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# National Identity and the Education of Immigrant Youth in Spain

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**NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE EDUCATION OF  
IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN SPAIN**

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS**

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Thank you so much to my wonderful thesis readers for their invaluable feedback and insight, and for their ability to always provide answers to my seemingly endless questions. I would also be remiss not to thank the teachers and administrators of the *Escuela Infantil de Cartuja* in Granada, Spain, whose dedication to the improvement of the life prospects of immigrant students in Cartuja is nothing short of inspiring.

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## Prologue

While studying abroad in Granada, Spain during the spring semester of my junior year, I volunteered weekly at a preschool and social action center in Cartuja, a working-class neighborhood just north of the city. The area of Cartuja is known for having significant immigrant (primarily North African and Sub-Saharan African) and Roma populations. I was originally nervous about working in the neighborhood. It was far enough away from the city center that I rode the bus there. I didn't tell my host family the location of the school for fear of their scorn or disapproval – while my host parents were lovely in almost every sense, they harbored strong prejudices against anyone they perceived as “different.” Finally, I knew my blond hair and American clothing would almost automatically give me away as a foreigner. I soon discovered, however, that any fears or misconceptions I held about the neighborhood and my presence there were unfounded. I enjoyed getting out of the stereotypical “Americans studying abroad in Europe” bubble to work at the preschool, I created bonds with the two year-old toddlers in my classroom, and I improved my Spanish while attempting to understand their jabber.

About a month before the end of my semester in Granada, I was returning from the preschool one morning and walking to the bus stop in order to commute to class at the university. The street was deserted at mid-day, and I was walking quickly in order to catch the bus and make it to class on time. Suddenly, I was grabbed from behind in a vise-like grip, my attacker trying to either wrest my purse from me or, presumably the next best option, take me with him. Terrified, my instincts kicked in, and I screamed louder than I ever had before, elbowing my attacker in the ribs as hard as I could. At that

point, he released his grip, retreated to an idling car on the street, and sped away. Still terrified for my safety and uncontrollably sobbing, I ran to the bus stop and waited for a seemingly interminable amount of time for the bus to arrive. Once it did, I began to compose myself, and upon arriving at the university, relayed the event to my program director. She responded by urging me not to return to Cartuja, stopping just short of forbidding me completely. My presence there, she said, amounted to a liability for the study abroad program – something that they simply could not handle. I nodded and began to take in her response. Just before I acquiesced, however, I realized: didn't this event precisely demonstrate the importance of working in Cartuja? Wasn't it symbolic of a cyclical and destructive poverty that robs people of economic options – a lack of life choices that access to a quality education supposedly combats? I decided then that regardless of the liability I posed to my program director, I was going back – and I did.

This experience propelled me to further examine the relationship between immigrant populations and education in Spain. I believe my story is representative of a phenomenon that is all too common in present-day Spain: immigrant populations in a country with a limited history of immigration seriously lack adequate access to a quality education, thereby exacerbating a vicious cycle of poverty, economic disempowerment, and social marginalization. For this reason, the examination of the intersection of immigration and education in Spain is so important – and the topic of my thesis.

## **Introduction**

Within the past 20 years, Spain has transformed from a country of emigration into one of immigration. In 1996, approximately 1,000,000 individuals residing in Spain were foreign-born, which amounted to 2.6 percent of the country's population. While this is still a substantially larger proportion than 10 years prior, the percentage of immigrants as a function of the country's total population continued to expand: in 2008, Spain's foreign-born population had grown to about 6,000,000 individuals, or 13.1% of the country's total population (Reher 817). A number of factors have contributed to the recent influx of immigration in the country, including the economic and social development that has taken place since Spain's induction in the European Union, the country's proximity to Northern Africa (Spain is often referred to as the gateway or bridge to Europe), and the linguistic, historical, and cultural ties between Spain and Latin America (Gibson 250). Spain's new immigrants tend to settle in the capitol city of Madrid and along Spain's southern and eastern coastal regions, including Cataluña, Valencia, and Andalucía (Reher 823). The vast majority of these immigrant populations hail from countries throughout Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe; 18.5 percent of new Spanish residents are from Morocco, 11.8 are originally from Ecuador, and 11.6 percent are from Romania. (*Alumnado Extranjero 2010-2011*).

With a significant influx of immigrants arriving in Spain the country, Spain's autonomous communities have responded by implementing certain educational policies in order to respond to the specific needs of those populations. Immigration, especially of the sort that Spain has recently witnessed, can have a very dramatic impact upon a

country's educational system. A lack of knowledge of the Spanish language, differing educational backgrounds among migrant youth, the marginalized economic roles of many immigrant groups, and the high concentration of immigrants in certain regions and urban centers are all factors that have necessitated a strong educational response to immigration in Spain. In the Community of Madrid, a region with a high concentration of immigrants, the most notable educational policy directed at immigrants has been the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* (Welcome Schools) policy. This policy is comprised of various programs, the most prominent of which is the *aulas de enlace* (linking classrooms), which are classrooms aimed at immigrant students without prior knowledge of Spanish language or who demonstrate "curricular deficiencies" (Relaño Pastor 259). In the autonomous community of Cataluña, meanwhile, educational policies directed at immigrants have fallen under a model known as the *vía catalana de integración*, or the Catalan way of integration; the most prominent of these policies has been the *Plan de lengua y cohesión social* (Plan for language and social cohesion). This program has provided for both *aulas de acogida* (insertion classrooms), and *planes educativos de entorno* (local education plans), which work together to integrate immigrant youth into Catalan society.

But despite the attempts at educational policies to respond to the needs of immigrants in Spanish classrooms, there remains a significant educational disparity between native-born Spanish students and immigrant students. Starting in the year 2000, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), has conducted an evaluation of educational systems in over 70 countries worldwide. In 2000, students in Spain with an immigrant background (defined as either first- or second-generation immigrants) scored, on average, approximately 40 points lower than the average native-born student on the



PISA Reading Literacy Examination – a disparity that places Spain among the worst of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries surveyed by PISA (Jacubowski 3).

In fact, the PISA data demonstrates that the educational inequities between native-born and newcomer students in Spain are worsening. In 2009, the most recent year for which data is available, students in Spain with an immigrant background scored, on average, approximately 60 points lower than the average native-born Spanish student on that same examination. Even after accounting for the socio-economic backgrounds of immigrant and native-born students, immigrant students in Spain still scored over 40 points lower than native-born Spanish students (Jacubowski 3-4). It is also more than reading literacy in which these students struggle; rather, “the overall performance of [immigrant] children generally lags in all school success indicators: higher percentages of them drop out, they repeat classes more frequently, and are concentrated in the least challenging educational institutions” (Ricucci 449). Other scholars of Spain’s educational system have found similar trends in the PISA data. The authors of a 2011 report for the *Fundación de Estudios de Economía Aplicada* (FEDEA) wrote that:

students who stay almost all their lives in Spain still perform worse than natives in all domains analyzed by PISA. The result holds even after controlling for a range of individual characteristics. This suggests that the children of immigrants who arrive now to Spain will probably only partially close the performance gap with native students. (Zinovyeva, Felgueroso, and Vazquez 2)

In other words, immigrant students currently entering the Spanish educational system are more likely than not to fall behind their native-born peers – with little opportunity to catch up.

Other OECD countries, however, have managed to close or at least minimize the gaps in educational achievement between immigrant and native-born students, even with similar demographics to those of Spain. In Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, New Zealand, and Liechtenstein, the performance gap between native-born and immigrant students actually decreased between the years 2000 and 2009. While native-born students still scored better on reading proficiency tests, the decrease in that gap demonstrates that educational policies can indeed play a role in abating these inequities. As the PISA report concludes:

Given that the performance gap varies so widely across countries, even taking into account these other characteristics, and given that in some countries the performance gap has changed markedly over time, it is clear that public policy can make a difference. (PISA 4)

It is therefore obvious that educational policies can play a positive role in the educational success of immigrant youth. Furthermore, because educational achievement is increasingly a prerequisite for future economic and occupational success, educational policies have the potential to affect nearly every aspect of students' lives. Spain's persistent achievement gap, however, demonstrates that it has not implemented the most effective programs to provide for the distinct educational needs of its immigrant youth populations – thereby ultimately harming these students' future life prospects.

