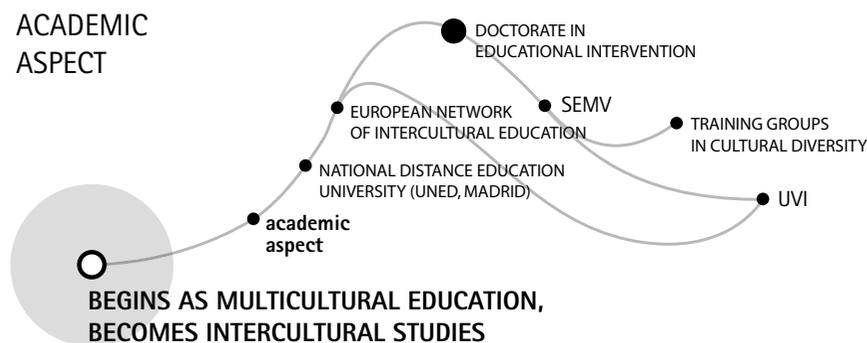


Figure 4: The academic aspect of intercultural discourse <sup>11</sup>

Within these aspects themselves, there are differences, because some actors that belong to one share characteristics of the other. Thus, an ATP can articulate an essentialist-type statement of interculturality due to the cultural tradition that she shares, institutionally or as a group, but through the process of transferring knowledge, her individual “linguistic screen” (Charle 2006) can show a transversal or contextualist-type of notion of interculturality.

<sup>11</sup> Taken from Mateos Cortés (2007).

## CONCLUSION

Empirical studies such as the one summarized here will, in the future, allow us to concatenate the monographic, “sedentary” analyses of identity politics and their “grammatical” logics of identity and otherness that underlie policies, models, and programs of “intercultural education” in each national and/or regional framework with a more “nomadic,” multisited, and itinerant analysis of the discursive and conceptual migrations that tie the different political, academic, and pedagogical fields together more and more. This is the only way that it will be possible to develop contextually pertinent pedagogical strategies and to avoid ingenuously copying and imitating “educational solutions” moved from one national or regional framework to another in these increasingly transnational and globalized exchanges. All in all, it is a matter of inter-relating and thus decolonizing several kinds of “lay, popular, traditional, urban, rural, provincial, and non-occidental (indigenous, African-origin, oriental, etc.) knowledge that circulate in society” (de Sousa Santos 2005: 69).

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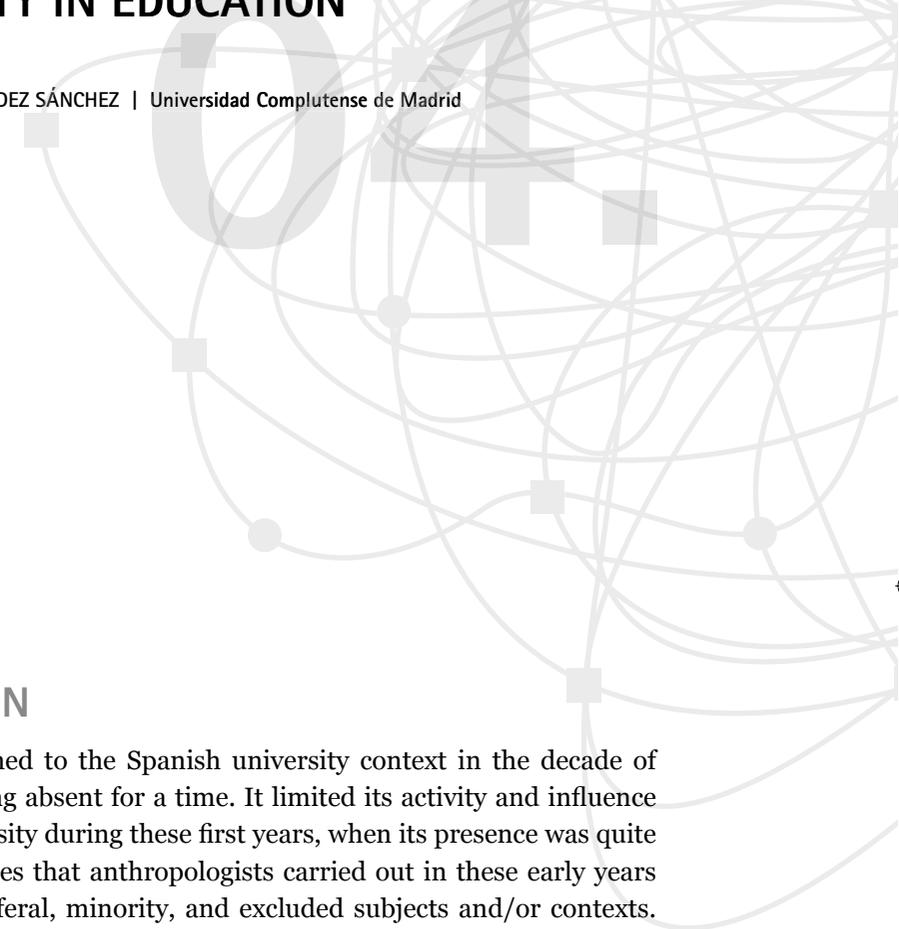
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# THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Anthropology returned to the Spanish university context in the decade of the 1960s, after being absent for a time. It limited its activity and influence mainly to the university during these first years, when its presence was quite restricted. The studies that anthropologists carried out in these early years were related to peripheral, minority, and excluded subjects and/or contexts. Some time went by before anthropology focused on aspects linked to broad sectors of society; this happened simultaneously with the change in the political regime, at the end of the seventies and at the beginning of the eighties. From this time onward, anthropology in Spain began to deal with subjects and contexts related to the sociopolitical changes that were happening; at the same time, its presence in the university grew.

In the nineties, anthropology transcended university frontiers and reached non-university teaching, and anthropologists began to study school contexts,



too. Since then, anthropology has continued to broaden its spaces and subjects of interest. The field of education is one of them, as well as social change and migratory movements.

In the following pages, we hope to show some of the fields which anthropology has reached, as well as some of the contributions it can make to understanding present-day social and educational situations, on one hand, and to useful proposals for dealing with the maladjustments that the crop up with these changes.

We believe, for example, that anthropology offers alternatives and instruments that are particularly appropriate for developing an educational project that is pertinent to a multicultural society. One of these alternatives is the perspective of Cultural Diversity, a useful instrument for understanding and comprehending the social context and for achieving a better fit between coexistence and social reality. However, it confronts the dominant perspective in education. We think it is necessary to incorporate this perspective into teacher training, but this also means confronting other perspectives on education, challenging resistances, and questioning the task of education.

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND EDUCATION

Anthropology formally became part of obligatory education curricula in 1990, with the teaching reform carried out in the Organic Law of General Structuring of the Spanish Educational System (Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo Español, known as the LOGSE). The Social Sciences area curricula had traditionally included the disciplines of Geography, History, and Art History, and this law incorporated several additional disciplines, such as Political Sciences, Economy, Sociology, Psychology, and Anthropology. Anthropology's move out of academic spheres and into other spheres to which it had not previously belonged made for a new situation.

In this change, the administration found anthropology's contributions useful and called upon them, stating that "*it includes interpretational keys for studying mentalities, behaviors, and the ways of life and of organization of groups and communities.*"<sup>12</sup> And so anthropology entered the curriculum of non-university teaching.

<sup>12</sup> Base Curricular Design for Obligatory Secondary Education (Diseño Curricular Base de la Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria -ESO- I de 1989)

If we look at the curriculum of Obligatory Secondary Education (Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria, ESO), anthropology is explicitly present in the thematic axis titled "Historical societies and change throughout time," where the main disciplinary references (according to the administration) were: history, art history, and anthropology. Anthropology was almost exclusively related to content block number 6 of this thematic axis, titled *Cultural Diversity*<sup>13</sup>, with the following points in the concepts section:

1. Decisive elements of a culture: technological culture and adaptation to the environment, social structure, gender system, and symbolic system.
2. Diversity and cultural relativism through the analysis of some elements of cultures different from one's own (preindustrial cultures, cultural minorities in our surroundings, or manifestations of rites and customs from our past).

This block, and its corresponding evaluation criterion, can be identified with the *holistic* perspective of anthropology, according to which all the elements of a society are closely related and none of them can be understood in isolation. It also reflects the thinking of three different schools throughout the development of the discipline.<sup>3</sup><sup>14</sup> In our opinion, this law induces confusion between the elements of a culture and perspectives of analysis. The second point of the conceptual contents mentions cultural relativism, perhaps one of the most important signs of identity in anthropology and rigorously indispensable for studying any human group. Cultural relativism is a work tool that involves both method and attitude when it comes to thinking about human differences, and so it should be the starting point for dealing with the procedures and attitudes that this thematic block indicates.

Regarding anthropology's presence in obligatory teaching, we can point out, first, a reductionist vision of anthropology, in the role assigned to it to justify its inclusion in the area of the Social Sciences. Secondly, together with some relevant aspects of anthropology, as we pointed out earlier, there are other aspects that do not consider the most recent movements in anthropology, their objects of study, or the discipline's recent approaches, but that nevertheless fostered its inclusion and requested anthropology's contribution to the curriculum.

After the LOGSE, there have been other reforms in the Spanish educational system that have modified the panorama. The first was Royal Decree

<sup>13</sup> BOE, September 13, 1991

<sup>14</sup> Cultural ecology, structural-functionalism, anthropology of gender, and symbolic anthropology

937/2001 of August 3 which repealed the Obligatory Secondary Education curriculum of the LOGSE and preceded the next Organic Law of Education<sup>15</sup>. This modification meant some significant changes with respect to the presence of anthropology. In broad strokes, the changes were due to:

- Elimination of the explicit distinction of the curricular contents in concepts, procedures, and attitudes, with priority preferably given to conceptual contents.
- Concentration of the conceptual contents almost exclusively in two disciplines: Geography and History.
- Suppression of constant references to attitudes.

Anthropology's explicit presence suffered a reduction in general terms, because the previous curriculum frequently referred to anthropology in the section on attitudes. Despite this, read from an anthropological perspective, the curriculum could still be seen to have many contents related to the discipline.

The curriculum published in 1991 repeatedly cited attitudes such as relativism and tolerance for approaching the treatment of human groups mainly in the present; even so, it did not foresee how important migratory movements would become throughout the decade. A decade later, the August 2001 curriculum did not foresee this either; even when the immigration process had been widely acknowledged, the curriculum avoided any reference to the social diversity resulting from this phenomenon.

Even so, anthropology is explicitly present in the subject "Human societies," where the section "The organization of societies" contains the point: *Cultural diversity of human groups*, which we see corresponds to the point *Cultural Diversity* from block 6 in the previous curriculum. This new phrasing simply formulates the subject without specifying the points that develop it, as it did before, and without pointing out the procedures and attitudes that correspond to cultural diversity. This declaration corresponds to anthropology in general as a subject to be studied.

The following themes are mentioned in other sections: *cultural heritage, plural society, cultural areas of the world, Spain and the diversity of its cultures*. From our point of view, they are all directly related to anthropology, even though the document does not explicitly say so. The text only mentions

<sup>15</sup> Organic Law 10/2002, December 23, of Educational Quality, -LOCE-

Geography and History, whose terminology had been used to write the declarations, as the axes that articulate the contents.

The concept of *relativism* is indicated on a few occasions, related to other spheres such as concepts of ethics, moral conduct, etc. which blur its importance (something which did not occur in the previous document), and confuse the value of this perspective.

Then came the Organic Law of Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación,<sup>16</sup> the LOE), in force at present. This law no longer cites anthropology, which has disappeared from the disciplines mentioned in these norms and involved in teaching non-university stages. However, if we read the curriculum of the ESO<sup>17</sup> in the area of Social Sciences, it permits us to see some points that could call for the involvement of the professionals in the field, in some cases, to contribute to enrich it and, in others, to point out biases and contradictions.

So, for example, Objective Number 8 indicates "*valuing cultural diversity, showing respectful and tolerant attitudes toward other cultures...*" and ends by saying "*without denying the possibility of judging them.*" Or Block 2, titled: "*Population and society*," in second year, which indicates the following points in its development: *Present-day societies. Structure and Diversity. Inequalities and conflicts. Characterization of European and Spanish society. Immigration and integration. Analysis and relative evaluation of cultural differences*. In other points, it relates diversity and immigration, and immigration and problems, for example in evaluation criteria 1 and 2.

1. Describe the factors that condition demographic behavior... The intention of this criterion is to evaluate... in order to explain the contrasts, problems, and perspectives that exist in the world today and in Spain: ageing, immigration, etc.
2. Identify the characteristic features of present-day Spanish society, distinguishing the variety of social groups that make it up, the increase in diversity that immigration generates, recognizing that Spain belongs to the western world and presenting some of the situations that reflect social inequality. This criterion attempts to evaluate whether the student is familiar with the present-day features of social organization in Spain, identifying the changes that have occurred in recent times (in the family, in the origin or country

<sup>16</sup> Organic Law 2/2006, May 3, of Education

<sup>17</sup> Royal Decree 1631/2006, December 29, establishing the minimum teaching corresponding to Obligatory Secondary Education

of origin of its inhabitants, in social mobility, in values, etc.), whether they recognize, in these changes, characteristics shared with developed western societies and identify some evidence of inequality and discrimination due to origin or membership in a social group.

Immigration is repeatedly mentioned in different sections of the curriculum, but mainly in relation to the sections on population, on the present-day situation of demographic processes, and on the economic situation. The way it is mentioned invites us to be aware of its presence, but does not push a critical analysis of it, indicating causes and consequences, when it is aimed at students who, because of their age at this stage, could do this and, as a result, take a position, as can be seen in evaluation criterion 11 in the third year:

11. Use the information obtained from different sources rigorously and present reasoned opinions when they participate in debates on current issues touching the student's life, showing solidarity.

This criterion allows us to check the student's sensitivity to the problems of today's world, such as the existence of disadvantaged groups, discriminatory situations, the deterioration of the environment, job markets, models of consumption, etc., that are approached rigorously and with an attitude of solidarity. On the other hand, it allows us to evaluate the appropriate use of oral language and of argumentation, as well as the acceptance of the norms of dialogue and group interventions.

This law has introduced a new subject in the curriculum, "Education for Citizenship," which mentions identity and otherness in its different sections<sup>18</sup>: Social and cultural differences, Rejection of intolerance, injustice, and exclusionary attitudes<sup>19</sup>, Social problems in today's world, and Factors that generate problems and discrimination towards different groups<sup>20</sup>. In the evaluation criteria, Number 9 says:

Distinguish equality and diversity and the causes and factors of discrimination... This criterion intends to find out whether the students recognize the equality and dignity of all people and the differentiating elements that underlie some discriminations... at the same time as it measures whether they know how to identify and locate the discriminatory situations of all types

<sup>18</sup> Content Block 2, Royal Decree 1631/2006, minimum teaching of ESO  
<sup>19</sup> Content Block 3, Royal Decree 1631/2006, minimum teaching of ESO  
<sup>20</sup> Content Block 5, Royal Decree 1631/2006, minimum teaching of ESO

that continue to exist in present-day society and actively reject violence against women and other groups.

The statement clearly identifies gender discrimination in particular, in contrast to other discriminations.

Everything that we have pointed out up to now concerns the area of Social Sciences and the new subject Education for Citizenship that is sometimes included in the area of Social Sciences and other times in the area of Philosophy. But there is another area where some more evident contradictions appear, in Foreign Language. Here, we can read the following:

It is therefore necessary to prepare students to live in a progressively more international, multicultural, and multilingual world.

On the other hand, learning a foreign language transcends the framework of linguistic learning, it goes beyond it... insofar as it encourages respect for, interest in, and communication with inhabitants who speak other languages, develops intercultural awareness, and is a vehicle for understanding global subjects and problems and for acquiring different learning strategies.

There is a specific section titled "Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness" where it says:

The contents of block 4, Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness, contribute to familiarizing the student with customs, forms of social relations, features and specificities of countries where the foreign language is spoken; in short, ways of life that are different from his own. This knowledge will promote tolerance and acceptance, it will increase interest in knowing about different social and cultural realities, and it will facilitate intercultural communications because languages carry contents, features, and marks of the cultures for which they serve as the means of expression.

The quickest criticism that can be made is that this presentation on different languages and cultures is aimed at European languages and cultures, but it does not mention languages from other places anywhere, even though they are the languages that people who live in Europe speak.

However, the same criteria are not applied to these other languages, nor are they assumed to have the same good features as the European ones, despite the text of this document:

The purpose of teaching Foreign Language at this stage is to develop the following skills:

To value the foreign language, and languages in general, as a means of communication and understanding among people of different origins, languages, and cultures, avoiding all kinds of discrimination and of linguistic and cultural stereotypes.<sup>21</sup>

These ideas are repeated throughout the different sections of this area, as can be seen in the following phrase, which appears in the contents of the different courses:

Valuing the personal enrichment that relations with people belonging to other cultures means.

And in the evaluation criteria, such as Number 8, where it says:

To identify some cultural or geographical elements belonging to the countries and cultures where the foreign language is spoken and to show interest in becoming familiar with them. This criterion intends to check students' familiarity with some important features of the sociocultural and geographic context of the countries where the foreign language is spoken and their interest in and esteem for cultural habits that are different from their own, and attitudes of respect towards the values and behavior of other peoples.

This can be completed with Number 8 in the third year:

...they are capable of identifying... and showing respect for the values and behavior of other peoples, thus overcoming some stereotypes.

So we can see that, even if, when anthropology was first included, a general interest in its contributions, in a broad framework, could be deduced, the discipline has not only been excluded, little by little, but the presentation of some of the points that could have had an anthropological approach has been closed off and these points have been oriented in a very different direction. Even so, anthropology can contribute its viewpoint. It can point out, on one hand, the contradictions and ethnocentric biases of these approaches and, on the other, it can contribute to obligatory teaching in dealing with the cultural diversity of human groups, both from the linguistic point of view and from the social point of view, as well as in other subjects that are mentioned in

<sup>21</sup> Objective Num. 9, Royal Decree 1631/2006, minimum teaching of ESO

the different educational stages such as: *cultural relativism, discrimination, marginalization and exclusion, pluralism, social and linguistic differences, heritage, globalization, migrations, immigration, racism and xenophobia...*

## DIVERSITY AND SOCIETY

In parallel to this legislative development, Spanish society has gone from being a society that sends out emigrants to a society that receives immigrants, as we indicated previously. Spain had already received migrations, sometimes seasonal ones, such as tourism, and other times longer-lasting ones, both because of its geographical situation which is favorable to tourism and as an effect of economic development together with globalization and Spain's integration into the European Union, but these migrations were not perceived as a problem, or with fear. It was when the migrations turned into migrations of people with scarce resources that society began to perceive the phenomenon with suspicion and fear, expressing concern and classifying these migrations as a problem.

Faced with this perception, along with alarmed voices, proposals on how to approach the problem have arisen, both from the administration and from society itself, and the social panorama is presented as under threat from the changes that the arrival of different people from other places, with scarce resources, involves.

It is necessary to situate the educational system in this context, also, mainly in the non-university school stages. A quick list of the evils that affect schools and education, pointed out both in the communications media and by teachers, shows that one of the first is the foreign students called "immigrants," that is, the foreign students who belong to socioeconomic levels with scarce resources, although they are not the only evils. Discipline, parents' roles, the low prestige of teachers together with a failure to acknowledge their authority, students' lack of effort, their low academic level... and a long etc., are also indicated; this, in turn, is mixed with the country's political/administrative organization, its territorial organization in Autonomous Communities with the transfer of competencies in the area of education, which includes different ways of specifying the guidelines of the central administration, with their co-official languages, curricula, and different political ideologies, among other things.

Faced with this, we have to ask ourselves: Can there be a more diverse panorama than the one we have just briefly sketched?

In our early inquiries with the purpose of articulating anthropology's contributions to this educational context, we were quite clear on the idea that it was not an issue of including more academic contents in the curriculum, but of how this material could contribute to these curricula, in the reference framework of the social context. At different points on our journey, we have found that anthropology's contributions can be meaningful and that they almost all focus on the perspective of cultural diversity as the most relevant contribution:

- in the contents of the curricula that the administration has prepared in the different reforms
- in the social context of the school centers, with the plurality of the students
- in the social panorama of multicultural coexistence that society itself perceives and of which it is afraid
- in the proposals that arise to deal with diversity in education, such as Intercultural Education, and in the indications that other national or supra-national organizations –the European Union, the European Council– prepare for education and coexistence, even in the political battles about new subjects, such as Education for Citizenship

Regarding this, we wonder: Why does the Cultural Diversity perspective appear so repeatedly as a relevant contribution? And the answer we find is: because all of these moments and educational situations reflect the idea that the problem is diversity. Why is the problem diversity? Perhaps because the reference model is homogeneity, opposition to diversity, and if diversity is a problem, what it is a problem for is homogeneity. In order to show this opposition, we will look into the regulations.

## PERCEPTION OF DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION OR WHAT KIND OF DIVERSITY IS ACKNOWLEDGED

The regulations explicitly mention diversity in education and attention to diversity. For example, in the LOE, Article 12 of the ESO is titled “Attention to Diversity.” By reading it, we can see how diversity is acknowledged and how the regulations propose to approach it. In the preamble, it says:

“the objective (of education is)... to achieve full inclusion and integration. The educational treatment of students who require specific support and attention due to their social circumstances, physical, psychological, or sensorial impediments, or who have serious behavior disorders is specifically included in this heading” .....

Students with high intellectual capabilities and students who have entered the Spanish educational system late also need specific treatment.”

Heading II is called “Equity in education” and Chapter 1 of this heading talks about “Students with specific needs for educational support.” Specifically, Principle 2 of Article 71 says:

It is the responsibility of the educational administrations to ensure the necessary resources so that students who require educational attention that is out of the ordinary, because they have special educational needs due to specific learning difficulties or high intellectual capabilities, or because they entered the educational system late, or due to personal circumstances or school trajectory, can achieve the maximum possible development of their personal capabilities and, in any case, achieve the general objectives established for all students.

So, first of all it points out the need to:

...consider student diversity as a principle

In order to do this, it indicates:

The mechanisms of reinforcement that should be put into practice as soon as learning difficulties are detected...

And then it clarifies the measures proposed to attend to this diversity:

3. For... students with specific needs for educational support... the opportune curricular and organizational measures will be established to ensure their proper progress. And later:
- 4...when it is necessary, adaptations that differ significantly from the contents and evaluation criteria of the curriculum will be carried out in order to attend to students with special educational needs who require them.

And in the last points, the diversity acknowledged is made clear when the students to whom this attention to diversity is addressed are mentioned:

5. ...students who enter the system late...

specifying two classifications of these students:

When they show serious deficiencies in the language used in school

Students who show a gap of more than one year in their level of curricular competence

6. ....students with high intellectual capabilities,...

These curricular norms are specified in the programs for attention to diversity that the centers prepare, where most of them consider as diversity and thus requiring special attention measures mainly the following groups:

- students belonging to the gypsy ethnic group
- immigrant students
- students with Special Educational Needs

So, with these references that speak of diversity, we find that the diversity that is acknowledged is the diversity associated with differences that are deficiencies. These texts clearly indicate that education is oriented toward homogeneity and that only what is outside of homogeneity is considered diversity, typifying what diversity is and how it should be dealt with. What this treatment indicates is that diversity is perceived as a difficulty for achieving homogeneity, on one hand, and, on the other, that what it proposes are measures to direct or redirect this diversity toward homogeneity.

In short, diversity in Education is associated with individual differences, but only when these, for whatever reason, prevent the student from fitting the expected model of behavior. That is, in Education, differences are identified with deficiencies. And the measures that are proposed, in general, are oriented toward attending to the differences acknowledged with measures such as compensation. So-called “Compensatory Education,” with reinforcement or support outside of the ordinary group, isolates these students from the group temporarily, at certain times, or assigns them to special groups where education is designed as an education that is different from normal education and with a lower social value.

Faced with this perspective, we must point out that the attention to diversity proposed is based on two main assumptions. The first one is that some

of the differences that diversity presents are taken into account. The second one transforms the differences indicated into obstacles that prevent a student from reaching the academic level or development that it is assumed that her age-group should have. The lines of action derived from these two assumptions have a common denominator: getting the educational structures to make a special effort with these students, acting on their deficiencies temporarily or permanently, so that this extra personalized attention and these extra hours devoted to the student will allow him to act like the rest of his classmates.

This approach can be criticized in two ways. The first one is to determine whether the measures adopted achieve the desired objectives, that is, if pointing out certain differences in certain students and acting in a discriminatory manner with them manages, in the short or the long term, to eliminate the deficiencies that have been identified with their differences. The information says it does not. It seems that these kinds of measures have obtained a very relative success because, even if certain students have been integrated into their age groups after going through compensatory classes, it is also true that, in many cases, the students from compensatory classes end up becoming numbers in the “school failure” category, that is, that the measures adopted by the system have been unable to incorporate these students into the system.

The second criticism of the philosophy of these approaches seems much deeper, to us. By only selecting negative differences and by identifying them with obstacles to the proper functioning of the school system, all the other differences that could act precisely to the contrary, as benefits for the student throughout her academic life, are avoided.

As a reflection after this analysis, we can conclude that the perception reflected is that diversity is a problem and an exception, while homogeneity is the norm and the model. A review of everything that has been mentioned and of the realities of educational contexts indicates several things that can be synthesized in the following points:

- the problem is diversity as opposed to homogeneity, and therefore the issues are
- how to erase diversity and
- the need to erase diversity because it is understood to be a problem, therefore
- the diversity that is acknowledged is attended to as special differences that are not common

Behind this approach that we are uncovering, there is a mechanism that maintains inequality, because this mechanism is a way of perpetuating certain differences, evaluating them negatively so that the inequality of some is justified and there is no reason to feel guilty about it.

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

From our point of view, this panorama presents a series of challenges to society in general and to education in particular. To face these challenges, we believe that, although anthropology has been relegated to a position of little importance in school curricula by the different educational reforms, it can nevertheless offer particularly appropriate alternatives and instruments for developing a pertinent educational project with a multicultural society. Anthropology can make contributions such as:

- a valid perspective to develop concepts and tools to teach in classrooms with culturally and socially diverse students
- a useful instrument for approaching teaching more effectively and equitably in new social situations
- provide strategies to help comprehend the complexity of present-day social contexts
- contribute to training future citizens to live in a multicultural society

However, the most important contribution anthropology can make to education consists, in general terms, of learning to accept differences and value them positively.

Although this statement might seem simple, it has very broad, deep, and complex implications in daily life, implications which will become even more relevant in the future. Cultural diversity is anthropology's object of study and includes both the internal diversity of societies and diversity among societies. Because of this, the greatest contribution that anthropology can make is precisely to provide its knowledge of diversity and the perspective it uses to approach this diversity.

Through anthropology, cultural diversity is understood to be the variety of strategies and behavior that mankind has thought up to survive and perpetuate itself as a group through its descendants, throughout time and space. All

human beings contribute to or have contributed to this diversity, thinking up solutions to the problems that come up as their lives develop and transferring these solutions to their fellow human beings or to the following generations, by exchange, negotiation, imposition, etc. At the same time, the group responds to these solutions in quite varied ways: forgetting them, rejecting them, criticizing them, transforming them, or accepting them. If we adopt this perspective, any difference in lifestyle with respect to the norms and values that explain behavior can be understood as a product of cultural diversity so that, in *relative terms*, we all differ, *to some extent*, from our fellow human beings and, therefore, we are all involved in the concept of "cultural diversity." Just as we all differ from others, *at the same time* we are also similar to the rest of human beings.

It is our diversity, precisely, that is the motor that pushes us to relate to one another; no group is homogeneous because the way a group works is based, specifically, on the differences among the members. Social exchange is always produced thanks to the imbalance among the parts: if we were all the same, if we managed to construct ourselves the same way, we would have nothing to say to one another. Heterogeneity is the motor of exchange. But in the same way, if each of us were completely different, we would lose the capability of communicating with one another because we would be unable to establish arbitrary shared codes to relate the shared symbols that allow us to communicate with the different personal experiences that push us to communicate with one another. So we are neither totally homogeneous nor totally heterogeneous, and basing learning on one extreme or the other incapacitates us to carry out the activity that characterizes us as human beings, that is, communication.

Communication is based on the search for a balance between similarities and differences. The similarities provide the foundations for understanding the differences, while the differences allow us to move from where we are to other places. Understanding this process means understanding what the foundations of human relations are and, among them, the relations that are established in a classroom.

We can synthesize the perspective of cultural diversity, as a contribution that anthropology can make, in two main objectives:

- to appreciate diversity in a positive way
- to learn to live with diversity

In order to achieve the first objective, we propose a process that entails a) discovering diversity, b) knowing its meaning and social value, and c) appreciating diversity in a positive way. The second objective involves using diversity as a challenge to develop a critical attitude, to think up solutions to solve the conflicts it provokes in daily life and, when this is not possible, to teach strategies for living with these conflicts.

In order to discover diversity, we have to learn to recognize it. Many of the differences that we notice are evident, but there are many others that are less evident because they work unconsciously. We use both kinds of difference for classifying, but we must learn to identify which ones are more significant. Discovering the diversity that surrounds us means identifying differences in order to strike up a possible relationship, an exchange. It also means assigning the differences detected to a category of classification, allowing us to assume how the person in the role in question will behave, and this also allows us to adjust our own behavior to the behavior we expect from the other person.

Knowing the meaning of diversity means that we need to distinguish between which differences are socially significant and which are not, because not all differences, not even the most evident ones, are always significant. Sometimes the differences themselves have different meanings, depending on the group, so they are relative and depend on the meaning that the social context confers on them. Detecting which differences are important means being able to dig deeper into the relationship that exists between these differences, the behavior that they implicitly involve, and the expectations that are associated with them.

Understanding the social value of the differences implies that, if the differences do not mean the same thing, it is because they are given a different value when it comes to establishing social relations. That is, the social context not only discriminates between some values and other values, making them meaningful or not, but it also assigns them a specific value, making some desirable and others undesirable. This point is difficult to separate from the previous one, because it means not only recognizing that one social group attributes different meaning to some differences than to others, but that it is a matter of learning to determine what value a specific group attributes to a particular difference or category.

In short, if we take these three points into account when we analyze diversity, we can gain in-depth knowledge of diversity. Doing this in class with the stu-

dents will not only enrich the teachers but will provide them with a scheme of reference that will be useful for understanding diversity in another way. This will avoid the widespread error, both in the context of education and elsewhere, of identifying differences with immigration and avoid the discriminatory strategy of conceiving differences as obstacles to the student's or person's development. Because of this, if we consciously discover what our own differences are and, in addition, we are capable of detecting what value our group gives to these idiosyncrasies, we will be able to improve our capability of relating to our surroundings and this will allow us to include ourselves fully with everyone else, just like everyone else, in the concept of diversity.

Once this process is complete, the conclusion should be that knowledge of human diversity allows us to understand differences as a set of strategies that human beings have developed to seek solutions to the problems that life presents. All differences constitute an archive of solutions that have been thought up, and knowledge of them is wealth because they can be used to resolve the conflicts and problems that have come up throughout history and those that may come up in the future. This is the reason that we should understand that differences should be respected and valued positively, even though they may cause problems sometimes.

The analysis of diversity from this perspective contributes to accepting and recognizing the differences that exist in our social environment, which involves achieving a better fit between coexistence and social reality. It also contributes to developing a critical attitude, when we know the social value attributed to the differences, and to enriching each individual's heritage, providing different perspectives from which he can analyze his surroundings; that is, different ways of living life, by valuing diversity positively.

The second objective mentioned means using diversity as a challenge to develop a critical attitude, to think up solutions to resolve the conflicts that diversity provokes in daily life, and, when it is not possible to solve the conflicts, to learn strategies for living with them. It focuses on the subject of the coexistence of diversity; if the first objective was oriented toward learning to appreciate cultural diversity in a positive way, this one deals with learning to live with it. It proposes that we understand this diverse reality as an enriching context, whether the diversity belongs to the social majority or not, accepting the challenge of coexisting with differences, learning to turn them into a useful resource for teaching and solving problems derived from the conflicts that

the existence of contradictory norms provokes. There is a double goal here: on one hand, to take advantage of the positive aspects of coexistence with cultural differences, such as the enrichment that comes from being familiar with different perspectives regarding the complexity of the world, and, on the other hand, to develop creative and imaginative skills for seeking alternatives when it comes to solving or living with the problems that derive from a multicultural society.

Linking both objectives allows us to reach the conclusion that it is necessary to learn to recognize diversity independently of its origins, that differences are always meaningful, not just when they come from different cultural groups, and that the methods that should be used to recognize them, analyze them, compare them, criticize them, and learn to live with them, are the same, no matter what the difference is. It is also necessary to understand that, in the end, we are all a little different and that, because of this, we all cause conflicts, sometimes, in our surroundings. In this way, we can work on the attitudes and values that are useful in multicultural coexistence, independently of the specific context of each school in relation to diversity, because when the student acquires these attitudes and values, she is training to get along in a society that is different, where differences are not imposed but rather negotiated.

Two ideas are behind this approach:

First of all, all the differences that exist in society should be treated *the same way*, whether they are ethnic differences or differences of any other kind. This basic assumption is indispensable for learning to perceive differences as equal, on the same level: *differences are always differences*, and, as such, require the same treatment. Only by starting out with this premise will it be possible to work on a series of attitudes that will make *integration, not exclusion*, possible, attitudes such as cooperation, solidarity, empathy, coexistence, a critical spirit, creativity for seeking solutions to problems and conflicts. And, using all of this, we will be able to value differences positively, to learn from exchanges and to respect other ways of thinking and of explaining the world. The consequences of this argument, which is apparently so logical and easy to accept, are, however, quite profound and even radical when we adopt them in everyday life. This requires a constant exercise of cultural relativism, because it involves stopping judging our surroundings with such everyday outlines as “what is normal” and “what is not normal,” by including our personal perspective in this judgment, that is, making the place from which we are doing

the judging explicit. In this way, we accept that what is normal for us may not be normal for others.

Second, it is necessary to consider that the problems deriving from the contradictions in ways of seeing the world and making judgments about our surroundings are no different from the rest of the problems that can appear for many other reasons; therefore, they must not be approached with fear, because we are accustomed to face many kinds of problems in our daily life, and our daily life consists, specifically, of trying to resolve them the best we can.

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND TEACHER TRAINING

Incorporating the cultural diversity perspective into teacher training would be an appropriate way to provide teachers with the tools to approach their teaching tasks. This process means confronting other perspectives on education, challenging resistances and questioning educational tasks, because it confronts the dominant perspective in education, the perspective of homogeneity. It means that deep mental schemes are questioned by these approaches, and these schemes show up more strongly when we move from theoretical approaches to practical proposals in school contexts.

On one hand, it has often been commented that teachers in schools do not usually have time to reflect on their educational practice, because the dynamics of teaching occupy all of their effort and time. However, there are many signs that teachers are often unsatisfied with their work, with the panorama of the educational centers, and with education in general, and ask for changes, proposals, and tools that could modify what they have. Teachers, as day-to-day experts, are the ones who can change, modify, and improve the educational contexts. The contribution of the cultural diversity perspective can work in this direction to deal with diversity in education.

Nevertheless, this is hard for teachers, for many reasons. It is hard because both in their training and in their teaching experience, all the *inputs* that they have received have reinforced the following conception: the difficulties, requirements, changes, etc. that are presented in education fit within a reference framework that they know quite well, because they use it in their work and it allows them to explain it. It is a reference framework in which education is oriented by the perspective of homogeneity, and this is an orienta-

tion and a philosophy of education that they have experienced as students, in which they have been trained as professionals, and in which they carry out their activity. So it is deeply rooted in their mental schemes.

In both cases, in teachers' initial and continuous training, in general, similar obstacles to orienting education from the perspective of Cultural Diversity appear. But if they make the effort to consider another philosophy of education from the perspective of diversity as a reference framework that proposes explaining the difficulties, the requirements, the changes, etc., in educational contexts, they may not stop thinking that what is being presented is difficult, but they will understand that it has a coherent logic. This logic allows them to understand things from a different point of view and, thus, think about strategies in order to change them, strategies that are not without difficulty but that are possible and desirable.

This is all important because the consequences of education in one philosophy or another transcend the school and classroom contexts, impregnating and influencing social contexts and social co-existence. This is why this proposal attempts to deal with discrimination in order to contribute to social cohesion.

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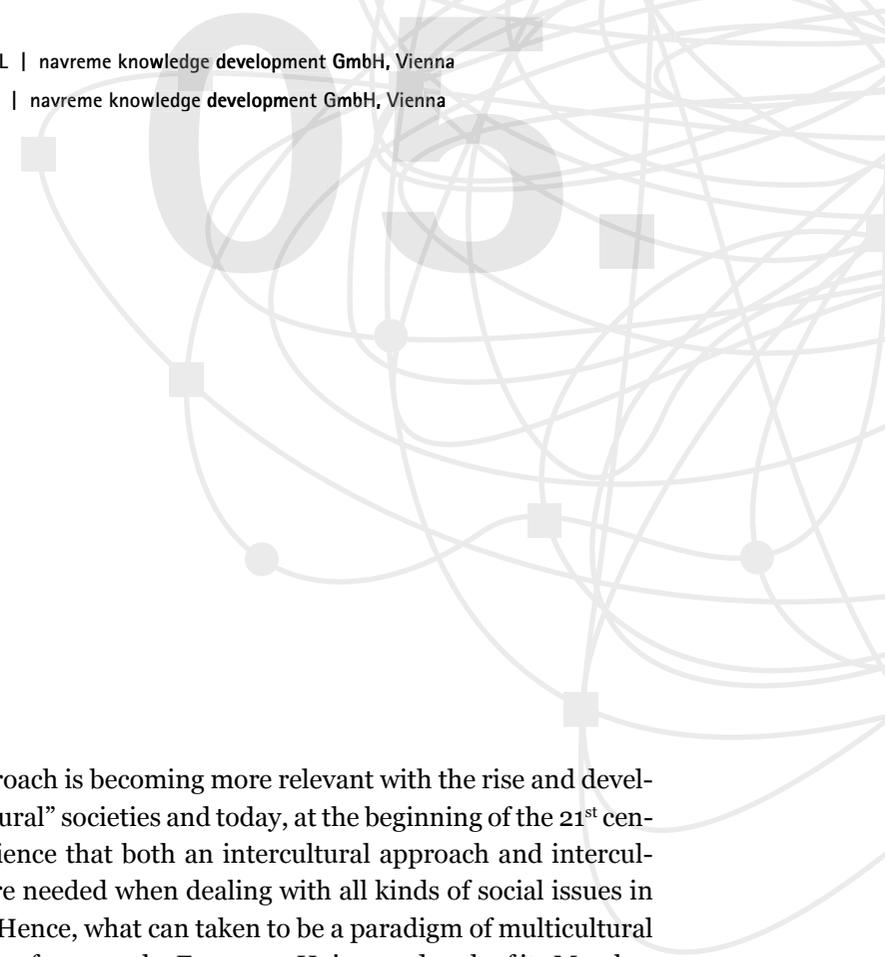
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## INTERCULTURALITY

A NECESSARY SKILL IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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An intercultural approach is becoming more relevant with the rise and development of “multicultural” societies and today, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we often experience that both an intercultural approach and intercultural competences are needed when dealing with all kinds of social issues in a European context. Hence, what can taken to be a paradigm of multicultural society is for instance, of course, the European Union, and each of its Member States by itself, for example with its ever increasing population, who partially have roots all over the world. This obviously raises the question, about what is actually an “intercultural approach” and “intercultural competence” and why do we need them?

One thing is clear from the outset: these new buzz-concepts certainly have the word “culture” in their names, and it seems that there is no possibility of understanding these concepts in the right manner - if we do not deal with and



clarify the concept of “culture” first. So, the first step for us is to distinguish some basic traits of what “culture” is supposed to be so that when we come to interculturality we already know on which aspects of society we should focus on - and on which less or not at all.

## WHAT IS “CULTURE”?

The more we understand the manifold usage of it, the more we realize, that “culture” as a concept is not something which is easily definable. The understanding of culture is something that constantly changes, whether through time whether through different contexts, and this characteristic of culture is one which seems that is not going to help us with our task, but on the other hand it is the one aspect which is going to help us understand why is so important to be open to all kind of differences and to be constantly aware of them. Opposed to the term “nature”, the term “culture” has its origin in the term “to cultivate”. And it was thus used to designate some kind of improvement or refinement, which was connected to a human endeavor or intervention (agriculture, horticulture, etc). From this first meaning stemmed the second one, in which it was applied to human refinement and it was seen through education, so a cultured man or woman was a well educated individual (and it can be said that in that sense it is still used when we talk about someone’s developed and refined taste in arts). And it wasn’t before twentieth century that culture started to refer to a set of values, beliefs, traditions and convictions shared by members of a specific community.

It’s only in this last sense that we are going to talk about culture. However, now a different question arises, i.e. which types of beliefs and convictions are going to be counted as relevant for the concept of culture. And if we try to define culture as a specific worldview (Weltanschauung) of a specific group, then the question becomes: what is that that forms our view at life, is it only our religion, our language, our customs, or also our age, gender, sexual orientation and so forth, and on the other hand to which group or groups do we actually belong, i.e. it is not only our nation, or our religious group, or other forms of social associations. There is a general direction of the development of this concept in which it is becoming ever more richer and inclusive. “Culture” as a concept changes its reference constantly and this process is putting the light on the fact how general (and also professional) opinion changes when

it comes to question what are the important aspects of our lives, what is that that defines our cultural identity. In our definition of culture we will hence take a widely permissive stand and include into our definition inasmuch different features that would be marked cultural in any given context.

## CULTURES AND IDENTITIES: INTERCULTURALITY

So, culture is what defines us or how we define ourselves and what we identify with; what is giving us an orientation in the world, the set of categories which make sense out of raw material which we receive through our senses. So being thus defined is a kind of necessity because any kind of mental functioning would be impossible without these generalizations. We can distinguish between many different degrees or levels of categories or identities which are giving shape to our experience of the world (ethnic origin, mother language, education level, religion, weight, age, professional practice, health status, place of residence, preferred ideology, family status, and many more). The most basic ones (and chronologically first one to be acquired), which are sometimes completely unconsciously employed, like the category of form or substance or family, would be absolutely resistant to any conscious attempt to change them. But there are other kinds of assumptions that we employ and which are not embedded in us by birth, not written down in our genetic code, less general and formed through social interaction, and they inhabit the world of culture as well. Again, they can be a product of centuries or even millennia, of habits and customs practiced through generations of our ancestors, thus connected to a larger population on a wider territory and so more resilient to relativisation, or more recent product of ways of life of some particular group or association people feel they belong to. So there is an urgent need of recognizing our limits posed by these necessary restrictions, our inevitable enclosure in a set of prejudices which are formed on different levels with different kinds of protection from change.

These sets of pre-suppositions or prejudices vary through time and space, as various groupings live on different territories and their beliefs change through time. The function of our views and beliefs that we inherit or adopt is sometimes the organization of our perceptions, and sometimes it is the abbreviation for thoughts about various everyday life topics. Thereby, it is in every respect practical. We are not capable of, there is just not enough time



for, reflecting on every aspect of our lives, so we adopt these views as ours and we recognize other members of our society or grouping as having these same beliefs or habits. Of course, they often have some normative connotation and this is the place of disagreement and conflict between different cultures. One cultural group would value a certain state of affairs as positive, while the other would value it negatively. However, these sets of values, views and beliefs as a whole don't carry any normative marking, they are never good or bad by themselves. They are just arbitrary tools for putting sense into the world.

The diversity that exists between actual cultures is truly immense. And more we include in our definition of culture, with more features that we permit to penetrate into our view of cultural diversity, this abundance grows. The essence of a truly intercultural approach is the awareness of this diversity, acknowledging its natural or chosen origin (see for example Anderson who speaks of ethnic groups as imagined communities), as a necessary definition of ourselves in the world and not attributing any specific value to any particular culture.

## VALUING DIVERSITY!

In particular, "Interculturality" expresses an underlying openness to different cultures which is actually enabled by our own belonging to the specific individual or collective culture. Only as being cultural, defined in a cultural way, we can discover, meet, and reject or appreciate others' differences. Putting interculturality into practice is a chosen human space of interaction where variance is considered to be a virtue. As we are always found in a cultural situation, we are always determined to some extent with our location in space and time (born at the specific historic moment, and at the specific continent, country, region; having gone through specific experiences; and identifying with certain cultural identities), and only realizing this necessity of being determined with some cultural context do we find others determined in the same but often also different ways. Like the problem of one and the many, where we see different things at one time as the same, and at another time as different, and we have to find an underlying unity, the problem of interculturality is the project of finding the common ground of all humanity but also noting and cherishing all the differences that stem on those foundations.

Interculturality is not so much about the content, about knowing exactly how a particular person from a particular culture would behave in a particular

situation, it is more about the form, a method, deploying respect for, or a way of meeting other people's differences. However, employing an intercultural approach is not an easy thing to do. It asks of us to put under a question our own beliefs and values. In order to understand the views about the world which are not our own we are obliged to relativise our basic opinions and beliefs. On the other hand this relativisation shouldn't obliterate culture, or deprive anyone of his/her/their own identities. The shift is made towards understanding that nobody has the absolute value(s), and that nobody should interfere with our attempts to establish good communication, understanding and productive cooperation, or simply to manage a satisfactory cohabitation or cooperation.

## AVOIDING INTERCULTURAL CONFLICTS

It can be said that an intercultural approach in itself has some normative input. It positively values diversity and sees homogeneity and exclusiveness, i.e. a state of affairs in which there are only dominant cultures, or, in an extreme case, only one single culture, in a negative light. Foundations of this view are not going to be explained in this paper, but this view can be negatively justified by showing that the opposite view, i.e. against strong cultural identity in favor of cultural universalism is made on the assumptions which are not well justified. Namely, this view which leads to a form of homogenized world society rests on the assumption that multiculturalism leads to sharp divisions, exclusion and marginalisation in any given society. That diversification leads to a divided world with a lack of communication and respect for others, and that it is necessary to adopt a universal cultural framework in order to prevent these evils from happening. In other words, that a "clash of civilisations" (Samuel Huntington, 1993) is not inevitable, but that "throughout history different cultures have learned and benefited from each other" (Trojanov et al in their book "Refusal to Fight", 2009).

But, the intercultural approach is trying to show that there is another way to avoid these evils, and that diversity itself does not lead naturally to this unwanted state of affairs, it is only potentially causing conflicts in the case if we leave it "unattended". If we employ an intercultural approach and if we become interculturally competent we will try to do just the opposite: instead of creating one culture, or try to impose our own set of values on others belonging to a "weaker" cultural group, so that we can supposedly avoid conflicts

and social divisions, we will try to deal with multiculturalism in a constructive way, to show that there is a way to handle cultural diversity, which is maybe at the start divisive, in a manner which can reconcile differences and human unity. A multitude of cultures and the diversity which is thus created are not a justification for taking away from people their national, religious, sexual, or any other identity, which are not up to our “universal standards” (mind: who could possibly define these?). However, what is needed is an approach which will address these differences in a way which will be able to solve the problems that can arise because of mismatching worldviews but on the way not discarding any view that is not perceived as dominant, right, or even normal by an elite culture. So, it is not the case that we do not admit that differences can create conflicts, divisions and misunderstandings but we certainly do not agree with a statement that this is a reason for obliterating them. In contrast, sharp divisions, exclusion and marginalisation in any given society need to be avoided, in order to facilitate and manage a peaceful co-habitation also in ever more diversified societies.

## WHAT INTERCULTURALITY IS NOT: RULES OF BEHAVIOUR

Now that we have laid some grounds for what interculturality is we can try to point out what interculturality is not. First, intercultural competence is often seen as only knowledge about rules which if followed supposedly yields intercultural competence. These rules are very specific rules of conduct, but merely rules of behaviour and conduct in different countries. So, for instance:

- If you are in China you should put the business card you received in an appropriate place, not in your trousers pocket, because this can be interpreted as an insult.
- If you are visiting Islamic countries don't hold your thumb up as this can be seen as showing a very rude sign.
- When you are in Asia don't eat everything from your plate and don't stay long after dinner as this can be interpreted as a sign that you haven't eat enough and can embarrass your host.
- Being late is perceived differently in Western European and Southern European countries; in Western countries it can be very offensive to do so.

- Organising days or weeks of foreign cuisine, dance or folklore, etc.

But interculturality as a competence is not learning from a guidebook about various customs, or picking nice and/or exotic features of a particular other country or culture. Even if we learn everything about some nations' customs, what bodily movements to produce in a particular contexts and what words to pronounce when asked particular questions, that by itself doesn't imply that we possess an understanding of that culture and that we have opened a channel of communication, and that our behavior is guaranteed to produce effective cooperation.

Culture as we have defined it earlier is not bound to national borders or ethnic groups, and it is certainly not something that we can observe and then imitate like some type of a dance or sports. It is a set of values, opinions and beliefs and thus cannot be treated in this sort of behavioral manner. When new situations arise for which we were not prepared by our guidebook we will be left in a state of confusion not knowing how to proceed. We need a methodical approach which can be applied to every such situation, one which will open a possibility of learning from these new situations, and which will help us to understand other cultures in a systematic way and to go beyond understanding others as people who may, in our view, make some strange gestures in particular situations.

Another approach to interculturality was through language. If we learn a new language we are more interculturally competent, more languages we manage to adopt our IC (intercultural competence) grows. But this is again not sufficient. Language is often only one aspect of, usually, one single ethnic or national culture. So, first it is not refined enough to capture other smaller cultural groups, and secondly it is not rich enough to cover all relevant differences. On the other hand it is not even necessary, as there are some people we would call interculturally competent that doesn't speak or understand the languages of cultures with which they are in fruitful interaction.

## MANAGING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES!

As it is already pointed out in this paper IC is not about set of instructions, about some physical or verbal competence or skill that we can exert in a suitable moment, it is about the general attitude of a person which is limitless in its application.



Wherever and whenever there is a possibility of underachievement due to cultural conflicts or misunderstandings there is a need for a constructive management of cultural differences. If we think of the area of application of IC then we must go beyond our first remark about multicultural societies. In the light of our definition of culture, we can perceive other countries and other types of groupings as multicultural orders and not only multinational orderings as EU. Mixture of cultures can be found in almost every social setting. Of course, we can distinguish between various levels of cultural diversity, where national and religious differences are more foundational and can more easily yield in conflicts between members of different cultures as these bear more normative input, and can be foundations of different morals. As it is already said they are less prone to relativisation than some other cultural characteristics connected to a smaller and more recently established groupings. Because all of this, intercultural competence is seen as a skill which should be used by people working in international and multicultural (taken as a multinational) environments, but its application should not stop there - even if it is in these areas that its use is of the greatest importance and can yield best results.

We can conclude from previous assumptions that the space of application of intercultural approach and intercultural competence as tools for effective prevention and resolution of conflicts created due to opposite opinions of members belonging to a different cultural backgrounds is every organized public setting that includes actors (at least two) from differing cultures. First such setting that comes to our mind is education, but also health care systems, security organizations and actually every other working space that exercise social (or economic) interaction that can be multicultural are potential fields for IC application.

## ATTENTION, RESPECT AND MINDFULNESS

There is a great chance of not fulfilling the purpose that we have set - if we are stubbornly stuck with our preconceptions, prejudices and prejudgments. For example, if we are faced with a multicultural reality in the field of public health systems, we have to take into account that the patients that come to our hospitals are persons coming from different cultural backgrounds because their cultural identities can interfere with medical practices. And the fulfillment of the goal that is set, namely, to help people restore their health can be under-achieved or postponed due to our ill preparation for these situations.

It seems to us like the concept of interculturality is already in the heart of medicine (and enshrined in the Geneva Declaration). Nevertheless, even if there is a strong non-discriminatory thinking, deprived of all racial, nationalistic, political, etc. prejudices, at the very foundations of this practice, that doesn't mean that every doctor or a nurse is prepared to treat every patient as an equal and at the same time as an individual belonging to a specific culture nurturing distinct habits and customs. Intercultural approach has two sides: to accept everyone as an equal, as someone belonging to a specific cultural framework, but at the same time accept him/her as different and respect his/hers individuality. It is this part, diversity and not equality that is in the question here. Because of a growing diversification in the EU countries there is an urgent need to address these differences in a proper and effective way.

## INTERCULTURAL HEALTH?

Patients in a European hospital are coming from different backgrounds. They are belonging to different religions and they are born in different countries. Their habits and customs are frequently disparate and it is not uncommon that these customs influence their thinking and opinions regarding health in general. But even more: patients are individuals, with diverging needs, expectations, preferences. Neglecting all of these would jeopardise their cure and healing.

Different religions, for instance, perceive doctors and treatments in different ways. While the Geneva Declaration pretends not to take gender, nationality, race, etc. into account, it is precisely these and any other differences and varieties that must be taken into account. They should affect the practice, but in a positive and a constructive way because every practice should suit the needs of its beneficiary. Differences in cultures produce differences in perception of medical practice. Some cultures have more faith in doctors than others, some peoples have too much trust in doctors and never read prescriptions and diagnoses, others overmedicate, some never complain, etc. There are patterns in these behaviours and they can be foreseen and used to a good cause. Today's society is multilingual and multicultural and its citizens must be treated with respect of this diversity. Awareness of these patterns can be of utmost importance. Because medical treatment deals with human beings patients' responses, and attitudes and psycho-somatic processes are an integrated part

of a healing process. And if we can predict these responses, by our acquaintance with these discernable patterns, the outcomes of treatments can be significantly improved.

## MINDFUL AND INTERCULTURALLY COMPETENT

Hence, as a first summary, an interculturally competent person is a person is:

- **aware of own limitations and prejudices,**
- **open to other one's differences,**
- **respectful,**
- **flexible,**
- **ready to learn and to employ new knowledge.**

Only with these “skills” possible conflicts can be constructively avoided or resolved and also greater productivity and efficiency can be induced in contexts where people of different cultural frameworks operate together. First step towards IC is to become **aware of our own cultural framework** and to become conscious of its relativistic character. We should start seeing our own values, beliefs and practices as only one possible way of looking at things and doing them. We should be aware that we are also full of prejudices about other people and not only “those” people, we should reflect about our own behavior and try to explicate to ourselves what are our own prejudgments about people from different backgrounds and when are we employing them.

