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Three Miles Apart ... and Beyond: School Inequalities in Dublin 15

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SUMMARY

The Celtic Tiger boom increased the availability of new jobs and generated large-scale immigration; the economic downturn saw amplified concerns over the place of migrants within Irish society. Nonetheless, Ireland is today a multicultural country. In this situation of rapid societal change, schools are key sites of research both for reflecting on wider social issues and for their potential to shape future citizens.

   This ethnographic research, carried out in 2010-2011, looks at how two secondary schools deal with increasing numbers of international students. Both located in Dublin 15, the area with the highest percentage of migrants in Ireland, and located only three miles apart from each other, the two schools illustrate the heterogeneity of wealth distribution within the district: Oaktree College is located within a middle-class neighbourhood, and Newtown School located in a disadvantaged and much poorer neighbourhood.

   My ethnographic material shows how the two schools' priorities, resulting from the diverse social backgrounds of the student populations, inform the allocation of resources for migrants' inclusion as well as the ways in which cultural differences are represented and valorised. These context-specific processes of accommodation contrast with national policy on inclusion as well as with the (decreasing) funding allocated for this purpose, both of which downplay the schools' diverse social backgrounds, with the paradoxical result that schools *less* in need of support, like Oaktree College, end up collecting *more* funding and resources. This *laissez-faire* interculturalism exemplifies an increasing marketisation of education at work in Irish schools – which is also an international trend – where not only do schools do not receive adequate resources and support to realise meaningful forms of intercultural education, but state-promoted interculturalism comes to be nested (with a risk of increasing) within pre-existing social inequalities. Within this 'corporate multiculturalism', a superficial celebration of diversity is privileged over social justice. From this point of view, intercultural education can be framed within wider scholarly research characterising multiculturalism as an ideology of current global capitalism.

   However, the many international students' voices collected in my work, those key actors generally absent from policy documents, challenge the prevailing ideas of 'integration' as necessarily coinciding with educational success, thus prompting the distinction between multiculturalism as policy and multiculturalism as reality, where inclusion is not 'normalisation' to middle class standards but integration within the existing social stratification.

DECLARATION

I hereby state that this dissertation has not been submitted in part or in whole to any other institution and is, except where otherwise stated, the original work of the author.

Signed ------------------------------

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Equality and classlessness are strongly defended ideals in Ballybran, but the children of teachers rarely play with the children of shopkeepers, and the children of shopkeepers even more rarely with the children of farmers, and almost no one plays with the children of shepherds.
-- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics,* 2001

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

CSO: Central Statistics Office

CSPE: Civic, Social and Political Education

D 15: Dublin 15

DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

DEJLR: Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

DES: Department of Education and Skills

EAL: English as additional language

ED: Elector Division

ELSTA: English Language Support Association

ESOL: English as a Second Language

ESRI: Economic and Social Research Institute

IES: Intercultural Education Strategy

ISA: Ideological State Apparatus

KET: Key English Test

LCA: Leaving Certificate Applied

NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NCE: National Commission on Education

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PA: Parents Association

PLC course: Post Leaving Certificate course

PET: Preliminary English Test

RAPID: Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development

RSA: Repressive State Apparatus

SEN: Special Educational Needs

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

TY: Transition Year

UNCERD: United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Introduction: Three Miles Apart ... and Beyond

This thesis is the result of more than one full year of ethnographic fieldwork in two secondary schools located in the Dublin 15 area during the period 2010 to 2011. These were years when Ireland was going through a dramatic crisis that interrupted a decade (1995-2005) of unprecedented economic growth, the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' boom.[i] The number of jobs available during the economic boom was so high that in 2000, for the first time in Irish history, immigrants outnumbered emigrants (CSO 2012). Employment conditions were especially buoyant in the tertiary sector, and especially in the information technology sector, and immigrants coming to Ireland were generally highly educated: in 2011, while 45 per cent of 'non-Irish nationals' held a third-level degree only 32 per cent of Irish nationals held one (McGinnity et al., 2011). There are many aspects, therefore, which make Ireland a unique case in the analysis of migratory trends in the EU: the long tradition of emigration, a sudden economic prosperity accompanied by large-scale immigration, followed by a dramatic downturn, as well as a relatively select type of migrant.

From boom to bust, migration-related issues started to claim a central place in public debates, in the media, in policy, and in scholarly research. Was Ireland 'ready' to be a multicultural country? How was its colonial past and long history of emigration going to manifest itself in integration policies and migration laws? Doubts about whether Ireland was still the 'country of a thousand welcomes' arose in 2004, when in a Citizenship Referendum 79.2 per cent of the electorate voted in favour of a birthright shift from *jus solis* to a more *jus sanguinis*-based legal framework. The

success of the referendum also reflected mounting concerns over the dramatic increase in asylum claims during the boom years.

This is one of the paradoxes of the contemporary globalised world. During the economic boom, Ireland was listed amongst the most flourishing economies, opening its borders to both international investments and to a foreign workforce to fill the employment needs generated by the market, while at the same time reinforcing its status as a 'gated community' within a global market. These two apparently opposing forces, however, are not in contradiction:

> The state defines and enforces inclusion and exclusion within national territories, constructing and enforcing the conditions in which the Majority World enters the privileged space of the First World. […] Here we begin to look at the synergy between these apparently contradictory tendencies, the one towards a strong, repressive racial state, the other towards a globalised transnational world which transcends state boundaries and undermines the power of states to intervene in and control both external and internal processes (Lentin and McVeigh, 2006:4).

With the economic downturn, Ireland once again became a country of net emigration (CSO 2012). Both Irish and 'non-nationals' emigrated in large numbers. Nonetheless, the majority of migrants and their families remained: despite the crisis, Ireland was unquestionably a multicultural country. In this context, school soon became identified by scholars as an important site of epochal transformation, a site of problematisation, of uncertainty, but also of hopes for the future.

There is a scholarly tradition of school-based research in Ireland but this is generally quantitative and even amongst the qualitative ones ethnography has a very limited space (see, for example, Devine 2005; Devine, Kenny & Mac Neely 2004). My research is an attempt to provide a partial yet detailed picture of how two different kinds of school face the challenge of the increasing numbers of international students.

I choose to look at the two schools' intercultural strategies initially through the lens of social class, because soon after the beginning of my fieldwork I realised that the substantive differences in the two schools' strategies and in the resources put in place to integrate international students was much influenced by local factors such as neighbourhood, funding available, and the two schools' very different priorities.

Ethnographically speaking, social class remains an inescapable issue: the different levels of wealth and family background, as well as broader socio-economic differences, together with the common-sense perspectives of people themselves, all need to be discussed in the light of their social class. But what is class? The term, of course, has been used as a flexible tool in social sciences. Classic Marxist frameworks identified social classes in terms of ownership of the means of production (this reflecting the wider and perennial division between oppressor and oppressed), and defined history as a struggle between different classes but didn't explain the ways in which this structure was maintained. Later approaches put more emphasis on the ideological dimensions of class. Louis Althusser, for instance, focused on the conditions of reproduction of every social formation, and in particular the school as a system reproducing submission to an established order. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu focused on how individuals distinguish themselves not only by their material wealth but also by their tastes, behaviours, and different ways of speaking. This, again, varies according to social class: and even in this case schooling plays a key role in perpetuating inequalities.

This research, moreover, is interested in international students and therefore in issues of ethnicity and 'race'. It will be therefore necessary to look at the connections between 'race' and class rather than simply preface one over the other. In his lectures on war, 'race' and bio-power at the Collège de France, published in English as *Society*

Must be Defended (2003), Michel Foucault problematised the assumed distinction between race and class. Foucault meticulously uncovers the counter-history of the wars between races (denoting 'people') in post-Roman Europe. Modern racism is taken to rest upon this older history, but it gains specificity especially through its connections with evolutionism. Modern racism, linked with the rise of nations and nationalism, is a discourse on the purity of the 'race' and its defence against enemies, not an underlying condition of society but an evolutionary struggle to protect the 'race' itself (Foucault 2003:80). But Foucault also notes the relationships between 'class', 'race' and 'people'. The resemblance between class struggle, often a struggle for purity, and racial struggles are striking. The connections he argues are located in the politicization of population – the forms of bio-power that administers life, regulates the population, and engages in complex processes of calculation within and well beyond the state, and in the processes of calculation that separate, evaluate, and govern life itself.

I am not going to retrace these philosophical debates in this thesis, though I do spend time discussing race and class, ideology and the more Foucauldian concept of discourse. Rather, for now, I want to simply state that I will explore class as an ethnographic category but in an open and nuanced way that does not adhere closely to classical Marxist frameworks. Following Pierre Bourdieu, I am cautious of the theory of class in that it might be a category produced by theory rather than analysed by it (Bourdieu, 1991:134). Rather than reifying class, I am conscious that it is there and spoken about, and may share elements with 'race' historically, but class distinctions and racialisation processes are also different today. I am interested in how international students and their schools are experienced and governed by policies that create different priorities, school opportunities available to all students, but most

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importantly for those with special educational needs. Throughout this thesis, therefore, I will analyse the measures taken to support international students by a disadvantaged and a middle-class school, starting with linguistic support. It is important to stress that these measures go much further than linguistic support and include the whole intercultural policy articulating the discourse of cultural diversity within these different yet so close contexts. Most importantly, doing ethnography means to describe the day-to-day relations happening within these contexts.

Since the beginning, Irish policies have tended to frame integration as a two-way process of mutual accommodation. However, many commentators describe this position as basically hiding a *laissez faire* attitude. It is worth asking, then, what the 'two way process' mantra is meant to signify in general terms and more specifically in the educational context. Later on, I will deal specifically with the ideological nature of these debates and terminologies, which Gavan Titley and Alana Lentin refer to as the 'recited truths' (2011:23), and Ghassen Hage as 'debates as rituals' over multiculturalism (Hage, 1998:233). And I will suggest both the fruitful aspects of recognising ideology and the limitations of ideology as an analytical frame for complex everyday experiences, going on to propose a newer perspective.

This is not to deny that significant measures have been taken to support international students. The DES (Department of Education and Skills) disbursed €85 million for the academic year 2010/2011 for English as Additional Language teachers (McGinnity et al., 2011:25). Few believe, however, that enough is being done in the realm of intercultural education, teachers' training, or to rethink the curriculum from a less Irish-centric perspective. For all this, as well as for the quality and quantity of linguistic support, schools were left alone in a perfect instance of *laissez faire,* where each school becomes a case study *per se.* Indeed, while policy documents as well as

quantitative scholarly research tend to give a heterogeneous picture of the educational system, ethnography, with its focus on local articulations and situated experiences, is in a privileged position to look at how different realities face the same challenge.

The demographic changes of the last decades forced the whole Irish school to rethink its history. The starting point for this reflection is that since its foundations the values and principles of the Irish educational system and curricula were influenced by its colonial past.

The history of the Irish educational system from 'cultural revival' to 'market philosophy'

If one wants to understand how Irish schools are dealing with cultural diversity today it is necessary to take a step back and to look at the history of the educational system and to the political and historical factors that influenced the making of the school curriculum. Curriculum and teaching practices are never random activities but reflect deep processes, such as the social configuration of the idea of the individual, belonging to the nation-state and the construction of a national identity. Historical perspectives on the origins of the Irish educational system and curriculum, together with more recent school policy on integration have contributed, in Pierre Bourdieu's words, to form a *habitus*, or 'systems of durable and transmissible dispositions' (1995:72) in teachers' actions and in their conceptualisation of who and what is considered as 'different' from the 'norm'.

From this perspective, the Irish educational system is a perfect example on how a post-colonial country plans a new national identity, with the help of the school curricula. Michel Foucault is very insightful on this issue: he denies that concepts of truth or knowledge may be abstract entities. Instead of abstract entities, truth,

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according to Foucault, is a 'will to truth': a set of practices which distinguishes those statements considered false from those considered as true:

> Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980:131).

As an institution, the school therefore has an enormous power over the kinds of citizens it will produce. The history of the Irish educational system, therefore, needs to be analysed with a critical lens. The national school system, founded in 1831 during the era of British rule, had a primary focus on 'civilizing' and indoctrinating the population (Devine, 1999). With the advent of the Free State, the Irish curriculum had a shift from a more child-centred program to a conceptualisation of children as a *tabula rasa* to be moulded in the image of nationalistic ideologies. In this regard, during the '20s, education in Ireland played an important role in the 'cultural revival' of the State. The result was an aggressive 'greening' of the curriculum, underpinned by nationalist and Catholic ideologies as well with the teaching of Gaelic traditions (Nowlan, 2008).

The post-Independence curriculum in Ireland has been characterised by the ideology of 'cultural nationalism'. Irish language and Gaelic culture teaching, which were restricted topics during colonial rule, were deemed to be the pillars of the new, post-Independence Irish schools, whose main duty was 'to inculcate national pride and self-respect' in the population (Clancy, 1995:473-474). This nationalistic attitude was located in the context of an educational system relying almost exclusively, at

least for primary and secondary levels, on religious denominations that owned the vast majority of schools.

The 1960s, however, saw a shift in the Irish explicit and hidden curriculum from a more national-moralistic one to a more instrumental one. In 1966, *Investment in Education*, a research document funded by both the Irish Government and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was published. This document had the purpose to provide feedback on how to re-orientate education in view of economic development. The Irish education system from that moment underwent dramatic change: the document stressed that the education system had to be reorganised to meet the needs of the jobs market. This process characterises not only Ireland, of course, but also the majority of post-industrial economies. I will discuss the development of the 'marketisation' of education and more specifically of the curriculum in Chapter 2. In 1992, the Green Paper on Education criticised the 'overemphasis on utilitarian and individualistic values, its overstress on enterprise, technology and economic concerns and its under-emphasis on cultural, moral artistic and civic elements' (Report on the National Education Convention, 1994:149 in Clancy, 1995:479), the school curricula, remains to this day understood as instrumental to the market economy.

A perfect example of this 'market philosophy' at work even among Irish scholars is provided by Sheelagh Drudy who in 2001, that is at the height of the Celtic Tiger years, framed the causes of the increased levels of dropouts from the Senior Cycle solely in economic terms: 'In the last few years, as employment has expanded, pressures of a different kind have arisen in schools. The growth in the services and construction sectors, and the ready availability of part-time work has created difficulties in many schools. There is an increase in school dropout from the senior

cycle in some schools' (Drudy, 2001:6). Interestingly, Drudy framed in economic

terms also the consequences of school dropouts:

> The implications of a reduction in senior cycle completion rates are also potentially serious. Ireland has tended to try to attract foreign investment on the basis, *inter alia,* of a highly educated workforce. In the context of our dependence on multi-national investment for economic growth, a reduction in senior cycle completion rates could be negative. (...) Thus, what happens in the classroom is intimately bound up with movements of global capital (2001: 7).

This last sentence is particularly relevant as what happens in the classroom

seems to be framed as relevant for the global economy in that it has to serve the

global market by 'producing' the kinds of workers required in a particular time and

place. School dropouts are not explained in terms of social inequalities but by

variables unfavourable for the job market.

The shift towards a curriculum that is more instrumental to the economy,

however, has not cancelled the original nationalistic spirit from the Irish curriculum.

According to Emer Nowlan (2008), the approach of Irish schools towards diversity

reflects even nowadays a nationalistic culture, with a hegemonic role for the Roman

Catholic Church, and with an approach to cultural diversity that despite an

intercultural facade continues to be in fact assimilationist. O'Connor and Faas (2012),

in a recent review of the Irish civic education curricula, stress how this should at least

in theory focus on 'universal values' instead of stressing difference. This model of

citizenship, which the authors define 'post national', can indeed generate exclusions

by framing 'normality' with reference to European values.

Before starting to introduce the ethnographic material, a brief note on ethics is

necessary. In this thesis I have preserved people's privacy by using pseudonyms. I

have also changed the two schools' names, while the fieldwork location, Dublin 15, is

the actual one. Researching in a school implies a particular carefulness in relating with the informants, the majority of them being minors. Therefore, after having gained access to the two schools, I have also collected informed consent from parents of all students I have observed in classroom as well as those I have interviewed.

Graduating at Newtown Community School: 'Believe a change is possible'

In June 2011, when my doctoral fieldwork was nearing completion, both principals of the two secondary schools where my research was based invited me to the graduation ceremonies for the students who just completed their Leaving Certificate exams. I was aware that this was probably the last chance to see a special celebration in each school and I was eager to observe how the same ceremony was organised in these two very different contexts.

My fieldwork in Dublin 15 started more than one year before this when I chose two schools in the area with the intention to explore how those schools reacted to the 'demographic challenge' happening in Irish society. The Dublin 15 area soon emerged as the best location for my research as one of the areas with the highest concentration of migrants in the whole island. More than any other region, Dublin 15 represented the effects of the economic boom at its highest intensity. Located in the North-West periphery of Dublin, the area not only has the highest percentage of migrants in the whole country but also very high numbers of young people (Ryan, 2012:11). During the economic boom the area underwent dramatic urban expansion: employment increased rapidly and it became the fastest growing area in Ireland. Despite this, Dublin 15 has a heterogeneous distribution of wealth, with high discontinuities even within confining Electoral Divisions.

The location of this area for my fieldwork therefore was not casual. Dublin 15's recent and dramatic changes in terms of urban landscape and human density constitute the perfect setting for a research focusing on the intersection between ethnicity and social class. All this, however, is abstracting from the happy atmospheres of the two graduation ceremonies I was invited to. The celebrations represented for me the perfect *finale* of my fieldwork in Dublin 15.

The graduation day at Newtown Community School was held within the school. For the occasion the main hall was cleaned and decorated with flowers, and the students' best drawings and other artistic work realised during the school year were showcased in the hall. Students' chairs were taken from the classrooms to be used by parents and arranged in the hall in front of the speakers' table, which was on the same level as the chairs. The atmosphere, despite a touch of solemnity (all teachers and graduating students taking part in the ceremony wore the traditional black gown), was informal and friendly.

The official ceremony started with the students of the four 6th-Year classes graduating entering in the hall, each preceded by their tutors. Mrs Levine, the Principal, gave an opening speech in which she greeted the families and welcomed the new graduation classes. Her speech had as a central theme 'looking forward', and these words were repeated frequently during the whole ceremony. Indeed, the word 'success', together with 'believe', which was included in both songs at the beginning and in the end of the celebration, were recurrent words used during the entire celebration. Mrs Levine concluded her speech by stressing that at a recent conference the Minister of Education, Mr. Ruairi Quinn, addressed a group of school principals saying that education and a degree are the only things that are not subject to inflation

during these hard times, so they should be proud of what they had achieved and should continue studying.

After the speech, a small religious celebration took place. A Catholic priest gave a short address and a moment of prayer followed. The structure of the religious celebration did not acknowledge the fact that among the students and the public, a number of non-Christian people were very likely to be present: prayers, as well as readings had not only a Christian theme, but specifically a Catholic theme. However, the presence of cultural diversity was somehow celebrated (although still within a Catholic frame), when during the final prayer students and teachers addressed their wishes to God, and the public replied with the traditional 'Lord hear us'. On these occasions, a number of students from migrant backgrounds expressed their wishes in their original languages.

This kind of arrangement, although ostensibly inclusive in that students with different languages were all taking part in the prayer, showed a reality of little consideration for those students with a non-Christian religious background. This denominational prayer was not doing much to include those with a different religion or those with no religion at all. I will discuss these issues in the next chapters, attending especially to how much of the rhetoric of inclusion expressed in Irish policy papers revolves around the concept of 'integration as a two way process'. However, for now the implications for a multicultural school are obvious.

The 'special guest' of the celebration was Sarah, a Newtown's graduate of 2005 who was at the time studying English at Trinity College, Dublin and achieving very high grades. Sarah was introduced by Mrs. Levine with obvious pride and was celebrated as a symbol of success: 'Sarah is talking today to show you that everybody can do what she is doing', proclaimed the Principal, explaining how she

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gained access to University, how much she enjoyed college life, and discussing the importance of having a third-level degree today.

Newtown School is located in one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Dublin 15 and Blanchardstown area and is included in the Irish Department of Education and Skills DEIS scheme (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), a program that aims that '... the most disadvantaged schools benefit from a comprehensive package of support'.[ii] The school is also part of a national project in collaboration with Trinity College called 'Trinity Access Program', the main objective of which is 'to work in partnership across the education sector and with students, teachers, families, communities and businesses to widen access and participation at third-level of under-represented groups.'[iii]

It is understandable that Mrs. Levine was proud when introducing Sarah. However, despite her discourse stressed that everybody could achieve just like her, if just he or she 'believed', it is a matter of fact that the number of Newtown graduates going on third-level education was well below the national average. This is in line with recent research showing that educational success in Ireland remains heavily influenced by socio-economic factors, with students attending non-DEIS schools having more chances to complete their Leaving Certificate and having access to third-level education (Mc Coy and Byrne, 2011:147).

Mr. Dunne, a German and English teacher as well as and the graduates' Year Head, gave a very ironic and funny speech in which he welcomed with relief the news that these students were leaving the school: 'This is like a circle (drawing an imaginary circle with his arms between his place and the parent's places and having the students in the middle), you gave us your kids, we kept them, now please take them back and bring them away, and thank you!'.

Under their black tunic, all students looked very elegant: later that night they had a party in the nearby Radisson Hotel and they were all looking forward for it. All girls, except one or two, had on very high heels and miniskirts, and lot of makeup, and many of them were, in my eyes at least, a tad excessive in their style. Most of the boys were dressed in an elegant manner too, but nothing compared with the girls. The school choir sang a selection of songs; one of the most appreciated was Cindy Lauper's 'True Colours Shining'. While listening to the song, and getting more and more sad thinking that this was probably the last time I would see many of the students and teachers in the school, I thought how appropriate the song was for the people attending the ceremony and for the choir itself, where out of twelve singers, more than half were of African and Afro-Caribbean origins. Newtown, indeed, is a true multicultural school. Located in Dublin 15, the school had in 2010-2011 a 29 per cent population of international students (with this including students born abroad plus Irish-born from non Irish parents), well above the national average of about 7 per cent in Irish secondary schools (Smyth et al., 2009:XIV).

Recent research (see, for example, Darmody, Tyrell and Song, 2011) shows that in Ireland a majority of the newly arrived migrants tend to settle in urban and suburban areas where rents are cheaper and, thus, in the more disadvantaged ones like Newtown, whose school catchment area coincides with a poor neighbourhood where all the estates surrounding the school are composed of public housing projects. Moreover, the Newtown area was experiencing new challenges during the time of my fieldwork: as a consequence of the global economic crises, unemployment levels were increasing, together with the number of people living solely on state benefit. From their side, teachers in the school frequently referred to the area as 'rough', and mentioned the massive levels of drug dealing happening during the night on the

roads surrounding the school, and the high numbers of students' families taking an active part this trade, or experiencing problems with alcohol, and suffering poverty and social exclusion. Despite these problems teachers described the majority of the families in the area as 'good working class people who were doing fine' and trying to cope at their best with the challenges of the area and of the economic downturn.

All these problems, indeed, seemed far away on that cheerful evening. After the celebration, Ms Boyle, an older school assistant, served tea, coffee and biscuits in the corridor. No external catering service was provided: beverages and food were bought in the nearby Lidl supermarket and served in the same school-kitchen cups and dishes that are used every day by teachers during breaks – each of them was different in colour and shape. The atmosphere was informal and relaxed.

During the evening, I met many of the parents and students I had been in touch with during my research. There was lot of pride and happiness in most of them: most parents were taking pictures of their 'kids'; most people were smiling, including the teachers. For their part, students were looking anxious: many of them wanted the celebration to finish as soon as possible and were looking forward to the party.

The day after, back to normal school life and to my 'everyday fieldwork', teachers were talking about the graduation ceremony in the staff room. For most of them, as for me, it was a very pleasant evening. Mrs. Kerr, an Irish and mathematics teacher who I observed teaching over the course of several months, commented with her usual sarcastic tone, 'They were very nice, weren't they? If only they had studied …' This kind of sarcasm in the staff room was a constant reminder during all my fieldwork at Newtown of the fact that teachers considered the majority of the students in the school as not taking study seriously enough. Irony, that sometimes

also flowed into the mocking of the weakest students, was probably a self-defence mechanism enacted by a number of teachers, in particular the older ones, to cope with an environment that could sometimes be very challenging, with a neighbourhood that was very different to the ones in which they lived, and to a school that was not the kind of school that their own children were attending.

School-based ethnographies, indeed, are not new in documenting teachers 'practicing' humour in the staffroom as a means of defence against the harsh realities in the classroom (see, for example, Mac an Ghaill, 1988:52). Ethnographers frequently report reacting strongly and negatively to the ways teachers relate to their students and even in the very spatial organization of classrooms. Geoffrey Walford (2001), for example, recalls this feeling during his first two days of fieldwork in a primary school, when he was shocked by the way teachers communicated with students, and above all by the arbitrariness of the power that the teachers wielded over the students: a perfect example of what Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) would call the 'symbolic violence' of every pedagogic action. Walford argues that for this reason the first days of fieldwork are essential because in those moments researchers have a potentially higher ability to discuss what is considered to be 'normal' in a certain environment. Because the researcher is also under pressure to be accepted by the community, this period of 'cultural shock' is for Walford necessarily very brief (2001:59), and while researchers studying new cultures might experience longer periods of cultural shock, all ethnographers of schooling have been students themselves and many of them have been teachers as well. Walford noticed how his first and second day fieldwork notes are sharply different and this may be caused by the 'rapid re-acclimatization' to the school environment. Contrary to Walford, however, my period of 'cultural shock' was not brief. Quite the opposite: I felt

indignant about a number of teachers' statements until the very last day of my fieldwork (and beyond), and in particular Mr. Holmes, who I will introduce later below. However, especially during lunch conversations in the staff room, I always tried 'to push' him (and other teachers) to speak freely about students and I had the feeling that they always spoke with me as if I was another teacher.

While discussing how well organised the ceremony was with Mrs. Kerr, Mrs. Shane, a religion teacher, was collecting money. She came to our table and asked if we wanted to pay three Euros each for a raffle to win all the flowers that were bought by the school and exposed during the ceremony. Mrs Kerr gave her the coins while jokingly asking: 'Ok I'll give you the money, but what charity is it for?' 'It's for the Newtown Charity!' replied Mrs. Shane. All teachers in the staff room listening started laughing. 'Irony is at work again', I thought, while putting my €3 in the metal box.

Graduating at Oaktree Community College: 'Ready for the challenge'

The graduation day at Oaktree was organised in the same week as the one in Newtown, but luckily it was in a different day so that I was able to attend both ceremonies. The graduation was held, as usual, in a four-star hotel whose conference and coffee rooms were rented for this purpose. A couple of days before the ceremony, Mrs. Hanley, the Assistant Principal and Language Support Coordinator who was also an important research participant in the school, reminded me that I was invited and that the hotel had a dress code: this kind reminder immediately gave me the feeling of how seriously the school took the ceremony. When I asked her why the College chose this location, she explained that the ceremony was held in the hotel

because the school canteen and gyms would not be big enough to host all the people invited. However, I always had the feeling that the real reason for this choice was more connected with prestige and image than with the availability of space. Mrs. Hanley and I arrived slightly after the beginning of the ceremony: the hotel was located in another county and kilometres away from the school, and while attempting to reach the location we got completely lost in the Irish countryside.

Getting lost with a key informant is, I believe, the dream of every ethnographer. As usual our conversation turned to school issues, and in particular to international students whose success she considered as a 'mission' to be completed before her forthcoming retirement. Miss Hanley defined herself as a 'radical' on many issues, and we often discussed her previous experience as a teacher in a disadvantaged school and how this compared to her current role of Assistant Principal at Oaktree. When we finally found the hotel, it turned out to be a huge, modern, and, at least in my eyes, kitsch building: a sort of 'cathedral in the desert' built during the golden Celtic Tiger years and standing quite oddly in the middle of nowhere. When we entered the hotel, I understood the reminder about the dress code ... and I felt inelegant compared to the others: the celebration was a very formal party indeed.

We entered the conference room, at one side of which was a big theatre-like stage. I was very impressed by how elegant and exited the teachers looked and immediately perceived how important this ceremony was for them, in particular for those more directly implied in it as the Year Head. Indeed, during the ceremony I was amazed by the number of female teachers I met in the hotel's toilets frantically refreshing their makeup, combing their hair and checking their dress at the mirrors. Image was important that evening.

The celebration started with a multi-religious prayer organised by Mrs. Kelly, the school's chaplain. This was a multi-religious celebration including Hindus prayers, readings from the Qur'an, and an address from a Catholic Priest. This kind of multi-faith celebration was not new to the school: months before I assisted with the 'Interfaith Day', where two students' mothers from Pakistan and Algeria read Hindu and Muslim prayers before a Catholic friar and a Church of Ireland minister gave short speeches drawing from passages of the Gospels.

Soon after the religious celebration, different Merit Awards were given to a number of students: 'Determination is what makes things possible', stressed Mr Johns, the Deputy Principal, 'Those prized are not those who are As or Bs but those whose teachers recognize that they did their very best – top grades are a reflection of the consistency of the efforts of the students'. These awards were not only prizes for high achievements but also for those who made a special contribution to college life and to the local community: a 5th year student for won the special 'Community Spirit Award' for raising €20,000 over a period of three years for a local charity. His Year Head praised him stressing his independence and responsibility while organizing the process. Later on, two graduating students gave long, emotional speeches about their experiences in the school. These students were selected from among the many Oaktree students who attended debating championships held in Ireland and abroad. The school's website showcases many current and past debating champions attending international competitions.

The predominant theme in the Year Head's and in the Principal's speeches was the challenges of growing up in today's world – stressing the fact that they were ready to face these challenges, to be successful people and to make a contribution to the world. The graduate's Year Head was overwhelmed by emotion and tears during

her speech, celebrating the efforts, the talent and the commitment of the class of 2011. This kind of speech, I realised immediately, revealed a profoundly different attitude towards students in comparison with Mr. Dunne's ironic address at Newtown, asking, mockingly, if parents would 'bring away the kids'? Irony was absent at the Oaktree graduation: the celebration was a joyful for all, but framed in a context of solemnity, where students were genuinely celebrated for their efforts and not mocked for what they didn't do. Later on, students presented gifts to the Year Head, the Deputies and the Principal. Every action on the 'stage' gave me the impression of following a precise scheme. I knew there had been rehearsals during the whole day so each 'actor' knew precisely what to do. And, as in Newtown, Oaktree's choir was truly multicultural. In 2011, 10 per cent of the students enrolled at Oaktree were 'International'.

The graduating students left the room guided by their tutors and accompanied by Queen's 'We are the Champions', and everybody clapped their hands. For the first time since the ceremony started I focused with attention on the public: parents and siblings were elegant, although not excessively so, visibly proud, although not too excited. Indeed, as my knowledge about the school suggested me, for the majority of parents this was only the first step in their kids' educational careers. The majority of Oaktree students will continue their studies on to third-level education after the Leaving Certificate.

After the end of the celebration, we all moved to a big coffee room where sandwiches, coffee and wine were served by the hotel's staff. Parents were taking pictures, and in a corner of the coffee room whose walls were specially covered in grey velvet for the purpose, the 'official' school photographer was taking pictures of the award winner students to later be hung on the walls of the school's corridors.

Later on, Mr. Oliver, the school principal, invited me to attend a dinner in the hotel's restaurant. All Oaktree teachers (more than one hundred) were also invited. While we were eating, Mrs Hanley explained me that the dinner, as with the whole graduation ceremony, was entirely paid for by the school's Parents' Association whose members were happy to fund these kind of events. Months before I had been invited to the school Staff Day, where, again, a three-course meal was offered by the Parents' Association and provided by a catering service and served within the school. Another male teacher sitting in the same table with us joined the conversation and stressed how these moments are very important for teachers as they contribute to build a good 'team spirit'. There was no doubt about that: the location, the quality of food, and the alcohol available freely contributed to a very enjoyable evening for everybody.

I am sure that Newtown's teachers are also aware of the importance of having a dinner together and 'team spirit'. They organised a dinner out in the local restaurant with a special arranged price of €45 per head. There is no Parents' Association at Newtown, and I am sure that the teachers in any case would never ask the school (or the 'Newtown Charity' as they sarcastically called it) to pay for their dinner out.

It is thanks to the collection of all these little details that I got a concrete measure of the differences between the two schools and I developed important insights to answer to my research questions, the most important being: how are the two schools coping with demographic challenges? How are cultural differences experienced in the two contexts? How are international students experiencing their school life at Newtown and Oaktree? To try to attempt an answer to these context-related questions it will, of course, be necessary to look at a much wider context, including Ireland's migration history and integration policies, as well as questioning

the nature of international and local debates and the politics of integration, multiculturalism and intercultural education.

Methodology and Research Questions

This thesis is the result of more than one year of ethnographic observations at Newtown School and Oaktree College. The two ethnographic vignettes about graduation ceremonies in these two schools give a flavour of two very different environments: the two schools do not have much in common beyond their location in the Dublin 15 area. The graduation ceremonies constitute the last pages of my field notes: a symbolic re-entering through the school doors starting from the last days and going back in my memories and in my field notes, ethnographically re-analysing what I learned and working conceptually to capture key patterns and experiences.

The fieldwork was developed between April 2010 and June 2011. During this period, I carried out ethnographic observations in the two schools, in the classrooms and during language support activities, sharing lunches with teachers in the staffroom, and attending special events such as graduation ceremonies, merit awards, intercultural festivals, and many other activities and celebrations. Later on during my fieldwork, I also interviewed students, teachers and parents, as well as people involved in different projects within the two areas. The names of the schools and people's names have been changed to preserve their privacy. Such a long period in the schools has contributed to what I consider to be a good knowledge of the schools' structures, in particular those aspects connected with language support and intercultural education.

The methodology used throughout my fieldwork was ethnographic. This

highly qualitative methodology requires long periods of immersion in the school and a deep knowledge of school rules and structures. The ethnographic method assumes that only through an almost daily relationship with the people researched, as well as a relationship of trust, important insights about other people's lives and experiences, that are otherwise impossible to gain, are revealed. Ethnography is frequently regarded by other social scientists as a time-consuming methodology, offering non-objective accounts of contextual situations and spaces. Marilyn Strathern stresses how the problem of 'scale' has always been a problematic one for anthropologists: a methodology based on people's accounts cannot but give partial accounts of the whole society (1995:15-16). It is (also) partly for this reason that until the 1960s anthropologists focused on so-called 'primitive societies', all the better if geographically isolated, and on much delineated fields, such as kinship. In the 1960s, when anthropologists started to focus on Western societies, ethnography as a methodology faced new and challenging issues concerning transferability, ethnocentrism, and scale. The impossibility of generalising and providing new statistical results which could easily bring 'solid data' to policy documents or make easy claims on the media, places our discipline in an awkward position compared to other social sciences. As a consequence, other methodologies providing quicker, quantitative and (apparently) more objective results are often privileged when research funding is limited. Nonetheless, anthropology has a lot to say about what happens inside schools and this is thanks to – and not despite – its method. Indeed, Pierre Bourdieu stresses how difficult settings, including schools, can be challenging to describe and think about and that it is necessary to replace simplistic accounts with 'complex and multilayered representation capable of articulating the same realities but in terms that are different and, sometimes, irreconcilable', thus considering the

multiple and even the competing points of view (Bourdieu, 1999:3).

I am conscious that every scientist – including social scientists – may be biased towards his or her methodology and therefore could be lead to think that it is the best way to analyze the topic of research, and I will conform to this trend. I do believe, indeed, that through ethnography the school both as an 'institution' and a place where different people meet every day is elicited in such a way as to allow insights that can hardly be given by other research methodologies – this will be, I hope, properly demonstrated in the subsequent chapters. Every school has its own 'micro-culture' that teachers and students frequently take for granted, and the ethnographer has the privileged role of being able to unveil this tacit knowledge. But this takes time.

From the institutional standpoint, only a time-consuming methodology such as ethnography can show the gaps between how an institution – in this case a school – introduces itself, its policies and rules, and what happens in real-life contexts. As Mr. Oliver, Oaktree's Principal, told me during a conversation in the corridors, 'Maura, one thing is our written policy, and the other is what happens in a corridor at 3pm on Friday. I would like to know this gap'.

For what concerns us here is human relations; and people take their own time to open themselves to foreigners, perhaps even more so if they are teenagers. Indeed, more than through interviews, I have been able to collect interesting life histories by 'hanging around' for months and letting people know that they could trust me. For these reasons ethnography is especially suited, I think, to capturing life in a school. Of course this doesn't mean that educational research is not in need of statistical surveys, but that these should be better understood if accompanied by highly qualitative material. Indeed, although ethnographies shouldn't aim for generalisation:

Ethnographic and qualitative studies can achieve 'transferability' (...). If the authors give full and detailed descriptions of the particular context studied, it is claimed that readers can make informed decisions about the applicability of the findings to their own or other situations (Walford, 2001:15).

But more precisely, ethnography is about the people concerned and the perspectives they offer. To once again quote Marilyn Strathern:

Social anthropologists route connections through persons. They attend to the relations of logic, of cause and effect, of class and category that people make between things; it also means that they attend to the relations of social life, to the roles and behaviour through which people connect themselves to one another. And habitually they bring these two domains of knowledge together, as when they talk about the relation between culture and society. … The tradition of fieldwork meant that anthropologists learnt about systems by entering into relationships with those whose social life they were studying (Strathern, 1995:11 and *passim*).

For Strathern, anthropological research is about studying relationships and by so doing understanding concrete patterns and abstract forms of sociality. The ethnographic lens, then, will always offer different perspectives and challenge common-sense conceptions of scale and complexity (see also Das, 2007:*passim*). In other words, ethnography remains one of the few methods that takes account, at least in theory, of the accounts of the people studied, and does this by slowly entering in the landscape studied. Only this process can lead to forms of understanding of how people experience things, which is not possible in other ways. Take for example, *Learning to Labour* (1977) and the long conversations of Paul Willis had with his 'lads' about delicate topics such as drugs or sex. In this ethnography, Willis recounts how a group of working class boys take an (apparently) active part in rejecting the rules and values of the school and how they inevitably end up reproducing the social inequalities that the school should at least in theory downplay. These boys would

arguably have never told Willis their secrets in a one-off interview. It is only after months that the lads started to trust the researcher. Another example of the specific advantages of ethnographic method for educational research is on the (unconscious or not) gender, ethnic and classist stereotypes that teachers may hold toward students, which can be uncovered only by observing teachers in action in classrooms and not by their verbal assumptions.

At the beginning of my research, my main objective was to look at the experiences of students with migrant backgrounds as they attended two schools in the Dublin 15 area. Soon after the beginning of my fieldwork, however, I realized that in order to understand how integration was experienced in the two schools, these experiences had to be contextualized in the neighbourhoods where the schools were located. Although 'integration' is an over-used word in the current debate on migration, this is often (and mistakenly) used as a 'white or black' word: one person is assumed to be either integrated or not, it would be more insightful questioning 'integrated to what?' and 'integrated where?' In the next chapters, indeed, I will stress that what is missing in the discourse on integration in Ireland, as well as in other countries of recent migration, is a debate on what 'integrated-ness is in social, political or economic terms' (Titley et al., 2009: 14).

The two schools where I carried out my ethnographic research reflect all the contradictions of the Dublin 15 area: even if only three miles apart from each other, they are located in very different neighbourhoods. Oaktree College is located in a predominately middle-class neighbourhood, while Newtown School is located in a much poorer area. What the two schools have in common is the increasing number of students with migrant backgrounds. Throughout this thesis I will refer to these students as 'international students' to avoid the negative connotations and

inexactness of colloquial expressions such as 'non-national', 'foreign' or 'immigrant'. This is a recent change in Irish schools: Ireland has experienced high numbers of migrants only in the past fifteen years, generally as a result of the 'Celtic Tiger' economic boom.

The main research question asks: how do Oaktree and Newtown, so close but also so different, adjust in the face of the increasing numbers of international students attending Irish schools? I am interested to see how cultural difference are represented and valorised in the two contexts, and what resources are deployed by the two schools to meet the linguistic support needs of a number of international students, as well as how the financial constraints imposed on all Irish schools during this moment of economic crises impacts on such measures. I am particularly interested to see if the two different social settings where the schools are located and the diverse social backgrounds of the student populations impact on how international students perceive their school experience and build a sense of integration in the school. This research, however, is primarily an ethnography of everyday life at school, and looks at classroom interactions in two schools among Irish and international students and their teachers, about how students build peer groups, and on how teachers relate with students, and talk about them in their absence.