Because education in Spain is free and compulsory to those under the age of 16 –

citizens and non-citizens alike – the country’s public schools have received the task of educating all immigrant youth under the age of 16. Moreover, since the enactment of the *Ley Orgánica del Derecho a la Educación* (Organic Law on the Right to Education) in 1985, the Spanish educational system has experienced a progressive decentralization to the autonomous communities. While Spain itself has retained a regulatory role in ensuring that all autonomies provide a minimum level of standards, the autonomous communities themselves are responsible for the enactment of school policies, school support services, and the delivery of programs they see fit (Teese et al 12). More recently, Article 42 of *La ley de la calidad de la educación* (Law for the Quality of Education) prescribed national guidelines for entry into the educational system for foreign youth, although each autonomy has taken its own steps toward this incorporation (Hernández i Dobon). Due to the largely multinational and decentralized character of the Spanish state, its autonomous communities have stepped in to create their own educational policies.

### **Research Question**

It is clear that immigrant students in Spain are falling farther and farther behind their native-born peers in schools. In the face of this crisis, how have Spain’s autonomous communities attempted to resolve those educational inequities? What factors have contributed to the solutions pursued by the autonomous communities?

### **Literature Review**

In attempting to answer the question of how societies resolve educational inequities between native-born and immigrant students, scholars have put forth a variety

of models explaining those inequities. These approaches tend to focus on the specific backgrounds of immigrant students or the specific characteristics of their teachers' teaching styles. However, none dedicate sufficient consideration to the institutional characteristics of the host society – and therefore do not fully explain why educational policies directed at immigrants appear to have been successful in some places, but not in others.

One approach that attempts to provide an answer to the question of educational inequities between immigrant and native-born students is the asset and deficit model dichotomy. In the asset model, cultural and linguistic differences of immigrant students are seen as assets that are to be valued, respected, and utilized for the benefit of all students. Many scholars argue that it is the preponderance of this model that explains the success of some societies in the minimization of educational inequities between immigrant students and their native-born peers. In “Understanding the Cultural-Linguistic Divide: Language Learning Strategies for a Diverse Student Population,” Kerry P. Holmes, Susan Rutledge, and Lane Roy Gauthier argue for the usefulness of the asset model in understanding immigrant students' academic achievement; the authors emphasize that when the unique life experiences of all students, native-born and immigrant alike, are valued, “all students, native and non-native [English] speakers, benefit” (Holmes et al 285). In contrast, they argue that the use of the deficit model explains educational inequities between immigrant and native-born students in some classrooms and societies; this is because teachers in these educational systems see immigrant students as deficits by failing to give them sufficient credit for their pre-existing language and academic skills in the non-native language. As such, the use of the

deficit models leads to “barriers to learning that fulfill [teachers’] expectations of low student performance” (Holmes et al 288). These barriers can take many forms, including “the lack of appropriate seating, visual cues, stimulating material, modified material, and the overuse of unfamiliar idiomatic expressions” (Holmes et al 288). However, the asset/deficit model fails to explain exactly why some societies tend to view immigrant students as assets or deficits in classrooms. Although the model emphasizes the importance of valuing immigrant students’ unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds, it does not explain the reasons that some societies value those backgrounds, while others see them as problems that should be eliminated.

Similar to the asset/deficit dichotomy, another explanation for the educational inequities between native-born and immigrant students emphasizes teachers’ approaches to the native languages of their students – a field of study known as language planning. Proponents of this model argue that it is the utilization of one of these approaches that explains immigrant students’ educational achievement (or lack thereof) in a given society. In his article “Orientations in Language Planning,” Richard Ruiz lists three common approaches in the field of language planning. The first of these is language-as-problem, in which the focus is on “the identification and resolution of language problems” (Ruiz 18). According to the author, this approach is inherently problematic because “whether the orientation is represented by malicious attitudes resolving to eradicate, invalidate, quarantine, or inoculate, or comparatively benign ones concerned with remediation and ‘improvement,’ the central activity remains that of problem-solving” (Ruiz 21). The second approach identified by Ruiz concerns language-as-right, in which the use of language is seen as a basic human right, therefore justifying its use

and presence. Ruiz's third approach, finally, concerns language-as-resource. This approach views minority languages as important resources that merit management, conservation, and development, especially considering both the "positive effects of multilingual capacity on the social and educational domains," as well as the increased military preparedness, national security, and international communications that would result from increased knowledge of minority languages (Ruiz 27). Ruiz argues that language-as-resource appears to be the most fruitful approach to addressing minority languages in classrooms, primarily because of the benefits it promises for both language minorities and majorities. This model thus places emphasis on the approach taken by individual teachers to immigrant students' native languages – and argues that immigrant students' success (or lack thereof) in the classroom can be explained by the language planning approach taken by their teachers. However, the language planning approach again fails to explain the reasons behind teachers' perceptions of their students' languages as problems, rights, or resources. Similar to the asset/deficit dichotomy, the language-planning approach elides a structural analysis of the institutions in a host country that create the conditions for certain approaches in a classroom.

As a way to explain the educational disparities between native-born and newcomer students, some scholars have argued that the entire concept of culture has been overly emphasized in discourse surrounding immigration and integration, thereby leading to negative results for all students. In her article *Interculturalism as a Paradigm for Thinking About Diversity*, Martine Abdallah-Preteille argues that the entire concept of culture has been too widely used and disseminated in commonly-held notions of difference and diversity. The author argues, in fact, that there is an "overemphasis on

culture as the determining factor of behaviour and learning”; moreover, this cultural overemphasis, according to Abdallah-Preteille, “pushes us in the direction of a ‘dictatorship’ of the cultural by reducing the individual to his or her cultural membership” (Abdallah-Preteille 476). The author continues to argue that thinking of individuals in terms of categories and characteristics is dangerous in that it “leads to exoticism and cultural dead-ends, by overemphasizing cultural differences and by enhancing, consciously or otherwise, stereotypes or even prejudices” (Abdallah-Preteille 476). Rather than a reliance on the cultural characteristics of students in a classroom, the author argues that a more constructive way of dealing with classroom diversity would be to consider each student as an individual, rather than as a product of his or her own culture.

Others, however, would argue that ignoring culture has detrimental effects on teachers’ and schools’ ability to connect with students, thus resulting in those students’ subpar educational achievements. This alternative perspective instead posits that accounting for a student’s specific culture is indeed important, and allows that student to increased opportunities to obtain the best possible educational outcome. These authors also look to the importance of focusing on educational practices that allow students not just to have equal opportunities within a classroom setting, but to have equitable outcomes for all students. In their article “Toward a Conceptual Integration of Cultural Responsiveness and Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support,” the authors recommend the implementation of culturally relevant social skills lessons, using culturally relevant language, enhancing teachers’ cultural awareness and knowledge, frequent positive feedback, and increasing the cultural competence of school leaders to support staff

(Vincent et al 220). This approach provides a clear contrast to the one proposed by Abdallah-Preteille, in that it advocates for the use of culturally specific knowledge and language, which would therefore necessarily entail treating students as part of their cultural group, although not necessarily limiting the students by putting them into one specific box. However, both this approach and that of Abdallah-Preteille are not fully satisfactory explanations to the educational disparities between native-born and newcomer students. Both models fail to answer the question behind why some teachers, schools, and societies ignore the cultures and backgrounds of immigrant students, while others emphasize the importance of using culture in order to connect with students.

Explanations for the educational disparities between immigrant and native-born students also tend to focus on the specific characteristics of immigrant students, such as their family background and language abilities; however, these individual-level explanations notably fail to account for any institutional-level characteristics of the host society. Immigrant youth are more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds (such as lower incomes and more limited access to education); this perspective posits that immigrant students' relatively low educational achievement reflects that marginalization (Buchmann and Parrado 348). In a similar vein, scholars have emphasized the effect of differences in language ability in an attempt to explain the achievement gap between native-born and immigrant students. Students with limited knowledge of the host country's operating language tend to have difficulty communicating at school and are much more likely to be viewed as slow learners (Buchmann and Parado 349). Notably, this explanation fails to address the features of those schools or societies that also affect immigrant students' language learning.



One of the biggest chasms in the literature on the achievement gap between native-born and immigrant youth in schools is the attention paid to institutional characteristics and their variations among distinct societies. Notably, in their article “Educational Achievement of Immigrant-Origin and Native Born Students,” Claudia Buchmann and Emilio Parado compared institutional features among various host countries throughout Europe and North America, demonstrating that those institutional variations played a significant role in the future educational success and even life prospects of immigrant students. However, even this approach does not lend sufficient weight to institutional and policy-level variations in the realm of educational policy, especially *within* a single country. Because they focus on the specific ways in which a host society can or cannot implement educational policies directed at immigrant students, these often-overlooked characteristics are critical for a more complete understanding of the reasoning behind and enactment of those very policies.