This should bring us to a place where we can see and be **open to other one's differences** as something that is as a worldview framework at least equally valid as our own. But at first we must become aware that other people or groups thereof can have different opinions, values and beliefs regarding various aspects of life, and that our own views are just another way of looking at things. We should be open to other one's opinions and values as something which is equally important to them, as our own are important to us. That some beliefs and values, with which we cannot fully relate to, are treasured and cherished by them as we treasure and cherish some of our own, and that they will sometimes proceed in actions according to their, and not according to our, assumed norms and rules. We should become sensitive and mindful to

these opinions and practices, be prepared to recognize them and learn about them, and not discard them as something unimportant, because they don't mean a lot to us.

We should be **respectful** of them. It is of outmost importance not to measure these different views using concepts of normality and standards of our own group and to respect them in their own right. We don't have to agree with them or to accept them as ours, but we have to give them a respectable place as they are part of someone's identity and we should not attempt to deprive anyone of them because they are the both selected and legitimate guidelines that put sense into the someone's world.

It is important to define the space of possible or actual disagreement. To be aware of the origin of these disagreements (as arising from different cultural settings) and to be **flexible** in their resolution. We should be able to adapt to various situations, and this means to make compromises when this is needed and to adopt some different views if this can help in creating more productive working atmosphere or to develop new, more efficient working strategies. In development policy, such approach is called “localization”.

At the end we should be open to **learning**. If we are aware of our own constraints, if we are open to differences which constitute cultural identities of other's, if we are respectful and flexible towards them, then we are already in the space which is exposed to new cultural experiences which can enrich us in more than one way. We are then in the position of an unbiased observer who can learn about other cultures and see her/his own in a new light, can comprehend the mechanism which underlie some intercultural disagreements, s/he can now clearly see why some strategies were not good when applied to multicultural situations, s/he can get to know some good general practices employed by members of a particular culture. All this knowledge that becomes available in this manner can, and should be employed to create new, better, more efficient practices and strategies which will be more readily accepted and respected as they are taking into account what different people value and cherish.

The sum of all these attitudes and skills is **intercultural competences**. They are a necessary tool for a large variety of professions, not limited only by the educational sector (where they are indeed of crucial importance), but their presence is of decisive importance in many areas of public policies (ad-

ministration, police, health, science, development and family policies, etc), and also in the characteristic work challenges of internationally active NGOs, international organizations or private companies as well.

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## TINKERING WITH CULTURAL RELATIVISM

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*The principle of cultural relativism rests on a vast accumulation of data gathered by applying techniques in field studies that have allowed us to penetrate the value systems that prop up societies with different customs. Briefly expressed, this principle is as follows: Judgments are based on experience, and experience is interpreted by each individual based on his own enculturation.*

(Melville J. Herskovits, 1974)

*Human thought is obsessed with a specter: relativism. If the truth has many faces, none of them are worthy of trust or respect. Fortunately, there is a remedy: human universals. These are the holy water with which the specter can be exorcised. But, of course, before we can use human universals to dissipate the threat of cognitive anarchy into which we will otherwise sink, we must find them. And so begins a new search for the Holy Grail.*

(Ernest Gellner, 1985: 83)

Relativism is not in fashion. We are living in times when it is necessary to “set the limits,” “give short, clear messages,” and “renew values,” as some politicians, religious leaders, academicians, and “experts” say. Their message is simple: we have entered a dangerous new era and society, our culture, and our way of life are threatened by an anti-western alliance. Under the label of a new stage or era, a series of visions of the global world which we supposedly inhabit have become consolidated.

A few years ago, the message focused on the deep transformations that humanity was undergoing and, instead of causing fear, globalization and the end of the Cold War predicted a better life, an almost perfect life, outside of history. For some, history had ended in 1989 with the fall of the Wall of Berlin. History ended when the fight among ideologies ceased and the liberal democratic state became the most evolved system of human organization (Fukuy-



ama, 1992).<sup>22</sup> Later, a less optimistic doctrine finally prevailed: the doctrine of the clash between civilizations (Huntington, 1993),<sup>23</sup> and along with it, the defense of a world, the western world, besieged from outside and from inside by terror and even by immigrants' ideas and lifestyles. For Huntington, the only way that the West can survive, in a world of seven or eight civilizations in conflict and in which ethnic struggles are increasingly bloody, is based on the moral renovation of western civilization. For Huntington, this moral renovation must come through the return of the western nations to the cultural canons, mainly Christian cultural canons, from which they arose, and through the rejection of the multiculturalist perspectives that accept a diverse society in a single state. As Appadurai defends in his essay *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006: 117-18), this prophetic vision of a world that is increasingly dominated by disorder is based on an essentialist conception of cultures. Cultures or civilizations, according to Huntington (1993), have a concrete geographical and racial nature and are defined by a well-defined religious, racial, and cultural homogeneity. From his perspective, the risk lies not only in the civilizations that are "enemies" of the West, but also, and above all, in the American –or European- multiculturalism that dilutes the unitary moral and cultural nature of the West. I am, without a doubt, simplifying a great deal and the situation I have just mentioned is much more complex. Old ideas that helped to explain inequality and injustice based on the criticism of colonialism and imperialism and on the abuses of the capitalist system have almost entirely disappeared from the arguments that help us to give a kind of meaning to the world.<sup>24</sup> These ideas and models seem to be as obsolete as industrial society.

The main objective of this text is none other than to incite the reader to reflect on the concept of relativism and, particularly, on the concept of cultural relativism. In contrast to categories such as colonialism or imperialism, relativism seems to have gained visibility in recent years. And it has gained this visibility in a rather paradoxical way. When I was studying the history of philosophy during my last year of secondary school, Franco had just died and relativism, like pantheism and other philosophical perspectives, was shamelessly cata-

22 This book arose from an article by the same author published in 1989 in *The National Interest*, a periodical published by The Nixon Center.

23 I am citing the article that gave rise to his book with the same title. Like Fukuyama, his theses became not only successful books but visions that inspired the international politics of the Republican government of the United States.

24 In recent years, texts with alternative visions of the world have once again attracted the interest of readers. See, for example, *Empire* (Hardt and Negri, 2000).

logue in our textbooks as 'false.' Those were times when many of us students were attracted by everything that was *false* or went against the ideas of the totalitarian and, fortunately, shaky political regime. Later, at the university, when I was studying anthropology, I discovered that this *false* doctrine of relativism and, more specifically, cultural relativism, was one of the cornerstones of the discipline. Thanks to cultural relativism, we could approach the people we studied, other ways of life and forms of culture, in a more open, comprehensive, honest way. Cultural relativism helped us not only methodologically in our fieldwork, it also allowed us to understand the reasons of others and, incidentally, to unmask our own prejudices and stereotypes. Approaching others' lives from a cultural relativist perspective helped us to understand their beliefs and practices by the light of their cultures and opened a path to communication with them, as well as to comparison-translation with other cultures, including our own. At that time, it seemed to us that cultural relativism was also an answer that facilitated coexistence and the exchange of perspectives and values in societies that were increasingly diverse, socially and culturally. Cultural relativism was associated with values such as coexistence, democracy, and civil society. However, the popularization and use of this concept, as well as of others coined by anthropology, such as ethnic group or culture (in this case I am referring to anthropologists' use of the concept of culture), have not given the hoped-for results.

In recent years, the word relativism has come to form part of a group of cursed terms that only seem to be related to negative concepts and values. According to those who criticize these terms, relativism is a nihilist manifestation that characterizes the decadence of western values and lifestyles. As Steven Lukes indicates, relativism is perceived as a threat to intellectual certainties and moral seriousness. "Pope Benedict [XVI], on the eve of his election, proclaimed that we were 'advancing toward a dictatorship of relativism that does not acknowledge anything to be true and whose highest objective is a person's own ego and desires'" (Lukes, 2008: 1).<sup>25</sup> As I have already indicated, I am not trying to tackle the issue of the features or tendencies that characterize the transformations that we have experienced over the last decades on a global scale here; I am not even attempting to define this anti-relativist front clearly (see, for example, Lukes 2008). Unfortunately, hardly any other opinions are

25 I do not think that it is by chance that Michael Brown (2008), alludes to this speech in the introduction to his text on cultural relativism 2.0.

heard in this debate, apart from the opinions of those who accuse relativism, and even cultural relativism, of the very evils that this perspective supposedly was trying to attenuate.

For those of us who were trained with cultural relativism as one of the cornerstones in the discipline of anthropology, this extremely negative way of painting it cannot fail to surprise us. Any discussion about cultural relativism comes up against the West's favorite universal values, human rights, and ends up invoking a series of extreme cases, such as vaginal infibulations and ablation of the clitoris, as well as the use of the veil and the stoning of adulterers. All of these examples, which deserve careful consideration and are not the object of condemnation –or of defense– by those who approach them with a relativist perspective, express a tendency and a worldview that the recently deceased Huntington would feel are very representative of the civilizational frontiers that he defended and that seem more a model of international relations than a worldview in which cultures are historical and diverse in themselves.

According to one of the anthropology handbooks that is most widely used today, cultural relativism is “The position that cultures’ values and patterns differ and deserve respect. Taken to an extreme, it argues that cultures should be judged only on their own terms” (Kottak, 2006: 385). In another key handbook, “The anthropological position that a society’s customs and ideas should be described objectively and paying attention to the context of this society’s problems and opportunities receives the name of **cultural relativism**” (Ember, Ember, and Pellegrine, 2004: 262). These authors do not approach the principle of cultural relativism in a neutral way; they openly ask about its relationship with our capability, as anthropologists, to judge or not judge customs and actions of foreign cultures. “Does our insistence on objectivity mean that anthropologists must not make moral judgments about the cultural phenomena that they observe and try to explain? Does this mean that anthropologists should not propose possible changes?” (p. 262). For the authors of the handbook, the answer is: “Not necessarily.” They state that, as anthropologists, we inhabit a complex moral and professional territory in which different circumstances lead us to adjust cultural relativism, as a general principle of the discipline, to each of the peculiarities of the cases or subjects of study that we deal with. This strategy of fitting it to the circumstances, which seems to violate the principles of cultural relativism in a paradoxically relativist fashion, is not new and tends to not deal with the fact that both the

origin of cultural relativism in anthropology and its later transformations are based on specific social and cultural circumstances that can be approached in a historical way.

Soon after the terrorist attacks that felled the Twin Towers and affected the Pentagon itself (2001), William J. Bennett made a declaration similar to what Cardinal Ratzinger had defended right before his election as Pope: relativism “implies that we have no basis for judging other peoples and cultures and, certainly, no basis for declaring some to be better than others, and even less to declare them ‘good’ or ‘diabolical’” (2002: 46).<sup>26</sup> From Bennet’s perspective, the most moderate cultural relativism became an enemy of United States democracy, not to mention western democracy, and it became the seed of evil that was eating away at the principles of our civilization. The accusation that cultural relativism maintains a worldview that respects other peoples and cultures and attacks our own is not new and has been defended by prestigious anthropologists such as Melford E. Spiro (1986) and Wilcomb E. Washburn (1987); this criticism often goes along with one of the subjects that in recent decades has truly obsessed anthropologists who defend or criticize any of the existing definitions of cultural relativism: the relationship between cultural relativism and human rights. To those who most enthusiastically defend human rights, it seems particularly clear that cultural relativism can become an obstacle to reaching a higher good at some times or for some controversial issues. It is not hard to find attacks on cultural relativism based both on the defense of human rights and on the principles of the Enlightenment both in the press and in academic publications;<sup>27</sup> morality and rationality join in

26 When the preparation and writing of this article was already quite advanced, my colleague Ángel Díaz de Rada, pointed out an interesting article by Michael F. Brown (2008), which came close to and defended very similar principles to those which I uphold here. These similarities are not uncommon in the social sciences and can resemble the polemic that took place in anthropology several decades ago about the human being’s capability of making the same inventions and discoveries independently in space and time. Like Steven Lukes (2008) or Brown himself (2008), we all start out by mentioning the declarations of the future Pope, and I do not believe that this is by chance. I have taken Bennet’s revealing quote (2002) from Brown, and I thank Ángel Díaz de Rada for calling my attention to the existence of the text by Michael Brown (2008).

27 See, for example, the articles by Goodale (2006), Alvargonzález (1989-99), and Sánchez Durá (2005). I wish to express my thanks to the students in the course “Cultural relativism as a tool for anthropological analysis” in the intercultural education doctoral program of the UNED INTER Group: María García Gómez, Olga Romero Guedes, and Carlos Filemón Sánchez Gómez; as well as Nuri Azalea Coto Medina, Abel Rogelio Terrazas, and María del Rayo Pérez Juárez, students in the course with the same name in the Master’s in intercultural education at the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural de México and at the UNED, Spain, for their commentaries, suggestions, and bibliographic references. This article is fruit of their stimulus, although they cannot be blamed for the defects and the opinions I give here.

this case and dress cultural relativism in the clothing of anti-modernism and amorality.

The surprise that this perspective of cultural relativism generates in those of us who are anthropologists and are familiar with the history of the discipline is even greater than that of those who only defend cultural relativism as the expression of “the idea that the beliefs and practices of others can be understood better in light of the specific cultures where they occur” (Ito-Adler, 2001: 529). Cultural relativism not only arises, as Barnard (2000: 99-119) and Brown (2008: 363-67), indicate, as a reaction to the unilineal evolutionist school that first consolidated and later developed anthropology as an academic discipline, but, in addition, it stems from approaches that demand scientific objectivity in describing other peoples and/or cultures, and articulates a moral commitment to the people we are studying. In British anthropology, the functionalism of the 1930s seems to implicitly defend a relativistic view of cultures. According to these functionalists, “ethical practices were the result of prolonged practical or structural developments, that had complex, subtle purposes that could not, therefore, be forced” (Whitaker, 2002: 479) or manipulated from outside. Meanwhile, in United States anthropology, cultural relativism was formulated explicitly and much more precisely in the period between the wars –that is, between World War I and World War II– by the disciples of Franz Boas. In fact, the cultural relativism defined by Boas and his disciples became, as Alan Barnard indicates in his history of anthropology, the dominant paradigm in United States anthropology during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Barnard 2000: 100). So-called *conventional cultural relativism* arose in the United States and hand in hand with the historical particularist school, based on a series of axioms. First of all, each culture is a world in itself or, in other words, the differences in values and behavior that exist among the different populations of the world are the results of cultural differences that given them meaning for their practitioners. Because of this, in second place, it is essential that ethnographers interpret the culture that they observe, understanding the internal logic of this culture’s meanings. As Brown indicates, the same universal measuring stick cannot be applied to all cultures. Because no culture or society can be placed on a scale of values or of evolutionary developments, anthropologists must approach ways of life that are satisfactory for those who live them in a tolerant fashion (Brown, 2008: 364-65, Barnard, 2000: 99-102, and Whitaker, 2002: 479-80).

The success of relativist approaches, despite the criticism that cultural relativism has suffered since its genesis,<sup>28</sup> is obvious. The richness of this approach to the study of humankind can also be defended by the development of different tendencies. In fact, anyone interested in tracing the history of relativism in anthropology faces a veritable jungle of categories and descriptions. In this article I will try to avoid this jungle. Three kinds of cultural relativism are generally distinguished: *descriptive*, *normative*, and *epistemological*. *Descriptive relativism* holds that the social and psychological differences between individuals are based on cultural diversity. *Normative relativism* states that, as it is necessary to judge cultures according to their own values, it is not possible to judge one culture with respect to another. *Normative relativism* is usually divided into two tendencies: *cognitive relativism* and *moral relativism*. The first holds that all the descriptive statements we make about the world are mediated by culture and the second holds that any evaluative statements that we make should be judged aesthetically and ethically in terms of the culture in which they are produced. For cognitive relativists, all science is *ethnoscience* and it cannot be transcended; for moral relativists, in the crosshairs of the enemies of relativism, we live submerged in moral and ethical codes that do not transcend the culture in which they arose. Finally, *epistemological relativism* is, in itself, the most hard-core version of descriptive relativism, holding that the systems of knowledge that different cultures possess are incommensurable, as Whitaker (2002: 480) indicates, and that each culture lives in a different and equally *true* cognitive world. One of the problems that this forest of classifications generates is that definitions and categories overlap one another and the nuances can be as varied as the researchers who approach their work from a relativist perspective (see Spiro, 1986, Barnard, 2000, Whitaker, 2002, and Brown, 2008).

Anthropologists, no matter what accusations they receive from anti-relativists, tend to distinguish between cultural relativism as a methodology and a moral relativism that they do not support or associate with their professional practice. On one hand, anthropologists observe, describe, analyze, and interpret; on the other, people who work for a living doing applied anthropology analyze, collaborate, and intervene in favor of the groups, societies, and cul-

<sup>28</sup> The origin or the first relativist formulations can be traced to periods previous to the one I have just described. A clear intellectual genealogy can be traced between the ideas of Franz Boas and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1802). However, as Michael Brown (2008: 365) points out, classic or conventional cultural relativism has a purely American flavor.

tures that have the hardest time defending themselves. Applied anthropology is a committed field in which moral relativism does not seem to have taken root. So what are the reasons behind the ferocious denunciation of relativism and, more specifically, of a cultural relativist conception that has come from anthropology?

Without a doubt, as I pointed out at the beginning of this article, there are political reasons, correctly or incorrectly interpreted, that place some of the evils that contemporary western society suffers at the door of cultural relativism. Although some of these denunciations seem to pay more attention to the messenger than to the bad news –depending on the glasses one uses to look at it, it is necessary to clarify that cultural relativism is not a neutral work methodology. In fact, cultural relativism offers a strong platform for attacking the racism and ethnocentrism that characterize western societies. For Boas and his disciples, anthropology was a discipline that was committed to their society. The Boasians' interest in the racial problem in the United States, or their siege of the deeply rooted ethnocentrism of the United States and of the West, were not happenstance; despite contemporary criticisms of relativism, their struggle was based on objective events and principles. In fact, one of the disciples of Boas who defined cultural relativism best, Melville J. Herskovits, has become the best representative of *ethical relativism* for authors such as Mark Whitaker (2002: 481). For Herskovits, cultural relativism was something more than an empirically tested method; cultural relativism was an ethical and philosophical perspective that allowed him to combat racism and cultural imperialism. Melville Herskovits is the person who prepared and wrote the famous, and still poorly understood, declaration of the *American Anthropological Association on Human Rights (1947)*<sup>29</sup> shortly before the UN approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). For Herskovits, as the AAA declaration indicates, the risk of passing a Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>30</sup> was based on the fear of cultural imperialism that could arise from rights that could hardly be defined as universal. Just like a growing number of anthropologists today, Herskovits advocated a critical perspective of Human Rights that would allow us to avoid, specifically, the progress of

29 AAA (American Anthropological Association). 1947. Statement of Human Rights. *American Anthropologist*, 49: 539–43. For a critical vision of cultural relativism and the declaration of the AAA, see Washburn (1987).

30 In this article, I am not going to get into one of the key themes of cultural relativism: the anthropological profession and human rights. Anyone interested in approaching this issue can consult the sources mentioned in the previous note and the work of Mark Goodale (2006).

different forms of cultural imperialism sheltered behind the defense of these supposedly universal rights (Goodale, 2006).

I doubt the common statement that a cultural relativist position clashes with a defense of human rights. This is one of the false oppositions that I criticized at the beginning of this text. I do not believe that relativism's criticism of the indiscriminate application of human rights, or of their universality, are enemies of a commitment to improving human beings' living conditions. In recent years, a growing number of ethnographies have shown how globalization and phenomena associated with globalization are transforming all societies and cultures of the world in unsuspected ways. Under the cloak of defending human rights, as Goodale (2006) shows, the neoliberal model is being extended as if it were something natural, or the only possible alternative; the growing number of scandals originated by NGOs with humanitarian purposes is beginning to sketch out a less positive image of their humanitarian missions. Is it so bad for anthropology to approach the actions of assistance groups in less economically developed areas of the world in a critical and reflexive way? Richard A. Shweder, in his reply to the aforementioned article by Michael Brown (2008), writes: "Many of the things that we take for granted, as natural, God-given, logically necessary, or practically indispensable for living in an ordered, safe, and decent society are the product of local history, of ways of seeing the world and existing in it that may have meaning and value for our own lifestyle but are not the only way of having a life with meaning and value" (in Brown, 2008: 378).

After World War II, some currents of anthropology began to cast doubt upon the validity of the cultural relativist paradigm that the historical particularists and the more or less wayward disciples of Boas had enthroned. The resurgence of grand explanatory theories in anthropology, such as multilineal evolution, structuralism, and cultural materialism, undermined the paradigm of cultural relativism, even though they did not banish this methodology that is mainly respectful of what we define as descriptive relativism from their work. Out on the street, the situation was quite different. On one hand, the old colonial powers that had unified the world were collapsing while, on the other hand, the struggle and claims of the silenced minorities in the United States and the West (the civil rights of African Americans and Native Americans, women's liberation...) were becoming evident. The grand models that had defined the world up to that time were cracking open, and the people who had,

some years before, headed the different kinds of liberation movements and minority movements, and who had barely set foot in a university before, entered into the academic world and became the professors. It was not by chance that relativism in anthropology ceased to be an academic concern, or a philosophical concern defended by intellectuals in order to intervene politically in their societies; from this moment onward, relativism seemed to *inhabit* the world and to be one of the forces that was transforming it. I think that this is how we must understand the criticisms that relativism receives both from the academia (Lukes, 2008) and, above all, from religious and political institutions. Because of this, and in order to attack the growing fear that the diversification of the societies we live in and the shrinking of the world generate in the middle classes that are becoming more and more of a minority, not to speak of the oligarchies that dominate us, articles such as Clifford Geertz's *Anti anti-relativism* (1984; 1999) appeared. For Geertz, it is not necessary to design such a complex philosophical position as Gellner's (1985) in order to explain the coexistence of universals with a certain kind of diminished relativism. According to Geertz, it is not so much a problem of being a relativist as of being an anti anti-relativist: "We anthropologists were the first to insist on a series of points: that the world is not divided into religious people and superstitious people, that political order can exist without centralized power, and justice without legal codes, that the laws that reason must be subjected to did not belong to Greece alone, and that England was not where morality reached its highest point of evolution. And, more importantly, we were also the first to insist that we all see the lives of the rest through the lenses of our own glasses. [...]. What we reproach anti-relativism with is not that it rejects an approach to knowledge that follows the principle 'everything depends on the color of the glasses you are looking through' or an approach to morality that holds with the proverb 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do.' What we object to is that it thinks that these attitudes can only be defeated by placing morality beyond culture, separating the knowledge about one and the other. This is no longer possible. If what we wanted were homely truths, we should just have stayed at home" (Geertz, 1999: 123-24; 1984; 275-76).

I doubt that the criticisms that I mentioned at the beginning of the text have much to do with fear of cultural imperialism or of the loss of people's and cultures' essential rights. When Pope Benedict XVI said: "A dictatorship of relativism is taking shape that does not acknowledge anything as definitive and

that leaves, as the only measuring stick, the person himself and his desires,"<sup>31</sup> it is not so different from statements such as "The irresoluteness that western secularism aspires to disseminate cannot be accepted by a proper mind that respects itself," made by Dr. Zawahiri, associate of Osama Bin Laden.<sup>32</sup> In my opinion, secularism or laicism and religiousness are not opposed, either, and, as a good relativist, I believe that there is room for everyone, even if it is not without conflicts and conversation.

Throughout these pages, meant to stimulate reflection and new readings, I have particularly mentioned the anthropologists who developed and defended conventional cultural relativism for one fundamental reason: no matter how recent the criticisms of cultural relativism are (see Lukes, 2008), the arguments always tend to be aimed at authors whose careers took place more than half a century ago. Anthropology, like the world, has changed a lot since then, and today we anthropologists do not feel that these ideas represent us. It does not fail to be paradoxical that the attacks on cultural relativism are attacks on a formulation of cultural relativism that is no longer applied as such in the discipline. For some, the disappearance of front-line cultural relativism from anthropological thinking is a great improvement, while for others, such as Richard A. Shweder, it is a clear setback. In his opinion, the fact that cultural relativism has lost its centrality among United States anthropologists is not a symptom of maturity but rather of "anthropologists' incapability of getting across an important moral message in a multicultural world in which we are not only lacking in mutual tolerance but in tolerance for anyone's presence" (Shweder en Brown, 2008: 377).<sup>33</sup>

I will end as I began, with a quote from Herskovits, the most common object of criticism from the anti-relativists:

Before I finish the examination of cultural relativism, it is necessary to answer certain questions about the culturally relativistic attitude. 'It may be true –they argue– that human beings live in harmony with the ways of life that they have learned and that they consider to be best.' A people can be so addicted to these ways of life that they are ready to fight and die for them.

31 Homily of the Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice Mass: <http://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/vaticano/conclave/misa.htm>

32 Broadcast on Internet on February 11, 2005. I have taken this quote from the conference by Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Mi cosmopolitismo* (2008). Kwame Anthony Appiah defends a model of ethical cosmopolitanism that deserves consideration by anyone who wishes to live in this century (Appiah, 2006).

33 See also Shweder (1990).

Their effectiveness in terms of survival value can also be acknowledged, since the group that lives according to them continues to exist. But, does this all not mean that all moral value systems, all concepts of good and evil, are based on such shifting sands that there is no need for morality, for proper behavior, or for ethical codes? Does a relativistic philosophy involve their denial?

Declaring that values do not exist because they are relative to time and place, or denying the psychological validity of diverging concepts of reality is to become a victim of a sophism that is the result of not taking into account the positive contribution of the relativist position. Because cultural relativism is a philosophy that, by acknowledging the values that each society establishes to guide its own life, insists on the dignity inherent to each body of customs and on the need for tolerance for conventions that are different from [90/91] our own. Instead of underlining the differences with respect to absolute norms that, although they are objectively attained do not, because of that, fail to be the product of a certain time and place, the relativist point of view highlights the validity of a series of norms for the people who are guided by them, and the validity of the values that they represent. (Herskovits, 1974; 90-91)

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## MULTIPLE IDENTITIES OF PEOPLE AND GROUPS

### A CONCEPT TO AVOID XENOPHOBIA?

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*"Each of us is several, is many, is a profusion of selves.  
So that the self who disdains his surroundings is not the same  
as the self who suffers or takes joy in them.  
In the vast colony of our being  
there are many species of people  
who think and feel in different ways."*<sup>34</sup>

Livro do Desassossego, Fernando Pessoa

## INTRODUCTION

This paper, by questioning the usefulness of racism as an umbrella term for ethnically based exclusion in Europe, focuses on reasons for xenophobia in Europe. First, because the original "scientific" basis or justification of racism has been discredited, the term does not truly capture the nature of the phenomenon. Second, in the European context, the actors of exclusion have generally shifted their discourse to a different rhetoric and now put forward mainly cultural rather than "biological" racial arguments. Thirdly, because racism is used as a generic term outside scientific analysis, it has become so distorted that scholarly reference to it often involves an endless effort of definition in order to clarify one's intention.

<sup>34</sup> Cada um de nós é varios, e muitos, é uma prolixidade de si mesmos.  
Por isso aquele que despreza o ambiente não é o mesmo que dele se alega ou padece.  
Na vasta colónia do nosso ser há gente de muitas espécies, pensando e sentindo diferentemente.

Xenophobia is here understood as an operational concept that aims at overcoming the limitations of the term racism. Precisely because there are various ways in which exclusion of others is practiced and justified today, an inclusive approach is needed. In attempting to compile views from all European countries (Baumgartl and Favell, 1995), xenophobia had to be defined rather broadly in order to allow each national specificity to emerge. At the same time, it needed to have some degree of specificity in order to facilitate comparison. As became clear from the evidence collected, discourses and practices of exclusion differ widely in Europe -not only between Eastern and Western Europe, but even between and within single countries.

In the final section, an attempt will be made to introduce the concepts of multiple identities for individuals and groups – as a possible antidote to the overstressed identification of groups with their nation-state, and the resulting identity crises at the collective level. Awareness of multiple identities hence strengthens groups' sense of belonging, and decreases their unease when confronted with ever more diversity, at a personal level and collectively. Globality, the main feature shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> century, will clearly increase the diversity of people and peoples – and thus will result in the need for more and better tools, competences, policies and paradigmata, to deal with diversity and interculturality – hence the call of the authors of this book for intercultural education on a large scale.

## BEYOND RACISM

Attempts at defining the term “racism” seek to explain the offensive discourse and violent actions of certain groups against their victims, even if they are no longer based on biological racism. But because of the vagueness of the term, various denominations have lately been coined in order to reflect the different nature of contemporary forms of racism: symbolic racism, indirect racism, clandestine racism, and finally, neo-racism (see e.g. Barker, 1981). Today, instead of espousing hatred of others, the defenders of exclusion call for a national preference (Amaducci, 1994). They underline diversity instead of the outdated premise of inequality, and feel that their nation (no longer their people) is endangered by a different culture (and not a race). Therefore, research must move forward “to the explanation of the forms that racism actually takes in our contemporary society” (Solomon and Wrench, 1993, p. 8).

A well-documented example of the nature of exclusion and discrimination in Europe, and the problems associated with applying the term racism, is found in the long history of Jewish-Christian tensions. From the beginning, assimilation occurred between Judaism and Christianity, and the threat of differences disappearing has been a constant in Christian-Jewish relations. Christian anti-Judaism had its roots in the 4th century, when Christianity became the religion of the Roman empire, and emerged as a distinct form of discrimination at least as early as the year 633, when converted Jews were held in suspicion of being “fictitious” Christians.

Pogroms and violence against Jews were frequent throughout the Middle Ages. Some authors cite the “Spanish obsession” with converted Jews during the Reconquest and the Inquisition as one of the earliest examples of racist behavior. However, the suspicion against converted Jews at that time was not linked to their biological features. It was directed against their supposed “fake” acceptance of Christianity, and their continuing worship of the Jewish religion after baptism. Even if the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492 was accompanied by various and numerous examples of barbaric violence, and other general accusations of exclusion FN<sup>35</sup>, the matter was rooted in religion and not race. Generally, anti-Judaism is the correct name for these religious conflicts in which Christians discriminated against Jews. One can convert to another religion, but one cannot convert to another race.

The observations of a 17th century Viennese writer also indicate that anti-Jewish behavior was more characteristic of xenophobia than racism. After the emperor had assigned special privileges to Jewish traders, the author noted the following Christian reaction:

Their own failure is repressed, the success of others is declared “evil” ... [and the Viennese act as] a brutal aggressor who invents (or imagines) the others blaspheme in order to justify its prosecution. The image is decorated with various Christian forms, but in the background is deep paganism, against everything which is different because it is “different” (Drabek, 1975, p. 73).

Legal equality eventually was initiated to counter such destructive trends: Joseph II's Toleranzpatent and Napoleon's post-revolutionary law in 1807 eliminated all juridical limitation for Jews. Political rule was wrested from

35 Yerushalmi (1993) believes that religious discrimination during the Inquisition was also translated into racial terms whereby “assimilation developed a new anti-Semitism,” a doctrine of the purity of blood (limpieza de sangre) which “can't be called other than racist” (p. 5).

the hands of church leaders, and assimilation slowly undermined the outward signs that enabled Jew and Christian to be differentiated.

But “science” soon emerged to fill the gap and provide a new basis for discrimination. Free from church prohibition, early “anthropologists” began to explore the human body and genetics, including “natural sciences” such as craniology, the measure of criminal potential by skull analyses. Darwinism was just one keyword in the boom of the natural sciences, and true racism was a by-product of this paradigm shift. Detailed studies of “race,” such as the infamous work of Joseph Artur Comte de Gobineau, divided humanity into two basic categories: white and colored. But in 1853 Gobineau included Jews as part of the white race, although any mixture of races was considered to produce mediocrity and ruin.

In the late 1850s and 1860s, anti-Judaists began to use scientific “racism” as a justification for their “anti-Semitism,” and it was only then that the concept itself was consistently and specifically “justified.” Finally there was scientific proof why they hated Jews. A new paradigm (i.e. the shift from Religious Anti-Judaism to “Scientific” Anti-Semitism) took over the discourse of exclusion, but it was scientism, not science, that legitimized political positions. In some cases even Jewish intellectuals “recognized” the inferiority of their “race.” Science could not be doubted.

The rest of the story is too familiar: the implementation of these “scientific principles.” In Europe the mania of the Nazis, and the extermination of Jews and Gypsies during World War II; but also in American segregation and South African apartheid FN <sup>36</sup>. However, discrimination based on scientific and biological reasons ceased to be an official standpoint in the USA in the 1960s and eventually in South Africa in the 1980s. After the holocaust, “race” was taboo in Europe, both in the west and the east. Discrimination did not cease to exist, but “science” could no longer be used to validate it, and the credibility of “racism” was biologically disproved. By the 1970s there was hope that official and eventually social exclusion might become a ghost of the past. Unfortunately, all this changed in the context of 1989.

The fall of the Berlin Wall, the Maastricht Treaty, the construction of “fortress Europe,” the success of right-wing parties in Western Europe, of former Com-

<sup>36</sup> Similar to racial scientism, historical scientism was the justification for dictatorship and violence under totalitarian communism.

munist turned-into-nationalist parties in Eastern Europe, and an “economic crisis” - to name but a few issues - challenged European post-war identity. New justifications, explanations, and rhetoric stepped in, creating a new wave of exclusion. But as a fundamental concept, “race” no longer completely captured the re-emergence of new rigid ideas of ethnicity and the problem of the Other. Xenophobia in its national variations had emerged.

In order to understand what happened, and what continues to happen ten years later, it is necessary to document the events of this period, and then attempt to find useful means of analysis when traditional terms and approaches fail to explain the phenomena of 1989. We must attempt to understand this new and complex beast, its instrumentalizations, and its main triggers. It must also be noted that such discussions of either the concept of race or xenophobia are problematic at yet another level: the convictions and evidence of social, behavioral, or biomedical scientists are irrelevant to the man on the street, who clearly sees that differences exist. The fact that racism is “biologically” wrong does not necessarily mean that it simply will cease to exist. The refutation of any racist ideal is sustained “not because it is more true, but because it is ethically superior,” and ethics are a difficult matter (see Todorov, 1993).

## XENOPHOBIA: AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Xenophobia, or “dread of foreigners (or strangers)” implies that people actually perceive a threat, but does not necessarily mean that there is a rational, causal relation between the emergence of a multi-ethnic society and the fear many European populations feel. There is no single source of this perceived threat, nor are there valid (rational) reasons for the perceptions. Some cite a “flood of immigrants,” which could feasibly be perceived as threatening (Winkler, 1992), but statistics do not confirm such a flood, and an increase in numbers alone cannot be the only trigger for xenophobic manifestations. Some perceive that the presence of a large number of foreigners endangers European identity, but there are no clear indications that identity is in fact being specifically eroded, or that foreigners cause a general cultural change that makes people feel uneasy. Nor is there clear or consistent evidence of a more general rise in “cultural fundamentalism,” which is, according to Stolcke (1994), a dread of change in general. In some states, certain foreign

groups were the targets of xenophobia and violence, while others were not: in Holland for example, xenophobic political organizations such as the Centrumdemocraten (CDs) have been far more opposed to the presence of Turks and Moroccans than Surinamese or Antillianese.

But xenophobia more aptly describes these various phenomena than the term racism since it encompasses two connected facets. On one hand, it indicates that there is an emotional or psychological side to the issue, and the reference to “foreigners” or “strangers” indicates that these fears are not strictly based on animosity toward others with a specific skin color, cultural background or physical characteristic. On the other hand, “foreigners” also implies that there is a governmental or state role in “regulating” the number of foreigners admitted to one’s country, the rights they are accorded, and the processes through which they are assimilated, integrated or incorporated.

But even if there is no singular and specific cause for the rise of xenophobia in Europe, it definitely figured prominently on the European agenda in the 1990s, and there was far more attention to this “problem” than some ten years ago. The year 1989 brought the fall of the Iron Curtain not only on the political landscape, but also in our minds. In 1989 and 1990, feelings of solidarity with the “new” neighbors prevailed. But already in 1992 and 1993 we saw the emergence of conflicts, separation, and exclusion not only in Yugoslavia, but in many other countries as well. A “wave” of xenophobia seemed to sweep over Europe. And many questions followed, revealing the complexity of the issue. Was this real, or was it exaggerated by the media? In other words, is it the real or the perceived problem that increased? Is xenophobia against neighbors stronger than against non-Europeans? Is there a genuine difference between Eastern and Western Europe in this aspect? Is there more xenophobia and racism in Protestant societies than in Catholic societies, as some writers contend? What is the specificity of xenophobic Europe as opposed to other regions?

The information collected over the course of our study (Baumgartl and Favell, 1995) answers some of these questions. At least three notions become clear: the triggers for xenophobic action in different countries, the degree of variation over time, and whether xenophobia is a problem for individual countries or for Europe as a whole.

Xenophobia as a general sentiment manifests differently depending on who is xenophobic, and who the target is. There is no single target: immigrants,

refugees, asylum seekers, guest workers, commuters, tourists, rich foreigners, or even absent ethnic groups provoke different reactions. Still, xenophobia does not necessarily imply action against others. It is when feelings and perceptions become conviction and justification for action that xenophobia becomes physically dangerous. From various viewpoints xenophobia can be perceived as a concept of the meso-level between two extremes: the first level concept is benign, the last level is disastrous. In other words, cultural fundamentalism can lead to xenophobia and then to exclusion and violence. In the same way, patriotism can lead to xenophobia and then to ethnic discrimination. When xenophobia reigns in a community, the diversity of others may eventually develop into racism against them.

Comprehending xenophobia, therefore, can be facilitated by considering it as a meso-level concept within a broad spectrum of perceptions, behaviors, and actions relating to “others.” It does not necessarily correlate with violence against foreigners, or even with demands for political action to mitigate the perceived threat they embody. It can nevertheless evolve into malignant or violent forms such as racism, ethnic cleansing, or genocide.

Being situated on a meso-level also means xenophobia is dangerous, but you cannot punish or combat it directly. This is reflected in the definition used in the report by the European Parliament: “Xenophobia is the latent resentment or feeling ... it is an attitude that goes before fascism or racism, and can prepare ground for them, but, in itself, does not fall within the purview of the law and legal prevention” (EP, 1991). Similar conclusions can also be drawn from our case studies. There is no instant antidote against xenophobia: neither information (“there are not that many foreigners”), nor laws (“you must not discriminate foreigners”), nor appeals (“do not fear foreigners”), nor explanations (“they come because of ...”), nor scientific projections (“we are not able to change history”).

Therefore, tools to avoid malignant offshoots of ethnic identity reaffirmation can only target the problem either indirectly (eliminate triggers for outbreak), or through long-term initiatives (education). In this sense, observation as it was undertaken in our project can also be described as an attempt not to explain xenophobia itself, but rather the symptoms, which lead to the outbreak of malignant manifestations of ethnic identity toward Others. Paradoxically, a group’s dread of losing its identity is specifically strong when differences

with other groups are perceived as fading. All tools to overcome xenophobia should thus avoid real or perceived disappearances of differences.

## ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY

One way to begin to understand xenophobia is to consider it as a more malignant corollary of a rise in or greater preoccupation with collective identity, which tends to be defined according to dominant ethnic, religious, economic, political, and cultural terms. To have an ethnic identity is not per se a negative feature. On the contrary, it is a necessary step and part of the development of everybody's personal identity/ies. On the individual level, psychologists explain that "identity denotes the sense of self we acquire over time, as we experience and review our own core characteristics" (Thomson et al., 1995). National identity is one of these core characteristics - beginning in early childhood, it provides a sense of "inner solidarity with our ethnic group's ideals and comfortable sense of belonging to a larger group" (ibid). According to Herskovits (1972), the ethnocentrism of group identity,

"... performs an essential function for human beings.... Without it, the kind of orientation in society that is indispensable to man could not be achieved, and the adjustment each individual must make to the world in which he lives would be difficult, if not impossible" (p. 75).

But constructing one's own identity means at the same time recognizing the diversity of Others. We cannot help but note differences, and to believe that "we" are special and often even superior to those with other identities. Prejudices therefore are an unavoidable result of contact with other ethnic identities, and sometimes, the source of feelings of superiority (see Todorov, 1985). By appreciating one's own identity and, in contrast, the alterity of alien groups, we have achieved the necessary steps toward a sound and sustainable self. A Salzburg Seminar session in 1994 observed that:

"ethnicity is not only central, it is also paradoxical: ... a sense of separate-ness, of difference, which may be as deep as that other human feature of the human condition, namely our dependence on others; on the one hand ethnic identity as a source of pride and perspective and empowerment, self-understanding, and yet the negative side, ethnic identity as the basis of bitterness, of feeling constantly besieged, of being belligerent."

Asserting a strong ethnic identity therefore is not necessarily harmful to others, but it manifests across a broad spectrum. A positive feeling of pride toward one's own ethnic group and a feeling of closeness to its customs, traditions, rituals, history, and language could be defined as benign patriotism. But when one perceives that his or her ethnicity is threatened, negative perceptions against other groups typically emerge. Various processes can be initiated: the projection of negative characteristics of one's own group onto the others, the externalization of our own unwanted features onto "them," the splitting of otherwise complex relationships into simplistic good/bad - we/ them scenarios, and the scapegoating of another group as the source of all problems. Although one's own group - similar to one's language - is in reality a diverse, historically grown conglomeration of people, influences, languages, cultures, and customs, it is increasingly perceived as a homogenous entity, and other groups may likewise be perceived as homogenous, cohesive, and single-minded, but in a negative or threatening way.

When large groups regress and become preoccupied with the questions of Who are we now?, How are we different from them?, and What will become of us?, the result is often a tense and unstable social and political atmosphere in which the group attempts to maintain its sense of a cohesive identity. Members of various ethno-national groups begin to increase their attachment to what they define as their "own" large group, and simultaneously focus more and more on what differentiates and delineates them from their neighbors. In some cases, this process gains enough strength to greatly influence political, legal, economic, military, and other aspects of domestic and international relations. Such was and still is the case in the former Yugoslavia, where the answer to a collective questioning of identity ultimately was sought through war (see Volkan, 1997).

When a group regresses, it may utilize primitive defense mechanisms such as externalization, projection, splitting, excessive idealization, and excessive devaluation. For example, Cullberg-Weston (1994), a psychoanalyst who conducted extensive research in Yugoslavia as it was collapsing, observed that:

"[In Yugoslavia] we found a strong tendency toward splitting. Images were split into good/bad and into we/them categories. Almost everyone idealized their own ethnic group and demonized others.... The black-and-white thinking was encouraged by nationalistic leaders who actively played on group antipathy, using propaganda aimed at creating fear, rage and insecurity about people's safety" (p. 27).

Again, the motivation behind such behaviors is the relationship between “self” and “other,” or “us” and “them” and is not explicitly race oriented, but can instead be based upon class, religion, or social and ethnic dissimilarities. Even more, profound feelings can awaken when differences are perceived to be disappearing (for example, by assimilation). When we talk about xenophobia we are talking of people for whom their ethnic or national identity is or has become more important than other sources of identity.

Once this step has been taken, i.e. once one’s own group is perceived as congruous and another as a “suitable target for externalization” (Volkan, 1997), then it is possible to dehumanize the “other.” Even if cooperation and coexistence characterized the relationship of one group with another, as in the former Yugoslavia, severe societal stress and threats to identity can cause a rapid escalation of the rhetoric of exclusion to a previously unknown level of irrationality and violence. Once alterity is the main criterion for assigning ever new negative characteristics, it does not really matter any more whether they are true or false. The only thing that matters is that they are believed. It is this latent “dehumanization of the other” that we call xenophobia.

Thus, xenophobia is the “dread of foreigners as a group, which is latent, and triggered by a social, economic, or political crisis situation that helps initiate an ethnic identity crisis” (Baumgartl/Favell 1995).

## THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Although the end of the Cold War prompted a period of enthusiasm and optimism, it also caused many Europeans to collectively question their identity. In post-World War II Western Europe, considerable energy was devoted to internal and international issues like reconstruction, progress, anti-Communism, prosperity, growth, and technology. Eastern Europe partly embodied an antagonist identity: socialist/communist values, anti-capitalism, internationalism, but also progress and technology. Since the 1980s, however, most if not all of these concepts had accumulated doubts and lost legitimacy. “Green” and socialist movements grew in the West, and Perestroika and calls for democracy grew in the East, undermining traditional ideologies and identities. With the collapse of the Soviet/East European “enemy,” lines between “us” and “them” were blurred further, a vacuum of sorts emerged, and xenophobia seemingly grew to fill it and establish a “new” enemy Other.

At the same time, the European Union (EU) increasing took over characteristics of a new state entity with powers formerly exerted by individual countries. There was greater stress on the similarities and cooperative potential of Europe’s diverse nations, rather than the differences that led to two brutal 20th century wars, and numerous others in the more distant past. Growing economic links and industrial and governmental collaboration linked former enemies such as France and Germany. Barriers to trade and travel were being lifted through extensive multinational negotiations. The Schengen agreements (1990) provided free movement and unrestricted travel to persons across all borders of its (then) fourteen (today 27) member states. Individual nations were perceived as becoming the states of a new federal super-nation called Europe.

But abolishing borders between the individual states of the EU necessitated the simultaneous construction of new “walls” to protect the collective borders of the emerging union. Some feared that once “foreigners” (called, for example, *extra-communitari* in Italy) gained access to one EU country, individual states would be unable to regulate the entrance of “undesirable” elements into their own, which was especially troubling to countries suffering from economic crises and/or the growth of organized crime. Perhaps it is no coincidence that in July, 1998, the EU also opened the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna (today called EU Agency for Fundamental Rights).

During this same period xenophobic political parties began to grow in many but not all European countries. According to the data collected, this rise seems not to be directly linked to the actual number of foreigners or minorities in a country. Indeed a good number of the countries have shown no signs of developing political parties that espouse xenophobic, racist, or exclusionist policies (Finland, Greece, Sweden, Portugal, Spain); in some they were already well established but achieved more significant representation in both local and national governments (notably Austria, Italy, France, Slovakia, Belgium). In still others, such as Germany, the Netherlands and Great Britain, a more diffuse and legislated toughness on foreigners appears to have vanquished the direct political threat of the extreme right for the time being. These differences do not appear to correlate with data on a more general deterioration of social attitudes (observed in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Austria, Germany, but not in France, Belgium, and Great Britain).

## CULTURAL FUNDAMENTALISM: NEW LEGITIMACY IN WESTERN EUROPE

As noted earlier, the justification for exclusion of others has changed over time, and various “valid” (fashionable) paradigms have been used (see Baumgartl, 1989). The exclusion of foreigners as a general principle appears with two different explanations: absolute exclusion (neo-racism) is voiced against foreigners because of their ethnic belonging. It is justified as a quality problem. In contrast, relative exclusion opposes the number of foreigners, and wants to set limits: here the problem is of quantity (“the boat is full”). In practice these two discourses are often mixed, or one is put forward in order to hide the other one in the background. But today’s rhetoric has taken on yet another new ideological face to support such exclusion: cultural relativism. Cultural relativism is based upon the powerful force of enculturation over both individuals and their groups:

“[This process of cultural learning] is all-pervasive, and for the most part, we are not conscious of its operation. Cultural symbols are internalized so that they not only assure adequate response to particular cues to behavior, but set up those enculturated restraints that go under the designations of conscience, super-ego, guilt feelings and the like. Hence if culture is to be thought of as the ordering behavior in a society, enculturation is the mechanism which orders for each of its members the form and extent of accepted modes of conduct and aspiration, and also sets the limits within which variation in individual behavior is sanctioned” (Herskovits, 1972, p. 76).

The power of culture over people, and the notion that it is far easier to think and act in accustomed ways than to learn new ones, is then used to justify the exclusion of “foreigners” from “incompatible” cultures. Proponents see such foreigners as essentially unable to successfully integrate or assimilate, doomed to a peripheral existence in which they can neither maintain their own culture or adopt the new one. Moreover, it is, according to smart ideologists like Jean-Marie Le Pen (France), Franz Schönhuber (Germany), Umberto Bossi (Italy), or (the late) Jörg Haider (Austria), no longer a negative attitude against foreigners which makes Europeans reject further immigration or refuge: respect for the diversity of others, so they say, should induce us to resist integration. For their own best interest “they should stay where they live,” and thereby keep

alive their unique culture and reduce the “brain drain” that poorer countries experience.

This type of anthropological reasoning is further supported by new “biological” ideas. For example, German behavioral scientist Eibl-Eibesfeldt, in his recent book (1994) underlines the thesis that, from a genetic viewpoint, human beings still belong to the Stone Age. Xenophobia is a relic from our tribal heritage, reflecting a psycho-biological fear of “strange” things, and politics cannot ignore this fact. Hence multi-cultural societies violate biological rules and needs, will always encounter inherent problems, and therefore may not be as viable as we would like to believe.

But others maintain that such “rational” justifications hide unconscious perceptions of a threat to identity rather than a vague primitive genetic trait or “reasonable” attempt to maintain cultural integrity:

“... for the worth we ascribe to the things we have and use and the ways in which we use them; the relationships we sanction; the beliefs by which we live, lodge deeply beneath the stream of conscious thought. That is, we take these values for granted, which means that when they are challenged, our response is essentially an emotional one. On this plane we react to challenge; we do not reason” (Herskovits, 1972, p. 77).

Especially when comparing the past and present ethnic composition of former multicultural cities such as Vilnius (Vilna), L’viv (Lemberg), Thessaloniki (Solon), Chernowicz (Chernovtsy), Vienna (Wien, Bec), or ultimately Sarajevo and Prishtina, one is actually inclined to confirm the thesis of an innate impetus for mono-culturation. Peoples without a home state, like the Gypsies, Armenians, and Jews, but also small minorities who never had political independence (for the Occitanes in Southern France, see Antolini, 1994) have been reduced to a mere fraction of their former number in numerous places. On the other hand, many recognize that in Europe, “ethnic purity has never existed ... diversity is the base of the very vitality of the European civilizations” (Bocchi and Ceruti, 1994, p. 206).

In this shift to a “cultural” paradigm, similar concepts and ideology are used by both sides for different ends: multi-cultural society is presented as a goal or a threat. According to the intentions of the speaker, they achieve a double sense. For example, cultural diversity is used by both defenders of equal rights for foreigners and propagators of exclusion; “ethnicity” can today both support claims of racial purity as well as the distinctive and valuable characteristics of all ethnic groups.

The main target of xenophobia in the West, in the absence of significant minority populations, are mainly immigrants and refugees. Although there are also a few multi-ethnic states in Western Europe, their constellation of ethnic groups reflects a balance between them (see Switzerland or Belgium). The combination of a solid majority group and traditional resident minorities is less evident here than in Eastern Europe. Against history and all hard data, immigrants and refugees are therefore perceived as exploiting the welfare system, as changing the national culture and traditions, and as competitors in an ever tightening job market.

Taguieff (1994) and Amaducci (1994) studied this phenomenon in detail in the French case. The Front National (FN) has indeed been at the forefront of exclusionary discourse, and has achieved significant governmental representation. In turn, both the Wallonian and Swiss FNs have adopted the French model nearly without modifications. Most countries do have some form of party or organization which voices exclusion as its main content, and their political importance is often in inverse proportion to their degree of radicalism. But the Austrian FPÖ and the French group of right-wing parties, which use the threat of foreigners in their discourse, have convinced nearly a quarter of their respective national electorates.

In contrast, in Mediterranean countries xenophobia was not reported to be a main issue in national politics, apart from the Spanish and Portuguese CE-DADEs (Celda de Amigos de Europa - Cell of Friends of Europe), which on their part represent less than one percent of the population. Occasional gaffes by Lega politicians in Italy contrasted with a strong stand of other mainstream parties against “naziskin mobilisation.” Greece has not overcome its ethnic tensions with either neighboring or domestic Slavic and Turkish groups, but foreigners as such are not a dominant issue.

Populism and xenophobia therefore have paid political dividends, when used in the national politics of today’s Western Europe. At the same time, moderate demands of exclusion have a higher mobilizing power than radical discourses. Particularly in vogue for this purpose has been the instrumentalisation of history: “historic ethnic conflicts” have been resurrected by would-be-historians and then adopted by politicians and journalists. Such simplistic and emotion-driving perspectives have quickly gained popularity and legitimacy, while the contrary evidence of more objective historians has received far less attention (see Bocchi and Ceruti, 1994). In some countries,

mainstream parties’ ensuing move to the right seems to have indeed lowered the potential for primarily xenophobic parties to grow further (Germany, Netherlands, France, Great Britain, Austria). A general tightening of the climate toward weak groups in all societies, however, gives little hope that particular attention to and awareness of the need to interact with Others will change significantly in the years to come.

## NATIONALISM: THE NEW UNIFYING IDEOLOGY IN EASTERN EUROPE

Eastern Europe faces a different kind of exclusion: the targets are less rich foreigners from the West, or poor foreigners in transit, than resident minorities. Difficulties in the transition to independent democracy, which was anticipated to be far easier and faster in 1989 than it has turned out to be, resulted in a general crisis situation. An identity crisis brought on by the end of Communist ideology followed, and a wave of disenchantment with transition hit the former Eastern Block. In such situations, minorities became the main scapegoats and served as the objects of projection for numerous resentments.

In contrast to Western Europe, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with the exception of Poland, have substantial minority populations of different ethnic origin. Most of these groups are members of the majority ethnic group in neighboring states (Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania, Turks in Bulgaria, Slovaks in the Czech Republic, Croats, Serbs, and Bosnians in the successor states of Yugoslavia). Moreover, nearly all of these countries have significant Gypsy populations. As was observed most clearly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but is likewise present in most Eastern European countries, the increasing importance of ethnos after the fall of the Soviet Union created xenos. With the collapse of the principle of a Soviet brotherhood that discouraged narrow nationalistic identity in favor of a higher equality and purpose, countries and groups in Eastern Europe began to question who they now were and what sort of independent nation they would become.

Once the xenos was perceived as such (as a strange body amongst us), and welfare capacities and economic problems induced further anxiety about the present and future, a minority was defined as the guilty one. Ironically, most if not all former Communist parties, thinly disguised by new names, tuned their messages of “salvation” to this wavelength. With the exception of the Czech

Republic, in all Eastern European countries, re-baptised former Communist parties have returned to government at a certain point in the mid-1990s, be it in coalition (Hungary, Slovakia, Poland) or by majority (Bulgaria, Romania). Nearly all of them (again Poland may be the exception to the rule) use a new nationalistic rhetoric in order to realign their constituency. In general it can be said that, contrary to the West, xenophobic parties are not a right-wing minority, but represent the ethnic majority politically.