At a wider level, I will question how the chances of success of international students may be constrained or enhanced by the kind of school they attend and by the neighbourhoods where they settle. Recent research in Ireland shows that the majority of migrants hold a high qualifications, although generally they employed in jobs of a lower level than they are qualified for and opt for cheaper housing options such as renting in poorer areas instead of buying house (Byrne et al., 2010). This means that

migrants' cultural and social capital, that is, their concrete and symbolic resources in terms of education and skills, but also in terms of social connections and expectations for the future, may be paradoxically devalued in the very same moment when they are making efforts to look for better life chances for themselves and for their children.

Moreover, by intersecting class and ethnicity, it is my intention to problematise prevailing ideas about 'integration' as necessarily connected with achievement and high grades. There is evidence that international students' performances at school are not always associated with higher level of acceptance by local students (Archer and Francis, 2005). Indeed, ethnographies of working-class youth counter-culture, such as Willis's pioneering *Learning to Labour* (1977), show how in a school where high achievements are not the priority for the students, adopting an attitude of resistance towards learning may turn into an advantage from the side of the social acceptance by the peer group.

Because I bring a comparative ethnographic perspective as an Italian educated in Italy, the UK and Ireland, I bring a sensibility attuned to matters such as the strong connection between choice of secondary school and the place where one resides available in Ireland. I have always been amazed to note how in Ireland (as well as in the UK) residency criteria dominate school selection, so much so that one could actually question how much space for choice is, in truth, offered when so often residency is the school's main criteria for the enrolling of students, who in turn find themselves closely linked with the school located in proximity to where they live. What are the implications for Irish and international students of residing in Newtown's and Oaktree's neighbourhoods and catchment areas? The first implication for the majority of students is that of attending their local school. And

this easy, taken-for-granted choice, in turn, may have consequences on their

education future and entire life.

The key themes of this thesis: social class and migration

While starting as an exploration of the integration of international students in Irish

schools, my doctoral research soon turned out to look at the intersection between

ethnicity and social class. Ethnicity and social class much debated issues within the

social sciences; therefore I will briefly introduce these topics. My reading during my

first months as a PhD student focused on critical theorists asserting the primacy of

'race' over any other identity marker (see, for examples, Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-

Billings 1998; Tylor, et al. 2009). The term 'race,' in the last decades especially, has

been hotly debated. From a biological point of view the term carries little analytical

weight on the basis that all humans share a relatively recent African common

ancestor and have not developed relevant and rooted biological and genetic

differences such that one could legitimately describe clear-cut 'races' (see, for

examples, Lewontin, 1982; Reynolds and Lieberman, 1996; Shea, 2011). From the

social sciences discourse, in particular in Europe, critical race theorists argue that the

term still has content in the form of its power as a social construct and signifier

(Ladson-Billings, 1998:8). This position is clear: race and racism continue to be

everyday expressions and social scientists should not ignore the impact of these

idioms just because they have been scientifically refuted.

Still, this thesis will use the term ethnicity as an analytic category to define

human differences. Ethnicity is currently used in the social sciences referring to a

mix of elements such as cultural traits, origins and phenotype characterising a certain

group. It is important to be aware that, as with 'race', the use of the term 'ethnicity' constitutes an over-simplification and brings in an element of fiction and construction which, to a certain degree, characterises all ethnographic works (Clifford, 1997:29).

After the first months of my fieldwork, however, my ideas and theoretical threads took an abrupt turn. Observing the organisation of the two schools, I started to realise that the future of these students, more than being influenced by their ethnic background, was connected to their families' social status and thus to the school they attended. While still focusing on the integration of the students with a migrant background and on what the two schools were doing to enhance it, social class become a key theme of my research and the frame to understand all the rest.

Again, one may borrow from Strathern (1995). Because ethnography routes connections through persons and attends to the relations of class and category prevailing in their worlds, I argue that 'race', racism, integration and the management of diversity in two Dublin schools is not understandable without foregrounding social class. Social class goes far in explain the relations of class and category in these schools. As with ethnicity, social class is a central theme in the social sciences. Sometimes used interchangeably with 'social status', the term is used to define a society's degree of stratification, which inevitably translates into social inequalities. Take the following illustrative explanation:

> A society is socially stratified when its members are divided into categories which are differentially powerful, esteemed, and rewarded. Such systems of collective social ranking vary widely in the ideologies which support them, in the distinctiveness, number, and size of the ranked categories, in the criteria by which inclusion in the categories is conferred and changed, in the symbols by which such inclusion is displayed and recognized, in the degree to which there is consensus upon or even awareness of the ranking system, its rationale, and the particular ranks assigned, in the rigidity of rank, in the

disparity in rewards of rank, and in the mechanisms employed to maintain or change the system (Berreman in Smith, 1984: 470).

I will focus specifically on social class in Chapter 2, where I will extensively discuss the connection between social class and education and the reproduction of social inequalities. In this thesis, I will discuss social class as conceptualised by Pierre Bourdieu, who described class as a system of objective determinations which are defined by a class *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990:85). Social class for Bourdieu goes beyond the distribution of labour and the ownership of the means of production, as in Marx, and of economic and political power, as in Weber. Bourdieu adds a symbolic element to social class – *habitus*, a learned and structuring attitude, which distinguishes individuals according to their education, wealth and profession. This focus on *habitus* constitutes an effort to find a balance between structural accounts depicting class as a fixed category and subjectivist accounts where individuals are totally responsible for their actions.

As habitus is a learned category, Bourdieu had a special interest in education (that from parents and even more so school) and in how social advantage is transmitted to the next generations. In the next chapters, therefore, I will start from this concept of class to show how advantage can also be transmitted by the kind of school attended.

The contribution of this thesis in the context of the anthropology of education

Ethnographies of education and in particular of schooling do not have a long tradition in Ireland, where research in and on schools has tended to be quantitative. Longitudinal observations in Irish schools are rare: from this point of view my

research brings fresh insights in new ways. In recent times, however, education research has experienced a qualitative, if not properly ethnographic, turn. Dympna Devine investigated how Irish schools responded to the demographic change and teacher and student representations of cultural diversity as well as exploring how state policies frame these representations (Devine, 2005; Devine, Kenny and MacNeely, 2004). Audrey Bryan, working within a critical race theory frame, problematises how the discourse underpinning intercultural education is a means to produce a new Irish identity and how this discourse is experienced in everyday school life (2009a, 2009b).

There is, however, wide international scholarly research in the field of the ethnography of schooling. This tradition started soon after WWII, when anthropologists, who were until then more interested in 'primitive tribes' started to look at the Western world, including its schools as places worth exploring with the ethnographic method: it was the beginning of urban anthropology. The '50s may indeed be described as a passage from the 'anthropology relevant to education to an anthropological research in schools' (Cherneff and Hochwald, 2006: xii). Since then, both the issues of ethnicity and of social class became key themes of the anthropology of education, although they have often been considered and analysed together.

From the point of view of social class, there is a wide international literature looking at the impacts of class on students' attitudes towards school and learning, and although there are documented cases of schools in deprived areas performing above the national average (see, for example, NCE, 1996), it is widely recognised that schools with poor intakes tend to reproduce disadvantage and shape future social positions. Scholarly literature had addressed this gap first as a 'deficit' (Jensen,

1969) then as a 'deprivation' (Bereiter and Engelmann, 1966) of disadvantaged families unable to provide their children with the kind of 'linguistic capital' required by the school environment. Deprivation theories are today generally rejected and a consistent part of recent works tend to stress the institutional responsibility of schools in the perpetuation of middle class values and linguistic codes. I will explore in detail this literature in Chapter 3, where I will also stress how the work of Pierre Bourdieu is a key starting point in the analysis of these themes.

Outside Ireland, a limited number of ethnographies explore how migrants fit in the educational context while at the same time considering their social class. Although focusing more on parenting practices than on school life, one the most insightful recent ethnographies looking at the intersection between class and ethnicity is Annette Lareau's 'Unequal Childhoods, Class, Race and Family Life' (2003). This work, heavily influenced by the theoretical insights of Bourdieu, explores the parenting practices in families with different social (middle class, working class and poor) and ethnic (black and white) backgrounds. According to Lareau (2003), poor and working class families have radical different rearing practices. Middle class parents follow a principle of 'concerted cultivation' while poor and working class follow an 'accomplished natural growth' ideal. Lareau concludes that despite ethnicity indeed playing a role in children's lives, white and black parents act in similar ways when it comes to how children spend their time, parents' uses of language and discipline, families' social connections; in many respects it is social class and not the colour of one's skin that suggests how parents raise their children (2003:240). Following Lareau, my research aims to dig at the same time into social class and ethnicity: the intersection between the two topics

remains under researched, in particular in Ireland. From this point of view this dissertation has the ambition to bring a new fresh perspective in the Irish context.

Outline of Chapters

This thesis will develop around six chapters. The first one, which is entitled 'Looking outside the school's walls: urban Landscapes in Dublin 15', will introduce the area where both schools are located. Using data from the last national census, it will be stressed how the area is heterogeneous from the point of view of wealth, educational levels and employment, and how the high numbers of migrants living in Dublin 15 have settled into these pre-existing features. I will also discuss from an historical point of view the process of suburbanisation of the Irish landscape, and how this has been since the beginning, framed in terms of wealth, that is 'different suburbs for different people'.

The second chapter, 'Social class and reproduction theories: an anthropological perspective' will provide a wide overview of social class from different theoretical perspectives. After having stressed that social class remains an important key to explain social inequalities, I will frame the debate on class in Ireland. I will then provide a summary of reproduction theories in classic theories, and in particular in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who will be a central theoretical reference for this thesis. Part of Bourdieu's work, indeed starting from *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), was especially concerned with how schools, under a facade of giving the same opportunities to every student, reproduce the dominant class advantages by valorising the kind of cultural capital that middle class children inherit from their families. Later on, I will

look at scholarly research analysing the intersection between social class and ethnicity and migrant's mobility in their host country. This last point is important in the discussion of how migrants into Ireland are folding into pre-existing social classes. The chapter will conclude discussing how in Ireland, as in most western countries, a process of 'marketisation of education' is transforming students into 'entrepreneurs' (Lolich, 2011). Schools, starting from the lower levels, are today more and more becoming a competitive market. Parents holding the cultural capital that enables them to be more aware of the functioning of his world have an important advantage from the start and they will transmit to their children. This confirms how even today in Ireland (as well as abroad) social class is always in the classroom.

The third chapter, 'Near but far away: a school day at Oaktree College and Newtown School' goes back to my ethnographic material and starts with the description of an ordinary day in the two schools. It will introduce the two schools' general organisation and policy, as well as how relations between teacher and students are organised. I hope I will bring enough ethnographic material to give the reader a real insight of how different the two schools are under most aspects. I will argue that the majority of these differences lie in the social background of the students attending school and their families: social class not only permeates teacher's representation of the students and their families, but also the school's ethos in general. School policy and teacher's expectations, heavily influenced by their own middle class stereotypes about what 'good parenting' and 'nice neighbourhoods' are, are also clearly deployed. These expectations, in turn, contribute to reinforce the objective limits and potential of students.

The fourth chapter, 'Different ways of feeling 'integrated': International students' voices' will analyse the ethnographic material concerning the measures that

the two schools have taken to include their international students. I will discuss the two school's language support (how it is organized, my interviews with ESOL teachers, fieldnotes), as well as the two schools' inclusion strategies. I will outline two emerging paradigms to look at cultural diversity, as well as two levels of priorities given to international students' issues within the school. These, again, are heavily influenced by the social backgrounds of the two schools' student populations. By framing Ireland's integration policy as characterised by a *laissez faire* approach, this chapter will show how this attitude extends to intercultural policy. Indeed, the comparison of the two schools' strategies to cope with the demographic changes will show that each school is much left alone, with the consequence that decisions concerning international students get folded into the school's different priorities.

The fifth chapter is entitled 'Different ways of feeling integrated: international students' voices'. Here I will bring in more ethnographic material concerning the biographies of a number of international students, and how they speak about their feeling of inclusion at school and outside. What will emerge is that there are many different ways of feeling integrated or non-integrated, and that integration should be analysed as completely untied from school performances. The theoretical central point of this chapter is Ghassen Hage's idea that integration can happen even despite policy because multiculturalism happens even when the state is not multiculturalist.

Starting from this assumption, the sixth chapter, the conclusions, entitled 'United colours of capitalism? Multiculturalism as ideology and multiculturalism as a reality' will frame multiculturalism as an ideological instrument of global capitalism and intercultural education as a product of this ideology. Here I will also

deploy some example of a radically different intercultural education as well as policy

measures that could be taken to reduce school inequalities.

Chapter 1

Looking Outside the School's Walls:

Urban Landscapes in Dublin 15

Little distances, big differences

The two graduation ceremonies I portrayed in the introduction had many aspects in common: elegant and smiling parents taking pictures, excited students happy to be at the centre of the attention for an evening; hopes, fears and expectations for the future. However, Newtown and Oaktree, both public secondary schools in the Dublin 15 area, are located in such different neighbourhoods that one could imagine their distance to be much wider than the three kilometres setting the two schools apart. The ways in which the two graduation ceremonies varied and the almost opposing approaches of teachers towards their graduating students are a perfect illustration of the differences between the two schools. These reflect, on a wider level, the discontinuities of urban spaces, where disadvantaged and poor areas, like that surrounding Newtown, coexist in close proximity with suburban middle-class estates, like the one where Oaktree is located. However, this is not the story of a ghetto located next to a rich neighbourhood, as Newtown school is not in a ghetto, and there are no physical walls dividing the two areas. But there are very real imaginary and symbolic walls between the square miles of public housing estates seamlessly massed together and, on the other side, expensive suburban estates just as seamlessly, although more elegantly, massed together. This is more the story of two schools, located in the same city and in the same postcode area, but differentiated by the

social fabric of the neighbourhoods where they are located. And, more importantly,

this is the account of the ways in which these two schools face their different

challenges and priorities, and in particular of how they deal with the increasing

number of international students.

Despite all the differences, one thing that the two ceremonies held in common

was the increasing numbers of international students in each school. This percentage

was represented in the two graduating classes as well as in the merit awards gained.

Indeed, the majority of teachers in both schools freely admitted that the number of

international students gaining awards or graduating at top levels was remarkably high

in comparison to their Irish peers. In both schools, indeed, there was a shared view

amongst teachers that 'internationals' generally behaved and performed better. It is

hard to say whether these views had a basis in fact or reflected a process of 'inverse

stereotyping,' or a mix between the two. In the next chapters, I will dig deeper into

these teachers' representations of (most) international students as the highly

motivated and hardest working students. In even greater detail, I will ask: what

vision of international students provided the conditions for the possibility of these

statements by teachers in the two schools? How are cultural differences experienced

in the two contexts? How does the different social fabric of the neighbourhoods

where the two schools are located influence (if it does) the school experiences of

international students?

The social background of the school plays a central role in the student's

school chances. It has an influence, for example, on the classification of student's

special needs, with DEIS (disadvantaged) schools more eager to classify students

with low achievements as having behavioural problems instead of a learning

disability (McCoy, Banks and Shevlin, 2012), and teachers working in disadvantaged

schools acting more as 'social workers,' vis-à-vis their students, often taking care of them and their pastoral needs more than challenging them to achieve academically (Darmanin, 2003).

A methodological implication is therefore that the situatedness of the ethnographic method should never correspond with a closure towards the world immediately 'outside' the fieldwork site. Before answering to the research questions, therefore, it is necessary to take a step back from the school walls and look at the area where Newtown and Oaktree are located: Dublin 15. It could seem naive, but it is important to stress that schools are not isolated from the local context, but, quite the opposite, they are the result of the interaction with the local community, and therefore any qualitative analysis of school life must contextualise the school within the local area.

Despite this, much scholarly research in the field of education and schooling is not paying enough attention to the historical, demographic and economic dynamics surrounding the school. Comparative studies between different schools are generally quick in labelling the neighbourhoods as 'working' or 'middle class' (and consequently their schools) without generally considering with more attention the social fabric of the surrounding neighbourhood. Living in a 'middle class neighbourhood', for instance, can be a very different experience in an urban or in a rural area, or in a low or a high density one. Conversely, simply labelling an area as 'working class' without discussing, for example, the unemployment rate, and the number of recently arrived migrants, or the house ownership rate, can produce important misrepresentations:

> Diverse class experiences derive from many factors, not the least of which is social geography, the ways in which a class self is shaped by the degree of

class and racial/ethnic homogeneity or diversity in one's community. Class is a relational identity, and we must always contextualize it in communities, for it is from communities that 'young people draw conclusions about what sort of people they are, what society has in store for them, and what they can therefore hope for' (Bettie, 2003:194).

This is not to say that there are not well-situated ethnographies of schooling taking into account school dynamics within the local area. An excellent example is *Educational Failure and Working Class White Children in Britain* (2006), wherein Gillian Evans recounts her experience of living in a popular estate in London and following young working class students both in their everyday lives at home and in the local primary school. Evans stresses how students' experiences at school should be framed within the peculiarity of a very specific white working class area, in this case Bermondsey:

> Nowadays, despite demographic disruption during and following World War II (...) those remaining ex-dockers and factory workers, their families and descendents, continue to imagine the community in terms of closely-knit ties of both residence and kinship criteria and what people refer to as being born-an-bred Bermondsey. The historical presence of fierce territorial rivalry between Bermondsey people and 'Roaders' who are white working class people living on the wrong side of the Old Kent and Walworth Roads, undermines any idea of a homogeneous white working class in London and reveals the overarching significance of Bermondsey people's sense of place (Evans, 2006:22).

Similarly, as I have stressed in the introduction, my research is an attempt to analyse how two different schools organise their activities and priorities *vis-à-vis* the social and economic background of their locations, and how these arrangements are reflected in the daily interactions between teachers and students. I will look with a peculiar eye to the arrangements and interactions concerning international students because I am particularly interested in looking at the two schools intercultural policies and the effects of these arrangements on the integration of international

students.

I will frame with more detail the actual debate around integration, with a specific focus on Ireland's integration policy in Chapter 4 and 5. What is important to stress here is that the analysis in much of the literature concerning integration in schools tends to downplay issues concerning social class, such as the cultural and social capital held by migrants as well as the kinds of neighbourhoods in which they reside, resulting in a very uncritical approach to the concept of integration. A typical example of this is provided by policies such as the Intercultural Education Strategy, which was drawn up by the Department of Education and Skills in conjunction with the Office of the Minister for Integration with the purpose of ensuring that, 'all students experience an education that respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership', (DES, 2010: executive summary). This policy paper completely overlooks the fact that schools with a different social class background might respond differently to the increasing number of international students, thus providing a homogenous, and idealistic (thus possibly false) portrait of the educational system.

This is a clear example of how an intercultural education policy document overlooks deeper social inequalities that manifested themselves in Irish social fabric prior to the arrival of migrants and are very likely to be reproduced if not amplified with the arrival of migrants, especially in the period of the current economic crises. Ronit Lentin and Robbie McVeigh, amongst the most radical voices in Ireland, assert that multiculturalism fails to address institutional racism and societal inequalities:

> Of course, it is important that we have different cultures on this island and that these are cherished; but, as an ideology of change, multiculturalism needs to be *repudiated*, not celebrated, nor quietly ignored. Because of their refusal to name and address state racism, these ideologies actually become racist

themselves. They function to disguise and protect the operation of state racism. From this perspective, multiracialism is a racism; interculturalism is a racism; good relations is a racism (2006:178).

On these same lines, Bryan Fanning stresses how in Ireland the emphasis on individual rights went together with little acknowledgment of structural inequalities or understandings of the existence of racism and has been framed in Catholic terms with a stress on friendliness and compassion (Fanning, 2002:178). What is at stake here is the ideological formation of a certain kind of subject: instead of learning how to fight for equal rights, we are all encouraged to assume social differences and racialisation can be countered by 'respect', 'tolerance' and a diversity of values.

Same postcode, different landscapes

During my fieldwork, I often walked along the route between Oaktree College and Newtown School, and what was most striking to me about these walks was the sudden change in the urban landscape between the two neighbourhoods. The two schools are located in the Dublin 15 area, and only three kilometres apart from each other; yet when walking from one neighbourhood to the other the distance seems far greater than this. The thirty-minute walk shifts briskly from a green and quiet middle-class area, where Oaktree College is located, to a liminal space with a busy national road sided first by a number of industrial buildings and then a public park. Only then does one end up in the much poorer neighbourhood where Newtown School is located. This area is composed predominantly of public housing, and the major local amenities include a massive, newly built shopping centre located next to the even newer Blanchardstown Public Library -- the 'biggest library in the country', as many of my research participants often proudly referred to it.

In *The Global City* (1991), Saskia Sassen points out how this kind of sharp

discontinuity, where middle-class areas coexist in proximity to disadvantaged

neighbourhoods is a common characteristic of many post-industrial, global cities

whose social geography is characterised by, 'High-income residential and

commercial gentrification, … and sharp increases in spatially concentrated poverty

and physical decay' (Sassen, 1991:250-251). Areas of concentrated poverty and

physical decay, to use Sassen's words, are obviously to be found in every city and at

every historical time. The sharp differences amongst confining poorer and richer

areas in the same city are even more striking when one goes beyond the

consideration of their geographic closeness and instead sees the spatial and symbolic

barriers that separate one from the other. These spatial and symbolic barriers often

facilitate misrepresentations among neighbours. A poignant example is provided by

Friedrich Engels's astonishment when touring the poorest areas of Manchester in the

mid-nineteenth century:

> The town itself is peculiarly built so that someone can live in it for years,
> travel into it and out of it daily, without ever coming into contact with the
> working class quarters or even with the workers. I have never come across to
> systematic a seclusion of the working class from the main street as in
> Manchester. I have never elsewhere seen *a concealment of such fine
> sensitivity* of everything that may offend the eyes and ears of the middle class
> (Engels, 1969, quoted in Bartley, 2003:145).

Describing post-industrial, post-modern cities, Brendan Bartley (2003) urges

us to recognise the connections between places and prosperity and points out that in

the western world economic restructuring in the last decades has caused high levels

of social polarisation and exclusion. While new kinds of jobs have been created,

providing new opportunities of employment and creating suburban wealthy

neighbourhoods, industries requiring unskilled and semi-skilled jobs have been

dislocated in developing countries with the result that today many European and North American cities provide a picture of increasing social polarisation, where rich neighbourhoods coexist with disadvantaged areas with high levels of unemployment and poverty (Bartley, 2003:131). This analysis is consistent with the urban contradictions I observed during my fieldwork in Dublin 15, and although Ireland can't be defined narrowly as a post-industrial country given its colonial past, the Celtic Tiger economic boom did impacted on the socio-geographic landscape of the Irish cities, where new and expensive middle-class developments were built not far away from much poorer public housing areas. The Dublin 15 area, as I have noted in the previous paragraphs, is also very diverse from the ethnic point of view. Its socio-economic and ethnic heterogeneity makes it a very unique case.

Planning Dublin 15

The Dublin 15 area underwent dramatic changes in recent times. While only three decades ago the majority of the area could be defined as countryside and hosted only 'a series of rural hamlets' (Mc Gorman and Sugrue, 2007:xiii), during the Celtic Tiger years Dublin 15 turned into one of the most rapidly expanding areas in Ireland. This process, however, has its roots before the economic boom. To understand how this relatively rapid process of transformation took place, it is necessary to look at the recent history of urban planning in Ireland, and in particular to those processes of urban planning concerning the suburbanisation of the inner city population.

Despite the many differences between suburbanization in Europe and in the US, Baldassarre's definition of American suburbs can be easily applied to the Irish context. Suburban communities are defined by Baldassarre as:

Municipalities and places in metropolitan areas outside of the political boundaries of the large central cities. Suburban communities differ from central cities in the presence of sprawling, low density land use, the absence of a central, downtown district, and the existence of a politically fragmented local government. They differ from rural areas in that the economic activities of suburban residents and businesses are primarily in manufacturing and services, rather than in agriculture (Baldassarre, 1992:476).

This suburban landscape in Dublin has its roots in the 1950s and 1960s, when the inner city of Dublin went through a process of urban regeneration. The process, however, should be more properly be defined as 'social engineering,' as this urban planning had a deep effect on the population. During these years, many eighteenth-century buildings in the city centre were destroyed and the people living there, generally belonging to the poorest classes, were abruptly moved into the suburbs, in particular in the North West periphery of the city, the only area able to guarantee enough space for massive suburban developments. This ambitious, yet very contested plan, named Myles Wright Strategy (1966-1986) after the English urban planner who realised the project, took as a model the experiment realized in the English city of Milton Keynes where in the 1960s a brand new city was planned and created with the aim of relieve London housing congestion, and some 250,000 people living in London were 'targeted' to create a brand new city, located fifty miles from London. With the same objectives in mind, the Myles Wright Strategy targeted people living in scattered houses in Dublin city centre and relocated them into the newly built 'edge cities' (or 'new towns') of Tallaght, Clondalkin and Blanchardstown, the latter being situated in the Dublin 15 area and of strategic interest for my research.

These new areas, located far away from the local railway lines, often failed to provide sufficient services for the new populations, especially in the area of public

transport provision. The planner's assumption was that each household would own a car and that a 'multifunctional' city centre was therefore not necessary to the community (Bartley, 2003:135-136). These assumptions, however, proved to be incorrect as the majority of the population living in the three centres at the time did not in fact have a car. This, together with the scarce provision of community services, and the fact that many of the kinship and social relations existing in their previous communities were suddenly severed, caused high degrees of isolation in many areas, in particular for those who were less advantaged. In a recent report about the history of the Greater Blanchardstown Area, Williams stresses how

> The planned towns (of the Miles Wright Report) never achieved self sufficiency (being too close to Dublin) and became peripheral, poorly planned suburbs. In many cases, large local authorities housing schemes in these locations became isolated enclaves of relative deprivation. (…) Blanchardstown waited until 1996 for its long planned Town Centre to open (Williams, 2004:10).

In *The Destruction of Dublin* (1985), Frank McDonald stresses how this kind of urban planning was generally driven by the interests of developers, while the Irish Government and local councils (which in Ireland have central responsibility for urban planning) were not able to provide adequate services to the population. The result was the transformation of Dublin 'from a small, compact high-density city into a large, sprawling, decentralised metropolis around a declining inner city' (Bartley, 2003: 135). The whole project was realised with a *laissez faire* market philosophy, with local authorities delegating most responsibility for the realisation of infrastructures to private developers (see MacLaran and Punch, 2004).

By the 1970s, Dublin city centre was in decline: the process of suburbanisation in fact did not concern only family households, but also companies

and institutions such as University College Dublin, which relocated in the suburbs (Corcoran et al., 2010:29). The Miles Wright Strategy and its effects constitute what could be named as Ireland's first major wave of suburbanisation. The second and more extensive wave came obviously in the 1990s as the result of the Celtic Tiger economic boom, which was responsible for an unprecedented change in the Irish landscape. The 'housing boom' running from the turn of the century until 2007 caused what Corcoran effectively defines as 'accelerated suburbanization'. As recently as in 2007, house building levels in Ireland were four times the European and seven times the UK average levels (Corcoran et al., 2010:26).

Planning Inequalities? Different Suburbs for different people

Contrary to the US, where suburbanization, at least until the 1960s, was considered as a predominately a white, middle-class phenomenon, suburbs in Europe took from the start a much more interclass profile, with different kinds of suburb created to host different kind of people. In the UK, the first experiments of working-class suburbanization started in the 1920s, when suburban council estates were created (Clapson, 2000:152). Suburbs in Britain, therefore, were from the beginning characterized by social segregation, because middle-class and working-class neighbourhoods were planned separately. In his analyses of American suburbs in the 1990s, Baldassarre stresses how there is an increasing gap between wealthy and poor estates and an increasing segregation by ethnicity, family status, age, income and occupation: 'Suburban communities are specialized, catering to the unique needs of different sub-groups of the suburban population' (Baldassarre, 1992:482).

This situation was mirrored in Ireland decades earlier, when, prior to the Miles Wright Strategy, inner suburbs council estates were created for the poorer population in Marino and Crumlin in the 1920-30s, and in Ballyfermont from the 1940s (Corcoran et al., 2010:8). This early differentiation among, on one side, private developers building suburbs targeting wealthier people and, on the other side, public housing projects for the poorest population, can explain, at least in part, the high degree of wealth variations still present today between bordering neighbourhoods in Dublin 15. This is also true of other suburbs of the Greater Dublin area, where rich middle-class estates coexist in close proximity with public housing in disadvantaged areas. Specifically, in Dublin 15, while in the 1960-70s certain areas in Blanchardstown were entirely and exclusively planned as public housing, at the same time, areas such as Castleknock distinguished themselves as an up-market suburb, although still lacking in important infrastructure such as roads, public transports, and schooling provisions (Williams, 2004). Urban planning has therefore intended and unintended social engineering sides:

> [B]y allowing the wealthy to distance themselves from the problems of the poor and a responsibility in the development of an underclass which are a by-product of the economic restructuring ... by free market forces and the social and economic policies to which national governments subscribe. (...) The resultant emphasis on business shareholders at the interests at the expense of community stakeholder concerns produces the social polarisation and segregation which translates at their extremities into the secured fortresses (gated communities) of the included wealthy and the marginalised reservations (hidden ghettos) of the excluded poor (Bartley, 2003:146).

This spatial polarization is, still today, one of the causes of the great levels of social inequalities present in Dublin 15 and can, at least in part, explain the differences that I have extensively recorded between Oaktree College and Newtown School and that

I will discuss extensively in the next chapters. I start by providing more detailed and up-to-date data showing the levels of social inequalities in the Dublin 15 area.

Dublin 15 today

The Dublin 15 area is located in the North West periphery of Dublin and is bounded by Phoenix Park on the eastern side, County Meath on the western side, and by the rivers Liffey and Tolka at the northern and southern side. The area includes twelve electoral divisions: Castleknock Park, Castleknock Knockmaroon, Lucan North, The Ward, Roselawn, Delwood, Corduff, Coolmine, Abbotstown, Mulhuddart, Blakestown and Tyrrelstown. In the decade 1996 to 2006, that is, during the 'Celtic Tiger' years, as a result of a number of companies locating to the area, employment levels increased rapidly. This coincided with a regeneration of the urban spaces, thanks to investments both in the private and public sectors. During those same years, for example, new public amenities such as a new civic centre with a theatre and a public library were opened. The Blanchardstown Institute of Technology opened in 1999.

Despite the current economic crisis, the area still sees a steady increase in population, according to the 2011 Census, Dublin 15 is home to a population of 101,032 (up 40 per cent from 2002), and is considered to be the fastest growing urban area in Ireland, with a population increase of 81.3 per cent over a fifteen-year period.
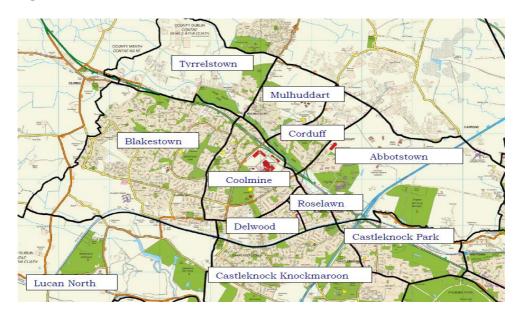
Today, an astonishing 23.5 per cent of the population of Dublin 15 are migrants: the national average is 12 per cent. The area also hosts amongst the highest percentages of young people nationally, with 26 per cent of the overall

population aged below 15 years of age (Ryan, 2012). These demographic features are obviously posing a challenge to school and crèche provision in the area, even more so if we consider that problems identified among youths is identified as something of a crisis. Indeed, during the past years, the area has come to be associated with a particular problem of 'youth at risk', a population said to far exceed national averaged. This percentage is especially high in Blakestown, Tyrrelstown and Mulhuddart electoral division (Ryan, 2009:13).

On the other side of the life cycle, the proportion of persons aged 65 and over is only 4.8 per cent, a very low number compared to the national average of 11.7 per cent (Ryan, 2012:14). These small numbers are probably explained by the large numbers of newly arrived migrants living in the area and to the many recent housing developments.

According to the 2011 Census, the most populous Elector Division (ED) of the Dublin 15 area is the Blanchardstown-Blakestown ED, with a population that increases by 49 per cent from 2002 to 2011 – the greatest percentage population increase in any electoral division in Ireland (McGorman and Sugrue 2007:44). This increase in the population for the Blakestown area coincided with an increase in the non-Irish-born population, and Blakestown is today the Dublin 15 ED with the highest number persons classified in the census as 'non white Irish' (8,883 persons) (see Ryan, 2012:28).

Figure 1: Dublin 15

(Source: Ryan, 2009:8)

Moreover, it is important to also note that the Dublin 15 population exhibits high levels of internal migration. McGorman and Sugrue stress that: 'the transitory nature of this population is inimical to community building and continuity while this is also disruptive of schooling and the educational wellbeing of the children affected' (2007:55).

Dublin 15 in numbers: socio-economic and ethnic profile

When looking at demographic data on Dublin 15 it is necessary to keep in mind that the area is characterised by a very heterogeneous spatial distribution in terms of wealth and education. Looking at the demographics of the entire area may therefore give a vague image, while a more realistic image is provided when the twelve Electoral Divisions (ED) areas are analysed separately. For instance, the 2011 Census divided the population of Ireland into seven socio-economic categories,

starting from 1 (Professional) to 7 (All others gainfully occupied and unknown). According to this classification, 17.6 per cent of the national population in the 2011 Census was classified at the lower levels (social class 6, unskilled and 7, never been in paid employment), while in Dublin 15 area this was 21.1 per cent. On the opposite side of the scale, 34.6 per cent of the national population was in social classes 1-2, while this was the case for 38.1 per cent of Dublin 15. This confirms that the area hosts high levels of socio-economic inequalities.

More insights, however, are provided when the different electoral divisions of the Dublin 15 area are analysed. While in Tyrrelstown, one of poorest areas, 63.6 per cent of the population is in class 7, 10.6 per cent of the population of Castleknock Park (one of the richest) falls into this category (Ryan, 2012:61). On the other side, while only a 1.9 per cent of the Tyrrelstown population is in social class 1 (higher professionals), this rises to 23.9 per cent in Castleknock Park. This heterogeneous profile within the area is confirmed with a previous analysis of Ryan (2007) based on the Haase and Pratschke index of development. The index takes into considerations factors such as social class, education, marital status, demographic and labour market deprivation. According to this index, the twelve Dublin 15 EDs fall into the whole range of the index, with the Tyrellestown area defined as 'Disadvantaged' and the Lucan Nord and Castleknock Park area as 'Very Affluent' (Ryan, 2007:9).

This complex socio-economic profile is also mirrored by wide variations in the educational levels in the area. Although the general trend of the educational attainment of the population is that of an improvement, with those reporting of having no formal education or primary education only falling at 9.4 per cent (a percentage lower than the Dublin and the national), when EDs data are analysed a picture of heterogeneity in the area appears clearly, with the poorest areas hosting the

less educated part of the population. Ryan reports how in the Dublin 15 area's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, 25.1 per cent of adults have no primary education at all, in contrast to only 3.6 per cent in the richest areas (Ryan, 2012:19).

When it comes to labour force participation, since 2006 the total number of people at work in Dublin 15 decreased by 5 per cent, and the labour market participation rate fell to 71.4 per cent in 2011 from a peak of 73.3 per cent in 2006. Even in this case there is heterogeneity in the EDs: the Ward had the highest labour market participation rates (82 per cent) and Roselawn registered the lowest (54.3 per cent) (Ryan, 2012:24). Even during the Celtic Tiger years Dublin 15's poorest EDs experienced levels of unemployment similar to those in the 1980s, i.e. before the economic boom. This means that people living in poorer areas were generally less well educated and had fewer opportunities to find a job even during periods of economic prosperity. This is in part caused by the fact that a good amount of the new jobs created during the economic boom were not in the production sector, requiring unskilled workers, but in the service and assistance sector requiring some degree of qualification and specific skills. And this, in turn, explains why Ireland, contrary to many others EU countries, became home to significant numbers of migrants with third-level qualifications during the 1990s.

According to the 2011 Census 23.5 per cent of the population of Dublin 15 is foreign born (compared to 21 per cent in 2006). This percentage is double than the national average (12 per cent) and the highest in Ireland. The most prevalent countries of origin were Nigeria, Poland, the UK and Lithuania (see Ryan, 2009:28). On the labour market side, foreigner workers living in Dublin 15 experience higher levels of unemployment compared to Irish nationals living in the same area (6.9 per cent), however, there is an important degree of variation if we consider migrants

nationalities, with Lithuanians having unemployment rates similar to Irish nationals (9.6 per cent), while on the opposite side Nigerians experience very high rates of unemployment (50.8 per cent) (see Ryan, 2009:24). More generally, the distribution of foreign nationals in the twelve electoral divisions offers a complex pattern. While one could except to find non-nationals highly concentrated in poorer neighbourhoods, the distribution of foreigners in the area is relatively homogenous, but with great differences between Abbotstown (40 per cent) and Roselawn (6.8 per cent) (Ryan, 2012:28). In 2004, a report on the Greater Blanchardstown Area stressed that large numbers of residents in the area did not self-identify themselves with the area or with the larger Fingal County (Ryan, 2004). This may be, at least in part, caused by the recent waves of migrants to the area (Williams, 2004:8).

Conclusions

Today's Dublin 15 is the product of recent historical changes, involving city planning, economic revolutions bringing drastic modifications in the job market, and sudden migration processes that came to be nested within the high level of social inequalities within the area. Different electoral divisions in Dublin 15 have, therefore, accumulated different levels of social capital, in terms of resources that belong to a place (Corcoran, Grey and Peillon, 2010:16-17). Social class, therefore, plays an essential role in the differentiation of Dublin 15's Electoral Divisions and in their inhabitants everyday lives: this is why during this chapter I have introduced the local area before analysing in depth my ethnographic, school-based research material.

The high percentages of migrants coming from different ethnic backgrounds, together with the vast numbers of people living below the poverty levels and the high volume of internal migration and of young people living in Dublin 15, make the area one where there is a great risk of social disaggregation. This is confirmed by McGorman and Sugrue who, at the end of their report on intercultural education in local primary schools, recommend,

> a much more proactive approach to community development, including allocation of housing and rental support be undertaken to avoid ghettoisation, isolation and exclusion and proactively build inclusive communities (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007:172).

Newtown School and Oaktree College, the two schools where I carried out my fieldwork, are illustrative of the contradictions characterising the Dublin 15 area. Both schools, for instance, have high numbers of international students. The two schools' locations reflect a very heterogeneous distribution of wealth in nonetheless confining electoral divisions. This, in turn, influences the kind of students attending the two schools, the cultural capital held by their families, the school ethos and the ways in which teachers think about their work. All these aspects will be explored in the analysis of the ethnographic material collected during my fieldwork, starting from Chapter 3, where I will let the reader look at what happens inside the school walls during everyday life and show how the different arrangements and organisation of the two schools reflect the social inequalities in Dublin 15.

Before doing this, however, it is necessary to look at these differences from a more detached perspective and to frame these inequalities within social theory. In the next chapter, therefore, I will outline some of the theoretical apparatuses that I used

to interpret my ethnographic material, and pay particular attention to the work of

Pierre Bourdieu.

Chapter 2:

Social class and reproduction theories:

An anthropological perspective

> It is not enough … to go see what's all about. In effect, the empiricist illusion is doubtless never so strong as in cases like this, when direct confrontation with reality entails some difficulty. … Yet, there are compelling reasons to believe that the essential principle of what is lived and seen on the ground … is elsewhere (Pierre Bourdieu, *The Weight of the World,* 1999).

Is it still worth talking about social class?

In the first pages of this thesis I introduced Newtown School and Oaktree College. Through the description of the graduation ceremonies I portrayed the ways in which two schools located in the same postcode area can be radically different. In the next ethnographic chapters I will dig further down by outlining how the kind of neighbourhood where the schools are situated can affect the schools' priorities and ethos, teachers' motivation, students' performances, parents' participation, and the funding of extracurricular activities. All these differences are not casual but are related, among other factors, to the local neighbourhoods and the social backgrounds of the families residing there.

This chapter, therefore, will put aside for a while the ethnographic material and will illustrate some theoretical approaches to the concept of social class, and in particular that of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Given the topic of my research, this discussion will be mainly focused on the theme of the role that school and family play in the reproduction of social class. I will then discuss some of the

ethnographic research that deals with these issues internationally. In the last paragraph I will frame the debate over the 'market paradigm in education' as the new strategy of the dominant classes to reproduce their advantages to the next generations.