### **Hypothesis**

This thesis will argue that the extent to which educational policies directed at immigrants in Spain have been successful largely depends upon that region’s distinct national identity, which includes the history, culture, and language of the region. Case studies of Madrid and Cataluña will support this point, as both regions have significantly distinct histories, languages, and cultural identities. A comparison of the policies enacted in those two regions – along with an examination of the tensions over national discourses inherent to each policy – will be a more productive way to examine these educational programs.

## Methodology

This thesis will also focus on the current trends of immigration and educational policy in Spain, specifically from the mid-1990s to present-day, as well as the political and historical context that plays a role in the discourse surrounding that immigration and those educational policies. The thesis will also specifically focus on the policies surrounding the education of immigrant youth in the autonomous communities of Madrid and Cataluña – specifically, the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* policy in Madrid and the *Plan de lengua y cohesión social* in Cataluña.

The majority of the sources for this thesis are academic studies of Spain, its immigration policies, and its educational system and policies. Primary data in the form of governmental reports collected and disseminated by the governments of Spain's autonomous communities will also be utilized. The specific policy areas and information collected on those policies on which this thesis is focused are primarily a result of the availability of data (or lack thereof) on this subject, which can result in a more limited project. A second limitation of this thesis comes in the form of the limits of its analysis. By solely focusing on educational policies, the study overlooks more systemic issues that play as great of a role, if not greater, in the lives of immigrant youth in Spain. Although an analysis of other structural issues are important, they are outside the scope of this study – but undoubtedly merit a closer look in examining the life prospects of Spain's immigrant communities. While acknowledging the existence of these limitations, this thesis is still useful in its examination of the effectiveness of policies that seek to abate educational inequities between immigrant and native-born youth populations in Madrid and Cataluña. From this point, it will be possible for readers to extrapolate to broader

conclusions about the intersection of immigration and education – and especially the role of cultural identity and nation-building within those processes.

### **Chapter Organization**

The first chapter of this thesis will argue that the distinct historical and political contexts in the autonomous communities of Madrid and Cataluña have informed the ways in which each region has responded to increased immigrant students in their schools. This is especially important given Spain's multinational and decentralized character, under which it is the autonomous communities, rather than the central state, that create and enact most legislation, especially that related to education.

The second chapter will focus specifically on a policy enacted in the Community of Madrid to account for the increased presence of immigrant students in that region: the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* policy, which has established separate, temporary classrooms for newly-arrived immigrant students. This chapter argues that the failure of that program to fulfill its original goals of educational success and social integration for immigrants reflects the tensions over the construction of national identity in Madrid.

The third chapter will focus specifically on the *Plan de lengua y cohesión social* (Plan LICS) in Cataluña, a set of measures implemented in order to integrate immigrants into both Catalan classrooms and broader Catalan society. This chapter will argue that the relative success of this program – seen through its abatement of educational inequities and promotion of social cohesion – is the result of a strong political motivation and commitment to protect and promote the historically marginalized Catalan language and identity. Indeed, the Plan LICS demonstrates that policies surrounding the education and

integration of immigrants in Catalunya are inseparable from that region's processes of nation-building.

Finally, the conclusion will summarize the findings of the previous chapters; it ultimately argues for the necessity of a careful examination of cultural identity and nation-building processes when studying the educational responses to immigration. This chapter also reiterates the importance of educational policies and structures in the future life prospects of immigrant youth. Finally, it outlines and addresses possibilities for further investigation regarding the education of immigrant youth, in Spain and beyond.

**Chapter One:**  
**Historical and Political Context to the**  
**Education of Immigrant Youth in Madrid and Cataluña**

**Introduction**

The subject of diversity within Spain, both historical and modern-day, has been fraught with tension in popular and academic discourse. The various interpretations of this history are not to be discounted; rather, these tensions have helped to construct the various strains of national identity in Spain. The autonomous communities of Madrid and Cataluña, each of which boast a distinct history and cultural identity, are two prime examples of the differing discourses surrounding the construction of the Spanish nation. Whereas the identity of the Community of Madrid is very much linked to the larger Spanish state, the distinct language, history, and identity of Cataluña have resulted in the region being considered its own nation within the Spanish state.

Furthermore, the ways in which these identities have been constructed have largely determined the political will to enact policies regarding immigration – the most poignant of which ultimately come down to the educational policies directed at immigrant populations. Ricard Zapata-Barrero argues that education functions as a mirror to society in that it is an “instrument of social integration and a means of constructing identity. Education continues to be, perhaps more than ever, the most crucial socialization institution. The ways in which the dominant cultural majority frames the educational system determines perceptions of its own identity and understanding of the ‘other’” (Zapata-Barrero 65). A region’s educational structures and policies, then, both reflect and

result in a certain construction of its own identity and the ways in which the “other” (in this case, immigrant youth) are included in or excluded from that construction. Because the educational sector is often charged with the language learning and general integration of newly arrived immigrants, these educational policies are fundamental in a study of a society’s responses to immigration. Nationalist discourses (and the tensions over those discourses) are inseparable from that nation’s policies for immigrant integration and education. Moreover, the distinct processes of nation-building and construction of identity in the Community of Madrid and Cataluña result in vastly different programs for the education of immigrants between the two regions, as the remainder of this chapter will argue.

### **Processes of Nation-Building in Spain and the Community of Madrid**

In the face of rapidly increasing cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity, tensions over the construction of Spanish national identity have also increased; while one response has sought to disavow differences, another has attempted to reclaim and assert the importance of diversity within Spain’s history. Perhaps these tensions are best encapsulated by Susan Martin-Márquez in her book *Disorientations*: “[Spain’s] medieval past has again been mobilized ... as Spaniards have struggled to reconcile centralist and peripheral nationalisms, reconsider their place on the world stage, and negotiate the dramatic increase in the numbers of immigrants, including those arriving from onetime Spanish colonies” (Martin-Márquez 300). Some argue that the construction of Spanish national identity has rested upon a complete disavowal of diversity, of which one important factor was the expulsion of non-Christian persons from the country in the 15<sup>th</sup>

century, in support of the Catholic monarchs' project of national unification. As the philosopher Eduardo Subirats argues, for example, "since its historical foundation in 1492 until the present day, [Spanish] national identity has been formed through the oftentimes virulently violent rejection of any sort of reflection concerning the destruction of the historical languages and the religions and cultures that populated the Iberian Peninsula. It has also been formed through the rejection of their memory" (as quoted in Martin-Márquez 4). Despite a strong historical presence of both Islam and Judaism in Spain, these scholars argue that the construction of a largely homogenous nation-state and notion of Spanish national identity has been predicated specifically upon a refutation of that diversity. Gunther Dietz, for example, argues that the Spanish nation-state project "has been founded on a mixture of ethnically-based 'arabophobia' and religiously motivated 'islamophobia'" that can be traced to 1492, when the Catholic monarchs captured Granada, the last Islamic stronghold of the Iberian Peninsula, expelling both the Jewish and Muslim populations shortly thereafter (Dietz 1097). Subirats, Dietz and others argue that these historical refutations of diversity in Spain are used to support a specific narrative of Spanish national identity, in which Catholicism and the Castilian language are privileged. Other scholars, however, contradict the claim that conceptualizations of identity within the Spanish nation-state have indiscriminately focused on this hegemonic control over Spain's construction of its history; instead, they demonstrate that there is an important movement vested in reclaiming the country's historical diversity. Furthermore, these authors argue that this past is visible in current, mainstream discourse, especially in response to the increasing numbers of immigrants entering the country. As Susan Martin-Márquez argues, "... the medieval past continues to resonate in political and cultural

discourse concerning Spain's relationship to a number of African nations, many of whose citizens are now immigrating to the Iberian Peninsula" (Martin-Márquez 4). The fact that Spain shares a historical and colonial relationship with a large number of the native countries of its new immigrant populations, especially ones throughout Latin America and Northern Africa, is undoubtedly important in the construction of a national identity that accounts for that difference. In fact, these tensions demonstrate that Spain's lengthy Judeo-Islamic history, paired with its more recent past of Catholicism, are being re-negotiated as a basis for Spanish national identity, especially in the face of increased immigration.