## GYPSIES: AN IDEAL TARGET

Journeying through Europe since the 13th century, when the first wave of these nomads entered the European continent from the southeast, Gypsies (also called Travellers) have traditionally been the scapegoat in crisis situations. Their relation to the non-Gypsy population (Gaz'e or Gadge in their language) has always been one between banishment and inclusive control. The main threat Gypsies posed was often simply their nomadic status, which prompted suspicion and therefore rules and laws aimed at settling them as a solution to their "deviancy." But such integration attempts and policies geared to encourage their settlement frequently caused them to be rejected by local populations, thus forcing them to move on. Today 30% continue to be "on the move," 40% are settled, and the rest shift between the two lifestyles (Lidgeois, 1987). In addition, Gypsies particularly have been hit hard by the modernization of the last decades: they have lost their economic base and their professions (like repairing or door-to-door selling) have become obsolete. Many of them have moved to cities or their peripheries, where they have become more visible targets.

In Eastern Europe, Gypsies are strongly rejected by populations in all countries. Even in the Czech Republic, the wunderkind among the former Eastern Block, there is uncertainty about what to do with the Gypsy population, given the impossibility of "getting rid of them." Lower degrees of exorbitant hatred against Gypsies seem to prevail only in those countries where they came close to being exterminated by the Nazis. More numerous than Jews in many countries in the aftermath of the Holocaust, although nearly exterminated in others, they have been named the "New Jews" by some (Tucker, 1994). They are not (yet?) a main target of all-European xenophobia, but certainly are targets in countries where they are present in significant numbers (Bul-

garia, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain). In other countries, where they constitute only a minor part of the "foreign" population, they still receive inordinate attention (Ireland, Finland), and have been the victims of violent attacks in Hungary, Austria, and Italy.

No solution has yet been found for dealing with this European people nearly as numerous as the population of Switzerland. The attempted politics of forced assimilation in Communist Europe only reinforced the ever-present antipathies against Gypsies, and any activity in the West to meet their special needs as a nomadic people (like offering stopping places) has met with outrageous resistance by the local populations in Italy, Spain, Great Britain, and Austria. Throughout Europe they provoke irrational and intense dread, even among people who never had any contact with Gypsy communities.

But surprisingly little is known by social science about their beliefs, traditions and culture. Gypsies, therefore, continue to historically represent the Other in their physical appearance, lifestyle, professions, and mentality, and attitudes and laws pertaining to them will most likely provide a barometer for both country-specific as well as Europe-wide xenophobia.

## INSTRUMENTALISATION: THE REAL TRIGGER

History, and the myths and misconceptions that surround it, have been used to legitimize current conflict in Europe. Hatred and war have been quickly reignited, and irrational fears have been justified or incensed by spurious "rational" concepts and ideologies. It is true that the path to fully knowing the Other is long and fastidious. In his interpretation of the conquest of America, Todorov identifies various steps: after discovery, one has to conquer, and to love, in order to know. Building tolerance and mutual understanding is a slow process even between two individuals. It is presumably even more complicated between different ethnic groups when the rules of communication cause exponential complication. Frequent misunderstandings and interest-motivated interference can start the vicious circle of ethnic hatred, and undermine within a few months the trust built carefully over decades. "Intolerance has so far always won over tolerance," as Todorov (1985, p. 299) has pessimistically observed. Observation over the last decade of both social and political phenomena suggests that the ease of xenophobic populism in Europe may prove this equation to be true, although the consequences of this xenophobic



arithmetic have surely not been calculated. Against all the evidence (e.g. that foreigners will not suddenly, quickly, and easily leave en masse), politicians and political parties insist on painting a myopic portrait of an illusive fantasy of the contentment, security, and prosperity of ethnic homogeneity. But in the end we have “no choice between tradition and modernity - the goal must be the renovation of creativity. Europe could become a model for the world, if it respects the other, and opens to the other. In doing so, it would find again its equilibrium, one of its characteristics” (Le Goff, 1994).

## MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AS THE ANTIDOTE?

As mentioned earlier, individuals acquire a wealth of identities during their life, as they grow from newborns to youths and adults. They connect to, and identify with, their peers, be it firstly in the family, and later with school-mates, friends they share a hobby with, sport, music, or cultural styles. Professional identities join later, and usually any adult person can identify with dozens of groups of peers. According to Volkan, it is the “tent” of identities, under which we feel safe: the more, the better. Clearly, a wealth of identities makes the loss of single ones more bearable, still allowing us to keep a notion of exclusive self.

The same process is true for larger groups. As Anderson observed, they are all “imagined communities,” and choose and select common traits of historical events, cultural traditions, and political and social practices, amongst others, as their distinct identity.

At the personal level, an identity crisis happens when identity features are challenged or taken away, in particular in situations of drastic change, reform, historical developments, or, especially, wars and other collective traumata. Following the image of the tent, the preventive cure against collective identity crises of ethnic groups, as it were, is to strengthen and increase the number of identity layers. These allow for a better self-identification of the group, and avoid hysteric reactions against others, which often follow identity crises.

European identity, as it is envisaged in European Union Treaties (e.g. by creating the legal term “European Citizenship”), could be one additional layer of identity, applicable to all “Europeans.” The same is true for the emerging notion of “Global Citizenship,” expressed in transnational movements for the environment, for a sustainable future, or against war. However, at present

national identities still prevail, and at the same time their disappearing exclusive importance and decreasing relevance (e.g. during the global financial crisis 2008) puts a strain on the collective identity of most nation-states, especially in Europe.

The (path towards) the “solution” of ethnic or national identity crises of groups, and their disastrous consequences, is, thus, the reinforcement and addition of other identity features, for large groups also. More research is needed in order to understand what impedes or facilitates the emergence of new identity layers, which are to substitute or complement the over-emphasis on (only) a national identity. Regional identities, transnational, or continental collective identification would naturally strengthen the “tent of identities” under which large groups feel at ease, themselves – and in peace.

Once we know how large group identities are brought about, we can aim at education programmes which make people aware of the wealth of identities they already possess, and promote the inclusion of new identity layers. Multiple identities of groups, as well for individuals, enhance self-awareness, sense of oneself, and the rootedness of groups. The emergence of new social risks and changes in the perception of ourselves and others in a globalised world will thus be more digestible for large groups. The same is true for the encounters with other groups, which are facilitated and more frequent as well (due to migration, tourism, and, increasingly, intercultural societies). Awareness of multiple identities, at the individual and group levels, is both a precondition and an objective of intercultural education. Diversity, thus, is seen as richness – both for ourselves, and at a collective level.

## NOTES

1. Por mi raza hablará mi espíritu (“Through my race, my spirit speaks”) is the official motto of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) but it certainly is not a racist statement.



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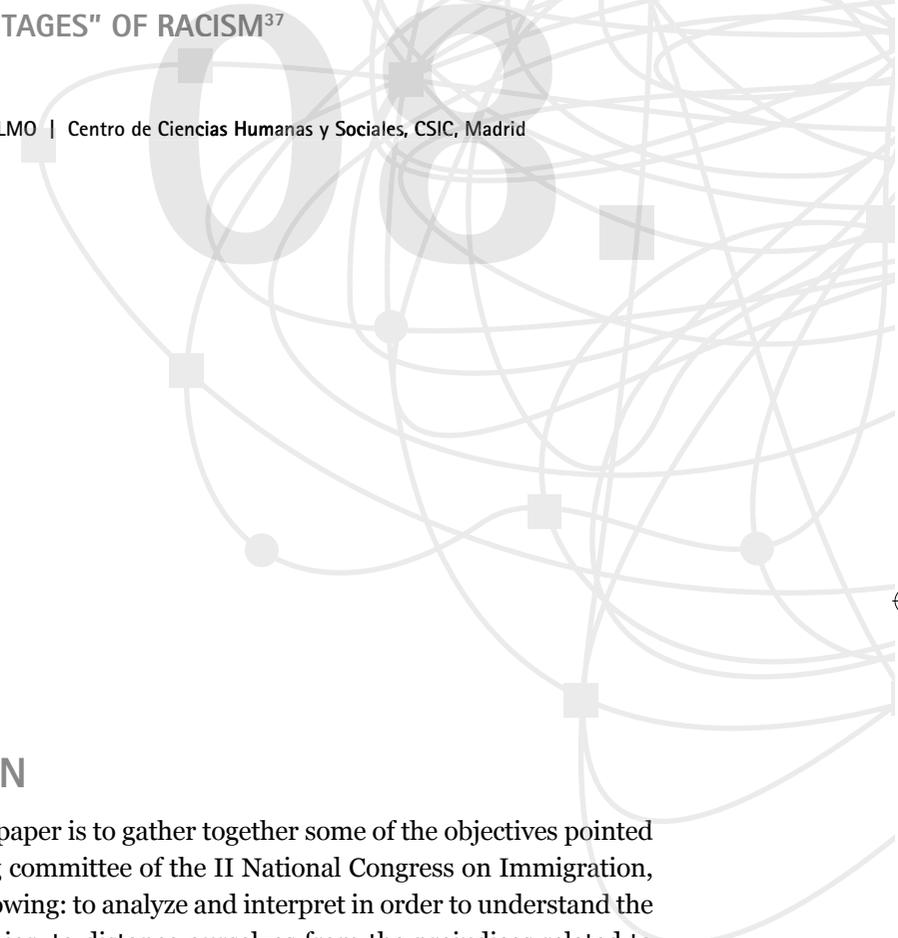
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# THE BUSINESS OF DIFFERENCES

A PROPOSAL FOR UNDERSTANDING  
THE "ADVANTAGES" OF RACISM<sup>37</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The intention of this paper is to gather together some of the objectives pointed out by the organizing committee of the II National Congress on Immigration, in particular, the following: to analyze and interpret in order to understand the keys to human behavior, to distance ourselves from the prejudices related to the construction of the other and to conclude by arguing that the meeting of cultures will favor diversity, which is the condition that defines the human species. And I am going to do this through a study not of immigrants, but of the receiving community itself, proposing a theoretical and methodological analysis.

<sup>37</sup> This paper was first published in: GARCÍA CASTAÑO, F.J. and C. MURIEL LÓPEZ. 2002. La inmigración en España. Contextos y alternativas. Vol. 2 pp. 141-148. Granada: Laboratorio de Estudios Interculturales, Universidad de Granada. The author thanks the Laboratorio de Estudios Interculturales for its permission to reproduce it with slight modifications.



The three subjects chosen, racism, prejudice, and discrimination, have a close connection that I will state explicitly later. Now, however, I would like to begin by presenting a general approach to the subject using an image as a metaphor in order to try to communicate a perspective that I consider useful for understanding some of the ideas that I will develop throughout this paper.

My proposal is to think about racism as if it were an iceberg. Only a small part is visible above the water, but the way it works depends, above all, on the invisible mass of ice that is hidden below the water. The same thing happens with racism: only its most visible manifestations catch our attention, the majority of its nature is not considered. However, my intention here is to do exactly the opposite because I want to analyze not the visible manifestations of open, voluntarily defended racism, but the racism that is least noticeable in daily life, the racism that is learned unconsciously and reproduced even though it is rejected. This is what I compare to the hidden mass of the iceberg, while I identify the visible part with the racist manifestations produced by those people who claim to be racists, at least at certain times. Because of this, the victims of racist acts and attitudes end up preferring people who openly acknowledge their racism,<sup>38</sup> because they are not deceiving them, because they are the visible part and are, therefore, predictable. When you are going to crash into the mass of ice, you prefer to confront what you can see, which is what you expect, but it is precisely the part that you do not see that can do the most brutal damage.

I would like to add another observation before concluding this short introduction: most studies on racism, both academic studies and studies based on opinion surveys, only study the visible part of racism, as if it were the only part. I am referring, for example, to the expression of violence in El Ejido or the crime of the Dominican immigrant woman in Aravaca.<sup>39</sup> They avoid hidden racism, perhaps because it is not visible. This is the reason that B. Abdel Hamid, for example, president of the Association of Moroccan Workers and Immigrants in Spain (Asociación de Trabajadores e inmigrantes Marroquíes en España, ATIME), a group acknowledged by the *Ford Report on Racism in Europe* (1991: 107) as the group Spaniards discriminate against the most (followed by the gypsy group), stated the following in a work titled *Hablar y dejar de hablar (sobre racismo y xenofobia)* (Martín Rojo and others 1994):

38 Boyley's work (1995), *The Tortilla Curtain*, expresses the idea I am referring to here in novelized form.

39 Tomás Calvo Buezas, for example, has devoted one of his books to this crime (Calvo Buezas 1993).

To conclude, Spanish people are not racist, but watch out! Racist and xenophobic groups can grow if our situation does not improve and these problems can affect the entire society [although he then clarifies this]: Now, after the assassination of the Dominican woman Lucrecia, we must warn that there are indications that this situation is changing. (Abdel Hamid 1994)

I am going to argue the opposite. I will also argue that racism is a mechanism that is difficult to evaluate and much more difficult to measure, and that it does not change much because it is hard to recognize and, therefore, the instruments used both to analyze it and to combat it are not very effective. I will devote my presentation to proposing a different way of analyzing racism and of understanding it in order to change it. In contrast to the books I have just mentioned, I would like to propose another book titled *The New Xenophobia in Europe* (Baumgartl and Favel 1995), with an analysis that is not based on surveys and with a quite different diagnosis of the situation.

## 1. RACISM: A DEFINITION

In contrast to the majority of the works in Spain devoted to analyzing racism, my intention is to analyze the subject in a much broader, older context than the context corresponding strictly to immigration and to demonstrate that racism affects each and every one of us, thus confronting the more generalized opinions that declare that the ones who are racists are the others.<sup>40</sup>

In my opinion, one of the best definitions of racism is the one Paul Kivel published in 1996 in a book titled *Uprooting Racism*, where he stated that it was “an unfair and unbalanced distribution of power, privileges, land, and material goods” (Kivel 1996: 2). Personally, I consider that any discourse, attitude, or tacit commitment that attempts to explain social inequality by using arguments outside of the social context in which this inequality is produced to be racism; that is, when inequality is justified in terms of physical appearance, religion, geographical origin, mother tongue, or cultural membership. None of these reasons can explain or justify a distribution of power, privileges, land, or material goods (paraphrasing Paul Kivel) that follows a social hierarchy.

What a racist reasoning assumes is that social differences should exist be-

40 Tomás Calvo Buezas used this expression as the title of a book that gathers the opinions reflected in the interviews he carried out (Calvo Buezas 1989).

cause people do not have the same physical appearance, do not speak the same language, were not born in the same places, or do not share the same religious beliefs or cultural values. But that leads to the deduction that some places are better than others for being born, or that it is better to speak one language than another, some religions are better than others to believe in, or some cultures are better to belong to, because some are more appropriate than others. And *that this is why* they have a greater right to claim power, privileges, land, or material goods and, as a result, it is legitimate for them to occupy a higher position in the social hierarchy, with everyone complacently agreeing and *blaming the victim*.

This is a very powerful argument, and it works in a circular fashion, saying to certain people: since you are different from me and I am better than you are, I deserve certain rights that you do not have, but this inequality is not my fault or yours, but rather the fault of our differences. In this way, a racist reasoning becomes a powerful tool for managing what William Ryan (1971) called “blaming the victim,” that is, for avoiding the very responsibility of having to justify one’s own privileges, making the dispossessed person responsible for his own dispossession, because of some of his differences. In this way, the differences stop acting as part of a neutral diversity that defines the human species and they become the currency in a social transaction: some differences are more valuable than others and therefore deserve more.

This is the reason I have given this paper the title “The Business of Differences,” because racism is an argument that is used to legitimize inequality, declaring that the person responsible for this inequality is the person who is dispossessed, not the person who monopolizes the privileges. Everyone of us who obtains benefits from racism is directly involved in this business, not only the people who kill, rob, or hurt others brandishing an openly racist discourse. These people, as I said at the beginning, are only the visible part of the problem, the ones who dare to shout what we all accept unconsciously, those that violently use arguments that the rest of us simply use to obtain social benefits translated into privileges. Until we are capable of unmasking these kinds of mechanisms –and it is necessary to understand them well in order to do this, there will be a favorable breeding ground for some people, at certain times, to kill, rob, destroy, and hurt the same people that the rest of society is preventing from having equitable, fair access to power and goods.

Teun van Dijk expressed it in this way:

When white people<sup>41</sup> are not directly involved in these present-day forms of segregation, exclusion, aggression, interiorization, or marginalization, then their participation in the problem of racism consists of passivity, acquiescence, ignorance, or indifference regarding racial or ethnic inequality. (Dijk 1993, 6)

Many years ago, in 1966 to be specific, Fredrik Barth proposed a schematic model for understanding social exchange. In his opinion, a social exchange is a relationship that is established, say, between two subjects, A and B, and that is successful, that is, it reaches its conclusion, when A gives B something that she considers to be less valuable than what she receives from B, while, *at the same time*, it works the same for B, that is, B obtains something from A that she values more than what she has given in return (Barth 1966). If we accept this very schematic and balanced way of understanding what a social exchange signifies, we are condemned to be unable to understand what racism means, because it would work as an argument that would break the balance of this transaction. One part, say A, gives something to B that he considers to be less valuable than what he obtains from B, but the other part of the transaction is not a mirror image, because B gives some to A that B believes is more valuable than what he receives in exchange. Racist arguments work as previous assumptions in the transaction, introducing a value scale that is foreign to the exchange.

Let me give a specific example. If we pay a person, for a job that we would not do ourselves, an amount that we ourselves would find unacceptable, and we justify this inequality using the person’s economic situation, the place she was born, the language she speaks, or the religion she practices, we are using a racist argument to justify this unequal exchange and, in addition, we are benefiting directly from it. When an apartment is rented and the rent is higher because the tenant is a foreigner, when a person is paid less because his situation in the country is not legalized, in addition to breaking a legal norm, we are using a racist reasoning that translates directly into an unequal exchange that benefits us directly. Otherwise, we might not find anyone to take care of our children, to repair a wall, to fix our garden, or to grow tomatoes at a price that will allow us to buy these tomatoes, and many other things.

At this point, I would like to underline one idea, a matter, really, of focusing

<sup>41</sup> Instead of ‘white people’ we could say ‘majority society’ so that it would make more sense in Spain.

attention on a mistaken relationship. I am referring to the relationship that is established between racism and immigration. There are plenty of examples in Spanish academic literature devoted to analyzing immigration that establish a direct relationship between immigration and racism. In my opinion, they are mistaken in joining the two phenomena, because more immigrants does not mean more racist arguments, it just means more chances to use them.

In Spain, we have not learned our racist attitudes as a result of the recent arrival of a certain number of foreigners, wherever they come from and whatever customs they bring. I do not believe that racism is a social defense mechanism, as others argue, nor that it is an attitude of surprise when we come up against things that we are not familiar with or are not accustomed to. I believe, rather, that it is a reasoning that allows us to make an advantageous social transaction, to do business with difference. The only new thing that immigration has brought is a larger number of people upon whom we can impose our initial privileges because in general, and I say in general because we do not behave the same way with all foreigners, it has provided us with a group of people who have fewer possibilities of challenging the starting assumption that, because we are better, we deserve more. And it has also provided a kind of diversity that is stigmatized outside of our country and that we have been quick to learn to stigmatize ourselves, too, because the benefits of this learning process are very advantageous.

Until quite recently, the majority of the foreigners who lived in Spain were citizens of the European Union or of the United States. Curiously, we have only started to talk about competition for job positions when immigrants from Latin American and northern Africa began to arrive.

And I say curiously because, if any group has given us stronger competition for job positions, and I am referring to the most prestigious, best paid positions, it is not exactly the northern Africans, in general. All one has to do is travel around certain parts of the Spanish coast to see who the clients are and who the employees are in different establishments; all one has to do is ask which languages are spoken in what kinds of businesses.

In think that now is the right time to analyze what prejudices are and how they work.

## 2. PREJUDICES AND STEREOTYPES

Prejudices, as the word indicates, are simply ideas that are accepted before a judgment is made. Simpson and Yinger offered a classic opinion in 1953, an opinion that I feel is useful, when they stated that:

we should define prejudice [ ... ] as a predisposition to respond to certain stimuli in a certain way (Simpson and Yinger 1972, 24).<sup>42</sup>

Despite their pejorative connotation, prejudices are the material upon which social relations are established and if they did not exist, communication would be impossible. They are ideas that are transmitted from one person to another, without experience intervening in any way in their acceptance; they are a way of accepting the experience of others according to criteria of the authority or the credibility of the person from whom we acquire it. Thanks to prejudices, we are capable of accumulating the experiences and ideas of others and making them our own, so that they work as a powerful tool for obtaining information about our surroundings without needing to experiment with them directly. In this sense, prejudices are part of the process that we call symbolization and, specifically, of the process of creating categories.

The only problem with prejudices is that sometimes they become fossilized, they turn into stereotypes, and even though stereotypes are also necessary because they allow us to economize on our exposure to our surroundings, there are two problems with them. First of all, they mean a simplification, because they outline complexity in a reductionist fashion. Second, once they are acquired, it is very hard to modify them from personal experience, introducing information that is complementary to and, above all, contradictory to, the information the stereotype transmits.

Stereotypes are used, just like any other category we create, for classifying and characterizing human groups. So when they are transmitted, what happens is that a certain type of information about the human group is transmitted and the person who acquires the stereotype receives these ideas even though she has never had any personal experience of any member of this group. There is also another way of creating them, which is from one's own experience: comparing some cases, creating a series of simple ideas from them, and expecting

<sup>42</sup> Allport (1958) offers one of the best analyses, also a classic, on the subject of prejudice.

the next case to follow the same pattern. Because they are simplified generalizations, they reduce not only the amount of information about the group, but its complexity, eliminating any ideas that contradict the predominant ones. If this were all, there would be no problem with first acquiring these oversimplified ideas and then enriching them with complementary information obtained from experience. However, this is, unfortunately, not how it works. In general, once a stereotype has been acquired, it is not modified by comparison to experience (or comparing it to new experiences, once the stereotype is developed). What usually happens is that any behavior that we observe that does not agree with the stereotype is turned into an individual exception. For example, we can acquire a certain idea about the group of Argentines and then meet an Argentine who does not agree with this idea: instead of modifying the stereotype about the group, what usually happens is that we make an exception for this individual, we say that he is not a typical Argentine because his behavior does not correspond with what we would expect from the stereotype. We do not modify the contents of the stereotype. So experience is used to ratify stereotypes, but never to challenge them, modify them, extend them, or make them more complex.

Because stereotypes transmit very simple ideas, they are generally charged with a positive or negative valuation, never with both at once. It is as difficult to modify a positive stereotype as it is to modify a negative one.

Let us take a look at a specific example of transmission and acceptance of the ideas contained in a stereotype, and at how the author of the stereotype later managed to challenge these ideas, turning the stereotype into a simple categorization. The example comes from the United States, and might be startling in the Spanish context, which is exactly why I have chosen it:

I have met lots of Catholics. At the beginning, when I was a child, I thought they were ignorant, superstitious people, considerably inferior to me [as a Protestant], both socially and in terms of intelligence. I used to walk by their church, but it would never have occurred to me to play with Catholic children or to shop in a "Catholic" store. However, now I know that Catholics have very few things in common. They accept a series of beliefs and practices, but apart from this limited uniformity, I have learned, throughout successive knowledge about them and encounters with them, that there are so many kinds of Catholics that I cannot attribute any common characteristic

to them, except for their religious beliefs. I realize that they are more likely to live in shanties or to have been born abroad, compared to Protestants, or that more of them tend to go to religious schools than to public ones, but, regarding any other aspect, I do not see that they are different from other groups. Therefore, I can only refer to Catholics as a group in relation to a very limited series of characteristics. As a general rule, it is much easier to create and use monolithic categories than other more complex kinds of categories. (Allport 1958, 168–169)

Going back to Simpson and Yinger (1972), whom I quoted above, I would like to include their exhaustive analysis of the problems that derive from using stereotypes here. According to these authors:

All stereotypes include truths, but we commit a series of errors when we apply stereotypes to the behavior of all the members of a group:

1. A very limited number of characteristics, be they positive or negative, is exaggerated.<sup>43</sup>
2. Ideas about this group are assumed and invented, but they are presented as reasonable because they are closely associated with certain observable characteristics.
3. A negative stereotype omits or suppresses any positive behavior.
4. Certain characteristics of a group are associated, as if other groups did not also share these characteristics.
5. They are always attributed to minorities, never to majority groups.
6. The possibility of changing or transforming the characteristics associated with the stereotype is eliminated.
7. The possibility of individual variation is eliminated and the stereotype is automatically identified with each and every member of the group, even though we deal with them individually.

Stereotypes are the tools that racist arguments use, because they are an easy, effective –although deeply simplifying and poor- mechanism for transmitting ideas about human groups. They are transformed into racist arguments by an exercise of power,<sup>44</sup> when they are used to legitimize an unfair distribution of

<sup>43</sup> As the work carried out by Vallés, Cea, and Izquierdo (1999) points out.

<sup>44</sup> Regarding this, see the reasoning by Jones (1972).

power or of the goods associated with it. So any reasoning used in this way, whether based on gender, social class, skin color, religion, place of birth, etc., can, from the perspective I am using to define it, be considered a racist argument or an argument that shares the same mechanisms.

### 3. SOME METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSALS FOR ANALYZING RACISM

Understanding racism as I have argued here involves a series of consequences when we consider how to analyze it. One of the most problematic, and perhaps one of the most polemical, ones is rejecting the use of surveys. Unfortunately, in the Spanish context, the majority of the studies on racism are based, specifically, on this kind of methodology; this is why their conclusions have a very limited scope. Let us take a look at one specific example of this.

Carlos Celaya (1996), in an article titled “El mapa de la xenofobia en España: una irregular geografía del rechazo” (“The Map of Xenophobia in Spain: An Irregular Geography of Rejection”), creates a typology consisting of four categories for classifying Spaniards’ racist behavior: 1) “assassinations,” 2) “more or less spontaneous beatings,” 3) “massive expulsions as a manifestation of a restrictive policy,” and 4) “discriminations in public and private spaces.” He then moves these categories to the different geographical places in Spain where these kinds of discrimination have been recorded (according to autonomous community) and prepares a map, with these contrasted data, the map that lends its name to the article. From there, he presents three conclusions that lead him into a dead end:

- 1) “Negative opinions about immigrants to not entail a move to action,” and explains that “where the worst opinions are registered is not where the greatest number of racist acts is registered while, on the other hand, the perception of immigration is not equivalent to coexistence with immigrants.”
- 2) “The relation between presence of immigrants and xenophobic opinions is not automatic,” and he clarifies that in Murcia there is a negative opinion regarding Maghrebis and the province has the third largest number of immigrants, while Cantabria has the worst opinion about northern Africans and is one of the provinces with the fewest foreigners.
- 3) “Where the most foreigners are present (Madrid and Barcelona) is also

where the main attacks have happened.” However, he then acknowledges that “attacks and discrimination have also happened in places where the presence of foreigners is minimal (Palencia), slight (Huelva), or not so intense (Balears).”

To summarize, in the first conclusion he is incapable of establishing a relationship between racist opinions and racist acts, or between the perception of immigration and the presence of immigrants. In the second one, he cannot connect the variables xenophobia and number of immigrants. And in the last one, he abandons any attempt to explain the number of immigrants according to the presence of racist acts or discrimination.<sup>45</sup>

I think that this researcher’s failed attempt when it comes to linking variables in the subject of racism is directly related to his approach and his methodology. First of all, he offers no definition of the subject he is analyzing and, second, I think that he has focused only on the visible part of the iceberg, without even wondering if there might be something beyond what is recorded in newspapers and surveys.

The Colectivo loé (1995) has used much more effective methods in their work titled *Discurso de los españoles sobre los extranjeros (Spaniards’ discourse concerning foreigners)*, although they did not specifically deal with the subject of racism. I am referring to the discussion group technique, also analyzed in the same context, by Pumares and Barroso (1993). However, the person who has made the best contribution to the analysis of racist attitudes and discourse has, in my opinion, been Teun A. van Dijk. I would like to point out, especially, two of his works: *Prejudice in Discourse. Analysis of Ethnic Prejudice in Cognition and Conversation* (1984) and *Elite Discourse and Racism* (1993). In these works, he proposes a model for discourse analysis that focuses on the informants’ conversational strategies, strategies such as generalization, the examples they offer, the corrections they make, how the emphasis is placed, the concessions, the repetitions, the contrasts, the mitigating arguments, the displacements, what is avoided in conversation, and, finally, what is assumed. He analyzes these strategies as cognitive strategies for reproducing a discourse that legitimizes inequalities in terms of difference, trying to reach an agreement with the researcher and, at the same time,

<sup>45</sup> The analysis made here of Celaya’s argumentation can be found in my article “Una introducción al análisis del racismo: el contexto español como caso de estudio” (del Olmo 1997).

presenting a positive image of one's own perspective in relation to the people of the groups that are suffering discrimination (1984, 130-132). His analysis focuses on the active role that the élites play when it comes to legitimizing and reproducing inequality and, by a concrete study of a series of cases, which could easily serve as a model of analysis, he concludes, saying that:

both the written and spoken discourses of the political, intellectual, business, teaching, and communications media elites almost always express stereotypes and prejudices about the minorities that define which the ethnic group they belong to, legitimize discrimination toward them, thus contributing to prepare a consensus with the objective of maintaining the dominance of the dominant elites." (van Dijk 1994, 283)

A simpler example is provided by Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell (1994), using a case study from New Zeland, in relation to opinions about the Maories. These authors call our attention to a series of analytic considerations that must be taken into account when analyzing the racist arguments expressed in discourse. They identify five main considerations: 1) the variations in the level of discourse, 2) the attention given to details, 3) the rhetorical organization, 4) the strategies used to legitimize credibility, and 5) the contrast with other similar analyses (Potter and Wetherell 1994: 56-61).

Through this kind of analysis, or other similar kinds (and I have only referred to the models I have found most useful here), what we have achieved is to unmask the racist arguments that we all use, almost always without even realizing it, in the processes of social interaction that we establish in daily life, and the identification of the mechanisms we employ to legitimize and reproduce these arguments so that they become our shared heritage and we learn them as such from infancy.

Using the perspective I have defended in the first section of this article to understand what racism is and what it is 'good' for, and adopting the strategies that I have simply sketched out in the second section, we should look for the variables that can explain the way these mechanisms works in each of us, that is, in majority society, and forget the stubborn attempt to seek them in the foreign immigrant minorities who began to establish themselves in our country a couple of decades ago, or in the behavior of the minorities with whom we have been coexisting for several centuries already, as in the case of the gypsies.

If, with my explanation, I have managed to convince you that, in order to un-

derstand racism, we must analyze our own behavior, not other people's, and weigh the advantages and inconveniences that racism brings us, I will have achieved my objective. This was nothing more nor less that to challenge the majority of the perspectives adopted up to now by those who have worked on this subject in our country, moving the analytic viewpoint from the groups categorized as minorities, whatever the criteria used, to majority society, which is where racist arguments are generated, transferred, legitimized, reproduced, and learned. Although, in fact, this is all denied because, in the end, it is majority society that obtains the benefits that racism brings and, therefore, the most interested party in continuing to "blame the victims" and escape any responsibility for an unequal distribution.

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## LEARNING GENDER IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

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The behavior expectations that exist for each sex in a certain situation respond to socially available models that allow people to achieve identification in terms of man or woman.

The film “In & Out” by Fran Oz and Howard Brackett provides one example. In this film, a high school teacher, played by Kevin Klein, sees how his life turns into chaos because, due to certain supposedly feminine behaviors (he likes poetry, dancing, getting dressed up, and Barbra Streisand movies, and he is an educated, supportive person), a student who wins an Oscar thanks him in front of a show-business audience stating that he is gay. The press pursues him, his students reject him, his mother threatens to disinherit him if he does not marry his fiancé,... All these things make up a system of sanctions because his behavior is not “masculine.” Opinions about how the behavior associated with each sex should be imposes models on us and directs our behavior.



Girls' and boys' educational models begin in their families and continue in school; in addition, models of behavior reinforced in the communications media are also adopted. At present, the so-called media power exercises a great deal of influence in the so-called "information society."

We are living in a decisive historical time when audiovisual information plays a main role in shaping people and those of us dedicated to educational tasks, either professionally or in our families, cannot avoid this fact (Moreno, 2005), nor can we isolate our offspring from its influence. It transmits emotions, models of behavior, and socioeconomic relations that shape the so-called cultural pedagogy (Giroux, 1996).

In the era of globalization, of the accumulation of capital, and of the incorporation of the new information and communications technologies to the fundamental aspects of life, we should ask ourselves what use is being assigned to these new instruments that bring us closer to one another and make life easier.

We must consider what we construct with them and if they are really fulfilling their role to facilitate the task of creating a fairer, more equitable, more egalitarian society.

There is no doubt about the importance and the repercussion of the communications and information media in our world and of technopower for those who have access to it economically (Kincheloe, 2000). In present-day society, access to the media is generalized even among the most disadvantaged social strata.

From their very first years, children observe and hear arguments about how feminine and masculine spaces should be different and they are assigned different values, generating a hierarchy in which the masculine world is more valuable.

As infancy is a cultural construction shaped in the contemporary era by the forces of the *technopower* of the multinationals catalyzed by television, computers, videogames, videoconsoles, and cellphones, all of which transmit values, beliefs, roles, feelings... it is fundamental for the family, teachers, and members of the community to analyze their influence.

"It is necessary to rewrite the images and the way they are anchored in public memory as part of the script of power acquisition, instead of simply rejecting them because they serve to weaken human action and democratic pos-

sibilities" (Giroux, 2000:75). To this end, we recently carried out a study in which girls and boys between 6 and 12 years old were interviewed. Among other results, it became clear that the programs that children of these ages watch the most are cartoons (Moreno et. al., 2009). In their high technology images, adventure and pleasure come together, in contrast to what happens in reality, and they build a fantastic world. *Doraemon* is the acknowledged favorite of 97% of the students interviewed, followed by *Shin Chan* with an audience of 81.36%. In most case, children watch both. They also indicate the episodes of *The Simpsons* that are shown at midday (46.21%), even though it is a program for adults.

Specifically, the first program mentioned is a widely accepted children's series that was created in 1970 in Japan where it has been shown continuously up to the present.

*Doraemon* is a strange blue cat-robot who comes from the future and whose mission is to help Nobi Nobita, a child who does not like to study, or do sports, or take on responsibilities, and who goes to *Doraemon* to ask him to solve his problems. Nobita is attracted to his friend Shizuka, whom he is always trying to see naked or in her underwear, when she is taking a bath or when her skirt goes up.

The characteristics of gender differences are clearly and repeatedly expressed. On one hand, there are the characteristics of appearance and physical aesthetics, with the male characters identified by type of clothes and bright colors (pants and sweaters in yellow, blue, and red) and the feminine characters by type of clothes and pastel colors (skirts, long hair in ponytails or pigtails, pink).

On the other hand, as for the hierarchical construction of gender and the relations among the female characters, they appear in third place in the order of relevance of the contents. Shizuka is determined by her relationship to Nobita and often adopts a clear attitude of submission and compliance toward him or toward other male characters. Nobita's mother and grandmother are characterized by behavior that is traditionally considered to be feminine: they are nice and sweet, and they carry out the tasks of housewives, among other things.

The relationships between different-sex characters clearly shows inequality, as the marriage formed by Nobita's mother and father shows, with the father becoming the main axis and breadwinner of the family (he works outside of the home, he has fun in bars with his colleagues), while his mother takes on the role of caregiver and carries out all of her activities in the private sphere

(cleaning, cooking, and having coffee while she gossips with her women friends at home).

Sometimes the commercials, programs, and publicity for objects aimed at children have such “opaque” contents that adults do not capture them, they do not fully perceive the intention and objective. But “we cannot forget that pedagogical places are those where power is organized and deploys, including libraries, television, films, newspapers, magazines, toys (...), etc.” (Steimberg and Kincheloe, 2000:17).

There are many influences in the construction of children’s culture. Shirley R. Steimberg (2000) tells how, in fifth grade, playing with Barbies consisted of dragging plastic cases full of “outfits” (clothing) to the patio and creating scenes with Barbie at the center and Ken (the doll) visiting her. When she was 12 or 13 years old, she began to make a meticulous record of the clothes she wore every day of the year, making sure not to wear the same thing in one month. The force of the learning that takes place in the early years makes her wonder if Barbie constructed her behavior.

From the earliest years of life, education plays a fundamental role in people’s development through training in school institutions and the influence of the communications media, as well as through the family socialization practices that transmit what behavior people of each sex should have. This shapes gender.

Gender has been dealt with from different viewpoints. For Scott (1990), it is a cultural and social construction whose contents are specified according to the normative definitions that society has of what is masculine and what is feminine, in the creation of a subjective identity and of the power relations that exist between men and women, and in their development in general. As an element that constitutes social relations, it includes four interrelated elements: culturally available symbols, normative concepts that show interpretations of the meanings of the symbols, of political notions about and references to social institutions and organizations, and the subjective identity that inquires into the ways in which generic identities are constructed, but relating them to historically specific social organizations and cultural representations.

As a cultural and social construction, we are interested in reflecting, from an educational framework, on the effect of creating a hierarchy of gender roles in institutions and in educational organizations, whether it is intentional or not (Acker, 2003). It has not been too difficult or complicated to show the still

relatively defenseless and discriminated position of women in organizations. This issue is one of the consequences of sexism today that is orienting our line of work. In fact, despite their progressive incorporation into the job market, women still play a marginal role and are far from the spheres of formal power. In fact, women make up only 2.38% of the presidencies of official chambers of commerce, industry, and navigation, 1.47% of the officers in the armed forces, and 14.29% of the important positions in the Bank of Spain ([www.mtas.es/mujer/mujeres/cifras/](http://www.mtas.es/mujer/mujeres/cifras/)).

The “toxic context” of patriarchal organization (Nicholson, 1997:106) allows normative equality of opportunities, but opposes the changes that could enable women and other minority groups to achieve the same opportunities that are accessible for men. In this sense, although women are winning fame as good managers, efficient businesswomen, and apt professionals, organizational cultures continue to be openly hostile to female progress and control. A good organization is considered to be one that makes concessions to equal opportunity and other similar measures. But none of these improvements take place and they only find resistance from many men and even from some women. Women in management positions have to face many more obstacles than men to maintain and improve their prestige and authority, due to the insignificant organizational support that they receive.

We cannot, therefore, lose sight of this and we must be particularly watchful because, under the appearance of a democratic, respectful discourse that is sensitive to differences, the traditional prejudices and dogmas, the old, resistant ways of understanding the relations between people that create obstacles for equality, continue to perpetuate themselves.

So it becomes necessary to continue to investigate in order to broaden the perspective of studies on women as a category of analysis in educational and organizational processes, in order to reinterpret social construction, relationships, leadership, communication, power, and human relations. This requires an effort to document and understand the roles of women in different contexts. It means working on women as specific groups, their self-discovery and self-affirmation, their conquest of spaces, and how they acquire and generate power (their empowerment), not in terms of dominating other people, but in terms of their capacity to influence the direction change takes, and their impact on organizational culture and on educational transformation and improvement.

A great deal of research has studied the diversity of ways that sexism is manifested in the educational context and has shown situations in which inequality not only affects access to post-obligatory studies, but the objectives and contents that are presented in obligatory education, teaching and learning styles, the materials used, language use, the use of spaces, expectations about students and the ways school is organized, etc. This research shows that, although at least the formal aspects of equality are a fact in western schools, and girls and boys share everything the institutions offers them (curricula, spaces, furniture, teachers, etc.) with equal opportunities in school, there are still biases that only grant women responsibility for household tasks. The insignificant representation of women directing educational institutions, both on the national and international levels, continues to be a relevant issue, taking into account the importance of this group in the field of teaching (Cubillo and Brown, 2003).

The school institution reproduces the stereotypes assigned to women and men consciously and/or unconsciously, ignoring and excluding all female references (Mañeru, 1999 and Moreno, 2000).

In this sense, since the decade of the 1980s, we have knowledge about gender, organization, and educational management which has documented the experiences of women and their professional work in this field.

The work carried out from the *feminist approach*, its analysis of how gender penetrates the educational discourses and the alternatives offered to transform these discourses, appeared progressively on the terrain, making significant contributions (Apfelbaum and Hadley, 1986, Ferguson, 1984, Hall, 1988, Blackmore 1989, Alvesson and Due Billing, 1992, Enomoto, 1995, Fennell, 1995, Kenway and Modra, 1992, and Reynolds, 1995).

Because of this, people's education and training should deal with how identity, gender roles, and their valuation are shaped, in order to contribute to eliminating the mechanisms of exclusion that make up educational scenarios from the first years of life, scenarios that are the source of a lot of learning that translates into discrimination.

That is, it is necessary to analyze the process by means of which behavior, values, desires, and attitudes are transmitted... even the ways of thinking and feeling about a society's processes and products, about each person according to his or her biological condition and sex, and the way his or her gender identity is shaped.

Discrimination against women is not often discussed explicitly today, except in the case of radicalized men, due to the social rejection that has been generated thanks to women's movements. But in many cases, there are still subtle mechanisms that transmit this discrimination.

One manifestation of it is protective paternalism (Glick and Fisker, 1996) which, with a certain affective tone towards women, not only stipulates a sexual division of work, but considers that men should care for and protect women as happens, for example, in the stories of Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel, or Snow White. Benevolent sexism "disguises" its aversive tone, but its effects are evident.

Therefore, we can deduce that androcentrism is manifested through explicit mechanisms and other subliminal but no less forceful ones, and that, although women do not perceive these mechanisms emotionally, they continue to form the basis of differentiation and inequality. We must not forget that conceptions about gender differences and the treatment they receive in educational institutions constitute sociocultural constructions that do not exist outside of the medium and of our influence as part of this context. Because of this, we hope to contribute, with this chapter, to the decentralization of the knowledge of the exclusivity of traditional, discriminatory, and inconsistent approaches regarding differences between women and men, in order to form the backbone of a critical reading of how gender stereotypes are transmitted and how education contributes to this.

In the study that we mentioned previously, carried out with students in primary school (from 6 to 12 years of age), it became clear that the girls and the boys also are educated from the first years of their lives to respond to the demands and social expectations assigned according to the biological characteristics associated with their sex. This transmits the belief that behind this hierarchical organization of women and men, there are natural laws, and this inculcates a dangerous lesson of impotence and conservation of the social order.

Androcentrism and the roles that are transmitted by a violent and *machista* ideology begin to crop up in primary school. In our research we observed that boys sometimes preferred to be punished by the teacher rather than reflecting on and asking forgiveness for violent behavior. Their behavior is reaffirmed, there is retaliation, and then there is revenge when they get out of school.



The thing is that, since they never want to, maybe the teacher says: listen, say you're sorry or you can't go out. And he says: then I'd rather stay here! They've done that. Other times, in order to go out and not be there any more, they ask to go to the bathroom and that's it. But they don't do it because they are convinced, because they really feel it... Oh, no. No, because then they say: if I catch you when school's out, if I catch you, you'll see (Interview with Raúl, 11 years old)

In the ages studied, the victims of aggression, as happens with many women, get blocked and do not respond with any kind of behavior to the violence they receive, because they are afraid of retaliation. This causes them to not rebel against these injustices and even to hide the fact that someone in class has abused them.

Relations of affection and love can lay very dangerous traps that originate dominant-submissive relationships. In these relationships, a dependency is generated between the victim and the aggressor. The female victim feels that, alone, she is no one. Fear and anguish paralyze her and she has reactions like the ones a fifth-grade girl indicated, when she told us that one day her father wanted to go to the discotheque with her uncle and he could not find his belt. He got really angry with her mother. He threw her on the bed and hit her. He hit her on the head and she began to bleed from her nose.

Women and girls who are abused feel that they do not like the men's actions, but they assume that their expressions about and reactions to the men's behavior have no effect in avoiding the abuse. They accept the aggression passively, as the fifth-grade girl we have already mentioned told us:

My mother went to the doctor and told him that she had fallen down, because my father told her that if she said anything about the fight, he would kill her. And she didn't want to get separated because she could lose us, if my father said we had to go with him. (Interview with Carmen, 11 years old)

In this case, the men are under the influence of *machismo*, which uses the feeling of superiority to justify discrimination and violence. There are also boys who accept, take for granted, and suffer violence and do nothing to avoid the aggressions against them. This shows that violence, like discrimination and stereotypes, does not have a sex, what it has is gender.

Women, instead of devoting their vital energies to themselves, take care of

other people. This model is completed by "belonging to others"; this property of women is established through sexuality and maternity, and girls have an option for their future in this behavior.

At this point, someone could think that men and women behave differently because we are different biologically, that nature has made men and women. We share Simone de Beauvoir's (1999) idea that "one is not born a woman: one becomes one. No biological, physical, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society. Civilization as a whole is what creates this product."

Biologically, we women are the ones who can have children; we are responsible for "maternity." For now, at least, because since the birth of Dolly the sheep, we can expect almost anything. On February 23, 1997, a scientific team from Scotland presented the first sheep created using the technique of donation of a single cell from the mother. Fertilization with a spermatozoid was not necessary.

But what continues to be evident today is that we women are not the only ones who have an obligation to "mother," that it is a social function responsible for taking care of children and that any person, independently of his or her sex, can do it.

Traditionally, due to androcentric interests, these two concepts (maternity and mothering) have been united and have, among other things, made women devote themselves to caring for their sons and daughters, for their husband or the father of the family, and for their own parents.

This similarity is a cultural (and intentional) construction that is evident in work that is already considered classic about different gender roles in other cultures. For example, there are the studies by Ruth Benedict (1964) and Margaret Mead (1967) who, in the 1920s and 1930s, studied women in their research based on fieldwork. Mead's work with the tribes of New Guinea is especially well-known. In this research, she discovered that, among the Arapesh, both men and women are expected to behave in a sweet, understanding, cooperative way. Among the Tchambuli, women shave their heads and are aggressively efficient as providers of food, and men devote themselves to art and worry about how they look. In these studies, it became clear that societies use biological sex as a criterion for attributing tasks and functions to a person or a group of persons within a culture or a certain social group. But beyond this



simple starting point, there are no two cultures that completely coincide in the differentiation that they establish between the genders.

In each society, according to the socialization process that subjects people to masculine or feminine gender stereotypes, the characteristics develop one way or another.

A series of values (cultural constructions) are promoted, as indicators of the degree of acknowledgement that the society attributes to human capabilities, considering these to be indicators of our power to develop a certain aspect of human growth (Urruzola, 1996).

The values associated with gender are made evident in each reality through the valuations, considerations, and representations that people carry out regarding masculine and feminine roles.

These values are what produce stereotypes, defined as popular beliefs about attributes that characterize a social category and about which there is substantial agreement, and that depend on the cultural context. Being a woman is not the same in Spain as in India.

It does not have the same consequences for development and, in general, for daily life. In fact, in the countries that some people call Third World countries (according to the masculine desire to create hierarchies and measure everything), women and girls are the ones who have the worst of it. For example, there is the situation in China, where 25% of the girls are considered a social burden and are abandoned or assassinated when they are born. In India there are newspaper advertisements that offer a savings of 2000 rupees on selecting the sex of babies in pregnancies. This is the amount that the dowry that a girl needs to marry is supposed to cost, and marriage is the only future awaiting women. It is a common practice to assassinate the wife (poisoning her, strangling her, or burning her) when her family can no longer make the payments on the dowry (Martínez Ocón, 2006). This all gives an idea of the low value given to women, even before they are born.

We must add to this other scourges that through the simple fact of being a woman, extend a terrible veil over such vital aspects as health, as in the case of AIDS. Young women between 15 and 24 years of age are the group most affected by AIDS the world over. In Spain, the data accumulated on HIV-AIDS infection by the National Epidemiology Center between 1981 and December

2004 show that sexual transmission accounts for 7.4% of the total number of infections in women under 24 years of age.

According to the estimates, in Africa, south of the Sahara, between 60% and 80% of the women with a positive serological reaction to HIV have been infected by their husbands, their only sexual companions. Their acceptance of their feminine roles and obligations costs them a dramatic price. Without going any farther, in Europe each year a million women enter into prostitution, 300,000 to 500,000 of whom cross the frontier through Spain.

A *machista* interpretation would be that they do this because they want to. This is inadmissible, because the United Nations, in a September 2000 report, gave the number of women sold as prostitutes or for forced marriages as four million, and the number of girls who enter into the sex business each year as two million.

In order to act against the *machista* reasoning that nature is the cause of the differences between men and women, a reasoning that generates a dangerous lesson in impotence and the conservation of social order, it is necessary to change both the economic model and the educational and cultural models, where power relations and hierarchies are given priority, to other models based on dialogue, freedom, and respect among people, transcendental aspects that favor human relations from infancy.

Nor can we forget that the role of teachers is fundamental. With their practice, with the contents they select, and with the hidden curriculum they transmit, they constitute models of and vehicles for socialization. The preparatory documentation of the United Nations for the IV World Conference on Women indicates a series of measures to eliminate social stereotypes from school programs, textbooks, and teaching. In order to do this, the documentation declares that teachers and materials must present women's positive functions and contributions in order to increase girls' capacity for action and their self-esteem, which will ensure the creation of an educational environment that is sensitive to the needs of each sex.

Another aspect underlined is that the first step is to show those aspects that are transmitting sexist models in education and that are discriminating against girls because of their sex.

The complexity of the phenomenon of sexism shows us that there are no quickfire recipes for changes that will make the effect of cultural myths and

traditions disappear. There are many actions and models that can be carried out to end this social scourge of discrimination. As Michel Perrot states, “nothing is innocent and the situations that seem the most anodyne contain the most profound options” (Duby and Perrot, 2000).

In order to continue progressing and to open a door to produce these changes, there are several sources, among which we will mention politics and laws, that should obligate; education is a first-order social agent for eliminating existing discriminations due to sex, social class, ethnic origin, etc., that have historically been imposed on different groups. And we must not forget out individual role of rebellion against injustice.

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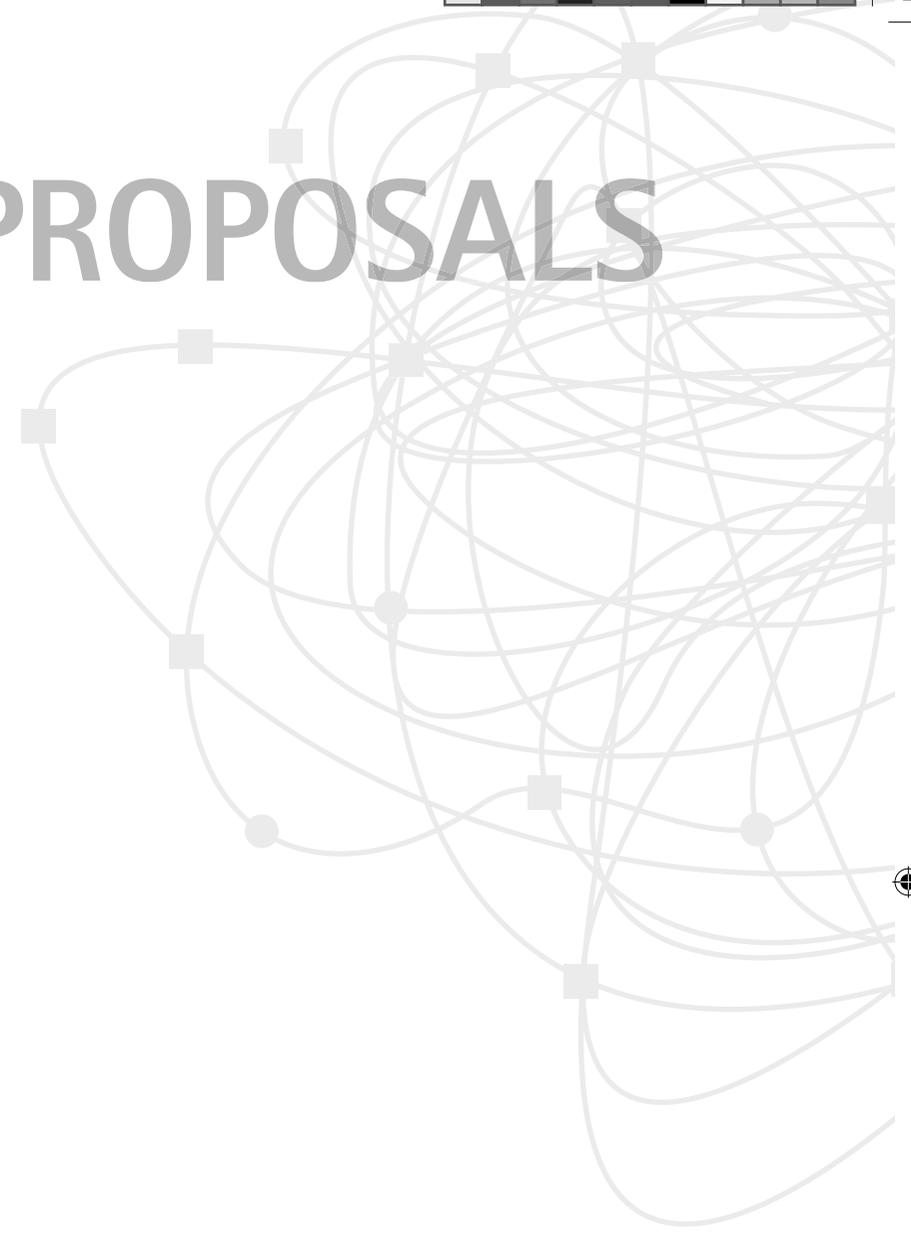
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# PROPOSALS

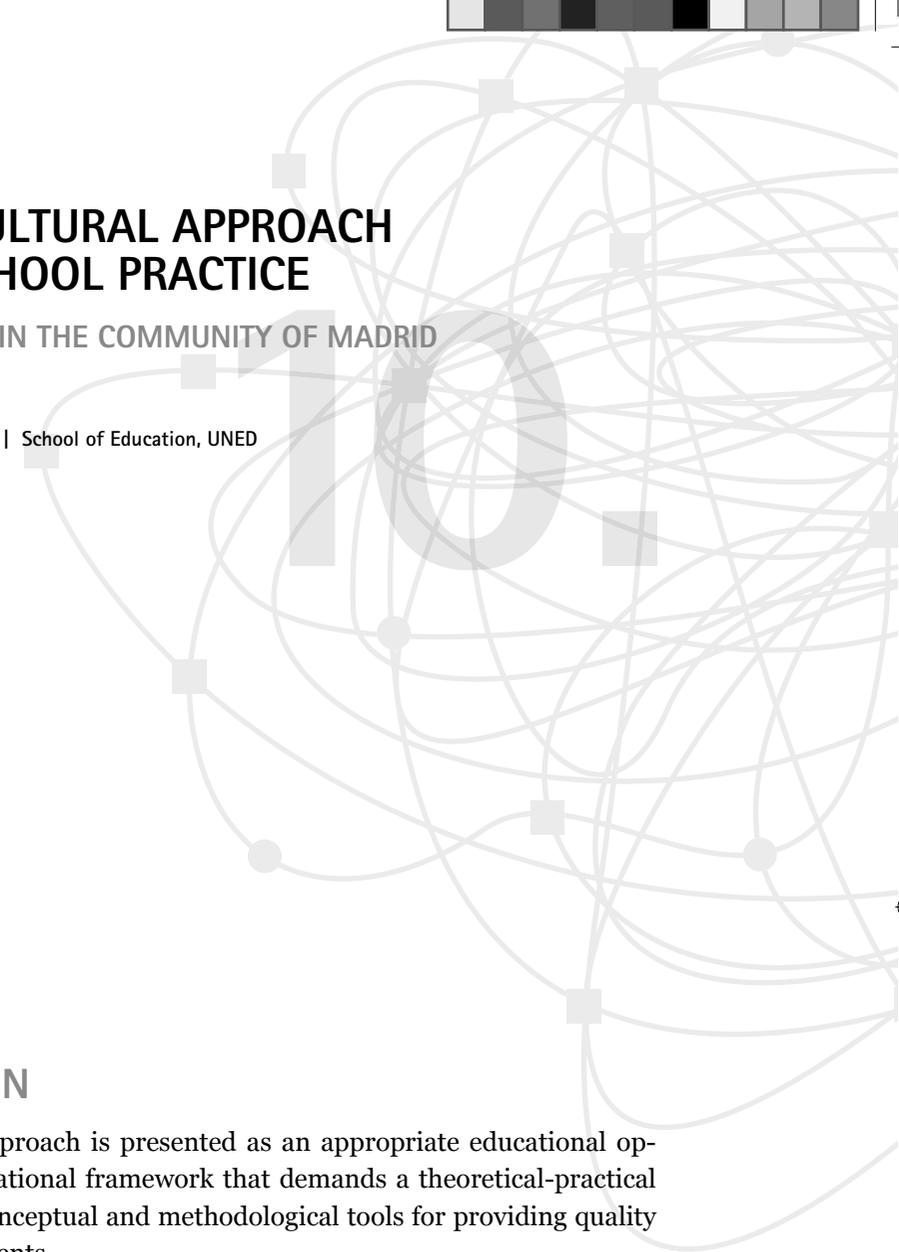




# INTERCULTURAL APPROACH AND SCHOOL PRACTICE

SCENARIOS IN THE COMMUNITY OF MADRID

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## INTRODUCTION

The intercultural approach is presented as an appropriate educational option in a socio-educational framework that demands a theoretical-practical response offering conceptual and methodological tools for providing quality education to all students.