While social class has been a central theme in social theory, during the past decades many commentators have noted how class has fallen short in providing a useful key to understand the modern world. This was caused, at least in part, by the emergence of theories that privileged the cultural, and concepts such as agency and identity, over economic variables (see Smith, 1984). The first simple but essential questions that one may ask when discussing social class therefore are the following: 'What is social class today, and is it still worth talking about'? In her ethnographic study, *Unequal Childhoods* (2003), Annette Lareau discusses this last question. According to Lareau, in the United States today (as in many other places) it is common sense to think of society as fundamentally open:

> They [*the majority of Americans*] believe that individuals carve out their life paths by drawing on their personal stores of hard work, effort, and talent. All children are seen as having approximately equal life chances. Or, if children's life chances appear to differ, this is seen as due to differences in raw talent, initiative, aspirations, and effort. This perspective directly rebuffs the thesis that the social structural location of the family systematically shapes children's life experiences and life outcomes. Rather, the outcomes individuals achieve over the course of their lifetime are seen as their own responsibility (Lareau, 2003:30).

Given my fieldwork experiences, this perspective seems at best naïve, yet it is a commonly held perspective. The majority of social scientists, on the other hand, tend to stress how life chances are influenced by the kinds of social environments in which children are reared – family *in primis.* Still, a number of authors in recent years argue that social inequalities can be explained in terms of 'casual patterns'. For

example, in *The Classless Society* (2000) Paul Kingston argues that the social inequalities (which he does not deny) existing in post-industrial societies are 'unrelated patterns' and that bounded and defined conceptions of social classes are useless for understanding 'life-defining experiences'. Kingston and other authors argue that today 'class consciousnesses' and 'class identification' have disappeared. This last point, however, raises the question whether 'class consciousness' is really a conscious identification, and the more general question of whether consciousness of a phenomenon is what endows it with 'existence'. In opposition, herein I discuss Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus,* which despite being 'unconscious and non-orchestrated' generate nonetheless 'the socially informed body' (Bourdieu, 1995:124). As an ethnographer, Bourdieu understood that informants' 'official accounts' were not perfect accounts of the state of affairs that ought to happen (Jenkins, 2002: 53).

Kingston refuses the notion that life experiences such as tastes, behaviours and cultural habits – in short, *habitus* – are shared by groups that also share economic positions. While it is possible to agree with Kingston's idea of a 'gradational approach' to social classes, that is, the idea that instead of being divided by a net division, social positions are better understood as located on a fluid continuum, this, cannot deny the fact that different social habits are not randomly distributed among individuals:

> Social class, understood as a system of objective determinations, must be brought into relation not with the individual or with 'the class' as a *population*, (...) but with the class *habitus* (...). Though it is impossible for *all* members of the same class (or even two o f them) to have had the same experiences, in the same order, it is certain that each member the same class is more likely than any member of another class to have been confronted with the situations most frequent for the members of that class (Bourdieu, 1990:85).

Indeed, if I look back at my fieldwork, reading the transcripts of the many conversations I had with parents at Oaktree and Newtown, the different lifestyles I have observed when I visited their houses, the students' attitudes towards school and their behaviours in the classroom, I can say without any doubt that they were definitely not randomly distributed. Social inequalities can be named in different ways, be analysed as gradational or more sharply cut, but they still exist and can be found in the same city in spatially distinct but proximate locations. It is for this reason that it is still necessary to talk about social class.

Social class in Ireland

Although often depicted as a 'classless society', Ireland is far from being classless. To analyse the changing patterns of social classes in Ireland it is necessary to look at the economic changes that the country underwent in the last decades. While most EU countries shifted their economy from a mainly agricultural one into an industrial economy and are now in the 'post-industrial phase', all analysts agree that Ireland has mainly skipped the industrial phase, but the nonetheless the shifts occurred to social class follow a classic trend. Starting from the 1960s the number of people employed in the agricultural sector and unskilled manual fell, as white collar and skilled job increased, while the 1980s saw an increase in professional and managerial jobs (Whelan and Layte, 2007:70).

Recent debates around social class in Ireland tend to be divided into two different currents: the first stressing how the Celtic Tiger economic boom had a positive impact in terms of a lightening of social inequalities and increasing

opportunities for higher education and job positions even in the poorest sections of the population, while others stress how the gap between the dominant classes and the poorest has remained unchanged, and that the current economic downturn has increasingly widened that gap. Peadar Kirby (2002) for instance, stresses how the Celtic Tiger period produced significant social inequality and during that period the state favoured market forces instead of balancing inequalities with welfare, thus contributing to even deeper social polarisation.

Other authors, such as Christopher Whelan and Richard Layte, believe that the economic boom did not increase social polarisation. Their analysis of social mobility in Ireland from 1973 to 2000 concludes, 'Ireland has experienced a great deal of social mobility in the last 30 years, but almost all of this mobility (96 per cent) is due to the changing occupational structure and the sheer number of higher class positions available, rather than being due to increasing openness in the way that higher class positions are allocated' (2004:90). During the last 40 years, then, Ireland had a great deal of 'absolute mobility', that is, the social mobility caused by the expansion and contraction of certain social classes, but a low level of 'relative mobility', that caused by governmental policies promoting equity, fairness, and meritocracy. Indeed, critiques of neoliberal policies suggest that the state should intervene more heavily to redistribute wealth and to limit social inequalities (Nolan, et al. 2003:352).

Leslie McCall stresses that Ireland ranks today in the same positions as the UK and US (amongst the countries where social inequalities are higher) for what concerns the levels of 'economic inequality and poverty and lowest levels of social spending across advanced industrialised nations,' and that while in the US poverty rates decreased during the economic boom, they actually increased in Ireland during

the Celtic Tiger era (2008:168). Indeed, Whelan et al. propose an 80:10:10

classification of the Irish population:

> While four out of five of the population can be described as reasonably
> secure, well-off and insulated from a range of economic stresses and strain to
> which the remaining one-fifth of the population is vulnerable (…) Just less
> than one in ten of the population simultaneously experience the combination
> of low income and extreme material deprivation that we refer to as
> 'consistent poverty'. A further one in ten, while avoiding such poverty,
> continue to experience a heightened risk of income poverty, material
> deprivation and economic stress that marks them off from the more secure
> four-fifths of the population (Whelan et al., 2007:87).

Even when analysing data on schooling, the overall frame is that of an

increasing participation in absolute rates, within a permanence (if not an increase) of

the gap between social classes. Whelan and Hannan have analysed the schooling

rates of cohorts covering those born 1930-1939, 1940-1954, and 1955-1969 and

conclude thus,

> Economic change has not eroded class advantages in income and security.
> Furthermore, the manner in which the connection between the Irish
> educational and occupational system has developed with a high degree of
> level congruence has involved the maintenance of a series of barriers to
> working-class achievement in a system dominated by the academic needs of
> college bound middle-class students (Whelan and Hannan, 1999:303).

Indeed, since 1973, the level of education in Ireland experienced an

impressive increase. But was this enough to generate a more meritocratic society?

Unskilled manual workers with a third-level qualification accounted for 2 per cent of

the workforce in 1973 and this proportion rose to 10 per cent in 2000. This is

certainly encouraging data, but it appears small when we compare the professional

and managerial class with an increase from 4 to 51 per cent. (2004: 99). This means

that although there has been an increase in the general level of degree-level

qualifications these same degrees have been deeply devalued as a means to gain a job in higher positions. This leads to the paradoxical conclusion that from 1973 to 2000 there has been a reduction instead of an increase of the impact of education (2004:100). Social class permeates all aspects of the Irish society, including education. Sheelagh Drudy, for example, stresses how despite the Government incorporation of, at least in theory, equity and equality as their key objectives of educational policies, the upper and middle classes remain the greatest beneficiaries of any measure of change in education (Drudy, 2001:8).

This is not to deny that important and positive changes did happen in Ireland. For example between 2000 and 2006 there was a rise in life expectancy as significant as that in the preceding twenty years, and that rise has been equally spread between all incomes (O'Grada, 2008:159). A perfect summary of this situation is provided by Fahey et al. below:

> Pre-boom Ireland was both more unequal and poorer than the norm for Western Europe. Today it continues to be unequal but in a context where even the less well-off have seen major absolute improvements in their circumstances. This combination of stasis and advance could be judged a success or failure (...), but in any event it is important to keep both sides of the coin in mind and not simply focus on either relative or absolute change alone (Fahey et. al. 2007:5).

It is in this frame of social polarisation that my research on the integration of international students takes place. How are migrants fitting into this post-economic boom and stratified society? To answer to this question it is necessary to stress that Ireland has a different migratory history in comparison to many other EU countries, on different levels. Ireland indeed can be considered as 'a new laboratory for the study of migration' (Barrett and Duffy, 2008: 601).

First of all, Ireland has a very short history of labour migration in comparison, for example, the UK and France. In Ireland, intensive labour migration is the result of the economic boom and therefore a recent phenomenon. Ireland, however, is also different in comparison to those EU countries with relatively recent migration, such as Italy, where intensive immigration started in the early 1990s as a result of the end of communist regimes of East Europe. In this case, migrants were generally unskilled workers with low levels of educational qualifications. In Ireland, in contrast, migrants arrived to fulfil the labour shortage caused by the sudden economic growth and were generally highly educated, with the proportion of degree holders superior to that of the extant population, although more recent migration from the new EU Member States was the opposite of this trend (see Barrett and Duffy, 2008:616). However, they do not appear to be gaining access to jobs that fully reflect their education levels (Barrett, Bergin, and Duffy, 2006) and appear to be earning significantly less than comparable 'natives' (Barrett and McCarthy, 2007). The findings suggest poor labour market outcomes and that they work in jobs not commensurate with their skills and experience (Barrett, Bergin and Duffy, 2006, Barrett. 2009). Indeed, recent research shows that their housing arrangements tend to reveal cheaper options such as renting instead of ownership (Darmody, Tyrell and Song, 2011).

Social reproduction in classic theories

Social class has always been a focus for classical social theorists starting with Marx, Weber and Durkheim. Karl Marx speaks about class predominantly in terms of class struggle based on economic interest. Social class is determined by the control over

the means of production, with the capitalists being the privileged class because they own the means of production, and starting from this economic advantage, they also seek to make their political and cultural interests. The working class or proletariat is exploited and will continue to be exploited until it ceases the means of production through a revolutionary process. This can happen only when the bipolarisation between the two classes reaches its highest point. For Marx, therefore, social class is in close relation to the economic realm, while all other factors (social, cultural) are only a consequence of the relation one has with the means of production.

Although Marx did not discuss the role of education extensively, his position can be clearly deducted by analysing his works, starting from the 'Manifesto of the Communist Party': 'The Communist have not invented the intervention of society in education: they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class' (Marx and Engels, 1969:102). Starting from this assumption, Marxist scholars analyse school as one of the means that the state and the ruling classes use to generate social control in the capitalist system. Paradoxically, despite its supposed equalitarianism, the school does so by instilling a belief in the legitimacy of social inequalities (Innes, 2003:57).

Max Weber, despite agreeing with Marx on the relationship between social class and ownership of the means of production, adds other criteria: status groups associated with social order, and party or power associated with political order. According to Weber, class and social status are different aspects of social stratification (Giddens, 1971). This double characterisation of social stratification allows one to bring a more detailed description of social differences and, contrary to Marx, bring elements that go beyond the economic domain, including the domain of the symbolic, which characterises Bourdieu's analysis. Weber sees education as

connected with the fields of religious, economic and political institutions, and thus as contributing to the rationalisation and the bureaucratisation of modern society. In this rationalised society, the possibilities for individual freedom and autonomy in education are bleak: 'The consequence for higher education is the loss of autonomy and academic freedom that can currently be seen in the debate over the corporatization and commercialization of education' (Samier, 2002:27).

Emile Durkheim was one of the first social scientist to theorise the role of education in cultural reproduction. According to the French sociologist, the role of education is to maintain the society in order and equilibrium, a classic functionalist position that has been criticised for not considering the importance of conflict. In *Moral Education* (2002), Durkheim argues that schools reproduce what happens in the world and are in effect like a mirror held up to a society. By stating that schools do not change society but reproduce and imitate it (see Walford and Pickering 1998:4), Durkheim looks at education in a very deterministic way: there is little or no chance of social mobility. The role of the teacher is restricted to that of curriculum dispenser, and there is no mention to the notion of hidden curriculum. At the same time the respect of shared rules learned at schools enhances social cohesion by forging a sense of belonging to the society. Durkheim thought that the examination system in the schools was generally fair and that class or ethnic origin did not interfere with it: personal merit was the only way to achieve success. Although providing an explanation for the fact that school might reproduce social inequalities, this perspective looks at class differences as a necessary ingredient for the stability of the society, a vision that was also later taken up by Talcott Parsons.

Contrary to the previous thinkers, Louis Althusser put a particular emphasis on education for the reproduction of social classes. According to Althusser, ideology

(which reflects relations of production) constitutes individuals thanks to the action of the 'Ideological State Apparatus' (ISA) and the 'Repressive State Apparatus' (RSA), this last maintaining the conditions for capitalist production through the use of violence and the first through the use of ideology. This division reflects for many aspects the Gramscian division among coercive and non-coercive institutions. According to Althusser, family, Church, media and the political system are all ISA, although the most important and powerful ISA is the educational system:

> I shall say that the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also (...) a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order (...) in other words, the school teaches know-how but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology (1971:17).

More recent works tend to define social class in terms of employment position. For example, in their assessment of social mobility in Ireland, Whelan and Layte (2004) make reference to the neo-Weberian Erikson/Goldthorpe schema, which makes a distinction between employers and employees, and among employees.

In her ethnographic work, Lareau (2003) defines middle class households as those where at least one parent is employed in a managerial position, or a position based on complex skills; working class households are those where at least one parent is employed in a position with little or no managerial authority; and poor households are those where both parents live on public assistance and with no regular participation in the job market (Lareau, 2003:279). But at the same time she also considers more symbolic dimensions such as the concept of individual and personal growth underpinning the ways in which people from different social classes raise their children. This attention to the symbolic realm as a distinctive feature of class differentiation has been particularly developed in the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

The work of Pierre Bourdieu in the context of this research

The work of Pierre Bourdieu, and in particular his writings concerning social class, social reproduction and the ways in which primary socialization agencies such as family and school perpetuate the advantages of the dominant classes are central for this thesis. His theories provide a frame of interpretation for the ethnographic material on which this research is based on.

As school is a central institution where social reproduction takes place, the work of Bourdieu cannot be but central in a research that looks at the school world from the point of view of social class. According to Bourdieu, contrary to societies with no self-regulating market:

> Domination no longer needs to be exerted in a direct, personal way when it is entailed in possession of the means (economic or cultural capital) of appropriating the mechanisms of the field of production and the field of cultural production, which tend to assure their own reproduction by their very functioning (1995: 183).

In modern societies there is no need for a conscious effort to perpetuate social inequalities. While other thinkers such as Althusser would argue that schools produce and spread 'ideological apparatuses' (1984), according to Bourdieu this simply happens:

> through the practical justification of the established order which it achieves by using the overt connection between qualifications and jobs as a smokescreen for the connection - which it *records surreptitiously,* undercover of formal equality - between the qualifications people obtain and the cultural capital they have inherited - in other words, through the legitimacy it confers on the transmission of this form of heritage (1995:188).

Bourdieu's conceptualisation of social class represents a continuous attempt to overcome the opposition between the most subjectivist social theories stating that actions are a product of individuals interacting with their own experiences, and, on the other side, those stating that action is mechanically imposed by the structure: 'an action without actors':

> To avoid either theoretical bias, a social theory must acknowledge the relative autonomy of individual action from social structure and recognize that societal development is not merely the result of the sum of individual actions (Buchmann, 1989:31).

Bourdieu challenges this opposition by portraying structure as a prefabricated social reality facing the individual who is also driven by personal competences and skills. One of the key tenets of Bourdieu's work is that the socialisation process of individuals differs according to their social class: family is central in this process, but Bourdieu also explains in detail the ways in which schools perpetuate social advantage, in particular in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (see Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). The notion of social class for Bourdieu goes beyond the Marxian analysis of division of labour. Class analysis for Bourdieu should include both economic relations and symbolic relations, what Max Weber would define as the difference between class and status. This differentiation allows Bourdieu to reject the idea of bounded, stratified social classes.

During the socialisation process, children acquire dispositions, skills, tastes and knowledge. These constitute a set of notions that the holders generally consider as 'natural'. Far from being so, for Bourdieu practices are generated by structures, the material conditions of existence of a class condition, that in turn generate the *habitus,* a system of durable and transmissible dispositions (Bourdieu, 1995:124).

The name *habitus* derives from the Latin and denotes a habitual and typical condition, particularly referring to the body (Jenkins, 2002:74). The habitus acquired is derived from the social class of the family where a child is socialised: even in cases of upward social mobility, the new forms of *habitus* acquired will not be 'natural' and embodied like the ones learned in childhood. Bourdieu emphasises the symbolic and non-material resources as key elements for the perpetuation of social inequalities. Sullivan (2002) stresses how even with the dramatic decrease in educational expenses, the association between social class origin and educational chances remains constant (see Sullivan, 2002:146)

In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Bourdieu defines *habitus* as, 'a general, transposable disposition which carries out a systematic, universal application—beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt — of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions' (1984:170). These dispositions include taste for food, arts, and aesthetics in general. Bourdieu admits that personal tastes and behaviours do exist, however he is far from attributing 'free choice' to individuals: 'Personal style, the particular stamp marking all of the products of the same habitus, whether practices or works is never more than a deviation in relation to the style of a period or class' (Bourdieu, 1990: 60).

The *habitus* will also constitute the first background knowledge as people build their capital, that is, the resources that they will enact as they relate institutions and different social formations, the fields. In the economic field, the hierarchy of position is determined by those who possess the highest economic capital, in the cultural field the cultural capital, both as incorporated (tastes, knowledge) and objectified (degrees). According to Bourdieu, all actions are, at least unconsciously,

oriented to maintain or improve one's position in the social hierarchy: to do this, subjects enhance their strategies of investment.

Social inequalities and domination are at the root of every society. Although cultural practices change with time, and the dominated classes may acquire the values of the dominant ones, the dominant classes will acquire others that will distance, make a distinction of their position of privilege. To do this there is no need to theorise any conspiracy or conscious effort: as previously mentioned, the process is unconscious but, for this very reason, very powerful. When the more advanced classes have acquired a new *habitus* and are ready to pass this capital to their new generations that will find itself more in 'tune' with institutions.

Lareau (2003), who draws heavily from Bourdieu's work, gives a perfect example of this process when she describes how the practice of beating children, which was commonly accepted as valuable among all social classes a century ago, is now rejected by schools. While all the middle class families taking part in her research have 'absorbed' this habit, a part of the working class and the poor haven't. This generates a gap between family and school for the poorest families – who often live with frustration of this incongruence – while between school and middle class families there is a sort of 'compatibility' that makes children's entry into the educational world smoother. I have reported this same 'compatibility' in the previous chapters where I described Oaktree College as a continuum with the local neighbourhood, in opposition to Newtown School, which I have described as a discontinuous space, a 'happy island'.

The dominant positions for Bourdieu will always be limited in number and when the working classes and poor will have acquired certain middle class dispositions, other *habitus* will come to distinguish the richest. The role of the school

for Bourdieu is precisely: 'Contributing to the reproduction of the structure of class relations and by concealing, by an apparently neutral attitude, the fact that it fills this function' (Bourdieu, 1973:72). According to this view, the educational system, instead of favouring social mobility, tends to reinforce the class difference pre-existing in families' educational models. In *Reproduction* (1990) all pedagogical action is defined as a form of 'symbolic violence':

> Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are at the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations. (...) All pedagogic action is objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:4-5).

In this work, Bourdieu and Passeron focus specifically on the relation between the domestic and the educational fields. Family is the 'biographical starting point' for the determination of social class (Weininger and Lareau, 2003:379) and the primary place of formation of the class *habitus* while the school receives students with different cultural capital and with a false meritocratic process (from here the symbolic violence) of selections ends up to reproduce social inequalities. According to Bourdieu and Passeron, therefore, it is not even in the curriculum that we should look for institutional racism or classism – it is the system that is per se carrying inequality.

Critical analysis of Bourdieu's work calls attention to the paucity of school-based qualitative data supporting his theories, and his proximity to structuralism, though he would deny this. It has been observed, for example, that the concept of *habitus* is overly deterministic and fails to avoid the tension between structuralism and atomism (Sullivan, 2002:150). According to Lareau, although Bourdieu's work

provides key instruments for understanding how social classes are reproduced, what is missing is empirical work on 'the difference between the possession of capital and the activation of capital' (Lareau, 2003:277). In particular, Lareau stresses that Bourdieu does not explain how people from different social classes activate their class-based resources when they interact with institutions: 'We need to understand the individually insignificant but cumulatively important ways in which parents from the dominant classes actually facilitate their children's progress through key social settings' (Lareau, 2003:278). This is exactly what the author does in her ethnographic work, which based on intensive observations of different families' lives. Similar steps proved to be central in my research, as in the previous chapters I have stressed how parents from the two different schools relate in very different ways with the schools, with Oaktree parents taking an active role in school life, taking part in the Parent's Association and organising money raising and extracurricular activities, and with Newtown parents tending to delegate to teachers all the care wrapped up in their children's school time.

Even more importantly, Lareau asserts that while the concept of *habitus* has been widely investigated by social scientists, other concepts, like the concept of 'field', which could offer both a focus on biography and social structure by taking into account both the study of 'fields' and the practices of individuals, have yet to receive sufficient attention in empirical research (Lareau 2003, 311). Although in a limited way, my fieldwork tries to address this point by examining both the structure, in this case the Irish educational system from the macro to the micro, as well as into individuals' biographies, and at the same time examine the intersections between the two.

Moreover, Bourdieu offers statements that could potentially be applicable to every time and space, but some of his claims are not realistic in today's contexts. For example, one of the key findings of *Distinction* regarding the arts consumption is that there is a close relationship linking cultural practices to educational capital (degrees) and to social backgrounds. Bourdieu here measures social origins by referring to a father's occupation. This parameter, which could have been reasonable in France during the '60s and '70s, does not seem trustworthy today. On this same line, Sullivan remarks that the notion of cultural capital itself can be more relevant in some countries than in others. Participation to higher cultural forms such theatre and museums for example might not be as relevant as a sign of high class distinction in the US, while it still is in France (Sullivan, 2002:164). Situated ethnographic accounts are therefore of great importance if we are to use and test Bourdieu's theoretical tools and, more generally, explain how social inequalities are reproduced in different contexts. This is also the case in the Irish context, where the recent economic boom and sudden period of recession, as well as the dramatic demographic and migration changes, transformed economic wealth distributions, and cultural and social capital.

School and the reproduction of social inequalities

Education and especially schools are a classic focus for social scientist interested in the reproduction of social inequalities, but it is only in the early 1950s onwards that anthropology began to attend to schools. The Civil Rights Movement in the US, which claimed parity of rights between 'whites' and minority groups, was especially influential in raising important questions and challenging anthropological work.

Why, for example, were 'black' children constantly underachieving at school? To what degree were the different levels of funding disbursed to schools situated in poor areas contributing to inequality? Do teachers have different expectation of pupils from different social class and ethnic backgrounds? Eleanor Leacock and Jules Henry were among the first anthropologists to do intensive fieldwork in schools in the late 1950s. In *City and Learning in City Schools* (1969), Leacock compared 'black' and 'white' working and middle class schools and analysed teachers' educational goals and expectations. The ethnographic material showed that expectations for 'black' and 'white' working-class children, as well as middle-class 'black' children, were lower than for middle-class 'white' children (Cherneff and Hochwald 2006:204). Leacock concluded thus:

> The teachers' differential behaviour towards children of different backgrounds reflects not the individual incompetence of a minority, but an institutional system of race and class bias that patterns the practices of the vast majority (Leacock in Cherneff 2006:205)

Henry (1965) conducted fieldwork both in middle class and poorer schools, where he analysed the low achievement levels of poor 'black' students in terms of 'problems of motivation' and connected these to the background of their families and to the socio-economic oppression they suffered, rather than their personal inadequateness or 'culture' (1965:7-8).

Another milestone in the anthropology of education is Philip Jackson's *Life in Classrooms* (1968). Based on two years of observations in an elementary school in Chicago, Jackson's work has become famous for its use of the term 'hidden curriculum', denoting 'those aspects of learning in schools that are unofficial, or

unintentional, or undeclared consequences of the way teaching and learning are organised and performed in schools' (Meighan, 1986:32).

After the 1960s, and the collapse of the functionalist paradigm, social scientists started to look at school with a more critique eye. School was no longer considered as the neutral mirror of societal inequalities. While the role of school in reproducing cultural inequalities was certainly highlighted by functionalists, conflict and Neo-Marxists theorists put the emphasis on the reasons for this reproduction and the ways in which this happens in concrete contexts. According to this perspective, the school curriculum and teachers' behaviours are biased toward middle class values which working class students have difficulty internalising, and teachers' expectations toward students are also biased towards those who were excepted to do better, that is, again, middle class students.

One subject of particular interest for anthropology, therefore, is the clash between the micro-culture encountered in the school and that of the outside (family and peer groups). Neo-Marxist approaches stress that schools mirror middle class culture and do not reflect those students coming for working class, disadvantaged backgrounds, and/or from ethnic minority groups. Take for example Bowles and Gintis' *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976) in which they propose a 'correspondence principle', an untold rule underlying school life:

> A structural correspondence exists between the social relations of school life and the social relations of production (…). School reproduce the existing social relations of capitalist society by reproducing the consciousness necessary for such relations (Lynch, 1989:3).

After the 1960s, social scientists started to look at the roles played by schools in reproducing cultural inequalities. An illustrative example is provided by William

Labov's (1969) work on ghetto 'black' children in Harlem. Labov shows that far from suffering from verbal and cultural deprivation, as was claimed, these children use a very elaborate language when speaking outside the school. 'Vernacular', non-standard English was successfully in operation on the streets and in homes but was deemed illegitimate in schools and a source of school failure. This work challenges the assumption that 'black' ghetto kids come from dysfunctional contexts and demands that schools attend to children's language as a resource instead of constraints.

In Europe, the Manchester School hosted the first educational anthropology research strand, which, in line with the founder Max Gluckman, placed emphasis on social conflict. The works of Hargreaves (1967), Lambart (1976), and Lacey (1970) are illustrative. These ethnographies have as a common starting point the assumption that previous studies of students' achievement were considering social class, intelligence and aptitudes as 'inputs', and schools achievement and occupation as 'output', but treated the curriculum and the school organisation as a 'black box', i.e. they largely ignored it. Their objective was to problematise the very structure of the school by opening the 'black box' and analysing the specific contexts. The theoretical framework adopted in these three studies was labelled by Lacey as 'differentiation-polarisation' theory. According to this theory, the differentiation of students in the secondary school according to their abilities (streaming) produces a polarisation in their judgements towards peers of the same age attending different streams; their choice of friends and their behaviours including pro and anti-school behaviours: 'By differentiation is meant the process of separation and ranking students according to a multiple set of criteria (…). Polarisation (…) is a process taking place within the student body, as a result of differentiation' (Lacey,

1970:252). This process is well documented in *Social Relations in a Secondary School* (Hargreaves, 1967). Hargreaves showed how the organisation of the school imposed limitation for interactions with members of other streaming groups. This, in turn, had an effect on the judgments pupils made towards those of others streams, an effect particularly evident in the two extreme groups (i.e. stream A, the best, versus stream D): 'By fourth year the boys at Lumley School have developed stereotypes about the kind of boy to be expected at the extremes of the streaming system' (Hargreaves, 1967:71). Teacher's behaviours and expectations also greatly varied according to stream level, and the fact that less experienced and competent teachers were allocated to the lower levels, contributed to the realisation of a self-fulfilling prophecy which further increased the distance between streams and the possibilities of consistent upward mobility. Drawing from these data, Hargreaves concludes that the existence of two opposing subcultures (pro- and anti-school behaviour), and high levels of delinquency in the lower streams was arguably not only accentuated but possibly created by the streaming process itself (Hargreaves, 1967:190).

Stephen J. Ball further developed the differentiation-polarisation thesis by using the case study of a mixed comprehensive school. New progressive developments were challenging the UK educational system at that time and many schools, like Beachside comprehensive, started to introduce mixed-ability classes, together with banding (a more complex and inclusive system of streaming) in the first year. Ball conclusions were not optimistic as he found that although providing improvements for those who aim at social mixing and tolerance (Ball, 1981:288), even in mixed-ability classes teachers relate with students primarily in terms of separation and ranking (Ball, 1981:284), and that mixed ability classed do not involve radical changes because the teachers' attitudes are unchanged.

In the UK, *Learning to Labour*, the ethnography by Paul Willis (1977),
provided a fresh interpretation of the reproduction of inequality at school. What is
innovative in Willis's work is the idea that schools not only reproduce a culture – the
culture of dominant classes – but they also produce (as a side effect) other counter-
cultures which are generated by working class students, Willis's famous 'lads'.
Willis challenges the idea that students merely assimilate the hidden curriculum.
Indeed, by not respecting school rules and teachers' authority and by actively
resisting school culture, working class lads produce their own counter-culture.
However, and somewhat paradoxically, this counter-culture carried deep connections
to sexism, racism and distrust for mental labour (Lynch, 1989:17), and thus had
effect of reproducing particular forms of social inequality. The 'lads' resisted school
culture, but this resistance, which they perceived as 'true learning', formed a
boundary between themselves, the teachers and middle class students. In conclusion,
according to Willis, the lads take an active part in building their future subordinate
position by resisting the school today. What is innovative in Willis's work compared
to then contemporary ethnographies of schooling is the concept of the agency of the
working class students who are not yet represented in the lower category of teacher's
expectations but are actively engaging with school life in anti-conformist terms.

Schools as sites of power and knowledge

Michel Foucault is frequently cited in educational research, especially by those
interested in discourse, discipline and in the relationships between power and
knowledge. In the introduction, I described how truth for Foucault is not an abstract
entity but a 'will to truth', a human production 'by virtue of multiple constraints'

(Foucault 1980: 46), circulating in the world, and reproduced, among other agencies, by the school. Foucault looked at power as beyond the crude repression of the powerless and examined how it operates in everyday relations between people and institutions and how this process generates new forms of behaviour (Mills, 2003:33). Foucault was not interested in abstract 'agents' per se but, rather, in the microphysics of power, in the dispersed entities, the sets of relations, as well as the historical conditions that enable the actual school to exist as it is. The concepts of bio-power and bio-politics, which were theorised for the first time in *The History of Sexuality*, *Vol. 1,* refer to the forms of governmental management of biological life itself and to the power exerted over a population's bodies and lives:

> Since the classical age, the West has undergone a very profound transformation of these mechanisms of power. 'Deduction' has tended to be no longer the major form of power, but merely one element among others working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize and organize the forces under it. (...) One would have to speak of bio-power to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculation and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life (Foucault, 1990:136-143).

Although Foucault never focused explicitly on schools, except in celebrated moments in work such as *Discipline and Punish* (1995), the concepts of bio-politics and bio-power can be successfully applied as instruments to interpret, among many other themes, power-knowledge, the origin of the taken-for-granted assumptions underpinning everyday life at school, as well as the priorities of curricula and of educational policies. Every time Foucault analysed school it was in the context of an investigation of other institutions that provided correction and discipline and created what he defined as a 'docile body'. In this light indeed, according to Foucault, schools and prisons had much in common. According to Foucault, school as we see it

today, together with prisons and other disciplinary institutions, were first settled as part of a general tendency to discipline the masses, train the masses through practices of normalisation, separating, analysing them and putting them to productive uses. By the mid-19th century one also sees 'inclusion through exclusion' -- a transformation from physically violent and spectacular discipline to more personal and psychologically compelling 'moral orthopedix' (Foucault 1995:182) for the bodies:

> All in the school design, starting from the system of record keeping to the building design as well as the sits disposition are, according to Foucault, designed to create the self-disciplined citizen: compulsory mass education indeed starts in the same period as democratic institutions (Allen, 2012: 3).

However, with the onset of the 20th century the disciplinary society explored by Foucault was already transforming into what Gilles Deleuze (1995), who draws from Foucault's writings, defines the 'societies of control'. According to Deleuze, while disciplinary societies were characterised by enclosure, institutionalisation and distinct systems of disciplining, training and normalisation, social control in modern societies is now more fluid and pervasive and different forms of control overlap one into the other. This Foucaultian line of thinking is distant from Marxists and Neo-Marxist scholarship, including the work of Bourdieu, who see the school an instrument of the state and of the dominant classes to perpetuate the interests of those holding the power. By stressing the historical processes that determined the conditions of existence of the contemporary school, Foucault challenges our most taken for granted assumptions about how education today is organised. Moreover, as Foucault always analysed schools together with other institutions characterised by the disciplining, training and normalisation of the body, he was critical of the idea that education could in any way produce free subjects and autonomous thinkers.

From this point of view, it may be argued that Foucault reaches the same disillusioned conclusions as Bourdieu, although via a very different route.

Intersecting Social Class and ethnicity

Before the 1970s, migration studies were dominated by 'classic' theories that did not take into sufficient consideration the impact that identity markers such as gender, ethnicity and social class have on migratory and on integration processes. Later on, new and more complex perspectives emerged (Cuban, 2012:15). I will briefly analyse a number of these perspectives that will help to provide the theoretical background for the part of my research looking in detail at the experiences of international students attending Oaktree College and Newtown School. Indeed, in the next chapter I will stress how soon after the beginning of my fieldwork it became clear that the family background of the Irish students attending the two schools reflected the social conditions of the local neighbourhood; but the background of international students' families constituted a gap: a number of the internationals attending Newtown School had both parents holding an educational capital more similar to Oaktree's parents, but were nonetheless being frequently underemployed (a phenomena named deskilling which I will analyse later on and which is partly caused by the current economic downturn). This justifies, at least in part, the enthusiasm that Newtown's teachers hold towards international students, which they consider as high achievers in comparison to their Irish fellows.

Pierre Bourdieu's focus was primarily on social class and on the distribution of capital, but his work (starting with *Distinction*) also focused to a lesser extent on other forms of domination, or 'stratifying factors', such as gender, age, region and

ethnicity (Weininger, 2002:153). According to the French sociologist, an individual's *habitus* is affected by both the place one occupies in the social space plus the demographic characteristics such as ethnicity and gender, although the effects of these factors are not cumulative. It is necessary, then,

> to break with linear thinking, which only recognizes simply ordered structures of direct determination, and endeavour to reconstruct the networks of intertwined relationships which are present in each of the factors. The structural causality of a network of factors is quite irreducible to the cumulated effects of … [a] set of linear relations (Bourdieu 1984:107 cited in Weininger 2005:153).

In Bourdieu's analyses, factors deriving from the social class are defined as 'primary', while the demographic factors are defined as 'secondary'. This means that the impact on *habitus* of demographic factors such as ethnicity depends on the class location and not vice-versa:

> Volume of capital, composition of capital, and trajectory enjoy a certain primacy: the meaning ascribed to the 'secondary' factors is a function of location in social space; the impact of location, by contrast, does not vary systematically as a function of the 'secondary' factors (Weininger, 2005:155).

This for Bourdieu has important consequences. For example, in those cases when social conflicts are exploding, ties of social class are likely to be much more permanent that those related to secondary factors such as ethnicity and more salient (Bourdieu, 1984:107). This clearly emerges in his comment during an interview conducted with two young men, (French and Moroccan), both living in the *banlieus* of Paris and sharing the same condition of unemployment and social exclusion:

> How could readers of their interview fail to see that in fact they share every trait except ethnic origin to which, by the way they never refer, and the patent

absurdity of those who try to introduce into the political discourse, and into the minds of citizen , the dichotomy between immigrant and French? Ali is merely a sort of Francois taken to the limit: the ethnic stigmata (...) radicalizes the handicap linked to the lack of certificates or qualifications, itself linked to the lack of cultural and more specifically linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1999:62).

In his later work, Bourdieu revised in part the conceptual framework on 'stratifying factors' by analysing both gender and ethnicity. In *Masculine Domination* (2001), Bourdieu conceptualises gender as an independent force that structures social relations beyond social class while in *The Weight of the World* (1999) ethnicity emerges as the identity marker around which working class antagonisms take place in a society like France in the 1990s, with large numbers of migrants and a globalising economy (Weininger 2002:164).

Every migratory process brings inevitably a degree of social mobility, and for a vast majority of people this is, at least in the beginning, a degree of downward mobility, which, it is hoped, will be 'repaid' over time. Many of the 'foreign' parents I interviewed during my research described how their move to Ireland was motivated not only with a desire to improve their own life but, above all, to give their children the best opportunities in terms of education and jobs. The migratory process affects people's ability to use their human capital. However, scarce knowledge of the language, failure to recognise the educational credentials, as well as the loss of traditional support structures constitute among the major problems migrants have to cope with. Migrants frequently enter those sectors in the labour market in which jobs are available instead of those sectors that they are most qualified or suited for. In her theory of 'segmented assimilation', Min Zhou analyses the different integration paths followed by migrants in the US: a first path of upward mobility characterised by a growing acculturation and integration into the white middle class; an opposite path of

downward mobility of assimilation into the underclass; and a third alternative of upward mobility twinned with a preservation of tradition and sense of ethnic identity (Zhou, 1997:975). These different patterns of social mobility are related, among other factors, to the migrant's social class and nationality and in particular to the attitude towards schooling and education that they deploy to their children. While Zhou stresses second generations of highly educated migrant parents have higher chances to success and assimilate to the 'white' American middle class, the opportunities for first generation migrants, and even those holding high education capital, are frequently lower than expected.

This is confirmed by recent research in Europe. Sondra Cuban (2012) for instance, has researched the lives of health care professionals who migrated to England and became carers, thus deskilling their profile to be able to enter into the job market. Their struggle and strategies carry high financial and psychosocial costs. In line with these results, Riaño and Baghdadi's research on skilled migrant women in Switzerland concludes:

> The results show that only a small minority of the women in this study have been able to secure employment that corresponds to their skill level and that has long-term prospects. This is remarkable, because most of the women had good educational qualifications and professional experience prior to migration, and all of them mastered the German language.(...) Thus for the majority of women in this study, migration means deskilling, loss of confidence, and loss of autonomy. We view this as a missed opportunity for "brain gain" for Swiss society (Riaño and Baghdadi, 2007:180).

This means that educational and human capital are not universal but context-specific: an individual is differently valued in the job market according to factors depending on the positions available in that country's job market, but also on a country's laws

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and migration policy, as well as social norms concerning gender, ethnicity and social class.

In conclusion, recent research emphasise how migrant's human and educational capitals built in their home country are not immediately transposable into the host country, thus bringing to a loss a social status. This is also the case of the many highly educated international parents at Newtown for whom this loss of status meant living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood and enrolling their children to a DEIS school. I will bring on a number of case studies showing these paths in the next chapters.

Why class is always in the classroom?

In a recent article on the *Irish Times*, the principal of Coláiste Chiaráin in Croom, Co Limerick, considered to be one of the most successful schools in Ireland, discussed how his school improved its position at a national level since 1999. In explaining one of the 'signs' of the appreciation that the school was getting in the local community the principal stated that: 'It's sort of sad to say, but once I started getting the middle classes to accept the school, that's when I knew we were going to be successful. Success breeds success' (*Irish Times* 2011). Attendance by the middle classes is recognised as a sign that 'things are starting to improve'. The middle classes, therefore, are those who can navigate successfully in a school world where the paradigms of market and competition are increasing and with dominating 'changes in the moral economy of society – an ethical retooling – legitimated, encouraged and made possible by the values of the market regime' (Ball, 2006:115). In this context, the working classes and the poorer seem to be left with what's 'on offer' locally and

their 'cultural options' come to be considered of less value than the middle classes

ones:

> The cultural symbols of the working class population, who are marginalised
> economically, are also the subject of a lack of prestige culturally because
> their cultural options are considered to lack knowledge and taste and become
> associated negatively as the 'problem with the working class' (Lawler, in
> Mac Ruairc, 2009:125).