The past and present relationship between the center of the Spanish nation-state and the historic autonomous communities comprising its peripheries further demonstrates the negotiations that are at the heart of the tensions over the construction of Spanish identity. Over the past two centuries, many of these autonomies have struggled for self-governance against the authority of the larger state. Indeed, "Spain is a multilingual country in which, over several centuries, a Castilian-speaking centralized Spanish state has struggled for political and cultural hegemony over several regions containing sizable populations speaking distinct languages and having cultures different from the rest of the country" (Shabad and Gunther 443). The most commonly-cited examples of these regions with distinct languages and cultures from the centralized state are País Vasco, Cataluña, and Galicia, all of which have unique histories that have formed the basis for their separate identities. However, after the dictator Francisco Franco gained control over Spain following the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939, these regions were largely unable to express their own identities and cultures – most obvious in the realm of



language. As Clare Mar-Molinero and Angel Smith describe in *Nationalism and Nation in the Iberian Peninsula*, “the use of minority (non-Castilian) languages was seen as anti-patriotic. These languages were therefore proscribed from public use and ridiculed...” (Mar-Molinero and Smith 81). Challenges – real or imagined – to the hegemony of the Castilian language and identity during this time period was considered to be dangerously subversive to that dominance. After Franco’s death in 1975, however, “... the moderate drafters of the 1978 Constitution sought to appease those with separatist inclinations by establishing a national State of Autonomies” (Martin-Márquez 301). The three historic communities that had voted in favor of increased independence during Spain’s Second Republic (1931-1936) – Cataluña, País Vasco, and Galicia – were granted increased autonomy over local policies and procedures. While this level of autonomy was not as high as the nationalist politicians had hoped to attain, it nonetheless was sufficient to grant these communities the right to employ their distinct languages within their regions and implement the policies they deemed best for their region and the promotion of national identity within those regions.

Furthermore, the Community of Madrid, in which Spain’s capital city is located, has a history and culture that is inseparable from what is considered to be broader Spanish culture. As a result, regional identity in Madrid has minimal importance for those who live there. The autonomous community of Madrid is not considered to be a historic autonomy; as Andrew Davis puts it, “‘national’ identity in Madrid is directly tied to the majoritarian, Castilian identity, referred to more commonly as ‘Spanish’” (Davis 147). Due to the intertwined linguistic and cultural norms that make national identity within Madrid inseparable from that of the larger Spanish state, the community of Madrid has a

relatively low level of autonomy from Spain's national government and thus any notion of Madrid regional identity is minimally salient. Moreover, the strong ties between Madrid and the center of the Spanish nation-state has led to the enactment of policies that seek to promote a broader conceptualization of Spanish culture and identity, rather than any one specific regional identity.

### **Processes of Nation-Building in Cataluña**

The discourses surrounding national identity in one of those historical autonomies – Cataluña, in Spain's northeastern corner – differ significantly from those in the Community of Madrid, and tend to focus more on the specific promotion of the Catalan identity. Although subject to repressive laws during Franco's dictatorship, both the Catalan culture and language have recently grown in their importance and have played substantial roles in the politics of the region. Specific policies that have sought to promote the use of the Catalan language in public spaces – most notably, schools – have played an important role in Cataluña's reassertion of its identity against a significantly stronger Spanish state, and have even been constructed so as to increase social cohesion within Cataluña. Melinda Dooly and Virginia Unamuno, for example, argue that “the teaching and learning of Catalan has been directly associated with a project of social cohesion” (Dooly and Unamuno 219). The use of the Catalan language within the public sphere is a fundamental piece of the construction of nationhood and belonging within the region, and Andrew Davis deems this practice an example of the “alternative forms of nation-building in parts of Spain's territorial periphery” (Davis 138). Steve Marshall also

supports the idea that the Catalan language has been used to express identity and certain values:

Historically, there has been a complex interrelationship between language, identity and nationhood in Catalonia, one in which language has been a contingent marker of identity (May 2000). Catalonia continues to represent today a society where there is a complex interrelationship between self/group/other identity construction and language, culture, politics and nationhood, all of which are negotiated, and competed for, in social and cultural spaces that are often linguistically charged. (Marshall 87-88)

The use of the Catalan language, then, constitutes a political choice – one that connotes belonging, nationhood, and identity. The use of Catalan is especially important given its relation to Castilian Spanish because of the former's status as a historically marginalized minority language that is only now enjoying increased use in both public and private spaces.

The relatively high level of autonomy enjoyed by Cataluña has also helped to define the region as a subnation of the Spanish state with a distinct identity. This is especially true in recent years, after the amendment of Cataluña's Statute of Autonomy in 2006, which had originally been drafted and passed into law shortly following Spain's transition to democracy after the end of Franco's dictatorship. This second statute significantly expanded the authority of the Generalitat of Cataluña to increase regional control and self-government over its specific policies; the preamble of the Statute states that "Catalonia's self government is founded ... on the historical rights of the Catalan

people” and that “the Parliament of Catalonia has defined Catalonia as a nation by an ample majority. The Spanish Constitution, in its second Article, recognizes the national reality of Catalonia as a majority” (Cataluña Statute of Autonomy, Preamble). The increased level of autonomy has allowed lawmakers in Cataluña to shape policies that better align with the distinct goals of that region, as opposed to those of the central Spanish state.

In sharp contrast to the low salience of regional identity in the Community of Madrid, Cataluña has a high incentive to promote both the Catalan language and identity; as such, policymakers in the region have enacted policies that seek to successfully integrate immigrants in that society, especially through education. As a result, these policies fortify the Catalan nation and conceptualizations of Catalan citizenship. This integration strategy, referred to as the *vía catalana de integración*, is apparent in Cataluña’s Citizenship and Immigration Plan, which has aided in the construction of the Catalan nation. This Plan emphasized the inclusive nature of the Catalan nation; as Andrew Davis writes, “... it was symbolized by the definition the Catalan government used to define what it was to be Catalan, which ‘is anyone who lives and works in Catalonia and wants to be Catalan’” (Davis 144). The fact that the Plan defines *anyone* who lives and works in Cataluña as Catalan is important in that it makes Catalan citizenship accessible for a wide variety of people – aligning with the region’s broader nation-building project through the inclusion of non-native Catalans. One of the primary reasons behind Cataluña’s inclusive conceptualization of citizenship and belonging is its historical status as a marginalized region within Spain: the region has often felt the need to assert its identity against the larger and more powerful Spanish state. A policy that

promotes more inclusive notion of citizenship allows Cataluña to build upon itself as a nation and have more success in asserting its autonomy against the Spanish state. Davis argues that “immigration integration policies at the regional level follow largely along the lines of regions’ relative integration into the incomplete Spanish nation-building project, and have based their integration projects largely on historical models” (Davis 139). Because Cataluña is arguably not integrated into that Spanish nation-building project, its policies of immigrant integration (as manifested in education) necessarily promote immigrant integration and citizenship in Cataluña specifically, rather than Spain as a whole.

An integral part of the inclusive notion of citizenship promoted by Cataluña is the Catalan language. Cataluña’s Citizenship and Immigration Plan contains an explicit reference to the Catalan language; specifically, it proposes the “defense of the Catalan language as a vehicular language to resident citizenship” (as quoted in Solé and Parella 97).<sup>1</sup> In other words, knowledge of the Catalan language is explicitly defined as a means toward obtaining citizenship – and with citizenship, belonging – in the Catalan nation. As a minority nation within the Spanish state, Cataluña has an increased stake in the construction of that nation; whereas immigration could present a possible threat to the Catalan language and identity, that potential danger has been reformulated so as to actually fortify the process of Catalan nation-building. Carlota Solé and Sónia Parella point out that:

from the moment that the Catalan language is defined as a  
‘language of opportunities,’ it seeks to assure that the use of this

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<sup>1</sup> In the original Spanish: “defensa de la lengua catalana como lengua vehicular de la ciudadanía residente” (as quoted in Solé and Parella 97).

language will be useful for social, economic, political, and cultural communication. The fact that the vehicular language of immigrants is Catalan clearly influences the will to integrate them based on an identification with a nation based on the fact of sharing common elements. (Solé and Parella 97)<sup>2</sup>

By defining Catalan as the language of opportunities in Cataluña, Catalan policymakers have both legitimized the continued use and prominence of the language while pressing upon its importance for new Catalan residents. Language is a fundamental aspect of culture; the use of the Catalan language, in place of Castilian Spanish, is integral to the Catalan identity. As Shabad and Gunther note, in Cataluña, “language is related at the mass level to various manifestations of micro-nationalism, such as national self-identification, preference for various degrees of regional autonomy from the Spanish state, and support for regional nationalist political parties” (Shabad and Gunther 444). By stressing the importance of the Catalan language in the region’s conceptualizations of citizenship and belonging, Catalan policymakers are in turn able to promote the historically marginalized Catalan identity.