The same axiological motives that demand that all students obtain educational benefits from their (obligatory) passage through school also require education to attend to cultural diversity in a certain way: from respect for people and their diversity, fostering coexistence with solidarity, and the consideration of values such as freedom, equality, and social justice... (Bennett, 1990: 19). The intercultural approach sees school as a privileged space for people's integral development, for learning to coexist and learning freedom



with solidarity, and for social transformation according to principles of social justice (Gorski, 2000 and Nieto, 1996). In addition, intercultural education and school efficacy are two interrelated educational movements (Gil Jaurena, 2005). Starting out from a broad concept of quality and effectiveness and from a specific proposal for intercultural education, schooling can be an inclusive, effective process for all students.

With these considerations as a starting point, I did research between 2003 and 2008 in the context of the Community of Madrid, with the main objective of analyzing school practice in primary education centers from an intercultural approach in order to make proposals for improvement (both in school practice and in teacher training). In this text, I will present part of the results of this research; I hope to offer a panorama of what happens in classrooms. The results obtained in the different educational centers observed in the fieldwork have provided very rich information about what happens in school practice. This text presents a synthesis of these practices, narrated in the form of two contrasting scenarios that illustrate the practices that are closest to the model of an intercultural school and the practices that fit what the intercultural approach proposes for education the least.

These scenarios are interesting because they can help us to think about how things are done (even if it is in a non-generalized way) and to imagine both what it would be possible to do, because some teachers and centers are already doing it, and how intercultural practices could be supported in school.

## THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

In this paper, the perspective adopted is the global *intercultural education* approach, with a sociocritical character which, as different authors understand it (Banks, 1997, Gorski, 2000, Nieto, 1997, and Sleeter, 1991, among others), means a movement to reform the school to guarantee *quality* for everyone, according to principles of *equity* and social justice.

The initial idea is that in education, intercultural is not just an adjective but an approach, a perspective or a way of looking at school and educational reality that puts the spotlight simultaneously on globalness and particularity: on the globalness, complexity, and systematic nature of educational processes,

and on the particularity of the contextualized educational situations that occur every day in education.

Intercultural education is conceptualized as a:

holistic, inclusive educational approach that, based on respect for and acknowledgement of cultural diversity, seeks to reform the school as a whole in order to increase educational equity, overcome racism/discrimination/exclusion, favor communication and intercultural skills, and support social change according to principles of social justice.

Intercultural education is understood from a holistic approach that affects the school as a whole. In the research whose results I am presenting here (Gil Jaurena, 2008), I was specifically interested in analyzed school practices, that is, what happens in school, what teachers and students do in the educational center and in the classroom. The dimensions of school practice I considered were:

- a) The atmosphere of the center
- b) Teachers' conception of the teaching-learning process
- c) The didactic strategies carried out in the classroom
- d) The didactic resources used
- e) Evaluation

These dimensions were selected following *theoretical* criteria (delimiting the dimensions contemplated in other theoretical or practical studies such as Banks, 1997, 1999, Bennett, 1990, Sleeter and Grant, 2003, and Aguado *et al.*, 1999, 2005, 2006), *methodological* criteria (availability of the instruments for gathering information that were used (Aguado *et al.*, 1999, 2007) for observing the dimensions the study focused on, and the capacity to use them and analyze the information), and criteria related to the *research objectives*: the selection of aspects of school practice over which the teachers can exercise a certain amount of control, that is, the elements that are most susceptible to reform by the educational community itself along intercultural lines. The belief in teachers' capacity to achieve quality education for all students (Pike and Selby, 1998: 59) led me to place the focus of the research on the aspects most closely related to their capacity for decision and management.

Based on these dimensions, I used instruments of observation (observation scales for educational atmosphere, classroom process, and didactic resource-

es) that allowed me to gather information in a total of 26 primary education classrooms in 14 educational centers in the Community of Madrid. The instruments were prepared/adapted from the intercultural approach and focus on the dimensions mentioned in order to analyze them from this approach's perspective.

In the following section, two school scenarios created from the practices observed in the centers participating in the research are presented, considering two poles: the practices best adapted to the intercultural approach and the practices least adapted to it.

## SCENARIOS IN THE COMMUNITY OF MADRID

This is not a description of a real center or centers, but of possible scenarios that are described taking, on one hand, the assessments that go along with the practices that are most frequently identified in the centers and, on the other, the observations that clarify the practices that are less frequent. Thus, two possible scenarios that synthesize the practices that adapt to the intercultural approach the best and those that adapt to it the least are described, considered in relation to the dimensions under study.

### SCENARIO 1 | SCHOOL PRACTICES THAT ARE BEST ADAPTED TO THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH

In the center where an **intercultural atmosphere** is promoted, pluralism is used as an educational resource and supportive attitudes and behaviors are promoted with regard to pluralism, through measures such as: fomenting knowledge about the cultural characteristics of different groups (gastronomy, customs, stories, etc.), working with values of respect and equality, and highlighting the positive aspects of students with special education needs (SEN).

When you enter the school, you get the feeling that everyone is welcome and that the people who are there are enjoying it. The school pays particular attention to this aspect because they are aware of its importance. (Extract from field notes from a primary school)<sup>46</sup>

There is a concern for promoting interactions among the different members of the educational community (students, teachers, families...) and because of this,

<sup>46</sup> In the quotes and literal examples, the source of information, whether a scale (in which case the corresponding number is given) or an extract from field notes or an interview, is given in parentheses.

they pay special attention to aspects such as achieving continuous communication with the families, in person or in writing, the relation with the Parents' Associations, and more intense involvement of the families (visits to their places of work, for example).

Each child's birthday is celebrated in class, even the children with birthdays in the summer. At some point in the morning, usually before recess, the birthday children share some confection that they have brought and receive some small handmade gift from their classmates (a drawing, some trinket, a postcard). Sometimes the mothers also participate in the celebration. (Observation in a public primary school)

The connections between school, the family, and the community refer both to periodically programmed meetings and isolated activities in which the families participate. For example, workshops, talks and/or school for parents, or specific activities and encounters, such as the Cultural Week or "*a party where each person brings typical food from his or her country.*" The center collaborates with NGOs.

Another way of involving the families, in relation to life at the center in general, is their participation in mixed (family-teacher) committees that manage different aspects of the functioning of the center: lunchroom, economic affairs, pedagogical affairs, environment, newsletter, new technologies... Each committee is represented on the Board (organizational basis of the center). (Extract from field notes from an educational center)

In one public primary school, in order to create continuity with the work carried out in the school, families are involved through a "Guide to work at home" which, in the absence of homework given in class, gives orientations on how to work on concepts, procedures, and attitudes from the grade-cycle at home.

The objective of working at home is for the children to resolve, with progressively increasing autonomy, the concepts presented in class and for them to consider mathematical situations in their daily lives and seek strategies to solve them. Some suggestions could be to measure objects and rooms in the house, or use a calculator to go over shopping receipts, or use mathematical games (chess, Parcheesi, building toys...). (Interview with a teacher from the center)

The center participates in training courses and innovative projects, such as linking classrooms, and they carry out activities that they call intercultural such

as gastronomic encounters. Meetings, workshops, etc. are organized and all the people involved in the task of education –teachers, families, etc.- are invited to attend.

In the case of interactions with foreign students or students who have not mastered the school language, they resort to learning body language until they acquire a minimum knowledge of Spanish.

Attention to students' educational characteristics and needs is associated with devoting individualized attention to them, and the kind of extra help given is diverse: individualized curricular adaptations, compensatory education, counselors, psychologists, social workers... But, in general, the center's measures of attention to diversity are "special," not "general," and extra help is linked to special education needs or special education. Diversity is highlighted in academic achievement as a criterion to consider for giving attention to diversity:

"Not just the student who is not doing well, we also work on the needs of the students who are doing better." (28)

However, students' diversity is also understood to be an integral part of people; each student is diverse:

"All the students have different characteristics." (20)

"All students are diverse even if they are average." (25)

The norms, based on respect, are prepared jointly by teachers and students at the beginning of the year. In case of conflict, both parts are heard and taken into account.

Linguistic pluralism is promoted by teaching English, by the use of several languages on posters in the center, and by allowing the students in compensatory education or those who are learning Spanish to use expressions from other languages. The posters in the center are multilingual in order to make it easier for all the students, teachers, and personnel to understand them.

The walls of the center are decorated with posters with messages related to the value of diversity, with photographs of the teachers smiling, with drawings and photographs of Mardi Gras and of student field trips... (Extract from field notes from a primary school center)

Regarding teacher training in attention to cultural diversity, even though it exists, it is each teacher's individual decision to take advantage of it or not and

generally only the "special" teachers do it, such as linking classroom teachers. In some centers, teachers' professional development is considered to be very important, so that training activities are favored:

There is a permanent seminar that changes subjects each year, that has experts participating and in which all the teachers participate. (Extract from field notes from a primary school center)

Similarities among people are underlined more than differences and, even though practices to combat racism and discrimination are carried out, they are mostly classroom activities (tutorials) that do not involve the center as a whole using structural measures.

As far as curricular design, the educational project in one public primary school is a brief written document but, above all, it is a philosophy adopted by the educational community as a whole (teachers, including special help teachers, and the director all work as a team along the same lines, focusing their attention on attending to the needs of all the students). It includes the following aspects: freedom of expression and creativity, a critical attitude, responsibility and solidarity, valuing diversity- a school for all, learning by investigating, and democratic, participative management. The section that refers to valuing diversity as a principle of identity of the center says:

In our surroundings, cultural diversity is a fact, above all if we accept culture not only as a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms that a socially identified group shares, but also as all the elements that, actively or passively, interact in the existence of an individual from the point of view of the present, the past, and the future.

Diversity means talking about equality of opportunities, making decisions about values and about the relations of domination that prevail in the contexts where we, naturally diverse people, interact. Our school wants to respond socially to complexity and cultural diversity (it cannot be isolated), placing our bet on cooperation, respect, coexistence, solidarity, and freedom. (Extract from the educational project of a primary school center)

In coherence with these educational principles, the curricular design in this school becomes an emerging process, so that the decisions about what, how, and when to teach (curriculum) are made continuously, fitting them to the group with which each teacher works.

There is no textbook that plans the work in the classroom rigidly, but rather teachers and students who design and carry out the activities using a variety of resources. (Extract from field notes from a primary school center)

Work in the classroom is characterized by the **constructivist conception of the teaching-learning process** and by the emphasis on achieving meaningful learning.

Thus, the teacher acts as a facilitator for learning, more than as a person who controls the students:

"we focus more on making learning easy than on controlling it." (28)

The teacher carries out a dialogue with the students rather than just giving the subject, clarifies ideas rather than inculcating them, explains activities individually and supervises the work, and:

"foments participation and the formation of concepts from the contributions of everyone." (12)

The teachers adapt the contents and the tasks to the students' age, their capabilities, and their level of knowledge, favor student participation, ask questions beforehand to find out what the students know about a subject they are going to begin, and take advantage of students' experiences in order to begin an explanation.

The concepts are introduced and used taking students' previous knowledge into account. The teacher asks the students what they know about the subject they are starting to study, their preconceptions of the subject are reviewed, individual curricular adaptation is taken into account, examples and experiences given by the students are used to introduce the subjects, and teachers refer to what the students have studied in previous years.

In the classroom, teachers try to make the curriculum relevant for the students and to include different perspectives and social interest. For example, when working on math contents, they use percentages that reflect government spending on education, health, the army, infrastructures, etc. (Extract from field notes from a 3rd grade primary school classroom)

Teachers make it easy for students to present their knowledge and experiences regarding the different subjects they work on. Students have a chance to comment on their own experiences on a subject, sometimes in class meetings for sharing experiences:

"class is begun by reviewing previous subjects, with students' voluntary participation" (7)

Teachers ask specific questions about what the students know, "*they are always allowed to talk as long as what they are going to tell has to do with the subject under discussion*" (23). However, these kinds of activities are more frequent in some subjects, such as *Conocimiento del medio*,<sup>47</sup> than in others.

In one of the primary school centers, classroom meetings are used at the beginning and at the end of the week, the first to organize the work over the next days and the second to evaluate it. Also, meetings are used to discuss and try to solve conflicts, work on aspects such as responsibility (each day one student is the moderator), and share experiences with their classmates. (Extract from field notes from a 3rd grade primary school classroom)

In certain cases, focuses of interest are worked on, the students are asked to participate in explaining and in carrying out activities, and are offered opportunities to decide on the work they will do "*in the subject that is the alternative to religion*"<sup>48</sup> (19).

In order to attend to the students' interests, if they get bored with something, the teacher changes to another activity, even if it was not on the schedule.

The needs and interests of each student are attended to as an individual rather than as a member of a certain reference group. Individualized teaching is put into practice:

"the student receives help both with her academic needs and with her personal needs on the individual level" (6)

"the individuality of each student has priority over his assignment to a group" (12)

Teachers talk about individual attention in the case of students with academic difficulties, who need more help, depending on the problems they have. In one case, curricular adaptation is discussed, in another it is decided to demand less of the student. In the case of the linking classroom, teachers indicate that they attend to the needs and interests of each student first as an individual rather than as a member of a specific reference group because "*that is the main objective*" of these classrooms (21).

47 Translator's note: This subject, literally "Knowledge of your surroundings" is a subject that includes areas of science, social science, history, art, literature...

48 Translator's note: Students attend one of two classes: religion or an alternative course.

Particular attention is paid to aspects referring to students' **motivation** for learning. Various reinforcements are used to reward work well done: acknowledgement and prizes, for example, are each provided accordingly, depending on each student's needs. Above all, positive, affectionate verbal reinforcement is used, congratulating the children for their work immediately, praising them out loud in front of everyone, and asking the students to show their classmates how good their work is. In other cases, the rewards are material: picture cards for students who behave well and do their work better, according to their capabilities, presents if they do things well, or:

"a gift at the end of the month for the student who has brought the most fruit for lunch." (28)

Different forms of motivation are used in response to the variety of reasons or feelings that motivate learning: positive verbal reinforcement, recognition by teacher and classmates, material reinforcements such as picture cards for reading and doing book reports, or reinforcements such as

"going out earlier, going to the blackboard, using the encyclopedia, handing out the books ..." (3)

The variety of formulas for motivation is mentioned, but not how they fit or correspond to the tasks or learning to be achieved.

Students' attitudes of self-confidence are supported in the following ways: working in groups and individually, encouraging each student to contribute to the group, verbal public confirmation, rewarding each child for his effort, reinforcing students' self-concepts in a context of cooperation, motivating the students to resolve the problems that come up on their own, and:

"encouraging them by saying 'come on, you know how to do it,' or 'look for it.'" (22)

Cooperative behavior is promoted "*trying to get them to learn to share*" (21), although in one case a teacher indicated that "*cooperation on the spoken/attitude level is promoted, but less so regarding the activities proposed*" (13).

As far as **motivation** and **discipline**, one of the centers analyzed had an atmosphere of nearness, respect, and trust among students and teachers:

Teachers and students speak to one another informally and use their first names. In the classrooms, there tends to be a "controlled disorder." They work in groups a lot and the level of participation is high. When it is time to

change classes, I observed that the teachers knock on the door before they enter the classroom. Students are not reprimanded in public, but are called aside. Several times, a student who was disrupting the class was made to leave the classroom. The reasoning given was always something like: "you're really nervous, go out into the hall, calm down, and when you think you can continue in class, come back in." The teacher tries to get the student to regulate himself so that he could keep working on the task like his classmates when he came back in. (Observation at a primary school center)

The **teaching-learning strategies** used are varied and encourage, among other aspects, cooperative work among the students, their participation, and the self-regulation of learning. In one classroom:

The students, whether in groups or individually, choose the subjects of the projects they are going to do, the reading that they do each day first thing in the morning, the activities they are going to do at each moment (as long as all the activities get done by the end of the week or whatever period has been decided). (Observation in a primary school classroom)

In relation to **classroom organization**, we can highlight that, in group activities, the teacher offers instructions, help, and materials for doing the activities successfully and facilitating comprehension and learning.

In this center, they do the work in projects. They are working on the subject of the human body. They have been divided into three groups and students from the two 3rd grades and from 4th grade are mixed together, each group in one of the classrooms with a teacher. In the 3A class, there are two subgroups, one with the reproductive system and another (larger and subdivided into two) with the muscular and skeletal systems (one group with muscles and the other with bones). They are working with a variety of resources: different books, a dictionary, a computer program on the body. Some of them want to use Internet, but on that day it is not working. The teacher's instructions are to finish the outline that they began the other day, in order to be able to do the file the next day. For each system, they need to work on: parts, functions/working, hygiene, and diseases. Each group organizes itself independently. On the blackboard, there is a big mural that they will finish little by little, and the sheets with the questions and answers of the initial evaluation are also taped to the wall (what they would like to know and the answers they already knew). One of the subgroups (four people) is working

on the reproductive system and they can't quite manage to organize themselves to do the work. One of the children offers to look for words that they don't understand in the dictionary. Another decides to work on hygiene on his own, and another student insists that the boy who is left should write the outline on fertilization. (Extract from field notes from a primary school center)

Regarding the **materials and didactic resources** used in the center and in the classroom, they promote equality and do not contain discriminatory elements that could encourage feelings of superiority in some students with respect to others.

A variety of resources are used in order to understand the subjects better (computer, audiovisual, written, and oral materials, stories...), and some of them mention subjects related to diversity. Some teachers consider the textbooks to be the main didactic resource, while others consider them to be one more aid for teaching.

The objectives of the materials (the textbooks) coincide, a priori, with the objectives of the intercultural approach and do not contradict it, especially the materials related to learning Spanish. In addition:

"through different materials, we try to give different perspectives on one subject." (12)

Teachers attempt to use the materials in coherence with the proposals to respect diversity that are contained in other dimensions of the curriculum, such as the project of the center, using varied resources, some of which specifically deal with diversity.

The materials and methodologies used favor cooperation and group work. Students are stimulated to participate. They are invited to share their customs and lifestyles with their classmates, in class meetings, stories they wrote, etc. Teaching includes presenting different jobs and respect for customs. In the lunchroom, they prepare menus from different countries.

In relation to acknowledging the universality of human experience and the interdependence of all human beings, work is done in the classroom on equality, the value of plurality is discussed in areas such as *Conocimiento del medio*, and in class meetings students tell their experiences; this is to help them realize the similarities and differences among the cultures that exist in the classroom.

In the materials, the contributions of some specific groups are highlighted, such as women or physically and mentally challenged people, mentioning diversity but emphasizing equality:

"we have an example with material on blind people, where they show how they live and that it is just like people who see." (25)

In the contents, "*we look for what is positive about the different groups*" (5), they work on self-esteem, and consider the baggage each person brings to be valuable, so the students achieve a positive self-image. The materials promote equality and do not contain discriminatory elements that could foment feelings of superiority in some students with respect to others. Special care is taken with the illustrations, especially with those that show men and women, avoiding stereotypes. Meaningful people for certain groups, such as Martin Luther King or Kiriku in the story *Kiriku and the witch*, are presented so that their influence in the life of the group is clear, this being considered an enriching learning experience.

With respect to the role of women, relevant contributions by women in history, science, literature, etc., are highlighted. Male students and female students are treated equally and there are talks in the center about gender equality. As for the history of different groups, beyond the stereotypes that link minorities to poverty, underdevelopment, etc., teachers try to explain their past in order to understand their present situation with no other connotations, and any kind of achievement is valued independently of its origin.

The materials are adapted to the students' needs: it is considered normal for each student to work at a different rhythm, and each one works on exercises that the teacher sets, depending on his needs.

Among the variety of resources used (technology, newspapers, field trips, volunteer work, scraps, reading books, etc.), there are also games made by the students themselves, and things that the students bring from home. This all motivates the students and helps them to learn and to feel better in their groups.

Regarding the "human" resources, or personal resources, teachers resort to interpreters, NGOs, special help teachers, and specialists on a subject to explain some concrete content. Special help teachers generally work outside of the classroom, although sometimes they work both inside and outside. In some cases, they work mainly in the classroom, sharing the work with the tu-

tor or working with a group of students, not just giving individual help to one student. There is a continuous, fluid relationship between the counselor and the tutors regarding attention to diversity, involving the exchange of materials, opinions, evaluations, etc.

The families participate in the center; specifically, parents visit the center, students visit the workplaces of the families, parents participate in workshops in the afternoon, and the Parents' Associations organize extracurricular activities. They also collaborate in associations in the area.

One of the aspects that is most carefully dealt with in relation to the **evaluation** of learning is the way grades are communicated.

There are periodical meetings with the families in order to discuss the results of the evaluations, but not to make joint decisions. The calendar of meetings with the families is fulfilled. These meetings have varied time schedules: bimonthly, three times a year as a minimum, *"every two weeks with all the parents and individually each week with the parents who are interested"* (25), or indeterminate. Teachers meet with families when the families request it, taking advantage of any occasion, *"whenever the parents want to and are able to, even though there are parents who do not want to have meetings"* (23). Meetings with the families are considered:

"necessary, the parents should be informed and kept up to date" (1)

"to inform them and avoid greater evils, and so to try to find solutions." (24)

Meetings with families are basically to inform the parents, but *"we don't usually make joint decisions"* (20). Only in one case is the opposite explicitly indicated: *"the decisions are consensual"* (12).

The language used in the bulletins or report cards is serious but it is also clear and simple, and it avoids technical academic language, so that the families can understand what the teacher wants to say and avoid mistakes, especially if the families do not speak Spanish. With respect to language, in one case it is expressly indicated that the report card is only in Spanish, even if the students and their families have a different mother tongue. Observations (PA, NM, ...) appear on the report card and their meaning is explained; observations such as *"needs to improve reading out loud"* are included (22). In addition to using clear language on the report card, the teacher speaks to the parents when they pick up the grades.

In this center, there are no report cards. Each trimester, the teachers meet with the families (individually and in groups) in order to discuss the students' progress. This exchange of information is not given in terms of "he has a 10" or "she has a 3," but in much more complex, enriching, individualized, and propositional terms. (Extract from field notes from a center)

All the students' educational aspects are evaluated, such as effort, capacity, attention, behavior, attitude... and there is a specific section on the report card for procedures and attitudes. It is indicated that attitudes are evaluated, above all, or *"first, procedures and attitudes are evaluated, then concepts"* (28), although sometimes procedures and attitudes *"do not have the same status as concepts"* (11).

Teachers take note of everything the student has done in the different contexts and all of his actions are taken into account. Some of the specific contexts in which the students' actions are observed are the notebook, the patio, the lunchroom, when they leave school with their parents, in other classrooms (e.g., computer science), and field trips, and information is gathered from the family.

The teachers evaluate both the learning process and the product. This refers to continuous evaluation and observation in the classroom of behavior, interest, attitude, participation, and daily work. The process, how things are done, is valued the same as or more than the product. The teachers consider the reasons for the failures and offer continuous feedback while the tasks are being carried out.

In this primary school center, there are no exams, and the teaching-learning process is presented so that continuous evaluation is part of it, encouraging self-regulation in learning and also, therefore, in evaluation. The criteria for evaluating the students, in consonance with the educational philosophy and objectives of the center, include a global evaluation of aspects such as attitudes and values, relationship with peers and adults, strategies and planning of work, oral and written communication, reading, and curricular areas. (Extract from field notes from an educational center)

The results of evaluation are used to rethink the teaching task, that is, evaluation is used in a formative way to correct aspects of teaching methods, class organization, or the contents that the teacher must continue to reinforce after the trimester evaluation. They are also used in the sense of emphasizing the exercises that fail the most and improving the errors in students' work.

Evaluation is personalized and is reflected in individual reports on students' achievements in the material. Students' achievements and efforts are taken into account, as well as the different rhythms and difficulties. The evaluation is coherent with the objectives set for each student.

Improvement in concrete dimensions with respect to the initial level that was diagnosed is valued. An evaluation is made of individual progress, of any achievement or progress in areas that are difficult for the student, and the small daily achievements are valued and rewarded, starting out from the initial evaluation.

## SCENARIO 2 | SCHOOL PRACTICES THAT ARE LEAST ADAPTED TO THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH

In educational **centers** that are not characterized by an intercultural approach, attention to diversity is carried out in isolated instances and with compensatory measures. There is acknowledgement of diversity associated with students' characteristics and education needs, which are dealt with "specially," not "generally."

There are no measures in the center to favor intercultural interaction and comprehension and, in any case, they are isolated measures such as Peace Day or the Cultural Week or Intercultural Week.

The personnel of the center (teachers, counselors, lunchroom staff, etc.) do not reflect the students' cultural diversity in an appropriate fashion and are mainly people of Spanish nationality.

The center either does not participate in training and innovation programs on sociocultural diversity, or these are done as isolated instances by the teachers, or they are specific programs with an "integrating" nature such as linking classrooms. Teachers' permanent training in cultural diversity is considered to be an individual, personal issue for each teacher and is usually related to compensatory education.

Students' personal and academic experiences and those of their families are not taken into account, except by some teachers. The exception is associated with immigrant students and their families:

"Attention is given to each student's previous experience in other centers and what work they have done. Especially for students who come from other countries." (28)

Pluralism as a value and an educational resource is not explicitly promoted, or this is done in complementary activities, such as the subject that is an alternative to religion or the cultural week. There is no explicit treatment of racism; it is not considered to be a priority, as there have been no outbreaks of xenophobia at the center.

"There's nothing to fight, these problems don't occur in our school because we start out from the basis that we are all equal." (Interview with a primary school teacher)

If there is a conflict, it is analyzed, but generally from the perspective that the center is right.

The school-family-community connection does not involve the families much, it is limited to tutor-family meetings, or isolated activities.

Linguistic pluralism is valued and promoted in the case of languages that are learned as second languages (English and French). Expressions from other languages are not used, and the Spanish used by South American students is corrected and/or not valued.

"Antonio's (an Ecuadoran student) rich vocabulary and his fluency surprises me, the problem is that he talks too much and he fails language because the objective of this course is not oral expression." (Commentary in a conversation between two 3rd grade primary school teachers)

The **teaching-learning process** is highly directed by the teachers. The students are not given opportunities to decide on their own learning activities in different moments or situations of academic activity. It was clear that:

"the teacher presents the activities as obligatory and for all the class, with no participation from the students." (20)

The explanations offered are that the students are little, that the teacher or tutor plans or gives the activities, that it is a waste of time and it is too much of a fuss. Sometimes there is an intention of offering the students alternatives to choose from, but they do not turn into real opportunities. In the best case, the subject is decided but there is freedom in the way it is developed, or sometimes the students decide on the activity because they insist and drive the tutor crazy until they get their way.

Interest centers or activities that would allow the participant to choose the moment they begin and end tasks that respond to their own interests are not used, because timing is very marked and it is the teacher or tutor who de-

cides about times and tasks “to avoid conflicts” (24). There is usually a work plan to follow. Sometimes the students are allowed to choose activities freely once they finish their obligatory task, but they have to choose among tasks or catching up on homework in other subjects.

The teacher is more of a transmitter of knowledge, she tends to explain concepts or specific tasks, or “sometimes sticks to controlling the students so that they fulfill their obligations” (23), more than acting as a facilitator of learning.

Care is not always taken to ensure that the students have the premises and cognitive learning skills to confront the class tasks; rather, they are expected to have them and, if they do not, they are considered “not to be good students.”

Informally, the students’ level and previous knowledge are taken into account, asking them what they know, but without carrying out a “specific detection of previous ideas” (20). Teachers follow the program. Students are not encouraged to present their experiences and knowledge about the subject they are working on; they are not cut off if it comes up spontaneously, although the teacher does not allow it if he is very tired.

Each student’s needs and interests as an individual are not attended to over and above their needs as a member of a specific reference group:

“they say they do, but immigrants, for example, go to extra help classes just because they are immigrants.” (11)

Prejudices are worked on in an isolated way, in some activities, and verbally in tutorials. In one case, it was said that:

“normally there are no discriminatory situations, and sometimes it is impossible to avoid out-of-place commentaries that they then try to resolve by explaining the consequences.” (7)

To justify this avoidance of the subject, they say either that the students are very little or that “there are no problems of this kind in class” (23), which could be taken to mean that “they do not see any problems of this kind” and so they do not deal with them.

**Didactic resource** is identified with textbook, and this does not reflect diversity, does not always reflect diversity, or it is less a matter of the book than of the use that is given to it that fits diversity. The didactic material used is only or basically the textbook.

The materials encourage individual work more than cooperation or communication among students or, in some cases, despite having a format that favors cooperation, the way the materials are used do not take advantage of these characteristics.

The objectives of the material do not coincide with the objectives of the intercultural approach, or do so exceptionally in the subject that is the alternative to religion, outside of the classroom, or in activities such as the cultural week. No care is taken to use the material coherently with the proposals to respect cultural diversity that are contained in other dimensions of the curriculum (that may be inexistent).

There are not very many minority groups represented in the materials and, for example, “they are never the main characters in math problems” (6). At some moments, people who are significant for different groups are discussed (e.g., God, the Pope), but people belonging to minority groups are not generally discussed. The materials present certain groups in a stereotyped way and, above all, the oldest resources are not careful to eliminate feelings of superiority of some students over others. Groups’ traditions and customs are presented in a stereotyped, incomplete fashion, without focusing on what they mean to the group. The images and illustrations either do not reflect diversity or they do so in a stereotyped way. Women’s role in history and in the development of societies is not shown appropriately. For example, “women are always doing the shopping” (5). As for the history of different groups, no attention is given to it beyond stereotypes. For example:

“when they talk about African countries, they talk about their underdevelopment and do not attend to other aspects.” (6)

In the materials “the universal nature of human experience is discussed, but without mentioning other cultural groups” (20). In general, the materials:

“are presented with a view to the majority, without paying attention to minorities or different cultural contexts.” (6)

Specific materials are prepared for compensatory class students and SEN students; in the rest of the cases, in general:

“the students are the ones who must adapt to the materials, even to the rhythm for doing them.” (13)

As for personal help, mediators and volunteers are not usually used, only in some specific instances. Special help teaching staff work outside of the classroom and individually, generally, sometimes *“doing the same work as in the normal classroom”* (25). Regarding the relationship between tutors and the counselor, the counselor:

“gives orientations about the diagnosis, but the teachers tend to do things on their own.” (13)

The families do not participate much and this participation is channeled mainly through the Parents’ Association.

Regarding **evaluation**, what stand out are the elements and strategies that are not used.

The portfolio is not usually used as an evaluation technique. When it is used, the samples of work included in the portfolio can only be in Spanish (the language of the school), not in the students’ mother tongue.

Coevaluation is not an evaluation method that is used in the classrooms. Classmates do not usually participate in evaluation (not even to evaluate group projects, not individual ones). In one case, it was pointed out that:

“when a student directs the class, she evaluates her classmates according to their answers to her questions, although these observations do not appear on the report card.” (7)

Students do not participate in the evaluation process (self-evaluation), either, and the teacher is the only one who evaluates the students. Evaluation:

“is based mainly on test grades.” (7)

And self-evaluation is considered to be a contrast element to compare the students’ assessments to the teachers’ and families’ assessments, and is not taken into account in the grade.

Formally, meetings with the student are not part of the evaluation process, nor are they a method of evaluation; students are evaluated by tests, class activities, and daily effort. On exceptional occasions, interviews with students are part of the evaluation process, and sometimes the teachers, *“in their free time, comment on what they should do to improve”* (6). Using communication and individual dialogue with students as part of the evaluation is not a common technique.

Learning contracts with students are not promoted *“due to the problems that can arise”* (24). The objectives of learning are not negotiated but rather are marked by the teacher or are given. Sometimes the students do not know the objectives, they only:

“know that they have to learn what is explained to them.” (28)

There is only one case in which the possibility of negotiating is contemplated, but the negotiation is not about the objectives but rather about the work plan, *“but not too much”* (27).

When the possibility to resit exams exists, the exam is repeated to raise the grade.

The teachers do not discuss the reasons for using a variety of tasks and evaluation criteria with the students. The teachers are the ones who decide on the type and method of evaluation, as well as the criteria. The students are given no clarification on the specific purpose of an evaluation process, teachers only *“explain grades”* (5) to students. The justification for this lack of information for the students is that they are still very little.

Metaevaluation processes are not carried out, nor is there any reflection on the evaluation, *“they are evaluated, that’s all”* (6) and *“neither the students nor other teachers question it”* (13). In relation to students’ awareness, teachers indicated that:

“they don’t understand that they are being evaluated unless they are given a sheet of paper and told that they’re doing an exam.” (28)

The decisions derived from the diagnosis (assignment to special groups, to the integration program) are not put off for at least two years after entering schooling, but are made immediately, right from preschool:

“some of them have not had the psychopedagogical diagnosis and have been in compensatory education since 1st grade” (11).

How students process and express ideas in their mother tongue is not something that is taken into account in the regular classroom, or only on specific occasions, such as in the linking classroom. Only Spanish is spoken in the classroom and/or only Spanish language and English are evaluated.

In general, all the evaluation is “contaminated” by the language factor, that is, in almost all the basic materials, grades depend on students’ command of the language. It is not so much a matter of evaluating *Conocimiento del Medio*

or Mathematics, as of evaluating the students' ability to express themselves in Spanish in these subjects.

## FINAL REFLECTIONS

Fernández Enguita (2001) explains how the school should respond to the changes linked to pluralism from the teachers themselves and from the educational center, conceiving their roles and organization from a perspective that contemplates their potential and capacity for change. This is the reason that this paper has focused on teachers' beliefs and practices.

The two extreme scenarios described make the distance between practices that fit an intercultural approach more or less in primary school centers and classrooms visible.

However, because the scenarios are based on real practices observed in the centers, they do not reflect what we could consider to be an "ideal school," but rather what is closest to an ideal school, among the schools we have visited. We have found practices that we consider adapted from an intercultural approach that are, however, not totally integrated into the center as a whole. Going back to the scenarios described, it can be said that, in a scenario better adapted to the intercultural perspective, there are aspects that are not so positive. The following are some examples of these dissonances:

- Attention to students' educational characteristics and needs is associated with giving them individualized attention, and the kind of help given is varied: individualized curricular adaptations, compensatory education, counselors, psychologists, social workers... But, in general, the measures of attention to diversity at the center are not "general" but rather "special," and extra help is linked to special education needs or special education.
- Regarding teacher training for attention to cultural diversity, even though it exists, it is each teacher's personal decision and, in general, only the "special" teachers such as the linking classroom teachers receive this training.
- The similarities among people are highlighted more than the differences. Although practices to fight racism and discrimination are carried

out, they are mostly classroom (tutorial) activities and do not involve the center as a whole with structural measures.

- Measures that favor meaningful learning such as asking explicit questions about what students know are not systematically implemented in all subjects.
- There is cooperative work, but it is used, above all, to favor affective and social objectives, not academic ones.
- There is a relationship with the families, mainly through meetings, but these meetings are basically to inform the parents in a unidirectional way, not to make joint decisions.

Identifying and describing school practices from an intercultural approach in a concrete context, such as primary education in the Community of Madrid, helps us to clarify the framework we find ourselves in, the realities and possibilities that appear on the pedagogical scene. Recognizing these strategies, sharing the results of a research process, and facilitating information for reflection, are the first steps on the path to adopting an intercultural approach in education.

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# COOPERATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

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## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will present a methodology that is basic to any teaching-learning process, even more so when these processes are being carried out from an intercultural approach. We are referring to cooperative and/or collaborative learning. Various authors distinguish between the two, based mainly on the roles of teacher and student, and on the activities carried out, or on the educational level considered, although the two terms are often used indistinctly. They are based on the same principles and pedagogical bases of learning and, in the chapter, we will use them synonymously. In the first section, we will discuss the concept of collaborative learning, its characteristics and its advantages. In the second, some of the theoretical approaches that lay the foundation for cooperative learning will be highlighted. In the third section, some of the most frequently used techniques will be presented, and in



the fourth we will indicate some practical issues regarding group formation and the way groups work. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn from all the previous discussion.

## CONCEPT OF COOPERATIVE/COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative/collaborative learning is learning that is carried out as a team, in small groups of two or more people, aimed at achieving specific learning goals. Not all group work, however, is collaborative or cooperative: a group of students can apparently be working together, but they are not all necessarily contributing to the group or achieving significant learning with respect to the assigned task. All of the members of a group must be actively committed to working jointly to achieve the established objectives in order for us to really be able to talk about cooperative learning.

Johnson and Johnson (1991, 1999) define cooperative learning as: “*the didactic use of small groups for students to work together and maximize their own learning and that of the others.*” In cooperative learning, each student is responsible for her own individual learning and for the learning of the rest of the group members. In addition, according to these authors, the teachers structure the learning activities in an intentional fashion. In this sense, some authors establish differences between cooperative learning and so-called collaborative learning, mentioning that in this last type, the teacher’s role is less directive and the students’ responsibility and autonomy are even greater in the joint planning of their own learning.

Other authors apply the adjective collaborative to refer to the team learning carried out using information and communications technologies, while others differentiate between the two according to the educational level on which we are working: cooperative learning for non-university teaching and collaborative learning for university teaching, where the students are theoretically more autonomous. In our opinion, differentiating these terms is not very useful and we use both terms as synonyms, so we will use one adjective or the other without distinction. The important thing is the processes that are established and the way that the types of learning are achieved in a collaborative fashion, according to the characteristics and elements that we will describe in this chapter.

We cannot speak of cooperative or collaborative learning when only one of the participants does the group task while the others observe. Everyone ought to contribute something, depending on the objectives and the techniques used, as we shall see in the third section, with the idea of attaining shared achievements, or a joint project. All the members of a group must actively commit themselves to work together to achieve the established objectives. The efficacy of the team and its success in the end, depend on the *diversity* and *complementariness* of the functions of all the members who, besides, are all pursuing the same objective.

Another characteristic of collaborative learning is that significant learning is achieved. When students work together in a collaborative fashion, their knowledge of the task and their comprehension of the contents increase. But not only does learning about curricular or academic knowledge occur; there are also other kinds of learning taking place, such as the development of skills for team work and the evaluation of other points of view through interaction with other companions. This kind of learning is also very appropriate for debating and questioning concepts and ideas that are normally considered to be valid knowledge, thus contributing to the joint construction of knowledge and to learning by discovery, helping the participants to be authentic co-participants in their learning, together with other companions.

Johnson, Johnson & Holubec (1993, pp. 7-8) and Johnson, Johnson & Smith (1998, pp. 21-23) indicate five essential elements for cooperative learning:

1. *Positive interdependence.* Individuals’ success is linked to the success of the group: the individuals attain the goals proposed insofar as the group does. In this way, the students have a motivation to help one another to achieve the goals of the group.
2. *Stimulating interaction.* The students are expected to help one another and to support each other mutually. The components of the group share resources and promote the efforts of their companions to learn.
3. *Individual accountability and group accountability.* The group is responsible for achieving its goals. Each component of the group is responsible for doing his part; and the students are evaluated individually.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Authors’ note: This last aspect depends on the cooperative / collaborative learning techniques used, or on the objectives determined at the beginning, because the evaluation can also be a group evaluation.

4. *Development of teamwork skills.* The students should learn curricular contents (work by tasks), and they should also learn teamwork skills in order to work well as a team. Skills for teamwork should be taught explicitly, just like any other academic content.

5. *Group reflection and evaluation.* The students should learn to evaluate the group's productivity. It is important that they describe which actions are useful and which are not, and make decisions about what to keep doing and what to change, in order to improve as a group and as a team.

Pujolás *et al.* (2005) add heterogeneity as a criterion and diversity as a value to these characteristics of a cooperative learning team.

We agree with Pujolás (2002, 2005) that cooperative learning constitutes a *learning structure* that is different from a *competitive, individualistic structure*. Jonhson, Jonhson & Holubec (1993) refer to these forms of learning when they discuss cooperative learning. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of each of these learning structures.

LEARNING STRUCTURE	<i>Individualistic</i>	<i>Competitive</i>	<i>Cooperative</i>
	<b>ACTIVITY SUBSTRUCTURE</b>	Individual, non-competitive work Hardly any teamwork Mutual help is circumstantial	Individual, competitive work Teamwork is rejected Mutual help makes no sense
<b>REWARD SUBSTRUCTURE</b>	A student achieves her objective independently of whether the rest achieve their objective or not. (Results are not interdependent.)	A student achieves his objective if, and only if, the rest do not achieve their objective. (Results are negatively interdependent.)	A student achieves her objective if, and only if, the rest also achieve their objective. (Results are positively interdependent.)
<b>AUTHORITY SUBSTRUCTURE</b>	Curriculum management and the teaching-learning process are in the teachers' hands; they do not seek student interaction.	Curriculum management and the teaching-learning process are in the teachers' hands; teachers can encourage competition among the students, or not.	Teachers share curriculum management and the teaching-learning process with the students and encourage interaction among students.

Table 1 – Different Learning Structures (Pujolas et al., 2005)

In short, the cooperative/collaborative learning methodology or *structure* can be said to contribute noticeably to improving learning. As Barkley, Cross, and Major (2004) declare, the students are actively involved and put the results of half a century of research on cognitive development into practice. They acquire skills for teamwork that will be useful in the future. This methodology helps them to value multiple perspectives on a subject and to develop skills for dealing with different situations and problems in a collaborative way, and it takes into account the contributions and perspectives of all the students, thus contributing to involve them and make them active participants in their educational process.

There are several reasons that make collaborative learning advisable. Santamaría (n.d., p. 4-5) points out the following advantages to cooperative learning:

**IT RESPONDS TO THE NEEDS OF A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

It turns diversity into a powerful educational resource.

**IT CONTRIBUTES TO COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

It manages to increase the variety and richness of the experiences that school provides, helping to develop greater intellectual skills and to improve students' expression and verbal comprehension skills.

**IT REDUCES ANXIETY**

Cooperative learning foments students' self-esteem and self-confidence because it allows them to relax and work in a tranquil environment where they have enough time to think, opportunities to experiment and to receive feedback, and, above all, a greater probability of being successful, derived from both their companions' support and help and from the adaptation of educational intervention to their peculiarities.

**IT ENCOURAGES INTERACTION**

Teacher-student interaction is very limited because the ratio in our classrooms today is very high. Cooperative learning helps maximize the resources that educational centers have in order to develop the teaching-learning process.

#### IT FOMENTS AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

In a cooperative dynamic, students' dependency on the teacher is considerably reduced because their companions can give the kind of support that, previously, only the teacher could provide.

#### IT ALLOWS THE ADAPTATION OF THE CONTENTS TO THE STUDENTS' LEVEL

Group interaction facilitates students' comprehension of curricular contents. Joint work within a heterogeneous team makes it possible to modify the contents to fit the comprehension level of each one of the students. This happens because students ask for clarification of points that are unclear, they use an appropriate vocabulary, key concepts are explained in greater detail, etc.

#### IT PROMOTES THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPLEX SKILLS OF CRITICAL THINKING

When the students work in cooperative contexts, a whole series of metacognitive skills related to cooperative interaction itself are brought into play: planning and organizing the task, decision-making, argumentation and defense of positions, negotiation of points of view, problem resolution...

#### IT FAVORS SOCIO-AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT

Constant interaction translates into greater cohesion within the class-group, strengthened by the development of attitudes of openness, friendship, and trust derived from closeness to and integration with their classmates. In this way, a positive valuation of others is generated within the class-group, and this produces greater understanding among peers, mutual help, and the acceptance of ideas.

#### MOTIVATION FOR SCHOOL LEARNING INCREASES

If we understand motivation for learning as the degree to which students make an effort to achieve academic goals that they perceive as important and valuable, cooperative learning encourages:

- The subjective probability of success and causal attribution*
- Curiosity for what is learned and continuous motivation*

*Commitment to learning*

*Persistence in work*

*Expectations of future success and levels of aspiration*

#### IT IMPROVES ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Some of the factors that cause cooperative learning to provoke better academic performance are:

*Quality of the learning strategy*

*Search for controversy*

*Cognitive processing*

*Classmates' support*

*Active mutual involvement in learning*

*Group cohesion*

*Critical thinking*

#### IT HELPS REDUCE VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL

Cooperative learning is an effective tool for reducing some of the most decisive factors in the appearance of violent behavior, such as:

School failure

Lack of bonding among classmates

Promotes psychological health: self-esteem, social skills, etc.

Table 2: Advantages of Cooperative Learning (Santamaría, n.d.)

Obviously, cooperative work is not the panacea for achieving every kind of learning, although it does contribute to achieving many kinds of learning that cannot be achieved using other methodologies. It can be applied in many more situations than those in which it is usually used because it has very positive effects for the learners, as can be deduced from the previous table and as some of the main theories of learning defend, as we will see in the next section, in consonance with an intercultural approach in education. Nevertheless, the students' learning style must also be taken into account, because not everyone likes to work in a team and they do not normally know how to work in a team, making it necessary to explicitly teach cooperative work

skills, as we will see, because certain kinds of learning can only be achieved in interaction with others. In any case, it can be combined with other teaching-learning methodologies or strategies, depending on the nature of the task, on the planned objectives, on the skills to be developed, and on the students' learning styles. In the following section, we will take a look at some of the main theories on which cooperative learning is based.

## PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL BASES OF COOPERATIVE/ COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

In this section, we will present the conceptual theories that constitute the psychopedagogical bases of cooperative learning, although our presentation will necessarily be brief and schematic. In particular, we will present the constructivist theories that Piaget and Vygotski defended and the democratic school of J. Dewey.

Following Panitz (1997) and others who have studied this subject, we can state that both collaborative and cooperative learning are based on the *constructivist* approach. Knowledge is discovered by the students themselves and transformed into concepts that they can relate to. Later, this knowledge is reconstructed and extended through new learning experiences. Learning is carried out thanks to the student's active participation, in contrast to passive acceptance of information presented by an expert, and it is carried out by means of interactions and dialogue among the students, and between teachers and students in a social context. Students learn to understand and appreciate different perspectives through dialogue with their classmates.

In his genetic epistemology, Piaget considers knowledge to be constructed based on a process of balance-imbalance-rebalance that makes models of knowledge more and more complex and adapted to the context in which we live. According to his theory, we apply the knowledge models that we have developed to different learning situations –formal or informal- that we face. When the models that we have do not allow us to assimilate the new situations (simplifying, we could say that assimilate means to interpret and take in), there is a **cognitive conflict** that is resolved by adjusting the models, that is, extending, adapting, or changing the cognitive models. Following the trail of Piaget, the representatives of the School of Geneva broadened the concept

of cognitive conflict, considering that learning situations do not happen in a vacuum. The learner is not only faced with learning situations; any teaching-learning process happens in social interaction and requires the interaction of two or more people. In this way, cognitive conflict turns into **sociocognitive conflict**. For sociocognitive conflict to occur, points of view on one subject or task that differ moderately must confront one another. That is, a discussion of a subject in which the different participants in the confrontation have the same ideas and points of view will not produce sociocognitive conflict; nor will a situation in which the points of view are so divergent that they can find no point of encounter give rise to cognitive conflict. When two or more approaches to a single subject or task diverge moderately, conflict among, or a lack of balance among, models can appear, and it will be resolved by rebalancing the models or their adaptation, resulting in a person's progress in intellectual development.

Out of the different contributions from Vygotski's theory (1985), perhaps the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) has been the most fruitful regarding practical applications in teaching. The ZPD is the distance between the learner's real level of development, determined by the problem-situations that he is capable of resolving himself, and the issues that the person is capable of resolving with the help of someone else who is more of an expert on the subject. In this way, we appropriate the culture in which we live through a process of internalization according to which all the mental functions that are on the interpsychological level become part of the intrapsychological level. That is, according to the socio-cultural theory, social interaction is completely necessary for learning to occur: thanks to interaction with others (the interpsychological level) who are more expert and who are in the learner's ZPD, the learner manages to interiorize the knowledge of a specific culture and incorporate it into the (individual) intrapsychological level and develop her Higher Mental Functions, in short: learn.

Although they start out from different assumptions and use different mechanisms, Piaget's theory and the School of Geneva, on one hand, and Vygotski and the Socio-historical School, on the other, share some points that will help us to understand the relevance of collaborative learning in schools:

- The importance of social interaction for the proper development of the person and of learning

- The need for the teacher/expert student to start out from the learner's knowledge and level of development in order to create an optimum imbalance of the models (School of Geneva) or to be in the Zone of Proximal Development (Socio-historical School)
- The importance of contact between peers who, naturally and with no great effort, are in the ZPD of the classmates or create optimum imbalances

These three shared points are also shared in the case of students from different ethnic, religious, or cultural backgrounds. Thus, social interaction allows **all** students to experience cognitive development and, at the same time, to develop models of social knowledge that include the fact that all students have the same capabilities/skills and the interiorization, reaching the intrapsychological level, of the fact that work shared with different people can be as fruitful or even more so than work shared with similar people. We must not forget that the concepts sketched here, cognitive and sociocognitive conflict, ZPD, and interiorization, are not only useful for explaining the way scientific concepts are learned, but for learning in general and, therefore, for understanding the global development of the person as such.

The active school promoted by John Dewey (1859-1952) at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also emphasizes the need for interaction among the students, with mutual help and collaboration being part of this. Dewey considered the school to be a microcosm that reproduces the cosmos of society. From this point of view, education should be a controlled version of the process of growth in society. We learn (grow as people) when we interact with the environment and we see an obstacle appear or we need to solve a problem and we then try different solutions and learn from the results of these attempts. In this active research process, we do not act in an isolated manner, but embedded in the community that we are part of, as human beings. This means that our actions affect others and the actions of others affect us.

The school's main responsibility, according to this model, is to incentivate children's natural curiosity and direct it toward investigation (problem solving) in a social context and through shared experiences, in a school community in which the children are stimulated to develop cognitively, socially, and morally. The student's progress is not evaluated by his ability to receive and give back information (which involves reproducing the knowledge, values, and attitudes of present-day society), but by the ability she develops for resolving

new situations in an intelligent way, knowing how to express her experiences and share them with others (which involves society's ability to change). The challenge to the school is to become a cooperative community at the same time as it stimulates the students to develop their own capabilities and the skill to respond to their own needs. If teachers manage to create this kind of school, students will develop an innovative spirit that will allow them to generate whatever social changes are necessary, within a democratic society where all the students/citizens, whatever their origin, race, or religion, can and should contribute to change and to democratic growth. Cooperative work is, finally, the expression of democratic ideas in education (Dewey 1916).

## SOME OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED TECHNIQUES

Cooperative learning consist of a continuum of methods that goes from the most direct (techniques) to the most conceptual (teaching models or macrostrategies) (Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne, 2001). Having stated the psychoeducational foundations of collaborative learning, we will now present the techniques resulting from the intentional structure that requires the use of collaborative learning in the classroom. These techniques usually have a series of shared steps independently of which one is used (Díaz-Aguado, 2003): organization in heterogeneous groups, explicit encouragement of the members of the groups to cooperate among themselves, and rewards for group performance. However, the different techniques differ in other aspects, mainly on the final evaluation, the kind of reward (individual or group reward), and the process for carrying out the activities. In this section, we will briefly describe the different techniques that have been developed to provoke cooperative learning, giving special emphasis to evaluation and rewards.

### 1. LEARNING TOGETHER. JOHNSON AND JOHNSON (1975)

This is the most general of the models that we will present in this chapter and it is based on the general characteristics of cooperative learning described in the first section. It consists of forming groups of students with 2 to 6 members who must work on the same material and try to achieve success both for the group and for each individual student. The activity that the group will

work on should involve, preferably, problem solving, significant conceptual learning, or diverging thinking and creativity. Finally, the teacher's activity consists of selecting the task to be carried out, selecting the groups and their size, and supervising the work of the students in their groups.

## 2. GROUP INVESTIGATION OR WORK ON PROJECTS

The main characteristic of this technique (Sharan and Sharan 1976) may be the autonomy and the responsibility that the students take on as they carry it out. The groups (3 to 5 members) are made up by the students themselves who choose their companions according to their interests and preferences. Similarly, the students are the ones who choose the subject to work on and the distribution of the sub-themes within the team. Once the groups are formed and the subjects are chosen, the team must develop a work plan which clearly states the objectives proposed, the procedures to follow, and the division of activities among the members of the group. Then each member carries out the activities distributed in the plan. The active participation of the teacher is necessary both in the preparation phase and in carrying out the activities of the work plan, and the teacher should help and supervise the students as they carry out their work plan, providing materials, suggesting activities, discussing contents, and supervising the activities. Finally, the students will analyze and synthesize the information obtained and present it to the class group. The class group will ask the work team questions and the work team will provide appropriate answers.