It is through this process that schools become 'arenas of injustice' (Keniston

et al., 1977) where instead of being mitigated social inequalities continue to be

reproduced. Sullivan, for example, stresses how despite the fall in the material costs

for education caused by the universal provision of free and compulsory secondary

education, the association between class origin and educational success remains

constant (Sullivan, 2002:146). Bourdieu's perspective, via Lareau, is important here:

> [*Bourdieu*] would never suggest, for example, that more parents could
> improve their children's school success by adopting particular practices.
> Instead, he would point out that the number of elite slots in society is limited.
> Thus, any effort to spread an elite practice to all members of the society
> would result in the practice being devalued and replaced by a different sorting
> mechanism. In this sense, his model suggests that inequality is a perpetual
> characteristic of social groups (Lareau, 2003: 277).

This is why Bourdieu's focus on the non-material resources that middle class parents

can deploy is so central. These resources, which depend on the capital possessed,

reflect an ability to dominate the space, in this case the space within the 'educational

arena':

> The ability to dominate space, notably by appropriating (materially or
> symbolically) the rare goods (public or private) distributed there, depends on

the capital possessed. Capital makes it possible to keep undesirable persons and things at distance at the same time that it brings closer desirable persons and things. (…) Conversely, those who are deprived of capital are either physically or symbolically held a t a distance from goods that are the rarest socially (…). The lack of capital intensifies the experience of finitude: it chains one to a place (Bourdieu, 1999:127).

The rise of a market paradigm in educational policy is partially a consequence of the increased autonomy given by the state to schools. This autonomy, according to Mac Ruairc, in turn equates with a 'delegation of blame': giving responsibility for failure to individual schools (2009:123) and thus hiding responsibilities in policy making and funding at the national political level.

Michel Peillon argues that the 'commodification of education' is caused by a blurring of the boundaries between different spheres of social life, especially culture and the economy. According to Peillon, before the economic boom the cultural sector was dominated by a Catholic Church that monopolised education. This did not match with the economic sector's requirements for industrial development (Peillon, 2002:42). This process, referred to as de-differentiation or implosion, can be found in post-industrial economies and consumer societies:

> The implosion of economy, culture and society is usually related to the extension of the dynamic of capitalism to culture. The view has long been held that capitalism maintains its growth only to the extent that it absorbs new places or new spheres of activity. It continues to penetrate the most remote areas of the world while intensifying its impact in those places where it is well implanted (Peillon, 2002:46).

Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland indeed seems to have been particularly receptive towards the market paradigm in education: no surprise that the neo-liberal politics of the economic boom had an influence even on educational policy. In his analysis of post-Celtic Tiger citizenship, Joseph Dunne remarks, 'The extent to which knowledge is

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now construed as a commodity, education as a business, students and their parents as customers, and teachers as mere functionaries who must satisfy the demands of their managers and clients. All this is an accurate reflection of what seems to have become the dominant culture in contemporary Ireland' (Dunne, 2002:86). The most direct consequence is an 'increasing pressure on both adults and children in adapting to a world dominated by market forces and the need to maximise advantage in a highly competitive environment' (Devine, 1999:22). This is also expressed by an increased control of adults on children time and space and on a more structured and controlled form of play environments. According to Luciana Lolich, 'the increasing importance given to the economic aspects of education decreases … solidarity and critical thought' (Lolich, 2011).

Aidan Seery (2008) stresses that in the Irish educational debate, policy and theory are today dominated by a series of normative discourses such as the grammar of marketisation and commodity, and the rhetoric of developmental psychology, connected with the idea of personal development. These discourses are normative in that they not only describe but also legitimate a certain state of affairs, and are ideological in that they constitute a false representation and a simplification of education. The first discourse, 'the grammar of marketisation and commodity' is increasingly used in education policy in EU and abroad. Seery brings the example of a recent DES (the Irish Department of Education and Skills) document: 'high standards of service, greater accountability and quality planning to meet future educational needs' and 'delivering quality services that address the needs of our customers, clients and learners at all levels' (Seery, 2008:145). The second discourse is that of developmental psychology, according to Seery, which emphasises individual needs over the power of emancipation of education.

What are the consequences of the 'commodification of education' in actually existing school contexts? And how is social class related to this? Going back to the reflections of Stephen J. Ball on the marketisation of society, it now appears clear that people with a sufficiently high cultural capital have the power and the opportunity to choose. Choice for those who can afford it might be oriented toward private education. But even for those choosing public education, the catchment area policy will guarantee to people living in more wealthy area gain access to the best school options. During my fieldwork, for example, it was only at Oaktree School that teachers referred, frequently in quite polemic tones, to an emerging 'grind culture', wherein parents pushed their children to take extra private tuition, and on how many of them tended to attribute more importance to these expensive private lessons than to some school subjects which they presumed to be of less importance.

Opponents of the idea of an increasing 'marketisation of education' may argue that the catchment area policy and thus the substantial ghettoisation of poor people to their local schools is not a post-industrial issue per se because as it has always been an issue. This is partly true. However, it must be said that nothing has been done, even during the Celtic Tiger years, to solve this problem. Yet, the Celtic Tiger economic boom has not reduced the gap amongst the richest and the poorest sections of the Irish population.

Social class doesn't exist anymore... but it still matters

The words of the principal of Coláiste Chiaráin, mentioned above, resonate with the voices of those working at Oaktree College and Newtown School. For those teachers working in a 'good school' such as Oaktree, their previous experiences of teaching in

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a disadvantaged school are often described as a tough adventure, a 'rite of passage'

that many teachers go through in the hope of eventually finding a job in a 'real'

school. A 'real' and successful school is therefore one attended by 'the middle

classes'. The 'problem with the working class', and the conceptualisation of working

class culture as inherently inferior to the middle class culture is so deeply rooted that

even contemporary ethnographers end up repeating this mantra:

> The working class culture evident in all communities surrounding each
> school has an impact on the workings of the school and the individuals within
> them. Hegemonic ideologies concerning sexism, racism and homophobic
> attitudes (...) are reflected within schools (Russell, 2011:55).

Here we see how sexism, racism and homophobia are identified without any

problematisation as the ideology of the working class. This characterisation of the

values of the working class as intrinsically inferior resonates with the long debate on

the underclass which has its apex in the much-contested work of Charles Murray.

While most analysts of poverty tend to focus on the structural reasons acting as

'forces of expulsions' and causing unemployment, social exclusion and a 'loss of a

comprehensive approach to citizenship' (IEA, 1996:3), Murray focuses on the

behaviours (as both cause and consequence of poverty) of the most disadvantaged,

which he defines as the underclass, and characterizes as being in an economic, moral

and educational poverty. Blaming single parenthood as a key variable in perpetuating

poverty and dependency on state benefits, Murray portrays a pathological image of

the underclass, as increasingly 'contaminating' entire neighbourhoods (IEA,

1996:26). According to Murray the middle classes carry 'a heavy responsibility too:'

'to re-affirm *by their own behaviour* the desirability of bringing up children inside a

stable marriage. How the middle classes behave has huge resonance for classes lower

down the social scale, since it is the middle classes to which they aspire and whose lifestyle they wish to share' (1996:161).

Apart from his arguable approach to social inequalities, Murrays offers a radically different way to look at social class. While most theories tend to explain inequalities in structural terms or with a mix between structural and individual reasons, in Murray's theory the responsibility for one's social status is primarily designed in individual terms. This shows how social class is now a dynamic term, which can be approached considering many different aspects. To go back to the debate over the 'problem of the working class', the (superficial) attribution of working class values as intrinsically 'inferior' goes in pair with the assumption over whether the middle class values are necessarily reflecting a higher level of tolerance and open mind. On the contrary, contemporary middle classes are often depicted as 'socially exclusive' (Giddens, 2000). In the context of school based research, Reay et al. (2008), for example, stress how in the UK even those 'white' middle class parents who enrolled their children to comprehensive schools to share a more multicultural and multi-class environment do so to give their children the opportunity to be able to deal with different kinds of people – they do not have a real engagement in changing things. By making reference to Ghassen Hage, Reay et al., argue that middle class parents seem to be more interested in an ethnic surplus value of the 'exotic other' than in a nearer but perhaps less enriching 'working class other'. In this perspective, multiculturalism and interculturalism are superficial cosmopolitanism without a real spirit of exchange.

These fieldnotes below are composed of my reflections on what is included and what is excluded in the posters hanging on Oaktree College's walls. The following thoughts began life as mere 'observations' but eventually revealed their

great importance:

> When I came back in the train, I wondered about the discussion I had with Karen (a language support teacher). I was mentioning that I am looking at the representation of difference on the school walls. I realised that representation of difference at Oaktree includes sexual orientation, ethnicity, age; poverty in Africa: all these issues are worthy as issues to raise consciousness against discrimination. But what about class? Social class doesn't appear on the walls, is not supposed to be a reason of discrimination, but paradoxically in my experience in the two schools it is what makes the difference! Why are there representations of poverty in terms of third world and human rights and not in terms of class in Ireland? It's not a stupid question. Is like if intolerance is dealt at an individual level, but the greatest discrimination I can see in my research is that at the institutional level, and this is not represented on the school walls. Why not? It won't be fair or politically correct?
>
> It is like as if the status of 'different' can be displayed, recognised and consequently challenged if you are lesbian or gay, old, poor (in the third world), from another country, old, but not if you are poor in Ireland. What is the discourse underpinning this selection? (Fieldnotes).

Chapter 3:

Near but far away: a school day at Oaktree College and Newtown School

> Maths class, the teacher is checking attendance …
> *Teacher:* Maria, where is she?
> *Student:* She's gone.
> *Teacher:* Gone gone?
> *Student:* Yes.
> *Teacher:* Gone gone where?
> *Student:* She left school.
> The teacher doesn't say a word. The room is freezing, the heating doesn't
> work   (Fieldnotes, Newtown School, 2011).

> *Maura:* What do you want to do after your Leaving Certificate?
> *Sam:* I want to do psychology at DCU. You know, before I wanted to be an
> engineer, I had my stage at O2, I found it thanks to my father, he knew a guy
> there, then I had a job experience at Rover, again thanks to my father, and
> then in a special care clinic and in the end I decided to be a psychologist
>   (Interview with Sam, a Chinese student at Oaktree College, 2011).

Introduction

It is clear that Oaktree College and Newtown School are geographically proximate

but worlds apart in terms of local wealth distributions, cultural capital, employment

opportunities, and many other factors. From the beginning of the Celtic Tiger period

onwards, migration and ethnic diversity further complicated this already diverse area

of Dublin. But how do radical socio-economic and ethnic differences play out inside

the schools' walls? This chapter will describe a typical, composite school day at

Oaktree and Newtown to convey my experiences during my fieldwork.

Although I spent the majority of my time interacting with international

students, observing their language support classes or discussing intercultural

strategies, this chapter is not focused specifically on migrant students but on the two schools' organisation in general. A multicultural school is first of all a school, and an ethnography looking at the ways in which a school answers the challenge of increasing numbers of international students cannot start without an investigation of the school's ethos, its history and organisation, as well as the biographies and everyday behaviours of the people attending it. Indeed, as with other organisations, the school is a 'site for constructing meanings' (Wright, 1994:3), and the meanings that each school attach to international students, and more generally to cultural diversity, are related to its previous history.

Oaktree College and Newtown School (as with most Irish schools) predate the period of the Celtic Tiger and large-scale immigration – they became 'multicultural' schools. They met challenging demographic changes by re-engineering pre-existing ethos and organisational features. This is not to deny that schools, as every other institution, are able to accommodate change by modifying their rules and organisation through the years. Schools however, are also, in Bourdieu's words, 'historical artefacts' as all social collectivises, and as such, to fully grasp them, it is necessary to 'reconstruct the historical labour which has produced [the] social divisions through which they were constituted' (Bourdieu, 1991:248 in Weininger 2005:151).

Whole-school organizational approaches have been notably absent in scholarly discussions of diversity in education. It is only by holistically considering the minutiae of everyday school life that specific arrangements such as the provisions for international students can be framed as a part of the wider picture and thus better interpreted. This chapter, therefore, will provide a detailed record of a normal school day at Oaktree College and Newtown school, as I have experienced it during my

fieldwork. The chapter will focus on the school organisation, infrastructures and policies, as well as on everyday relations between school personnel and students. The main purpose is to show how the two schools' organisation and relations need to be observed by taking into consideration the wider frame of the local neighbourhood.

Susan Wright stresses the necessity to look at organisations as in a continuous process of 'organising' instead of an entity with a boundary against its environment. The meaning making process of organisations is what makes organisations 'real' (1994:19). In line with Wright, my purpose is therefore to show the ways in which the social fabric of the surrounding areas as well as the distribution of wealth and cultural capital influences the school organisation and is in 'dialogue' with the school.

A school day at Oaktree College

It is the first school day after the Christmas holidays. Students enter in the college building to start a new term. I see many faces looking unhappy at the prospect of being back to school after the long holiday. During my ethnographic fieldwork I got into the habit of taking an early train to reach Oaktree before the commencement of lessons, to observe different aspects of school life, including those aspects on display before school actually begins. In general, the entry is not too chaotic, considering that 1,100 students walk through the same doors in a short amount of time. Indeed, as I show in the extract from my field diary below, the entry represents the first chance to discipline students, literally during their first steps inside the school:

At the entry, I notice that students divide themselves into two rows: students in the first row swipe their card, while the others enter a digital number on a

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display. I later ask Mr Oliver (the school principal) and he explains that when students forget their card, they have to digit their student number in the display to make sure that their attendance is registered. At the entry door, Miss Conway, a young religion teacher, is checking, as usual, that each student looks in order: she chides many of them for wearing earphones or for wearing their uniform improperly, or having necklaces or earrings that 'do not conform' with the school code. Many students are picked out and have to 'fix' the problem in front of the teacher. A couple of minutes later, Mr Oliver joins Miss Conway and immediately stops a first year student wearing white trainers (students are expected to wear black shoes). They start talking, and the shy and somewhat scared boy tells him that his father has gone to San Francisco. Mr Oliver asks ironically: 'Did he bring your shoes with him? Go and sort it out' (Fieldnotes 2011).

Ordered entry, cart-swiping, proper dress code: this vignette shows a *dispositif* of regulation and self-regulation determining from the very first step inside the institution a set of precise rules to elicit the student ideal-type. This discipline and self-regulation at the school entrance resonates with Foucault's reflections on discipline. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault stressed how discipline in modern societies is related to procedures aiming to self-discipline individuals:

> The great book of Man-the-Machine was written simultaneously on two registers: the anatomical-metaphysical register, of which Descartes wrote the first pages and which the physicians and philosophers continued, and the technical political register, which was constituted by a whole set of regulations and by empirical and calculated methods related to the army, the school and the hospital for controlling and correcting the operations of the body (Foucault, 1995:136).

While walking through the corridors to reach Miss Connolly's classroom, I notice that a number of new posters have been hung on the walls during the holidays. The school walls host a number of posters, the majority of which aim to sensitise students towards different themes such as racism, homophobia and respect for older people. Last year, Ms Hanley, the Language Centre Coordinator, organised the 'Anna Project' involving a third-year student from Lithuania. She audited all the

posters hanging on the school walls, dividing them by argument and sorting out which topics were insufficiently 'showcased'. Anna wrote a report on this work, stressing that certain themes, such as homophobia, were insufficiently represented, and Ms Hanley rearranged the posters. Like Anna, many international students at Oaktree are very active in school life, especially in the development of the intercultural policy.

Miss Connolly is teaching English and religion in the school library, a small facility with a disappointing number of books available considering the 1,100 students. The school has no money to improve the library. The room is, however, comfortable, recently painted in yellow and purple, with a projector (every classroom in the school is provided with one), computers and a TV. The furniture is all new and very well maintained. There are framed posters of Irish writers hanging on the walls. There are also a great many students' drawings hanging in a dedicated space. In the back of the room and opposite to the teacher's desk, there are two sofas: this is where I usually sit during my observations of Miss Connolly's classes.

Miss Connolly is in her early thirties but despite her youth she has seven years of teaching experience. At the time of my fieldwork she taught English, religion and CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education) and was one of the teachers I observed most frequently in the school. I knew her teaching style very well, and the ways she related to students. Kind but quite timid, she was always available to answer my questions and was very interested in my research. This is probably why Mr. Oliver put me in contact with her before my fieldwork commenced. Miss Connolly told me more than once that she really enjoyed her job. She was also very active in extracurricular activities, such as the drama group and rising money for charity. Outside school, she was a volunteer teacher to the elderly.

Oaktree policy in general is not to teach any subject at foundation level and to try to push everybody towards the higher levels. When Miss Connolly enters the room early only two girls are present. She asks them courteously but firmly to arrange all the tables and they immediately do so without complaining. When the rest of the students arrive she asks them to read individually – they do so; no one whispers. This goes on for five minutes while she checks that every student has completed the homework they were assigned. I know that this is a strategy of Miss Connolly's: to keep students busy during every second and to give one and only one precise thing to do. Students know that if they will not do what they are asked to do Miss Connolly will notice. The level of control is also maintained by frequent questioning, and questions are often addressed to those looking tired or distracted. Almost everybody is given an opportunity to speak at least once every day.

Six students enter in the room a couple of minutes late. She asks each of them in turn to explain why they are late and it emerges that they were all at the lockers. She makes clear that nobody should be near the lockers between classes and that the next time this happens she will write a note in their journals. Although discipline is maintained firmly, not much time is wasted because she is quick and clear in her instructions and keeps students busy all the time. She returns a mock exam on 'language and personality'. 'I'm really impressed by these papers,' she says. 'They were very good'. She immediately starts writing on the blackboard about preparing a poetry essay. 'If you find that you are a weaker student … if you find it is very hard for you … use this structure for your essay,' she tells them. Everybody is writing in his or her copybooks; nobody is talking. When she uses an unfamiliar word, like *cliché*, they immediately ask the meaning. The students are attentive, but there is also a relaxed atmosphere. Before the end of the class, Miss Connolly asks the students to

read their books again for a couple of minutes, this time in a loud voice, calling on each student to read in turn. Again, those looking tired or distracted are picked first. There are many 'bad' words or phrases in the book, like *shit*, *kiss my ass* and so on, but nobody is laughing or making silly comments.

But Miss Connolly, like all teachers, encounters discipline issues. I once observed her teach second-year English. Someone notices that there are wasps in the room. A couple of girls start to scream, and the majority of them are not listening to the teacher anymore. Miss Connolly quickly finds another classroom, and while we are moving the atmosphere remains messy. 'Any excuse is good', she whispers to my ears as we enter the new classroom. Once settled, they exchange books and start to correct each other's homework, but Miss Connolly has to interrupt them frequently to keep them quiet and threaten them with extra work for the weekend. When she realizes that this strategy is not working, she silently starts to add numbers on the blackboard every time there is a disruption: students know that this represents the number of extra exercises they'll have to do (six in the end). She looks very angry and she stops frequently waiting for silence. 'Some of you do very well, but some of you are bringing the level down, not listening in class, and probably not doing anything at home either', she adds when silence is finally restored. At Oaktree, I frequently listened to teachers stressing that the level of the school is generally high and should remain so, and that students not putting in enough effort are letting themselves, their class and their school down.

Later on, I observe a class with Mr. Kelly, who teaches geography and Irish. Like most teachers, Mr. Kelly is always very kind to me and is always available to 'host' me in his classes, even when I enter during his lessons. One day, while we were chatting in a corridor and looking at the photographs of classes hanging on the

walls, Mr. Kelly, pointed out the picture of the 1996 graduating class, explaining that he was among the first students who graduated from Oaktree. After University, he took up a permanent position at Oaktree: 'Just in the right place at the right moment', he modestly says. Today, at twenty-seven years old, he has his former teachers as colleagues. Today's class includes exam preparation, and when we enter the room a number of students are already reading their books. As he enters in the room it becomes silent immediately. Mr. Kelly reads out questions, students write them down and have five minutes to answer them in writing. Nobody makes comments about the questions: they work in silence.

The School-Community Continuum

Today, as always, the houses surrounding Oaktree College are predominantly owner-occupied. All of the parents I interviewed during my fieldwork categorise their families as belonging to the 'middle class'. During the interviews and conversations I had with the parents of students attending Oaktree College many spoke with pride about their activist roles in establishing Oaktree in 1995. Ms. Crowley, the mother of two students, recalled:

> When we moved to this estate 25 years ago there was nothing around, fields only, no shops, no bus stop, and no schools. Oaktree has been build even thanks to the pressures we created as a local community: a local activist was running as TD to bring attention on the needs of this community (Interview, 2011).

Ms. Crowley recalled the local community's disappointment on realising the absence of infrastructure planning subsequent to the building of the houses built. The increase in population without a commensurate increase in infrastructure

obviously created an imbalance. She recalled how for her first son the closest parish primary school was full and they had to buy a car in order for her to bring him to another school. 'International' families were more difficult to 'fix' from the point of view of social class. While a significant proportion of international students' parents hold third-level degrees, many of them are employed in positions below the levels they perceive themselves to be qualified for, and the majority reside in rented apartments. Of course, one might argue that his pattern is typical for many first generation migrants. Maria, for example, is a fifth-year Polish student whose mother holds a degree in primary teaching from Poland but who is not allowed to teach in Ireland because she doesn't speak the Irish language. Maria's mother drives a DHL van, while her father, who has a secondary school diploma, works in construction. Nonetheless, her parents moved to the Oaktree College catchment area as soon as they could afford to pay higher rent, because they imagined it to be a much better place to live, and because they wished Maria to have the opportunity to attend a well-known college in the area. Maria's parents believe that education is essential to her future. From this point of view, Maria parent's, despite holding employment positions that are generally associated with the working class, are investing in middle-class cultural capital and are acting as middle class parents by valuing education and transmitting this cultural capital to their daughter. This is immigrant upward mobility.

Students and parents living in the community referred to the area as a quiet middle-class neighbourhood, where the majority of people knew each other and where children could play safely in the common fields. Daniel, a first-year student described his feelings during an interview:

>I feel very safe, no instances of guys missing, incidents. I feel definitely secure, is a good area with nice people I can trust, it is not like in disadvantaged areas where people may take away children (Interview, 2010).

This description is recognised by almost all of the parents and students as well as the teachers in the school – a number of whom live locally. Teachers generally perceive and define themselves as middle-class people, and this is also the case across Ireland generally (Devine, 2005:64). During my conversations with Oaktree students, teachers and parents, there was a clear sense of belonging and identification with the local area, and a sense of continuity between the neighbourhood and the school was underscored by the activities of the Parents' Association.

Oaktree College is widely regarded as the best public school in the region, with very high average grades in the Leaving Certificate examinations. For the vast majority of students and parents at Oaktree going on to third-level education is not an option but, rather, is taken-for-granted. All parents interviewed and the majority of students referred to university as a necessary step. Parents generally praised the school for the good quality of teaching, the range of extracurricular activities on offer, and in general they described the school as a very caring environment, especially vis-à-vis those more in need, such as students with disabilities. The school was also praised for the quality of the infrastructure, including classroom, common spaces, computer rooms, labs, and sports amenities. The building of a new multifunctional gym was approved during the year of my fieldwork. In the same area where the Oaktree is located, there are two private secondary schools, one for boys and one for girls, both run by the Catholic Church, with a reputations as good as Oaktree's. During my conversations with parents, four of them (of whom two are academics) indicated that they had the intention to enrol their children in the local private school, but that when they attended the Oaktree 'open day' they changed

their minds because they had a better impression of it. Two parents reported that the kids themselves put on pressure to be enrolled at Oaktree because they found the environment much friendlier than in the private school. Other parents justify their choice in economic terms or referring to the current economic crises, as Mr Thompson stated:

> The quality of education at Oaktree is terrific and she (her daughter) has very good marks. ... We had the idea to apply to St. Mary (the local Catholic girl's only school) but this is an expensive school, and you don't know with the current economic situation how it will be... and we always would like to have a chance to go to an expedition in Morocco or skiing in France. ... We went there for the open day with Aoife, she enjoyed the school, but when we visited Oaktree she preferred this one. At St. Mary there was a non-refundable €1,000 deposit, so in the end we decided for Oaktree. You know secondary school is important, people mention their secondary school as a point of honour, in particular if private (...). There are people in the neighbourhood richer than us and they send their children to Oaktree (Interview, 2011).

This quote is relevant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it reflects the idea that school choice among these parents is never a random act but, rather, implies knowledge about what is 'on offer' in the area, and this reflects an awareness of the importance of the reputations of the schools. This relates back to the previous chapter where I discussed the commodification of education and how middle-class parents can navigate more successfully in an increasingly competitive school market.

The social and cultural capital of parents is, in these cases, crucial to their children's cultural capital. School choice emerges as an evaluation not only of the school's quality and reputation but also in 'market terms' of costs and benefits. According to Ball (2003), this capacity is peculiar to the 'middle classes', who have the ability to see school choices as located in an 'educational market' and are able to enhance strategic choices, having the effect of perpetuating their social advantage.

Ball stresses how in the '50s and '60s there was too much emphasis on 'locating the motor of inequality within the family' (2003:4-5), while more recently the responsibility of families for the unequal educational chances that poorer students have compared to their middle-class peers has been neglected:

> While I would not turn back the clock as far as underplaying the role of institutional differentiation and other social factors in producing educational inequalities, there has been neglect on the actions on families (…) in recent times. We now have the theoretical resources which enable attention to be paid to the differences within and between families without an immediate collapse into social pathology (Ball, 2003:5).

The strongest link between families and Oaktree College – showing at one and the same time a strong sense of continuity with the neighbourhood – is the role played by the Parents Association (PA) plays for the school. This sense of continuity is confirmed in an interview with Miss Connell, a French teacher who lives in the neighbourhood:

> My children go to a private school because there was no place at Oaktree; basically, I'm working to pay their fees! If there was a place here I would have enrolled them here, because it has a very good reputation. Private schools are good also, but my daughter keeps challenging the religion teacher and I understand her (Interview, 2011).

This quote shows that teachers at Oaktree consider the school as an option for their own kids. This, again, denotes a sense of continuity between the school and the neighbourhood. On the contrary, I will describe Newtown School below as a sort of 'happy island' disconnected from the area. By this, I mean that teachers working at Newtown do not live in the area and would never consider enrolling their children in the school where they teach. Moreover, the continuity between school and

neighbourhood at Oaktree was mediated by the strong participation of parents in school life. This did not did not exist in the case of Newtown.

A school day at Newtown Community School

The school day starts earlier at Newtown for those who want to attend the 'Breakfast Club', and today I decided to join the activity. Michael welcomes me with a smile when I enter in the room located at the backstage of the school's main hall. Michael is not a teacher: he works for the Department of Education and together with Peter he takes care of the organisation of the Breakfast and the Homework Club at Newtown and at its feeder Primary School. These are both activities funded by the Department of Education and Skills DEIS (Disadvantaged Schools) program.

Students know that Michael is not a teacher and many of them have a special relation of trust with him. Being in touch with the most disadvantaged students and their families, Michael is much more aware of their opinions and feelings than the majority of teachers and when talking to me he has sometimes confesses that the teachers' image of the poorest families is often based on stereotypes.

Michael and Rita, the cook, serve toast with butter, together with juice, cereals and milk, while students sit and chat. They are constantly reminded that they can't bring food outside. The Breakfast Club is a pre-school breakfast offered to all junior students which is usually attended by a group of 20-25 students each morning, including some seniors. By bringing students to school earlier and offering them a breakfast, the program aims to give them a good start to the day and suggest to them that school can be a safe and nurturing place. Moreover, as Michael reminds me

while serving food, a number of these students simply do not have the opportunity to eat breakfast because their parents are either not at home or not able, for many reasons, to prepare breakfast, so this is a chance to eat something before lessons begin. Attendance is open, but Michael and Peter, during their visits to the families most in need of some extra help, inform parents about the activity and suggest that they make their kids to attend. Michael adds that parents are generally very receptive to these suggestions.

The first objective of the Breakfast Club is to target those students at risk of dropping out of school before their Junior Certificate. Although Michael and Peter often stressed that all parents, even the most disadvantaged ones, do care about the education of their children, a number of students at Newtown do leave school before the legally permissible age. Anna, the local Youth Officer, summarised the situation during an interview:

> If your older brother has no Leaving Cert it's not cool for you to do it. You prefer to go to Youth Reach because you are paid, which is ridiculous. Parents just don't understand because they are not educated to. We are trying to push every kid to go at list for the Junior Cert (Interview, 2011).

When all students leave the room, I help Michael and Rita to clean up and ask Michael how he would portray the typical 'Breakfast Club' family?

> All of them live in council houses you know, Maura. ... All the houses surrounding the school are council houses. ... There are many parents with alcohol and drug dependencies, lot of poverty. Nobody has regular jobs; all of them are on the dole. Certain houses have no electricity and no heating. More than half are single-mother families. But once I see them for five times they trust me, if I give them a suggestion or I propose activities for their children they are happy to agree (Fieldnotes).

It is now time to go to the first class of the day with Albany, one of the classes I was assigned to observe by Miss Pearce, the school Principal. Maybe because this is a first year class or maybe because I ended up knowing all of the class quite well, but Albany kids are my favourite class. They always welcome me very cheerfully when I enter the room. The girls are especially curious about my life and often question me about Italy. Ms. Kerr, the Irish teacher, is in her late forties and she has often confessed feeling tired of teaching, finding Albany's students 'nice but quite challenging'. Indeed, as usual, when we enter the room together it takes several minutes to convince everybody to sit down and stay quiet. As soon as discipline is restored, what eventually grew to term the 'toilet ceremony' begins. Ms. Kerr asks who needs to go to the toilet and the vast majority of the class raise their hands. After this, she gives the toilet keys to two students, reminding them to be very quick. They eventually return and give the keys to two other students, and so on until all of the students who raised their hands have gone to the toilet. The whole toilet ceremony takes more than twenty minutes from beginning to end. In the meantime, the lesson starts, and students need to be constantly reminded to maintain discipline:

> There are a great number of people standing and walking with every kind of different excuse (people looking for a rubber, or going to the bin). Angela sits with her back to the wall. When Miss Kerr asks her to sit up properly she says in a very bored voice that this is the only position she can sit to see the blackboard, which is quite untrue as she sits in the first row. She is not moving and Ms. Kerr pretends not to see her, but she can't start the lesson because Darren asks her for a pencil. She says she doesn't have one and a couple of students start to look for a pencil for him. Now Ms. Kerr is asking where Tom is, and Angela explains he went home because he was too tired, so Ms. Kerr replies she would love to go home too because she is also very tired. Every disruption is a chance for students to chat, or stand up with every excuse. Ms. Kerr writes a note on Kevin's diary because he doesn't have the book and asks about when his mother is coming in? He says in two weeks, and asks if he can go to the vending machine to get a drink. The Public Announcement system interrupts the lesson: over the speakers, the Principal thanks the 130 people who were involved in the Variety Show. This is a very

long disruption and Miss Kerr after a while says, 'Keep working,' but for many of them this represents just an excuse to not work. The announcement goes on for several minutes and involves thanking all of the people involved in the show, until the bell rings. They did almost nothing during this class. Miss Kerr quickly gives out some homework without writing the instructions on the board: half of the students don't take notes (Fieldnotes, 2011).

All Miss Kerr was able to do during this class was to write six short sentences on the blackboard, explain the meaning of the sentences and ask students to copy the sentences in their copybooks, although not all of them were able to complete the task. From a pedagogic point of view, not much was achieved: the level of disruption was extremely high and the teacher was not able to maintain discipline. Moreover, there were constant announcements over the Public Announcement speakers that represented further reasons for disruption. Announcements were half of the time about people looking for other people, thus completely irrelevant for the majority of the classes. These are just two examples drawn from my notes:

The speakers interrupt the lesson for 10 minutes. Firstly, the secretary asks a teacher to contact the principal; then the principal informs everyone that today the 'Water Week' commences, explaining quickly what it is. Then she reminds everyone that no earphones are allowed in the school, and that the school uniform includes black shoes; no black with white stripes. Wednesday 16th is non-uniform day! After this, she reminds everyone about a book launch in the local library, and finally she talks about the school dance competition. Students look at each other's probably thinking, 'Who cares about all this?' The teacher looks exhausted, probably thinking the same (Fieldnotes).

The PA system interrupts the lesson for four announcements: there will be a rigorous check on shoes -- shoes must be all black; students will be sent home if they have white shoes; buy the recipe book, there is a PowerPoint presentation on water in the main hall; encourage your parents to read the book *Wilderness* (Fieldnotes).

The bell rings and I have a couple of free minutes before the next lesson, so I decide to take a walk towards the school entrance. I find Miss McCourt, the

School Chaplain: she is talking to a girl who has just asked to the secretary to call her mother because she wants to go home – apparently she's sick. Miss McCourt stays with her for a good five minutes, talking and trying to understand the real reason why she wants to go home. She concludes very resolutely: 'Now you go back to class, have a walk first, drink some tea if you like, but go back because you've been missing for four days!' Miss McCourt is a very important character in the school: she teaches religion but she is also 'paid to hang around'. To be the Chaplain in a school like Newtown means, first of all, to take care of those students more 'at risk' of dropping out and those whose families are experiencing hard times. For this reason it was not unusual to meet her in the corridor or in her own office talking to students.

Back in Albany, 'my' first-year class, geography is being delivered by Miss Davies, a young teacher, much more charismatic and determined to maintain discipline than many others. Despite this, keeping the attention of Albany for fifty minutes is not an easy job:

> She enters in the classroom and immediately asks the students to open their copies so that she can check their homework. Simultaneously, she calls on people quickly. Angela is copying the homework as quickly as she can from her friend's copy.
>
> *Miss Davies:* 'Angela you sit properly now or you sit in the front.'
> *Angela (changes position):* 'What is the difference sitting here and there?'
> *Miss Davies:* 'Lots.'
> *Angela:* (talks with a low voice): 'Be quiet.'
>
> Miss Davies asks her again to sit properly, she does, but changes position immediately after she turns. People keep going to the bin, changing places, but still they are working, she keeps asking questions, calling on specific people and praising them if they do well. I am amazed by the amount of movement around the class and even more amazed by the fact that learning activities go on despite it. Miss Davies is now writing on the whiteboard. 'Are we looking up? Eyes here!' She constantly tries to keep attention. Only a couple of them are sitting still for the whole lesson (Fieldnotes).

I will frequently hear teachers describing students like Angela, that is, students not able to sit properly or to stay still for the whole lesson as having a disorder. A frequent 'diagnosis' was, 'I think that he/she has a bit of ADHD'. However, I have always thought that this was a very superficial interpretation, and that this behaviour was more as a sign of a resistance towards the school than any biologically rooted inability to stay still. This was confirmed when I visited Angela's home twice to meet her parents. Angela was in the living room with us, and behaving in a completely different way than she does when at school, perfectly able to 'stay still' on the sofa while conversing with me and her mother, asking me kindly if I wanted a cup of tea, or joking about the teachers she hated most.

For the next two periods, I follow Mr. Holmes, a math teacher in his late fifties. Mr. Holmes was probably the teacher I met during my fieldwork with whom I felt the greatest attitudinal differences, though we always maintained friendly relations. The truth is that I needed Mr. Holmes because he gave me free access to his foundation level classes, classes that the school principal did not encourage me to observe. Despite being always available and kind to me, I didn't appreciate the lack of respect he showed to his weaker students; and my reaction to Mr. Holmes was shared by many other teachers, especially the younger teachers. Very challenging as a teacher, ironic and always sarcastic, Mr. Holmes always gave me the impression that he valued teaching only when oriented to the best students, and considered teaching the other to be a waste of time.

I was always interested in observing Mr. Holmes during these two periods, because each time I could see a clear transformation in his behaviour. During the first period, Mr Holmes teaches to a 5th-year higher-level stream; during the second period, he teaches to a 3rd-year foundation-level class. The differences between the

two classes, but most of all, the differences in the ways in which he related to students, always left me astonished.

I meet Mr. Holmes in the staff room before the lesson and he welcomed me in his usual style: 'Are you coming into my class now Maura? There will be even fewer than usual: they are all dropping because they don't like me'. This is not the whole truth, of course. The real reason is that he is very challenging and many students asked to be allowed drop higher-level maths because they were not performing well enough. Today, only three students are attending this class: Claire, Dylan and Robert. Claire is from the Philippines and wants to be a surgeon one day. Last year she won the prize as best student of the year. Dylan and Robert are Irish-born and they both want to go to university, although they look much less determined than Claire. Mr Holmes is very challenging, especially with Claire, and sometimes it looks like he talking to her only. Given the numbers, this looks more like a private lesson, and the level is very high. Mr Holmes questions me twice and twice I give the wrong answer. There are no interruptions, no discipline issues and no talking out of turn. He is professional and challenges them but at the same time he is respectful if someone says something wrong. When Mr Holmes and I leave the classroom to join his foundation-level class, I ask him why he is so challenging with Claire. He replies that he is deciding if she will have to leave the higher-level for the ordinary-level one and adds that this could be a disaster for her, because she will need as many points as possible to be admitted to a medicine programme in university and if she takes maths at ordinary level she may not have enough points. He also adds that he is not sure whether the school will be able to afford to pay him next year to teach only two of three students.

After this class, entering the room with 'Boston', his 3rd-year Foundation-Level class presents quite a brisk change. For a teacher like Mr Holmes, as for many others I met at Newtown, it is very challenging to move from a higher-level class to teaching in a class like Boston. This is what Mr Holmes sarcastically defines his 'weaker class'. This is a class where, according to Mr Holmes, foreign students 'do not mix'. 'International student in general do better than Irish, see for example Claire', he told me once. 'But they mix better in higher streams. At Foundation Level they don't mix at all'. There are 20 students in this class, and 15 of them are non-Irish.

What captures my eye when I enter the class is the amount of hair – the long, elaborately combed hair of the many migrant girls. They are all very chatty, and Mr Holmes looks less motivated and more annoyed than usual. While he is teaching, or trying to do so, I always have the feeling he wants to humiliate them because I am there, and he often looks at me as if to say, 'I told you they were a disaster'. Many students are continually yawning; they are not at all receptive to what the teacher says, and the standard is low:

Mr Holmes is checking homework. He takes a number of journals. As usual there are people chatting, laughing. While walking to check homework a student tells him, 'I never do my homework', while giving him the journal. Nico looks like a little gang boy, with his two big golden rings on his fingers, he is trying hard to affect the expression of a bad boy.

Now they are trying to convert from kilometres into metres. Most of them give wrong answers, papers are falling; people are moving and chatting. The next exercise is to find the perimeter of a rectangular. Mr Holmes asks what the perimeter is? A student replies that it's the area. Remember they are about 16 years old. It takes a lot to say what is the perimeter, Nico finally says it is 5+5+8+8; another student adds, 'Sir, it is also 5x2 + 8x2', Mr Holmes replies, 'Yes, but that's only for clever people'. The boy thanks the teacher without even suspecting his sarcasm. He is constantly using this kind of irony with people in this class; he is completely different now than in the other class. Now Mr Holmes is asking what a cube is and what the difference is between a square and a cube. The first reply is that a cube is smaller. The

second is that the cube has to fit in the square. Mr Holmes asks Nico, 'What is 2x4?' He replies, '6', and then '12'.

The PA system interrupts three times. One is to look for Marius. Mr Holmes asks to a student to go and say Marius is not here. Marius is a Romanian Gypsy, missing this lesson since ages, probably retired. Nobody knows. A student says 'Wrotten down'. Mr Holmes looks at me saying that my English will improve if I stay here. We all laugh (Fieldnotes).

Today my observations at Newtown finish after lunch with the Homework Club. This activity, as the Breakfast Club, is organised by Michael and Peter and has the purpose to keep students in school to provide them help with homework. Students who need to may join freely, but most of the time it is the teacher that suggests a student should join, and Peter and Michael get the consent of the student's families. The Club is facilitated by Sarah, a young English teacher who always gave me the impression that she felt obliged to be there:

There are only 5 people today, 4 girls and 1 boy, the boy is Nigerian, the others are all Irish. But it takes time for Sarah to calm them down, and when she asks them to start working, they all complain. It is difficult for them to start; there is lot of chatting, standing, etc. We are in the horrible room behind the arts room, the one with the broken ceiling. Two other girls, both international students join later. One of the two girls has sweets with her, they all start eating while starting working and it gets quieter. After 40 minutes of very light work, where Sarah looks like she is there to supervise more than help with the actual content of the work they are doing, they start playing with board games, mime, there is a radio and plenty of junk food. I am always amazed to see the crisps, chocolate and candies they give to the students, but so far there is zero education food. I eat and play with them. There is never a behaviour issue. Perhaps junk food is included in a strategy to convince them to join the group and enjoy school. I ask Sarah if she is going to do this job next year, but she even doesn't know if she will teach in the school.