Furthermore, the language that is integral to that notion of inclusivity and expresses the values of the Catalan identity is often transmitted through the educational system; as such, schools play a pivotal role in the promotion of the Catalan language, for native-born and newcomer residents alike. Dooly and Unamuno argue that schools

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<sup>2</sup> In the original Spanish: “desde el momento que el idioma catalán se define como ‘lengua de oportunidades,’ se pretende asegurar la práctica de esta lengua como vehículo de comunicación social económica, política y cultural. Que el idioma vehicular de los inmigrados sea el catalán incide claramente en la voluntad de integrarles desde una identificación con una nación basada en el hecho de compartir elementos comunes” (Solé and Parella 97).

occupy a “fundamental position for transmitting the Catalan language to future generations” (Dooly and Unamuno 219). Catalu a’s Statute of Autonomy reflects the importance of educational policies and structures in the construction of the Catalan nation; the most recent version of the Statute (from 2006) declares that “each individual has the right to receive an education in Catalan, as established in this *Estatut*. Catalan shall be used as the teaching and learning language for university and non-university education” (Catalu a Statute of Autonomy, Article 35, Section 1). With Catalan as the primary language in schools, Catalu a is able to promote identity and culture within the state’s educational system – thereby ensuring its use and continuation for both native-born and newcomer students. The statute specifically addresses the integration of non-native Catalan students in its educational system, stating that “those pupils who join the school system in Catalonia at a later age than normal school starting age have the right to receive special linguistic support if their lack of comprehension skills makes it difficult for them to pursue their education normally” (Catalu a Statute of Autonomy, Article 35, Section 4). The promotion of the Catalan language is clearly a priority of the Catalan government, especially through the education of newcomer youth.

While the Catalan language has been used as a tool to foster the inclusivity of that region, some scholars have argued that the Catalan model of nation-building goes too far in its emphasis on that language. This is primarily due to the fact that two languages – Castilian Spanish and Catalan – exist as co-official languages in Catalu a. Proponents of this perspective argue that the strong emphasis on Catalan detracts from Castilian Spanish language acquisition, which would be quite helpful to immigrant populations if they migrate to other regions in Spain. A lack of knowledge of Castilian, then, would seriously

hinder any opportunities for immigrants for mobility, either geographic or social, in Spain outside of Catalan-speaking regions. This perceived limitation of Cataluña's *vía catalana de integración* is likely the result of its past migration histories; prior to the early 1980s, the vast majority of its migrant population was comprised of Spanish-born migrants from other regions, who came to Cataluña already with prior knowledge of Castilian Spanish. According to Davis, the *vía catalana de integración* follows this mindset; he argues that "Catalonia's brand of assimilation has demonstrated certain limitations, particularly the way in which it depended on a fairly homogenous set of migrants not strongly different from the autochthonous population" (Davis 144-145). The demographics of Cataluña's immigrant populations have changed drastically over the past two decades, so that the majority of migrants now proceed not from other regions in Spain, but rather countries throughout the world. As a result, some argue that it may be necessary for the region to re-examine its immigrant integration policies, and specifically the ways in which these policies can both allow for newcomer Catalan residents to learn the co-official languages of the nation, while still allowing for the preservation of the Catalan identity.

### **Conclusion**

The distinct histories, identities, and languages of Madrid and Cataluña necessarily inform the ways in which each region has responded to increased and increasing immigration. Ultimately, the most poignant issues regarding immigration manifest themselves in tensions over educational policies – policies that tend to reflect the cultural identities and nation-building processes inherent to each region. Madrid's policies are very much marked by the federal government and align with the identity of



the Spanish nation-state; on the other hand, Cataluña's policies aim to promote that region's distinct language, culture, and identity. As the next two chapters will argue, the educational responses of Madrid and Cataluña to immigrant youth largely reflect and even help to shape the popular discourses over national identity in each region.

**Chapter Two:**  
**The Tensions Over National Identity and the Enactment of**  
**the *Aulas de Enlace* in the Community of Madrid**

**Introduction**

Spain is receiving higher numbers of immigrants than at any previous point in the nation's history. This trend has been especially noticeable in the Community of Madrid, where, as of 2008, over 14 percent of the region's population was comprised of immigrants (Davis 147). As of the 2011-2012 school year, 770,384 immigrant students were enrolled in Madrid's educational system – 13.4 percent of the total student body (*Datos y Cifras 2011/2012*). In response to such high numbers of immigrant youth, the regional government of the Community of Madrid implemented its *Escuelas de Bienvenida* program in 2003. The main goal of this policy was to facilitate the integration of immigrant students into Madrid classrooms and increase their linguistic competencies in Spanish. A primary component of the program was the provision of specialized and separate classrooms for those students, called *aulas de enlace* (linking classrooms). The *aulas de enlace* are specifically aimed at two profiles of students: immigrant students who enter Madrid schools with limited Spanish language skills and those who may speak Spanish but are significantly behind grade-level in their instructional backgrounds (namely those who have emigrated from Latin American countries).<sup>1</sup> The *aulas* rely on

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<sup>1</sup> According to Madrid's Department of Education, the *aulas* were implemented specifically for “aquellos casos en los que dicho alumnado presenta un elevado grado de desconocimiento de la lengua española o un grave desfase en conocimientos o competencias básicas” [“those cases in which students present a high level of ignorance of the Spanish language or a serious lag in knowledge or basic competencies”] (Instrucciones 1).

completely voluntary enrollment; therefore, the explicit consent of students' parents or guardians must be obtained before students may be placed in them (del Olmo and Cucalón Tirada 226). Students in an *aula de enlace* can be anywhere between six to 16 years old, and each classroom is capped at 12 students. Students remain in the *aulas* for a period of between six months and one year, at which point they are expected to transition to mainstream classrooms (Inglés López, "Aulas de enlace: Estudio de la implantación" 137-138). The program has rapidly gained popularity; in 2003 (the first year of implementation) there were a total of 115 *aulas de enlace*. As of the 2008-2009 school year, the most recent year for which data is available, over 300 of these *aulas* were in place in the region of Madrid, serving a total of almost 4,000 students (del Olmo and Cucalón Tirada 228).

This chapter will argue that the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* program, and specifically the *aulas de enlace*, have not been a successful policy tool for the education of immigrant students. While the policy may have been well-intentioned, the implementation of the program has been problematic to the point of doing a serious disservice to the students involved. In theory, the program was supposed to facilitate immigrant integration into both schools and broader society; in practice, however, the program has been implemented in such a way that it effectively excludes students from the mainstream and prevents their further integration into Spanish society. This is seen in the program's segregation of immigrant students from mainstream education, the emphasis on its benefit to autochthonous students, and its secondary effect of tracking immigrant students on a lower track than their native-born peers. Furthermore, the hasty implementation of the program has also resulted in a forced assimilation of immigrant students into the

dominant culture – a process that is notable in the absence of any rigorous oversight or evaluations, hasty teacher selection, and the prioritization of Spanish language acquisition over maintenance of students’ native languages. While that lack of oversight seriously hampers any concrete data on the effectiveness of the *aulas*, the broad social critique that has been leveled against the *aulas* and the continued (and even increasing) marginalization of immigrants from economic and social opportunities demonstrate that the program has failed to fulfill its stated goals. Moreover, the problematic implementation of the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* policy reflects the tensions surrounding national and regional identity in the Community of Madrid – discourses that exclude immigrant youth from the mainstream, while expecting them to unquestionably assimilate into the dominant society, and ultimately failing to provide any clear path toward societal integration and success for these students.