An advantage of this technique is that each member of the group participates, developing the part of the material that motivates him the most or for which he is best prepared.

**Evaluation:** Both the teacher and the students who made up the work team do the evaluation.

## 3. JIGSAW. ARONSON (1978)

The teacher divides the students into heterogeneous groups of 4 or 5 members, and divides the subject on which they will work according to the number of students in the group. Each component of the work team will receive one of

the sub-themes or divisions proposed by the professor, but she will not know the information that the rest of the members of the group have. Each member of the team must prepare his part of the material, either using the information that the teacher provides or looking for contents related to the contents he needs to prepare on his own. Once all the students in the classroom have prepared their part of the subject, they will get together in expert groups; that is, all of the students that have studied a sub-theme will meet in order to study this part of the subject in depth. In this expert meeting, they will prepare summaries, study key concepts in depth, clear up the doubts that each one may have, make concept maps, or use any other technique that will help them to manage the contents that they have worked on comfortably. After this expert meeting in which they can prepare a report on the part that they worked on, the students will return to their original groups, give the report to the group, and explain their part of the material to the rest of the members of the work team. The only way of learning the sections that the others have prepared is by means of the information that the experts provide, requiring trust in individual and group responsibility.

This technique is useful when the material to be studied can be divided into different sections (e.g., history or literature). Each student knows her part of the material and needs the rest of her classmates to put the entire puzzle together.

**Evaluation:** All of the students in the classroom are evaluated and graded individually. One variation of this technique consists of adding the evaluations of the members of the group in order to give the team a global grade (Slavin, 1980). Also, in this variation, it is not necessary to prepare specific material for each member of the group; instead, all of the students have the information on the whole subject, which means that regular study material, for example, a textbook, can be used.

## 4. STUDENT TEAMS ACHIEVEMENT DIVISION. SLAVIN (1978)

Heterogeneous work groups of 5 or 6 members are formed. The teacher explains the subject to the entire class and the students prepare the material in their group, making sure that all the members of the group understand the subject well. In order to achieve this, they can make concept maps, summaries, or outlines, do a question-answer session among themselves, memorize the key or most relevant concepts, look for more information, etc.

**Evaluation:** The evaluation is individual, but the teacher does not use the entire class-group as the comparison, but rather will evaluate the performance of each student with respect to a reference group that is homogeneous with respect to performance. One possibility for doing this is to use performance on a subject to form the homogeneous evaluation groups for the next activity. In this way, if the groups are made up of 6 members, the 6 students who get the highest grade on a subject will form division 1, the 6 students with the next best grades will be division 2, and so on. Within each division, the student with the best grade contributes 6 points to his group, the next one 5 points and so on. This technique ensures that a student with lower performance but in a lower division can contribute more points to her group than another with better performance who is in a higher division.

#### 5. TEAMS-GAMES-TOURNAMENT. DEVRIES AND EDWARDS (1974)

This technique is similar to the previous one, but, instead of exams, there are question-and-answer tournaments or competitions. The class is divided into groups with 5 or 6 members each. The students in these groups must prepare the material together until they are sure that all the team members are ready for the tournament. Then the tournament is held, with each student competing with two other students of their same level or performance (the performance on a previous test can be used to make the divisions or the trio for the competition). The tournament is held with cards and answer sheets prepared by the teacher. The student takes a card with a question and gives the answer. If the answer is correct, he keeps the card, but if it is incorrect he puts it back at the bottom of the pile. His two companions can refute the answer with their arguments, so that if they are right, they keep the card and, if they are wrong, they have to give one of the cards that they had already won to the companion who picked the card in the first place. The tournament ends when there are no more cards.

**Evaluation:** The player who wins the tournament contributes 6 points to the team that trained her, the second, 4 points, and the third, 2 points. If there is a tie, each team gets 4 points. Each team's score is the average score of all of its members.

#### 6. TEAM ASSISTED INDIVIDUALIZATION. SLAVIN, LEAVEY AND MADDEN (1982).

In this technique, the students work in heterogeneous groups of 5 or 6 members, but it is original because individual and cooperative learning are combined to achieve the learning objectives. Even though all the members of the team are doing the same work, each one of them does it following a work plan that the teacher has adapted to her performance. Within each team, each student freely chooses a partner and they exchange answer sheets and correct one another's activities.

**Evaluation:** When the group members are ready, they are tested on the material by another student-monitor. The score that each team obtains is the average of its members' scores.

The last four techniques described, developed by Slavin and his collaborators, can be found in other texts under the generic name of (*Student Team Learning*). The following quote summarizes the idea on which they are based:

The idea on which the student team learning techniques are based is that when students learn in small, carefully structured groups and the rewards are based on the progress of all the students in the team, they help one another to study and gain not only in school achievement but in self-esteem, increasing the positive valuation and respect for the rest of their companions, benefiting all the students (Success for All Foundation, <http://www.successforall.net/curriculum/stlearn.htm>)

#### CREATING COOPERATIVE WORK GROUPS

As Pujolás et al., (2005) comment, following Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1999), it is not easy to get the members of the work groups to collaborate to the benefit of the group and to take on the roles they are assigned in each of the subjects of study. Collaborative learning techniques require careful monitoring by the teacher. The students tend to go through a series of phases as they interiorize this way of acting, phases which we will sketch briefly in this section. At first, the students play the roles that have been assigned to them (person in charge, secretary, person in charge of material...) in a clumsy, conscious way. Later they become less clumsy, but feel like they are pretending. It is important for the teacher to encourage the students at these times so that

they will continue to play their roles. After this phase, they begin to play their roles mechanically and correctly; in the end, they use their roles automatically and routinely, having interiorized the cooperative way of working.

In any case, as Pujolás (2002) states, a team cannot be improvised and the students do not spontaneously acquire the necessary social skills to work in a team. As we have already mentioned, it is necessary to teach these skills explicitly (Pujolás has developed a Cooperative Learning program aimed at Secondary Education students to train them in teamwork skills).<sup>50</sup> When a work team –called a *base team*– finally works, its composition should not be modified. The *base teams* are permanent and stable and their composition is always heterogeneous. Base teams are generally made up of 4 students, depending on their experience in working cooperatively and they should never have more than 6 members.

An indispensable characteristic is that the teams be heterogeneous (regarding gender, origins, interests, skills, motivation, performance...). In a way, using Pujolás' (2002) words, each team should reproduce the characteristics of the class group. It may be interesting to group the students together more homogeneously, but only sporadically and with quite specific objectives; generally, the priority in forming groups is to make them heterogeneous.

Ideally, once the groups are consolidated, they should be maintained during the entire educational cycle. However, it is also convenient for all the class group members to relate to one another and to have the opportunity to work together sometimes; it is not good for the same students always to work on the same team. This can be achieved if, in addition to the base teams, other kinds of teams are used, combining these different groupings throughout the educational cycle. These other teams are called *sporadic teams* and, as the name indicates, they are formed sporadically, to solve a specific issue or for very specific activities and for *expert teams*.

*Sporadic teams* are formed for one class session, but they can also be used for shorter times, depending on the problem to be solved, or for carrying out a short activity. The *Peer tutorial* is this kind of formation: for one class session, two or three students can work together, with one of them explaining something that the other or others do not know, or the students who already know the technique or the procedure that the teacher is teaching can work

<sup>50</sup> Available on Internet, at: <http://www.uvic.cat/fe/reerca/ca/psico/jet.html> Last consulted on March 15, 2009

together, while the teacher meets with the students who do not know it well yet to explain it again and help them to overcome their difficulties.

As for *expert teams*, the *base teams* can be redistributed every now and then in expert teams, in which a member of each group “specializes” in a knowledge or a skill until she is an “expert,” and later shares her knowledge with her companions on the base team –similar to the *Jigsaw* technique described in the previous section. Class sessions in which a student who is outstanding in one area “directs” the others in an exercise of this technique can also be organized; the “experts” are rotated depending on the students’ different skills, so that each student acts as an “expert” on one team or another. For a more in-depth description of team formation, of how teams work, and of other practical and methodological issues regarding cooperative learning in the classroom, the work documents by Pujolás (2002, 2003) and by Pujolás *et al.* (2005), included in the Bibliography, can be consulted.

## TO CONCLUDE

In this chapter, we have presented cooperative learning, its advantages, the theories it is based on, and some of the most common techniques, as well as ways to form teams. We have discussed the relationship of cooperative learning with interculturality, the central subject that unites the different chapters of this book. In this sense, we have clarified that this kind of learning, by definition, responds to the needs of a multicultural society such as the one we enjoy at present, forming the basis of a democratic society that understands that each and every citizen should enjoy the same privileges, rights, and obligations.

Students are not learning curricular contents alone, they are also learning a way of working that they will be able to use throughout their learning and job trajectories, a way of working that helps them to deal with and accept interculturality in the classroom, and diversity in general, as a source of richness. Cooperative/collaborative learning contributes to the joint construction of knowledge and to the dialogue between types of knowledge, aspects that are specific to an intercultural approach in education.

We have described some of the best-known techniques that have been used for years in cooperative learning. The reader of this chapter finds here not only the conceptual foundations that govern collaborative learning and its

relationship with interculturality, but also a useful tool that will allow him to approach it using these techniques in his daily work, with a brief warning about some of the difficulties he may find in applying them.

Although we have not been able to discuss collaborative learning online in this chapter, due to evident issues of space, the reader who is interested in this aspect can, no doubt, weave the cloth that joins this chapter with the chapter “*Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in Intercultural Education*” by the authors Angélica Rísquez, M<sup>a</sup> Jose Rubio, and Germanía Rodríguez, and apply the different techniques described in this chapter using the conceptual and methodological tools presented by these authors.

Finally, we would like to call the reader’s attention to the versatility of the different techniques presented. Knowing the foundations and principles that govern cooperative learning, the teacher who uses this kind of learning in her sessions will be able to mix the different techniques, combining types of evaluation and learning processes in a way that will allow her to adjust the contents of the material to the students who attend her class and to the times necessary for learning. She will even be able to create new techniques similar to existing ones but with their own idiosyncracies that will benefit the learning and development of all of the students in the class.

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VYGOTSKI, L. S. 1985. *Pensamiento y Lenguaje*. Buenos Aires: Pléyade.

### SOME INTERNET RESOURCES

Web page on Collaborative Learning, prepared by T. Panitz  
<http://home.capecod.net/~tpanitz/>

International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education  
<http://www.iasce.net>

Bibliographic references and documentaries on Collaborative Learning from the Centro de Profesores y Recursos de Caspe  
[http://www.cprcaspe.es/doc\\_noticia/bibliografia\\_.pdf](http://www.cprcaspe.es/doc_noticia/bibliografia_.pdf)

Government of Aragón (Primary Education)  
<http://www.maestrosdeprimaria.com>

## BUILDING THE CURRICULUM FOR SPACES FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

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YOLANDA JIMÉNEZ NARANJO

### INTRODUCTION

In order to talk about the possibility of generating spaces for intercultural dialogue, we believe that it is absolutely necessary to start by putting on the discussion table key concepts, such as culture and identity, and their insertion in the processes of curriculum building nourished by an intercultural education perspective. This involves reviewing curriculum proposals as state projects, from the perspective of an analysis in which the subject does not literally consummate the elements that govern her practice, but rather carries them to a reflexive, comparative process with respect to her own teaching and personal work. In light of these ideas, we will also include the notion of a teaching subject who avidly seeks processes of change, but who could find himself limited by conditions of curricular operation determined by uses and customs or by institutional purposes that could slow down the dialogue of knowledge.

The possibility of generating spaces for intercultural dialogue in a school curriculum –understood both as the actors’ capability to interact and coexist in spaces of diversity and otherness and as the institutional capability to participate in spaces for constructing and legitimizing plural knowledge- presents the need to discuss, initially, key concepts that are repeatedly used in these kinds of experiences, such as culture and identity.

The frequency with which both terms are used, both inside and outside of the debate on the intercultural school, proves that “intercultural studies” and multiculturalist movements have been very successful in their “strategy of visualizing and topicalizing cultural diversity in any sphere of contemporary societies” (Radtke 1996 quoted in Dietz 2003:69) and for the anthropological task, this involves “its definitive loss of the monopoly on the concept of culture” (Dietz 2003:69). But if such a rich and plural usage indicates its success in noting the presence and importance of cultural processes in almost every sphere of life and their relation to the aspects of otherness and diversity to which they lead, we must consider that this very recurrence has travelled a parallel path to the indetermination with which they are named.

This indetermination is particularly significant when constructing an intercultural curriculum, because the significance that both concepts adopt outlines the same nature that we hope to promote in the curriculum. The danger lies in “taking them for granted,” in “assuming they are understood” and avoiding an in-depth analysis including both what we understand these concepts to mean and the latent and implicit concept which emerges from them in our daily school and curricular practices.

Within intercultural educational practices, it is not unusual to find pedagogical models that reinforce, through their curricula, stigmatizations and essentializations that are even more notorious than the ones they attempt to avoid. Or models that collaborate, explicitly and implicitly, in strengthening a “compensatory” view of the cultural practices of reference. Or models that indicate discursive processes that have nothing to do with the daily reproduction of cultural processes. Or models that draw a concept of culture that is so strongly rooted in “how things used to be” that it hinders an analysis of the complexity and heterogeneity of today’s cultural processes.

This is the reason why we would like, briefly in this article, to initially enter into the theoretical-conceptual debate about the concepts of culture and

identity within anthropological theory and examine the influences of this conceptual-disciplinary view on constructing intercultural curricula.

## A LOOK AT THE CONCEPTS OF CULTURE AND IDENTITY

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, anthropology tended toward an anti-substantialist,<sup>51</sup> anti-primordialist, and anti-objectivist conception of culture (Dietz 2003:35). However, writings with anthropological origins and, even more so, the *imaginaires* of the actors who attempt to promote activities of intercultural curricular innovation (Jiménez Naranjo 2009) still very frequently reproduce a concept of culture that is very close to essentialism, primordialism, and objectivism. This tendency corresponds quite precisely to the concept of culture that anthropology produced in its so-called classic period, between 1921 and 1971, according to Rosaldo (1991:51).

In the classic period, cultures were interpreted as discrete entities in which border areas could be visibly drawn –that is, as atomized, fully specified, immutable, closed, isolated spaces (Teodoro 1996:32). Similarly, it was not common to consider the inter-cultural nature of culture both in its relations to other cultures and in its own “intracultural dynamics,” which were also considered to be discrete entities, not entities that were inter-cultural in their interiors (Dietz 2003:70).

The sociocultural context of the decades of the seventies and the eighties nourished these changes. A homogeneous, static, discrete concept of culture, “foreign” to Euro-North American cultural practices (which allowed the establishment of “our own” and “theirs” as exclusive, defined spaces) lost all explanatory capacity when faced with the new phenomena that social analysis had to deal with during these years.

Instead of discrete cultures, the new social analysis imagined a “plurality of communities, partially disjointed and overlapping” (Rosaldo 1991:169), in which social organization, not the object culture, is what gives meaning to

51 The anti-substantialist or anti-essentialist concept of culture gathered a set of criticisms of the traditional anthropological approach in which the concept was interpreted statically and homogeneously. But essentialization refers especially to the categorization and stereotyping of individuals using their cultural characteristics “as if they were ‘essentially’ defined,” so that in these interpretations, “culture plays the role that race and sex play in other discourses” (Grillo 1998:196 quoted in Dietz 2003:34).

cultural processes. That is, the conceptual change of culture indicates a processual, close, diverse, dynamic, porous, border concept, which avoids creating a hierarchy of cultures useful for justifying a “true culture” that is above all the others. This change overcame the tendency of positivism and social evolution by acknowledging that each particular culture represents a universal culture (Teodoro 1996:33).

In addition to these changes, the post-colonial context accentuated interest in the relations of inequality, power, and domination (Rosaldo 1991:198) of cultural processes. The “evidence of political manipulation of cultural symbols” (Lomnitz-Adler 1995:15) let the lack of credibility of the great discursive accounts show through, creating awareness of the social and political construction of reality and, as a result, of anthropology’s role in it. Recognizing these characteristics in the post-industrial urban context stimulated reflection and the transfer of these cultural particularities to contexts with traditional economic and social characteristics, also (García Castaño, Pulido, and Montes 1997:238).

In this sense, as Anderson (1997) analyzed the situation for different nations, speaking of cultures, there is no “pre-cultural objective order that supposedly validates them and gives them a foundation as true,” or makes them “legitimate a priori” (Teodoro 1996:35). Moving away from the essentialist concept of culture, the tendency in conceptual development in anthropology points to culture not as an objective process that is independent of its subjects, and much less as genetic inheritance, but as a result of a concrete process of production. Therefore, culture is understood to show a vital, practical dimension that is difficult to separate from “the ways it is manifested concretely” (Teodoro 1996:24).

Its materialization is expressed both in an “objectified’ way in the form of institutions and socially coded meanings,” and in a “subjectified’ way as interiorized habits” (Giménez 1994) that become “routinized” by means of the continuous reproduction of daily activities in the institutions of society which are, in turn a product of “routinization” (Giddens 1995:94f.). And so the importance of the concept of “routinization” that Giddens provides lies, as Dietz indicates (2003:104), in the fact that it manages to shape both “institutional objectification” and “individual subjectification.” In other words, the concept of “routinization” allows us to integrate both structures and actors in cultural analysis, as it would be insufficient to “conceive of social structures independently of social actors, and viceversa” (Dietz 2003:143).

Therefore, the individual is both “creator of culture” through the intersubjective relations that give “value, meaning, and reality to his action” (Teodoro 1996:25) and re-creator of culture. If individuals develop within preexisting social structures, these social structures are “actively reproduced, modified, and adapted by these very same actors according to their interests, identities, and changing contexts” (Dietz 2003:143).

To summarize, arising from the criticism initiated in the anthropology of the seventies (and continuing today), cultural processes are interpreted in a new light that gives them dynamism, heterogeneity, flux, and hybridness and accepts cultural processes as being concrete, practical, subjective, social phenomena. That is, dances, traditional medicine, language, and gastronomy are cultural processes just like the uses of space and time, children’s behavior in the classroom, the attention mothers give children in their first years of socialization, forms of family socialization through work, the bureaucratic problems that teachers encounter at work, the social function that the school plays in the community, and a long etcetera.

Not only can these events be said to be cultural processes, but the heterogeneous viewpoint, the diverging, conflictive, contemporaneous, daily manifestations of these very processes are, too. It is important to note that they are socially located practices that go beyond those practices related to identity processes, that do not belong only to the “cognitive-verbalizable” world of culture, and that, finally, are non-discrete<sup>52</sup> inter-cultural processes, that the actors both reproduce and modify.

The debate about the concept of culture that we have commented on in the previous section takes place in parallel to the debate that has arisen about the concept of identity. In this debate, “the ontological-fundamentalist conceptions of identity” are suffering a serious crisis (García Canclini 1995:167) because they are showing interest in going from an essentialized concept of identity to a constructivist concept and, in parallel, the “way of legitimizing identities” (García Canclini 1995:168) is losing credibility.

Just as we have mentioned for cultural processes, processes of identity essentialization are defined by “a series of properties and attributes that are specific and stable, considered as constituting the entities that remain constant and with no great variations throughout time” (Giménez 2002:58f.). Identity,

<sup>52</sup> That is, processes that cannot be assigned clear frontiers with clearly delimited borders.

presented from a constructivist approach, focuses on the “socially structured” process by means of which individuals draw their frontiers with other groups or individuals with the explicit intention of producing differentiation with respect to some of the groups with which they interact (Giménez 2002: 60). This process indicates that identity is a social construction within a relational situation, that is, a situation of interaction and social communication, which orients its representations and actions (Giménez 2002: 60).

Drawing limits with respect to another set of actors requires the comparison and selection –carried out consciously– of certain cultural practices and representations as “emblems of contrast” (Giménez 1994:172). These “emblems of contrast” must be acknowledged by the actors, both those in one’s own group and the rest. This is what this author mentions as “self-identity’ and ‘exo-identity,” that is, self-affirmation and assignation, which take place within the specific socio-political dynamics of the struggle for “legitimate classification” (Giménez 2002: 61).

Therefore, we conceive identity not as an “objective datum” but as a social construction in a “relational and situational conception” that is far from the substantialist approach (Giménez 2002: 63). However, these characteristics do not mean that identity is an arbitrary, subjective process (Giménez 2002: 63). The cultural characteristics that are considered to belong to or be specific to one’s own group define and differentiate one group from another, thereby referring to concrete cultural practices. This constructed nature does not refer to the falsehood or truth of a certain identity, but to the style “with which they are imagined” (Anderson 1997:24).

Cultural and identity processes, even when there is no exact equivalence between them, interact deeply with one another. But as we have pointed out, they are not equivalent processes, particularly because the cultural features that are taken into account are only those that the actors themselves consider to be significant (Barth 1976:15), symbolized by the aforementioned “emblems of contrast” (Giménez 1994:172). Nor does the existence of a certain cultural practice generate identity on its own, because it “still requires the social actors’ will to distinguish themselves socially by means of a subjective, selective reelaboration of some of their elements” (Giménez 2002: 60). This explains why, on occasion, the changes in cultural processes are not equivalent to changes in identities, not even in the “emblems of contrast” (Giménez 2002: 65).

Thus, culture and identity, even though they are closely linked, are processes with differentiated mechanisms of reproduction and transformation. In cultural processes, the mechanisms of reproduction and transformation are carried out through routine practices, while processes of identity assignment and imputation are initially conscious, deliberate processes that select certain practices, although they end up internalized (Dietz 2003:104).

This conceptual clarification presents important challenges to building an intercultural curriculum, because several subjects must be kept in mind:

- a) This link between culture and ancestral practices –which are also part of community culture– present the danger of not visualizing important contemporaneous, hybrid cultural processes that take place in community contexts and, therefore, the danger of not being worthy of attention when establishing an intercultural curriculum.
- b) The concepts of culture and identity are constantly confused; this does not, however, provoke reflection on the juxtaposition, but rather differentiated processes that involve cultural and identity reproduction and production.
- c) Cultural practices are socially “situated” in the daily activities of the community inhabitants (Gasché 2002:137), so it is neither easy nor feasible to think that culture can be “sought,” “discovered,” and “transported” to the classroom to be acquired by the students.
- d) Failing to pay attention to these characteristics of culture strengthens the establishment of a “slightly folklorized curriculum” (Dietz 2003:168) which includes “complementary, episodic” approaches based on the acquisition of certain cognitive skills, considered “another content topic” and isolated activities for developing these areas and contents<sup>53</sup> (Franzé 1998:52). Forgetting, once again, the social and relational nature of cultural processes.

In this sense, when establishing an intercultural curriculum, it is important to understand that cultural processes are processes that are socially located; they can hardly be turned into discrete processes that are independent of their social ties, processes that can be captured only through cognitive prac-

<sup>53</sup> We recognize the need for these contents to also be part of an intercultural educational project but, as Franzé (1998:52) points out, the problem is exacerbated when these actions seem “in many cases, to exhaust intercultural ‘intervention.’”

tices and can, therefore, hardly be “transported” to the classroom without undergoing modifications.

Up to this point, we have presented the considerations that we wanted to highlight in relation to the concepts of culture and identity, concerning the reflection that gives life to the construction of curricula. But this reflection does not end here. We consider three other axes to be singularly important in this topic: curriculum proposals as state projects, the importance of the teaching subject and her pedagogical transformation, and, finally, the institutional dimension of the construction of curricula, which can contribute to determining the ranges and limits of intercultural curriculum proposals.

## CURRICULUM PROPOSALS AS STATE PROJECTS

Once we are aware –as we pointed out in the first part of this article- of the dynamic and changing concept of culture, we could say that, according to the needs and intentions that the state<sup>54</sup> prioritizes, the particular cultural features that coexist and are pertinent to a specific project can be selected by means of educational projects.

The state’s educational project will not always be explicit, inasmuch as the state attempts to get *acquiescence* to the prevailing order from different groups whose projects do not coincide with others and that, nevertheless, the state attempts to offer a compromise –upheld strongly by rhetoric- that makes room to recover their projects without sacrificing their respective leaderships and interests (Apple 1996:39).

One recurring practice in identity formation by means of the state’s cultural project is to consider the possibility of a *national curriculum* whose purpose is none other than to reduce –at least discursively- the diversity of conditions in which this curriculum is implemented in the school space, forgetting the conditions of the schools and trying to construct them as ‘the same.’ This illusory practice does not hide a bias that admits that there is something in common and that, nevertheless, tries to avoid the differences that exist among schools and communities. This can generate failures and chaos and, by attributing these to other factors, the bad results are often declared to be due to the

54 Dewey held that the problems regarding the formation and the re-form of public life should be understood relationally, highlighting the links between the economy, politics, and schooling (Apple 1996:9).

teachers’ deficient preparation. In the end, the state usually takes on the role of a progressive, ‘saving’ vision by establishing ‘innovative’ cultural projects.

It might seem feasible to identify and acknowledge the state’s intentionality –through discourse analysis; however, the features that are proposed for shaping the subjects at any certain time tend to be ‘naturalized’ by using certain strategies with the intention of legitimizing *the* project.<sup>55</sup>

This naturalization can not only be identified in the educational project and, more specifically, in curriculum proposals, but it tends to be separated in stages or phases through the multiple strategies used to implement it. We could underline that it is implemented with a backward direction of participation which causes it, in these early phases, to be accompanied by long documents. Only a few people, to whom they are made available, participate in this phase, and their participation is lacking or ‘simplified’ to the extent that it ‘goes down’ to the numerous teaching staff who are responsible for putting this project into practice. Or, as has tended to happen recently, it is made public in an administered, gradual way, by stages that are mediated by a lack of knowledge about the full proposal, at least in declarative terms. Thus, it is not difficult to identify the role that the state gives to the teachers, recognizing their not very significant role in the framework of the curriculum, paying no attention to the relational, significant performance that they carry out in the construction and reconstruction of the curriculum and, thus, in the identity of the students in their care.

With these considerations, we must not leave behind the different strategies that, systematically and little by little exclude the curricular agents: directors, teachers, students, parents, and communities, leaving them with the role of managers and consumers of the curriculum. The vision of the bureaucratic framework of school institutions frequently separates technical support work from the work of the teachers, or from the work of directors and teachers, limiting the task of educating and, with it, the resulting responsibility of the teachers: achieving the perverse effect of isolating<sup>56</sup> teachers from their work.

55 Apple highlights the attempts to create “a great narration” based on a unitary cause, the cause of the State, and that it is not easy to notices because we are participants in it (Apple 1996:14).

56 Hargreaves points out that, in the processes of “Balcanization” of teaching work, a relation arises that tends to separate “those with power” (with regard to decision making) from those without (Hargreaves 2005:254).

## THE TEACHING SUBJECT AND PEDAGOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

That is why, in this text, we insist on the importance of the teaching subject and his capability of generating actions aimed at achieving pedagogical transformation. Despite the role that we give to the teacher, we do not fail to notice that the challenges and demands that teachers face daily, as well as the rapidity required to respond to them, have changed. Also, despite the conditions of their surroundings, they are usually given greater attributions<sup>57</sup> than they can attend to individually and, in addition, in isolation.

As if this were not enough, the management and administration of time<sup>58</sup> is added to this intensified condition of school work. This management of time is proposed externally to the decision making that a teacher could establish according to specifically educational criteria: such as the recovery of previous experiences, the identification of teaching styles, and the reconstruction of skills in attending to the diversity of students, the group, and the community. Later we will talk about the discursive ‘traps’ that are usually presented to the teacher using statements or pronouncements about improvement.

In addition to the intensification of educational work, the external administration of time, and the isolation of teaching work, there are warnings that teachers should be the protagonists in educational changes and there is, particularly, a wager in favor of social transformations that arise from practice. From our point of view, this can generate a process of dissatisfaction or unease, or even of impossibility, if the idea is to take on the task from angles that have no knowledge of the perspective that is proposed from interculturality. This process, as we have mentioned, includes de-essentializing culture, and recognizing and insisting on its resignification as a process of social construction which includes the teacher.

Along this same line of ideas, teachers, in isolation, cannot take responsibility for constructing new scenarios, in isolation from relational and situational characteristics – particularly of the space where they work- in order to collectively build the meaning of their work in shaping the children. The teacher has to notice, among other things, that her co-protagonists in staging the cur-

57 The additional load of management and administrative tasks that teachers have to take on, taking time away from educational tasks themselves, is presumed to be a process of intensification (Hargreaves 2005:15).

58 In the case of Mexico, the new curriculum for Basic Education formally establishes the time for each subject.

riculum are diverse,<sup>59</sup> not different, and that the attempt to hold them to a ‘national’ curricular development using an educational project can, contrary to what is intended, generate differences, hierarchies, and processes of exclusion.

Managing their time needs to be reconceptualized, not only within the classroom and in their teaching practice, thinking from polychronic<sup>60</sup> time frameworks that allow them to be sensitive to the context, to orient their task toward people and the relations between these people, make space for the ‘non-official sphere’ of informal, domestic life, carry out transactions (of educational contents, of tasks, of materials), and recognize their capability of doing several things at a time. Time management also needs to be reconceptualized with reference to their training times,<sup>61</sup> those times devoted to reflection and to seeking alternative ways to carry out their pedagogical work, joining them to their personal times and the time they could share with their colleagues.

To this need to rethink the work of teaching, we need to add the institutional dimension of constructing the curriculum which, even though it could contribute to determining the scope of intercultural curriculum proposals, can also set their limits. In order to think about this, it is necessary to aim at recognizing work cultures<sup>62</sup> in the institutions; in this sense, the state’s intention to exercise power not only through repression but also to make this power accepted, have it crosscut everything, produce things, induce pleasure, shape knowledge, and produce discourses, must be noted (Foucault 1992:82).

One of these discourses is the recurring wager by the curriculum proposed by the state in favor of teachers working as a group, so that they do not do the section corresponding to reflection on and updating their practice on their own. What can be criticized about this assumption, with respect to the strength that could be recovered from intra-institutional work with peers,

59 Aguado and other authors warn us about the need to avoid conceptual frameworks that assimilate differences to deficiencies. “...cultural differences should be conceptualized and dealt with as neutral relations between the definer and the one defined, not as characteristics of the one defined” (Aguado 2003:4).

60 Edward Hall establishes a contrast between the monochronic and polychronic conceptions of time. The first would be the recurring use of western bureaucratic organizations –not Mediterranean ones- that are generally used by men, close to the technical-rational vision of time (Hargreaves 2005:127).

61 The simple fact of breaking the barrier in training time with the idea of ongoing training that does not involve a ‘before’ and ‘after’ (Hargreaves 2005:119).

62 It is important to underline the plural because, in contrast to a reductionist vision whose purpose is to control, where what is ‘ideally’ meant is ‘school’, ‘teacher’, ‘community’, these images will have to allow more than one meaning and more than one possible way of doing things. In this sense, Hargreaves points to an acknowledgement of what happens inside the institutions, if we want to work with a ‘real’ understanding of the educational phenomenon.

does not come from the many possibilities that doing it would mean, but from the impossibility –in real, practical terms- of this occurring in institutions that hardly have space for the classrooms, in schedules that the teachers have to limit due to their incorporation to other tasks, because of the scarce or inexistent bibliographic support for the discussions that could eventually be generated, because of the lack of academic leadership in many directors, and because of the recurring uses and customs for dealing with aspects of school life and of administration. The pleasure of group work can be threatened by these and other institutional conditions.

The considerations established in this article could be seen as good spaces for reflecting not only on the educational project as a safe project, but on the possibility of identifying the discursive fissures of this project, so that, by de-constructing the curriculum, the subjects can rethink themselves as Subjects<sup>63</sup> capable of analyzing an educational proposal in terms of being provisional insofar as they acknowledge a non-fixed, dynamic culture that is capable of making diversity visible, at the same time as it accounts for the subject as part of this diversity. As in other social objects, this is part of the complexity that stalks those who are ingenuous, and from this comes the invitation not just to review the proposals for attention to diversity from state projects but to first go through a process of acknowledging *oneself* in order to become aware of the challenges that await researchers in this field.

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63 We have capitalized Subjects here in order to emphasize the elective condition and a role that is not only one of contemplation and consumption but a dynamic role that questions and socially constructs and reconstructs a process. Here we would be speaking specifically of the role of the subject as a critical curricular agent that opens the possibility of participating in the transformation of the educational process that she participates in.

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## PROJECT EVALUATION

WHAT IT IS AND WHY WE DO IT

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## INTRODUCTION

The views expressed in this article were produced and provided by the Capitalisation and Evaluation Research Network, the CERN<sup>64</sup> group. This text was first published in the handbook "Project Managers – Guide to Evaluation," a Navreme Knowledge Development<sup>65</sup> publication, and it is a compilation of chapters one and two of the Guide. All quotations present in this text were taken from the "Project Managers – Guide to Evaluation." As the handbook

<sup>64</sup> The Capitalisation + Evaluation Research Network (CERN) and the E-VAL electronic environment (<http://www.evaluate-europe.net/>) have been established under the Leonardo programme of the EU in 2001. They have brought together experts in theory and practice of evaluation from 14 countries across Europe. CERN analyses intention, effectiveness, and impact of activity, in order to recommend future action and to stimulate collective learning. E-VAL develops a virtual environment to support those involved in evaluation processes.

<sup>65</sup> Navreme is an Expert Network on Consultancy, Research, Evaluation and Training in European Union Projects and Central, Central-Eastern and South-Eastern. Navreme was also responsible for the accompanying evaluation of the INTER-Alfa project.

was written primarily for managers and other professionals responsible for the development and execution of projects funded by the European Commission (EC), references to specific EC issues were excluded, in order to make the text accessible and relevant to project managers in general.

The article presents some of the basic ideas and assumptions underpinning project evaluation – what it is and why we do it.

Project Evaluation is also one of the topics of the INTER-Alfa MA module “Project Design, Management and Evaluation.” The course aims to gather previous experiences from students, and bring them into the discussion of standard methods as required by donors (international/local). Framework conditions, procedures, methods, and instruments of Project Design and Management will be discussed, provided, and applied to the students’ own projects - with an intercultural approach.

This brief introduction to the topic project evaluation can be considered an invitation to raise curiosity and bring discussion about this important component in the process of designing a project.

Evaluation is becoming an increasingly important activity in project management. The emphasis placed on evaluation by policy makers, funding bodies, strategists and practitioners is at an all time high. The cycle of innovating, piloting, evaluating and refining together with dissemination of the process and its outcomes is a widely accepted model of development. Yet many project managers are unclear about what evaluation actually means and, more importantly, how do they do it in practice. (*Project Managers – Guide to Evaluation*, p. 5)

## WHAT EVALUATION IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT

There are probably as many definitions of evaluation as there are books written about it. Here are some of them.

“Evaluation is the process of making comparisons for the purpose of improving decisions.” C.L.Taylor (1999)

“Evaluation consists of making judgments about programs based on established criteria.” Boone (1955)

“Evaluation uses a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer basic questions about a program — and to ensure that those answers are supported by evidence.” ACF Handbook (1997)

“Evaluation compares what has been accomplished (evidence) with what should have been accomplished (criteria) and then makes a judgment about how well it was done.” C.L.Taylor (1998)

“Evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of programmes for use by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness and make decisions with regard to what these programmes are doing.” Patton (1986)

“The term evaluation refers to the activity of systematically collecting, analysing and reporting information that can be used to change attitudes, and to improve the operation of a project or programme.” Allum (1990)

“Evaluation does not aim to replace decision makers’ experience and judgment, but rather offers systematic evidence that informs experience and judgment.” Weiss (1999)

“Synthesizing the definitions from the major dictionaries, we ...take evaluation to be the process of determining merit, worth, or significance. Evaluations are the products from this process.” Michael Scrivens (1998)

“Research determines what can be done, needs assessment determines what should be done, and evaluation determines how well something has been done.” Mendenhall (1973)

“Evaluation is the process of determining the value and effectiveness of a [learning] program. It uses assessment and validation tools to provide data for the evaluation [where]....assessment is the measurement of the practical results of the training in the work environment [and] validation determines if the objectives of the training goal were met.” Donald Clarke (1997)

We do not propose to give you another one because we have found all of these are appropriate in different circumstances. It is up to you to work with the one you find most useful for your project. However, the important ideas we can synthesize from all of them are that:

- Evaluation is purposeful; it is a means to an end, not an end in itself.
- Evaluation of experiences helps people make decisions about the future.
- Evaluation is based on asking specific questions about a project and finding the answers. It is an investigative process.
- Evaluation is systematic and scientific. It involves collecting evidence, making comparisons, measuring things against criteria.
- Evaluation means that someone, ultimately, has to make judgements about the value or worth of something so its outputs must be interpretive not simply descriptive.

The last definition usefully leads us to other, related terms, (like ‘assessment,’ ‘validation’ and so on), that we need to be familiar with in order to understand how and where evaluation fits in.

## WHAT EVALUATION IS NOT

Understanding what evaluation is not, is a good starting point for understanding what it is!

### MONITORING

Monitoring is about checking – checking whether inputs match outputs, whether income balances expenditure, whether actual activity matches planned activity. It is also about recording the gaps between them. Evaluation is about explaining why the gaps exist.

(And remember, the ‘gaps’ can show over-performance as well as deficits or shortfalls and it is important to record these, as the evaluation process will be interested in why this happened and whether there are factors which should influence future planning.)

Monitoring is not the same as evaluation because it is descriptive rather than interpretive and is not intrinsically directed toward learning, but the two are often confused. However, evaluation is almost impossible if there is no monitoring system in place.

### CAPITALISATION

Capitalisation has crept into the evaluation-related vocabulary in recent years and simply means building on the achievements of a project (or programme) and using the results in future activities. Thus, project evaluation is a good baseline from which to start the capitalisation process.

### VALORISATION

Valorisation is looking at the lessons to be learned from a project and how these can be translated to a wider context or to novel situations. Valorisation is closely related to impact analysis and is usually about the longer-term sustainability of a policy or strategy rather than a particular application. It is often used interchangeably with ‘capitalisation’ but is more commonly a term applied to capturing the collective learning of a group of similar projects or a whole programme rather than an individual project.

### AUDITING

Auditing simply means ‘taking stock of’ and is used in this sense in expressions such as ‘skills audit’ or ‘environmental audit’ or ‘audit of training needs.’ However, to a project manager it usually implies an inspection of the project to determine whether financial controls are in place (systems audit) and whether these are being followed (compliance audit).

### ASSESSMENT

The difference between assessment and evaluation causes more confusion than almost any other distinction we make. It is largely a question of language and culture and so is particularly problematic on transnational projects. In common usage British English, the terms are virtually interchangeable although ‘assessment’ tends to be used more in the sense of ‘weighing up’ or choosing between options rather than in the sense of making scientific judgements about their value or worth. However, in technical usage, particularly in education, training and HRD fields, it is almost always used to refer to the process of measuring the performance of individual staff or students. (This

could be, for example, formally, as a result of student examinations or staff appraisal interviews, or informally in the workplace.) This is further complicated by the fact that in American English, assessment is often called 'Performance evaluation' and recognised as being a distinct sub-category of the overall discipline of evaluation.

So, in the context of a training project, for example, assessment will establish what learning took place whereas evaluation will be asking questions about why that happened.

## WHY DO WE EVALUATE PROJECTS?

We believe that evaluation has two main purposes and have called these the 'torch' and 'stick' approaches. Firstly, evaluation can be about accountability. It is a measuring 'stick' that can be used to justify the existence of the project in the first place, its work and its continuation. The ethos is largely inspectorial and judgmental and the underpinning rationale is about value for money and quality standards and is, effectively, a 'licence to practice' for project sponsors. Secondly, evaluation can be about project improvement. In this case it can be seen as a developmental process – a 'torch' that helps illuminate problems and recognise good practice. The ethos is diagnostic and interpretive and the underpinning rationale is about collective learning. It is a process that reduces the likelihood of repeating mistakes and helps use mistakes, when they happen, as critical learning incidents.

Evaluation can be inspectorial or developmental in approach. Both are equally valid, depending on the context and purpose of the evaluation. The developmental approach is becoming the most popular of the two and many project managers are unhappy with the accountability model. Nevertheless, rigorous 'measuring stick' evaluation is essential if the intended project involves funding bodies and if the public interest is to be protected. Not surprisingly, many funding bodies are more concerned with this type of evaluation but are increasingly aware that whilst it is an effective process for justifying existing expenditure, it is less effective for planning long-term investment.

There is also a case for arguing that the dividing line between the two is artificial and that any evaluation should include elements of both. This may or may not be true. However, in our experience, it is not so much that the methodolo-

gies are different but more that the spirit in which the evaluation is conducted is different. When we ask clients – usually project managers – the fundamental question "Why do you want to evaluate your project? Is it to justify it or to improve it?" the answer is invariably "a bit of both."

## SOME FUNDAMENTALS

### CONSIDERING THE BENEFITS

The idea is not about "selling" evaluation as an idea, but unless you personally believe that it is a genuinely useful process for you and the project staff, it is unlikely that your evaluation process will be more than another hurdle to jump or simply an administrative procedure. Here are some direct benefits for project managers that you might want to consider.

Evaluation can help you to:

- Find out what is and is not working in your project before too many other people do.

- Show your funding agencies, line managers, and the wider community what your project does and how it benefits them.

- Raise additional money for your project by providing evidence of its effectiveness.

- Improve your staff's work with participants by identifying weaknesses and strengths, thus contributing to the staff development process.

- Improve your personal credibility and reputation by adding to existing knowledge in the field in which you are working (for example, in terms of what does and does not work in your type of project with your kinds of participants as well as in terms of outcomes).

### WHAT ARE THE BASIC QUESTIONS AN EVALUATION CAN ANSWER?

There are many different types of project evaluation, many different terms to describe them and many questions that they can answer. You may have heard the terms formative evaluation, summative evaluation, process evaluation,

outcome evaluation, cost-effectiveness evaluation, cost-benefit evaluation and impact analysis.

You may have also heard the terms “qualitative” and “quantitative” used to describe an evaluation. However, these terms, which are also defined in the glossary, refer to the types of information or data that are collected during the evaluation and not to the type of evaluation itself. For example, an outcome evaluation may involve collecting both quantitative and qualitative information about participant outcomes.

Our intention is to avoid the confusion that often results from the use of so many terms to describe an evaluation. Instead, all of the terms used here are directly related to answering evaluation questions derived from a project’s objectives. There are two types of *project objectives*:

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION OBJECTIVES

Project implementation objectives refer to all those things that you plan to do in your project. They will cover how you plan to do it, who you want to reach, the types of activities you will include, the services, training you want to provide, or the research and development work you want to undertake. They should also refer to the characteristics of the participant population, the number of people you are targeting, and the timescale. You may also need to specify other processes at the planning stage, e.g. the staffing and staff training arrangements, strategies for recruiting participants, number and type of meetings, management and co-ordination systems, publicity, and so on. This information is needed for budget calculations and, therefore, has to be built in at the outset. Evaluating project implementation objectives is often referred to as process evaluation. However, because there are many types of process evaluations, we will use the term implementation evaluation.

### PARTICIPANT OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

Participant outcome objectives describe what you expect to happen to your participants or beneficiaries or target groups as a result of your project, with the term “participants” referring to agencies, communities, networks, and organisations, as well as individuals. Your expectations about how your project will change participants’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, or awareness are your

participant outcome objectives. Evaluating a project’s success in attaining its expectations for participants is often called an *outcome evaluation*.

An evaluation can be used to determine whether you have been successful in attaining both types of objectives, by answering the following sorts of questions:

Has the project been successful in attaining the implementation objectives? (Are you implementing the services or training that you initially planned to implement? Are you reaching the intended target population? Are you reaching the intended number of participants? Are you developing the planned collaborative relationships?, etc.).

Has the project been successful in attaining the predicted participant outcome objectives? (Are end users exhibiting the expected changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours, or awareness?)

A comprehensive evaluation must answer both key questions. You may be successful in attaining your implementation objectives, but if you do not have information about participant outcomes, you will not know whether your project is worthwhile. Similarly, you may be successful in changing participants’ knowledge, skills and attitudes but if you do not have information about your project’s implementation, you will be unable to identify the parts of your project that contributed to these changes.

These are all the sorts of questions that project managers and staff ask and answer on a routine basis, totally informally. Are participants benefiting from the project? Are the strategies for recruitment working? Are participants satisfied with the services or training? Do staff have the necessary skills to provide the services? Are we up to speed on the development? Is the management team working well? How is the research progressing?

Evaluation addresses these same questions, but uses a systematic method for collecting, analysing, and using information to answer basic questions about a project – and to ensure that those answers are supported by evidence. This does not mean that conducting an evaluation requires no technical knowledge or experience – but neither does it mean that evaluation is beyond the understanding of project managers and staff.

## WHEN DO YOU START?

One goal of evaluation is to fix problems and make the system better, not to lay blame - so these evaluation questions should be answered as far as possible while a project is in operation, not after the project is over. This will allow you and your staff to identify problems and make necessary changes while the project is still operational. It will also ensure that project participants and partners are available to provide information for the evaluation. This is often called *formative evaluation* as opposed to *summative evaluation* – which is the final-review type of evaluation undertaken at the end of a project.

(Personally, we do not find this distinction helpful if the evaluation is about project development rather than project justification. If the evaluation is essentially about accountability, there is a case for a summative report that ‘signs-off’ the project. However, if the project is about learning, then even a final report should be constructed in a formative way around future improvements – a baseline for new work.)

Ideally, the evaluation process should start when the project is still on the drawing board. Designing the evaluation is an integral component of the overall project design and should be built in to the planning stages.

Once the project is approved and underway, the evaluation process needs to run in parallel with its implementation from the first day. Ideally it should not be a ‘bolt-on’ to the other activities but integrated within the mainstream project processes. Again, ideally, the evaluation should continue after the main activities of the project have been completed in order to make it possible to carry out an ‘impact analysis’ – that is, a view of the longer-term consequences of the project and its sustainability rather than its immediate outcomes.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The CERN group and the handbook “Guide to Evaluation” deal primarily with evaluation as an exercise that aims, principally, at providing recommendations for future continuation or “repetition” of certain activities or programmes. To sum up, evaluation is pictured as a continuous and on-going process, mainly for the purposes of project improvement.

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# INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS) IN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

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## INTRODUCTION

The new information and communications technologies (ICTs) have become an indispensable tool for constructing networks and communities of practice, for accessing and managing knowledge, and for disseminating best practices in intercultural education. Social markers, Flickr, YouTube, Slideshare, RSS, Google, blogs, and wikis are some of the tools of the revolution of the so-called Web 2.0, which are characterized by their emphasis on the social dimension of the use of the new technologies. The proliferation of services and tools, many of them with free access and based on principles of free software, are democratizing the access to information and bringing groups of people from different points on the planet closer together. In the same way, Creative Commons licences and free software are liberating knowledge so that creative expression is not reduced to a consultation and exchange within a



group of people but can be within reach of everyone. This chapter will present a panoramic vision of the state of the issue and a reflection on the application of the new technologies to intercultural education.

The evolution of humanity has gone from the agricultural era, through the industrial era, to the “information” or “knowledge” era, where the main wealth-producing resource is knowledge or intellectual capital.

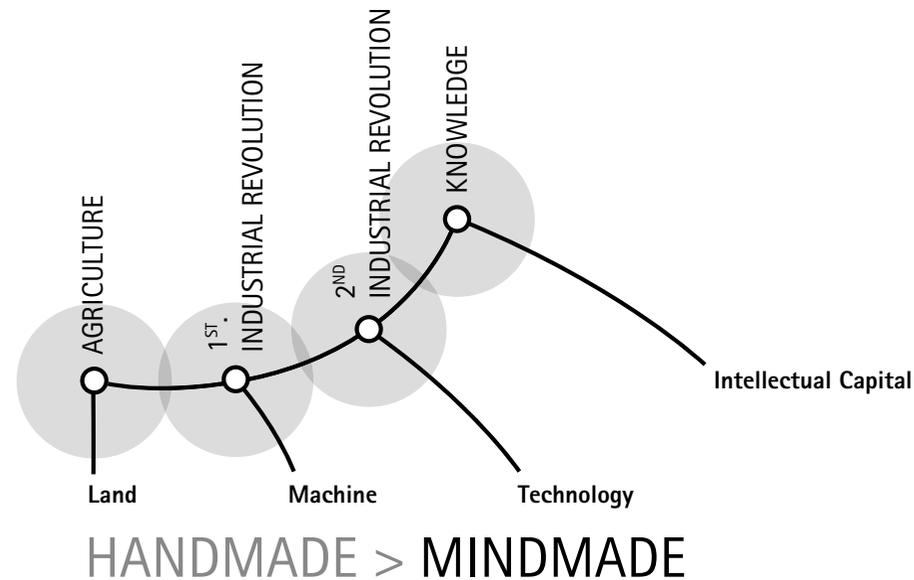


Figure 1 Human evolution (Villareal, (s.f.))

Technological progress, which has accelerated its rhythm in the last two decades, has been fundamental in this emphasis on sharing information and resources. But the crucial evolution has taken place in the way the nature of Internet has changed, from its appearance and evolution as a network initially oriented to connecting information, through a second phase focused on connecting people –“the social web”, to its present central role in connecting knowledge –“the semantic web”- and its projection in connecting intelligences –“the ubiquitous web” (Davis, 2008).

What is the Evolution of the Internet to 2020?

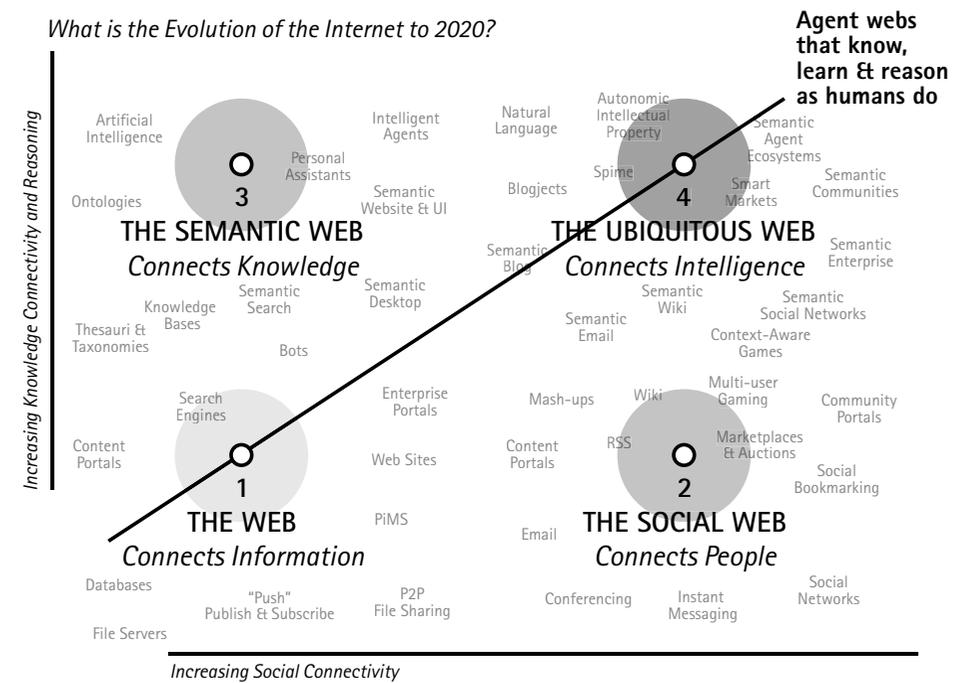


Figure 2 Evolution of Internet (Davis, 2008)

We can observe that technology and society “coevolve” at their own rhythms but oriented toward shared purposes, the so-called “Knowledge Era” in which people, companies, communities, and societies must worry about having access to knowledge, sharing it, promoting it, and recreating it (Freire, 2008).

Approaching the use of the ICTs in the context of intercultural education makes sense if we consider not only their function in disseminating contents but rather –mainly- their great potential for connecting people and for general development. The new technological revolution –referred to by many as Web 2.0- places emphasis on the ICTs as a tool for building networks and communities of practice, access, and management of knowledge, dissemination of best practices, and application of languages to collaboration among people by means of these technologies.

That is, the evolution of the use of the ICTs is democratizing the access to information and, more importantly, the creation of this information. At the

center of this process, interculturality is not only a product, but a fundamental element that determines the interactions mediated by technology. This leads us to two central reflections:

First, it is not only the experts in intercultural education who need to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to get along with agility in an interconnected world; all citizens need skills in interculturality to study, work, socialize, and reflect using the new technologies.

Second, it is important to remember that not all the inhabitants of the planet have access to technology or to the skills necessary for using it. This opens up a deep abyss of disadvantages with respect to the rest of “digitalized” society –what has been called the *digital divide*. Ortega (2004) reports that “the digital divide may be the most important danger threatening the egalitarian, supportive extension of the information society (...) the first decade of the generalized development of Internet has only benefitted the citizens of the economically advanced countries, worsening the “digital bill” for poor countries and developing countries,” and reminds us that, in 2004, 19% of the inhabitants of the Earth made up 91% of Internet users. In order to deal with digital inequality, Moreno and Urrecha (2007) comment that policies and methodologies for integrating ICTs in the community “should receive special emphasis in formal, non-formal, and informal education contexts, as that is where the majority of learning processes happen” (p. 3). The authors take into account the worldwide discussion that reflects the concern about ITCs as elements of development, including the United Nations report in its Development Program (TFSTI, 2005) and the Summit Meeting on Information Society (CMSI, 2005).

## APPLICATIONS FOR SHARING RESOURCES

The so-called “Web 2.0” is defined by its characteristics or philosophical and practical principles: it offers the chance to share resources, information, and knowledge and it is oriented toward the user, collaborative work, creating social networks, intercreativity and collective intelligence, the “architecture of participation,” and “intelligent multitudes.” The Web 2.0 “is more of a social revolution than a technological one, placing special emphasis on the open exchange of knowledge” (Cobo, 2007).

The importance of this new philosophy lies in the possibility that we all have of sharing our culture and best practices with many other people (1.1 billion users connected to Internet) in order to create interest and communities of practice networks on different topics in the context of interculturality. Levy (in Pardo, 2007) states that “the sum of intelligences does not depend on and is not limited by individual intelligences; on the contrary, it exalts them, it makes them bear fruit, and it opens new potentials, creating a kind of shared brain.”