Jonathan (the Nigerian boy) is now writing 25 times on his copy, 'I must not throw papers in the ground'. That's a measure taken by his tutor and, he says, 'If I am not doing it by tomorrow it will be 100 times instead of 25'. Clearly, to finish sooner he is not writing word by word each sentence but he writes the first word 25 times and so on' (Fieldnotes).

Figure 2 – School priorities 1: Antigay bullying posters hanging at Oaktree College. These were added as a result of the 'Anna Project' realised by an international student

Figure 3 – School priorities 2: Anti-drugs poster in Newtown Community School

Newtown School: the 'Happy Island'

Despite being distant only three miles away from Oaktree's middle-class neighbourhood, Newtown School is located in a much poorer area: the majority of the estates surrounding the school are public housing projects. Newtown school was built in 1979 in one of the most disadvantaged parts of the Dublin 15 area and enrolled just under 500 students during my fieldwork year. The school is therefore included in the Department of Education DEIS (designated disadvantaged) scheme and receives specific financial support to put in place a variety of programs to prevent early school leaving, targeting in particular those students at risk of leaving school before their Junior Certificate, and also aiming to increase the number of students going on to third-level education. The school has an active home-school liaison scheme, a school completion and a very dedicated 'care team' who meet every week to discuss the students in need of any extra support, including emotional, economic and educational supports.

Thought some sections of the school are newly built, other sections are in serious need of renovation: a couple of classrooms had broken ceilings and heating system not working. Moreover, I often noticed an internal garden outside the windows with an open theatre in disuse, with wild grass growing. I always thought that it would be very easy to fix it up, maybe on a Sunday afternoon with the help of a couple of parents. I was also impressed by the little guardroom in the courtyard next to the entrance. A security man was always stationed there to check persons at the school entrance. The guardroom had a small window with a metal grate, and this always gave me the impression of the entrance to a prison more so than a school. The courtyard was frequently strewn with empty coke tins and plastic bottles. The

entrance to the school does not give one a positive impression, and this is continued as one encounters the secretary's office on the far side of a glass window, which needs to be opened every time someone wishes to speak with her. Both the guardroom and the secretary's office suggest a need to be divided from the students. There were never security guards at Oaktree neither inside nor outside the school spaces

The vast majority of the pictures hanging on the school walls depict the history of the school (celebrations, Taizè, awards, sport activities) but also paintings and non-permanent information on how to avoid catching meningitis; drawings, non-permanent expositions, pictures of Irish writers, the world school debating championship, septicaemia, DCU. In sum: a very heterogeneous collection of issues. Nothing related to human rights or about intercultural issues was hanging on the school walls. As Figure 3, above, shows, even a quick look at the walls reminds one that Newtown has very different priorities than Oaktree. For example, a poster by the local organisation mobilising against drug dealing was a constant reminder of the problems in the neighbourhoods outside the school's walls.

The discontinuity between the neighbourhoods where Oaktree and Newtown are located is sharp both in terms of urban landscape than in its inhabitants' levels of wealth. Newtown's neighbourhood is a mix between working class families, people who recently lost their jobs due to the recent economic downturn, and the long-term unemployed. The number of migrants per head of population is among the highest in Dublin 15, and therefore in the whole country. This is how Ms Mc Court described the area:

> The majority of the people living in the area are poor, both economically and emotionally. ... But there are also many working class people doing fine. ...

Ten years ago here there were burned cars, burden houses, glass everywhere, wild horses. I think the shopping centre improved a lot the area, people got jobs, although many of them have lost their jobs now, they improved their houses; it is a safer place now. Before it was a dreadful place, rubbish, caravans, horses. The new Library too improved a lot the situation, there are lot of new houses, new shops, the LIDL. Earlier on there was only a small shop and a takeaway (Interview, 2011).

The majority of parents and students living in the area, although aware of the negative reputation the neighbourhood maintains in Dublin 15 and of the problems afflicting the neighbourhood such as poverty and unemployment, drug and alcoholism, nonetheless felt that these problems did not affect the majority of the residents. There was a general recognition of the fact that poverty and neglect were present in the area in higher degrees than in other parts of Dublin, but there was also the perception that the majority of people were 'good people, working and taking care of their children'. Many of the residents expressed a strong sense of belonging to the area.

However, a number of parents reported an increasing sense of estrangement. This arose, they explained, because of the large numbers of newcomers, in particular migrants. Some felt nostalgic for an ideal past when 'there were parties in the streets and you could trust everybody because you knew everybody'. This sense of loss and estrangement was sometimes expressed in terms of intolerance towards migrants and, more rarely, in the form of prejudice. I will discuss this in more detail in the chapter dedicated to international students' voices.

Although few teachers lived in the area many recognised the strong sense of local community solidarity. Miss Shane, a religion and music teacher and one of my key informants in the school, spoke to this theme. Miss Shane had considerable teaching experience in different schools in Ireland and overseas and had been working at Newtown since 2000, where she was also a Tutor and an Assistant Year

Head. During an interview, Miss Shane described the positive and negative features

of the neighbourhood:

> The area has a strong sense of community. People are trying to make their
> house to look nice and there are proud to. But a minority of people are
> making the area unsafe. Nighttimes are unsafe here. It is a hard place to live
> when you are poor (Interview, 2011).

This balancing of positive and negative aspects was present in descriptions

of the area given by the majority of the teachers:

> I would tell you that this is a very close community, underprivileged in some
> ways but quite rich in other ways. I say underprivileged because there is a
> terrible poverty, neglect and abuse, but is quite rich because they support
> each other for everything, when someone dies funerals are full of people. ... It
> is a very supportive community (I ask why for her this is the case) ... because
> it is 'us against the world'. Only few travel outside the area. Family grow up
> and stay close, everybody knows everybody, and many families are settled
> since many years (Interview, 2011).

Parents, on the other side, were much more positive when talking about the

area. They often expressed satisfaction about the positive changes that the area

underwent during the past ten years, in particular referring to an important

redevelopment plan that invested in the whole Blanchardstown town centre,

including both public and private investments. In particular, this involved the

construction of the new County Council Offices, a new Library (the biggest in the

whole country), a theatre, and a shopping centre. The majority of the people in the

area, including Newtown teachers, judged this latter amenity in a very positive light.

People were in agreement in stressing how the shopping centre provided large

numbers of jobs and contributed to a general 'opening' and improvement of the area.

Despite these improvements, however, the area is still included in a number of

national projects targeting disadvantage. In addition to the DEIS scheme, which I mentioned above, the area is included in the RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) project, a government scheme targeting the most disadvantaged urban areas and provincial towns in Ireland to tackle issues such as social inclusion and disadvantage.

All of the parents I interviewed shared the teachers' representation of the school as a very caring environment, and all reported their happiness with the quality of teaching. However, while Oaktree College students, parents and teachers described the local area all in similar ways, at Newtown teachers tended to describe their area in much more negative terms than parents and students. I maintain that this incongruence is caused by the fact that no Newtown teachers lived in the area or enrolled their children in the school. Many made reference to a sense of estrangement they felt with the local community and their sense that they wouldn't be able to make friends should they move to the area, referring to the locals as 'too different from them'. As Miss Conway, the Language Support Teacher explained during an interview:

> There are a couple of foreign students whose parents are doctors, it annoys me they are in class with twenty other people not dedicated at all, I would like to tell their parents to change school, you know, they look at their peers. … I wouldn't give my son this, and you too, Maura (Interview, 2011).

Indeed, while at Oaktree College teachers described the local area as being in continuity with the school, at Newtown School a frequent metaphor employed was that of the school as a 'happy island' in stark contrast to an outside perceived as unsafe. As Miss Mc Court explained: 'I think that the school here is a safe place,

there is lot of care, we know people personally, and it is a happy place for students to go' (Interview, 2011).

The image of Newtown School emerging from my conversations and interviews with parents and teachers was that of a 'happy island'. I will discuss in the next chapters the ways in which this representation is also shared by students and in particular by international students. What is important to stress here, however, is that while parents and teachers appear to share the representation of the school as a safe place, they portray the local area in quite different terms, with most parents aware of the problems of the area but enjoying being part of it, and teachers are keener to stress the negative aspects. Interestingly, a number of Newtown's teachers tended to automatically associate poverty with neglect and bad parenting. This extract represents just one of the many illustrative conversations I had with teachers:

> *Teacher:* Ten years ago here there was more money, I don't know where it came from. I don't mean a lot of money, but they went on holiday together for two weeks. They had cars, but not books; no uniforms, but expensive TVs. 6th years had jobs. Now even their parents don't have jobs.
> *Maura:* What are the priorities of these people?
> *Teacher:* The priorities in the community are very wrong, priority is to keep up with the neighbour, if they go on holiday I have to go, if they buy a new TV, I have too, but there is no priority in giving importance to books, education, of doing homework. And if they go on holiday, that is drinking holiday, is not going to the museum as you and me would do, it is not the cultural holiday. So they could do holiday in their garden. … It is so difficult, the cycle doesn't change: alcohol, early pregnancy, racial discrimination… it is very frustrating for us (Interview, 2011).

Teachers' misrepresentation of parents priorities was also confirmed when Tom, a first-year student from Nigeria attending Albany class, was suspended for two days for bad behaviour. A couple of days later, I was talking about him with Miss Ryan, his Year Head in the staff room. Miss Ryan was complaining because during the two days of suspension Tom 'was sent to school' by his mother, who was,

according to the teacher, 'Not even answering at the telephone'. 'I know stereotyping is horrible', she added, referring to African parents who, according to her, do not take enough care of their kids, 'and I do believe Tom, but she was avoiding meeting us, and Roma are the same, they don't care'. The Year Head went on to admit that Tom's mother sleeps all day, because she works during the night, but in any case she didn't consider this as good parenting, because she sent her son to school while suspended. And, she didn't come to school to talk to teachers about this, although she noted that when Tom's brother was suspended she did come to school for a meeting.

Teachers, therefore, tend to have a misrepresentation of the neighbourhood, or at least a different representation than parents do, and tend also to portray certain families as dysfunctional and poor at parenting. Adults with close connections with the local community offer a different picture of it. When I asked Michael, the educator working for the DEIS project if he felt that there were misunderstandings between teachers and parents, he gave me a much more nuanced image of local families, an image which challenged the association between poverty and neglect:

> *Michael:* There are students who will come to school without uniform, parents don't have money to pay it, and this created misunderstandings with the school: they will think parents just don't care while the truth is that they are so disempowered that they feel they can't even call the school to say they need help. So, it is only when the school calls them to ask about uniforms, about the exams to pay for, that they will recognise that they don't have money. Some of these families may have rich items at home but they may have had these items for a cheap price through strange connections. ... Others are really extremely poor. No big TV screens at home, just a mess and nothing else.
> *Maura:* What is their attitude toward education?
> Michael: Believe me, I have never met one single parent saying that he doesn't care about the education of their children.
> *Maura:* Teachers don't think so.
> *Michael:* (talking silently) No, teachers don't understand this (Interview, 2011).

What are at stake here are different and class-based ideals and representations of what 'safe communities' or 'good parenting' are. Teachers look at local parents from their own point of view of the educated and often middle class people living away from Newtown, and seem not to be able to see a disadvantaged family as giving importance to education. From teachers' perspectives, good parenting means necessarily giving importance to education and being able to deal successfully with the school world. This world however, has always had rule and codes that are much more in tune with the middle-class values and languages than working class ones. From their side, Peter and Michael, who work in close contact with the community, are more able to look at the question in nuanced ways: they argue that all parents *do* care for education and despite a number of them do not have the cultural capital to guarantee the best educational chances for their children – they can nonetheless be 'good parents'.

Oaktree and Newtown: near but far away

Having portrayed the general atmosphere one may perceive in the two schools, it is now timely to analyse and discuss a number of aspects concerning the organisation and the relations in both schools, to show once more how the two schools are 'near but far away'. This is to show once more that the whole set of relations, behaviours, policies and rules, but also the resources available for extracurricular activities, are radically different in the two schools. I argue that the major cause of these differences rests in the different social contexts where these are located. This, in turn, may have important consequences in the educational success of students, in

particular those more in need of extra help, like students from disadvantaged backgrounds or international students in need of linguistic support. In the next chapters, where I will discuss in detail the situation of international students, I will bring forward this analysis by outlining how Newtown and Oaktree have organised ESOL (English as a Second Language) classes and, more generally, their intercultural policies.

Discipline emerged as an important difference between the two schools from the beginning of my fieldwork: I quickly formed the impression that discipline was given two different meanings in the two contexts. During my fieldwork at Oaktree, I observed at least fifteen teachers in action. Clearly, not all of them were as charismatic and able to keep students involved as Miss Connolly. On the contrary, some of them were very tired or not motivated and sometimes let students to take control over the class. However, I never witnessed or heard about the situation degenerating so far as to oblige teachers to take disciplinary measures more severe than giving extra assignments. I never witnessed occasions during which teachers menaced students with measures such as detention or suspension. As a side note, I can add that during my observations of classroom activities, external interruptions of any kind during classes where much less frequent than at Newtown. In particular, announcements over the Public Announcements system were extremely rare.

I have already outlined how teaching at Newtown is from a disciplinary point of view much tougher work than teaching at Oaktree. Discipline is, quite simply, a key issue at Newtown. During my classroom observations, in particular with younger students and those at lower stream levels, I frequently recorded in my fieldnotes how at least half of the time in each period was completely given over to discipline-related issues instead of subject teaching. As a consequence, measures

such as suspension, expulsion and seclusion were frequent in the school and mentioned daily by teachers as sanctions. I have observed classes where teachers weren't able to teach anything because of the number of disruptions. When comparing the meaning of discipline in the two schools, it could be argued that while at Oaktree discipline was a much taken-for-granted instrument to guarantee that learning took place, at Newtown discipline was often considered as a final goal in and of itself.

This environment proves to be a very difficult and frustrating one for teachers. While at Oaktree teachers always showed respect towards students and always talked to them in a kind and quite voice, I frequently noted teachers making ironic comments about students in their presence and in the staff room. I often witnessed teachers (in particular the more mature ones) speaking in rough and authoritarian ways towards students, as this extract from my fieldnotes shows:

> (...) I see the deputy principal in the corridor talking, or better, shouting at students (this is her default modality in corridors): 'quickly quickly, you don't have to walk around'. She says this so rudely, I can see she is mature and tired, but I have never witnessed this rudeness with students at Oaktree. After a couple of minutes, outside her office, a student asks (kindly and even with some shyness), 'I need to see Miss Pearce, is she busy?' She replies as rudely as before, 'Yes, she is very busy' (Fieldnotes).

Many teachers have taught at Newtown from the early foundation of the school in 1979 and are now near to retirement. It is understandable that they are quite tired of dealing with problematic students. However, the respect that teachers show towards students seems to be very much related to their achievements, as Mr Holmes's varying attitudes outlined above showed. While discipline and a high standard of teaching were the norm in classes at Oaktree, the situation at Newtown was more variable. In part, this is because the differences between classes in

Newtown were often remarkable. When Mr Holmes informally 'invited' me to observe his Foundation Class, I discovered how the practice of streaming contributes to the creation of separate worlds with different modalities of teaching and learning within the same school building.

Streaming, indeed, represents another important difference between the two schools. It is Newtown policy to stream students starting from the second year, when pupils are divided into ability groups for the most important subjects (Foundation, Ordinary and Higher Level). The school was streaming First Year students until 2008, when a 'Whole School Inspection' from the Department of Education and Skills recommended '(...) a move to mixed-ability classes in first year, to offer all students access to the full range of subjects available' (Department of Education and Skills, 2008). Students are now assigned to a certain ability group in the second year and are likely to remain there for a long period or even until their Leaving Certificate.

Newtown teachers noted that it was a rare event to see a student asking to go to the upper level, as this would mean more homework and only very willing students ask for this. Moreover, teachers frequently reported that most students perceived this ability-group division as an incontrovertible matter of fact. One is tempted here to think of the Foucauldian notion of discipline where control is interiorised and taken for granted by individuals (Mills, 2003:43). Indeed, to be assigned to certain ability groups does have consequences for students' academic futures. Moreover, students attending foundation-level classes will be very likely to share most of their school time with unmotivated students and frustrated teachers, and the quality of learning she or he will receive will be much lower than in the higher stream classes. If one is tempted here to think of the Foucauldian notion of

discipline, one may also consider Foucault's comments on the ways in which modern institutions operate by means of systems which classify 'types' of people, and give meaning to the relations and the boundaries between them (see also Wright, 1994:19-22).

My observations of Albany made me think not only about the chances of inclusion for the most disadvantaged students, but also about the 'right' to a decent education for the students taking school seriously. Take the examples of Maggie (Irish-born) and Irina (from Ukraine), two Albany students, and best friends. They sit next to one another not far from my observation point, and I the chance to get to know them quite well during my fieldwork. They are the best students in the class: the few who are always doing all of their homework and paying total attention to the teachers. They are the only two who never go to the toilet during Miss Kerr's 'toilet ceremony'. More than once, while observing the disruptions of their class and the time wasted with discipline issues, I felt empathetic towards these two young girls who just loved school and learning. At Newtown the level tends to be lower in the first years because less motivated students tend to leave school after the Junior Certificate. Streaming students into ability groups can guarantee that even in Newtown, starting from the second year, students attending higher-level classes have a good level of preparation without too many discipline-related disruptions, as I have described earlier. However, after one year of observations I can say that despite what many teachers state, the advantages of streaming are for good students only, who are offered a calmer environment in which to learn. In the next years, Irina and Maggie will be separated from some of their friends. While the two girls will take most subjects at higher level, together with other high achievers, and will improve their skills, and perhaps go to university, others will very likely be assigned to all

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foundation level courses, attend classes delivered by Mr Holmes, and perhaps leave school early.

As with streaming, Transition Year (TY) also constitutes another important difference between Oaktree and Newtown. At Oaktree TY was a consolidated experience offering different activity options, including work in charities, language courses, etc. At Newtown there was no TY. The school had the TY during the 1990s but this lasted for a couple of years only. During a conversation, the school counsellor explained how, at the time of my fieldwork, the school couldn't afford a TY because fewer resources were available. Moreover, teachers at Newtown generally agreed that this was not 'the kind of school for TY'. The reasons were generally explained in terms of the scarce financial resources of most families living in the area (a number of activities during the TY need to be funded by the families), as well as the scarce interest in doing something not strictly compulsory, and the unwillingness of many students to stay for an optional year at school.

While school dropouts before Junior Certificate (after the third year) were unusual, dropping school before Leaving Certificate (in the end of the fifth year) was hardly a rare phenomenon at Newtown, as Michael explained during an interview:

> Not so many students leave before the Junior Certificate, the moment when they leave is between 5th and 6th year, where is not compulsory by law to leave school. Many leave and do PLC courses or Youth Reach or other courses. They say, 'I am a man now;' they want to earn something and if they do these courses they earn 140 euros per week from social welfare. They want this money. If we look at our 5th years [*he shows me attendance papers while talking*], in a class 5 students dropped since the beginning of the year, in other classes 3 and 1, in another 1 dropped but 3 are at risk as they are not attending. So, out of 68, 8 or 9 dropped but they may well increase by the end of the year. And when they leave they won't come back (Interview, 2011).

In at least two cases at Newtown, dropping out of school or leaving for a long period was explained by teachers in terms of the student's 'safety'. During a lunchtime conversation in the staff room, the 5th Year Coordinator, Miss Stevenson, told me that one of her students left school months ago after he was found with hashish, which he was dealing in, within the school. According to the teacher, he left school because, 'His parents thought it was not safe anymore to go to school'. In another case a 5th-year male student went missing from home and consequently stopped attending school. This news was a topic of discussion in the staff room as the case went on the national TV and websites. However, most teachers were in agreement that the family knew where their son was and they were just helping him as the social services decided he had to stay in a sheltered house, and the family was 'protecting' him from this decision.

On the other side, dropping out is very rare at Oaktree, where the vast majority of students will complete their Leaving Certificate. Students less motivated at Oaktree after taking the Junior Certificate can choose to take the LCA (Leaving Certificate Applied), a less challenging version of the Leaving Certificate, but the number of students taking this option is low at about 10 students per year. The school tends to push students to do higher level for all subjects, but ordinary level courses are available too. The school does not offer foundation level courses.

The majority of teachers in both schools with teaching experience in a disadvantaged neighbourhood where always keen to stress that the responsibility for student failure rested with the families. Miss O'Brian, an Oaktree teacher, was the only one who discussed the responsibility that rested with teachers, criticising schools for the policy of streaming:

Maura: Are students at Oaktree much more motivated than in Creighton [*the disadvantaged school where she taught earlier*]?
Miss O'Brian: Some at Creighton were highly motivated but did not achieve so well because of the teachers they had. Teachers didn't want to teach at higher level; there was no culture of doing higher level; teachers have low motivation, and they say that anyway those kids are not going to college, they are the first in their family to go to secondary school level, they think they will be unemployed, that's why they achieve less than here. A kid with the same ability here at Oaktree will end up in college, in Creighton maybe doing a PLC course [*a one or two years Post Leaving Certificate course*]. Families there tend to think in short time, there is a perception they are not going further than 1 year (Interview, 2011).

Research in Ireland and internationally stresses that parents' active involvement in their children's schools has a positive impact on achievement levels. However, parents' self-confidence and willingness to take an active part in school life is influenced by their own education and social class backgrounds, and in cases where they are migrants by their knowledge of the language (McGinnity et. al, 2011:27). Parents play a key role at Oaktree and are seen as making an important contribution to school life through the activities of the Parents Association (PA). All teachers during interviews and conversations with me were eager to stress that this support was important for the pupils' educational success.

The Oaktree PA was founded in 1995, the same year the school opened, and since then it has been involved in a number of activities, in particular in fundraising for extracurricular activities (for both students and teachers), celebrations and paying professional advisers for different kind of counselling and advice. The majority of parents are relatively wealthy and can afford to make this contribution. On 13 October 2010, for example, I was invited to the PA's annual meeting. On this occasion, I had a chance to appreciate the level of involvement and the power of the PA in the school, as well as the number of initiatives influence within the school. On this occasion, Mr Oliver, the school principal, stressed that Oaktree was by then a

multicultural school. He introduced me, and my research project, to the Association. He stressed that this is also reflected in the intercultural festival, but also noted that so far only the Pakistani community had volunteered, and he asked for more involvement from all communities, including the Irish. Later on that evening, the treasurer informed everyone that the annual plant sale last year raised 23,000 euros and gave the cheque to the principal.

The principal and Ms Hanley, the Language Centre Coordinator, where concerned about the very low levels of participation and involvement by international parents in the PA activities. Indeed, during my observations of the monthly evening meetings of the PA, I never saw an 'international parent' there. To increase their participation, Ms Hanley was working on a specific project on parents' involvement. I will discuss this project in more detail in the chapter related to the school's intercultural policies.

At Newtown the situation was completely different. The school has no Parent's Association, and this was quite striking to me given the enthusiasm that all of the parents who I interviewed manifested towards the school. Newtown had a PA years ago but it was not in operation at the time of my fieldwork. This may have been caused in part by the financial restrictions of the families, in particular in this moment of economic crisis, as PAs are often involved in fund-raising activities to finance extracurricular activities. Lack of engagement, however, may have not been caused solely by economic reasons but also by a lack of agency and self-awareness in dealing with the school. Indeed, for Bourdieu, the working class's lack of cultural capital is so severe that its members are, to a certain extent, incapable of offering — and frequently do not consider themselves entitled to offer — 'deliberative' judgments for circulation in the public sphere (Bourdieu, 1984:397-465, in

Weininger, 2003:148). Annette Lareau in *Unequal Childhood* noticed the very same behaviour among the middle and working class parents she observed:

> In crucial ways, middle-class family members appeared reasonably comfortable and entitled, while working-class and poor family members appeared uncomfortable and constrained (...). Some working class and poor parents had warm and friendly relations with educators. Overall, however, working-class and poor parents in this study had much more distance or separation from the school than did middle-class mothers (Lareau, 2003:242-243).

Miss Pearce, who during my fieldwork was completing her first year as school principal, was extremely sensitive on this matter and was trying all possible avenues to form a new PA. During my fieldwork she organised a meeting with a small number of volunteer parents to this end. Her interest was more in building a 'school spirit' with as many parents as possible than in getting some extra funding through parents' fund raising. From their side, teachers, instead of looking at parents as able to give some material contribution to school life, tended to see them in terms of dependence. As Miss Mc Court stressed during a conversation, 'Parents are very dependent on us, they would come here and tell their problems, even when these problems are not educational related' (Conversation with Miss Mc Court, 2011).

This last quote is in stark contrast with the next one by Miss O'Brian, who was very insightful in her accounts of how she experienced teaching in a disadvantaged and in a middle-class school. This is how she described her relation to parents at Oaktree as opposed to her previous experience:

> *Maura*: Are there many teachers in Creighton [*the disadvantaged school where she taught earlier*] that are just dreaming to be in a school like Oaktree?
> *Miss O'Brian:* All dream: they have a very idealistic view of the middle-class. The big fear they might have would be the parents. In the other school,

parents would not come and ask, and many of them haven't any clue about second-level education. Here at Oaktree, parents want to know how you correct papers; they would ask why you give a certain grade. When I am back in the old school many teachers ask me if it's true that parents want to know everything. ... I say, 'They are just people like us; they are middle-class people interested in education; they are not intimidating'. But many say, 'No, can't cope with it.'
Maura: Have you have felt intimidated by parents?
Miss O'Brian: Parents are like me, if they see the teacher is the expert, they are not going to challenge, but is not a bad thing, I never mind meeting parents. I am a parent as well and I want the best for my child.
Maura: And what about parents in the other school?
Miss O'Brian: They ask you different questions, like 'Do they have Irish?' or 'Do they have exams this year?' (Interview, 2010).

What is central here is Miss O'Brien assertion that at Oaktree 'parents are like me'. This confirms once more my description of Oaktree as being in continuity with the local neighbourhood, and the contrast with Miss Mc Court description of Newtown, where 'parents are dependent on us' couldn't be expressed more clearly. Unfortunately, teachers at Newtown connected straightforwardly parent's dependence on the school – which needs to be framed in most cases as a lack of educational capital – with a lack of interest for schooling tout court. Many of my fieldnotes, indeed, are similar to the next excerpt, a conversation with Mr Hobbes, Newtown's Career Guidance Counsellor:

Mr Hobbes: Many Irish parents complain because international students lower down the level of the school, so they take their children to private schools.
Maura: Does this happen here (at Newtown)?
Mr. Hobbes: Oh no!!! *The majority of parents here are not interested in education*. In this school 15 per cent would go to college. What about Oaktree, would it be a 60 per cent? In this school dropping levels are high also at junior level, this is illegal and they should check it but is difficult to. (Conversation).

As I reported in the beginning of this chapter, the only people in the school who had a more subtle understanding of disadvantaged parents were Peter and

Michael, the two educators working within the DEIS scheme actions. Peter and Michael were in close contact with disadvantaged people and during our conversations were always keen to distinguish parents' lack of agency with their interest in the education of their kids.

Finally, enrolment policy constitutes another difference between the two schools. Oaktree College is among a 20 per cent of Irish secondary schools which are almost constantly oversubscribed (DES, 2010:29). This means that the number of applications exceeds the number of places available. In the Oaktree case, this is probably caused by the positive image of the school in the Dublin 15 area, but also by the limited number of secondary schools in local neighbourhood, although in the last year a new school was opened, and this is likely to improve the situation. Newtown School was not oversubscribed. Quite the opposite, I had more than once conversations with teachers who suspected that the school was a 'second level' option, where students rejected from other schools were allocated. As Mr Hobbes put it: 'Every year we receive a call from Oaktree College asking if they have space for some students which they don't have space for. They try to get only the good ones' (Conversation). I do not have the means to check if this statement was true. True or false, however, it shows in any case a very negative perception that teachers at Newtown had towards the system of enrolment and their own school.

Conclusions

By describing an ordinary school day at Oaktree and Newtown, I was modestly aiming to emphasise the differences between the two schools. Throughout the whole chapter, I stressed how the local neighbourhoods constitute an important key to

frame the causes of such differences, although not the only ones. Indeed, in a review of social reproduction in education, James Collins stresses the necessity to 'conceptualize and study multiple social levels to understand mechanism that might produce large scale structural inequality'. He adds the necessity to move beyond a micro-macro dichotomy of individual and society and invokes construction of the social word alternative to bottom-up or top down accounts (2009:43). This brings me back to Susan Wright citied at the beginning of this chapter: what makes an organisation 'real' is the process of continual negotiation between agents and the institution, with all of them having no set boundary against their environments (Wright, 1994:19).

Social sciences and educational research looking at the causes behind the reproduction of social inequalities have focused on the role and responsibilities of the family and that of the school. Of course, any attempt to provide a definitive account of the 'weight' of each of these factors, which remain context-related, would be an impossible exercise. Even in the context of the two schools that together compose my research, it is only by looking at the intersection between a multitude of factors, going from the micro to the macro, that it will be possible to draw some conclusions.

At Oaktree College, the vast majority of students enter school with a family background valorising education. This is because the catchment area of the school includes housing estates in which many professionals, managers and academics reside – the homes, in general, of highly educated people who transmit their cultural capital to their children. As a consequence, teaching at Oaktree is much more a rewarding and less stressful experience than at Newtown: in the words of a young temporary teacher I met at Oaktree: 'This is the school where all teachers would love to stay until retirement'. In this context, the priorities are keeping a high

standard to appraise parents and help those more at risk of falling behind those standards, that is, international students with poor English language skills. The absence, or at least, the very limited number of priorities which are normal routine at Newtown (like school drop-out levels) contributed to direct the staff energies towards good teaching standards. This is also attempted by the many extracurricular activities; many of those can take place thanks to the generosity of the Parents' Association. The perfect summary of this virtuous circle, where all the components reinforce each other is provided by Mr. Oliver's words in his welcome message on the school's website:

> Conscious that our college is situated in an area where education is valued and expectations are high, the challenge has been to set standards which will command the respect and the pride of the community. Aspiring towards excellence, creating high expectations (School website).

At Newtown also, the majority of students have parents who know the importance of education, and wish the best chances for their children. But many of them have not attended secondary schools and therefore, although understanding the importance of education, do not have the means to help their children succeed on the educational path, and this also manifests itself in the lack of active engagement in school activities. A significant number of students from very problematic backgrounds worsen the situation and render the work of teachers more difficult and frustrating. The school is able to select and provide a good education to high achievers only through streaming, this resulting in more segregation for those most in need. 'Remedial' measures are taken to limit school dropout levels, and coping with frequent episodes of violence and drug dealing just a step outside the school,

international students and interculturalism in this context represent a minor priority.

The result is a school where care takes priority over excellence:

> Newtown School strives towards and is committed to improving our school community by fostering academic and personal development in an inclusive and caring environment, through enhancing the quality of learning (…) a welcoming school with a warm and friendly atmosphere. (…) We want to prepare students for future life, well-rounded individuals (Principal's welcome message, school website).

As I stressed earlier on, the place and the priority given to international students is a consequence of these two realities: primary concern at Oaktree; and marginal issue, among many other more urgent problems, at Newtown. In the next chapter I will explain in depth what kind of intercultural policy the two schools have developed, while, in chapter 5, I will question the relationships between intercultural policy and the 'real' integration of international students.

Chapter 4

What is a multicultural school?

Locating Oaktree and Newtown within the Irish context

Introduction

Despite the recent return of net emigration as a consequence of the current recession, Ireland is today an unquestionably multicultural country. According to the 2011 National Census the number of 'non-Irish nationals' stood at 544,357, 11.9 per cent of the total population of 4,588,252. The most represented national groups are Polish and British; and the fastest growing groups are Romanians, Indians and Brazilians (CSO, 2012). In the space of a single generation, then, massive migration and demographic transformations occurred in Ireland. As a nation-state and EU Member State, Ireland had to put in place, relatively quickly at that, migration and integration policies. At the same time it started a rather ad hoc societal debate about what it means to be a 'multicultural country'. The integration and migration policies that emerged, however, tended to mirror the very neoliberal economic politics which facilitated large-scale immigration. Its provisions for ethnic minorities as well as the treatment of migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers have been widely criticised. For instance, the 2005 report of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) raised seventeen specific concerns regarding the state's approach to issues relating to racial discrimination (Nowlan, 2008:256).

In a recent analysis of Ireland's integration policy Gerry Boucher stresses how it is underpinned by a *laissez-faire* approach that seems to target positive affects for certain immigrant groups, namely 'those immigrants and groups who already possessed higher levels of economic, financial, educational, occupational, and socio-cultural resources before their migration to the Republic of Ireland' (2008:6). A perfect example of this *laissez-faire* approach is provided by a 2006 *Irish Times* article on the theme of international students in Irish schools, and in particular on the 'issue' of the headscarf. While stressing the increasing (albeit relatively small) numbers of Islamic students wearing a scarf, the journal found out that no single letter was sent between Department of Education and schools concerning the wearing of scarves (*Irish Times*, 2008). Each school was left free to decide what to do. This approach, which leaves to each school the responsibility for delicate decisions, can generate, in the worst cases, an inadequate treatment of sensitive issues when a school does not have enough human resources, funding or simply willingness to deal at best with it. This problem is obviously not confined to schools only. To quote just one recent debate, Ravinder Singh Oberoi, a Sikh living in Ireland, was recently refused permission to wear a turban while training as Garda Reserve, and his complaint under the Equality Act claiming that he had been treated unfavourably failed on the grounds that a member of the reserve is not an employee.[iv] The story confirms the necessity for institutions to rethink their structures, rules and ethos to accommodate the demographic changes occurred in the last decades.

Ireland is also lacking an integration program based on 'civic integration' and including measures such as language tuition and training (Boucher, 2008:6-10). Indeed, integration policy is often criticised as a collection of statements rather than a set of organic and concrete measures. A perfect example of this is provided by the

following quote from Mr. Conor Lenihan, TD former Minister of State for

Integration. Mr. Lenihan announced that the Irish model could be:

> (...) a middle way between assimilationism and multiculturalism. That third way is interculturalism, a model that emphases inclusion by design and frames integration as a two way process of mutual accommodation, albeit starting from certain core values' (*Irish Times*, 2008).

According to this statement, then, Ireland has chosen as a model of

'interculturalism', which is implicitly sold as more appealing than the old-fashioned

'assimilation' or the more scary 'multiculturalism' (the Irish model, indeed, starts

from 'certain core values'). This discourse, which at a first sight appears very

reasonable, is a perfect illustration of the ideological nature of modern 'liberal

multiculturalism'. Mr. Lenihan's statement resonates with what Ghassen Hage

describes as 'debates on multiculturalism as rituals', which have the result of framing

minorities as problematic (they need a process of accommodation) and migration as

an issue which should be managed by the 'white' majority (1998:233). It is also

interesting to see how in this statement multifaceted terms such as 'assimilation',

'interculturalism' and 'multiculturalism' are presented as bounded realities with

precise and shared meanings. This process of course, is not a new one. Hannah

Arendt denounced this process in the discourses concerning 'race':

> Ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical process-the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future-because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas. Ideologies are never interested in the miracle of being (…) even if they try to explain history by some 'law of nature'. The word 'race' in racism does not signify any genuine curiosity about the human races as a field for scientific exploration, but is the 'idea' by which the movement of history is explained as one consistent process (Arendt, 1953:316).

The same reflection that Arendt offered sixty years ago on 'race' can be applied to the current debate on integration wherein concepts such as 'multiculturalism' and 'interculturalism' are much more complex than in the Minister's statement may seem, starting from the fact that they do not have a shared definition:

> For some it clearly means the mere coexistence of 'other cultures', for others the state promotion of 'other cultures', (...) and for yet others it represents any resistance to assimilating racial, religious and ethnic cultures into national ones (Titley and Lentin, 2011:ix).

Titley and Lentin add that Ireland learned from other countries with recent migration histories a rhetoric of 'integration as a two way process', in truth doing nothing for integration and narrowing migrants' statuses in terms of residency, citizenship and rights. In short, the idea of the 'two way process' and a superficial celebration of diversity echoes even on the media ('multicultural is good'), but beneath this there is no structure, and there is no funding.

In Europe, the current debate on integration is often framed in terms of the necessity to be 'tolerant'. For critics of multiculturalism, the concept of tolerance causes a shift in the responsibility for integration from the nation-state to an individual willingness to include the 'ethnic other'. According to Slavoj Žižek, this shift is a potentially dangerous one:

> Therein resides the catch: of course I am not against tolerance per se: what I oppose is the (contemporary and automatic) perception of racism as a problem of intolerance. Why are so many problems today perceived as problems of intolerance rather as problems of inequality, exploitation or injustice? Why is the proposed remedy tolerance, rather than emancipation political struggle or even armed struggle? (2011:5).

Nikolas Rose, points out that in the last decades political theory saw an important shift in the analysis of 'governance'. While until the 1980s political power

was described as dominated by a 'state centred' approach, characterised by an 'apparently ineluctable tendency to centralise, control, regulate and manage', the more recent decades saw a move towards the analysis on how control is exerted in the relations between different networks of authorities, including more informal and not state-centred institutions, as well as modalities of self-regulation, where single individuals and their communities are 'empowered' and deemed responsible for their actions: 'Good governance means less government, politicians exercising power by steering (setting policy) rather than rowing (delivering services), and more' (1999:16).

It is exactly the *laissez-faire* approach that dominates Ireland's integration policy that should be considered, as well as the reasons why 'tolerance' comes to be the keyword of such an approach to integration. Tolerance is an individual sentiment, not a political approach. And, it is a 'mild' emotion: it does not imply neither a radical rethinking of one's traditions nor a real wish to know the other: it is just a forced process of coexistence.

The concept of tolerance, however, can be a very problematic one. According to Ghassen Hage, tolerance is a nationalist practice implying the power associated with the 'tolerant' people who imagine the nation as 'their own,' thus implying an acceptance within a certain limit (Hage, 1998). The idea of integration as a 'two way process' itself hides underpinning and unbalanced relations of power and a structural division amongst 'us' and 'them':

> (...) refugees and immigrants are to be unquestionably integrated and included by those who are invited to be mindful of, understand and recognise those in need of integration, who are thereby always identified as un-integrated. The invitation to be tolerant reinstates and disguises rather than changes these power relations and reconstitutes those to be integrated as outsiders (Gray, 2006:131).

In recent times there is much public debate in Europe about 'the end of multiculturalism'. This is widely understood as caused by the current economic crises, recession and the high unemployment rates in most EU Member States. Migrants, in times of crisis, have always been among the first to represent a sort of scapegoat. Multiculturalism is therefore denounced in many political discourses as a threat to the idea of 'one nation, one people'. Titley and Lentin stress how, for example, Angela Merkel and David Cameron now sound alike on the topic of multiculturalism: '(...) we tried with it, and it failed, because we have been too generous, now it's time to abandon it and reinvigorate a strong German/British culture which they have to start to belong to' (Titley and Lentin, 2011).

Despite all these theoretical reflections on the definition of multiculturalism, or about its end, 'multicultural schools' do exist. Or, to be more precise, most schools in Ireland have a significant percentage of students whose background is 'not Irish', at least in the sense of how a census of population counts 'Irish'. Is this enough to be a multicultural school? Even more importantly, it is necessary to question what it means to be a multicultural school in Ireland today. Instead of a form of critical and radical anti-racist education demanding equal rights, the ethnographic material reveals that intercultural education is a form of soft neo-liberal governance. Earlier on, indeed, I have suggested that interculturalism can be framed as a form of ideology of modern capitalism, and a way of conforming to the kinds of values deemed desirable in a middle class school, such as tolerance, partnership, respect, and autonomy.

Throughout this chapter I will describe all the measures taken by Newtown School and Oaktree College to include their international students and to promote

cultural diversity as a value. I will analyse how the two schools have structured

linguistic support as well as their intercultural education initiatives. I will stress the

importance of measures such as the language used to refer to international students

and the physical school spaces dedicated to them. I will also report a number of

classroom observations where issues related to cultural diversity where discussed.

All this, however, needs to be framed in light of the two schools different

locations, which I described extensively in Chapter 3. The main questions this

chapter should address are therefore: 'What is a multicultural DEIS school?' and

'What is a multicultural middle-class school?' These questions at a first sight might

look unusual: indeed policy documents on school integration and on intercultural

education tend to elide schools' socio-economic dimensions. In this chapter I hope to

show that this background, on the contrary, should be carefully considered.

What is a multicultural school?