### **The Detrimental Outcomes of the *Aulas de Enlace***

The *Escuelas de Bienvenida* policy and the *aulas de enlace* were intended to facilitate the integration of immigrants into broader Madrid society – a clearly beneficial goal for all involved. Indeed, Madrid’s regional government defined the *aulas* as “a new measure of compensatory education whose goal is to accelerate the incorporation of newcomers to the mainstream educational system under the best possible conditions” (Inglés López, “Aulas de Enlace: A Study of the Implementation” 7). However, the program has been characterized by an all-too-hasty implementation and a severe lack of oversight, resulting in unprepared teachers and negative outcomes for immigrant students. While this absence of oversight impedes the ability to determine with absolute

certainty the efficacy (or lack thereof) of the *aulas*, other broad social indicators – specifically, unemployment trends in the Community of Madrid – point to the fact that the social integration of immigrants, as measured by their prospects in the labor market, has actually worsened since the enactment of the *aulas*. Although the *aulas* were intended to improve the social integration and success of immigrants, these populations are actually falling farther behind their native-born peers. While this is not a causal connection, when paired with the broader social critique that has been leveled against the implementation of the policy, it points to the fact that the program has not had the beneficial effects on the social and economic integration of immigrant youth in Madrid. In short, the reality of the *aulas de enlace* has not fulfilled its original promise – ultimately leading to adverse consequences for all involved.

The lack of oversight in the form of concrete program evaluations seriously hampers the ability to assess the efficacy of the *aulas de enlace*; however, the differences in employment numbers for immigrants and native-born Spanish citizens in the Community of Madrid point to a serious lack of immigrants' social integration – one of the primary goals of the program. The global financial crisis of 2008 seriously affected the Spanish economy, and unemployment numbers have remained notably high. In the Community of Madrid in late 2007, shortly before the worst effects of the recession began to make their presence known, 5.8 percent of native-born Spanish residents in the Community of Madrid were unemployed, while 8.4 percent of immigrants were also actively searching for jobs. While these unemployment rates are far from ideal, the difference between the two is 2.6 percentage points – relatively minimal. However, these numbers changed drastically in just a couple of years: in 2009, 12.5 percent of native-

born Spanish residents in the Community of Madrid were unemployed, compared with 22.3 percent of immigrants in that region (“El paro en Madrid: Un drama humano que se extiende” 10). The stark differences in the employment prospects of foreign-born residents of Madrid, compared with that of native-born residents, demonstrate that there still exist social and economic barriers hampering broader integration – and that those social and economic barriers have even worsened for immigrants following Spain’s economic recession. Since the enactment of the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* policy in Madrid, immigrants in the region have not enjoyed expanded access to labor opportunities. In fact, their access to these opportunities has even decreased in relation to those of native-born Spanish residents. It is important to note that the connection between unemployment numbers and the effectiveness of the *aulas* is not causal by any means. However, these numbers do point to the absence of any outward signs of the improvement of job-related opportunities for immigrants – a broader indicator of social integration that the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* policy had set out to improve.

In addition to the stark disparity in unemployment between native-born Spanish citizens and those who have immigrated to the country, a broader social critique has been made against the *aulas*, most often appearing in national newspapers such as *El País*. These critiques represent a certain political discontent with the enactment of the *aulas* – especially by education professionals and progressive politicians. The public education division of one of Spain’s largest and most prominent workers’ unions, *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), has severely criticized the program. The union issued a statement for an article in *El País*, criticizing the enactment of the *aulas* for the program’s “lack of

coordination, information, and proper methods” (M.C. 2003).<sup>2</sup> In a similar vein, Fausto Fernández, the director of Madrid’s *Izquierda Unida* (United Left) party, expressed his dismay at the program, arguing that “it’s very difficult to support an initiative that does not guarantee the integration of immigrant students” (Agencia 2003).<sup>3</sup> These critiques demonstrate that the *aulas de enlace* were not enacted according to their original goals of immigrant integration, thus severely impeding their efficacy and reducing support from the professionals working in them.

### ***Aulas de Enlace: Constructing National Identity as Assimilation of Difference***

Although Madrid’s *aulas de enlace* were intended to provide a means for immigrant students to become integrated into both the Spanish educational system and broader society, their implementation has not resulted in students’ integration, but rather their assimilation into the dominant culture in a much more problematic manner. This is especially apparent in the ways in which the enactment of the *aulas* has not dedicated sufficient oversight to the program, failed to give teachers the preparation necessary to teach immigrant students, and prioritized the Spanish language over students’ native languages and customs. Furthermore, these shortcomings reflect a particular construction of the Spanish nation, in which Spanish identity and belonging is conceptualized not

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<sup>2</sup> In the original Spanish: “El sector de Enseñanza Pública de UGT ha arremetido contra las aulas de enlace denunciando que, en su puesta en marcha, reina la ‘falta de coordinación, de información y de medios’” (M.C. 2003).

<sup>3</sup> In the original Spanish: “...es muy difícil apoyar una iniciativa de la Comunidad que no garantiza la integración del alumnado inmigrante” (Agencia 2003).

according to the acceptance, but rather the assimilation or homogenization of diversity, as embodied by newcomer students in Madrid schools.

The fact that Madrid's Department of Education does not publish concrete evaluations of the *aulas de enlace* nor conduct significant oversight of the program not only reflects the program's overly hasty implementation, but also an implied expectation of students' assimilation into the mainstream. As a result of the lack of substantive evaluations, it has been impossible to conduct any quantitative assessments of any successes or failures since the inception of the *aulas* in 2003. The lack of evaluations and oversight of the *aulas* limits the possibility of assessing students' progress, both when they arrive in the *aulas* and when they leave them to enter mainstream classrooms. Without any sort of formal evaluative process in place, it is difficult to concretely know the progress made by each student in the *aulas de enlace*. When teachers and administrators do not have the means to evaluate the progress of their students, it becomes difficult for students to become re-integrated into mainstream classrooms to the extent that they otherwise could. Following their time in the *aulas de enlace*, students are expected to immediately assimilate into mainstream classrooms, without access to any sort of mechanisms to aid them through this rapid transition. The fact that students have shown considerable anxiety about leaving the *aulas* before being thrown into the 'sink-or-swim' environment of expected assimilation in mainstream classrooms demonstrates that the absence of controls to aid students in these transitions has the potential for lasting and harmful effects (del Olmo and Cucalón Tirada 229). There are two broad qualifying factors for immigrant students' placement in the *aulas*: limited Spanish language proficiency and/or limited prior formal schooling that would have led to significant



curricular gaps in knowledge (even if the student already speaks Spanish, as is often the case for those students proceeding from Latin American countries) (Inglés López, “Aulas de Enlace: A Study of the Implementation” 17-18). Beyond that, however, no formal assessments are carried out for students in the *aulas de enlace*, which creates two major challenges. First, it makes it impossible to evaluate what students have gained from their placements in the *aulas* and thus quantitatively determine how successful these classrooms are. Many teachers (approximately 38 percent) choose to use evaluative methods they have individually created, and another 24 percent instead use daily observations to evaluate students’ progress (Goenechea Permisán 287). Second, the absence of mechanisms for proper oversight creates the possibility for many teachers to misjudge the academic proficiency or language knowledge of their students – and even assume that they proceed from more limited educational backgrounds, and therefore know less, than they actually do. This preconception does not always hold true; for some students, the *aulas* are significantly less challenging than the classrooms to which they were accustomed in their home countries (Inglés López, “Aulas de enlace: Estudio de la implantación” 154). In one article challenging the effectiveness of the *aulas* for students with strong academic backgrounds, the authors wrote that “after having followed and analyzed the academic trajectories of the students that have left the *aula de enlace*, we can affirm that the program is a failure for those foreign students who come with a solid academic formation, established work habits, and high academic expectations” (del Olmo and Cucalón Tirada 232).<sup>4</sup> The *aulas* can thus delay some students’ learning, making it

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<sup>4</sup> In the original Spanish: “Después de haber seguido y analizado las trayectorias de algunos de los alumnos que salieron del aula de enlace podemos afirmar que el programa resulta ser un fracaso para aquellos alumnos extranjeros que vienen con una buena

even more difficult for those students to eventually re-enter mainstream classrooms. The dearth of oversight of the *aulas de enlace* is a serious problem because there is simply no way to verify that the program is meeting the needs of its students, ultimately hindering students' learning while promoting an implicit expectation of those students' assimilation into Spanish culture.