We now hope to transmit the principles of the Web 2.0 philosophy by presenting some of the tools that make it possible to put its characteristic principles into practice: they are easy to use, they focus on the user, the possibility of sharing resources, they are free, online, and aimed at managing knowledge. It is important to mention that technological evolution is very dynamic, so becoming familiar with the usefulness of some of the tools, will allow us to use any other ones that have the same purpose.

The selection of tools that we will present here was made considering their application to disseminate best practices and collaboration among people by means of these technologies. The most frequently used 2.0 tools, some of which are used without the user even being aware that she is part of the 2.0 philosophy, are:

- Web mail 2.0: for example, Gmail,<sup>66</sup> which, besides being a storage space, introduces the use to the concepts of *tagging* and categorizing, which are basic for understanding other more complex concepts such as ontologies, *folksonomies*, taxonomies, and web semantics.
- Social networks or social *software*, based on the principles of collective intelligence and participatory architecture such as Hi5,<sup>67</sup> Facebook,<sup>68</sup> MySpace,<sup>69</sup> Orkut,<sup>70</sup> and LinkedIn,<sup>71</sup> which allow users to store, organize, and share information such as photographs, videos, etc., in addition to creating shared interest communities.

66 <http://www.gmail.com>

67 <http://www.hi5.com>

68 <http://www.facebook.com>

69 <http://www.myspace.com>

70 <http://www.orkut.com>

71 <http://www.linkedin.com>

- Tools for sharing resources (photographs, videos, presentations, pdfs, etc.) such as Flickr,<sup>72</sup> Youtube,<sup>73</sup> Slideshare,<sup>74</sup> Issuu,<sup>75</sup> and Google Docs & Spreadsheets,<sup>76</sup> among others, that are used as a way to make knowledge explicit, to spread culture, and to contribute to knowledge society.
- *Bookmarking* or social markers, that allow the user to store links to interesting websites, to use tags to classify, categorize, share links, and form networks. Examples of this kind of tool are Del.icio.us<sup>77</sup> and Bibsonomy.<sup>78</sup>
- *Blogs*, or “logbooks,” one of the tools of the 2.0 philosophy that is used the most, because many of its characteristics, such as tags, categories, and subscriptions are evident and let the user share all kinds of resources.
- *Wikis*: collaborative websites, with the emblematic application Wikipedia,<sup>79</sup> a free encyclopedia that, at present, contains over 7.5 million articles in 10 languages consulted by a large number of users; it induces the user to create, edit, share, and link information (the raw material of knowledge).
- RSS (*Really Simple Syndication*) allows the user to obtain up-to-date information from previously selected sites or web services by subscribing. This is very useful for filtering interesting information in the increasingly large volume of information online. Google Reader<sup>80</sup> is one example of an RSS reader online.
- Podcast *catchers* such as iTunes,<sup>81</sup> for grouping and sharing resources that are normally audio or video resources, easy to create, to distribute, and to reproduce, and aimed at mobile devices.

72 <http://www.flickr.com>

73 <http://www.youtube.com>

74 <http://www.slideshare.net>

75 <http://www.issuu.com>

76 <http://docs.google.com/>

77 <http://www.wikipedia.org>

78 <http://del.icio.us>

79 <http://www.bibsonomy.com>

80 <http://www.google.com/reader>

81 <https://www.apple.com/itunes/>

- *Mashups*: hybrid web applications of available resources that allow the connection between different web applications in order to obtain the subjects of interest from each. Google ig,<sup>82</sup> Yahoo Pipes,<sup>83</sup> Netvibes,<sup>84</sup> and Google maps<sup>85</sup> are a sample of the mixture and reuse of online applications and data.

One example of the application to intercultural education of some of these tools is the educational computer program P3, which seeks to reach nearly 3,000 educational points and communities, 25,000 teachers, and more than 1,200,000 students in 16 countries of Latin America and in Spain (Moreno and Urrecha, 2007, p. 11) through the ICTs. These authors contribute the interesting reflection that “the creation of knowledge and collective construction may become comparable in efficiency and productivity to the traditional structures to which we are accustomed (see the phenomenon of the blogs as channels of communication, or Wikipedia as a source of information, and, additionally, they provide the added value of being based on principles and values that are in line with the search for sustainable development and of increasingly inclusive societies.”

But even more interesting is the way knowledge is generated among citizens outside of the context of structured, well-financed programs, often defying state and cultural guidelines or the tendencies of the majority communications media. Sometimes it seems that the less freedom of expression there is in the local context, and the harder the living conditions, the greater the energy that many citizens put into using technology’s potential for communication in order to read what others write, to share, to give their opinions, to complain, to challenge, and to plan changes. One illustrious case is the famous *blog Baghdad Burning*, <http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/>. Let us present the case here:

82 <https://www.google.com/ig>

83 <http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes/>

84 <http://www.netvibes.com/>

85 <http://maps.google.es/>

## Bagdad Burning | *Girl Blog from Iraq*



is a popular blog whose author, nicknamed "Riverbend," is an Iraqi woman who lives in Baghdad. Baghdad Burning – Girl Blog from Iraq has become one of the most intriguing, profound sources of Iraq. In each of her entries, Riverbend shares reflection on everyday Iraqi's feelings and attitudes about the occupation, providing the historical and cultural context that corporate communications media often lack. While the media focus almost exclusively on violence and death in Iraq, Riverbend tells the story of life during the occupation. (...) Through her writing, Riverbend never claims to speak for all Iraqis, although her position is pretty typical of

many Iraqis who, after years of disruption in their lives under sanctions imposed by the United Nations at the request of the United States, simply want to get on with their lives. In addition, Riverbend reveals the attitudes of her family, friends, and neighbors, who want the occupation to end.

Source: Partial translation of MediaMouse.org (2005), an independent opinion web, commenting on the book *Bagdad Burning* (Soueif, 2005)

In the context of education, what has happened with the *weblogs* is the best example that the most successful tools are not necessarily the most technologically advanced ones, but the ones that make everyday citizens' lives easier. Today's education use of *weblogs* and their potential future use are broad and fruitful: for the first time, we have the chance to break the expectations and conventionalisms and to think outside of traditional class limits, to start to perceive learning and personal development as part of a whole, in a homeostatic process that is intimately interrelated with a changing, complex, social and cultural context (Downes, 2004).

This is a rapidly changing reality, as today the discussion is increasingly focused on the pedagogical potential of *mashups* and contact networks, closely related to the concept of "communities of practice," groups of people who learn together by mutual agreement and collaborate directly (Ortega, 2004). The basic assumptions upon which these communities of practice are related, according to Peña (2001), are (quoted in Ortega, 2004, p. 32):

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

With the desire to make the most of the advantages that the new technologies provide today, some suggestions have been presented about the facilities that they give for access to knowledge without restrictions. The very method of distance education is considered to be a viable and saving alternative in different contexts and circumstances, making education much more acceptable to those who would otherwise not have access to it. The changing technologies have had a lot to do with progress in this method of education. Today, we are at a new crossroads which, by freeing the contents on the network, looks extremely promising for the future of education in general and especially for distance education which makes physical and mental frontiers disappear.

One example of this access to knowledge is having at hand all the good textbooks and other materials to consult responsibly, with the reliability of well-known authors and publishers. This is applicable both to the habitual reader who toils to acquire knowledge on his own, but even more so to formal education, which needs to have trustworthy, up-to-date materials available. Hav-

### Basic Assumptions

### Characteristics

The conception of learning as a social phenomenon	They have a common initiative to learn, that is continuously reviewed by their members
Knowledge should be integrated into the life of the communities that share values, beliefs, languages, and ways of doing things	They work through the mutual agreement and direct collaboration of the members
Knowledge cannot be separated from practice	They are not defined by an organizational mandate but, rather, by joint work
The circumstances in which we find ourselves in real life and which have had consequences, both for ourselves and for our community, create the most powerful learning contexts	They experience a continuous flux of members
Authority – influence over the members – originates in the skill to contribute and to create the potential for learning based on trust and esteem	They have a learning history created throughout time and a shared repertory of communal resources
	They are responsible for themselves, no one really controls them

ing a diversity of specialized materials available to everyone will doubtless change the history of education.

However, if the formative materials available to the public in general on the network has increased considerably in recent years, at the same time, serious worries have arisen regarding authors' rights and other concerns. In this context, there have been attempts to respond to these concerns with some types of licenses in consonance with the technological media and which have allowed a response to these issues.

The traditional concept of *Copyright* (all rights reserved) can be compared to the concept of *Copyleft*, which, in contrast, means "authorize," "offer," or "lend." We agree with Álvarez Navarrete (Álvarez Navarrete, 2005) that, behind these two concepts are confronting positions regarding culture, information, and knowledge, oscillating between economic value and social value in general. This same author speaks of "free *software*," a term coined by Richard Stallman, as the first attempt, with respect to protected programs, to allow free copying, modification, and sharing with others of programs, even improving them (the only thing that is not allowed is to appropriate the software and prohibit its free circulation). Based on these principles, the license called "General Public License" (GNU).

In reality, it is an issue of developing legal spheres that allow cooperation and the use of knowledge by an infinity of actors or users; so we are also seeing other kinds of licenses that substitute the concept of "All rights reserved" of the *Copyright*, with "Some rights reserved" or "No rights reserved," where the author can decide which rights to reserve, or the freedom she will allow for the use of her work.

In other kinds of licenses, we can speak of "Free Documentation License" (GFDL) specifically for software manuals and documentation. The "Free Content License" (LCL) covers the right to reuse photographs, graphics, images, texts, icons, links, and other audiovisual or sound contents, as well as their graphic design and source codes. The "Free Art License" (LAL) promotes and protects the artistic practices of musicals, videos, films, literature, websites, etc. In several of these licenses, the basic philosophy is that creation works by osmosis, mixture, contagion, rewriting, appropriation, and transformation, spheres that are contrary to the copyright. Similarly, there are other license concepts that seek to defend the authors' economic and moral rights without intermediaries, taking advantage of the technologies.

Because of the subject we are dealing with, we are going to take a moment to look at the case of the *Creative Commons* licenses as a legal alternative that facilitates the distribution and use of contents on the web. The *Creative Commons* licenses are one solution to the problems caused by the restrictions of other types of licenses and we even believe that they are contributing to spreading knowledge in an organized way that protects the rights of those who use this kind of license. In this way, with the *Creative Commons* licenses, contents are being liberating so that creative expression is not reduced to consultation or exchange among a group of people but can be within everyone's reach. We believe that this is one of the kinds of license that has been promoted in recent years that is being used the most in educational contexts.

The *Creative Commons* licenses (CC) (which literally means "creative common goods") define the authorizations that the author of a work gives, or who has rights to it, so that it can be used by others as long as they respect the rights or conditions established (Lanzamiento Licencias, 2008). *Creative Commons* was created in 2001 as a non-profit, non-governmental organization that wanted to reduce the legal barriers to creativity by applying a series of digitally available licenses. The founder of this organization is a professor of Law at Stanford University named Lawrence Lessing, jointly with a group of specialists in cyberlaw.

The *Creative Commons International* project is appendix to the larger *Creative Commons* project. Its objective is to translate the Creative Commons licenses into different languages, as well as to adapt them to the different legislations and systems of authors' rights the world over.<sup>86</sup> In this way, CC licenses have been established in different countries; even if authors' rights is one of the most standardized legal spheres on the international level, there are still differences between the systems and the regulations, so that the idea is to maintain a common license model and adjust it to the legislation of each country, using the terminology itself to facilitate comprehension of the license. At any rate, the user is free to choose the jurisdiction of her license.

The different *Creative Commons* licenses and their possible combinations are based on the following properties:

- Attribution BY: Requires citing the sources of these contents. The author should appear in the credits.

<sup>86</sup> For more information, see [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative\\_Commons](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons)

- Non Commercial NC: Requires that the use of the contents not report any financial gain to the person who uses this licenses
- No Derivative Works ND: Requires this work to be distributed with no alterations.
- Share Alike SA: Requires all derived works to be distributed under the same license as the original work.

Thus, the different licenses can combine these characteristics, choosing among the following combinations: Attribution – Share Alike (BY - SA), Attribution – No Derivative Works (BY – ND), Attribution – Non Commercial (BY – NC), Attribution – Non Commercial – Share Alike (BY - NC – SA), or Attribution – Non Commercial – No Derivative Works (BY – NC – ND).

One of the conditions of this license is that the licensor grants the licensee a worldwide license, with no royalties. On the other hand, *Creative Commons* is not a concerned party and presents no guarantees with respect to the work, that is, it is not responsible either to the licensee or to third parties for any harm that be caused.

On the other hand, we could say that CC is an intermediate point between the public domain, where it is no longer possible to protect patrimonial rights, and the phrase “All rights reserved” that we read in many texts, which gets a bit complicated in the digital, cyberspace era. CC does not impose a total restriction and, simultaneously, protects the rights of those concerned, because it frees these rights in the range of the six possibilities that we have indicated.

There is no doubt that, among the multiple advantages of CC, there is the feeling of freedom in the use of contents, the promotion of culture that derives from this, and the fields of collaboration that open up for educational innovation. *Creative Commons* can be a big contribution to the development of Open Educational Resources and a great instrument for collaborating and for creating new knowledge and new teaching resources. The sphere of participatory development between teachers and students, or any other actors, are strengthened by an unimaginable pedagogical construction, if we manage to incorporate and share our best practices.

Together with this type of license, the subject of repositories for learning objects is also promoted: *open courses*, *open access*, and, in short, the initiatives that can arise to share, use, and reuse contents without restrictions, or with

very few restriction, and, at the same time, ensure respect for the conditions that the authors have established.

There will doubtless be intense discussion about the path to using resources well, a discussion that is necessary for gaining access to and distributing knowledge, but an interesting path has already been travelled that makes us think about the best option for all the actors and that has a lot to do with using the Web 2.0 tools that strengthen a culture of social, collaborative work, the common good, and the universal right to knowledge and education.

## REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

We coincide with Moreno and Urrecha (2007, p. 4) in considering the “ICTs to be tools that can be applied to all the spheres of cooperation for development (starting with projects to create sensitivity), that can provide us with support in building a multicultural society that will extend the opportunities for development and global justice.” Because of this, we propose two main objectives for priority in our work (in the context of the “*Entreculturas*” program): (1) to prevent the majority from being left out of technological transformations, especially in the sphere of education, continuing to consolidate and deepen injustice, and (2) to use the ICTs to strengthen paths of participation, collaboration, and the mobilization of the citizens.

However, a cautionary note is necessary: it is important not to remove the use of ICTs from its context, “putting the cart before the horse,” in colloquial terms. As Moreno and Urrecha (2007, p. 3) remind us, the ICTs “alone do not solve the problems of exclusion and injustice that occur in local and global contexts: integrating technology requires applying policies for implantation and integration, and this is especially evident in the sphere of education.” The technological change can only be understood in the context of the social structure in which it takes place, because society acts as the decisive engine not only of innovation but of the dissemination and generalization of technology. Thus, Adell placed a positive counterpoint, over a decade ago, in the absolutism of the technocrats: “other benefits can be obtained from all of these developments, in the same way that a decentralized computer network, created to hold up to a nuclear attack, is very resistant to governments’ attempts at censure and ideological control when it is put into the hands of the citizens” (Adell, 1997).

On the other hand, there is still a lot to learn in order to reach the full potential of the ICTs. For example, O'Dowd (2003) reminds us that, even though we normally assume that intercultural learning is an automatic benefit of interaction among people from different countries, there is very little research that actually proves this to be so.

In this state of things, it is necessary to be very aware of the need to help citizens in general, and students in particular, to develop the necessary cognitive skills for selecting and processing information in a useful, critical way, without allowing them to fall into "attention deficit." It makes no sense to defend the idea that the application of sociotechnologies to collaborative publication will necessarily produce a better learning environment; rather, these must be part of a pedagogical change focusing on dialogue and participation. For example, Piscitelli (2002) admitted that, in the use of *weblogs* in education, the aspect of the production and publication (filtering information, posting data and interpretations, complementing material, putting questions online, etc.) has been more successful than the aspect of reception, and that nothing has yet been invented regarding *weblogs* as a mechanism for creating publics. As always, as Adell (1997) reminded us, the human factor is what is decisive in technological spheres.

To conclude, technology is not an end in itself, but only a means to achieve an end (to generate knowledge and to construct a global citizenry), and any project that attempts to foster an inclusive information society should include the particular context where it will take place and be proposed by the people and for the people.

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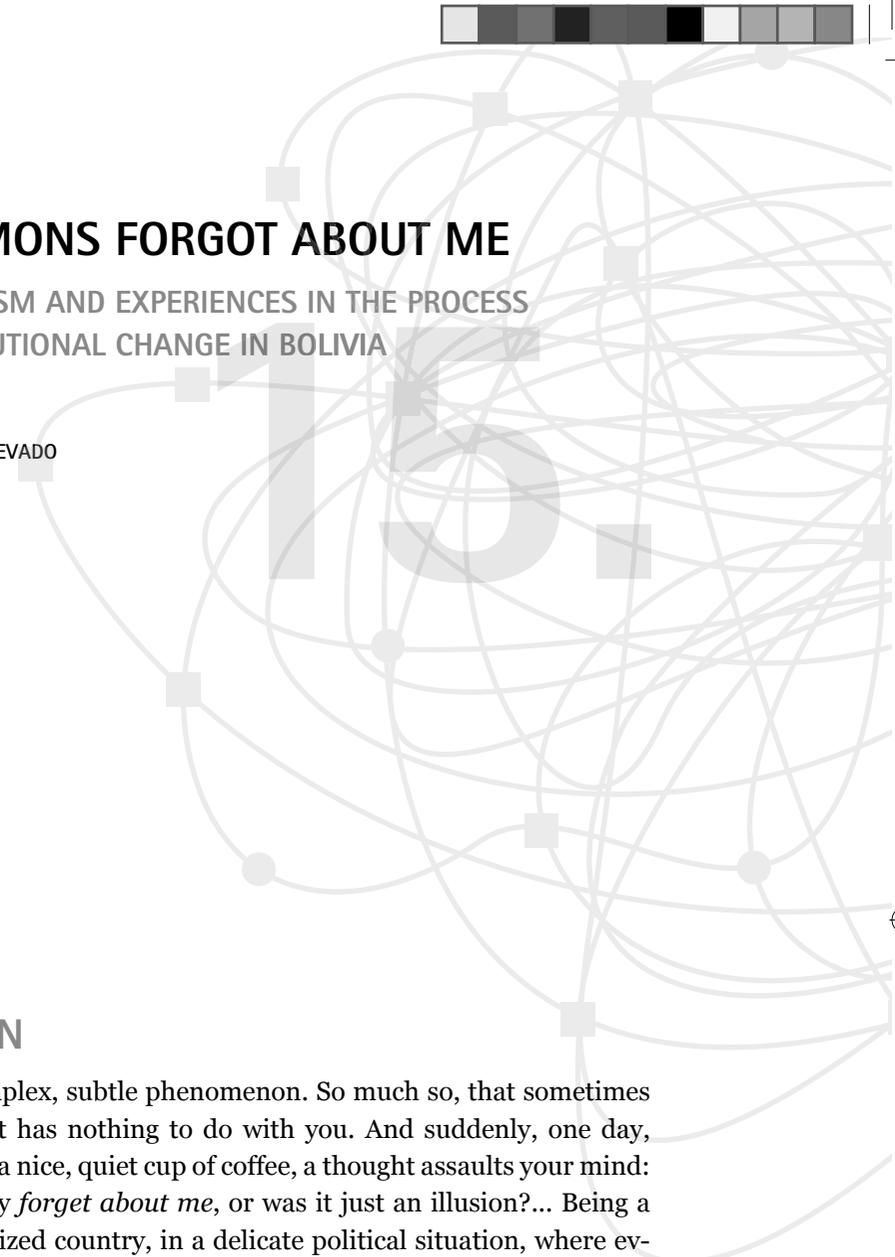
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## THE DEMONS FORGOT ABOUT ME

ABOUT RACISM AND EXPERIENCES IN THE PROCESS OF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN BOLIVIA

CARMEN OSUNA NEVADO



### INTRODUCTION

Racism is a very complex, subtle phenomenon. So much so, that sometimes it makes you think it has nothing to do with you. And suddenly, one day, while you are having a nice, quiet cup of coffee, a thought assaults your mind: did *the demons* really *forget about me*, or was it just an illusion?... Being a foreigner<sup>87</sup> in a polarized country, in a delicate political situation, where everyone trusts you, may mean that they are stereotyping you: a foreign person, who has nothing to do with this situation, who does not understand anything, who is making a common cause with us, who is a reporter, etc. And it is not that this pigeonholing made me an explicit victim of racism, but the subtlety of the mechanism suddenly hit me. What the demons do not know is that, this time, I had an advantage and this assimilation into the abstract group of “foreigners” was very useful to me. Who says that stereotypes are all negative?

<sup>87</sup> At present, I am in Bolivia doing fieldwork for the research for my Doctoral Thesis.



The *funniest* thing of all is that even part of my circle of friends has stereotyped me. Quite affectionately, they tell me: *you don't live here, so you don't understand, you don't see what's going on.* Or... *ay, this Carmen, she's crazy, she's always sticking her nose into all the problems, and she thinks everyone loves her.* Sleep on your reputation (*Cría fama y échate a dormir*) –a very true saying, the Bolivian version of which would be: get a reputation and rest (*hazte fama y échate en cama*). Because your friends try to take care of you:

A: Be careful, Carmen, I wanted to warn you that the husband of the woman who works in the office with me, he was attacked and robbed in a taxi...

Carmen: Oh no, poor fellow! But... what am I supposed to be careful about? It just happens to you!

A: Well, no, but you go around kind of crazy, you're not careful and, besides, who do you think you need to be careful of, it's those people, things are getting ugly, Carmen, you just don't understand what's going on yet.

Carmen: But who do I need to be careful of? What is it that I don't understand?

A: Well, oh, Carmen, well, well... well, of the people from El Alto<sup>88</sup> and all that, of the ones who look like they're from there... of those kinds of people, that are dangerous. Don't you see what's happening? They attack you because you are who you are, that's all.

Carmen: Oh no, I refuse to do that. I'm not going to get paranoid because of physical appearances, that's racist and cruel, and you shouldn't, either.

A: Well, I only wanted to warn you, because you're kind of crazy, don't you see?

Being kind of crazy –if there is any doubt- means mixing with all kinds of people and thinking that nobody is bad, nobody is a delinquent, because they are considered, socially, to belong to one group or another. If they warn me about encountering these *kinds of people* in daily situations –that you have to avoid, but how?- you can imagine what happened the day that, in my outgoing way, I jumped into the “adventure of the march for the Revocation Referendum”: *¡Oh, no! You being a foreigner, you ought to be careful... they might beat you or something...; oh, I knew it!... Me locked up in my house afraid of*

<sup>88</sup> A neighboring city to La Paz, recently created due to the migration of the Aymara people from the country to the city.

*the that mass of Indians and Carmen right there with them in the plaza, oh, no, that girl really is crazy!*

But no, not all people in the category of “upper middle class”<sup>89</sup> think like this. And the ones who do think like this, also *make exceptions* depending on the situation and “save people” depending on their personal attachments. Maybe talking about polarization is a bit reductionist, because society is always a little more complex than a dichotomous position. The panorama is very complicated; however, I will try to spell out some of the subtleties and vileness of racism little by little. This time, I will use a very specific event, the sojourn in the Plaza Murillo of La Paz of the *marchers* who spent four days, walking to the Government headquarters to demand approval in the Approval Referendum for the New Political Constitution of the State of Bolivia. And I will also use my own circumstance: an “innocent” foreigner, that everyone is willing to talk to... and that they do not want to beat up, as one of my friends predicted.

## THE ROAD TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND THE APPROVAL REFERENDUM

October 20, 2008, will be remembered in Bolivia as the day that –literally under siege by the indigenist and social movements- the Congress approved the implementation of the Referendum for the New Political Constitution of the State.<sup>90</sup> But these memories will not be homogeneous. While for some (those who put the Congress and its partisans *under seige*) it is a battle that has been won after nearly 20 years of fighting, for others (those who felt themselves to be under siege, directly or symbolically, in their homes) it was an act of repression. The political readings of this event are quite varied and complex and, in the end, although this is not part of the body of this article, I would dare to say that this time –and for this particular event- there were no half-measures: it was either in favor of, or against, that was all. The process leading to the Constituent Assembly has been a long and difficult one. In effect, the struggle to introduce profound changes into the Constitution began –with the main actors being the indigenous peoples- nearly twenty years ago.

<sup>89</sup> We also have to take into account that the “middle and upper” class is equally diverse, with indigenous people belonging to this social stratum.

<sup>90</sup> The date set for this referendum is January 25, 2009.

In September 1990, the *Indigenous March for Territory and Dignity* took place, headed by the indigenous peoples of Bolivia's Northern Amazon and supported by all the indigenous peoples of the country. This march marked a turning point in indigenous people's participation in the political panorama, and managed to get the then-president Paz Zamora (1989-1993) to grant them territorial rights of a collective nature.<sup>91</sup> Thus, indigenous political actors had to be acknowledged with Supreme Decrees, laws such as the ratification of ILO Agreement 169, the electoral reform, the Educational Reform, Popular Participation... This process culminated in the introduction of changes to the Political Constitution of the State which, in 1994, acknowledged Bolivia to be a multiethnic, pluricultural country (Sichra, Guzmán, Terán, and García, 2007). In addition, one of their demands was the preparation of a *New Political Constitution of the State*.

This event has remained in the *imaginaire* as the starting point of the visibilization, participation, and struggle of the indigenous peoples. Thus, Álvaro García Linera, vicepresident of Bolivia, soon after announcing the approval of the Approval Referendum for the new PCS, congratulated all the people congregated with the following words:

The brave continuers have fulfilled and achieved what they began eighteen years ago...

Before I go on to talk about the "struggle" for the New Political Constitution of the State, I would like to stop a moment to reflect on these declarations and the impact that they had on the Bolivian population that in no way felt represented by, or even felt any sympathy for, this new constitution, or for the movement that was behind it. Due to the fact that, since 2003 –as I will explain shortly– the process of the Constituent Assembly has been riddled with problems and polarized confrontations, listening to these declarations from the Vicepresident of the Republic caused –in many people who did not sympathize with the process– a feeling of exclusion and discrimination, as if their opinion and/or their rights did not count in this new process. It is interesting to point out, here, that one of the dangers of racism is that it confuses rights

<sup>91</sup> Initially, four territorios were recognized: the Sirionó Indigenous Territory, the Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park, the Tsimane' Indigenous Territory, and the Multiethnic Indigenous Territory. Later, with Paz Zamora still as president, four more territorios were recognized: the Yuki Indigenous Territory, the Araonao Indigenous Territory, the Pilón-Lajas Indigenous Territory and Biosphere Reserve, and the Weenhayek Indigenous Territory (López, 2005: 51). For more information on this issue, I recommend: [http://www.constituyentesoberana.org/3/docsanal/descindig/290606\\_1.html](http://www.constituyentesoberana.org/3/docsanal/descindig/290606_1.html), Orozco, García Linera, and Stefanoni (2006), and Molina (2004)

with privileges, on one hand, and, on the other, it defends these rights/privileges with the naturalness and ardor of those who have won them as their full birthright.<sup>92</sup> That is... when we see our rights/privileges threatened, and the order of things and of powers begins to change (*un*-balancing the balance), is when the red warning light comes on. The process in Bolivia is, in this sense, tremendously interesting, because this red light activates another one of the most common mechanisms of racism: blaming the *other*. I would like to give a couple of examples to illustrate this.

1) On October 19, the Plaza Murillo of the city of La Paz is full of people who have arrived after four days of marching. The watchword: do not move until the Referendum is approved. At the same time, in the Plaza 24 de Septiembre of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, hundreds (thousands?) of people have also gathered in a vigil, but with a different objective: to protest against the possible approval of the Referendum, which would mean an attack on their rights. Watching the news, I hear the declarations of a woman who not only branded those present in the Plaza Murillo as "criminals" but, in addition, challenged them to go to Santa Cruz, where a confrontation awaited them, because they were not going to "lift the siege." These courtesies were accompanied by a challenge: while the Plaza Murillo was under siege, they would not move from their positions in the Plaza 24 de Septiembre (in a clear confrontation and power play). As we can see, the people who felt threatened entrenched themselves to defend "what belongs to them."

2) Meanwhile, I receive new warnings from some friends (see who is to blame for the conflicts):

A: Careful, don't you go out now... oh, no, racism is serious here, they're racists, you can't even go out into the street ...

Carmen: Yes... but, well... they're not the only racists, are they?

A: No, of course not, but it's their fault things have gotten so serious, it didn't used to be like this, before there wasn't any racism, they're just rebels...

The government in power at present is, for many people, the one who "stirs up" this rebellious, racist behavior: the "struggle" for change has been headed by the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) since Evo Morales became President in January 2006 (after winning the presidential elections in January

<sup>92</sup> See Inter Group (2007: 22-23)

2005). As I have indicated, this does not mean that the attempt to change the constitution began at that moment, nor does it mean that there were no discrepancies between the government and the different indigenous organizations, because these organizations did not see their most important demands included in the project for the Constitution.<sup>93</sup>

As we have seen, the Indigenous March of 1990 is presented as a turning point. The second big milestone was in 2003, the event known as “Black October” and the declaration of the so-called “October Agenda.” After harsh confrontations in the community of Warisata and the city of El Alto, the Sánchez de Lozada government was overthrown with the insignia “gas is not sold.”<sup>94</sup> Stemming from this event, the aforementioned Agenda was declared, with one of the main points being the configuration of a Constituent Assembly.

As René Orellana has explained, the October 2003 uprising marked a turning point, inaugurating a new period marked by the *imminent opening of a social forum that would generate a debate on the project of the country and design the structural changes that would outline it. This forum (...) has been named the Constituent Assembly* (Orellana 2005: 53).

But did this social forum open? It is not the intention of this article to analyze the entire Constituent process or its political implications. However, it is interesting to underline two events that could give us some clues about the difficulty of this process and that can exemplify racist attitudes.

- 1) On one hand, it should be indicated that the *assemblyists* with indigenous origins were constantly mistreated (verbally and physically) in the city of Sucre,<sup>95</sup> preventing the normal process of the sessions and making the deep contempt of some population sectors for the indigenous peoples and for the party that (the majority of them) were representing, the MAS, evident.<sup>96</sup> These explicit samples of racism<sup>97</sup> hide

93 In August 2006 the Indigenous Peoples of the Lowlands carried out a march for the inclusion in the text of the Indigenous Autonomies.

94 More information regarding this in: Patzi (2005), Choque (2006), and Mamani (2006)

95 City where the headquarters of the Constituent Assembly were located.

96 There were numerous news items in the press denouncing what was happening. The following are some references: [www.bolpress.com/temas.php?Cod=2007082410&PHPSESSID=da1d0df57b](http://www.bolpress.com/temas.php?Cod=2007082410&PHPSESSID=da1d0df57b) - 26k - [www.bolpress.com/temas.php?Cod=2007082212&PHPSESSID=da1d0df57b](http://www.bolpress.com/temas.php?Cod=2007082212&PHPSESSID=da1d0df57b) - 31k -

97 Fidel Surco, President of the National Coordination for Change (CONALCAM) said, on October 20, in the Plaza Murillo: Silvia Lazarte, present, President of the Constituent Assembly, discriminated against, spit on... today the mission is accomplished!

implicit mechanisms that are much more complex than the “simple” fact of visible aggression. The racist attitudes expressed by people in the political opposition manifested their rejection in a double aspect: social and/or ethnic origin, on one hand, and political ideas, on the other:

- Social and/or ethnic origin: Each and every one of the people who identified themselves (in the best of cases, in other cases they were related to an already-established category) as indigenous people, were assimilated to a homogeneous social group with unified thinking and their individuality was denied. Physical appearance –indigenous appearance- was also included in this category and this has become a strong discriminatory factor in Bolivia.
  - Political ideas: They were denied critical diversification and diversification of thought, as if their opinions, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and political creeds made up a monolithic block with no fissures. In addition to this, there is the fact that, among the *assemblyists*, there were people who were illiterate who contributed the knowledge they had acquired in their lives and not from books which, for many, is an unacceptable kind of participation –thus showing their contempt for the empirical knowledge of people whom they consider *inferior*. This “block” (indigenous people) would also be acting beyond their “natural attributes” as a social group and, therefore, they would not have any rights to intervene as equals and to share their criteria (much less to impose them, as some say) on the Assembly that –to top it all off- many of the detractors did not consider legitimate. Prejudices and stereotypes learned from infancy (Indians are inferior, dirty, rude, ignorant, weak, etc.) acted to spur attitudes that became evident when a certain population sector felt offended.
- 2) On the other hand, it is interesting to point out that, as a product of these aggressions, the Constituent Assembly suspended its functions several times and, finally, the project of the New Political Constitution of the State was approved in a Military Society in the presence of the MAS *assemblyists* alone, as the rest –members of other political parties- could not or did not want to arrive. The approval was broadcast live on television and the truth is, it was a Dantesque spectacle. The text was approved without an in-depth reading of the contents and on the



biased vote of a single political party.<sup>98</sup> One of the main problems was, of course, the content of this text. According to some informal conversations I had at the moment: *so it is a racist Constitution, by Indians for Indians, the rest of us aren't taken into account, it's shameful, a dictatorship...*

Part of the population was overcome with this feeling, seeing how their rights as citizens were “stepped on,” because the political parties they felt represented them had ceased to take part in the process. Today still, when the New Constitution is about to be accepted (or not), the discourse of the middle and upper classes of the population is that *now there is a lot of racism, you have to be Indian and nothing else...* And of course we find racism on the “other side.” One of the dangers of the process of change that Bolivia<sup>99</sup> is undergoing is that there will always be people who take advantage of the circumstances to promote racist discourses, (anti-k'aras<sup>100</sup>) and sow division and confrontation among the civil population. In this way, racist discourse clearly cannot be created unilaterally, but rather bilaterally or even multi-laterally. As we will see later, some of the discourses and activities that people close to the change and to the convocation of the Referendum used also contain explicit racist behavior.

Finally the Constitution project was once again put on the negotiation table. We will now consider the moment in which the Bolivian congress members negotiated –once again, article by article- the Constitution project that should be approved in order to take it to referendum.

## PANDORA'S BOX OPENED AND ALL THE DEMONS GOT OUT

It had gotten dark. I turned the television on and that was when I hear the aforementioned politician from Santa Cruz talk about criminals and vigils... They have arrived! That's what I thought at that moment. When you hear something repeated enough times, you run the risk of starting to believe it

<sup>98</sup> According to informal conversations with MAS assembly members, this was the only way that the project –to begin with- would have prospered, given the way the assembly members from other parties constantly paralyzed the process. The told me to remember, also, that the text has undergone many later modifications. Nevertheless, be this as it may, the image that was given did not encourage further reflection, showing –only- an act that was interpreted as racist and dictatorial by sectors of the population that were not favorable to the MAS or to its proposals.

<sup>99</sup>The government has called it the “Democratic and Cultural Revolution.”

<sup>100</sup> Aymara word that means “white.”

(lies, myths, prejudices that are accepted as truths and, therefore, not to be questioned). At that moment, I doubted my own assumptions and I had qualms about going to the Plaza Murillo alone –where the *marchers* had concentrated- to attend their demonstration and hear their demands myself... *And if it's dangerous? And if they beat me up? And if I get into trouble? And if they are aggressive?...* But that “indeterminate grammatical subject” did not quite convince me...*How can I be afraid of people who have been walking for four days and fighting for what they consider are their rights? Who are “they,” exactly?* Some people would have answered, “those Indians.” The saying “saved by the bell” is sometimes quite true and that is what happened to me. I was still struggling with my own preconceived ideas (racist-type prejudices: they would see me as different and think I was trying to provoke them, they would see me as a stranger, someone could get violent with me, it's not my place...) when a friend called me and asked if I wanted to go to the Plaza Murillo to see what was going on. I did not hesitate for a moment.

When we arrived near the Plaza we could hardly get through. The streets were full of people, mostly indigenous people and peasants with their distinctive ponchos, their staffs of command, *ch'ullos*,<sup>101</sup> skirts... some of them were sitting down, eating, talking, napping... others were standing, shaking their wiphalas,<sup>102</sup> national flags, regional flags... I have to say that nobody paid any attention at all to me. Criminals? This descriptive term kept coming back to mind. When I had gotten comfortable in the middle of the plaza, the song of one of the leaders accompanied my first moments: *a song against the imperialists* –he said- *the colonizers, the exploiters...* and with these words he began to sing. He sang in Quechua and, the way things go (or the way history goes), *Spaniards* was the only word I understood. Once he had finished singing the song, he proclaimed: *and those few people who are against this, they can just go back where they came from.* Of course, a statement like this could hurt feelings and make part of the population feel rejected and feel like victims of a growing racism. But who are these few who are against this? To whom was the leader referring? Then I remembered the conversation I had had with a woman who was a leader –a couple of years earlier- with whom I had talked about the creation of her organization<sup>103</sup>:

<sup>101</sup> Hats with ear flaps woven from wool, mainly alpaca.

<sup>102</sup> Four-sided seven-color flags used as a symbol of the Indigenous Peoples of the Andean Altiplano.

<sup>103</sup> Interview carried out in February 2007.

Leader: We have formed in order to fight against the k'aras, against the Spaniards, against the imperialists, to fight (...)

Carmen: But I'm Spanish...

Leader: oh, Spanish, but no, not with all of them, with the ones who hate us, with those who fight (...) some of them fight against us, don't you see? (...) now, in Bolivia so many rich folks, but us poor people, they don't listen when we ask for something...

Did the leader in the Plaza Murillo mean the same thing? I think that, on this occasion, we could say he did. "Those who are against this" are those who (in his words) accumulate wealth. But careful, because this kind of discourse directed against a "symbolic," "abstract" enemy (categorized, in the end: imperialists, Spaniards...) can also generate racist attitudes and confrontations, creating prejudices and stereotypes, seeing the "white" person as a being belonging to a homogeneous group, lacking individuality.

Political discourses, the communications media, contexts of everyday life (in which our watertight thoughts gain meaning in expressions such as "my inner Indian came out"<sup>104</sup>) are ideal paths for reproducing racism. Thus, live news on the television such as the director in Santa Cruz talking about criminals or the peasant leader talking about the "imperialist" enemy can set the foundations for others to take this discourse, make it their own, and begin to reproduce attitudes of rejection toward the people they believe fit this description. As Albert Memmi says:

We are all tempted by racism. In all of us, there is a field ready to receive the seed and allow it to germinate as soon as we let our guard down. (2000: 23)

The leader continued to sing her song in Quechua. Suddenly, my friend said: *Pandora's box has opened and all the demons have come out... Evo Morales has encouraged all the dispossessed people to see their opportunity and some, instead of reacting peacefully, are responding with hate and racism, at least in their discourse, and that also has an impact.* That is, those who had been oppressed for years have raised their voices and would confront the prejudices and injustices of a racist, classist society once and for all.

And this struggle can involve, as we have already seen, biased discourses and vindicating attitudes in some people. That is, the liberation produced

<sup>104</sup> An expression that means "I got really angry," "I got aggressive," implying rude behavior.

by the sensation that no one has the right to exploit you may be manifested by exploiting and mistreating the one who used to be the executioner. These kinds of attitudes have, in fact, occurred (although they have been isolated instances). And this is where racism begins to move its subtle mechanism. If a person who looks like an indigenous person hits a person who looks like a white person, then, according to racist logic, all indigenous people hit white people. Another example: if the driver of a miniobus reprimands another person for any reason (if this person believes himself superior and, therefore, feels offended and humiliated because an "Indian" dared to raise his voice to him), then they will say to you... *going on the minibuses is bad because they are rebels and they don't respect you.* And so on, creating an atmosphere of fear of "Indian revenge," which irretrievably increases the polarization and lack of trust among the population.

But let's get back to the Plaza Murillo. That night I returned home without a single person having looked at me funny, and I had not been afraid or felt as if I were in danger. I was determined to return, the next day, to experience the historical approval (or not) day of the Referendum in person.

And the new day dawned. It is eleven o'clock in the morning of October 20 and some of the people who are present are getting impatient... some explosions are heard and the leaders, up on a platform, ask everyone to be patient. Inside the Congress, there are only five speakers left to discuss the terms of the Constitution. Evo Morales is in the plaza, accompanying the social and indigenous movements while they wait, in a clear symbolic representation of support to these sectors. Álvaro García Linera, as Vicepresident of the Republic, is negotiating in the meeting room. There are more explosions and then, it is the President who speaks<sup>105</sup>:

It has already been approved really, be patient... a little more patience (...) they are trying to provoke us, they want to provoke us, be patient (...) Meanwhile, let's celebrate, not make problems like oligarchic power. Long live the Constitution! Long live the process of change!

How do the population sectors that are not in favor of the Referendum take these words? As a separatist, confrontation-creating attitude, as racism on the part of the President of the Government: who represents the oligarchic power? Everyone who does not feel represented by the MAS and its proposal for change?...

<sup>105</sup> This paragraph is copied literally from my field notebook.

At any rate, people calm down, but maybe it is normal to be nervous. The *marchers* have been walking for days. There are thousands of them and, around five o'clock, they go on for nearly seven kilometers. The largest column left from Caracollo, in the Department of Oruro, and three more columns joined them: from north of La Paz, from Lake Titicaca, and from Río Abajo. The objective, according to Fidel Surco, President of the National Coordinator for Change (CONALCAM) is: *get a new text, a new constitution, and refound the country.* A country where, according to the words of the Vicepresident:

Never again will anyone ever feel discriminated against, never again will we have a Bolivia where they do not participate (...) Never again will there be discrimination because of a different last name, a different language, because you wear a skirt, we are all children of the same country, acknowledge people who were not taken into account before (...) The third nucleus of our constitution, recognition of the indigenous peoples and nations.

The New Political Constitution of the State is seen as a victory of the social movements and original indigenous peoples in their struggle for the recognition of diversity and symmetrical relationships. Luis Maldonado explained the terms of the struggle in the following words in the framework of an International Forum that took place in La Paz, Bolivia, to debate indigenous participation in power:

All peoples have known intercultural relations, but these have been relations of oppression and exploitation, asymmetrical relations. What we must work on is how to change this relationship so that future interactions can be respectful and equitable. There are different options, one is the vertical vision, the vision of assimilation. Another option is to build a new kind of culture, a vision that will lead us to build new relations to build a new society (Fondo Indígena, 2004: 42)

While waiting for the Referendum to be approved, I spent my time taking notes on what I was observing and taking photographs, either of the panorama in general, or asking for permission to photograph people. Not one single person stopped me or made me feel strange. Obviously, my presence must have surprised them a little, because several people came to talk to me on their own initiative. I will reproduce three testimonies of what they told me about the meaning of their struggle and what they had achieved with the New Constitution (which they had no doubt was going to be approved):

1. Three or four are opposed because it's cutting their fingernails, they won't be able to scratch anymore, they want to get rid of the poor.
2. Now the people have participated, there was a representative from each province and now they have approved it, so we will share the wealth, we will have more freedom. They wanted the peasants right there, poor, not bothering them, but not any more. When Evo came into power, we won, now we've got Juancito Pinto.<sup>106</sup>
3. Now the ones who have always run everything are going to have to quit sucking the bottle.

And again, an idea came into my mind. Is this the criminal mass of Indians that has come to beat people up? From their discourses, we can see that what they give greatest importance to in their struggle is to escaping from poverty and achieving a more dignified life; in fact, one of the slogans they were choring in the plaza was 'Long live the poor!' I think that now is the time to point out that some of the people with whom I spoke –informal conversations, in different contexts- about the Juancito Pinto Bond reacted saying: "who knows what they'll spend it on, they don't value it"... that is... the preconceived idea that these population sectors do not think education is important, they prefer to spend money on other things, and this idea prevails over any other kind of consideration. Is it not, then, a racist attitude to consider that quality education is the right/privilege of only some? Or what could be worse: since they do not value education, it is not worthwhile to help them. Once again, the victim is blamed.

An idea that seems very interesting to me to point out is that, in the Plaza Murillo there was not only the "mass of Indians," but the university movement, youth movements, social movements, miners, union members... were also there. Are these groups invisible? Unfortunately –for many people- they are. It is much easier to simplify social reality than it is to observe each and every one of the components that make it up. All this variety of social movements that support change, with their ideas, proposals, criticisms (constructive and destructive), are simplified in a single term: "mass of Indians," show-

<sup>106</sup> The Juancito Pinto bond was created by Supreme Decree 28899 on October 26, 2006 and was paid to the parents or tutors of the children who regularly attended between first and fifth grade of primary school in public schools and pacted schools. With Supreme Decree 29652, approved on July 23, 2008, the sphere of beneficiaries was extended "to eighth grade of primary school, including the Special Education and Alternative Youth Education students." Its purpose was to fight school absenteeism. [http://www.minedu.gov.bo/minedu/bonojp/DS29652\\_BJP.pdf](http://www.minedu.gov.bo/minedu/bonojp/DS29652_BJP.pdf)

ing, in addition, the place that this category occupies on the hierarchy of the person who is speaking: the lowest, most degrading category in society. This simplification means denying, in turn, the complexity of the political and social relations among the indigenous groups and different social movements themselves. At any rate, as Escárzaga and Gutiérrez (2005: 45) say:

It is necessary to abandon any homogenizing pretension in order to understand the struggles of the indigenous peoples, and it is a good idea to think of them as a mosaic of dynamic social diversities.

Perhaps this statement should also have been more present in the political discourse of the organizations themselves and even in the government, because they often situate themselves (or are situated) in homogeneous blocks to unify their demands and show their unity against internal fissures.

While I was at the Plaza Murillo, lots of thoughts knocked around in my head. How can anyone think that most of these people have been walking for days and days with violent intentions? How can anyone think that they are going to beat me up or look at me suspiciously just because I am interested in their stories? The thing is that, if I found any difference at all, it was that, while some people talked about the “mass of Indians” in general, others talked about “the ones who have the bottle,” “the ones who have the power,” “the ones who are simply against us.”

¿And myself... how did I feel? My experience among the *marchers* was exceptional. I had conversations and dealings with women and men who were members of different organizations and movements, as well as with people who had come on their own. I must say that that morning, there were times when I felt like I was being observed. Perhaps the fact that I was taking notes and photographs caught their attention... that is what I thought then. But, what if I was the one who was out of place? It was not (of course) that I was the only foreigner or k'ara attending the rally... although that is what I thought for a while, because I did not see anyone all morning in my own category of “similar people” (not *marchers* or sympathizers, just people who were curious and interested in the subject). Maybe my clothing, my attitude, and my own physiognomy gave me away as someone who was not an active part of the march (my feet were not tired and my attitudes –who knows what they were- and my clothing often betrayed my non-Bolivian origins). All of the people I went up to or who came up to me on their own initiative treated me

affectionately and with interest. Thinking about it now, it seems like maybe they were curious about why I was there and they themselves wanted to tell me their stories so that I could take their testimony (as if I were a reporter) to my own country: *so that Spain will know, then...* some said to me.

## END OF THE DAY: CONCLUDING

It is already two in the afternoon, the morning advances among songs, explosions, conversations, radio news... Suddenly, they announce that the Referendum has been approved and they play the National Anthem. Everyone present stands up, takes off their hats, and begins to sing solemnly; the voices are raised clamorously when they sing: *die before we would live as slaves*, and they shout: *Long live the Constitution! Long live Bolivia!*<sup>107</sup>... All of these examples of patriotism make me think about the words of Degregori (1999: 158) when he states that it may be the elites who are most insistent on marking the differences with respect to the indigenous peoples, while the indigenous peoples might be more interested in breaking down the barriers of exclusion and not seeming like peoples closed in on themselves. When I showed the photographs to people I knew, some were surprised to see these examples of “patriotic love.” The celebration continued with laughing, music, and dancing. And then it was time to go.

I would like to emphasize an idea that I believe to be important and that we should be aware of in the process that Bolivia is going through at present. Any discourse that simplifies the complexity of events is a breeding ground for reproducing racist attitudes towards the receivers of this discourse. Thus, by creating stereotypes, certain behaviors are attributed to a specific group, and these characteristics are very easy to transmit and accept, while they are very difficult to change. In this way, people act or speak as if the behavior of one person were what we should expect of another person from her same group, forgetting that the identity of each person must be understood using complex ideas and the set of roles interpreted in society throughout the person's life (Grupo Inter, 2007: 26-28). In the case of Bolivia, this discursive, simplifying, explicit racism is related to the undeniable exclusion and discrimination of the peoples of peasant origin. It is hard for an upper and middle class, accustomed to seeing the Indians as domestic employees, porters, doormen,

<sup>107</sup> Paragraph copied literally from my field notebook.

chauffeurs, etc., to digest the idea that the new government is giving them spaces of power in the public sphere (see the case of Silvia Lazarte, president of the Constituent Assembly and Casimira Rodríguez, leader of the domestic workers who was named Minister of Justice). They feel threatened by the loss of privileges they received at birth and of which they may never have been conscious before; it is difficult for them to acknowledge that they did not earn some of these privileges by their own effort but by the happenstance of birth and family and social context. On the other hand, as I have already indicated, the simplistic anti-imperialist discourse (which, as we have seen, concentrates on *specific enemies* when it is explained), is also dangerous when it is visualized and interpreted as an expression of rejection toward everything that is not part of their group, and it generates feelings of exclusion among the population, increasing the fear, the stereotypes, the prejudices, and the mistrust that nourishes racism.

The order of things is tending to change in Bolivia. The inversion of the established order threatens, like the sword of Damocles. This “order” is the one in which indigenous women are employees, not ministers, in which the chauffeur shuts his mouth and you (not an indigenous person) reprimand him, in which the “shitty Indian” is an expression that is taken for granted... while “k’ara de mierda” is an insurmountable insult. And then, one of those inevitable but very dangerous ingredients of racism appears: “we didn’t used to be racists, they’re the ones that provoke racism”... The issue is that in Bolivia, things are going from an aversive racism<sup>108</sup> to an explicit, racism explained –in many cases– as a logical response to the change that is occurring in the country: with open discourses, an increase of mistrust, with civil confrontations where people (mostly indigenous people and peasants) are physically attacked and even assassinated... And this is why people are starting to talk more earnestly about the subject: now that the line of naturally accepted, invisible racism has been crossed. Now that, according to many population sectors, the indigenous peoples or the *cholos*<sup>109</sup> are the ones who are making the problem worse. Before, in a country where the antiprejudice or antiracist

108 Also called “attitudinal duality.” It starts out from the negative social consideration of racism, but in a situation in which the antiprejudice or antiracist norms are not clear, so that the subjects have a greater chance to express and manifest negative feelings toward other groups. These negative responses characteristically are unperceived by the person who harbors this racism. Acknowledging it would be a threat to his own self-image. (Grupo Inter, 2007: 93)

109 A term which alludes specifically to indigenous women who live in urban areas and have abandoned their clothing and customs. However, it has become a despective word used as an insult.

norms were not clear or defined, defining oneself as a racist could be a threat to one’s own self-image and... how could you even define yourself as a racist if the attitudes themselves went (and continue to go) unnoticed? We have to be careful not to neglect –in our accusations of racism– the subtle attitudes that continue to be easily accepted.

Racism is not only expressed with violent manifestations, whether physical or verbal. If this were so, it would certainly be simpler to confront. Racism must be fought from family and school education, taking stereotypes and prejudices apart, showing that your employee has the same rights and privileges as you, that she is a person and deserves respect. By educating students in the awareness of the arbitrary nature of life and that life grants privileges and it takes them away, as if it were a raffle. Showing that being a k’ara does not make you an imperialist, that being an indigenous person does not necessarily make you poor or ignorant... Racism is fought by looking people in the eye and asking ourselves about their lives and circumstances, about their individuality, their reasons, and their *wrongs*. This may be the most important task that this Bolivian government and future Bolivian governments have ahead of them.

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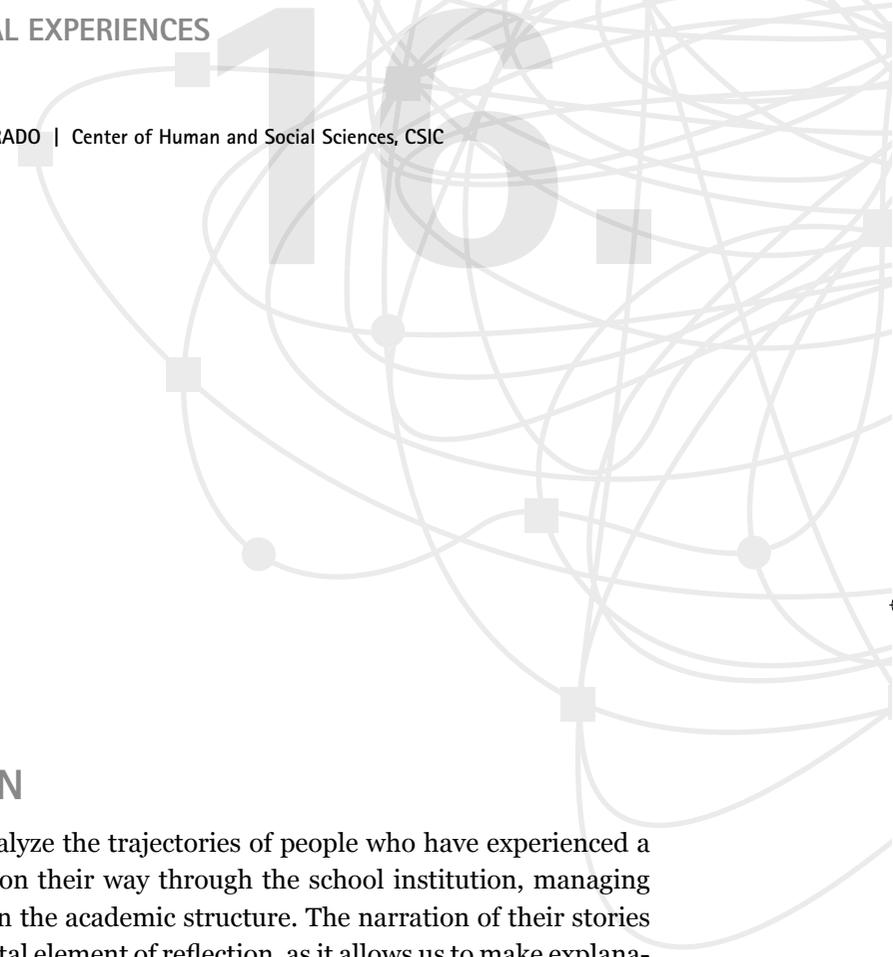
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# "EXCEPTIONAL" SCHOOL TRAJECTORIES

A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF SOME  
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

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## INTRODUCTION

In this text, I will analyze the trajectories of people who have experienced a “successful” process on their way through the school institution, managing to reach high levels in the academic structure. The narration of their stories becomes a fundamental element of reflection, as it allows us to make explanations of school success or failure more complex.