During my fieldwork, I spent a considerable amount of time focusing specifically on

the experiences of international students during their ESOL (English as a second

language) lessons. I recorded in great detail the organisation of time and space in

these classes, how language support teachers organised their lessons, and the quality

of language support provided. I ended up having long conversations with the vast

majority of teachers and students attending ESOL classes and I conducted formal

interviews with many of them.

Language fluency is of key importance for migrants to integrate in their

host society and to gain autonomy in terms of access to training and employment, as

well as to participate actively in the local community and thus to avoid social

exclusion (Carson, 2009:102). Recent research shows how poor knowledge of the English language, for example, is the key motivation for migrant parents' lack of engagement with their children's schools and learning (Mc Ginnity et al., 2011:27), and during my fieldwork I had occasion to see how this lack of engagement was perceived by teachers and by Irish parents as a lack of interest.

The 'Intercultural Education Strategy', a policy paper drawn up by the Department of Education and Skills in conjunction with the Office of the Minister for Integration with the purpose of ensuring 'all students experience an education that respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership', announced a number of key goals that each school should achieve to guarantee full inclusion and integration for all international students. Goal 6 recommends, 'Supporting students to become proficient in the language of instruction' (DES, 2010: executive summary). Irish schools have access to the Department of Education and Science (DES) funding since 1999 to provide linguistic support for those students for whom English is not the first language (Nowlan, 2008).

Providing language support to students for whom English is not their first language, and in particular to those who immigrated very recently, is of key importance to assure their higher chances of educational success. However, language fluency is not only essential for learning at school but also for integrating into peer groups and into wider society. Many of the Irish and international students I interviewed during my research stressed the importance of language fluency in building friendships in the school and outside. Many international students recalled how during their first months at school they went through a 'silent period' when their inability to communicate was impeding their ability to interact or limiting their

interactions even with same-nationality students. Although same-nationality friendships can be very important to preserve a student's roots, knowledge of English remains of key importance for fuller integration.

Language support in Irish schools has a very short history; therefore, research on the efficacy of such provision is scarce. Small-scale research by Nowlan (2008) concluded that language support in 11 secondary schools was inadequate for a number of reasons. The most important problem the author points out is the allocation of teachers for language support. In the majority of schools teachers were allocated to language support classes not based on their expertise but on the basis of managing those who did not have a full-time allocation for their subject area. This, in turn, reflects a lack of regulation of the expertise that a teacher should have to teach ESOL. I witnessed, more than once, these problems manifesting themselves at Oaktree, when more than one teacher expressed their frustration with being allocated to ESOL without any capacity to deliver. In these cases, teachers explained to me their sense that they would be much happier to teach to their subject classes and feel obliged to do ESOL without having chosen to do it.

The underpinning idea in my conceptualisation of integration for international students, however, is that language support is only one part, although a very relevant one, of the inclusion practices enacted by a school. For this reason, I also observed how the school deals with cultural difference at other levels, such as the terminology used to refer to international students, and to the use of space. The allocation of spaces and the use of a certain terminology, indeed, are generally taken for granted. However, because they may act on a more unattended level, they have great relevance in the ways in which students and teachers think about cultural differences. For example, the location of the language centre (is it in a central or in a

peripheral area of the school? Is it easy to find?), the space dedicated to cultural differences on the school walls through the use of posters and pictures, and the use of a certain terminology to refer to international students can contribute to making a difference in how Irish students and teachers think about integration and cultural diversity.

Language, indeed, shapes and is shaped by social relations and therefore it has an ideological aspect in that it carries relations of power and representations of the world:

> Language ideologies mediate social identity, because people rely on their construals of what particular linguistic patterns mean in order to identify speakers as occupying recognizable social positions. Drawing on ideologies that circulate widely in a society, particular speakers position themselves and others in characteristic ways. Consistent positioning over time can establish more enduring identities for individuals and groups (Wortham, 2001:256).

The 'sense of distinction' of the taste and language of the dominant classes, therefore, underpins relations of power and different positioning based on social class:

> (...) there is no area of practice in which the intention of purifying, refining and sublimating facile impulses and primary needs cannot assert itself (...). In language, it gives the opposition between the popular outspokenness and the highly censored language of the bourgeois…. The same economy of means is found in body language: here too, agitation and haste, grimaces and gesticulation are opposed…to the restraint and impassivity which signify elevation (Bourdieu 1984:175-176).

The starting point for this research is that a school with a high percentage of international students is not necessarily a multicultural school. Irish teachers may perceive cultural differences as a source of enrichment or as a constraint, as something to ignore or as something to valorise. Despite personal judgments, as the

DES (Department of Education and Skills) Intercultural Guidelines stressed, teachers should be, '(...) assisted with ensuring that inclusion and integration within an intercultural learning environment become the norm' (DES, 2010: executive summary).

Of key importance, then, is the school management. Chris Gaine (2000) argues that there are four levels where racial intolerance operates: personal, cultural, institutional and structural. Gaine stresses how anti-racist education can have a real impact only when all four levels mutually reinforce each other. Although Gaine's work focuses specifically on anti-racist education, the same perspective can be used when looking at school's intercultural and inclusion policies. To translate Gaine's work into real life, we need to think that when every teacher is provided with the tools to know how to deal with cultural differences then he or she will be eager to see international students as a positive challenge. If teachers are left alone, then, there are risks that he or she will see international students (especially the weakest academic ones) as an additional problem. It is a matter of fact that every institution is made up of people with different opinions and different ideas about migration and cultural difference. However, the school management can make a difference in framing a school as truly multicultural. At a higher level, the Department of Skills and Education has a key role in providing each school with the resources necessary to pay language support teachers, and to implement an intercultural policy.

Oaktree and Newtown face-to-face with demographic change

Today in Ireland 10 per cent of the primary school population and 7 per cent of the secondary population are international students (Smyth, et al., 2009: xiv). I use this

classification to refer to both Irish- and foreign-born students with both parents being non-Irish born. For the sake of clarity, the definition of international student includes both a small number of newly arrived foreign students in need of linguistic support plus those who don't need or have never needed help with English language skills.

Being both located in Dublin 15, one of the areas in Ireland with the highest concentration of migrants, both Oaktree and Newtown have large numbers of international students. Both schools have taken measures to meet the needs of these students. Below, I will describe and compare these different measures and I will discuss if these reflect the differences in the two schools I have previously discussed.

At Oaktree the measures include, in particular, a multi-task language centre as well as the appointment of an assistant principal, Ms Hanley, with the explicit duty to organise and coordinate language support teachers, assist international students in every step of their career in the school, and develop an intercultural and equality policy. Miss Hanley has also the duty to be a sort of 'welcome office' to assist students who recently arrived in Ireland by giving them a package containing a map of Dublin and other information, like how to get a student card.

During my fieldwork, seven teachers worked on a part-time basis in the language centre providing language support. Although the number of hours and the group structure of the provision varied, a newly arrived international student with poor English was generally allocated seven periods per week of language support on a one-to-one basis or in a group of maximum three students. Language support is generally on English comprehension but international students are encouraged to ask if they need extra support on other subjects and as the language support teachers are from different backgrounds, they are generally able to provide subject-specific support so that English support teaching is transmitted through subjects.

Figure 4: General Information and Language Support Provision in the two schools

	Opened	Students Enrolled	Inter-national students n. / per cent	Inter-national students receiving linguistic support	Kind of Linguistic Support Offered	Average weekly Linguistic Support periods per student	Language Support Teachers
Oaktree College	1995	1.100	105/9.5 per cent	15	One-to-one or groups of max three students	7	7, working part time for 5-10 hours per week
Newtown School	1979	485	141/29 per cent	25-30	Mixed ability groups with 6/7 students each	9 to 3	1, working part time for 16hours per week

Source: Personal Communications. Refers to the year 2011-2012.

At Newtown School, in 2010-2011, 29 per cent of the total student population was composed of international students. At the time of my fieldwork, the school employed a single language support teacher working part-time with newly arrived international students. In previous years, the school had more language support teachers, but at the time of my research one only remained due to government cutbacks. As a consequence, the majority of language support classes were composed of 5-6 students who had very different language abilities.

Newtown is not the only school in Ireland where the linguistic support of international students is underfunded. Since the start of the economic recession, almost all schools have encountered these kinds of cutbacks. As stressed in the Intercultural Education Strategy 2010-2015: '(...) the current concentration of expenditure is not enhancing the capacity of the whole school team to address EAL (English as additional language) needs' (DES 2010:39). Indeed, in a review of

international literature, Nowlan suggests that the provision of language support offered in Irish school compares unfavourably with that of Northern Ireland, England and other countries (Nowlan, 2008). However, this provision is not uniform in all schools and if some do really suffer as a consequence of government cutbacks others seem to be so well organised that they offer a model for emulation by others.

Language Support at Newtown School: 'The room beyond the library'

At Newtown School there is no precise name to indicate the language support room, but the most frequent name is 'the ESOL (English as a second Language) room', or 'the room behind the library'. The room is very small and is spatially separated from the rest of the classes. Moreover, there are no signs on the door to indicate what happens inside. This absence of definition was somehow strengthened by the peripheral position of the room in the school spaces as well as by the absence of any sign on the door to refer to the activity ongoing inside. Indeed, I soon realised that the majority of Irish students didn't even know where the room was located.

The ESOL room is used for linguistic support only and doesn't look especially different from the others: there are desks, a teacher's desk, and a blackboard. The only posters hanging are about English grammar. Behind the teacher's desk greetings in different languages are the only visible 'intercultural signs'. The place transmits the idea of a learning space, and nothing else.

Each student and teacher was left free to adopt the terminology they preferred, even when it came to the terms used to refer to international students, although 'international', 'migrant', 'new Irish', 'non-Irish' were the predominant. This lack of a clear and shared terminology at Newtown was the result of, at least in

part, the fact that migration in Ireland is still a relatively new phenomenon, and many schools still have to adjust to the challenges. However, this 'collective lack of knowledge' may reflect a deeper discomfort arising from shared memories of emigration and the new flows of people joining the Irish Diaspora:

> (...) how could we be racist (or exclusionary) when, more than any other race, we were 'taken in' all around the globe? Despite this general assertion, our discomfort, lack of awareness, and amnesia are immediately apparent as we struggle with an appropriate language by which to label 'others'. (...) While there is little agreement regarding an appropriate language that recognises difference and diversity in an inclusive rather than exclusive manner, there is a growing realisation that more needs to be done, that initial responses by 'official' Ireland have been inadequate and fragmented (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007:7-9).

Miss Conway is the only language support teacher in the school. Years before there were three teachers, but the school had severe budget cuts. Contrary to Oaktree, where most language support teachers are also subject teachers in the school, she is specialised in teaching English to foreigners and has TOEFL certificate. At the time of my fieldwork, Miss Conway worked at Newtown part-time for 16 hours per week, since 2 years and took care of 25-30 students (depending on the moment of the year, as newcomers may arrive during the year) working in groups of 5-7 per class. During her classes she taught 'grammar, little stories to read, games, crosswords, different things because they get bored', as she explained in an interview. The 'Trinity Immigration Initiative' provided most of the material they use. At the time of my fieldwork, the school did not provide for dictionaries, because, as Miss Conway explained, there was no money to buy them.

Miss Conway was an excellent teacher, always interactive and engaging and her motto was 'flexibility'. Indeed, given the limited hours she was working and the number of students, it frequently happened that she had to divide the group according

to students' abilities and give them different assignments. For example, a class I frequently observed was composed of 5 students, all 5th years. Edmund, from Lithuania, had been in Ireland for 5 months and spoke English quite well but was showing no interest at all in Miss Conway classes: he skipped as much as he could. Mika, from Albania, had been in Ireland for about the same amount of time as Edmund but had huge problems with English: he was very shy but very keen to learn. Like most Albanians, he spoke some Italian, the language we frequently used to communicate with one another. Monika recently arrived with her family from the Slovak Republic: she didn't speak a word of English. Sandra and Ingrid were sisters; they arrived from Poland the year before and spoke English very well. The ethnographic snap-shot below captures the experience of a typical class with them, showing clearly how difficult it was for Miss Conway to teach in such a mix ability class:

> When Miss Conway and I arrive in the class they are waiting outside and chatting, except Monika, who is inside sitting at a desk. She arrived last week and doesn't have any friends yet. We all enter and start working, but Edmund doesn't have a pen, Miss Conway leaves a note in his journal because he never has pens. He is very angry, it is clear that he is in this place because he is forced to be here but would like to be somewhere else, far away. But they quick start working. Today the topic is food. Before starting the discussion Miss Conway gives some very easy exercises to Monika who will work in the same class where we are while the others are talking. Edmund keeps yawning so she picks on him immediately and asks: 'Have you ever eaten Chinese food?' he replies quickly, 'No, I hate Chinese', and that will be the end of his contribution for today. Mika, Sandra and Ingrid go on discussing the topic. Miss Conway asks what they eat at home and how much time they spend eating in their country. Whatever the topic content, she is keen to discuss the students' countries and how they do things. Then is my turn (she always asks me to speak) and I explain the history of pizza Margherita. Sandra and Ingrid are very active in the conversation; Mika speaks slowly but tries his best. Edmund does not take part in the conversation anymore. I look outside the door. There is a little internal garden there, with a stairs made of cement in the shape of an amphitheatre. But it looks like nobody takes much care of this place. It is full of old leaves, wild grass growing between the sections of cement. It would take no more than an hour to tidy it up. Every time I look at

this sad internal garden I think that little details may make a difference in how people perceive places (Fieldnotes).

The school provided ESOL classes only for basic and intermediate levels. There have been cuts in the provision of advanced classes. When a new international student arrives, they should, in theory, be assessed on their skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, but, 'There is no time to do it. But if an inspector arrives it's a problem', Miss Conway whispered to me one day during a chat.

Despite being always very enthusiastic, Miss Conway worked in impossible circumstances, attempting to cater for 25-30 students of mixed abilities. For example, Miss Conway explained me that among her students that year, she had four students (brothers and sisters, three girls and a boy) who arrived from Somalia and never went to school before. Within one year they learned to read and write – a remarkable achievement in itself. Clearly, these students have a desperate need for one-to-one support instead of mixed-ability classes. Miss Conway admitted that a number of students would not reach their potential because they were not entitled to extra support – they needed a different kind of support.

During my fieldwork in both schools it was very frequent for me to listen to students speaking their own mother tongue with their friends or siblings during lunchtime or in the corridors. Having been a migrant myself, I was very sympathetic with them: I know very well how relaxing could be having a chat in my mother tongue after hours of English full immersion. Although at Newtown no written statement or regulation deliberately prohibited speaking languages other than English in the school, many international students reported having been reprimanded by teachers when talking their language. As Ana, a first year student from Romania noted:

> No, I can't speak Romanian with Lavinia [*her Romanian friend*], we are not allowed to. They say they don't want us to say bad words at them that they will not understand. This is the rule (Interview).

While students as Ana, perhaps for her young age, took it as one of the many rules in school life and settled with it, other students and in particular the older ones, developed an oppositional attitude towards it and perceived it as a lack of trust of the school towards international students and a limit to their freedom to communicate. As Ina, a 5th year student from Poland shows: 'Yes we speak Polish at school, but every teacher says: "English only here!" They think we talk about them. They say, "In the school everything is in English" (Interview). Interestingly, while the majority of students explained this prohibition as a shortage of trust in the content of their conversations, teachers explained it in different terms. When asked about whether there was any specific policy in the school forbidding IS to speak their language, a teacher working in the care team replied,

> There is no such a policy, but we try to encourage students to speak English. The 6th year graduating today was not good with it. They spoke their own language a lot, in particular a group of Polish. This is excluding, isolating and widens the gap between them (Interview).

While the teachers' intentions towards inclusion were probably genuine, the prohibition was often perceived as too intrusive and generated a sense of being mistrusted in the students. Indeed, being allowed to speak their own language during break times may help international students, and especially those newly arrived with poor English, to communicate more freely their feelings and to feel more at ease, in one word, more 'at home', even in the school space.

However, there is even more at stake here. The 'Intercultural Education

Strategy' (DES 2010:3) emphasises how research in Ireland and abroad stresses that educators should encourage migrant students to maintain a connection with their mother culture and language, because enhancing their mother tongue proficiency also enhances their ability to speak English (DES, 2010:40). To avoid counterproductive reactions from the side of the newly arrived international students, schools need to be aware that the use of English as the teaching language should not cancel out the competence these students have in other languages. This awareness should be even stronger in a country like Ireland, struggling over many decades to conserve and implement the use of the *Gaelic* language in schools and, therefore, at least in theory, Ireland should be more ready to recognise the importance that language plays in the construction of self-identity and esteem.

Language Support at Oaktree College: 'The Language Centre'

At Oaktree College, language support is taught at the Language Centre -- the name that is commonly used in the school by teachers and students, and all seem to be able to locate the place. The Language Centre is easy to find thanks to the central location in front of Ms Hanley's office and signs on the door.

At the time of my fieldwork, Miss Hanley was working full-time as Assistant Principal. Her role was to be a point of reference for all international students, to coordinate language support teachers (they met weekly), and to develop all kinds of inclusive practices within the school, like the international festival. Miss Hanley frequently referred to herself as a 'radical' teacher who decided to dedicate the last years of her career to help international students. She divided teachers in two: those converted to multicultural issues and those not. Miss Hanley, who was an

English teacher in different school earlier on, took the whole topic as one of great seriousness. She started for example with language: the first time we met she immediately corrected me when I mentioned 'non-Irish students,' stressing that the correct word to use in the school was 'internationals':

> We prefer to use this term (international student), because the term 'non-Irish' reflects a negation of something and we don't want to make them appear as missing something. International is more a positive term (Interview).

This terminology, of course, is not uncontroversial: for example, it doesn't acknowledge differences between newly arrived and second-generation, Irish-born and others. However, this represents an effort to be coherent – the vast majority of teachers in the school use this term --, and shows an awareness of the fact that a negation (non-Irish) may cast international students in a negative light.

The spaces and the words that each school dedicates to cultural diversity (from language support to any form of celebration of the 'ethnic other') can be an excellent key to unpack the 'school ethos'. It is there that the intercultural ethos of the school is materialised through the accommodation of places, which reflects the timetable organisation but also more subtle instances. The allocation of spaces and the use of a certain terminology, indeed, are never random acts. In this case, 'intercultural' spaces and words can say a lot about the importance that the two schools give to international students, as well as the ways in which the school management copes with structural (economic, spatial, etc.) limits, such as the amount of funding and the constraints of the school building. In particular, the 'intercultural terminology' can be very telling, because adopting a more inclusive terminology doesn't require extra funding but only a certain degree of awareness. Seery (2012),

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for example, stresses how the language we use in education, far from being absolute, is culturally and historically situated.

The Language Centre at Oaktree was one of the first in Ireland to be established as an independent department within the school. Before then, as in other schools, international students were sent to the learning support department, which was primary dealing with students with learning disabilities. In 2008, the organisation of the Language Centre was brought to national attention in the *Irish Times* (2008) as an example of good practice. The article concluded that the Department of Education was 'keeping an eye on the Oaktree model', and asked the following rhetorical question: what would happen if each school was left to improvise like Oaktree? This clearly confirms the *laissez faire* approach, which I mentioned earlier. Miss Hanley, during a conversation, confided to me that she thought this was not very fair, 'Because many other schools in Ireland clearly need more money and are more in need of it than us'.

The Language Centre is conceived as a multi-task space where language support classes are only one of the activities happening. This is the space where the weekly meeting of all language support teachers takes place and where all students are free to meet during break time. The space is structured so that more one-to-one lessons can be held at the same time and it looks immediately as a different place than the other classrooms. Students of all nationalities are encouraged to attend the room during lunchtime if they prefer a more intimate place than the big canteen. There are PCs that can be used by students (although only for educational matters) and during lunchtime international students are encouraged to play the music of their favourite singers, although very frequently they turn out to be the same American or English artists fancied by Irish students. Posters on English grammar hang together

with displays from previous intercultural festivals held in the school about other nation's foods, histories, buildings and political leaders. There are posters with translations in different languages of frequently used words, poetry on peace and tolerance, and posters campaigning against world hunger. Many posters give thought-provoking inputs such as poetry and statements by Malcom X ('to educate a man is to educate an individual. To educate a woman is to educate and liberate a nation'), Wittgenstein ('the limits of my language are the limits of my world'), and, again, 'White is something just like black is something. Everybody born in this Earth is something. Nobody, no matter what colour, is better than everybody else', among many others.

Seven Language Support teachers provide the language support classes. These are generally stream teachers who work for a number of hours in the Language Centre. Language support lessons are generally one-to-one or in small groups. The majority of students are withdrawn from their classes during Irish language instruction, which they are excused from. During interviews no students referred to their withdrawal from the main class as exclusion or as anything negative. Most international students considered language support classes as important and necessary, although sometimes they described it as tiring and noted the increased amounts of work they are expected to do.

The spatial setting of the Language Centre is organised so that a maximum of four groups can work together. When this happens, the Centre is quite noisy and concentrating can be difficult, both for students and teachers. However, it is frequent that only one or two groups work at the same time, so that levels of noise and disturbance are limited. These fieldnotes show a typical day at Oaktree during my Language Centre observations:

Today when I entered Language Centre for my observations the room was full. On one side, Miss Follett was working with Dara on a math paper, Mr. Bray was working on a KET paper with Cristina, and Miss. Drudy was with Mesma. At the same time, Jana and Maria were in Miss Hanley's office working on Shakespeare (Fieldnotes).

These fieldnotes show how four teachers were working at the same moment with five international students who had very different abilities and needs. The activities ongoing in the Language Centre were according to the normal timetable, while the two girls working with Ms Hanley were there by special arrangement. These fieldnotes were taken in mid May 2011, a moment when 3rd and 5th year students were preparing for their Junior and Leaving Certificates. Jana and Maria were internationals living in Ireland for 4 and 5 years respectively and did not need linguistic support but were asking for specific help to study some Shakespeare poems and were allocated an hour with Ms Hanley.

Language support classes had (almost always) a very friendly atmosphere, but also a challenging one, and the one-to-one or small-group situation did not allow students to fade into the background, like Edmund did so often during Miss Conway's lessons. Even tired students are somehow 'obliged' to pay attention. Dara was a student with a very problematic background – I will discuss his story in the next chapter. This is the description of a one-to-one language support class with him:

I am discussing Iran and the 'Arab Spring' with Dara. He is very disillusioned about his country, as usual, and looks very tired and sad today. After a couple of minutes, Miss Kingston arrives and they start reading comprehension. They analyse a text, it's quite difficult and they have to stop almost at every word. Every time he pronounces something incorrectly she says 'try again'. When Dara reads the words 'prejudice' and asks the meaning of it, I think of how many times I take those words for granted when doing interviews with internationals. … He continues to yawn and is not very focused. I imagine Dara in the same context at an ESOL class at Newtown

with other 6 or 7 people: he wouldn't pay any attention while there, but here he is literally forced to go on. At a certain point he stops, 'Miss I can't go on. I am too tired'. She tells him he has to go on. It is a very challenging situation with a paper, which is extremely difficult, and Dara who is extremely tired, but nevertheless they go on until the end. When Miss Kingston leaves the room, I ask him how is it that he is so tired, and he tells me he went to bed at 2.30am yesterday, so I ask him if he had fun as I think he has been outside with friends (although I am not sure of how many friends he has). He says has been arguing with his family all the time (Fieldnotes).

Although sometimes teachers changed their lessons plans at the last moment as a result of a specific request of the student, the majority of lessons I witnessed were planned and organized, with teachers bringing photocopies and papers for students. Language support teachers work with a variety of instruments to answer at best to individuals needs, such as schoolbooks, and exam papers. They are also encouraged to use external tools such as the Cambridge University KET (Key English Test) and PET (Preliminary English Test) papers.

All language support teachers meet weekly together with Miss Hanley. These meetings were not specifically focusing on the discussions about students' problems or lessons planning but about the implementation of an intercultural education policy for the school. These kind of meetings are in line with the intercultural education strategy key goal number 1 ('enable the adoption of a whole institution approach to creating an intercultural learning environment') and number 9 and 10 ('promote and evaluate data gathering and monitoring so that policy and decision making is evidence based') (DES, 2010: executive summary). Language support teachers, although generally very motivated, sometimes mentioned a feeling of frustration connected to their inability to help students to be at their best. This was caused by the fact that language support teachers were teaching subjects that were different from their normal teaching in classroom. Language support teachers,

especially those not trained and teaching to very weak internationals, referred to the job with weakest students as hard, boring and not very rewarding.

The Language Centre is conceived to be a space where Irish and international students can hang out together. However, even if many Irish students were aware that the space is open to everybody, many of them referred to the place as one dedicated specifically to internationals, and some of them went so far as to tell me that the school privileged international over Irish students. In addition to this, some teachers argued that the Language Centre may have the counterproductive effect of isolating international students, as this extract from an interview shows:

> I think international students tend to socialize together, and the Language Centre is promoting this … because they go there at lunch time and Irish students don't go there, they are not invited… is like a special place for students which are international, I don't think it is a good thing… they don't go there only for studying, they also go there for socializing. … I prefer when I see students mixing (Interview).

Despite being conceived as a space for all students, the Language Centre was attended generally by international students only. Without going so far as arguing that multicultural policies are necessarily a form of symbolic violence (see Bryan, 2009), the case of the Language Centre at Oaktree College shows that measures taken to enhance integration are not free of contradictions, which may even have counterproductive effects.

The different intercultural policy of the two schools was also manifest in the approach towards international students' mother tongues. At Oaktree students were, if not encouraged, at least considered to be free to speak their own language outside the classroom during their free time. No international student ever reported to me being reprimanded for talking in his or her mother tongue in the school. When asked

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about this, Miss Hanley commented: 'Of course they can speak their own language in the corridors! We are not scared of what they say in the corridors. We don't need to control them!' (Conversation). The school, then, had also a very positive attitude towards the opportunities given to international students to bring in their own mother tongue as a subject in their Leaving Certificate. I personally witnessed more than once Miss Hanley encouraging international students to take advantage of this opportunity and stressing how proficiency in their home language is an enrichment that must be recognised at their final exams. The idea that the cultural differences that international students brought with them was considered as enrichment was also strengthened during language support classes. During one of my observations of a linguistic support class on essay writing with an Iraqi and an Algerian girl, the teacher stressed:

> When choosing the essay, remember that you have the advantage of being different. Not different, but you have different traditions, different things to bring in, and when you write you can turn it into your advantage (Fieldnotes).

Allowing international students to improve their own mother tongues is an example of what Kirby and colleagues define 'equality of condition', that is, the enabling and empowering people to exercise real choices among real options (Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin, 2002:20). This is opposed to a form of 'liberal egalitarianism', the toleration of difference while still retaining a position of superiority (Darmody et al., 2011:20). From this point of view, Oaktree College seems to be rowing in a direction different from many Irish schools, like Newtown, where bilingual students' linguistic abilities seems not to be valued as cultural capital (Nowlan, 2008).

Intercultural education in action at Oaktree and Newtown

As I argued above, having many international students is not a sufficient criterion through which to judge whether a school is a 'multicultural school' of not. Moreover, to be truly multicultural school implementing language support measures should be only a starting point. A multicultural school should be a place where cultural difference is perceived as enrichment for everybody. There should be a 'multicultural ethos' acting at different levels.

The first point concerns the curriculum: in a country like Ireland, where 10 per cent of the national population is nowadays born overseas, the school curriculum should reflect and valorise ethnic and linguistic diversity. International research shows that there is a relationship between the valorisation of ethnic identities in the curriculum as well as in the school ethos and the achievement of international students (Nowlan, 2008:256). From this point of view, Ireland has a lot to learn: the curricula remain very much Irish and Catholic-centred.

The number of intercultural initiatives at Oaktree outnumbered that in Newtown. At Oaktree, I witnessed many events, initiatives and good practices with the purpose of raising students' and teachers' awareness of human rights and the value of cultural difference. Some of these initiatives were school-based, others were realised in partnership with other institutions. These are frequently cost-free projects, very much connected to the willingness of single teachers.

I will leave aside the use of terminology and the valorisation of international students' mother tongues, which I have described in detail earlier. From the 'visual' point of view, as I have previously anticipated, Oaktree's school walls are covered by posters, many of them celebrating not only cultural diversity, but diversity in general, including sexual behaviour and respect for the elderly. Many posters hanging in the

corridor had the purpose of raising students' awareness of the importance of human rights and respect for others. This is an example of a cost-free and very effective strategy to raise awareness. Another small, cost-free but effective project concerned the translation in as many languages as possible all documents that parents may need as well as all signs on the doors.

Spaces like the 'meditation room' reflected the 'interfaith spirit'. Members of all religions and atheist were welcome to join the place at any time for prayer or meditation. Objects from different religious traditions were displayed. Other religious faiths were acknowledged: for instance, during the interfaith day and the graduation ceremony I have observed that not only Christianity, but also Hinduism and Islamism were valorised, with parents from this religious backgrounds being requested to take an active role by bringing readings from the Quran and from ancient Hindu texts. Moreover, I have always observed religion teachers talking to students with evident sensibility towards their religious background, including those with no faith at all. The school is also an active member of Amnesty International's network of 'Human Rights Friendly Schools'.

At the time of my fieldwork, one of the concerns of Ms Hanley, the language centre coordinator, was that international parents were not attending the school's parents' association in high numbers. International parents are frequently 'blamed' by teachers for their low levels of participation in school life but often nothing is done to involve them or to understand why they are not involved. It is important for teachers to think about the reasons behind this limited participation. These can be cultural (a different attitude towards school), linguistic (English fluency can be a constraint for parents to relate with teachers), organisational (international parents are frequently working longer hours and are thus less available), or connected with

their traditions (in particular those connected with women's role in public life). Whatever the reasons, a project to widen international parents' involvement in school life can have positive effects for students and parents not only at a school level but also at a wider social level. The school was, therefore, evaluating strategies to increase their participation. During the year 2012-2013 the school enacted a new project, called 'paths to parental involvement', with the specific purpose to involve international parents in different aspects of school life, in particular the parents' association, but also in consultations with teachers and extracurricular activities.

Ms Hanley is the kind of teacher who sees her job as a 'mission'. Her mission was, in particular, the integration of international students. She believed that a 'whole school approach' was necessary and was fighting to involve as many teachers as possible, even outside Oaktree. For this reason, Ms Hanley was one of the founders of ELSTA (English Language Support Association) that organised workshops, anti-racist education training for teachers and an annual conference. During my fieldwork, I attended most ELSTA events. In the following fieldnotes it emerges clearly how for teachers these moments of reflexivity are necessary to rethink some of their taken-for-granted assumptions:

> When Miss Hanley asks who is involved in intercultural project, a teacher replies, 'We have a cultural evening, food, dance, they are all represented, it is an amazingly inclusive evening, and everyone is involved, celebrating all cultures'. The Moderator praises this initiative but then tries to problematise this teacher's assumptions by explaining that these kinds of events can have a double face: ' … the last you want is making them feel even more different, … and stressed kindly that being an international doesn't mean necessarily been into the traditional dances and dresses of your country' This is a perfect example on how to make teachers thinking a bit more critically about interculturalism (Fieldnotes).

Oaktree College organises an Intercultural Festival every year, with the collaboration of international parents and students. Newtown School has a much less intercultural spirit. First of all, contrary to Oaktree College, there isn't an assistant principal appointed to care exclusively of international students, and apart from language support, which was, as I have explained earlier, insufficient, not much has been done during my fieldwork period. The only but very important initiative I witnessed was that of Miss Kane, an art teacher who was working on the 'Show racism the red card' project[v]. Miss Kane organised many different activities like workshops at the Institute of Technology in Blanchardstown on cultural diversity, brainstorms on how students understand racism, they watched a DVD which is on the website, organised a creative competition and a mural, a soccer world cup, a policy on anti-racism, and a book on international cuisine. All of these initiatives raise the awareness of the enrichment possibilities of cultural diversity, but were focused on racism. When I interviewed Miss Kane she explained:

> I tried to involve more schools in the project, but they refused, they say racism is a taboo word, people are scared to say the word racism, they are scared about what happens when you start to talk about it, but my classes are so mixed that I can't avoid it. Teachers are not willing to introduce a correct terminology, they say that there is no racism, it's only slagging (Interview).

She also added that the 'Show Racism the Red Card' network also organised summer camps but nobody in the school attended this project because it was considered too expensive. When one attends a disadvantaged school the chances that a student has to attend these extracurricular activities, including travelling, doing exchanges with other European schools are, indeed, rare. Middle class schools, in contrast, can offer more of these opportunities as parents can afford the extra costs (Faas, 2009:85). Miss Kane was a young teacher and was working on this project on a voluntary

basis: she was not requested to do so by the school, although the principal was enthusiastic about it.

In conclusion, even for what concerns intercultural initiatives, as for language support, the two schools showed deep differences in what was 'on offer' to their students. While all initiatives taken by Oaktree were taken to valorise cultural differences, the only initiative taken at Newtown was on the issue of racism. But before all these initiatives, intercultural education should be something which is realised and performed everyday in normal activities, and during my fieldwork I was very careful to record how teachers discussed these issues in their everyday classes. In both schools, I witnessed several classes and events where cultural difference was completely misrepresented and where teachers showed themselves to not be trained as to how best to deal with these issues. I will discuss a number of these examples further in this chapter.

Intercultural education: a chance for learning or a form symbolic violence?

Recent scholarly debates over interculturalism and education are focusing on the effects that certain events such as school's intercultural festivals might have on indigenous students as well as internationals, those who should be at the centre of the action during the event. A number of scholars stresses that an emphasis on cultural difference, instead of what students have in common, can have counterproductive effects.

Some radical thinkers, such as Audrey Bryan (2009a) believe that intercultural education instead of reducing the differences between students have the opposite effect of showcasing diversity, rendering it abnormal, and thus reinforcing

otherness. More importantly, intercultural education is embedded in a specific

discourse of national politics:

> (…) the discourse of 'respecting', 'celebrating', 'valuing' and 'appreciating' diversity has the effect of denying the possibility of a national 'we' which is itself diverse, and ultimately entrenches power relations between culturally dominant and minority groupings in society (Bryan, 2009a:303).

Similarly, for Slavoj Žižek 'liberal multiculturalism', as he labels the current

approach to cultural diversity, celebrating values such as tolerance and

individualism, is itself ideological because it reflects the ideas and interests of

dominant classes:

> Progressive liberals are pleased by diversity contributions to cosmopolitan cultural capital, and schooled in by insisting in a discourse of tolerance. Yet, by insisting on maintaining a sanitary cultural distance, liberal multiculturalism merely desires a 'detoxified' Other, while 'reasonably' enacting increasingly stringent, stratified and securitized immigration systems (Žižek, 1997, in Titley and Lentin, 2011:30).

From my experience of research in both schools I can say that an

intercultural festival does not have the dangerous effects that Bryan predicts.

However, I am quite sceptical about the level of participation and engagement these

events may elicit in international students. At Oaktree I had an opportunity to attend

the intercultural festival and discuss it with a number of students, both Irish and

international. During the festival at Oaktree, I perceived students finding themselves

confused, if not embarrassed, to see a museum-like showcasing of their native

country. In this regard, the NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and

Assessment) recommends, 'Representations of minority groups do not focus on the

spectacular or colourful events, as this may lead to stereotyping and may counteract

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the desire to represent diversity as normal' (NCCA 2006:29). From my observations and conversations, the interest in and participation of Irish students in these events are quite limited. During the preparation, Kabil, a fourth-year student from Algeria, was quite upset with the organisation. He said that last year something was organised with food in the hall but was not a success, 'There was plenty of food but nobody came, it was awful. If it happens again I will do nothing next time' (Conversation). Many others do know something about their country, but are not enthusiastic about the prospect of talking about this in public. Not that this is a taboo, but we always need to keep in mind that adolescence is an age when people generally tend to homologate and often do everything possible to look like the others instead of marking their differences. Many international students left their country when they were very young and do not speak a lot about their traditional customs at home. These fieldnotes report an 'incident' I had in the Language Centre with Kabil the day before the intercultural festival:

> Kabil is preparing a poster about Algeria. He prepared pictures of monuments, national dresses and food and he is attaching them on the poster with some glue. Among all these images I see a picture of San Marco Cathedral in Venice. I pretend not to know it and I ask him, 'Kabil, what's that?' 'Miss, (he keeps calling me Miss despite I told him more than once to call me Maura, but he said he can't because it's not respectful) this is the Library in Oran, my city. It was a cathedral but we turned it into a library, isn't that beautiful?' So I tell him that I have the impression that this is San Marco in Venice, and we look on the internet and found that, yes, this is definitely San Marco. Kabil looks very disappointed and also a bit frustrated by this. I propose that we can keep the picture of San Marco and nobody will notice, because I am the only Italian in the whole school, and he agrees: he is in a hurry to finish the poster and San Marco remains there. I later check on internet and I realize that the library at Oran has some similarity in the structure with San Marco, but still it's interesting to see how he was taking pride in something he really didn't know much. … Was he feeling obliged to show knowledge of something he didn't know given the situation? (Fieldnotes).

Kabil is very active in school life; indeed he is also a mentor for younger students. He was born in Ireland and moved back to Algeria for a couple of years, but moved back again to Ireland five years ago. He speaks English very well and does not need any language support. In an interview with me he declared, like many other international students, to be 'in the middle' (half Irish and half Algerian), and that he loves to go back for holiday but he doesn't feel comfortable living there. Because of his status as 'international', Kabil was probably feeling in charge of doing something for the intercultural festival, but his scarce knowledge of Algeria, together with some hurry in preparing the poster made him 'adjust', and reinvent some details.

Other internationals, as Dara, an Iranian Kurdish child, were emphatic about not taking part in the celebration of their home country:

> I ask Dara if he is doing something for the intercultural festival, but he is disenchanted as usual: 'No, what can you say about Iran, *now*?' I know that by 'now' he is referring to the political moment in which many countries in Arab countries are struggling with revolutions but not much seems to be possible to happen in Iran, and he has always been extremely critical with the regime: Before Khomeini's Islamic revolution, he says, 'You could even go to the US with the Iranian passport, and what about now?' I try to encourage him saying that am sure he has a lot to say about Iran, as Kabil (who was working on the other side of the language centre) had a lot to say about Algeria. 'Listen, Miss' he talks very silently not to be heard, 'Kabil doesn't know anything about his country, his brothers and sisters are dying in his country and he says everything is fine with his government but they are killing people there. Now his country is like Iran. They are killing people. I have nothing to say about my country (Fieldnotes).

This is not to say that intercultural festivals should be abolished, but that the true intercultural education is, in the perspective that emerged from my fieldwork, better delivered as daily messages by mainstream teachers. As Titley and Lentin righty state, multiculturalism is by now a matter of fact in Ireland: 'Beyond the

different definitions of multiculturalism and its supposed crisis, multiculturalism is the lived experience of people: the nation-state is in crisis; neoliberal globalisation is in crisis: multiculturalism is simply *in situ'* (2011: ix).

For this reason, the curriculum should reflect linguistic and ethnic diversity in a respectful and not in a folkloristic way. It should be a message delivered in the school spaces, in the use of a certain terminology, in a strict behaviour policy against racial discrimination, and in teachers' personal behaviours and attitudes. On this point, I am in line with Bryan when she points out that intercultural education cannot contribute to creating a new national identity, redefined in *civic* instead of in *ethnic* terms, until it moves beyond being an add-on approach within the existing curricula and instead begins to radically define a new one (see Bryan, 2009a:302-303).

'What goes without planning'? Representations of cultural difference in everyday teaching

This chapter so far has explored the measures taken by Oaktree and Newtown to answer to the challenge of the increasing number of international students and how these students experience these measures. I have described the material resources such as spaces and teachers as well as the more symbolic ones like the use of a certain kind of terminology. I have also contextualised demographic change at a national level by discussing Ireland's educational integration policy. Despite the fact that all of these aspects do play varying roles in how the two schools welcome international students and have an impact on real life contexts and on each student's experiences, there is much more to explore. If one wants to give a full picture of the situation it is necessary to ask: 'what happens in the classrooms in everyday

activities?' 'what representations of cultural difference emerged during my classroom observations?' 'Are teachers prepared to deal with cultural difference in class?'