The process by which teachers were selected and trained to teach in the *aulas de enlace* has also resulted in the assimilation of immigrant students, rather than a reciprocal integration into a multicultural society. The rapid enactment of the *aulas* – approved by the regional department of education in November 2002 and implemented just two months later, in January 2003 – simply did not allow Madrid schools sufficient time to hire experienced teachers (Inglés López, “Aulas de Enlace: A Study of the Implementation” 207). In the *aulas*' first year of operation, all teachers were substitutes, and many lacked the necessary skills to be able to address the educational needs of immigrant students. In an interview with *El País* in 2003, shortly after the *aulas* were initially enacted, Luisa Martín Rojo of the Autonomous University of Madrid noted that “teachers often feel helpless. It is difficult for them to adapt so quickly to this change without specific training...” (Aguirregomezcorta 2003).<sup>5</sup> The administrators of the *aulas* attempted to improve upon this hiring process in their second year of operation, during which teachers were selected from a pool of those specifically interested in teaching in

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formación escolar, hábitos de trabajo establecidos y altas expectativas académicas” (del Olmo and Cucalón Tirada 232).

<sup>5</sup> In the original Spanish: “Los docentes se sienten muchas veces desamparados. Para ellos es difícil adaptarse a este cambio en tan poco tiempo y sin una formación específica” (Aguirregomezcorta 2003).

the program and with prior teaching experience. However, the hiring process was still seriously compromised; nearly half (45 percent) of the teachers selected to teach in the *aulas* lacked any formal experience whatsoever in teaching Spanish as a foreign language, and another 21 percent had two years or fewer of experience in the field (García Fernández 120). The teachers selected for the program were required to enroll in a 25-hour course in order to learn the basics of teaching Spanish as a foreign language. However, a 25-hour course is not sufficient to prepare educators to teach the primary operating language of a society to newcomer immigrant students – something apparent in many teachers’ evaluations of the course as “insufficient and not practical” (Inglés López, “Aulas de Enlace: A Study of the Implementation” 206). Moreover, as Robert Milk and others have demonstrated (1992), immigrant students are much more likely to experience academic success when their teachers have been trained in addressing their distinct educational needs and specifically when these teachers are proficient in multiple languages, can successfully integrate “students’ work at mixed levels of linguistic and conceptual complexity,” and are able to incorporate their own knowledge of the cultural norms of various groups into their classrooms (Milk et al 5). The teachers’ union UGT also felt that their teachers were not sufficiently prepared to teach in the *aulas*, voicing in *El País* that the necessary training was “accomplished in just five days, which discredits the implemented measures” (M.C. 2003).<sup>6</sup> These criticisms demonstrate that the teacher selection for the *aulas de enlace* has not proceeded according to generally agreed upon

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<sup>6</sup> In the original Spanish: “En un comunicado, UGT afirma que tanto la distribución de las aulas en los distintos centros como la selección del profesorado se ha realizado sin ningún tipo de negociación ni acuerdo con los sindicatos. Además asegura que la formación imprescindible para esta tarea ‘se ha realizado en tan sólo cinco días, lo que desacredita de antemano las medidas que se pretenden poner en marcha’” (M.C. 2003).

best practices of teacher selection and preparation. The obvious disconnect between the policy's multicultural discourse that values the integration of immigrants into Spanish society and the actual practice of the *aulas* has failed to provide teachers with the necessary resources in order to make that vision a reality. The result has been vastly underprepared teachers, which in turn has resulted in immigrant students' unpreparedness to enter the mainstream educational system – and their ensuing assimilation into a set of educational structures that are not properly equipped to meet their educational needs or account for the cultural and linguistic diversity that they embody.

The way in which the *aulas de enlace* have prioritized the Spanish language over immigrant students' native languages and cultures is a further reflection of the policy's tendency toward assimilation, rather than a reciprocal process of integration in an increasingly multicultural society. The prioritization of the Spanish language and culture has tended to take place through the structure and day-to-day activities of these classrooms – specifically, solely teaching in Spanish and a lack of references to immigrant students' home cultures. Although the vast majority of the *aulas*' teachers consider the use of students' native languages to be an integral part of teaching in the *aulas*, Cristina Goenechea Permisán notes that “references to students' home cultures are practically absent in the content and activities of the *aula de enlace*” (Goenechea Permisán 288).<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Inglés López has noted that “although the official policy recognizes the value of maintaining the students' languages of origin, and advocates for the richness of their heritage and traditions, the school system has not envisioned a way

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<sup>7</sup> In the original Spanish: “Aunque la mayoría considera importante el uso de las lenguas nativas por parte del alumnado, están prácticamente ausentes los referentes culturales de éstos en los contenidos y las actividades del aula de enlace” (Goenechea Permisán 288).

to make this possible in practice... students' first languages are ignored at the institutional level" (Inglés López, "Aulas de Enlace: A Study of the Implementation" 25). With the exception of some language programs in Arabic and Portuguese, immigrant students' primary languages are not offered in the curricula of any of Madrid's *aulas*. By solely teaching in Spanish, without incorporating students' primary languages, the *aulas* do a significant disservice to the students and their ability to learn in Spanish schools; in fact, the academic literature has consistently demonstrated that the integration of students' native languages into the curriculum of a school is a much more effective method than the exclusive teaching of the second language. There is a broad consensus among educational scholars that when immigrant students are learning the primary language of a host country, it is imperative that the schools also incorporate the native languages of those students into their curriculum; however, the reality of the *aulas de enlace* do not reflect this consensus. García Castaño, for example, has observed that there is "not the same emphasis on [students'] native languages as there is on the primary languages of the schools... they concentrate on the teaching of the school's primary language, without making any references to the mother tongues as a prior step for the knowledge or one (or more) other language(s)" (García Castaño et al. 355).<sup>8</sup> The absence of references to students' languages and cultures of origin reflect an expectation for them to unquestionably assimilate into the dominant culture, even if that assimilation proves to be ultimately harmful for the students.

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<sup>8</sup> In the original Spanish: "...no encontramos el mismo énfasis en la dedicación a las lenguas maternas que a las lenguas vehiculares... se centran en la enseñanza de la lengua vehicular sin hacer ninguna referencia a las lenguas maternas como paso previo para el conocimiento de la otra u otras lenguas" (García Castaño et al 355).

Although the rhetoric of the *aulas de enlace* policy emphasizes the integration of immigrant students into Spanish schools and society, the process by which the *aulas* function has been much more focused on assimilation of students and the homogenization of difference – specifically through the absence of mechanisms for proper oversight or evaluation, teachers’ insufficient preparation to instruct immigrant students, and the emphasis on Spanish language acquisition over maintenance of students’ native languages or cultures. Prior to enactment, the Madrid government explicitly stated that the objective of the *aulas* would be to “... facilitate the integration of the students from foreign countries that are incorporated into the school system of the Community of Madrid” (del Olmo and Cucalón Tirada 226).<sup>9</sup> In practice, however, the *aulas* have not lived up to that original intention, substituting assimilation for integration. María Dolores Inglés López persuasively argues that “although the official discourse recognizes the benefit that diversity (mainly linguistic, but also cultural) may bring to schools, the way that policy and decision makers have dealt with it is contradictory, since the main goal of the ‘Aulas de Enlace’ program has been the assimilation of the newcomer to make him/her fit in an ‘ideal’ homogenous school and society” (Inglés López, “Aulas de Enlace: A Study of the Implementation” 200-201). The assimilation of immigrant students is problematic because it assumes a deficiency on the part of the immigrant students, rather than acknowledging the steps that the larger society must also take in order to promote multicultural integration. As Luisa Martín Rojo from the Autonomous University of Madrid summarized, “[the program assumes] that it’s the immigrant

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<sup>9</sup> In the original Spanish: “... objetivo es facilitar la integración de los alumnos que se incorporan al sistema escolar de la Comunidad de Madrid procedentes de países extranjeros” (del Olmo and Cucalón Tirada 226).

students who have to assimilate, rather than it being a reciprocal process in which the welcoming community must also accustom itself to diversity” (Aguirregomezcorta 2003).<sup>10</sup> Rather than provide mechanisms for that difference to become an integral part of a multicultural society in which the “welcoming community” accustoms itself to diversity, the *aulas de enlace* have instead assimilated immigrant students’ perceived differences.