Contact with social actors who, even though they come from a “disadvantaged” socioeconomic context, which supposedly makes their trajectory in school more “difficult,” have reached high levels in school, has led me to find out how school was experienced by those who *suffer* it, *resist* it, and *enjoy* it daily, so that their discourses could help me not only to understand but to reflect upon the changes that the school should undergo.





I will focus part of the analysis on studying the school trajectory of one person, in order to get into concepts that I will continue to study in depth throughout my research, which is unfinished at present. I will develop this study by dividing the text into small sections which represent the parts in which I have divided my reflection on the aspects presented. After this experiment in dividing and interrelating, I will present a series of conclusions.

Just to contextualize the “case” that I will use to weave these pages, I would like to point out that the person’s name is Juan.<sup>110</sup> At the time he offered me his narration, he was 40 years old, married, and lived in a department of the delegation of Tlalpan (Mexico FD), near the UNAM. He worked as a publisher, wrote poetry and essays, was enrolled in the Arts doctorate (UNAM), and devoted himself to literary criticism.

Juan was born in the Federal District in the colony of Tacubaya, in the western part of the city... *“it was an area of irregular settlements... this entire area had been sand mines... when the sand mines closed, people started to live there. They were not natural caves, but they were caves. There weren’t a lot of people there before, but now it’s full of people. Then people started to settle on the edge of the gully. It’s a curious area, because on the other side is Santa Fe, that part of the city does not seem like the city, it’s super modern...”* (Extract from interview with Juan). He lived there for five years and then his parents emigrated to a town in the State of Mexico, more than two hours away from the center of the city by public transportation. It was a semiurban area that continues to go through heavy socioeconomic difficulties and suffer from a lack of governmental attention.

His parents, with whom he maintains a close relationship, had little schooling, and they had not finished their primary education. However, both Juan and his two sisters had, as a minimum, graduated. *“...I am the son of Ángeles and Pedro. Ángeles is employed at present, but she was a housewife for a long time. Pedro has been a laborer almost all of his life, and he still is...”* (Extract from interview with Juan)

110 Interviews with Juan carried out between May and June 2008 (case to be analyzed).

## CASE ANALYSIS: JUAN'S WORDS AND OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

“...A WHOLE MARGINAL ACTIVITY, INTRANSCENDENTAL, BUT TRANSCENDENTAL FOR THOSE OF US WHO ARE THERE...”<sup>111</sup>

In this section, I will try to reflect the importance of understanding the life of people within the different social articulations in which they act. The understanding is that the contacts established with others, in the spatial frameworks on which we move, condition our personal (and school) trajectories and our identities in relation to them.

... “the place where they could do something with me was in school... I could work on my own, without friends or classmates... I was rejected by my classmates and their parents, but I had an outstanding place in school”... (Interview with Juan)

School was the place where Juan could work on his own, without friends or classmates, because the environment of the town was hostile to him. He liked to read and to write, and in his case, school was the ideal place for doing these things; it was not easy for him to do them in his house and neighborhood. His lack of adaptation to the place he came from made him feel closer to school, as his interests were close to the ones that school legitimizes. Juan explains the strong discontinuities that existed between what the institution approved and what the “street” accepted, discontinuities marked by the different spaces of power that one and the other occupy in subjects’ lives. Following Lahire I think that

“thinking about children and adolescents sociologically involves understanding their place at the heart of the different configurations of relations of interdependence between the actors that make up their family universe, their group of peers, and the school institution, instead of trying to define them exclusively through the practices with which they try to distinguish themselves from adults–parents and teachers, especially” (Lahire, 2007:23). “To understand that the range of behaviors and of cultural tastes of each individual is only intelligible if we take into account the combined constriction of the family, friend, and school networks of independence, that are more or less harmonious or contradictory” (Lahire, 2007:24).

111 All of the subtitles of the section “Case analysis: Juan’s words and other contributions,” are taken from conversations with Juan.

Juan's case, and the cases of other people interviewed, help to understand that people do not simply "reproduce" the ways of acting of their surroundings, but rather model their ways of behaving according to the different configurations in which they are immersed (Lahire, 2007).

The interviewee acknowledges that there was a teacher in CCH<sup>112</sup> who marked his life; he was a literature teacher who made him feel that what he liked, reading and writing, was valid. The atmosphere of CCH was fundamental in his trajectory, not only because this educator made it possible for the students to approach a series of arts, but because, through his stay in this institution, he established a series of links with his classmates that led him to experience this space in a different way than the way he had experienced primary and secondary school. I have chosen some of the extracts of the interview to make sense of the previous explanations:

"In CCH I made a qualitative leap, because I met a professor there, a professor of... what was the name of his class... um... culture and writing. When I met him I was just one more student in the group, but when I finished the course he asked me to help him correct papers together with other classmates, to go over papers, I said yes, and I liked going over the texts and realizing when they were deceiving me, I mean... I liked reading and correcting things. Afterwards, I became good friends with this professor, I read lots of things because he suggested them to me. He did theater, we had a theater group that lasted a really long time, even when I got to the university, I was doing theater there and, well, my having come to the theater stuff, has to do with my being predisposed to reading, to understanding the things that were in books; on the other hand, I could be there by myself, I didn't need other people, I didn't feel bad, quite the opposite, I felt good. I think my family played their part, too, for my parents, it was always very important for me to study..." (Interview with Juan).

112 What is CCH? Information obtained from the webpage web: www.cch.unam.mx  
The Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México has two upper secondary degrees, the National Preparatory School (Escuela Nacional Preparatoria) and the College of Sciences and Humanities (Colegio de Ciencias y Humanidades, CCH). These subsystems have different study programs, the first one corresponding to an annual program, the second to a semester program, covering three years. The project of the College of Sciences and Humanities was approved by the University Council of the UNAM on January 26, 1971. Each year, 18 thousand students enter its classrooms, and around 700 thousand have participated. The CCH is an upper secondary degree of basic culture and its nature is propedeutic, but at the same time general. It is an upper secondary teaching institution which occupies an intermediate position between university studies and basic education studies; in Mexico, basic education studies include secondary school.

"...CCH gave a lot of chances for, like, socialization, we were with other classmates who, when you got down to it, we all came from similar levels but from different places... that was good too, it was great, meeting people, classmates from other places... and with the teachers, there were teachers who were nicer, more human, yes, there were all sorts, but I do think that was best, you were grown up and I think you didn't care as much about that..."

"...I made a mistake when it was time to choose a degree and I think I made the mistake consciously, because I didn't want to imitate that professor I was telling you about, his name is [...] I didn't want to imitate him, I didn't want to be like him, even though I liked everything he did, I didn't want to be like him... with him, you realize that reading is not a waste of time, he made his living from it, he was a professor... but I said I needed to maintain my individuality, and that's why I chose to study to be a veterinarian..."

A woman I interviewed said she liked CCH more because

"it was really different from secondary school, there was more freedom, because you see lots of things about your surroundings that you didn't see before, you become more social, and it's a really good school. We learned to get along with our classmates... the professors are unfair, they get carried away with the physical looks of some of the women students, but I had really good professors, you have to learn from everything."<sup>113</sup>

The importance that the people interviewed give to "cultured knowledge," or knowledge that is legitimized by the school, will allow me to approach the following issues: "*Cultured culture, then, might be appropriate for the children of the dominated classes, without this appropriation automatically implying or requiring a break with their culture of origin and conversion over to the dominant culture*" (Grignon 1993:134). It is important to be careful with this justified concern for defending the ideal of respecting local, ethnic, popular identities... because it can be used as a way to restrict them with respect to the rest of society (Grignon, 1993).

Hybrid cultures predominate in the Latin American world, so that the erudite arts include elements of popular culture, and, at the same time, the expres-

113 Interview with a sixteen-year-old woman, who lives with her parents and a younger sister in Mexico City. At the time of the interview, she was studying upper secondary school (Bachillerato, CCH Sur UNAM). I was able to talk both to her and to her mother, because her mother was the cleaning woman in the house of one of the professors that I met at the UNAM. The interview took place in June 2008.

sions of these popular cultures impregnate elements of the arts and of transnational industrial culture (Carvahlo, 2007). Said indicates that

"orientalism is a western discourse that constructed an image of Orient as primitive, backward, retrograde, violent, emotional, passive, dirty, and exotic. And because of the opposition of everything European to everything Oriental, the West created an Enlightened, progressive identity. Everything "western" is the absolute antithesis of everything "oriental": advanced, enlightened, rational, productive, pretty, and clean" (Said in Nagar Ron, 2006: 1999).

This means that both the peripheral subjects and those who are in a position of power over them live in a condition of hybridism, although they have always tried to instill the opposite idea. Relating Grignon to Carvalho, I would dare to infer that so-called "school knowledge" lacks this purity, rationality, and enlightenment that would show it to be so distant from or discontinuous with so-called "popular knowledge."

#### "...IT IS HARD FOR ME TO STUDY WITHOUT THAT SCHOOL FRAMEWORK, IT HELPS ME..."

In this section, I will reflect on the process of socialization as a path that is not finite, that does not end at a specific time in people's lives, and that develops throughout our existence. This process involves adaptations to different social and institutional configurations, arrangements that are not passive.

At one point, Juan leaves school, leaves the university, and starts to work:

"... I needed to study again. If I kept on without going to the university, things were going to turn out badly. I don't know how they were going to turn out badly, because I was ignorant... It is hard for me to study without the school framework, it doesn't restrict me, despite the absurdities..." "it helps me to finish something. School helps me on the critical-reflexive issue, and to write things that can be published. Knowing that people like what I write, I need another impulse to manage to produce the text..." (Interview with Juan).

School had made it possible for him to gain a series of kinds of knowledge that he instrumentalized according to his interests, although he acknowledged that a lot of what he studied had not been of any use to him, he considered it

a waste of time and that was one of the reasons, that he had decided to quit the university.

"Adaptation is more violently imposed on minority groups. It involves very rapid adjustments and a necessary selection of ways of belonging... These points correspond to an effort or interiorization of what is specific under the influence of stimuli or pressures to adapt to a different social landscape" (De Certau, 1995: 208).

However, this author indicates that it is not just adaptation on its own, but it involve the social actors reusing the order imposed, using their own tactics, underlining that this adaptation is not passive. These minority and minoritized groups appropriate, change, and improve the situations that are imposed upon them.<sup>114</sup>

The children in the linking classrooms (classrooms for immigrant/foreign children who have recently arrived in the Community of Madrid, devoted to teaching Spanish and/or formation for "remediating" curricular gaps of over two years) in which I carried out my fieldwork in the year 2006 did not adapt to this classroom passively. One of the norms of the classroom was the prohibition of talking in any language other than Spanish, but in their daily interactions the children did not respect this norm in the classroom, not only because they used their languages of origin, even if only to refer to other classmates with different languages, but because they constantly used non-verbal communication to communicate with one another, something that the teachers themselves did not understand. However, when they spoke to the teacher, they increased their effort to understand and express themselves in Spanish.<sup>115</sup>

#### "...IT PROMISES THINGS THAT IT DOESN'T DELIVER..."

In this section, I will analyze the expectations that the school projects on students and their families, and how the way that students do their work at school conditions these expectations. These discursive possibilities and practices allow us to increase the complexity of the explanations for school success and failure.

<sup>114</sup> De Certau names these practices implemented by social actors "the active part of belonging."

<sup>115</sup> Following Labov and De Certau, if space and time allowed, we could perform an in-depth analysis on the way the social actors resignify a language according to the use they make of it.

I asked Juan what he expected from school, from the first levels to the most advanced ones, and he answered as follows:

"...you have lots of expectations when you go to school, when I went to school, I really believed that I was going to learn to read and to write, to learn music, it said somewhere that I was going to learn music, but that never happened. If there's something that I could demand from school, that's it, that we never, never were taught music... If I had been taught music, my possibilities for abstract thinking would have been greater. I feel, I've reached a satisfactory moment of academic formation, right? But I feel that, in the long run, it is precarious... when you think about school, you think about literature, a Mexican writer said that all the Schools of Letters should disappear... when the institution doesn't fulfill its function, it should disappear, because it does not in fact fulfill the task of educating all of us who go through it, it keeps us busy a while, even I, for whom it's so necessary, think it should disappear, if we were radical, but we can't make it disappear, so they should just do their job a little... it promises things that it doesn't deliver..."

Relating Juan's words to those of another person I interviewed, I will add an extract of this last interview. I asked the person: What do you expect from school, from the CCH, from the university? She answered:

"to give me a chance to get in, it's really good. The people who come out of there are well-considered, for their capability, and I hope that they continue to open those doors, those opportunities to be in there, just like, up to now, they offer you lots of things, like books, they offer you lots of things so that you keep really wanting to follow your career. That's what I want from school, for it to help me to be a, a good being."<sup>116</sup>

Aspirations are manipulated in school, because school not only devotes itself to teaching certain kinds of knowledge, but it gives a series of degrees and, with them, a series of rights, which makes it raise a series of expectations about the people who are in school. Expectations which do not always correspond to the real chances that these accreditations offer. The number of people who hold these degrees increases, but they lose value not only because there are more people who obtain them but because those who obtain them

<sup>116</sup> Interview with a sixteen-year-old woman, who lives with her parents and a younger sister in Mexico City. At the time of the interview, she was studying upper secondary school (Bachillerato, CCH Sur UNAM). I was able to talk both to her and to her mother, because her mother was the cleaning woman in the house of one of the professors that I met at the UNAM. The interview took place in June 2008.

do not have the same social consideration as those who used to have them (Bourdieu, 2000).

"I would be very interested in going on to the university because it is the best one there is in this country and, besides, I want to study and be something, be someone in life. I want to continue studying, because I would like to be independent, more than anything, know a lot, that's it. I ask why she thinks it is important to know a lot, and she answers: Why is it important to know a lot? Hm... because that is what gives you power in life."<sup>117</sup>

In the cases studied, school appears as a place for not being lazy, a drunkard, a gambler... for not being like the people in the neighborhood, like the kids in the street, who "loiter," who "don't do anything."

"School and the subsidiary institutions contrast with the street physically and symbolically, like the norms, limits, and healthy spaces contrast with family, social, and personal destructuring and the lack of a reference." The idea of the presence or absence of a (school) life project is what leads to the establishment of dichotomies between those who do not do anything and those who prosper (Franzé, 2002).

Juan explained that his parents, with schooling, had given him the option of getting out of the neighborhood. Their efforts were aimed at managing for him and his sisters not to be laborers, but to ascend socially, to acquire enough school capital so that their children's economic capital would be different from theirs. Juan said that this was a way for parents from the working class to give their children an "inheritance," but, at the same time, he was clearly uncomfortable talking about his parents; he explained that they wanted him to return to the town they lived in but that, right then, he did not want to go back there, he wanted to stay in the Federal District, close to the university.

Saying that students are more successful in school as a consequence of the school capital their parents possess is not exactly a clarifying explanation, as Juan's case, among others, shows. If we wonder about the possession of this capital, we also need to wonder about the plurality of concrete conditions for transmitting these cultural aptitudes (Lahire, 2003).

<sup>117</sup> Interview with a sixteen-year-old woman, who lives with her parents and a younger sister in the Mexico City. At the time of the interview, she was studying upper secondary school (Bachillerato, CCH Sur UNAM). I was able to talk both to her and to her mother, because her mother was the cleaning woman in the house of one of the professors that I met at the UNAM. The interview took place in June 2008.

"Depending on whether emphasis is placed on the modalities of school failure or on the family structures within which the students are socialized, very different scientific and political conclusions can be drawn, as we can see... we often tend to consider –within the logic of the search for failures, or who to blame– the question referring to the responsibility for school failure. Where do these phenomena originate? At school? In the families? In the state? In the economic system? Sociological research makes it possible to consider this basic issue of "responsibility" or of the "causes" of "school failure" in a more complex way" (Lahire, 2003:71).

The issue of discontinuity regarding school culture comes from factors that have to do with different characteristics of the different social actors involved, as well as with the structure and conception of school itself, designed, perceived, and defined from certain social, economic, cultural, national, age, and gender positions. It is necessary to overcome the idea of resolving problems of cultural lack of fit beyond the acceptance of heterogeneous cultural environments where skills, dexterities, and codes of behavior and action that are incomparable are acquired (Franzé, 2002).

According to Ogbu (1993[1981]), school failure in the Afroamerican population of the United States cannot be understood unless we understand that the school structure is intimately related to characteristics of society and the opportunity structure it offers, which ends up having important repercussions on what happens inside the classroom. He indicates that it is necessary to refer to historical processes in order to understand the schooling processes of these minorities. He shows that there is a correlation between education and employment in the Afro-American community that is weaker than the correlation that exists in the white community Stockton, due to the limited ceiling for employment for these groups. Using his interviews, this author analyzed how the parents of Afro-American children encourage their children to get more training and emphasize the obligation of doing well in school, but their positions are contradictory because, at the same time, they tell them that this will not mean an improvement in their lifestyle or condition in society. If work in school is not accompanied by any kind of reward on the job level, this can mean disappointment, a lack of effort in their schoolwork, and the non-implementation of strategies that would allow them to adapt to this learning.

### "...ACCORDING TO THEM, WE WERE ALL DUMB..."

In this section, through words offered by Juan and a short film, I will focus on the influence of teachers' personalities on the interactions they established with students.

In the interview, Juan expressed some of his teachers' comments about him and his classmates, such as: *"I expected more from you," "according to them, we were all dumb," "in secondary school, the teachers were more distant, they weren't so willing to spend time with you," "that's what marked secondary school a little, there was a lot of, not nice treatment, and the other thing about secondary school is that there was a library, but it was closed, the books were glass cases," and "the idea of the institution is to humiliate you in the end, either the teacher or your classmate."*

These kinds of statements allow us to reflect on the expectations that are being projected about these children's school and social life, something that ends up having important repercussions in their trajectories inside and outside of school. However, knowing about these images means that we should inquire into the factors that explain them.

From my point of view, the short film I mentioned at the beginning of this section introduces a subject that is quite different from what we have presented in this text up to now; it deals with the relations between teachers and students more deeply, but it introduces "ethnic" and "gender" components (and the relationship between the two) that have not yet been dealt with, but that I believe are fundamental to understanding trajectories in school institutions. The film is a short film, a little over seven minutes, called *HIJAB*, with Xavi Sala as the scriptwriter, director, and producer.

It is filmed in Madrid; the streets that appear at the beginning lead us to identify the city from the images. The director locates the action at a Secondary Education Institute. He presents the conversation that a forty-year-old woman is having with a fourteen-year-old woman, in a scenario that simulates the halls of a school. The forty-year-old woman plays a teacher and the fourteen-year-old one is a student who is wearing hijab (a headscarf). The teacher tells the young woman to take off the scarf, that none of her classmates wear scarves. The girl says that she is Moslem and the teacher's response is "What does that have to do with anything?" I wonder why she will not let her stu-

dents wear a scarf? What equality are we talking about in educational context? What differences are allowed? Why is interculturality considered to be a value? Why is it a value that should be developed in schools? Why is this value fomented through festivals and specific subjects? Are there differences among differences? The teacher in the film says, “*This is a lay school, we’re all the same, we don’t want any differences among the students.*”

More than one Moslem woman wears a scarf, alleging that it is a way of marking their ethnic belonging or simply an aesthetic issue. The European father-states decide for these women about whether they should wear it or take it off, the father-state is who is in charge of deciding what happens in these spaces where it believes it has the power to exercise power over people. Nagar – Ron (2006) explains how the Orientalist Israeli consciousness creates an image of the “oriental woman” in which her main characteristics are stupidity, passivity, and dependency. In Spain there is a similar consciousness when we talk about these women, where submission and passivity seem to be their main character traits. Rescuing the words of the director of the public school in which I carried out my fieldwork, when he spoke of his students’ Moslem mothers:

“...we have more communication problems with the Moroccans than with the Rumanians, another immigrant population that is a large majority in this school. It’s not only easier because the languages are similar, but because, in the case of the Moroccans, it’s the mothers who spend the most time with the children, but these women don’t know Spanish, the majority hardly go out of their homes and they only talk to women from their ethnic group” (Observation, November 18, 2005. Public school in the Community of Madrid).

We have stereotypical images of *others*, and we relate to them from these stigmas. We owe this consideration to De Certau when he indicates that (in the 1970s, when he wrote this book)<sup>118</sup> foreigners suffer strong stigmatization from French society. This process develops as a consequence of a lack of representations of ourselves, which leads us to construct the other as an antinomial figure by means of which we construct ourselves. With greater indifferenciation, the foreigner, and/or indigenous person, and/or laborer, and/or bad student is constituted as a symbol that allows the school context to generate its own identity.

118 The book I used is a Spanish Edition from 1995.

The teacher’s words about the girl are loaded with an important contradiction, because she tries to convince her by saying that freedom of religion would be eliminated “*if each person came dressed in their religion.*” Clothes become a form of communication, they reveal sexual, cultural, social, and class identities, as well as nonconformism toward the society that devaluates them.

Non-discrimination is made equivalent to equality, but what kind of equality? In the public space, according to the teacher represented in *Hiyab*, we are all equal as long as we do not wear these kinds of symbolizations, which we should relegate only to private space. In addition, it forces an irremediable acceptance of the rules imposed, when she says “*rules are rules.*” Because a student is a student, he should accept already fixed rules, which he has no right to question, because the teachers make them, and the teachers believe they have the capacity to mark the norms. Why is the children’s capacity for action and/or reflection defined, restricted, and made possible by pedagogical discourses and practice, instead of by the children?

The girl reproaches the teacher, saying that she wears the hijab because she wants to, and her parents want her to take it off. Why don’t Fatima’s parents (Fatima is the name of the protagonist in the short film) want her to wear the headscarf? Can the scarf become a symbol of exclusion in a school where “we are all the same”? We can relate this girl’s behavior directly to De Certau’s words (1995[1974]), when he indicates that foreigners reject an identity that is imposed upon them from outside, claiming the right to be themselves and construct their own trajectories within diversity. But does anyone listen to these claims? Are they carried out?

There is emotional blackmail in phrases loaded with symbolic violence: “*you’d look prettier if you took it off,*” “*as soon as you’ve taken it off for a while, you won’t even remember,*” “*you don’t want to be the weird one in class, do you?*” After thinking about it, after the pressure put on her, with a look of resignation, pain, and anguish, the girl takes the scarf off.

At the end of the film, the girl enters class on her first day. The camera enters, as if it were Fatima’s eyes, and focuses on a classmate who has long hair, a Palestinian scarf, and a scarf on his head, another classmate is wearing a wool hat, another has several piercings, and the rest have all different hairstyles. All of these ways of dressing, of wearing one piece of clothing or another, are loaded with symbolizations. Why are some allowed and others not? Surprise, incomprehension, and injustice seem to appear in this woman’s eyes.

## CONCLUSIONS

Rights, opportunities, freedoms... Are they acknowledged due to the fact of having been born in a certain country, city, town, or neighborhood? Because of our gender? Because of our age? Our social class? Our ethnic group? Our religion? Our sexuality?...

Academic, political, and school subjects promote different strategies regarding the school's attention to this cultural, social, economic, and linguistic diversity... The different public institutions –among them, the school- are in charge of developing integration policies for “disadvantaged” groups, but the way they do it... Is it by problematizing and stigmatizing these groups?

School programs do not work because they explain school failure by focusing on the social context or on economic aspects. De Certeau (1995 [1974]) suggests that it is an accumulation of both options, and not the elimination of one or the other, because the frontiers between the economic and the cultural spheres are permeable. Educational policies say they “favor” one group as opposed to another when they give the group a series of benefits that make it possible to “equal” the situation of “disadvantage” from which it starts out. These organisms define which groups these are, creating spaces of segmentation and separation. The state apparatus defines the group, positions them in different places, and then works out ways to “make them equal.” All the nation-states establish a “nationalizing nationalism” in such a way that they impose different strategies in order to homogenize and monoculturalize the different groups that arrive at their borders.

Studying the presence of subalternate groups in the school context means taking concepts that are inherent to the school structure itself into account, such as “levels,” “rhythms,” and the importance of “keeping up in class.” When the students do not achieve the parameters that have been marked, it is assumed that there are problems within the student herself which need to be remedied, not in the way these categories are conceived. Certain social actors, with specific positions in the school organization structure, “define how things should be,” so that whoever does not adapt is considered to be problematic, to need help to remedy this situation. Educational policies try to make minority groups' problems with integration explicit using monocultural explanations such as: “they're immigrants,” “they're indigenous peoples,”

“they're gypsies,” “their families are destructured...” without reflecting on the other variables that may be acting and that may be found in the structure of the school itself.

In analyzing these groups' success or failure in school, I think that the explanations need not be limited to the opportunity structure that society offers them, or to historical issues that put minorities and majorities into contact, or to the discontinuity between school culture and the “cultural baggage” of each individual, or to the discontinuity in the forms of interaction employed between kids and their teachers... I think that we need to see how they all interrelate in order to respond to these issues more effectively.

“ In general, if the global working of the social world is not indifferent to the fact that these are the same individuals who act and think and feel in very different contexts of social life, who experience the contradictions of these contexts, constantly moving from one universe or sub-universe to another, then it is important for sociologists –whatever their original, favorite sphere- to get out of the tight spot of hyper-specialization in order to direct their comparative vision toward a broader range of practices and situations...” (Lahire: 2007:36)

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## CULTURE AND YOUTH PRAXIS: DECODING PRESENT-DAY POST-POLITICAL YOUTH CULTURES

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### NEW YOUTH REALITIES

An approach to contemporary societies requires reflection on the transition, contradiction, or coexistence among social paradigms, that is, among diverse, unequal ways of thinking, organizing, and living life in society. The *epistemes* that we used to use, that explained realities under apparently solid and congruent analytic parameters are no longer useful today. More and more, pres-

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ent-day realities exceed the ways of thinking about them and making them explicit, so we are observing a breakdown in these parameters and fractures in our ways of observing societies. This reflection, then, involves new guidelines that refer us to this process of transition, contradiction, or coexistence in the construction of contemporary social thought. This thought must search for the discourses of the “emerging subjects” who appear as part of the dynamics of these imprecise scenarios, as actors who shape this environment that we happen to experience in our lives.

In this sense, the analysis of youth cultures as important entities where the social imagination of the present is gestated cannot be reduced to a functionalist or determinist vision of being young; rather, it requires an approach capable of perceiving the contingency and complexity that characterizes today’s social configurations. This is the only way that we can narrate the non-linearity of youth cultures, as well as contribute elements to the intercultural dialogue that is necessary to understand our societies.

## YOUTH CULTURES AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

Young people are important producers of today’s social knowledge. Their own ways of communication, organization, symbolism, language, dress, consumption, etc., show us a reflexive universe through which we can understand and critically analyze multiple sociocultural and political processes of contemporary society, at the same time as they give us clues about what future social configurations may turn out to be.

Approaching youth cultures from a perspective of culture favors the analysis of the emerging voices which, in any case, have to do with the always permanent silence regarding what it means to “be young” in different present-day contexts, considering the material, intellectual, and spiritual life, as well as the symbolic expressions of the many youth groups.

From the field of politics, we should also consider the political and historical support through which youth cultures propose their social alternatives. Today’s youth groups carry the load of the political mortgage of the student movements of 1968, and this has caused some prejudices to circulate about their show of indifference to social commitment, about the prevalence of individual interest over community interest and of pleasure over effort. How-

ever, research on young people such as that carried out by Ulrich Beck (2002) and Rossana Reguillo in Mexico (2003) has shown that the vision of today’s young people must be understood starting out from contemporary redefinitions of citizenship, family, migration, identity, culture, state, market, violence, inequality, etc., and from the influence of political/cultural movements such as feminism, ecology, post-colonialism, multiculturalism, post-politics, and post-modernity.

Similarly, studies on youth communication and consumption have shown new (post-family and post-school) forms and spaces of socialization (Canclini, 2004) that are much less structured, where contemporary subjects construct and reconstruct their process of identification. On the other hand, the inequality and social fragmentation that large areas of Latin American countries, as well as many other countries in the world, suffer make young people’s lives resist, adapt, or succumb to phenomena such as violence, the illegality of migration, criminal organizations, addictions, illness, exclusion, etc.

Therefore, understanding young people’s political spaces today requires sizing the processes of inclusion and exclusion of young subjects on another scale. What is at stake is their capability of adapting in the excluding environments of globalization, using new cultural languages that make movements and identity ascriptions be a way of inclusion that, in the end, becomes political discourse, although this political discourse is produced on coordinates of participation that are far from yesterday’s political visions.

## CULTURE AND YOUTH

In the spheres where culture is studied, the pertinence of a concept of “culture” that is a flexible element that cross-cuts all the social-type problems that affect the world context is discussed. In fact, today, the concept of culture appears in any disciplinary space of a social or humanistic type as a horizon of explanation facing the processes of identity re-edition in the world’s emerging groups.

Regarding reflection on what is happening in the social sphere, at present the presence of the concept of culture is evident, with respect to the horizon for observing human processes. This concept has never before been so up-to-date in the social sciences. This tendency places it as the guiding point for analyzing what is happening today in our surroundings, and it reaches dif-



ferent fields of study that used to be hard to gain access to for understanding symbolic processes as a practice and an essential perspective for implementing social action, for example, in the economy and in many business studies. This is also true for agricultural and peasant studies, for social psychology, philosophy, and even for law, among other areas of knowledge that broaden the limits of their units of analysis to fit the “cultural element” in as a reference for reflection and action (Vargas 2007).

More and more, culture looks like a knowledge paradigm in which the different approaches and perspectives that carry the name “cultural problematics” and focus on the zenith of academic debate on the international level are constantly related. This leads us to think about the dimension that culture has obtained in recent years and the extension of its epistemic ranges, when not so long ago, the concept was relegated exclusively to the specific field of anthropology. This goes together with the emergence of certain cultural-type processes which, even if they were present earlier on the social scene, have taken on a new protagonism lately.

When culture is brought into the analyses of different disciplines of knowledge, the concept is adopted not to demand explanations of a “universal” nature, but as part of “local” type processes, as a *construct* that is constantly reelaborated by the people involved as subjects who participate in their own social construction. That is, culture is conceived as a joint group and community production, and that is why we cannot perceive it as a whole, or as something given, of an essential nature for the members of the group. Therefore, the localization of culture as an everyday *construct* is an analytic requirement because the understanding of reality cannot be acknowledged as a “whole,” foreign to the “external” factors that systematically attack everyday life.

On the contrary, this notion of culture as a *construct* refers us to this constant reelaboration of symbolic practice as part of the permanent dialectics of the relations entered into in the interior of the social group. Thompson uses this to propose a “structural” concept of culture, as a notion of a fixed symbolic nature located in social contexts:

This is a conception of culture that emphasizes both the symbolic nature of cultural phenomena and the fact that these phenomena are always inserted into structured social contexts... it can be considered the study of the significant constitution and the social contextualization of symbolic forms...

The analysis of cultural phenomena involves elucidating these contexts and processes that are structured socially, as well as interpreting the symbolic forms... it involves interpreting the symbolic forms by analyzing structured contexts and processes (Thompson 1998: 203).

Because of this, a broad, converging discussion about culture can help to understand the problems of inclusion and exclusion for the groups that dispute spaces that can be understood, precisely, in a cultural code. At the same time, the construction of a new notion of culture imposes itself on this discussion, a notion of culture that contributes to moving its debate to understanding different social groups’ identity processes, and this also makes it necessary to understand the social construction of differences, their new configurations, and the spaces where they struggle.

In this sense, youth cultures arise as identity spaces for a sector of the population that is already the main character in the social processes that we have mentioned. Youth cultures also appear as a category of analysis for understanding the enormous diversity of the concept of youth. There are many kinds of youths and they all share the characteristic of being, in and of themselves, spaces of identity construction that construct discourses of inclusion in social, political, and cultural spheres at the same time.

The objective of making youth a subject of study is to promote the analysis of and attention to a social sector that is the target of all globalizing processes. It is a group that, at present, appears as the protagonist in the spheres of cultural problems and that also draws the outlines of present-day identity construction and the debates about its pertinence.

## INEQUALITY AND PUBLIC YOUTH POLICIES

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the transformation of the nation-states gestated in the previous century underwent a widespread transformation, making a nearly global turn toward liberal democracy, whose main objective is to ensure citizens’ political freedom. In this way, politics have oriented themselves toward understanding the citizen not as a single model, but in his diversity, and this has involved the change from a homogeneous state to a plural state.

As we know, the student movement of the sixties, which was a great articulator of the political-culture criticism of the welfare state, had a lot to do with

this transformation. However, this openness to citizens' subjectivity has generated several paradoxes that have been identified by Villoro. One of these is that the new democratic systems "determined to ensure the freedom of all, have caused the exclusion of many" (Villoro 2007: 117), and another is that the nation-state has gotten too small to face global problems and too big to solve the claims to internal diversity (Villoro 2007:175).

In this sense, the search for new forms of citizenship has made it clear that political and even cultural recognition of differences is not enough, unless it is accompanied by an attack on the social and economic inequalities of social groups, a goal that seems less and less likely to be achieved.

This situation has generated tensions within the different state entities, among them, today's educational system which is facing different crises because of the distance between its social functions, such as favoring equal opportunity and social mobility, and the economic functions that seek to respond to the workforce needs of a flexible, volatile, and unpredictable job market (Sousa, 2006: 231). Today's perception of educational institutions is that they have lost power in the reproductive function that was widely questioned by Passeron and Bourdieu (1981), and even in their capability to watch and punish, analyzed by Foucault (1992), and that they have reduced their influence to the point that they are more of an administrative procedure. Even though they seem to up-date themselves, on one hand, by introducing technology for learning, they are far from reaching a comprehension of the *imaginaires* and the sociocultural processes that today's youth cultures experience.

In this context, the state's relations with the different groups of society are mediated by uncertainty and by the complexity of their transformation and weakening at present. In the case of young people, the institutions and the market have sought to appeal to them by discursively manipulating the concept of youth. However, the elements for doing this are increasingly insufficient for grouping, in institutional terms and categories, the different youth languages that began to appear in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that at present aspire to provide themselves with a worldview from different and complex ways of understanding the world. We could say that, in more than one case, youth subjectivities show themselves to be contrary to hegemonic fields and to fields of power, because these no longer respond to the expectations that are still generated in the universe of young people, made eternal in

the idea –and metaphor- of handing youth a magnificent future full of promise when they begin their social participation, in their adult phase.

Insofar as youth are denied their right to open up their participation as young people (or seen as a social space in a "moratorium"), they create patterns of behavior and of "manipulation" that are different from the reality that, specifically, clashes with the social imperative of the *way they should be* that is promoted for them. In this sense, this "counter-hegemony" of youth projects a kind of catharsis on citizen morality: the fear that suddenly the structure of control will fall apart and give way to another discourse, a discourse of change promoted by youth; thus, the rank of "immaturity" ascribed to youth excludes them from decision making.

In this order of things, the state is an institution that, despite its stigmatizing vocation, has been left behind as a space for appealing to youth. The discourses that come from the state no longer have any degree of acceptance or, above all, of submission in the sector of youth. However, dangerously, this management role of a state weakened by globalizing dynamics has been systematically supplanted by the market (as the backbone of the processes of economic globalization) and by the processes of the mass communications media that coin what the condition of contemporary youth should be.

For example, national policies aimed at young people are generally directed toward urban sectors through scholarships, support for the projects of NGOs that work with youth, and actions to prevent delinquency and addiction, and, finally, some support for getting the first job, among other things. This leaves out all the young people who are not students, not professionals: migrants, indigenous peoples, laborers, rural people, semi-urban people, heads of families, peasants, etc., none of whom have spaces or support for their youth life, considering them indistinctly as "adults."

These two "new" elements, the market and the influence of the communications media, which at present govern the patterns of selection regarding the nature of different kinds of youth (as consumers, as nihilists, and people who are politically apathetic, etc.), join the new social perceptions with which we should study and analyze and, therefore, try to understand contemporary youth cultures in relation to their responses to things political and to economic globalization. Thus the change in the epistemic paradigm.

## YOUTH IDENTITIES AND IMAGINAIRES

The term “youth cultures” is an analytic category that refers us to the symbolic production of youth and its repercussions in spaces of everything social. Studies of youth “from culture” are beginning to develop today from different approaches and from different social disciplines.

The symbolic expressions of youth cultural practices are part of this diversity that is observed in the forms of cultural expression that occur in globalization. As “new” emerging subjects, they are visibilized in concrete collective identities or in cultural spaces created with alternative languages, or in both. Because of this, because this is a discourse created by young people, it contravenes the homogenizing idea that emanates from this very globalization, when it takes on a nature that contradicts *what is said* of young people and becomes a discourse that arises from within the subjects’ actions. As an example, Gilberto Giménez observes, regarding the actualization of the subject of identity:

It initially imposed itself on the attention of specialists in the social sciences due to the emergence of the social movements which have taken the pretext of a group (ethnic, regional, etc.) identity or of a social category (feminist movements, for example) in order to question a relationship of domination and to demand autonomy (Giménez 2005:1)

Today, in the discourse of cultural exchange generated within globalization, the degree of insertion that cultural identities have in the visions and perspectives that have been constructed to understand the contemporary world has become evident. It is necessary to analyze the problem of youth identities as an issue that generates a series of analytic ranges; there is no staging when the discourse –whether national, collective, regional, cultural- is univocal. Youth identities move and make things dynamic; they change and are modified at a speed that would have been unthinkable before.

Along with the subject of “things cultural,” the spaces of identities are being discussed widely in order to try to understand the shape of today’s societies. These identities are cultural processes that are defining the reflections for analyzing the emergence of the “new actors” and/or “new identities,” so often mentioned today, that are parallel to what some have named the “new international dis-order” (García Canclini 2000).

In this sense, the construction of identities already has a new dimension with

respect to the dynamics of earlier contexts. This systemic order which we can observe makes us reflect on the roads and paths groups’ identity resources travel as part of their peculiar “construction of meaning.”

These “new” coordinates are parallel to a globalization in which *local* spaces are transcendental with respect to *global* spaces. They can also be visibilized in community contexts in which “identity multiplications” systematically appear, and which sometimes are based on certain frontal positions between what is called global-universal and identity particularisms, but also in the appropriation and constant re-use of indistinct cultural patterns:

In this scenario, the relative blurring of traditional frontiers (between states, regions, and ideologies, but also between types of knowledge and disciplines), beyond their real political validity, depending on the case, has favored the emergence and/or consolidation of the so-called “minorities” who claim a differential identity in a given context. The idea of minority or minority, understood in the classic sense of Deleuze, more than in numerical terms, particularly means the opposition to anything instituted as a pattern or canon from which things are classified or discriminated (the masculine, ethnocentric, heterosexual position, for example.) In this sense, the new differential and minority identities, whose visibility is accentuated in the different cultural contexts, are considered by some theoreticians to be positive, not in themselves, but insofar as they contribute to extending the contemporary space of democracies (Arfuch 2000: 62).

At the same time, daily life is a space for apprehending the collective “meaning” and, therefore, it has to represent spaces of analysis: daily life as a cultural showcase where youth “styles” develop and, above all, the identity traffic that this involves. It is from what is symbolic –hand in hand with the “flexible” concept of culture- that the discursivities of youth cultures are resolved as subjects immersed in cultural kinds of problems.

In this way, trying to decode today’s youth cultures is an effort to contribute some elements for understanding who the actors who consciously and unconsciously participate in significant interrelations and interdependencies in contemporary social transformations are and what they are like. Similarly, by proposing a broader and more integrated vision of the idea of culture, we seek to point out the importance of the symbolic, social, and political aspects of youth practices in the new social configurations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND TEXTBOOKS

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## INTRODUCTION

Subject of research: The reference framework of *Cultural Diversity and Textbooks* is Intercultural Education and the area of Social Sciences in the ESO.

Interculturality is one of the fundamental skills that people should develop. This leads us to reflect on the capabilities that people would need to develop in order to coexist in a multicultural society, what have been called *intercultural skills*. This is the reason that the starting point of this work is an intercultural education approach that goes beyond developing individual skills or capabilities.

We will deal first with the definition and objectives of this education approach, its place in and relevance to the educational perspectives required in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to respond to a society with new needs. The second aspect that will be



dealt with in this research is whether textbooks reflect the diversity that exists in the classroom and in our surroundings, and how they deal with this issue. Because of this, two main kinds of sources have been analyzed to prepare this paper: legal provisions and textbooks.

This paper<sup>121</sup> has been prepared according to the following guidelines:

In order to discover the cultural diversity that is present in books, the references to diversity found in each book have been taken into account and have been described. The descriptions correspond to a presentation of what was observed in the textbooks, with attention to the images, activities, maps and street maps, complementary texts, characters, concepts, and language.

Tables were then prepared to analyze and evaluate the way cultural diversity is dealt with in the textbooks, organizing the descriptions in a database, classifying them according to the content described in several subjects that were studied. The descriptions have been presented as statements whose degree of truth or falsehood should be evaluated.

## INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

The concept of interculturality has appeared in quite different political, pedagogical, and practical formulations, and this can lead to confusion or to discredit this profoundly transforming perspective.

The immediate cause behind the development of this educational perspective has been the public perception of the arrival of a significant number of foreigners from poor countries and societies that are remote from traditional European references. This does not mean that we hold that the presence of immigrants is the cause of society's multiculturalism; on the contrary, the necessary conclusion is that society has always been plural from the cultural point of view and, therefore, the arrival of immigrants highlights the diversities that have underlain society from time immemorial. In society, we are each part of some cultural minority, and in school, too, as Besalú (2002) says:

<sup>121</sup> This article is based on research carried out for the first phase of the doctorate (DEA), titled "La enseñanza de las Ciencias Sociales desde la perspectiva Intercultural. Tratamiento de la Diversidad Cultural en los libros de texto" (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2007).

Education should be this plural, diverse space, because it is a place of encounter, where we learn not so much because there is someone who is teaching, but because there are many who construct culture by confronting their own knowledge.

With the term intercultural education, we are alluding to a model of educational intervention that is capable of accounting for human diversity and of favoring the development of people in consonance with their identities. Intercultural education seeks to articulate processes of teaching and learning where these identities are not eliminated.

In developing theories about intercultural education, an enormous ambiguity regarding terminology and ideological approaches has developed. Interculturality, multiculturalism, intercultural education, and multicultural education are concepts that are used more and more, but not always with the same meaning; this results in contradictory conclusions that make it hard to create well-founded educational practices. Because of this, it is necessary to define each term precisely: multiculturalism refers to the fact that many individuals belonging to different cultures live together in the same society, while the term intercultural refers to the fact that the individuals interrelate with one another and enrich one another, aware of their interdependence.

From the sphere of education, there are many works with a similar approach that use the two terms interchangeably. American studies prefer to speak of *multicultural education*, while European studies use *intercultural education*. In this paper, we will use the term *intercultural education*, both because it is the term used in our most immediate surroundings and because it highlights the exchange among cultures. It is a matter of acknowledging that school and society are, in fact, multicultural, and the desirable educational approach is an intercultural one.

Faced with this variety of terminology, we opt for the term Intercultural Education, using it the way the Inter Group (2006) does, with Aguado's definition (2003):

Intercultural education is an educational approach based on respect for and appreciation of cultural diversity. It is aimed at each and every one of the members of society as a whole, and it proposes an integrated model of action that affects all the dimensions of the educational process. The aspiration is to achieve authentic equality of opportunities/results for everyone; as well as to overcome racism in its different manifestations and to develop intercultural skills in teachers and students.



When this definition is analyzed, intercultural education is understood to be a way of understanding education that affects all educational dimensions, means an education for everyone, and perceives diversity as a value.

Behind this proposal, there is also the intention of reforming the school in order to achieve a quality education for everyone. In accordance with the definition of intercultural education, the objectives which every intercultural approach should pursue are presented. The ideas of several authors are gathered for this purpose.<sup>122</sup> The main objectives of any intercultural education proposal should be:

- Increase educational equity. This means equal opportunities for all students to be able to develop their capabilities to the maximum. Because these capabilities are diverse, equity requires different treatment for each person.
- Overcome discrimination, whether because of ethnic group, gender, social class, or disability. The intention is to try to eliminate individual, cultural, and institutional racism, and to help all students to develop positive attitudes toward different cultural groups.
- Foster communication and promote interaction with others, in order to help develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to function in society.

Considering all of this, the final goal of intercultural education should be to transform society into a fairer, more democratic medium, favoring participating and offering students the opportunity to be critical, productive members of society.

With these references, the concept of intercultural education, as we propose it and will use it in this paper, has been outlined. We will also make the reductionisms that this educational model is subjected to evident. It remains to comment on the fundamental role that attention to cultural diversity plays in education, insofar as the cultural plurality that exists around us is becoming more notorious.

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<sup>122</sup> Abdallah-Pretceille (2006), Aguado (2003), Besalú (2002), García and Granados (1998), Grant (1995), Jordán (2004), and Nieto (2002), among others.

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Behind the discourses on intercultural education, there is a wide variety of implicit meanings of the concept culture. Not making this concept explicit has been one of the barriers to the progress of research on the phenomena of multiculturalism and the school. Reflection on the concept culture is essential to construct a theory and a practice regarding education. There is no univocal concept of culture, but the different classic theories that define it as a set of products that can be acquired and accumulated are strongly criticized for showing a static concept. Recent studies insist that these explanations contribute to the confusion and insist on their quantitative, accumulative nature.

Bullivant (1993) is one of the authors who insists on the need to start out from the anthropological treatment of the concept of culture as a basis for designing intercultural education. Thus, *culture* is understood to be everything that is learned and transmitted socially. Because of this, it is necessary to insist on the concept of culture as something that is unfinished and in constant movement. The anthropologist Camilleri (1985) defines it as:

The more or less linked set of acquired meanings, the most persistent and most widely shared ones, that the members of a group, because of their affiliation with this group, should propagate so that they prevail over the stimuli coming from their environment and from themselves, inducing, regarding these stimuli, attitudes, representations, and behaviors that are valued and shared, in order to ensure their reproduction by non-genetic means.

From this approach, it can be said that, using the term *culture*, we distinguish the way of being of a specific human community, its beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors. But each individual has a particular version of the culture to which she belongs, so culture is shared differentially. This idea insists on the difficulty of finding an individual who responds to each and every one of the attributes that define the culture in which she is included as a member of this group, and it accounts for the internal heterogeneity of the group.

The main idea of this approach is that there are no regularities, each culture is particular and diverse, although this does not mean that they are independent from and indifferent to one another. This is why we can speak of cultural relativism, the acceptance of cultural diversity, interculturalism, the search

for dialogue and reciprocity among different cultures, not from a paternalistic or contemptuous position, but from equality.

This paper places its wager on the Inclusive Education approach to incorporate Intercultural Education, which, in addition to acknowledging cultural diversity, promotes inclusion; that is, it respects minority cultures at the same time as it promotes contact, dialogue, mixing, and the equality of rights and obligations. Following Carbonell (1995):

(Inclusion) is a process that the two parties carry out slowly starting from an active, unequivocal will to resolve the inevitable conflicts that the diversity of values and customs will provoke, but most especially social and political inequality... The idea is to create a new space that does not yet exist, governed by new norms, born of negotiation and joint creativity.

Cultural diversity is unarguable, but this diversity depends on the context in which it is indicated; at times, this creates contradictions in the ways of living and accepting one's own existence, because what is good for some, is not good for others. Anthropology tries to describe, give meaning to, and analyze these kinds of differences; following this discipline, Hernández and Del Olmo (2005) understand cultural diversity to be *the variety of strategies and behaviors that humankind has thought up to survive and perpetuate itself as a group through its descendants, throughout time and space*. In this paper, in coherence with the meaning of diversity we have indicated, we opt for a broad consideration of diversity and for giving priority to work with heterogeneous groups, optativity, and the self-regulation of learning.

The starting point consists of accepting everyone. The option in favor of inclusion means the end of labels, of special education and special classrooms, but not the end of the necessary support, or the services that should be provided in integrated classrooms. Students cannot create a community or a group, or feel comfortable, if they think that they have to leave their differences and those of their classmates behind in order to belong to the group.

The objective should be a sincere exploitation of differences, for all students to have the chance to experience and understand the diversity present in a community. From all of this, we can summarize that the objective is to create, from the school, a community that accepts, uses, and respects differences.

## ANALYSIS OF TEXTBOOKS ACCORDING TO THEIR TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The textbook is a fundamental element in the educational process, besides being a representative sample of what society ratifies is valuable and should be transmitted to the younger generations. Textbooks, then, have a central role in teaching and learning processes. Because of this, different studies<sup>123</sup> call for changes in textbooks in order to educate according to cultural diversity.

Reflection on textbooks and their role in teaching is not new. One of the fore-runners in this area is the study by Calvo (1989). Among his conclusions, we can point out the ethnocentrism detected in the textbooks with regard to Spanish cultural diversity. The cultural minorities are included mainly for their folklore and gastronomy, with an abundance of stereotypes and promoting values of solidarity and compassion toward them. Because of this, an important part of the most innovative teachers have been seeking alternatives to educational materials that they criticize because they do not fit the social and cultural contexts and because of their conservatism and their poor learning strategies.

Most of the research papers on school texts deal with primary school teaching, and the authors agree that the textbook is the didactic resource that conditions the kind of teaching in the classroom most strongly. Following the contributions of Galindo (2005), the textbook is generally used in a closed, prioritized fashion in the ESO, and teachers submit to the specific conception that the publisher reflects, both in the contents and in the way of teaching them.

Given this situation where the textbooks have such an important weight in the educational process, it is necessary to be careful of what this didactic resource transmits to the students. We should pay attention to both the contents that are included and those that are omitted. They all have some contents in which the ideology, beliefs, and economic, commercial, and political interests of the authors filter through. Because of this, Intercultural Education calls for textbooks in which the students see themselves represented and feel valued.

The studies –some quantitative and others more qualitative– that critically

<sup>123</sup> Such as the studies by Aguado (2003), Besalú (2002), Calvo (1989), Colectivo Ioé (1996), Grupo Eleuterio Quintanilla (1998), and Venezky (1992), among others.

analyze the contents of textbooks from the parameters of cultural diversity insist that the majority of the schoolbooks are not very effective for an intercultural education that confronts the challenge of overcoming negative stereotypes and prejudices. Because of this, it will be a good idea to set some criteria and indicators to facilitate the activity of evaluating textbooks rigorously and effectively.

In this sense, our proposal in this paper is open and modifiable according to the context. To carry out this analysis, we have prepared some tables that follow; by applying these to the books analyzed, we hope to offer a material that will make a sufficiently complete, rigorous analysis possible.

The idea is to carry out a significant analysis of the way cultural diversity is dealt with in existing textbooks.<sup>124</sup> In particular, we tend to indicate the aspects that came up repeatedly. In order to do this, we defined enunciates or descriptors that were applied to several subjects<sup>125</sup> of Geography and History selected from the content program of the ESO; these have served to see whether the textbooks fit the Intercultural Education perspective. These descriptors were prepared following the indications of the project coordinated by Aguado (2006).<sup>126</sup>

This section of the paper, then, is presented in two parts. First, we give a descriptive analysis of the book and second, an analysis of the way it deals with cultural diversity. In order to do this, we observed photographs and illustration, activities, maps and street maps, support texts, characters, concepts, and language in the textbooks.

124 Textbooks analyzed:

Various Authors. (2002): Limes. Geografía. Ciencias Sociales. ESO, third year. Barcelona: Vicens Vives.

Various Authors. (2003): Historia. ESO, fourth year. Madrid: Anaya.

Various Authors. (2002): Ciencias Sociales, Geografía e Historia. ESO, second year. Madrid: Oxford Educación.

Various Authors. (2003): Limes. Historia. Ciencias Sociales. ESO, fourth year. Barcelona: Vicens Vives.

Various Authors. (2003): Limes. Ciencias Sociales. Geografía e Historia. ESO, second year. Barcelona: Vicens Vives.

Various Authors. (2001): Tiempo. Historia. Ciencias Sociales. ESO. First cycle. Barcelona: Vicens Vives.

Various Authors. (2002): Geografía, ESO, third year. Barcelona: Edebé.

Various Authors. (2002): Geografía e Historia. ESO. First cycle. Madrid: Editex.

125 La población mundial. La ciudad como espacio geográfico. La civilización romana: la unidad del mundo mediterráneo. La época del imperialismo.

126 AGUADO, T. (Coord.) (2006). Intercultural education. Teacher training needs from an European perspective/ Education intercultural. Necesidades de formación del profesorado desde una perspectiva europea. (Bilingual edition). Madrid: Estudios de la UNED.

### Book Card

TITLE

AUTHOR/AUTHORS

PUBLISHER

YEAR

PAGES

### Organization of Contents in Book

UNIT 1

UNIT 2

UNIT 3

UNIT 4

### SPHERE OF DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

This sphere or block that is previous to the main analysis of this paper includes a series of elements whose function is to help determine the basic characteristics of the curricular material we are analyzing. To this end, we will present three analysis tables.

In order to place the material, we first need to know its bibliographic information: title, author, publisher, year, and number of pages. Second, in order to determine the basic characteristics of the material, we also need to know how the contents are organized, by didactic units, by subjects and/or by blocks of general contents.

Third, the evaluator will respond to statements about general aspects of the textbook. These statements are a series of issues, presented as statements, whose degree of truth or falsehood must be evaluated. For each statement, the evaluator can choose among three possibilities (0, 1, 2) depending on whether he considers the statement to be less true (0) or truer (2): 0, no, this property is not observed at all, 1, the statement is true at least once, and 2, yes, this property is always fulfilled.

## SPHERE OF ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The evaluation established in the previous section will be maintained for the rest of the tables used in the analysis, so we will not insist on the tables. We will now apply these tables to various aspects related to the intercultural approach in education, as it has been configured in the theoretical framework of this paper. The following tables will gather a series of items that correspond to indicators of intercultural practices. We have opted to present them classified in different levels, according to images, activities, maps and street maps, support texts, personages, concepts, and, finally, language.

### ANALYSIS OF IMAGES

In this paper, we consider all kinds of photographs and drawings that appear in the textbook to be images. Due to their importance in learning, these should not be chance images, but should be coherent with the text they accompany, helping to clarify ideas and constituting a harmonic binomial of text and image.