I am convinced that ethnography represents the privileged position from which to answer to these questions: only the observations available in everyday life offer a perspective that goes beyond policy documents, statements, and what is said in interviews and by material arrangements. Ethnographers, as Stephen J. Ball writes, like working 'small' -- 'I am interested in events and specifics and locations, in contingencies, concatenations and contexts, in the odd as much as the typical' (2006:4). To paraphrase an article from the anthropologist Maurice Bloch titled, 'What goes without saying' (1991), I believe ethnographers may catch glimpses of 'what goes without planning', that is, what is said in a classroom despite what is planned in the principal's office or in the Department of Education buildings. For this reason, I will take a number of vignettes from my fieldnotes showing what happens at Oaktree and Newtown when cultural diversity emerges as an issue of discussion.

a - 30 in your family! (And 5 grandparents)

I am in Albany, during one of Miss Kerr's Irish classes. The teacher asks a question in English and students are requested to answer in Irish. Angela is an Irish student, and Tom is from Nigeria. They argue very frequently and I have often witnessed Angela shouting racist insults at Tom.

> Miss Kerr asks Angela, 'How many people are there in your family?' She replies, 'Seven'. Tom looks at Miss Kerr and at Angela looking amazed at this news: 'Seven, how is it possible?' Angela replies nervously, 'Oh shut up! You are 30 in your family!' Is this meant to be a racist comment? In any case

it's not the first time Angela makes this kind of comments to Tom, like, 'You live in the bush'. Miss Kerr shouts at them menacingly that she will report both of them to Miss Pearce.

Later on the question is, 'How many living grandparents do you have?' It is again Tom's turn. He thinks a bit before answering and says, 'Five'. Everybody start laughing, asking, 'How is it possible? You may have at max four grandparents!' It looks clear to me that one may have 5 grandparents indeed, it just depends by what Tom means by this term, but Miss Kerr also doesn't look like she trusts him. 'Tom, how's that possible?' she asks. And Tom replies, a bit shy, 'Well my granddad has to wives'. Again, everybody is laughing. Miss Kerr says quickly, 'Ok, we will discuss it later'. And, of course, they will never discuss it again. Why are they letting the others laugh at him, thus contributing to the idea he has 30 people in his family? Why not give him 5 seconds to explain whether his grandparents are divorced, or if maybe his granddad has 2 wives because this is allowed in his country, etc? These are great chances to understand other people that tend to be lost (Fieldnotes).

In this case, Miss Kerr showed herself to be insensitive towards Tom, who only some minutes before was also offended by Angela. She showed herself to be unprepared to discuss in plain and simple words the issue of polygamy, thus contributing to putting Tom in a situation where he was mocked by the entire class, without even doing anything to stop all those who were laughing at him. Her trying to push this conversation quickly aside ('ok, we will discuss it later') showed a lack of training if not an embarrassment when dealing with this topic.

b - Boys will be boys, bullies will be bullies

I am on the coach coming back to Dublin after a weekend in Donegal with some first-year classes in Newtown. I am sitting next to Miss Jameson:

Suddenly the teacher and I hear two Irish students talking to another saying, 'Yesterday we have been slagging [*mocking*] black people,' 'and I have been slagged because I am white,' replies another. I look at the teacher waiting for her to say something to the boys and when she stays silent I ask her why. She replies 'Well, so it's fine if the white has been slagged too ... laughing is good

until a person doesn't take it as a joke, in the end we don't want to live in a society where laughing is prohibited. (Fieldnotes)

This is, I believe, another example of a teacher showing little attention to the issue of racial intolerance. Here 'slagging a black' is considered as acceptable if counterbalanced by 'slagging a white'. What I found most discomforting in this conversation was the idea that slagging is considered by this teacher as having a laugh and joking together.

c - Civic Education at Oaktree

The following fieldnotes report a number of CSPE (Civic Social and Political Education) classes I observed at Oaktree College with different teachers. These classes proved to be extremely interesting to observe, as the contents of the subject were frequently pushing the lesson towards topics concerning poverty, development and other cultures. The first is a CSPE class taught by Miss Connolly. I introduced this teacher earlier, stressing her excellent teaching skills.

> Today the subject is 'the Traveller community and discrimination'. I am impressed by the fact that Travellers are straightforwardly presented as connected with discrimination. After a brief explanation of who Travellers are as a population, Andrew raises his hand and asks, 'Miss but we all know that Travellers steal a lot, why don't you talk about this too?' Miss Connolly replies 'Some of them. But everybody steals, not only Travellers,' and she dismisses it very quickly and it's a shame. I think it should have been a very good start for a discussion. They are asking lots of questions. Again, the same boy asks if there is any Traveller in the school, 'Yes, but not in this class. (And who are they?) You'll know them if they'll want to tell you. Do you want to know who they are to discriminate against them?'
>   Andrew asks again: 'Miss, do they have showers in the caravans?' and the teacher replies that, yes, many have showers in the caravans, and there are also showers in the caravan sites'. Andrew says in low voice to his neighbour, 'I don't believe her'.

After this class lesson I talk to Miss Connolly, who agrees with me that usually these kinds of prejudices depend on a student's parents. But interestingly, she adds that although they *have to teach tolerance*, 'The truth is that these people are like this. I have been working with settled Travellers with St Vincent de Paul and there are very nice people, but many do steal, this is the truth' (Fieldnotes).

In these fieldnotes, it emerges quite clearly that Andrew had a prejudice towards travellers. But was Miss Connolly really doing something to challenge it? Miss Connolly did not respond to Andrew's questions fully: she dismissed these kinds of arguments quickly because *it is* a difficult argument to deal with and *it is* true that Travellers, Roma are *perceived to be* more associated than settled people with crime, at least in the popular imagination - but she tried to silence the question quickly by saying that 'even settled people steal'. Given that Andrew was at least in part correct, (and this is what Miss Connolly had to admit when talking to me), perhaps instead of refusing the discussion she could have explained the (cultural, political, including institutional racism issues, etc.) background to ethnic stereotypes? Of course, this is much more difficult to do. This case provides an example of how the 'virtues of toleration', much proclaimed in policies and organisation of spaces, ends up being communicated in the classroom as common-sense *doxa*, and in vacuous ways.

The next vignette is a CSPE class observation with Miss Gould, another young a very enthusiastic teacher who I observed once a week.

Today they start a new topic: development. Miss Gould talks about 'stages' in development. 'Developing countries are not as developed as we are.' 'Ireland has finished its development, it's developed,' but also 'Development can be controversial'. She explains that what makes a difference between what is the developed world in comparison with the developing one is money, schools ... and goes on to explain, 'Developing world is not yet developed, they need to come to our standard, we have a society which is fully developed' (Fieldnotes).

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In this case, the topic of development is explained, I believe, from a sort of neo-imperialist perspective where the rest of the world must come to 'our' standards, thus implying that there is a 'we', that is, those on the right side, and a 'them', those who need to improve. This concept was further strengthened when the teacher explained (and it is not clear on which basis she said so) that Ireland had 'completed' the process of development. Finally, although Miss Gould was referring to the side effects of development ('can be controversial'), these aspects were not developed further. Are such oversimplifications justified by the young audience in the room? I don't think so: I believe that Miss Gould's students were ready to understand and deserved a more complex explanations. What was more striking to me about this class is that those words came from Miss Gould, a young and very motivated teacher, with very recent teacher training. How was it possible that a young teacher, and in particular a CSPE one could discuss development in such uncritical ways? After this class, I started to realise that problem, at least in part, lies in an absence of teacher training on these issues.

The third vignette is drawn from Miss Connolly's class, a lesson on human rights:

> They are reading the story of a woman, *Under Taliban Rules* (1996-2001). The supposed dates of beginning and end of the regime are written on the book. The idea one has reading the story is that now all violence towards women is over. They are discussing which rights *were* not respected in this woman's story, and a good discussion emerged. But there is no one single word of contextualization: why were Taliban there? Who were they? What about the war in Afghanistan? I guess it would be important to say here that not all Muslims are Taliban. … Nothing.
> They go on talking about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Miss Connolly says, 'Hitler decided to discriminate against the Jews for their race and religion'. Laura (who is very bright) asks, 'Why did Hitler chose them?' The teacher answers quickly as if the question was not an important

one: 'Because he hated Jews' and goes on talking. I am so disappointed (Fieldnotes).

Again, like in the previous fieldnotes, what is completely missing here are some words of contextualisation for these important past or present events. My worries about the lack of explanation on the fact that not all Muslims are Taliban unfortunately turned out to be right after a couple of observations, when Miss Connolly explained, 'The cultural context in Dublin is different to that of a Muslim country. In a Muslim country, women wear burqa and for them is more difficult to find a job'.

This is, unfortunately, only a selection of many other similar fieldnotes where teachers show not to be ready to discuss at best issues generally related with cultural diversity. This is a point where both schools seemed to me to be weak in the same way: the root of the problem lies in my view outside the school, in particular about how teachers themselves are trained.

In her assessment of Ireland's intercultural education, Audrey Bryan (2009b) talks about the discomfort of a teacher reading to the class a novel containing the word 'nigger'. The teacher in this case mentions she feels not well trained on multicultural issues and the English syllabus contains racist terminology, but there is no guideline on how to deal best with this text in multicultural classrooms. The unprepared teacher may avoid the issue (like it emerged in my observations), or engage in discussion without been prepared, but, Bryan warns, this may also be damaging (2009b:231).

One could argue that all this is not especially related to international students. I believe, on the contrary that it is very much connected to the issue. I consider CSPE education as a form of intercultural education. This subject, although

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been relegated to be amongst the less represented in the Irish curriculum in term of teaching periods, could offer important occasions for critical thinking if properly approached. Learning about issues such as development or human rights teaches students to think about cultural difference, and that there are different ways of living in this world. It is never too early to learn to be a bit less ethnocentric, and this should be a key focus of this subject.

However, a certain superficial civic education, which limits itself to empathize with those who suffer discrimination (like the work that Oaktree students were doing on women in Afghanistan), cannot be enough. There is a need to address injustice more critically, since the first years of schooling (Bryan, 2009b:236). This last point reminds me of a meeting I had in Dublin with a group of teachers and some delegate from Amnesty International. I was invited there by Ms Hanley, who was Oaktree's referent for the 'Human rights friendly school project'. Teachers discussed human rights, and how to include and introduce them in everyday classes. My fieldnotes report that all teachers see racism as caused by ignorance and rarely even mention institutional racism. There was a continuous emphasis on the need to be empathetic with those who suffer and no mention of the political and economic conditions that may cause such injustice. Soon after this discussion we had a video conference with teachers in a school in Israel with whom, ironically considering the previous discussion, we discussed human rights, without being allowed by their principal to talk about human rights in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have analysed the two schools provisions for language support and more in general their intercultural initiatives. It emerges clearly that, despite the governmental cutbacks impacted on all schools, Oaktree College is still able to provide a much better linguistic support (different assessment, more hours, and more teachers involved, one to one versus group lessons) than Newtown. The reasons for this different ability are twofold. The first is that Oaktree appointed an assistant principal with a specific focus on international students, which made it possible for this teacher to look for any extra funding that was available, and looking for funding is a very time consuming activity implying a degree of specialisation. The second, and more important reason why Oaktree College is able to provide a better language provision for international students is, to put it simply, that international students are the primary challenge for Oaktree, while at Newtown other challenges, related to the difficult neighbourhood in which the school is located, take all the energies and resources available. This means that despite policy documents that give a simplified picture and portrait of students as universal ideal types (the 'international student', the 'student with special educational needs'), the different language support arrangements taken at Oaktree and Newtown show a much more complex picture. Labelling a student as in need of linguistic support, for example, is context-related. As a DEIS school, Newtown receives financial support to tackle school dropouts and to help disadvantaged families, which are (and rightly so) deemed as the school's priorities. Funding for linguistic support was scarce and, at the time of my fieldwork, most teachers were sure they were to be reduced. At Oaktree there are more resources for linguistic support because this is considered as the main challenge for

the school and, as a consequence, the same level international students will have much more chances to receive support at Oaktree than in Newtown. Quite simply, a foreign student not in need of linguistic support at Newtown is probably considered to be in need of it at Oaktree.

This different criterion of classification of students' needs has also been stressed for what concerns students with SEN (Special Educational Needs). Analysing the data from a national survey in Irish Primary Schools (the nine-year-old cohort of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study), Mc Coy, Banks and Shelvin argue that the identification of a student as SEN is influenced by the school context, and in particular by the school's social background (Mc Coy, Banks and Shelvin, 2012). The analysis of the data reveals how children attending disadvantaged schools, and in particular DEIS schools in Urban Band 1[vi], are more likely to be classified as having behavioural problems rather than learning disabilities. Teachers working in disadvantaged schools seem, therefore, to look at children with special needs as having a behavioural problem instead of a learning disability. What is interesting in these findings is that both when SEN or Linguistic Support is discussed the social background of the school can make a difference not only in the support the student will receive but also in the interpretation that his or her needs: teachers refer to a model of 'normal student' which can greatly vary among different schools. According to Darmanin (2003), schools' different educational styles are much influenced by the schools social background, with the most disadvantaged stressing the importance of 'care', 'containment' and the schools in less problematic neighbourhoods putting the accent on 'challenge', 'academic excellence'.

This point is much in line with what I have stressed earlier when mentioning the two principals' speeches during the graduation ceremonies and that which emerges

frequently in the teachers' interviews and conversations. I stressed earlier how these two distinct 'caring styles' can be also detected in the principals' welcomes in the two schools websites.

In addition to the different economic provisions, I have also stressed how there are other and much more subtle arrangements impacting on international students' everyday life in the two schools, such as the organisation of spaces, the use of a certain terminology, and the attitude towards foreign languages within the school spaces. Better arrangements of this kind are possible at Oaktree because a full-time teacher, Miss Hanley is completely dedicated to linguistic support and to take care of international students. This causes a positive domino effect, because Ms Hanley was able not only to get extra funding for linguistic support but also to liaise with territorial and national agencies and even to 'advertise' the school through press releases. Pringle makes exactly this point when he argues that public resources are not necessarily released to those institutions more in need. In particular, when public funding is provided through a bidding process those less in need have more resources to win and get more funding (Pringle, 1999). In this way, if schools are left to make arrangements themselves the gap between those in a position of advantage and the ones more in need is at risk of increasing.

But international students' life in a school, of course, is more than this. The sense of inclusion that each of them may experience can be related to a multitude of factors going beyond the linguistic support they receive and the intercultural agenda that a school had set. The next chapter, therefore, will introduce the biographies of a selected number of international students I knew particularly well in each school. Their stories represent different and sometimes contrasting ways to feel integrated and to be considered as such by a group, a school, and a whole community.

Chapter 5

Different ways of feeling 'integrated':

International students' voices

> Over the past year in countries such as Norway and France extremists have resorted to barbaric acts of violence to express their views on immigration. *These actions reflect a failure of integration* (Mc Ginnity et Al., 2011: i).

The multiple meanings of an over-used word: Nadir and his family

Nadir is a fifteen year-old boy attending Newtown School. He was born in Algeria and moved with his family to Ireland when he was eight years old. He has a younger sister, Aisha, who was born in Ireland. He lives with his mother Rabab, a housewife, and his father Omar, a builder. I interviewed Nadir and his parents and I visited them in their house three times. I chatted with them about how they felt about living in Ireland, and if they were happy to stay here: the question 'do you feel integrated?' has, for most migrants, little meaning. Nadir and his parents expressed different and sometimes contrasting feelings, which were influenced by their different biographies. Religion and social class also played an important role in their answers.

Both Rabab and Omar hold high school degrees, but despite being 'deskilled' in Ireland they didn't complain about their current level of wealth, which guaranteed them at least a decent lifestyle. They lived in a council house project and their flat was always well kept and clean. Rabab was happy to stay at home and to take care of the children (she was pregnant for the third time at the time of my

fieldwork) and she saw it as impossible for her to work: her English was still poor. Despite this she was quite happy with her life in Ireland: she had a restricted number of good female friends with whom she met in her home or in the local park. All of them were from Algeria or Arab-speaking countries so she didn't have problems in communicating with them.

Omar and Rabab knew that the local neighbourhood was 'not the best, especially at night', but they were not planning to move to another place. They dreamed of going back to Algeria when they were older. They didn't have any Irish friends, but had good formal relations with their neighbours. Omar had 'very hard work, but these are tough times so I can't complain ... I still have a job'. His English was good. Nadir was described by a teacher as, 'Quite a good student; very well behaved'. His English was excellent and he had mixed friendships in the school. He reported never having experienced any form of bulling or discrimination. He was feeling more Irish than Algerian and wanted to be a doctor.

Would it be right to say that Rabab is not integrated because her English was still not good enough to find a job? In any case she wouldn't work because her idea was that as a mother and wife her place was at home. Still, her friendships provided her with an important social network. She described her life in Ireland as good: although she never expressed in this terms, she was, in her way, 'integrated'.

The epigraph at the beginning of this chapter raises the same points. It is taken from the 'Annual Monitoring Report on Integration', a policy document issued by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). This annual report promotes 'policy changes that ensure meaningful real integration takes place' (McGinnity et. al., 2011: Preface). This epigraph emerges out of and reinforces a particular discourse on integration, a discourse that carries the assumption that integration is a

'black or white' word, that is, it assumes that given societies do the job of integrating migrants well or fail at the task. This way of framing social facts is not exclusive to this report: on the contrary, it seems to be prevalent in a great many policy documents, in political discourse and in societal debates across Europe and internationally. The term integration is often oversimplified today; it is often emptied of any internal complexities and contradictions. The language used in policy documents 'objectifies', a process whereby 'policies acquire a seemingly tangible existence and legitimacy' (Shore and Wrights 1997:4): integration turns out to be used in a frequently ideological and instrumental way, which may look very appealing on policy documents and in politician's speeches, but shares little resemblance (not to say impact) with actually existing lives.

In this chapter I will try to challenge this view of integration by giving voice to the different biographies of a number of international students attending Newtown School and Oaktree College. Integration will emerge as a multifaceted term that needs to be framed in terms of process and, most importantly, to be discussed in generational and gendered terms, as well as from the point of view of social class. Bourdieu argues that individual's actions are both constitutive of and constrained by something that goes beyond the individual's actions and decisions. The French sociologist, indeed, always believed that the explanatory principles of the realities that we, as social scientists, observe must be elsewhere than the site of observation itself (Bourdieu, 1999:181). To weave this into our topic of discussion, this means that to reach a complex understanding of how migrants experience their integration it is necessary to look at both the micro level of individuals' actions as well as the macro levels of a deeper structure, without reifying either position as a stable vantage point: in both cases gender, age, social class and ethnicity play an important role.

The world integration itself should be problematised, as it places those in need of it as missing something. Breda Gray has stressed how policy documents in Ireland tend to place migrants as being excluded and in need of integration (Gray, 2006:121), a process which relegates migrants in an intrinsically inferior position *vis à vis* the 'normal', national citizens. Moreover, in interactions with my research participants, integration is a term which only the older students and medium to high achievers felt comfortable discussing with me. For younger international students, as well as for the older ones with poor English language skills, the term was almost obscure, although we discussed the issue almost daily, using words and questions that were easier to understand.

In the chapter 4, I discussed how the debate on integration in Ireland today is primary framed in terms of a 'two way process': a process of mutual accommodation between migrants and host society where both have to come to terms and accommodate. I have also stressed that Ireland's provision for ethnic minorities, refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers in policy have been criticised for its *laissez faire* underpinning, a delegation of responsibility from the Government to individuals. This speech from Michael McDowell, former Minister of the DEJLR (Justice, Equality and Law Reform) clearly shows this:

> Is integration for example, solely a Government project? Clearly it is not. It is everyone's business. It is everyone's business because everyone is involved directly at the level of their community - which is where integration succeeds or fails. It is everyone's business because at its core, it is about changing hearts and minds. It is everyone's business because integration and the issues surrounding it permeates the daily lives of every Irish man, woman and child as they go about the daily business of their social, economic, religious and cultural lives (McDowell, 2007).

But how is integration defined by policy then? To quote again the 'Annual Monitoring Report on Integration':

> Integration might thus be defined simply as the process of becoming 'an accepted part of society' both as an individual and as a group (...). The Integration Centre defines integration to be achieved when immigrants enjoy economic, political, social and cultural equality and inclusion (McGinnity et. al., 2011:1).

It is clear that this definition leaves many questions open. Let's analyse for example the term 'economic equality'. As I have stressed in Chapter 2, migrants into Ireland, despite holding in general high educational qualifications have jobs and housing arrangements inferior to their Irish counterparts. Therefore, from this point of view, a migrant shouldn't be defined as 'integrated' according to the definition. However, this may not be the case: a migrant might define himself as integrated even if aware of the gap separating his lifestyle form that of the Irish: this may depend, for example, on whether we are discussing newly arrived migrants or second generation migrants. And, more importantly, what kinds of 'Irish' are we talking about? Wealth in Ireland, as everywhere, is not uniformly distributed. Social and cultural equality are even more difficult parameters to discuss. What is social equality? Is it referred to a concept of same social opportunities in terms for example of participation to society? In this case, gender and religion, among others, might be influencing one individual's willingness and desire to 'integrate' into the host society. The following case study, taken from my fieldnotes, offers some reflections on this discussion.

The rest of this chapter will use ethnography to give some occasions to rethink integration. By outlining the biographies of a number of international students attending both Oaktree College and Newtown School, there follows an attempt to try to provide a more nuanced picture of integration. These life histories

show, for example, that the idea of integrated-ness held by teachers can be in stark opposition to students' ideas of it. This chapter, indeed, will problematise the concept of integration as frequently considered by teachers, who tend to refer a student ideal-type: a student not giving much trouble. In recent years, especially in the US, research looking at school achievement as evidence of integration has been increasing (Faas, 2009:215): high achievement, however, is not necessarily coinciding with a 'real' sense of inclusion from the students' perspectives.

Jana and Maria, Claire and Isa: 'classic' paths of integration

In the beginning of this chapter, I framed integration as a multifaceted term that escapes the rigid definitions that characterise policy documents and even teachers' definitions. Migrants can perceive themselves as integrated in certain aspects of their life while less so in others, and different members of the same migrant family can report different levels of integration. Most importantly, integration might not at all be a real concern in a migrant's everyday life.

Nonetheless, during my fieldwork in both schools I met many international students reflecting the portrait of the 'well integrated student': that is, with good achievements, mixed friendships, and frequently taking an active part in school life. Despite being from different countries, the majority of these students have been resident in Ireland for many years, thus confirming that language fluency is essential. They also shared an (successful) attempt to find a balance between their mother tongues and traditions and their life in Ireland.

Here I will delineate the biographies of four of these students, two per each school. It is not a case that all of them are girls intentionally, because gender is not a

focus of my research. When analysing the transcripts of the interviews and the informal conversations I had with students, it was clear how girls were fitting much better into the ideal-type of the 'well integrated student' more so than boys. This is not the place to discuss this issue, but research on this topic will probably bring important insights into the comprehension of the experiences of migrant students into Irish schools.

Jana was a 6th-year student at Oaktree College; she is Russian but holds a Lithuanian passport. I frequently met her in the language centre during lunchtime because she found the place quiet. Jana lives with her mother, a 'nail technician', her step dad, a builder, and a sister. The father is an engineer and works in Lithuania. Her parents moved to Ireland five years ago because, 'There is no money, no jobs there'. She stayed with grandparents and moved to Ireland four years ago. Jana's best friend was from Iraq and she had many mixed friendships. She was happy with the school and defined Oaktree College as a 'racism-free school'. When she moved to Ireland, Jana was able to write in English but not to speak English, and received intensive linguistic support:

> I didn't do French and Irish, I took extra English with Miss Hanley, I was here [*in the Language Centre*] most of the day. I made friends with other international students, and with my neighbours, not with Irish students. I was in the language centre; my English was not good enough. Now I have Irish friends but in the beginning I didn't talk to them, I started talking in the 5th year, when we started moving in other classes and there were more people to find friends. I had a very good support; Miss Hanley brought me to the level of the others (Interview).

At the time of my fieldwork, Jana had linguistic support for three hours per week; she was working only on *Hamlet* and on Leaving Certificates papers. This kind of support would not be available at Newtown, where the school policy is that

students can receive linguistic support only for two years and on basic-level English only. Jana defined herself as an 'average student' and planned to study medicine. She was much more than average a 'tough' person because she did extremely well in her Leaving Certificate. Her parents and her stepdad all pushed her to study and go to university. Jana spent most of her life in Russia but -- as with many international students I met --, when I asked about her identity she defined herself in very cosmopolitan terms:

> That's a difficult question. I am Russian, my mum is Ukraine, and I was born in Lithuania. When they ask me where is home, I say home is Ireland. I feel I go to Lithuania as a tourist. Lithuania is a very poor country, there is nothing. I don't consider it as Europe. I want to be in Europe, maybe not in Ireland, but in Western Europe for sure. I don't care having an Irish passport because even with a Lithuanian passport I can go around the world now. Lithuania is in the EU but is not Europe to me (Interview).

Maria was a 6th year too and she often attending the language centre for lunch and to study. She was Polish and lived with her parents and two brothers. Her mother is a perfect example of immigrant deskilling, as she was a primary school teacher in Poland but couldn't teach in Ireland (to teach in primary school one has to pass a Gaelic exam) so she drove a van, and her dad was a builder. As Jana, her parents moved to Ireland 6 years earlier to find a job. Maria in the beginning had Polish friends but as her English improved she started having mixed friendships. Like Jana, she defined the school as very tolerant and reported that she never had problems with racism. Maria was very good in drawing: she often drew on her personal book at the Language Centre, and she planned to study design. Her parents supported her. When Maria arrived in Ireland, she was enrolled in another secondary school in the area:

I was enrolled at half 2nd year at that time in St Andrew's School. Oaktree did not admit me because they don't take pupils in the middle of the year and without records. And the waiting list was very long, so I did my second year and transition year St. Andrew's, and after this I enrolled here. Since I am at Oaktree my parents stopped worrying about me: they know I am in good hands. (...) In St. Andrew's I had intense support, every day. Here is more if you want to get support you get to, you just need to ask. If we have problems with any specific subject we ask the teacher and she may give an extra class so I ask when I need. ... I think by now I am prepared for Leaving Cert. My English now is very good, sometimes I speak 10 minutes to someone and they realize only then I am not Irish (Interview).

Like Jana, Maria described her migrant status in positive terms, and thought about her future as in movement:

Maura: How will you imagine yourself in 10 years time?
Maria: Not here, not in Poland. Is not that I don't like Ireland and Poland, but I know them I want to see different places. Maybe Australia, maybe US.
Maura: So what are you now? Irish, Polish, a mix?
Maria: I am Polish, proud to be. I would be interested in having an Irish passport, but this doesn't make me Irish in any way. My home is not Ireland, not Poland. Home is a too fixed word for me. Home is wherever I feel good and I want to stay (Interview).

Claire was a 5th year student at Newtown School. I introduced her in the second chapter mentioning that she was appointed as my personal guide by school principal. Claire grew up in the Philippines. When her parents moved to Ireland, she remained with her relatives and emigrated herself in 2003. She lived with her parents: her mother working as care staff and father in a warehouse. She had a younger brother and sister. She applied in another secondary school in the area, but wasn't accepted due to residency criteria.

Claire received linguistic support in primary school, and by the time she started secondary she was doing so well that she also started to learn the Gaelic language (which many internationals are excused from doing). She had mixed ethnic friendships at school, but her best friend was Pilipino. She was very sociable during

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break times at school, but she didn't get out much with her friends because she studied hard every day. She declared herself to be happy to be part of that school and of never have felt different or bullied. Claire felt that her family was of key importance for her studies, in that her parents provided constant encouragement and pushed her to do her best. She achieved the highest result in the Junior Certificate in the whole school, and during the year of my fieldwork she also won the prize as best student in her year, which made her and her family extremely proud. She was taken as an example of perfect student by most teachers in the school and was planning to study medicine at Trinity College, Dublin.

Claire also had a cosmopolitan self-perception and seemed to be able to mix her Pilipino nationality and her migrant status without any conflict:

> I want to go back home for holidays, but not for good. If economy recovers, I may stay here, but after college if I have a job I may move, maybe to America. This year I'll get the Irish passport, I am very happy; I can go everywhere. But I am Pilipino, 100 per cent and I would like having a Pilipino husband, is easy to grow children when you have the same culture, language. ... Your child won't be confused (Interview).

It is also worth noting one final 'ideal integrated student', namely Isa. At the time of my research she was a 5th-year student at Newtown. She lived with her parents, (both had secondary school diplomas): her mother was a manager in a restaurant in the airport and her father worked in a warehouse packing magazines.

Isa lived with her grandparents in Poland for two years, while her parents settled in Ireland. She moved to Ireland when she was 12 years old and enrolled immediately in Newtown. Smiling, she recalls that at the time, 'My English was zero, nothing!' Isa had difficult times during the first two years; she recalls that linguistic support was not helpful and that in the first two years she hardly spoke,

because she felt too shy. So she gained very close friends in two Polish girls: at the time, they were known in the school as the 'three Polish'. They were a closed group and although the school policy is not to allow international students to speak their own language at school, Isa explains that they spoke Polish as much as they could. She recalls how, her silent period finished quite suddenly: she started to go out with Irish people and she literally discovered she was able to speak English.

Isa was excused from taking Gaelic classes and during these periods and instead did individual study. She was a very good student, and took higher-level papers in all subjects except maths: Mr Holmes moved her to ordinary level and she was very disappointed by this. Isa was planning to study at Trinity College but was not sure about the subject matter. Like Claire, she was very determined to do well and get enough points at her Leaving Cert to go straight to university.

Of these four girls, Isa is the only one who expressed her sense of sadness when thinking to her country. This might be caused by the fact that she left her country later on than the others. Still, as with the other girls mentioned above, Isa saw her future away from her home country:

> At one stage I was confused about my life and I wanted to go back. When I am out with my friends, I feel better in Poland: not that here is bad, but when I come back here after holidays I am sad for two weeks, after it goes away, but education, jobs, etc. make me feel I want to stay here. I have no problems in imagining myself with an Irish boyfriend. Still, I am 100 per cent Polish (Conversation).

At the time of my fieldwork the 'three Polish girls' period was over and Isa had mixed friendships. For this reason she was openly criticised by other Polish girls who just arrived in the school: Ingrid, who I will introduce below, complained,

'There are Polish girls that try to be Irish, like Isa they talk, behave Irish, it is just to be accepted, but I don't like it'.

One day I was talking to Isa, who was probably unaware of what Ingrid thought about her, and she asked for my opinion: there was a new group of Polish girls, and she was wondering if she should join them -- 'Only because we are Polish'. She didn't wait for my opinion, however, because she immediately added being Polish is not enough to be friends.

These four girls' biographies have a number of aspects in common, starting with their very good school performances. Their teachers spoke in very positive terms about them. The other common element is that they all have a number of years of permanent residency in Ireland, which made them confident enough in speaking English to build mixed friendship: this advantage, however, in the eyes of a newly arrived migrant like Ingrid, might look as though someone was 'acting Irish'. The third common aspect is their cosmopolitan, a sense of mixed identity. These four girls were able to find a balance between their home country and Ireland and were ready to think about their future lives in different places.

Dara and Kabil: is a 'good student' also an 'integrated student'?

Dara and Kabil were 17 and 16 years old at the time of my fieldwork. They were both Oaktree College students and frequently attended the language centre together, even if Kabil didn't need linguistic support. They were not friends and they had very different characters: Dara was shy, pessimistic and frequently polemic in his speech style; Kabil was always smiling and a pure optimist. Although it can be said that they

conformed to the stereotype of members of a 'model minority', these two boys differed from the four girls mentioned above in terms of how they felt within the school walls. Dara and Kabil, indeed, shared a similar path of integration. While their teachers defined them as 'good students', well behaved students, and at a first sight they related well with their peers, they frequently confided me that they felt alone and unhappy both in the school and outside.

At the time of my fieldwork Dara, an Iranian Kurdish, was attending the 4th year. Dara migrated to Ireland the year before and all teachers were astonished at how quickly his English was improving. This was doubtless facilitated in part by the very intensive multidisciplinary language support Oaktree was providing to him. Apart from when Dara was having intensive linguistic support, he was frequently hanging out in the language centre during lunch times. We soon became 'friends' and had long conversations there. Dara started to talk about very personal issues with me; he was clearly in need of an adult to speak with him. Dara had a very complicated family situation and was suffering a lot because of this. Her mother was still in Iran and with few chances to join them, because his father, with whom he had a very complicated relationship, was with another woman. Dara changed residence many times and for a short period he was living alone. Before attending Oaktree College, he attended Newtown School. When I asked him about the differences between the two schools, and he replied that teachers and language support were better at Oaktree, but also that in the Newtown area people were much friendlier:

> They don't care what country you are from, while here sometimes you get slagged or bullied by people in the school ... is not racism is just joking, but is to everybody not just internationals, and I don't care, they just mess with you and joke with you, you may find racist people but I never did. (...) I would say that in this school [*Oaktree College*] people are not friendly, while at Newtown people are much friendlier, but there they can't support you like

they do it here, there's nothing else they can do, they do with what they have. But teachers at Newtown are friendlier (Conversation).

Dara often described feeling 'different' and he imagined that he had to try hard to fit in. He tended to justify any form of bulling he experienced in terms of, 'It's not racism; it's just joking'. He was sure that this would stop when his English improved. He was trying hard to be 'Western': he was sure that Iran was too different and that the only solution was a 'total assimilation':

Dara: My skin is different, the way we dress, the way we behave [*referring to me and himself*].
Maura: What do you mean when you said that we have to change to be here?
Dara: I have to change dress and behaviour, in Iran we say, 'If you don't want to be bullied then do like them', so I have to wear tracksuits and swear. ... In the end, you don't want to be called 'Paki'.
Maura: Did it happen?
Dara: Yes, but it was just a joke [*laugh*] … Imagine you see in your street people with a turban, you don't feel comfortable; the way Irish people dress... we should be like them. We have to try to be all the same because we live in Ireland. For example in Iran you can't say anything about gay people here it is an issue, you have to talk in a logical way, you don't have to be strict (Conversation).

This position was also caused by the fact that Dara was very critical towards the Iranian regime and Islam, and probably even more so because he belonged to a minority even within his country. This, in turn, was reflected in his exaggeratedly positive, almost naïve, picture of the Western world:

Dara: When you come to this country you have to change your mind, here they have freedom! (...) When you come to Europe you see people are so happy, in my country everybody is depressed. ... In Iran many do not accept to discuss things in scientific terms, 60 per cent will explain things in religious terms. ... In Iran you have to keep many things secret, so why having a girlfriend? I don't want to keep it secret (...). I believe in God but not in Heaven. I want to be happy in this word!
Maura: Dara don't you think that to be different can be a good thing too? As migrants we can bring new things in Ireland. …

Dara: You are European, Miss, at a European level we can share, but Asia, no, is too different, we can't share. You are living in this country; you have to learn the language and the culture.
Maura: So what are you now? Irish, Kurdish, Iranian?
Dara: Now I just say I am a Persian Kurdish because I can't speak with an Irish accent, I don't have many Irish friends I don't know how to slag in English, which I want to learn. Most of my friends are foreigners, I have a couple of Irish friends, but not what you can really call friends, I call friend who is ready to help you (Conversation).

Dara said he didn't have 'real' friends within the school. He said his friends were all older people who he knew outside the school, and none of them were Irish. He was putting all his efforts into assimilating into Irish culture, but, despite this, he found it very difficult to make Irish friends, and explained this in terms of his not behaving exactly like the others yet. The refusal of their personal traditions to affiliate with Irishness, even if this implies being criticised, is one of the dynamics of inclusion enacted by recently arrived international students to be accepted in schools (Devine, 2009:60).

One of his teachers, Miss Kennedy, expressed her worry because Dara had started hanging about, 'with students who are not very good'. She imagined that this was caused by the fact that Dara, despite being very intelligent, took all subjects at ordinary level because of his problems with the language, and his classmates 'were not very motivated to study hard'. For this reason, Miss Kennedy anticipated that the next year Dara would study at least some subjects at higher level. She added that given his personal situation, she would not be surprised if next year he would work and study and this will be very difficult academically. Unfortunately, Miss Kennedy's prediction came true. When I contacted Dara after the end of my fieldwork, he had left school and was leaving in Cork alone and working in a garage. He was planning to start school the year after.

Kabil had like Dara a very troubled family history. Kabil and his younger sister Miriam, who also attended the school and was another of my key research participants, were both born in Ireland, where they lived for eight years. After their parents separated, they were literally 'kidnapped' by their father who brought them back to Algeria for six years. When they recalled this event, it was clear to me that it had been quite traumatic for both of them. They then moved back to Ireland, where they had been residing for the past two years. Kabil remembers his first months at school as very challenging:

> I was very nervous in the beginning -- it was horrible. I have changed my life three times, I had to make new friends for the third time … and, yes, there was a bit of bullying in the beginning from both Irish and internationals. Teachers were nice but it was hard to make friends, and even now it is hard, is difficult to fit in a different culture (...). When I was bullied I sorted it by myself outside, I fought outside. In school I went to the Principal and the Year Head (Conversation).

Kabil was involved in school life. For example, he was helping with the organisation of the intercultural festival, and he was also a mentor, providing support to younger students. Despite the fact that the initial bullying was over and he started to feel more comfortable at school, he admitted that he frequently felt alone. This is an excerpt from a long conversation we had one evening outside the school gym while he was helping as a mentor during the award-ceremony evening:

> Maura: Is that difficult for you to keep your traditions here in Ireland?
> Kabil: Yes, very difficult, Miss, because the Mosque is far away and I can't go as frequently as I would, and I don't like to meet other people from my country. They don't have good records here. It's difficult having friends here. I take things too seriously: drugs, drinks, girls. I take all this seriously and it is difficult to be friend with Irish who get drunk and make jokes with girls. And I even don't have friends at home. My father won't allow me to go out. I'm too shy, it's difficult, I would like to enjoy these years, I know they will fly, but I don't find anybody which is like me (Conversation).

From one side, Kabil wanted to respect his religion and traditions. For example, he observed Ramadan and wished he could go more often to the Mosque, and he was uncomfortable with how Irish boys behave around girls and alcohol. On the other side, he was also feeling uncomfortable with the image of Algerians and Muslims more generally in Ireland ('they don't have good records here'). Kabil experienced a 'reference group problem' (Faas 2009:79), in that he defined himself as being somewhere in the middle, between an Irish and an Algerian, but he couldn't imagine himself living in Algeria in the future. As a result he had only few friends and wasn't feeling properly at ease in any place yet. Rossella Ragazzi has defined this condition as a 'double bind' between the need to integrate and feel like one's peers and the reluctance to dismiss one's traditions. So-called integration thus comes to be 'shadowed by confusion and a sense of loneliness or even alienation' (Ragazzi, 2007:145-146)

Despite meeting almost every day at the language centre, Dara and Kabil were so different that they were not truly friends. Dara was very sarcastic towards Kabil, for example, he didn't like him because of his strong faith and his ignorance about the 'Arab spring'. Nonetheless, these two boys shared what I term a path of 'apparent integration'. At a first sight, and for many of their teachers, they gave the impression of having gained a good level of integration because of their linguistic skills, good educational achievements and apparent good relations with their peers: in short, they didn't give any trouble. However, shortly after having gained their trust, Dara and Kabil referred the other side of their story, and a different picture emerged where their troubled biographies, the experiences of bullying, and a sense of being 'somewhere in the middle', created a sense of displacement in both of them.

To use Kabil's words, 'I don't find anybody who is like me'. He was thus unable to feel comfortable with his home country's identity or with an Irish identity. These two boys were integrated only in superficial appearances. I call it 'apparent integration' because Dara and Kabil revealed me this feeling of discomfort only months after I started to talk to them. This constitutes an important reminder for qualitative researchers: it may seem naïve, but institutions are made up of people, and even within an inclusive school like Oaktree people may feel unwelcome.

Kabil and Dara are not unique cases of 'apparent integration'. In both schools, students who shared a history of very recent migration and of previous schooling in their home country experienced difficulties – interestingly, most of them were boys. Most international girls seemed to approach migration and schooling with greater flexibility. Kabil's younger sister, Miriam, for example, had the same troubled history and experienced some bullying within the school, especially because she wore a veil. Nonetheless, she was much more able to see her location between Irish and Algerian cultures as not in conflict and to pick the positive aspects of both.

Cristina: changing school

At the time of my fieldwork 18 year–old Cristina was attending the 6th year at Oaktree College. She was an intelligent person whom I could trust, and we had many long and insightful conversations. At the time she was a very motivated student who also won the prestigious award as 'Best female student' the year before. She was planning to study nursing after her Leaving Certificate. Cristina was always available to chat with me. She didn't have many friends in the school because, as she explained, she preferred to talk with older people. At the time of my research she did

not need linguistic support but continued to attend the language centre to study when her class was doing Irish language lessons, which she was excused from.