According to studies such as those by Valls (2002), several aspects influence the attraction an image exerts on the reader. Its dimensions and the number of colors used generally tend to be key aspects, although its surroundings and what it represents also have their influence. The exponential increase in the number of photographs and images in schoolbooks in recent years is an aspect that must be highlighted, as well as the space assigned to them, but the tendency to use stereotypical images, with the intention of connecting with

#### *General Aspects of the Book*

ITEM	VALUE		
1. The publishing staff belong to diverse cultural groups	0	1	2
2. A multidisciplinary approach is used	0	1	2
3. The index clearly presents the contents	0	1	2
4. Complementary bibliography is given	0	1	2
5. It respects cultural pluralism in general, not only specifically in certain subjects	0	1	2

### *Analysis of Images*

ITEM	VALUE		
1. Reflect experiences that are meaningful for the students	0	1	2
2. Facilitate reflection and exchange of opinions	0	1	2
3. Favor equality, avoiding classification and discrimination	0	1	2
4. Help students to learn the subject	0	1	2
5. Show the source	0	1	2

students' knowledge, is confirmed. Because of this, the analysis of images, photographs, and drawings is one of the ways to signify the presence or absence of different cultural groups.

All of the illustrations should avoid prejudices, so they must offer an image of personages from different groups that makes their action in active and positive roles evident. The following table contains a series of items that follow these recommendations.

### ANALYSIS OF ACTIVITIES

Analyzing the activities that the textbook proposes is meaningful for evaluating the way cultural diversity is dealt with in schoolbooks. We can ask ourselves if the activities proposed respond to the objectives and specific contents of the level. One aspect that should be analyzed is whether the activities, on one hand, correspond to the objectives and contents, on the other.

From the perspective of Intercultural Education, in order to deal with cultural diversity, the activities have to respond to certain intentions and should facilitate a good progression for learning a specific content. They have to help to acknowledge students' previous learning. In addition, the activity should help students' motivation and relation with reality. They should encourage inquiry and questioning for creating and constructing meanings, as well as helping to acquire habits, skills, and abilities.

According to previous studies, one key aspect of the activities gathered in the schoolbooks is that they show an excessively individualistic conception of schoolwork, constantly referring the student to tasks that he should do on

his own. While it is true that, in some cases, the textbooks refer to preparing debates or asking people around you for information, this is more the exception than the rule.

At any rate, it seems that the most appropriate way would be to seek a balance between individual-type activities and group activities. Among other things, individual work is necessary because it facilitates respect for students' diversity, but this does not mean that this is not possible with group work. And group work is indispensable for learning certain contents.

The following table contains a series of items that help to analyze the aspects we have commented on and to detect good activities in textbooks from the perspective of Intercultural Education.

### ANALYSIS OF MAPS AND STREET MAPS

Maps and street maps are geometrical representations of the Earth or part of the Earth's surface, on a flat surface where different information is given according to each type of knowledge: there are linguistic, topographic, demographic, political, physical, and historical maps, among others. Maps can be designed in quite different styles and each one shows a different perspective, which allows us to see the world from a practical, informative point of view.

In History, maps often appear to clarify contents. In Geography, on the other hand, they are an instrument that provides information. From the perspective of Intercultural Education, we advocate becoming aware of cultural diversity as a basic trait of people, acknowledging its existence and legitimacy, valuing this diversity as a heritage that should be preserved. Because of this,

#### *Analysis of Activities*

ITEM	VALUE		
1. Organized as group work projects	0	1	2
2. Allow several reasoned solutions	0	1	2
3. Propose tasks of inquiry and confirmation of hypotheses	0	1	2
4. Promote discussions, debates, and simulations	0	1	2
5. Favor different learning styles	0	1	2

#### *Analysis of Maps*

ITEM	VALUE		
1. Use different scales for showing a single localization	0	1	2
2. Reflect localizations that are meaningful for the students	0	1	2
3. There are individual or group activities associated with the maps	0	1	2
4. They are seen as part of the learning process	0	1	2
5. The legends are explicative, clear, and motivating	0	1	2

the maps that the textbook presents should contribute to understanding the world more as a community of peoples than as a simple sum of states.

The following table, following the criteria of the previous tables, analyzes a series of items that should be taken into account to evaluate the way textbooks deal with cultural diversity.

### ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT TEXTS

Support texts are a basic component of the textbook. Teaching Social Sciences, due to the very nature of this knowledge, requires the use of a broad range of support texts; they become an essential component. In addition, in the context of Intercultural Education, support texts become especially relevant, because the use of a diversity of texts is even more necessary.

If we take on an intercultural perspective for teaching Social Sciences, it is necessary to use different sources of information to transmit, in a persistent way, the message that knowledge is not just in the summarized information that the textbook provides, but is constructed using diverse sources and approaches.

The customs, lifestyles, and traditions of cultural minorities should be presented in such a way as to express the values, meanings, and roles that these custom have in the lives of the different groups.

### ANALYSIS OF PERSONAGES

We will now indicate a series of criteria for evaluating the personages considered meaningful by textbooks. From Intercultural Education, the intention is

## Analysis of Support Texts

ITEM	VALUE		
1. Include the source	0	1	2
2. Use meaningful legacies, as well as others that are less familiar	0	1	2
3. Extend the contents of the subject	0	1	2
4. Promote doing comprehension activities	0	1	2
5. Provide meaningful learning experiences	0	1	2

for these personages to be presented by highlighting their influence on the life of the group to which they belong.

### ANALYSIS OF CONCEPTS

The contents of the textbook should be respectful of cultural diversity and, therefore, should serve intercultural education. Geographical and historical concepts should be considered from an integrating, diversifying perspective, open towards other Social Sciences; thus, it is necessary to highlight cultural, economic, demographic, legal, and international relations issues.

The challenges of today's society should be an obligatory reference when the contents are specified. The importance of procedural and attitudinal contents must be balanced with that of conceptual contents, breaking the traditional hegemony of conceptual contents, working with the conviction that the first are more important when what we are trying to do is educate students in interculturality. It is not a matter of introducing new subjects, but rather of reconsidering many of the subjects that are present in recent curricular frameworks.

### ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE

Regarding lexical aspects, the lexical difficulty, the vocabulary, and the possibility of resolving these difficulties using the context in which the word or expression is found will be analyzed. From Intercultural Education, the use of images to help establish an approximate comprehension of the unknown word or expression is proposed. Because of this, a contextualized explanation should be found in the schoolbook itself. The need to keep referring to a dic-

## Analysis of Personages

ITEM	VALUE		
1. Useful for interpreting events, situations, and conflicts from different perspectives	0	1	2
2. Propose tasks of inquiry, reflection, and debate	0	1	2
3. Develop social action skills	0	1	2
4. Include images of everyone	0	1	2
5. Favor the learning process	0	1	2

tionary in order to understand the text produces a de-motivating effect and foments student dependency.

In any case, one possible way, among others, to improve textbooks would be to establish criteria regarding the spelling of place names, because quite different ways of writing them abound, even some ways that are contrary to the norms established by Real Academia Española de la Lengua.

### CONCLUSIONS

The intention of this research was to analyze textbooks as didactic instruments for approaching an appropriate treatment of diversity. The conclusion is clear: the contents of the textbooks provide students with incomplete information from an Intercultural Education perspective. Social Science textbooks are based on the assumption of a homogeneous society, they transmit the idea that only two cultures exist, Western culture, with all its artistic, historical, and geographic richness, and the culture of the *others*, where the only interesting thing that can be reflected is the folklore. Western culture is responsible for humanity's achievements and progress, while the others represent underdevelopment. In general, they attempt to develop feelings of national and cultural belonging in the students. Because of this, it is necessary to propose changes in the Social Science texts in order to get students to perceive and value the cultural diversity that surrounds them.

There is no doubt that the textbook is the material that has the greatest quantitative and qualitative effect on students' learning in the classroom. For most

### *Analysis of Concepts*

ITEM	VALUE		
1. Respond to different styles of learning and motivation	0	1	2
2. More emphasis is placed on similarities between cultures and less on differences	0	1	2
3. They are easily located in the text	0	1	2
4. They are expressed, whenever possible, from different perspectives	0	1	2
5. Favor meaningful learning for everyone	0	1	2

professors, its use is a priority. We can say that it actually conditions, in a relevant way, the kind of teaching that is done, because it is generally used in a closed fashion, with teachers submitting to the specific conception that the textbook reflects, both of the contents and of the way of teaching them.

As for positive aspects, we can point out the good quality of the editions, both of the texts and of the accompanying illustrations and figures. The formats are easy to manage, which gives them a pleasant appearance to the eye.

In the subject of Geography, in addition to a broad range of photographs, there are satellite images, maps, climograms, population pyramids, line graphs, bar graphs, pie charts, statistical tables, etc. And in the subject of History, there are, above all, texts with historical and constitutional contents, in addition to military, administrative, demographic, migratory, economic, property, electoral, and political influence maps, together with conceptual maps, organigrams, and art reproductions.

### *Analysis of Language*

ITEM	VALUE		
1. Includes a dictionary	0	1	2
2. Stimulates communication among the students	0	1	2
3. Racist or discriminatory expressions appear	0	1	2
4. The language barrier is reduced using visual organizers	0	1	2
5. Activities are explained in simple language	0	1	2

With some nuances, the contents follow the indications of the curricular decrees; the division in large blocks and didactic units is a reflection of the legislative provisions. The different subjects or didactic units contain, in addition to explanatory and descriptive contents, a section with exercises, activities, texts, and application of techniques. Thus, they offer indications for making topographic crosscuts, climograms, population pyramids, landscape sketches, touristic itineraries, commentaries on historiographic and legal texts, and on monuments and works of art, environmental evaluations, and conceptual maps.

Among the negative aspects we found, it is necessary to consider the textbooks as closed, totalizing products, not as support materials from which to continue learning. From Intercultural Education, we intend for the schoolbooks themselves to refer students to the use of other didactic resources, such as atlases, summaries, encyclopedias, the press, reference books, videos, and Internet, with the desire of overcoming the traditional consideration of the textbook as a self-sufficient, nearly exclusive medium for developing learning activities.

Social Science textbooks are based on the assumption of a homogeneous society. The new intercultural approaches demand substantial modifications for the textbooks. But it is, without a doubt, necessary to have teachers who are capable of working in classrooms with students from different cultures and traditions.

As this paper has tried to show, the intercultural perspective leads us to new initiatives regarding education. And its effectiveness will depend, to a great extent, on these measures being coherent with the analysis of the individual and community needs of the specific context where they are put into practice. But it is also necessary for them to occur along with other structural measures that go beyond the school sphere. If this does not happen, the initiatives called intercultural initiatives can be used to hide inequalities or to give a touristic vision of cultural manifestations.

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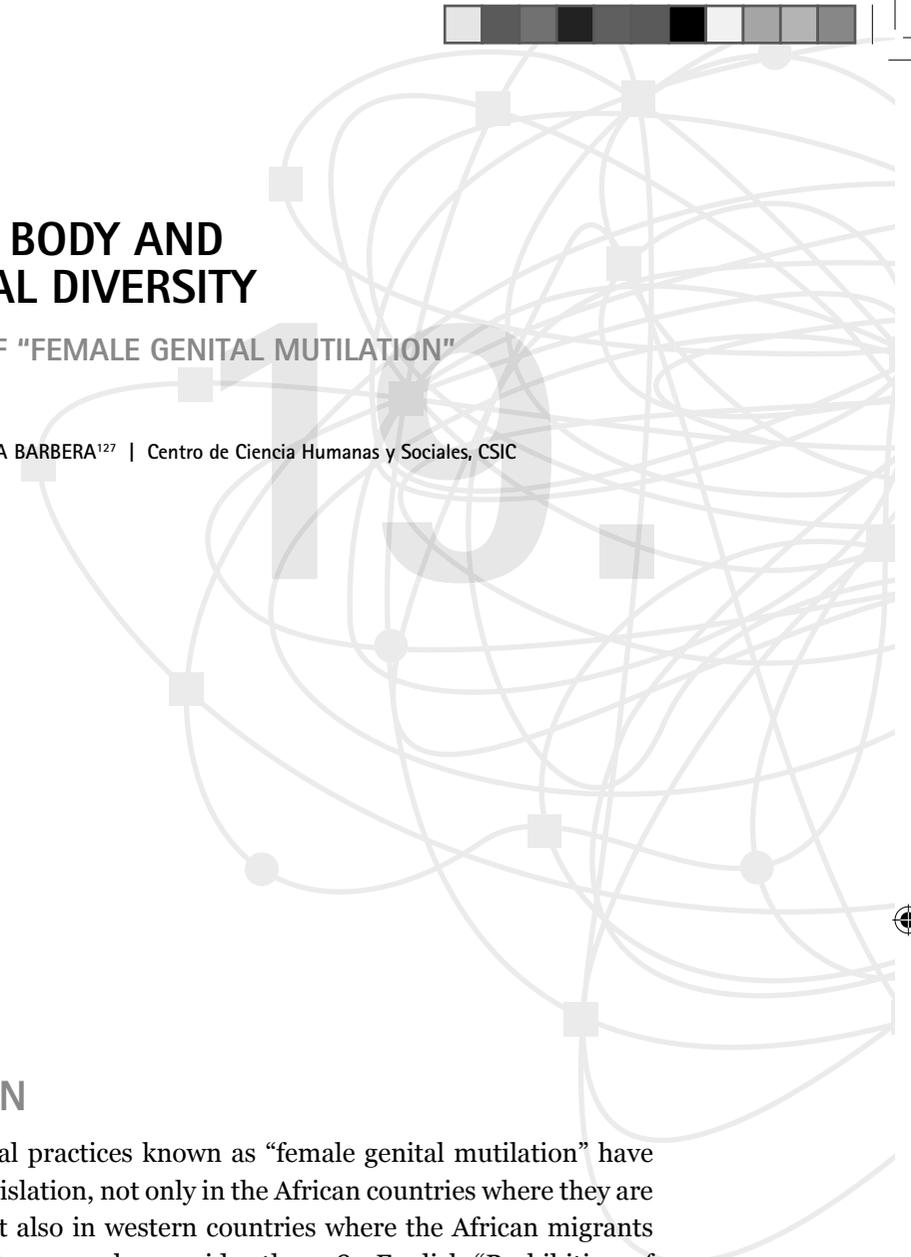
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# FEMALE BODY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

## THE CASE OF "FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION"

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### INTRODUCTION

All the forms of ritual practices known as “female genital mutilation” have been the object of legislation, not only in the African countries where they are mostly practiced, but also in western countries where the African migrants have come to live. For example, consider the 1985 English “Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act” substituted with the “Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003,” about the 1995 United States federal law “Federal Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act,” integrated with different state-level legislation, about the 2005 Spanish law “Ley Organica 3/2005 de la Jefatura del Estado

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de 8 de Julio para perseguir extraterritorialmente la práctica de la mutilación genital femenina,” and about the 2006 Italian law “Legge n. 7/2006, Disposizioni concernenti la prevenzione e il divieto delle pratiche di mutilazione genitale femminile.”

Western legislators have adopted two different approaches: judging these practices in the framework of the pre-existing criminal law or adopting *ad hoc* laws. Their symbolic functions, as well as the results, are evidently different. The prosecutions of these practices in the framework of pre-existing criminal law guarantees formal respect for the principle of equality, as the law is applicable to everyone independently of their ethnic group (Weil-Curiel, 2001). However, the truth is that these practices are carried out exclusively by migrants from the ex-colonies. In addition, it should be noted that France is the only western country where these ritual practices are systematically prosecuted.

In contrast, there have been no sentences in this legal framework in any of the countries that have adopted *ad hoc* laws. In fact, as *ad hoc* laws openly condemn these practices but also acknowledge their specificity and complexity due to the relations involved between men and women, parents and children, health and corporality, individuals and groups, relations that are established in different ways in African and in western cultures. For this reason, *ad hoc* laws guarantee the interaction of administrative law (for regulating educational programs and planning medical and social assistance), with family law (for the eventual suspension of parental authority), with civil law (for special compensation for the victims), with immigration law (for determining the condition of refugee and requests for asylum because of the feared mutilations), and with criminal law. However, the socio-anthropological relevance of these practices has been overlooked and the *ad hoc* legislative measures adopted have shown their ineffectiveness.

We should also remember that, independently of the political strategy chosen, all the laws that prohibit female genital mutilations have been presented in western countries as a response to massive immigration from Africa. But, as Elizabeth Boyle and Sharon Preves (2000: 722) argue, analyzing the immigration rates in the United States in the decade before the law was approved, the immigration from countries where genital mutilation is practiced remained below 4% of the total rate of immigration. Among the people included in this 4%, the percentage of those actually at risk was even lower, be-

cause the majority of the migrants were men, and not all the African women who emigrate belong to groups that practice these rituals. These data show, once again, that the fight against female genital mutilation is mainly symbolic, and its objective is to achieve a fundamental distinction between “western culture” and “barbaric traditions.” In the end, to mark the difference between “us” and “them.”

## FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION: WHAT'S IN THE NAME?

*Naming creates things. It declares. Saying must, at the same time, unite and separate, identify as different and identify as connected [...]. Naming selects, discriminates, identifies, locates, orders, organizes, systematizes*

(Dewey and Bentley, 1949: 133)

The diverse ritual practices which will be the object of this analysis are called, by the World Health Organization, by the general name of “female genital mutilation” and are classified as circumcision, excision, and infibulation. **Circumcision**, also called clitoridectomy (-τομία means “incision” in Greek), is the least severe form of genital cutting. It involves removing the clitoral hood, preserving the clitoris, the rear part of the labia majora, and the labia minora. In Islamic culture, circumcision is known as “sunna” (tradition), because it is mentioned in some “ahadith” (sayings of the prophet Mohammed).<sup>128</sup> This kind of cutting is equivalent to male circumcision.<sup>129</sup> **Excision**, also known as clitoridectomy (ἐκτομή means “cut” in Greek), involves the complete elimination of the clitoris and can include cutting the labia majora and minora. **Infibulation** is the most drastic modification. Derived from the Latin “fibula” (peg), the term “infibulation” recalls the pin used to hold the Roman toga closed. It was also used to “close” slaves’ genitals and prevent them from having sexual relations. This ritual was also known as “pharaonic circumcision”

128 The hadith generally related to female circumcision are as follows: “Touch but not destroy. It is more illuminating to the woman and more enjoyable to the husband,” “Do not go deep. This is enjoyable to the woman and preferable to the husband,” “Circumcision is sunnah (recommended) for the men and makrumah (meritorious) for the women” (quoted in El-Tom, 1998).

129 See Obiora, 1996: 289, Slack, 1988: 441, and Atoki, 1995: 230. In addition, the United Nations Population Fund Report (1997) declares: “Removal of the clitoral hood only has been referred to by some as true circumcision as it is most closely analogous to male circumcision” (<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/1997/chapter2.htm>, note 20, last access: April 2009).

because it seems to have been carried out in ancient Egypt, as revealed by the study of some mummies (Wasunna, 2000). Infibulation consists of the complete elimination of the clitoris and of all the labia, sutured together afterward so that only a small orifice remains for urinating.

The first objective I pursue here is to analyze the way these different ritual practices have been named. The term “female genital mutilation” is commonly used. However, this term is a profound reflection of the western perspective, which ignores the fact that the populations that effect these practices do not perceive them to be mutilations but rather modifications of the genital organs carried out to satisfy canons of beauty, hygiene, and social order that are deeply rooted in their culture. From the western perspective, these practices are just the cause of illnesses, irreparable disfiguration of the body, and permanent privation of corporal integrity. In fact, the expression “mutilation” refers to maiming or mutilating an extremity or an organ, implying a negative evaluation of these practices. As the term “female genital mutilation” is evidently conditioned by a value judgment, I consider it unproductive to use it in an analysis whose objective is to comprehend these practices and seek reasonable ways to house them in western societies.

Other researchers use the expression “female genital surgery” (Obermeyer, 1999). Even though this expression effectively alludes to the idea of intervention, modification, and corporal transformation that are the objective of the ritual, it does not, in fact, allow us to mark a clear enough difference between the traditional practices prohibited by the laws that we are examining and modifying surgery of the body carried out legally in hospitals.

On the other hand, the communities where these traditional practices are carried out use the expression “female circumcision.” “Female genital mutilation” and “female circumcision” clearly refer to very different sets of meanings. The communities that practice these rituals do not use the word “mutilation,” thus rejecting the idea that their women are disfigured and that they are, in turn, disfiguring their daughters. What is more, they use the term “circumcision” to emphasize the inherent dimension of initiation that these practices have. Also, the term “female circumcision” shows an equivalence between the ritual modifications of genitalia in men and in women. However, the analogy between male and female rituals does not exist in the case of the female genital cuttings that are more invasive than simple circumcision, such as excision

and infibulation. Because of this, the expression “circumcision” seems to me to be inadequate for describing the full variety of practices carried out.

Although no name in itself has a neutral value, there was a successful attempt to name these practices in 1996 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) with the expression “female genital cutting” (FGC). The explicit intention was to avoid judgment. With the objective of avoiding the demonization of certain cultures, religions, and communities, the expression “female genital cutting” has been adopted by the most recent official documents. The *La United States Agency for International Development* (USAID) declares:

Female Circumcision (FC), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Female Genital Cutting (FGC), Female Genital Surgeries (FGS) are all terms that have been used to refer to the tradition of altering female genitalia. Under current policy, USAID uses the neutral term, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). This decision has been prompted by the rejection of the term FGM by many practicing communities and activists who consider it judgmental, pejorative and not conducive to discussion and collaboration. [...] Issues of identity, culture and other social norms are interwoven in the practice. Naming the tradition after its physical effects ignores the cultural underpinnings of FGM/C. [...] The term “female genital mutilation” stigmatizes the practice to the detriment of the programs trying to change it.<sup>130</sup>

Based on the reasons explained so far, I opt for the expression “ritual female genital cuttings,” adding the adjective “ritual” to the expression adopted by the United Nations to refer to the inherent cultural and ethnic dimension of this corporal modification (Grassivaro Gallo et al., 2006).<sup>131</sup> As the literature on the subject often refers to infibulation and its health risks as if they were related to all the kinds of ritual cutting of the female genitalia, I will use the plural form to remind us of the existence of a range of different typologies of genital cuttings, also avoiding the acronyms that suggest the idea of a dangerous, incomprehensible illness.

130 Annex to “USAID Policy on Female Genital Cutting (FGC): Explanation of Terminology,” at [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/pop/techareas/fgc/annex.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/pop/techareas/fgc/annex.html) (last access, April 2009).

131 Pia Grassivaro Gallo suggests adopting the expression Ethnic Female Genital Modifications because the term “modification” does not involve a value judgment and allows the inclusion not only of interventions that reduce the genitalia, but also those that lengthen them. The term “ethnic” refers to the underlying cultural motive and the plurality of the populations involved.

## INITIATION AND GENDERIZATION

*Circumcised girls, come, let's go home.*

*You arrived as uncircumcised girls and now you return as women. Circumcised girls, come, let's go home to eat a goat with nkobe [cheese] and no one will bother you.*

*Don't go into the house [of your parents].*

*Let the parents say, "[the clitoris] has been eliminated. Let her come in and marry."*

(Thomas, 2003: 32)<sup>132</sup>

The origin of these rituals is not well known. There is no conclusive proof about when and where the custom began and how it spread. Because they are practiced in many African countries, in some parts of the Arabian Peninsula, in some areas of the Middle East, and also among some ethnic groups in South America, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia, there is no consensus on whether ritual female genital cuttings originated autonomously in different areas or whether they spread from a single location.

Many anthropologists have studied the symbolic meaning of ritual female genital cuttings, as well as their links to social relations, the anthropological conception, the aesthetic perception of the body, and religious beliefs. Fieldwork has revealed that the populations that practice these rituals justify them by their religious, socio-symbolic, and aesthetic meaning (they mainly define age, ethnic identity, gender, and the possibility of marrying), something which westerners do not take seriously. Of course, the explanations that a western observer may label as naïve may, on the contrary, be very helpful in understanding the practice because they reflect different, relevant aspects.

Although ritual female genital cuttings are not contemplated in any of the three monotheistic religions, they are often considered to be a religious requirement, above all by many faithful Moslems. However, contrary to what is commonly assumed, the custom did not originate in Islam (Abu-Sahlieh, 1994: 82-85). According to some sources, the Arabs learned the ritual in Egypt during the conquest of northern Africa and then extended it (Wasunna, 2000: 106). In fact, ritual female genital cuttings are not carried out only among Moslems, but also among Christians, animists and Falashas, the black

<sup>132</sup> Verses sung by initiated women when they go to the house where the ritual is practiced.

Jews of Ethiopia. And viceversa, these practices are not common in many countries with Moslem majorities, such as Turkey and Morocco.

Many anthropologists explain ritual female genital cuttings as **rites of initiation** that mark the passage from puberty to adulthood.<sup>133</sup> These rituals are traditionally a reason to celebrate and are accompanied by special food, dances, and songs. In Sierra Leone, for example, the passage from infancy to adulthood happens when the girls are initiated into one of the traditional women's secret societies ("Sande"), an important form of resistance against masculine domination.

An important characteristic and general consequence of both Poro [men's secret society] and Sande [women's secret society] is the sense of camaraderie they give. The initiated obtain the sense of participating in a national institution. The shared links of the society unite men with men and women with women, as members of a more extensive area, in a way that transcends all the barriers of family, clan, tribe, and religion. This sense of belonging –which arises mainly from the memory of shared experiences at a tender age– is the main reason for the extra-cultural importance of Poro and Sande. (Little, 1949: 5)

Entering a secret society marks the passage to adulthood and prepares the girls for marriage and to be respected as adult women by other women (Little, 1949). During initiation, they are taught hygiene, social norms, and secrets of popular wisdom that are useful for health issues. The process of initiation includes ritual cutting of the genitalia. According to tradition, the ritual is carried out exclusively among the women and constitutes the way to transfer female culture from one generation to the next. Because of this, explains Obioma Nnaemeka (2001: 180-181), communities strongly resist any effort to eradicate these practices. In addition, the genital cuttings allows the social definition of a girl's sex and declare her **gender identity** (Shweder, 2002, Gruenbaum, 2001, and Grande, 2004). In contrast to what has happened in the West, where the idea that gender is not innate but rather socially constructed (De Beauvoir, 1949) has only appeared with the diffusion of feminist

<sup>133</sup> Although they are generally carried out as a result of menarchy, some groups practice genital cuttings a few days after birth. Because of this, some researchers reject the hypothesis that these ritual female genital cuttings are an initiation ritual to enter into adulthood. Regarding present-day tendencies to lower the age for the girls and to exchange the traditional ritual for a safer hospital environment, see Herlund, 2000 and Shell-Duncan, 2001.

thought, in Africa this concept is deeply rooted in popular culture.<sup>134</sup> According to their beliefs, children are naturally bisexual. Boy's androgyny is supposed to reside in their foreskin and girls', in their clitoris. As part of the rite of initiation into adulthood, the adolescents must lose the symbols of their sexual duality in order to take on the organs and functions of adults.<sup>135</sup> In addition, the ritual is carried out in order to purify, sanitize, and to beautify. Especially in eastern African countries, both men's and women's genitalia are considered dirty, impure, and ugly. In Egypt, for example, an uncircumcised girl is called "nigsa," dirty, and in Sudan, the colloquial term for infibulation is "tahúr," cleaning, purging. In Mali and Mauritania, too, the clitoris is considered ugly and cutting is known as "tizian," to make more beautiful, and "gaad," cut (Erlich, 1986: 193).

The pain of cutting is viewed as an integral part of the passage from infancy to adulthood. In these populations, the way a girl demonstrates that she is ready to be an adult woman, that is, to deal with family work, with the pain of giving birth, and the fatigue of raising children, is by being able to stand the pain. The functional role of pain, as an intense, unforgettable experience, is acknowledged in the transformation of the adolescents into self-aware adults. In this sense, the initiation ritual fulfills a crucial role in creating social relations: the girls who are initiated in the same ceremony share the same experience and develop a strong sense of solidarity, mutual aid, and sisterhood (Kenyatta, 1938: 2). The initiation "culturalizes" pain and develops a sense of belonging to the group that allows them to overcome the pain that thus becomes the meta-message of the rite of initiation (Morinis, 1985: 164).

The gender-defining function that genital cuttings fulfill is strictly related to the possibility of marrying. An initiated woman is ready to be a wife and mother. African women submit their daughters to ritual genital cuttings because an uncircumcised girl is considered unacceptable for marriage. This explains why women are the strongest promoters of the practice and why the physical suffering is often considered preferable to the social ostracism the uncircumcised women experience. According to some popular beliefs, the re-

134 See the suggestive description of the mobility of gender frontiers in Sierra Leone by Aminatta Forna: "From the day a woman becomes a member of the men's society called Pa, she must give up her basket and use a hook and fishing line, exchange her stool at the back of the house for a hammock in the front, and give up snuff for a pipe. And give up her place in the women's society. The mambores. The women who lived like men." (Forna, 2007: 353)

135 Among some groups, there is a belief that the clitoris is a dangerous organ, that it can kill a man during sexual relations or hurt babies when they are born (Blackledge, 2005: 137-140).

duction of sexual desire caused by genital cutting prevents premarital sexual relations, considered immoral in some African societies. Although ritual female genital cuttings are not really a guarantee of virginity, because new cutting before the wedding can "restore" virginity, they symbolically mark virginity in order to celebrate fertility and underline women's role as mothers. As Janice Boddy explains:

As a symbolic act, circumcision markedly focuses on potential fertility, dramatically minimizing their inherent sexuality. By insisting on circumcising their daughters, women declare their indispensable social position, an importance that does not consist of being their husbands' sexual partners [...], but of being mothers of men. In this society, women do not achieve social recognition by being the same as men, but by being less and less like them from a physical, sexual, and social point of view. Both rites, male and female circumcision, highlight this complementarity. (Boddy, 1982: 687)

## NGAITANA, I AM GOING TO CIRCUMCISE MYSELF

In addition to defining gender, genital cuttings are deeply interwoven with **ethnic identity** and must be understood in relation to a social structure focused on the group (Grande, 2004: 9). Together with facial scars, tattoos, piercings, clothing, languages, and religions, the differences in the kind of genital cutting work as ethnic markers. As Jomo Kenyatta (1966: 133) explains, ritual female genital cuttings are a matter of identity and constitute fundamental elements for tribal psychology because they remind the members that they belong to the group. From this perspective, we have to understand the role that genital cuttings –becoming a symbol of African identity and liberation- have played in the resistance to colonial power. Colonial laws prohibiting ritual female genital cuttings were received by Africans as threats to their ethnic identity and as an intromission into their culture and social order. This is the reason that ritual female genital cuttings became a bastion of resistance to colonial powers, as is clearly shown in the Kenian story of *Ngaitana*.

In 1956, the local council (made up of men) of the city of Meru — under colonial administration since the 1930s — voted unanimously to prohibit excision (Thomas, 2003: 79 ff.). In response, groups of girls circumcised themselves, with no ceremony or celebration. *Ngaitana* was what they called themselves,

and it means “I am going to circumcise myself.” The *Ngaitana* girls chose circumcision as a way of demanding their autonomy. They claimed their autonomy from the men of the local council who tried to control the female body and, at the same time, from the colonial power that tried to control African politics. The *Ngaitana* girls were part of the Mau Mau rebellion and circumcision became a way of showing fidelity to Kikuyu tradition. Defying colonial domination, female genital cuttings turned into an instrument of empowerment and resistance (Kershaw, 1997: 190 and Presley, 1988).

As Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi (2007: 705-706) points out, emphasizing the story of resistance to colonial power that is associated with ritual female genital cuttings shows the importance of understanding cultural practices as a place of multiple possibilities, where individuals and groups actively and strategically reinvent tradition and reinvent themselves. The western vision of ritual female genital cuttings, which understands a patriarchal tradition in which women are passive victims, shows its inadequacy when it is confronted with this story of rebellion against colonial power. The *Ngaitana* story definitely offers an image of girls as agents capable of appropriating tradition and strategically transforming it into a political instrument.

In short, ritual female genital cuttings make up a complex set of meanings rooted in the culture that is transmitted from generation to generation and, at the same time, varies at different political moments and in the different sociocultural contexts of African countries, as it also does in the diaspora to western countries. Whatever the meaning and relevance in the country of origin, ritual female genital cuttings obtain new meanings in migratory contexts, turning into an identity claim and transforming women’s bodies into a flesh and blood ethnic frontier. Therefore, the *Ngaitana* story is an important lesson for understanding why ritual female genital cuttings have become a symbol of cultural identity in western countries; this story should remind western legislators of the dangers related to criminal prohibition.

## PARALLELISMS WITH MALE RITUAL CIRCUMCISION

In all the societies where ritual female genital cuttings are traditionally carried out, male circumcision is also done. Curiously, however, while masculine circumcision is allowed and currently practiced in hospitals in western countries, ritual female genital cuttings are prohibited and prosecuted as crimes.

Sami Aldeeb Abu-Salieh explains that, because male circumcision is a fundamental religious issue for Islam and, above all, for Judaism, many doctors avoid defining ritual male circumcision as a mutilation because they are afraid of being labeled as anti-Semites.

There is no valid justification for distinguishing between male and female circumcision. I condemn the attitude of the international and non-governmental organizations that dissociate one kind of circumcision from the rest, legitimizing, in the process, male circumcision. I also condemn the discriminatory attitude of western countries that have passed laws against female circumcision but not against male circumcision because they are afraid of being considered anti-Semitic. (Abu-Salieh, 1994: 101)

It is worth indicating that male circumcision is not done only in the Moslem and Jewish communities, but is also routinely practiced on most newborn males in United States hospitals.<sup>136</sup> Supposed therapeutic and preventive reasons (such as preventing cancer of the penis, AIDS, urinary tract infection, kidney problems, and even epilepsy) justify this massive surgical intervention with no medical proof (Van Howe, 1997 and Denniston et al., 1999). In fact, the American Medical Association recently declared that the scientific evidence of the benefits of circumcision is insufficient to recommend routine neonatal circumcision. Therefore, the AMA has recommended that circumcision be carried out only upon request by the parents and using anesthesia, admitting that, in this operation, social and cultural expectations are more important than medical needs.<sup>137</sup> Despite this, the normal surgical protocols and the requirement of informed consent continue to be inexplicably neglected.

In Italy, the National Bioethics Committee (CNB) established in 1998 that the practice of ritual male circumcision should be carried out by professional medical personnel.<sup>138</sup> In fact, cases of male circumcision have come before

136 According to the National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males, male circumcision is practiced by 60% of American men (see <http://noharm.org/HGMstats.htm>, last access: April 2009). This rate varies between 34.2 % on the West Coast and 80.1 % in the Midwest (Van Howe, 1997: 111). The reason for this dissemination is that it makes hygiene easier for the mother, who does not need to touch the penis.

137 See <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/no-index/about-ama/13585.shtml> (last access: April 2009).

138 According to the National Bioethics Committee (CNB) of Italy, circumcision seems to be fully compatible with the dispositions of Article 19 of the Italian Constitution which recognizes full freedom of cultural and ritual expression, both on the individual level and on the group level. In addition, the CNB states, circumcision seems to cause no harm, nor does it violate any constitutional values that could potentially be involved in this issue, such as the protection of minors or of health, and it is a manifestation of parents' right to autonomy in education (Art. 30). See Comitato Nazionale per la Bioetica (CNB) at <http://www.governo.it/bioetica/testi/250998.html> (last access: April 2009).

judges only when they were carried out under the National Health Service, but male circumcision itself has never been considered a problem.<sup>139</sup> In spite of the medical, legal, and ethical considerations related to this pediatric practice, the CNB has not considered circumcision to be a mutilation. On the contrary, the Italian Piemonte region has recently approved an experimental project to carry out ritual circumcision as out-patient surgery charged to regional funds.<sup>140</sup> Surprisingly, only a few years earlier, the nearby Tuscany region refused even to experiment with a circumcision that was simply symbolic for girls.<sup>141</sup> Of course, allowing non-therapeutic circumcision for boys while defining it as a crime when it is done to girls is a form of discrimination (Price, 1999). As Sami Aldeeb Bau-Salieh (1994b: 612) asks, How do you expect to convince an African father to leave his daughter uncircumcised while you let him circumcise his son? Of course, the practice of ritual female genital cuttings will never end while male circumcision continues to be carried out and approved.

## WESTERN SURGICAL INTERVENTIONS OF THE FEMALE BODY

When we consider the question of whether modifications of female genitalia are an anomalous, exclusively African practice, it is worthwhile to remember that clitoridectomy (removal of the clitoris) and hysterectomy (elimination of the ovaries and uterus) were carried out in Victorian England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as surgical solutions to cure female sexual behavior that was considered

139 Male circumcision, carried out in the absence of any real therapeutic need and under the National Health Service, is considered a crime of fraud affecting a government agency (Corte di Cassazione italiana, Cámara Penal, May 8, 2007, n. 17441).

140 Decision of the Regional Council of the Piemonte Region n. 39-2418 (March 20, 2006) "Approvazione della sperimentazione relativa alla circoncisione rituale in day surgery presso l'Azienda Sanitaria Ospedaliera OIRM/S. Anna di Torino. Stanziamento sul Capitolo 15476 del Bilancio 2006 di Euro 120.000 e accantonamento a favore della Direzione Programmazione Sanitaria."

141 The symbolic cutting would have consisted of pricking the external genitalia without removing any tissue (which is technically the definition of circumcision), under anesthesia and with the parents' consent. This proposal had a double objective. On one hand, to avoid the pain of cutting and prevent the side effects derived from ritual cutting practiced at home with no medical control or sterile instruments. On the other hand, the proposal would have allowed the preservation of a practice perceived to be meaningful for the migrant community, which required not only its sons, but also its daughters, to be circumcised. The compromise was proposed as an alternative to ritual female genital cuttings and seemed ideal for satisfying the expectations of the migrant community and, simultaneously, western ethical and legal criteria. Symbolic circumcision was presented as a transitory measure to achieve the gradual and participatory abolition of the practice among future generations of migrants. However, the proposal caused an incredible clamor of protest and was rejected. See Abdulcadir, 2006, Galeotti, 2007, and Pasquinelli, 2007.

anomalous and to cure symptoms of mental disorders. Specifically, these operations were used for treating masturbation, lesbian inclinations, hypersexuality, and hysteria. There is proof that, in the United States, up until 1905, the vaginal labia were sewn together (that is, they were infibulated) to prevent masturbation. Also, until 1935, clitoridectomy was used in psychiatric hospitals to treat epilepsy, catalepsy, melancholia, and even kleptomania (Sheehan 1981). Finally, we must remember that in 1925 Sigmund Freud (1925: 255) declared that the "elimination of clitoridean sexuality is a necessary condition for the development of femininity."

In my opinion, we must keep these data in mind when we consider the arguments against ritual female genital cuttings that western feminists use. Of course, the struggle against these ritual practices reflect the western experience of Victorian clitoridectomy because female genital cuttings are understood to be a castration of femininity and instruments used by patriarchal societies to control female sexuality. Through this lens, many western feminists only consider the arguments related to the control of female sexuality and virginity to be true, and believe all the other reasons to be false and superimposed. In reality, in western eyes, the control of sexuality seems to be the only plausible reason for practicing these rituals because this was really the only objective of "therapeutic" clitoridectomy in the West.

On the other hand, in the debate on ritual female genital cuttings, not enough importance is given to Victorian clitoridectomy, because it is argued that western countries are more advanced because they have abandoned such "barbaric" practices. However, as Nancy Ehrenreich and Mark Barr (2005: 91) allege, many other practices of corporal modification are carried out in western countries today with the objective of adapting women's bodies to patriarchal norms. Powerful cultural forces take part in the formation of an idealized image of the female body, not only in the "underdeveloped" South of the world, but also –and above all– in the "modern and civilized" western countries.<sup>142</sup> Although African women are believed to submit to ritual female genital cuttings because of their low educational level (Nussbaum, 1999: 123), western women –despite their educational degrees and their "liberated" life-

142 See the statistics on the tendencies in cosmetic and reconstructive surgical procedures of the American Society Plastic Surgeon at [http://www.plasticsurgery.org/Media/Press\\_Kits/Procedural\\_Statistics.html](http://www.plasticsurgery.org/Media/Press_Kits/Procedural_Statistics.html) (last access: April 2009). For an explanation of the procedures, see [http://www.plasticsurgery.org/patients\\_consumers/procedures/procedure-animations.cfm](http://www.plasticsurgery.org/patients_consumers/procedures/procedure-animations.cfm) (last access: April 2009).

styles- undergo more and more painful and dangerous cosmetic surgery operations.

Today, **vaginoplasty** – which includes interventions such as repairing the hymen, tightening the vagina, eliminating the clitoral hood (clitorodomy), and reducing the size of the labia – is done more and more for purely cosmetic reasons.<sup>143</sup> How different are the surgical alterations of genitalia carried out in western countries from ritual female genital cuttings? Why can western women get their cosmetic vaginoplasties while African women (or women of African descent) who live in western countries are prevented by law from ritually modifying their genitalia? What criteria does the law use to distinguish between “mutilated genitalia” and cosmetically modified genitalia?

We must remember that the European countries that prohibit ritual female genital cuttings give no indication regarding age, considering it to be irrelevant to distinguish between girls and women.<sup>144</sup> This implies that the consent of an adult woman does not affect the legal judgment of the act, or, to say it another way, that in western countries, any modification of the genitalia for non-therapeutic reasons is prohibited. However, if modifying female genitalia is prohibited for ritual reasons, this is not the case when the modifications are carried out for cosmetic reasons (Allotey et al., 2001: 198). The only difference seems to be that these cosmetic modifications are done to white women (read: autonomous) in clinics and hospitals in order to improve their physical aspect or sexual satisfaction, instead of celebrating a traditional ritual (with the women considered to be passive victims of the ritual).

Genital cosmetic surgery is not the only modification to which western women subject themselves. Even more frequent than genital cosmetic modifications are **silicone breast implants**. The reasons for undergoing this

143 Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation (LVR) is carried out to tighten the vagina and improve sexual satisfaction, while Laser Vaginoplasty is done to aesthetically modify the labia. Dr. Matlock is known the world over for carrying out vaginal rejuvenation, vaginoplasty, enlarging the G-spot, and lifting buttocks in the Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation Institute of Los Angeles. For the results of the procedures, see <http://www.drmatlock.com/gallery.htm> (last access: April 2009).

144 On the contrary, in the United States and Canada, ritual female genital cuttings are penalized only if they are practiced on girls who are minors. Section 268 of the Canadian criminal code says: “1) Every one commits an aggravated assault who wounds, maims, disfigures or endangers the life of the complainant. [...] 3) For greater certainty, in this section, “wounds” or “maims” includes to excise, infibulate or mutilate, in whole or in part, the labia majora, labia minora or clitoris of a person, except where [...] b) the person is at least 18 years of age and there is no resulting bodily harm.” Analogously, the United States Federal Act declares: “whoever knowingly circumcises, excises, or infibulates the whole or any part of the labia majora or labia minora or clitoris of another person who has not attained the age of 18 years shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than 5 years, or both.”

surgery seem to be the expectation of increased sex-appeal and a supposed resulting increase in self-esteem and in social recognition thanks to the new “regular” body. This, at least, is the product that plastic surgeons sell. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons has defined having small breasts as a serious disease that entails, for the patient, feelings of inadequacy, lack of self-confidence, and problems regarding the perception of one’s own femininity and welfare. The enormous persuasive power of plastic surgery derives from its position in the framework of medicine and its indisputable authority. From this power position, doctors define what pathology, disease, and deformity are, and they have given this “pathology” the name of micromasty. The therapy that has been discovered for it is a multimillion dollar business in the United States and in Europe (Coco, 1994: 104-110).<sup>145</sup> However, this “therapy” has short-term and long-term contraindications for health. The short-term complications are essentially those derived from any surgical operation, that is, hemorrhaging, infection, and bruising. While the long-term complications go from difficulty in detecting cancerous formations by breast screening, the formation of keloids, and capsular contractures (in nearly 60% of the patients), to zonal muscular atrophy, autoimmune disorders and loss of sensitivity in the nipples. In addition, deflation of the implant and silicone leaks that happen as time goes by require new surgery with the resulting related risks. With respect to the deflation of the implant, it also causes mental health problems (Ibid. 126). Despite all of these negative health consequences, breast implants are allowed in western societies, even in minors with the consent of only one parent.<sup>146</sup>

On the contrary, without any inquiry into real health damage, ritual female genital cuttings are all prosecuted as crimes. Carla Obermeyer (2005) points out that the activists who fight for the elimination of ritual female genital cuttings often share an attitude that assumes data as indisputable truths, when in fact these data are only rarely researched. Even in the absence of complications, ritual female genital cuttings are assumed to compromise women’s health. Of course, many medical studies indicate that the complications depend to a great extent on the inadequate sanitary conditions in which these

145 The cost of a breast implant is nearly \$4,000. See average costs for the operation in the “2008 Report of the 2007 Statistics National Clearinghouse of Plastic Surgery Statistics” at <http://www.plasticsurgery.org/media/statistics/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=23761> (last access: April 2009).

146 See [http://www.plasticsurgery.org/Media/Briefing\\_Papers/Plastic\\_Surgery\\_for\\_Teenagers.html](http://www.plasticsurgery.org/Media/Briefing_Papers/Plastic_Surgery_for_Teenagers.html) (last access: April 2009).

rituals are normally carried out. Therefore, the logical solution should be hospitalization. But activists strongly oppose the hospitalization of these practices in the name of the right to sexual satisfaction that circumcised women will supposedly lose forever.

Some studies show that even the women who have had the most drastic type of cutting, that is, infibulation, can have a satisfactory sexual life (Lightfoot-Klein, 1989, Obermeyer, 1999, and Gruenbaum, 2001). According to data gathered by Lucrezia Catania and Omar Abdulcadir Hussen (Catania and Abdulcadir, 2005: 168-183),<sup>147</sup> using the female sexual function index (Rosen et al., 2000) among infibulated women – with no health complications and with an emotionally satisfactory relationship with their partner- only 3.65% could not achieve an orgasm. On the contrary, it is interesting to note that female sexual dysfunction is a problem that affects up to 40% of women with intact genitalia in the United States (Rosen et al., 1993 and Laumann et al., 1999). In addition, William Master and Virginia Johnson explained that there is no way to distinguish, physiologically, between orgasms proceeding from stimulation of the clitoris and those proceeding from stimulation of nipples. (Masters et al., 1995: 84). It is significant that the loss of sensitivity in the nipples and the consequent obstacle to satisfactory sexual functioning in women that can be the result of silicone implants has not cause breast implants to be considered a mutilation, nor has it resulted in the prohibition of this surgical intervention.

Since both ritual female genital cuttings and breast implants involve health risks and problems for sexual functioning, it would seem that the reason for only prohibiting ritual female genital cuttings would be their supposedly patriarchal nature. Of course, it has been strongly declared that ritual female genital cuttings are without a doubt linked to men's desire to control women's sexuality because they shape the female body and the female sexual attitude. There is a widespread conviction that the eradication of ritual female genital cuttings constitutes a fundamental step to liberating African women from patriarchy (Nussbaum, 1999).<sup>148</sup> This argument would be decisive if patriarchal nature did not also condition breast implants and cosmetic vaginoplasties. As Linda Coco (1994) argues powerfully, breast implants also aspire to rewrite

<sup>147</sup> See also Okonofua et al., 2002.

<sup>148</sup> Martha Nussbaum compares ritual female genital cuttings to western diets due to their health complications and the social forces that model the preferences of choice. However, here we have also shown that there are many corporal modifications that are more serious than diets that western women submit to in order to adapt to the female ideal defined by patriarchy.

the geography of the body according to a particular ideal of femininity and of psycho-relational health. What is more, breast implants, just like cosmetic vaginoplasty, reveal women's interiorized desire to satisfy the ideal image created by men's sexual fantasies.

The patriarchal structure implicit in breast implants and in cosmetic vaginoplasty does not, however, seem to constitute enough of a motive for western lawmakers to prohibit these surgical operations. No matter how their preferences have been formed, the women who ask for this type of surgery are considered to be autonomous and free. It would no doubt be an extremely paternalistic invasion to evaluate –if it were possible- how an adult woman's consent and preferences have been shaped. However, the purpose here is not to define whether certain surgical operations are medically appropriate or if they should be allowed, but to point out that completely different parameters are used when it comes to evaluating ritual female genital cuttings, cosmetic vaginoplasty, and silicone breast implants, (Coco, 1994, Sheldon and Wilkinson, 1998, Chase 2002, Chambers, 2004, and Ehrenreich and Barr, 2005). Thus, in the framework of today's laws, consent is sufficient to carry out any modification of the body, except for ritual female genital cuttings. In this way, migrant women are considered as minors incapable of autonomous decisions, from a legal point of view. This incoherence clearly reveals the ethnocentric perspective with which the Other continues to be judged, as incapable of self-government, victim of a retrograde culture, and needing to be liberated by western civilization.

## THE CASE OF INTERSEXUAL SURGERY FOR UNDERSTANDING CONCEPTS OF HEALTH AND DISEASE AS "CONTROLLING PROCESSES"

*What we see depends on what we know, and what we know depends to a great extent on how knowledge or learning is produced and by whom, when, and how it is filtered by experience.*

(Nader, 1994: 3)

Ritual female genital cuttings are understood by the groups who practice them through social roles, gender relations, and the construction of the ethnic identity in which they are rooted. Therefore, the attempt to approach these practices using only medical categories that are supposedly neutral means

making all the socio-relational aspects invisible, as if they were accessories. This approach also fails to understand that western medical categories are also culturally determined (Favretto and Mascherpa, 1994: 164). As Laura Nader (1994: 1) shows us, paying attention to the “controlling processes” allows us to recognize the mechanisms by means of which individuals and groups are influenced, persuaded to participate in their own domination and, thus, controlled. The analysis of controlling processes allows us to recognize how dogmas are created and work, revealing the historical *situationality*, the mechanisms of production, and the hegemonic force of cultural meanings. The application of the “controlling processes” concept to the health/sickness binomial in relation to ritual, cosmetic, or therapeutic body modifications offers an interesting vision of the normative power of medicine. In this section, I will analyze intersexual surgery as a paradigmatic case.

By intersexual surgery, we mean the surgical reassignment of sex in children with anomalous genitalia. Nancy Ehrenreich and Mark Barr (2005) inform that when a boy is born with a penis that is too small, the doctors suggest surgically transforming him into a woman, despite correct testicular function. And vice versa, they suggest that a girl who is born with a clitoris that is too big be surgically transformed into a boy, even though the penis will never be functional.<sup>149</sup> The elimination of anomalous genital organs involves as a “side effect” the loss of reproductive capacity and of the possibility of obtaining sexual satisfaction, but this is considered less important, medically, than having apparently normal genitalia.

Intersexual surgery is carried out on ambiguous genitalia in order to adjust them to social expectations and avoid psycho-social trauma, shame, and emotional disorders for the children and their parents. Doctors explain that it is best to carry out these operations during the first three months of life. However, parents are not provided with appropriate information that would allow them to give free, informed consent (Beh and Diamond, 2000). In addition, Suzanne Kessler (1998: 53) comments that, despite the thousands of operations carried out every year, doctors do not do any follow-up analysis of

149 In 1967, in a United States hospital, a boy's penis was accidentally burned due to the malfunction of a machine used for circumcision. Dr. John Money at Johns Hopkins Hospital suggested surgically transforming him into a girl. For 25 years, the case, known as John/Joan, was considered a medical triumph and thousands of “infantile sexual reassignments” were carried out following this example. 30 years later, the boy who grew up as a girl told the truth: he had never really felt like a girl and, when he was older, he underwent another operation to change his sex and took the name David. In 2004, David Reimer committed suicide. See Colapinto, 2000.

the long-term results of operations that are apparently properly done. Only recently have empirical studies of the *Intersexual Society of North America* (ISNA) indicated that breast-feeding babies who have undergone normalization by genital surgery often experience problems and psychological trauma, going from serious depression to suicidal tendencies.<sup>150</sup> Even though it is a medically unnecessary operation that causes serious physical and psychological results, intersexual surgery is carried out frequently and legally.

I think it is interesting to pay attention to this kind of surgery in order to reconsider the fight strategy adopted in western countries against ritual female genital cuttings. The main difference is that ritual female genital cuttings modify a healthy part of the body, while intersexual surgery attempts to repair or correct a disability. However, by transforming, because of their abnormal size, functional genitalia into non-fertile, non-sensitive sexual organs, doctors are creating the intersexual conditions that they are attempting to cure (Ehrenreich and Barr, 2005: 109).

Even though the deformity of the intersexual genitalia would be unchangeable if not for medical interference, doctors do not consider it to be natural. In contrast, they think and talk about the surgical/hormonal alteration of these deformities as natural, because this intervention returns the body to “what it should have been” if events had taken their natural course. What is not normative is made normative and the normative state is considered natural. (Kessler, 1990: 24)

The normative value of the health/sickness bipolarity is closely linked to the strategy of legitimizing or stigmatizing a practice. Intersexual surgery, on one hand, and ritual female genital cuttings, on the other, are eloquent cases of the different models that operate when we consider health, bodily functioning, and physical integrity. From this perspective, we can understand how it is that the interpretation of pathological situations and illness belong not only to the doctors, but are a social act that follows different models for interpreting biological facts. These models are normatively effective insofar as they justify a social order that distinguishes what is “normal” from what is “pathological” (Foucault, 1973).

150 See Intersex Society of North America at [www.isna.org](http://www.isna.org) (last access: April 2009).

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of ritual female genital cuttings, together with male circumcision, Victorian clitoridectomy, vaginoplasty, breast implants, and intersexual surgery show that completely different parameters are used to interpret “biological facts.” The anthropological examination carried out up to this point has allowed us to comprehend that ritual female genital cuttings constitute a complex set of meanings that are deeply rooted in culture and subject to the changes of different political moments and socio-cultural contexts. Understanding cultural practices as places of multiple possibilities, where individuals and groups actively and strategically invent these practices and reinvent themselves, has opened up a new perspective on genital cuttings as a claim to cultural identity. However, western lawmakers ignore all of this and attempt to construct policies to protect universal human rights that cut across cultural differences without taking into account the particular, contextual declension of these rights. This attitude reveals, once again, the ethnocentric perspective in which western countries frame their policies of cultural integration, considering the Other as underdeveloped, retrograde, and uncivilized in a way that reminds us strongly of the colonialist attitude. Adult migrant women from countries where ritual cuttings are practiced are and should be considered capable of making free, autonomous choices, just like western women who choose to have a breast implant or a cosmetic vaginoplasty (Friedman, 2003).

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