When Cristina and her family moved from Romania six years ago she was enrolled at Newtown school, which she attended until her Junior Certificate. Cristina commented sarcastically on the choice of the school: 'When you arrive in Ireland you don't even know how to say, "how are you"? How would you know what kind of school you are choosing?' She recalls the three years there as a very happy time, although she frequently reminded that too much time was wasted during lessons for discipline-related issues and how these impinged on her ability to focus. When asked about the main difference within the two schools, Cristina said,

> The difference is that at Newtown in every class only three or four students are interested in the lesson and after a while teachers give up, because is too noisy. Here, only a couple are messy but they have to shut up because all the others want to work. Teachers here would find very hard to teach at Newtown but they wouldn't want to go there in any case. ... Only some teachers push you, but they really don't bother because in the end they got tired (Conversation).

After two years, to get a chance for a better education, Cristina tried to be enrolled at Oaktree College, but she was refused. I have stressed earlier, given Oaktree very good reputation in the neighbourhood, the school is always oversubscribed, and as a consequence it had to put in practice a strict enrolment policy. Cristina was excluded because leaving outside the catchment area – in some ways her address 'obliged' her to attend Newtown School. As a consequence, after her Junior Certificate, Cristina and her family decided to move in a more expensive flat located within the Oaktree catchment area, and she finally got a place. She knew that her family moved for her and she was quite aware that this implies some

economic sacrifice for her family: 'I know they moved house for me, and I am happy for this change – this is my future'.

Despite this, Cristina was alone. She reported of a bad experience she had when she was in Newtown, but thought that Oaktree was not different:

> Cristina: One day, it was winter and cold, I was outside school, they punched me, it was two people without uniform. …
> Maura: Did you report this to the school?
> C.: No, no ...
> M.: Do you think it was because you are not Irish?
> C.: Yes, because you look different, the way you dress, the way you speak look at us, we don't look Irish!
> M.: Would you prefer to?
> C.: No, I like to be brown [*I would never define her skin as 'brown'*]. Even in this area they will tell you something, everywhere is the same, they won't like you. You believe me, Miss, I don't have friends here, just Demi [*a male student from Romania, same year as Cristina*]. If I dress differently, they look at you; they don't want you to look better. It's not because I do well at school, is just that when I arrived groups were formed, I was shy, I don't want to blame them. I am not even suffering for this; I am not going to trips, what's the point? Like today, they are out for the chemistry trip, groups are done – the Irish are together.
> M.: You don't have any Irish friends at all?
> C.: No, no [*matter of fact*]. I don't have Irish friends; I have friends from Lithuania ... [*and adds whispering*] better black than Irish (Conversation).

It was hard to define Cristina as a 'well integrated' student. Her mother's decision to move house to be enrolled at Oaktree gave her a chance to enter the College better prepared, but this doesn't improve her sense of loneliness: in both schools Cristina had difficulties trying to make friends and her prejudice (it couldn't be named otherwise) towards her Irish peers was not helping her to improve the situation.

Abiola and Lavinia: integration, despite everything

16 year-old Abiola and her family migrated from Nigeria when she was four years old. Now she lived in a council house with her mother and two younger sisters. Her parents were divorced. Her mother was working in a nursing hospital, and for this reason she was out almost every night. In general, teachers' judgments of Abiola were not positive: she was regarded as someone who caused much trouble, but academically she was considered to be 'a total disaster'. Being Nigerian, she didn't have problems with the English language, but she attended most subjects at foundation level. In class, she was not disruptive but was not focused either, and if questioned she frequently looked absent minded. These fieldnotes, taken before and during one of Abiola's classes with Mr. Holmes, seems to confirm that Abiola was quite lost in the class:

> Outside the class: Abiola asks me (for the 4th time since I knew her) if I have finally seen *Jersey Shore* and the Italian girl, Sammy, who apparently looks so much like me. It looks like she really wants me to see it. I tell her that I will. Mr. Holmes arrives, and we enter in the class. He starts checking homework. It is Abiola's turn, but her desk is empty.
> Mr. Holmes: Abiola, did you do your homework?
> A.: Yes Sir
> Mr. H.: And where is it?
> A.: In the locker.
> Mr. H.: [*To another student*] Please, escort her to the locker.
>
> They go, and stay away for a few minutes. When they come back she doesn't have anything.
>
> Mr. H.: So where are your books and journal?
> A.: In the locker.
> Mr. H.: Why didn't you take it?
> A.: Because [*starts to speak very slowly*] ... I don't think I will be able to take my things anymore from the locker. The locker will remain locked.
> Mr. H.: [*Looks at her puzzled*]
> A.: I have lost my key.
>
> Mr. Holmes doesn't say anything and goes on with his lesson. After one minute Abiola raises her hand. Mr. Holmes appears not to see her; she stays with the hand raised for one minute until when he sees her.

Mr. H.: Yes Abiola?
A.: I found my key
Mr. H.: Ok go and take it, and don't get lost (Fieldnotes).

These other fieldnotes report on a conversation in the staff room when discussing Abiola with Mr. Holmes:

Miss Kerr sits at our table to join the conversation. Mr. Holmes tells her, 'We are talking about Abiola, your favourite one, isn't she?' Miss Kerr replies, 'At least she is not offensive, but *she is just stupid'*, and adds something Abiola said to confirm her statement. Mr. Holmes adds that she is not even able to do simple subtractions. At this point I say as naively as I can that I really think she needs some help, and ask what they think will happen to her after she leaves school. Mr. Holmes replies, 'Look Maura, if everybody here starts to say bad things about me and you, we suffer for this, but she doesn't care. Yes, she may end up doing a shitty job, but she may not think in those terms. If I and you end up pushing trolleys in a supermarket, we will think it is a shit job, wouldn't we? But she may be happy'.

All this conversation is grotesque to me, from the idea that Abiola may not suffer from negative comments, to the opinion that she will be happy doing a bad job, to the fact that Ms Kerr says she is stupid, and finally to the opinion that because she is quiet and doesn't disturb anyone she therefore doesn't need help (Fieldnotes).

Mr. Holmes's poor opinion of Abiola was also extended to her family:

Maura: 'Do you know something about her family?'
Mr. Holmes: 'Her mother works in a nursing hospital and she is not at home at night. Look, Maura, she, they, just don't know what is happening around them'.
M.: 'Is she attending the breakfast club, or is she in the home-school liaison?'
Mr. H.: 'I don't know if she attends breakfast and homework clubs, but this is more for people with behaviour issues, she doesn't disturb anybody, she is quiet, she simply doesn't know what happens around her' (Conversation).

I had many informal conversions with Abiola when I met her in the corridor or before classes, and MTV series *Jersey Shore* was frequently at the beginning of

our conversations. I understood that she loved to go to school because of her relationships with other students, but she didn't like most of the teachers (not a surprise: she hated Mr. Holmes) or doing homework. She was very friendly to everybody, but her best friends in the school were her older cousin and two other Nigerian girls attending the same class. For Abiola, as most students, friendships were mostly based on belonging to her ability group. She wasn't sure about what to do after school. Abiola lived not far from the school and liked the area, in particular hanging around the nearby shopping centre with her friends in the afternoon or during weekends.

Unfortunately, I was not able to conduct a more structured interview with Abiola, and her trust in me was cancelled 'thanks' to Mr. Holmes. One day in the staff room I was talking to him and I made a quick reference to a person who I believed to be Abiola's sister. It turned out that Abiola has no sister in school but rather a cousin, but instead of thinking about a misunderstanding, Mr. Holmes got very angry:

> When I tell him about Abiola's sister, Mr. Holmes gets immediately very angry, as I never saw him do before. He sends someone to call Abiola. When she arrives in the staff room, he repeats what I told him and shouts at her to stop lying. All of this in my presence, and I know that Abiola now thinks I am on the teachers' side. Later on, when I meet her in corridor she is very upset with me. I have been working a lot to organise an appointment with her – she also had the consent form, and now I am very frustrated. When I speak to Mr. Holmes later on, I tell him that maybe I misunderstood Abiola: after all English is not my mother tongue. He interrupts me and says smiling: 'Don't worry, Maura, it was just for fun!' But what kind of man is he, what kind of fun is it? (Fieldnotes).

The second student I wish to discuss is Lavinia, who at the time of my fieldwork was a first-year student in Albany. Her parents moved from Romania

before her birth. She says she doesn't know when or why: 'I don't know why they came here because I wasn't born'. We calculated that it was sometimes between 13 and 19 years ago, because her older brother was born in Romania. She lives with her mother, a housewife, who was working in a Boots outlet in Dublin but recently stopped working, and her sister, also attending Newtown. Her father, a bus driver, left the mother one year ago. When I ask her how she feels she just says, 'Very sad and disappointed'. She goes to Romania for holidays but, 'I don't remember the name of the place, I'll ask my mom and will tell you next time'.

Lavinia best friend is Marika, a Romanian Gypsy sitting next to her. More than once Lavinia stressed that they couldn't speak Romanian at school because teachers do not allow this. She has friendly relations with most people in her class: she had other friends 'but they started slagging other people for not being Irish, so I left them, I said, "I am not your friend anymore"'. She also confided to be that she experienced discrimination herself:

> Some outside the school call me Paki because my skin is different [*even in this case, as with Cristina, I didn't see any difference in her skin compared to her peers*]. I feel totally sad, I don't slag back -- they were some 6th years from primary school. In the school someone calls me stupid because I have dyslexia and I mix words. But I don't say anything to the teacher (Conversation).

All teachers at Albany spoke about her as a 'very weak student' who will probably not be able to take her Leaving Certificate, but they were also in agreement that she was a nice girl and well behaved. Lavinia, it is true, is a very well behaved student, but she has great difficulties in maintaining attention and understanding teachers' explanations. Teachers decided to move her to the front row, but this doesn't seem to be enough: her marks are low and she doesn't seem to be able to

complete her homework. She seemed very childish, and may also have a minor

learning difficulty (she told me she had dyslexia) and is thus in need of extra support,

but this would need a level of coordination between school and family, which does

not exist. She didn't cause any trouble, and for this reason she doesn't look to be at

the top of teachers' concerns. Lavinia was aware of her difficulties with school but

enjoyed being a student:

> Maura: Do you like this school, do you find it difficult?
> Lavinia: I feel happy, but it's hard work, I try but sometimes I got wrong.
> M.: Do you have any help at home with your homework?
> L.: No, nobody helps me, my sister is always outside, my mother can't help, and she doesn't speak good English. ... I try my best (Interview).

These fieldnotes, for example, were written during a weekend retreat

in Donegal, when I was invited to join Ms Kerr, Albany and other first year classes:

> When we arrive, Miss Kerr and I take a tea with Aishling, the owner of the hostel where we are sleeping. Aishling is also a primary school teacher, so she is curious to know something more about our school. While we are talking, Lavinia comes and sits at our table, just to ask us little things, just as an excuse to stay with us. When she leaves, Miss Kerr says that before Lavinia was asking her 'what time it is' and looking at the watch she said, 'Is it when the long one will be on number 10?'. Miss Kerr tells me that, 'Probably your little son Pietro soon will not ask these questions anymore'. Aishling asks whether this kind of students will come out with a good Leaving Certificate grade, and Miss Kerr replies, 'They are very weak students; they will not do well at school but girls like her are very well behaved, and this is in the end is the most important thing, isn't it?'

> I don't think this is the most important thing, I think this statement is classist and it makes me feel very uncomfortable. It sounds like: as long as they are not giving me any trouble, it's no problem if they do badly in school, and who cares if they have no chance to improve their situation?' (Fieldnotes).

Even Lavinia, like most internationals I have been in contact with,

reports a feeling of belonging to different places. Having been born in Ireland,

however, for Lavinia the sense of belonging to Ireland is much stronger than belonging to her Romanian mother country. Interestingly, this happens through framing Romania as a dangerous place:

> Maura: You are born in Ireland and you have an Irish passport, but do you also feel a bit Romanian?
> Lavinia: I am a bit of everything, but I want to live here. There are a lot of things happening in Romania like earthquake or tornados [*these worlds are common in the news these days because of a terrible tsunami in Japan, but I don't remember of Romania being recently in the media coverage on these issues*]. I love to go there for holidays, but here is so quiet and nice [*she makes a gesture to show me the sunny garden of the school where we are doing the interview*]. When dad left us, mom wanted to go back, but I said no, I stay here (Conversation).

Abiola and Lavinia held in common an immense difficulty in coping with school. This probably resulted from their international status, but probably more than this by the fact that their parents (both single mothers) were not able to fully support them with schooling-related issues, and the school was not supporting them enough either. Abiola, by being assigned to a low ability group was somehow pre-destined to a low profile school career. In Lavinia case, the learning difficulties were evident, but the school was not providing enough help. Lavinia, who at the time of my fieldwork was only in her first year, was already defined by her teacher, Miss Kerr, as a student who will probably never take her Leaving Certificate.

Still, these two girls were a part of the school and the local neighbourhood: they both liked the area where they were living, in particular Lavinia, who contrasted Ireland as a nice and quiet place with Romania, portrayed as a dangerous country. Abiola and Lavinia did not appear at all as 'model international students' to their teachers, yet they were not approaching school and their international status within it with the same pessimistic approach adopted by Dara, Kabil or Cristina. Although

their teacher's prophecies about their academic futures will probably (and sadly) come true, they were, despite all of this, integrating.

Conclusions

Herein, I have analysed the strategies set in place by Newtown School and Oaktree College to help their international students and to valorise cultural diversity within the school. I have stressed how the provisions for international students as well as the efforts to valorise cultural diversity were much greater at Oaktree College. I have concluded by stressing that the social background of the two schools had an important impact not only on the school priorities concerning what kind of students need help, but also on how the two schools construct a 'multicultural ethos'.

Given this premise, this chapter might at a first sight look at odds with the previous one: here I have problematised the concept of integration, and I have illustrated the biographies of a number of international students, who in both schools were succeeding or failing to 'integrate' despite the different levels of care received in the two schools. What I have discussed in these two chapters, however, is not in contradiction with the previous one. To put it simply: there are many non-integrated and lonely international students at Oaktree College; and, there are many happy and well-integrated students at Newtown. This, of course, doesn't mean that linguistic support or intercultural initiatives are not important, but that integration is something that extends beyond all of this.

This is, I believe, what ethnography can achieve: research practices that delve into contradictions and complexities. The life histories I have reported on in this chapter have been collected after having gained a good degree of trust from the

persons involved – otherwise those stories probably would remain inaccessible.

Collecting different biographies and using them to challenge the school organisation

and its policies cannot but lead to clashing, contradictory and sometimes even

incompatible findings – this is, however, how 'reality' is made.

Breda Gray (2006) challenges the idea that non-integration is migrant's

main problem and concludes that 'integration' as defined by policy documents is at

its core a neoliberal practice, having the purpose of 'normalizing' citizens to market

economy standards:

> These policies reinforce territorialized nation-state ideologies while
> simultaneously embracing neo-liberal ideologies of mobile and flexible
> capital and workers via thin discourses of integration, Diaspora,
> transmigrancy and global mobility. So migrants continue to be 'matter out of
> place' while at the same time being represented as the flexible
> citizen/workers of a new global capitalist era (Gray, 2006:134).

This may elucidate 'official integration', that is, Government papers -- but,

what about real life contexts? According to Ghassen Hage, integration is something

happening by itself with time, despite policy; and the creation of a genuine

multicultural society starts from a bottom-up struggle:

> I have often reflected on people who (…), with every new government, sit
> there wondering 'Will the state support multiculturalism?' Again, as if,
> without state support, multiculturalism will disappear. (...) Such people forget
> that from the start there was always a tension in conceiving multiculturalism,
> between what people call multiculturalism as *policy* and multiculturalism as
> *reality*. While multiculturalism as policy is clearly dependent on the state and
> can appear and disappear according to certain political whims,
> multiculturalism as *reality* cannot be made to disappear so easily; it is not
> dependent on policy (…). Indeed it can be said, (…) that when the
> government stops being nicely multicultural by funding multicultural
> programs, a more enduring kind of multicultural *reality* is created. This is
> because community activists, and other people who are struggling at the
> grassroots level, end up creating multicultural networks that are not reliant on

the state and whose endurance, as a consequence, is far less dependent on whether the state is multiculturally inclined or not (Hage, 2011:2).

When talking about integration, therefore, one might also ask 'integrated to what?' It is a pure speculation, but some of the students I have introduced in this chapter might not fit in the future with the standard of the producing citizen of the global capitalist era. However, they could be nonetheless feeling integrated within his or her neighbourhood, friends, and family. Under this point of view, integration and personal self-fulfilment might simply translate as looking and behaving like those surrounding us: perhaps, for example, ne might express integration by entering fully into the capitalist economy by making lot of money - by being a successful drug dealer (see Bourgois, 1996). Integration, then, in the case of Abiola, might just be caught up in a modest ambition to look like her school peers, sharing a hatred of their foundation level teachers, and wanting to be out of school as soon as possible.

Chapter 6

Concluding Discussion:

Multiculturalism as ideology

and

Multiculturalism as a reality

> The way in which education is organised can be seen to express, consciously
> and unconsciously, the wider organisation of a culture and a society. The
> content of education expresses... certain basic elements in the culture
>
> (Williams, 1961:122).

What happened to social class?

In a 1999 article titled, 'What happened to class?' Neil Smith recalls his reaction to a

particular TV advert. In the advertisement, set in an urban space, a number of

teenagers wearing fancy clothes moved to the tones of rap music. The central theme

of the commercial was diversity: males and females as well as young people from

different ethnic backgrounds were together, and together with the brand advertised,

the commercial closed with the written words, 'race', 'gender' and 'ethnicity'.

Reflecting on this advertisement, Smith poses the question of whether the difference

celebrated in the commercial are between equals or unequals? The answer he

proposes is neither: the ideal-types of gendered and ethnic identities in that

commercial were deployed to show the diverse multitude of the potential customer,

thus reducing diverse identities to 'powerful, commercial, symbolic commodities'

(Smith, 1999:1012). The second, more important question is: where is social class in

this media artefact? While gender and ethnic backgrounds were 'commercially

celebrated', commoditised, but nonetheless there, social class as 'difference' was missing. The commercial seemed to portray all teenagers as upwardly mobile, and, of course, the clothes themselves were standing as the promise of their success.

I begin the conclusions to this thesis with the description of this media artefact because the two questions that Smith raises are also central to my research. Throughout these chapters, an emerging question, indeed, was how issues concerning social class, ethnicity and multiculturalism are interwoven one with the other. Clearly, an ethnography of schooling focuses only on a certain aspect of a society, that is, education. This is, however, a central aspect of any society, because, as the quote I choose to open these conclusions with stresses, education must always be analysed as a mirror held up to the wider society: schools are a primary institution that have the capacity to perpetuate the dominant values and norms of a society.

What emerged throughout these pages is that intercultural education, and more generally all the measures taken to include international students in Irish schools today, can be better understood when considering the wider aspect of social class. As in the previous chapters, class is here intended as a flexible tool and a broad term, ranging from the classic definitions stressing the different access to resources and wealth to those putting an accent on the different levels of education, and on to those emphasising distinction in tastes, language and behaviour, as well as different levels of social and cultural capital.

I stressed earlier on how school provisions concerning language support reproduce exactly the quality of education that each of the two schools is able to provide to their students, and how this different level of education is related to the social class dimensions of the local neighbourhoods. Under this point of view international students' integration gets folded into the pre-existing system of social

class. As a consequence, linguistic support ends up being part of the multiculturalist ideology, because it doesn't challenge any pre-existing school inequalities and, to put it simply, gives internationals a chance to be like their school peers: Newtown internationals will be part of a DEIS school, and Oaktree international will be part of a well-known middle class school.

The second question that Smith poses, 'where is social class in this?' connects even more directly with my ethnographic material. This simple question resonates with the fieldnotes with which I chose to close chapter 2. In those fieldnotes, I reported my puzzlement when I realised that among the many posters celebrating diversity at Oaktree the dimension of social class was missing, as if gender, sexual orientation, different age and ethnicity were worth discussing, celebrating, and above all, to be set in an inclusive agenda to act against any form of discrimination, while social class was not. 'Where is social class in these posters?' 'What is the discourse underpinning this omission?' I asked in my fieldnotes. It was like as if the middle class ethos was so inscribed into the structure of the school that to place this aspect under the light of discussion would have meant to rethink radically the very essence of the school, a potentially revolutionary exercise, which was a bridge too far to be taken into consideration.

Poverty was in those posters, it is true: but it was poverty in Africa, far away. The Irish Aid poster hanging in the Language Centre pictured joyful African children and informed students that, 'Africa also smiles. The dignity and resilience of Africa's people must not be disregarded despite the scars of war, poverty and disease'. This poster, celebrating African people, indeed, was a good example of how I saw cultural diversity represented in the two schools. Those smiling kids and the apparently innocuous poster explained better than words what I mean when I say that

intercultural education chimes with a form of global multiculturalism that does nothing to alleviate social inequalities and injustices. In the same way that Miss Carroll, during her CSPE classes, explained that women in Muslim countries do not work, or that Taliban rule in Afghanistan was over without mentioning the current dramatic situation in that country, here African people stood in the Language Centre reminding us that 'despite everything' they still have dignity and resilience and can even smile. It is exactly that 'everything' which is, in my opinion, missing from a form of intercultural education that could aim to form students who look at the world with a more critical eye.

Here, therefore, I will briefly review the literature framing global multiculturalism as a form of capitalist ideology, and I will question if and how intercultural education chimes with this ideology. This thesis had a double focus on social class and ethnicity, and before closing the discussion and reflecting on the practical usefulness of this work I will suggest how a more meaningful intercultural education might emerge and the forms it might take.

What happened to multiculturalism?

A relevant part of the current political and academic debate is focusing on whether or not multiculturalism, no matter if conceptualised as a 'philosophy of integration', a product of economic neo-liberalism, or a matter-of-fact characterising Western societies, needs to be reconsidered or has utterly failed. While Hannah Arendt, sixty years ago, stressed, that 'racism' was a central concept in the ideologies of modern totalitarian regimes (1953), we are today in a situation where multiculturalism seem to have substituted itself into the space that was once give to 'race':

the concept of race is taboo, multiculturalism provides a discursive space for debating questions of race, culture legitimacy and belonging. Presenting it as a 'failed experiment' … allows anxieties on concerning migration globalization … to be ordered and explained (Titley and Lentin, 2011).

Within political debates, some years ago Angela Merkel claimed that 'multiculturalism failed spectacularly'. This claim gives a glimpse of the increasing discourses stressing that it is individuals' responsibility to integrate. This shift to individual responsibility is the result of an increasing de-politicised vision of social problems, where the focus on individual responsibility hides social injustice and political responsibilities, where policy is characterised by:

> a recent rise in governmental practices that seek to promote choice, autonomy, efficiency and accountability by making individuals and specific communities responsible for their own behaviour, goals and outcomes. Individuals are invited to be active in promoting their own empowerment and participation in decision making, for example, through 'active citizen' and community programmes (Gray, 2006:122).

This de-politicization is not related to migration issues only, but rather to many domains of life: 'under neo-liberalism it is not just that the personal is the political. The personal is the only politics there is' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000:305). According to Titley and Lentin, neo-liberalism has no advantages to be gained in pursuing a racist ideology; this is why capitalism in the US since the 1960s has been colour-blind. This again brings us to the point that social inequalities (including the disadvantage experienced by people of colour) are explained in term of individual responsibility.

Within the academic debates, certain authors emphasise that the crises of multiculturalism uncovers a need to distinguish between good and bad diversity, a necessity which is even deeper under the current economic downturn (Titley and

Lentin, 2011); others invite us to look 'beyond multiculturalism,' discussing its limitations, starting with the ambiguity of the term and the counterproductive effects it has produced, such as representing culture as bounded entity and thus, despite the appearances, potentially a divisive concept favouring one community over another and fuelling conflict (Prato, 2009:48). Other critical perspectives posit multiculturalism as a tool acting as 'diversity management paradigm', which, among other 'policies of containment' such as immigration policies, used by the state to manage and control difference (Bryan, 2009a:303)

All these contributions tend to frame multiculturalism (both intended as policy or practices) as an active project (mainly led by nation-states): a set of policy measures, for example. However, these contributions fail to frame those measures in the present historical context and in its relation with global capitalism. Slavoj Žižek has a different approach. First of all, he does not see multiculturalism in crises. Žižek discusses multiculturalism as a product of history: 'liberal multiculturalism', as he names it, is the logical result of the evolution of capitalism, which started with national trade, then international trade followed by colonialism, until the current situation where there are only colonies, with the global corporations as colonisers. Multiculturalism, which at a first sight looks like a celebration of cultural diversity, hides for Žižek an opposite truth: that of the unparalleled level of cultural homogenisation in today's world:

> And, of course, the ideal form of ideology of this global capitalism is multiculturalism, the attitude which, from a kind of empty global position, treats *each* local culture the way the coloniser treats colonised people—as 'natives' whose mores are to be carefully studied and 'respected'. (…) In other words, multiculturalism is a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism, a 'racism with a distance'—it 'respects' the Other's identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed 'authentic' community towards which

he, the multiculturalist, maintains a distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position (Žižek, 1997:44).

Global capitalism is so nested into our world's visions that its termination cannot even be considered, and we are only left with an illusion:

> (…) critical energy has found a substitute outlet in fighting for cultural differences which leave the basic homogeneity of the capitalist world system intact. So we are fighting our pc battles for the rights of ethnic minorities, of gays and lesbians, of different life-styles, and so on, while capitalism pursues its triumphant march, and … in a typical postmodern 'cultural criticism', the very mention of capitalism as world system tends to give rise to the accusation of 'essentialism', 'fundamentalism' and other crimes (1997:46).

Is intercultural education one of these illusions? And above all, what is the place of intercultural education in this debate? Starting from Žižek strong position that multiculturalism feeds on global capitalism to survive and given that intercultural education is essentially a product of the multicultural society where we leave, would it be correct to state that intercultural education itself is another deployment and a form of ideology of neo-liberalism?

Before answering to these questions it is important to define intercultural education. In recent years, Europe, (and Ireland among other countries was at forefront) saw an increased investment in more global forms of citizenship education. In Ireland the process started in 1997, when CSPE (Civic Social and Personal Education) became a compulsory subject in secondary school. This subject, which aims to build national and global sense of citizenships and belonging, is a key element of intercultural education (Bryan 2011:262-263). When I refer to intercultural education, however, I refer to any kind of curricular form of citizenship education such as CSPE, but also to less standardised projects, realised by the single school, such as initiatives such as festivals, celebrations, debates which have the

purpose to introduce different cultures and religions. But I also include in the term

the language provisions for international students, because, as I hope I have

extensively demonstrated, these provisions say a lot about the ways in which cultural

diversity is treated in the school and the organisation of language support can have

effects not only on international students but on the whole school population

including teachers.

The academic debate on the ideological aspect of intercultural

education unfortunately is still limited. A fruitful approach, I believe, is the one

provided by Katharyne Mitchell, who invites to look at the transformations that

multiculturalism and intercultural education have undergone in the recent period. A

recent and important shift, according to Mitchell, took place in the ways in which

public policy on education in many Western countries is framing cultural difference.

In particular, in the European Union, a recent move towards neoliberal forms of

governmentality has invested the educational sector (2006:389). Mitchell posits that

multiculturalism, until the recent past, had a three-face role. The first was that of

constituting a 'narrative of liberalism,' which celebrated a 'tolerant and munificent

liberal state'; the second to be an instrument to control difference insofar as cultural

difference was celebrated 'within the strict parameters of liberalism'; and, the third to

be a tool to export capitalism (2006:390-393). These versions of multiculturalism,

although firmly located within a Fordist capitalist frame, were celebrating a certain

'state subject'. Today, this individual is substituted by a more transnational subject.

The shift from a 'multicultural ethos' to a form of 'strategic

cosmopolitanism' has also concerned intercultural education, which changed from

emphasising the 'multicultural self', a valorisation of cultural difference and of

tolerance, although always within a neoliberal frame, to a form of global

cosmopolitanism, with an stress on adaptability and competition. Current educational policy in the EU is increasingly focusing on lifelong learning and 'knowledge economy':

> Earlier concerns of social liberalism, including the multicultural emphasis on achieving diversity as beneficial for civic life and for the development of ethical personhood, have been replaced with a market logic which underpins all educational policies and ideals (2006:403).

This approach systematically leaves behind and excludes the most fragile members of society and those not having the appropriate cultural capital to cope with that fast changing society where mobility and flexibility are key values. This is confirmed by research in Ireland, where Audrey Bryan has remarked that the Celtic Tiger economy and the related corporate interests influence state-promoted interculturalism, and schools do not receive adequate resources and support to realise meaningful forms of intercultural education. The result of this form of 'corporate multiculturalism' is that economic interests are privileged over social justice, while precluding inclusion for those not holding the accepted forms of national cultural capital which are deemed necessary to be part of the society (Bryan, 2010:254). The ethnographic evidence I brought in the past chapters on CSPE classes, as well as on the intercultural measures taken by the two schools unfortunately cannot but confirm this point: in these classes I never observed a plain, clear explanation of the reasons behind the disparities between the north and the south of the world as well as of all forms of social injustice. What my research adds to Bryan's findings is that in the deployment of this corporate, *laissez-faire* interculturalism, social class has an important role to play. In addition to multiculturalism, which sanctions which differences are to be accepted and which to be rejected, individual's allocation within

different social spaces reinforces the difference between those who will be more likely to have success and those who will remain marginalised.

Despite this, in the last chapter I argued that the sense of inclusion perceived by international students within his or her community might not be necessarily reflecting integration as it is framed by state policy (at a macro level) and teachers (at a micro level). In other words, inclusion might not coincide with 'normalisation' to mainstream society, what has been described as WHISCS: white, heterosexual, Irish-born, settled, Catholics (Bryan, 2010:255). This means that even within existing social inequalities integration can happen: from this point of view, there is a real-life multiculturalism where inclusion is not 'normalisation' to middle class standards but the integration of migrants within existing social stratification, including the poorest. Here I return to the distinction that Hage makes between multiculturalism as reality and multiculturalism as policy (2011). From this perspective, multiculturalism is simply a matter of fact, and something happening often despite policy (see also Gray, 2006). I will attempt to propose how these perspectives as well as what other measures should be taken to contribute to a more meaningful form of intercultural education.

An alternative perspective: putting 'multiculturalism as reality' at the core of intercultural education

Rethinking intercultural education, of course, should have a double-faced purpose: that of providing those international students for whom English is not the first language the best linguistic support possible, and, on the other side, providing all students with the cultural tools to look at cultural diversity, as well as to global issues

such as social inequalities and conflicts with a more critical eye, one which, for example is not ending with the pure commiseration of social injustices but that holds an awareness of the reasons of these disparities as well as the responsibilities held by the richest part of the world. Speaking in utopian terms, the 'strategic cosmopolitan' should turn into a 'responsible multiculturalism,' and the often-celebrated 'tolerance' should be substituted with what Nigel Rapport defines as 'magnanimity':

> Magnanimity began with being honest in one's perceptions of self and other and then in promoting the best in oneself and the other. Knowledge would seem key here, both self-knowledge and that of proximate and general others (…). Tolerance, however, might be said to begin, and to end also, in a certain distance. One does not presume to know the other because one accords difference an a priori moral status in its own right, a difference one need not and should not seek to overcome (2011:691).

Beyond these utopian reflections, and turning to discuss more concrete measures, language support for international students should increasingly be a key element for students' inclusion. Unfortunately, funding allocation for this is decreasing: while the Irish Government devoted was €69 million for 'English as an additional language' (EAL) for the academic year 2011/12, there was a decrease of 19 per cent in the 2012 allocation. Moreover, concerns have recently been raised because due to a 'reform' the allocation system for the 2012/13 resources for learning support (special needs) and for language support were disbursed together, with each school having the autonomy to decide how to assign the resources, thus also making monitoring a difficult process (McGinnity et al., 2011:40). This means that schools in disadvantaged areas like Newtown, where, as I have outlined in the third chapter, teachers are more likely to label their students as in need for special needs may be reducing their part of funding dedicated to linguistic support in favour of learning support. These two very different sectors should, in my opinion, remain

separated. The drastic level of difference in the quality of language support I have observed in the two schools might be reduced if funding available would be the same, and strict monitoring controls of how linguistic support is organised in every school would be put in place.

Apart from language support, a meaningful intercultural education should, first of all, be oriented to everybody and start from a drastic review of the Irish curriculum. I strongly doubt that one-off events like intercultural festivals and other 'ethnic' initiatives like a cultural evening might contribute to the building of a meaningful intercultural ethos (let alone a sense of inclusion for international students); every 'celebration' and appreciation of cultural diversity (which is typical of these events), as Hage stresses, represents a national 'we' celebrating 'them' and thus cancelling the possibility of a truly multiethnic 'we' (Hage, 1998).

The starting point is the day-by-day process of learning. I have stressed earlier on that the Irish school curriculum remains Irish and even Catholic-centred: this should be radically revised, and intercultural education should permeate all subjects. Bryan stresses how, until now, intercultural education in Ireland has basically been included in the curriculum with an 'add on and stir' approach, that is, as a simple addition to the pre existing curriculum, which remains basically unchanged and unquestioned (2009a:302).

Another important point concerns teacher training. In the ethnographic chapters, I stressed how in both schools teachers frequently demonstrated their inability to discuss issues concerning cultural and religious difference, as well as to explain in plain but meaningful ways the reasons of the economic unbalances and conflicts throughout the word. Many teachers, in particular the youngest one, are aware of or have not been able to deal with these issues well,

and lament a lack of training. Teacher training in Ireland on these issues indeed is limited and superficial:

> opportunities to engage with developmental issues in a meaningful way are limited and (...) teachers education has a tendency to maintain existing educational and social structures by teaching perspective teachers to assimilate and accommodate to existing ways of thinking and acting (Bryan, 2009c:12).

In chapter 5 I referred about the important action taken by Ms Hanley, Oaktree College language support coordinator in funding with other colleagues the ELSTA (English Language Support Association) which deals not only with language support but also on intercultural education and provides, as I realised attending its training and conference, a unique chance for reflection for many teachers. Although initiatives like these are laudable, these issues should not be left to personal initiative only. Teacher training today should include at list a specific module on intercultural, citizenship and anti racist education.

Finally, to give a last voice to my ethnographic material, and to the dramatic differences I have reported between the two schools, not only those concerning the treatment of international students, but to all of them, I think Nancy Fraser provides a perfect final reflection. Fraser argues that every policy of recognition claiming emancipation and equal rights for every minority have often the contrary effect of feeding more conflicts and marginalisation as well as reifying group identities. Fraser invites to rethink policies of recognition by:

> Conceptualizing struggles for recognition so that they can be integrated with struggles for redistribution, rather than displacing and undermining them. (…) a claim for recognition is in order. But note precisely what this means: aimed not at valorising group identity but rather at overcoming subordination (2000:109-114).

Conversely, to turn this reflection to my research, intercultural education and all measures taken to include international students should not be aimed at 'celebrating' and 'respecting' (or even 'overcoming') the differences of international students but to frame their inclusion within a wider project of contrast of the pre-existing inequalities between different schools and to go in the direction of a less 'class centric', and thus more democratic access to school.

A last reflection: the meaning of an ethnography of education

When writing the last paragraph of a doctoral thesis it is inevitable to think if all this work, effort and time spent were worth it. More importantly, I believe it is normal to question who is going to read this pages? This leads me to think more widely about the usefulness of ethnography of education and about its potential. In 2001, Geoffrey Walford stressed how governments and funding agencies were increasingly reluctant to fund educational research which is not instrumental (2001:111), and that action researchers (that is, research aiming at changing concrete educational settings) have criticised academic educational research as being irrelevant to the practical concerns of teachers, being separated from the subjects of research, and also being non-democratic as it allows the views of researchers to define the views of teachers. With the current global economic crises this is the case even more so.

Another anthropologist of education, David Hargreaves, has also critically reviewed educational research. Hargreaves states that much education research is irrelevant to teachers and policy makers, calling for an end to:

(...) second-rate educational research which does not make a serious contribution to fundamental theory or knowledge: which is irrelevant to practice: which is uncoordinated with any preceding or follow up research and which clutters up academic journals that virtually nobody reads (Hargreaves, 1996:7, in Walford, 2001:111).

During my fieldwork, many teachers asked me in puzzlement what ethnography was. A (restricted) number of them were interested in reading about education and reflecting on their practices, and some of them did some reading. However, not only was 'ethnography' unknown as a term, but even as a 'way of doing research in a school' it was unknown. I have the final ambition to argue that this is a shame. I'm not arguing here that ethnographers have the power to change educational policies at a national level or to actively challenge the problems of the schools they are studying, although many ethnographers of schooling are frequently actively working also in the school, frequently as teachers, sometimes collaborating in implementing policies. More realistically, ethnographies of schooling should be accessible reading for teachers, school principals and students, and not only to other academics. Maybe it is the case that teachers would benefit enormously by reading about the behaviours of colleagues living through similar experiences in other schools and even in other nations, but, to do this, ethnographies should be comprehensible and jargon-free. One viable solution would be that experimented, between others, by Douglas Foley in his work *Learning Capitalist Culture* (1990), who employed two distinct kinds of narratives by separating (even physically in the book) 'the description of a people and their place from a technical, theoretical discussion of the interpretive framework guiding the study', (Foley, 1990:xviii) to make it more accessible to non-specialists.

The process itself of making ethnographies of schools should become an occasion for mutual learning between parts, and not only for the anthropologist, as

Spindler, considered as the American father of the anthropology of education, argued long ago (2000). The impressions derived from classroom observations could be shared with the school, which could have an advantage from this information. However, this is an extremely delicate issue, which unfortunately has still not been investigated enough. For how little my contribution could be, Oaktree College Principal has always been very appreciative of my work, and, during our first contact-meeting he asked me to write a full report on my 'findings', because he was interested in improving the Language Centre activities. I hope this work will be useful, at least to the research participants.

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'Is this Ireland's best school?' *(http://irishtimes.com/newspaper/education/2011/1101/1224306842130.ht//ml)*. retrieved Oct 20th, 2012.

[1] The term 'Celtic Tiger', which refers to the Irish economic boom decade, 1995- 2005 (Coulter 2003:3). Although Ireland had radically changed the economy from one based on agriculture to manufacture decades earlier and living standards in the 1970's had a relevant improvement (Hout, 1989), the boom starting in the 1990's was radically different. During this time reduced taxes (amongst the lowest in the EU) attracted multinationals to invest in Ireland, thus highly increasing the exports. From 1994 to 2001 average growth rates in the Irish economy were 9%. During this period, employment boosted over two hundred thousand new jobs were created in Ireland between 1994 and 1999 and property values increased. As a result, in the 1990s, for the first time instead of 'exporting' its workers, Ireland become an immigration country for guest workers, asylum seekers and refugees. Immigration, which had its pick in 2006-2007, stopped abruptly in 2008, where the Celtic Tigers dreams woke up to a harsh reality. The global economic crisis had a particularly hard impact on the Irish economy and the trend reversed again. A number of work migrants left the country but despite this, at the time of the 2011 Census, 11.9% of the population of Ireland was composed by non Irish (CSO, 2012). Despite bringing a general increase of wealth, this boom had its side effects. Critiques of the economic boom stress that under the Celtic Tiger, the decisions of the state while privileging neoliberalism and advantaging the market forces have in fact been detrimental of social well-being (Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin, 2002: 1-21), and that a general increase of wealth was nonetheless accompanied by social costs as for example erosion of values and communities as well as a failure to elevate to EU standards of inclusion and solidarity (Fahey, Russell and Whelan, 2007:3)

[ii] (DESwebsite,http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?maincat=17216&pcategory=17216&ecategory=33128&language=EN, Retrieved June 12th, 2012).
[iii] Trinity Access Website http://www.tcd.ie/Trinity_Access. Retrieved June 12th, 2012).

[iv] http://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/sikh-loses-challenge-to-refusal-by-garda-reserve-to-allow-turbans-on-duty-1.1412236

[v] http://theredcard.ie/news/?p=1017

[vi] DEIS Primary Schools are divided in three categories: Rural, Urban Band 1 and 2. Urban Band 1 schools are considered more disadvantaged and receive more funding that Urban Band 2.