### **The Reflection of National Identity as Exclusion in the *Aulas de Enlace***

The fundamental paradox of the Madrid program lies in its coupling of a paradigm of assimilation, as demonstrated in the previous section, with one of exclusion from the mainstream; the two models together severely limit immigrant students’ opportunities for integration into broader Spanish society. This exclusionary tendency manifests itself in immigrant students’ separation from mainstream classrooms and their native-born peers, a system based on tracking, and a rhetoric that emphasizes the supposed deficits of immigrant students within a framework of compensatory education. Furthermore, the exclusion of newcomer students from their native-born peers and larger Spanish society derives from a relatively low incentive to promote a regional identity in the Community of Madrid, into which the education and integration of immigrant students would otherwise play an integral role.

One of the clearest manifestations of the exclusionary tendency of the *aulas de enlace* is the de jure separation of immigrant students from their peers, beginning with

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<sup>10</sup> In the original Spanish: “... dando por hecho que son los alumnos de origen inmigrante los que se tienen que integrar en vez de que sea un proceso recíproco en el que la comunidad de acogida ha de acostumbrarse a la diversidad” (Aguirregomezcorta 2003).

their arrival in Spain. That separation has negative consequences for students in the *aulas* – consequences which become especially apparent when they leave the *aulas* to enter mainstream classrooms. In their qualitative descriptions of the *aulas de enlace*, *La Consejería de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid* (The Ministry of Education of the Community of Madrid) have observed that the students in the *aulas* “show considerable anxiety and anguish when they leave and must integrate in mainstream classrooms” (del Olmo and Cucalón Tirada 229).<sup>11</sup> Although the *aulas* may initially be valuable as positive and secure spaces of initial reception, the students’ anxiety about leaving them points to a serious shortcoming of the design of these classrooms – the students in them become excluded from the mainstream activities of the school to the extent that they no longer feel comfortable re-entering them, leading García Fernández to call the *aulas* “‘bubbles,’ ‘refuges,’ or ‘islands’ of reception” (García Fernández 125-126).<sup>12</sup> When immigrant students are re-integrated into mainstream classrooms, their exclusion from the mainstream continues via a process of de facto segregation through being taught exclusively in Spanish. Although the students may appear to be integrated in their classes, “they don’t have access to the ideas presented there, nor sufficient tools to interact in Spanish” (Inglés López, “Aulas de Enlace: Estudio de la Implantación” 155).<sup>13</sup>

It is important to note, however, that students enrolled in *aulas de enlace* are not

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<sup>11</sup> In the original Spanish: “... manifiesta gran ansiedad y angustia cuando sale y tiene que integrarse en otro centro” (del Olmo and Cucalón Tirada 229).

<sup>12</sup> In the original Spanish: “... conlleva el efecto perverso de convertirlas en “burbujas”, “refugios” o “islas” de acogida” (García Fernández 125-126).

<sup>13</sup> In the original Spanish: “Aunque aparentemente integrados en su clase, no tienen acceso a las ideas que allí se presentan ni herramientas suficientes para interactuar en español” (Inglés López, “Aulas de Enlace: Estudio de la Implantación” 155).



separated from their peers in mainstream classrooms for the entirety of the school day; they do, in fact, have opportunities to interact with other students through music, art, and physical education classes, as well as certain extracurricular activities. While this component was added to the policy in order to ensure that immigrant students would not be completely segregated from the rest of the student body, the exclusionary effects that result from the *aulas* are still real and present. Indeed, the reality of the *aulas* is such that this stipulation does little to insure immigrant students' integration with the other students at a school due to a serious lack of coordination between the *aulas de enlace* and the other classrooms. Martín Rojo and Mijares demonstrate that the *aulas de enlace*:

are not always connected with the rest of the school: the students have a reference group, but there is not always coordination between the professors of one classroom and another. If this coordination goes wrong, the students of the 'special' programs are seen as difficult, lost or even unsuitable when they leave this island... These students tend to have enormous difficulties when they have to incorporate themselves into the reference classrooms (Martín Rojo and Mijares 100).<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, this provision does not resolve the fundamental paradox presented by the *aulas de enlace*: the policy that created the *aulas* intended to create a school system in

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<sup>14</sup> In the original Spanish: “La observación de lo que sucede en estas Aulas de Enlace muestra que estas no siempre se vinculan al resto del centro: los estudiantes tienen un grupo de referencia, pero no siempre hay coordinación entre el profesorado de un aula y otra. Si falla esta coordinación, los alumnos de estos programas «especiales» son vistos como participantes difíciles, perdidos o, incluso, poco aptos cuando abandonan esta isla... Los alumnos que a ellas acuden tienen enormes dificultades a la hora de incorporarse a sus aulas de referencia...” (Martín Rojo and Mijares 100)

which students of all backgrounds could be successfully integrated, but the practice of the *aulas* necessitate the exclusion of students with cultural and linguistic backgrounds that differ from the dominant Spanish language and culture. As García Castaño points out, “despite all of the well-intentioned statements that [the *aulas*] objective is integration and not exclusion... they function so that the so-called ‘problem’ doesn’t become a part of the mainstream classroom, or at the very least is present for the least time possible, or so that [students] can only incorporate themselves when they stop being a problem” (García Castaño et al 356).<sup>15</sup> The *aulas* exclude what is commonly seen as the ‘problem’ – either the limited Spanish language competency or significant curricular gaps of the immigrant students – from mainstream classrooms. After a short time period, during which that ‘problem’ has supposedly diminished or disappeared altogether, the immigrant students are allowed to re-enter mainstream classrooms. Although their explicit goal is to achieve the societal integration of immigrant students, the *aulas de enlace* work by excluding them from an integral aspect of society – primary and secondary education, thereby defeating their own purpose. Furthermore, the fact that immigrant students are systematically excluded from the mainstream educational structures in Madrid has serious implications regarding the exclusion and marginalization of immigrants throughout multiple facets of Spanish society.

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<sup>15</sup> In the original Spanish: “...en la mayoría de los centros educativos debemos considerar tales aulas como segregadas, a pesar de todas las declaraciones bienintencionadas de que su objetivo es la integración y no la exclusión. ... se permite que el llamado ‘problema’ no forme parte del aula normalizada, o que al menos esté presente el menor tiempo posible, o que sólo pueda incorporarse cuando deje de ser un problema” (García Castaño et al 356).

Moreover, the exclusionary tendency of the *aulas de enlace* reflects a particular construction of Spanish national identity – a construction in which perceived challenges to a supposedly immutable sense of identity, such as the cultural and linguistic diversity of immigrant students, are excluded or effectively nullified. Because the discourse surrounding national identity in the Community of Madrid is very much tied to the larger nationalist Spanish identity, it follows that the regional educational policies regarding immigrant students reflect that notion of nation- and identity-construction.<sup>16</sup> The enactment of the *aulas de enlace*, and especially the discourse surrounding their implementation, reflect the tensions over what exactly constitutes Spanish identity – and the categories that are included in or excluded from that conceptualization. This rhetoric can especially be seen in the emphasis on the intended beneficiaries of the policy, noticeable when one of the chief legislators behind the enactment of the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* argued that the policy was necessary because:

different innovations have been implemented progressively in the Community of Madrid's educational system, but the steady increase of immigrant students made the proper organization of the school where they had an impact (almost all of them), and the optimal development of teaching and learning processes of the whole student body, difficult to achieve. This is why the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* program was first implemented in January 2003, with the purpose of solving this specific,

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<sup>16</sup> Indeed, as Hargreaves demonstrates, “the highest [nationalist] identification with Spain is found in Madrid” (Hargreaves 71).

though widely extended, problem. (Inglés López, “Aulas de Enlace: A Study of the Implementation” 14)<sup>17</sup>

One of the reasons behind the enactment of the *aulas de enlace*, then, was the facilitation of native-born Spanish students’ learning processes – something perceived to be accomplished through their separation from immigrant students and the promotion of a largely monolingual and monocultural environment, thereby ensuring the continuation of a specific and exclusionary discourse surrounding Spanish identity.

Placing immigrant students into classrooms separate from other students not only effectively excludes them from the mainstream, but also leads to the tracking of those immigrant students – as well as the construction of a second class, separate from the aforementioned privileged Spanish identity. Tracking is commonly defined as the placement of students in specific settings based on different measures of those students’ supposed ability or achievement (Oakes 3). The isolation and segregation of students in the *aulas* actually increases the inequities between the immigrant students and those in mainstream classrooms. As Jeannie Oakes argues in her book *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality*, tracking maintains and even exacerbates existing inequities; because, for example, language minority students are “less likely to do well [in school] because of their language and experience differences,” placing these students in separate classrooms sends an implicit yet effective message that those students have less ability

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<sup>17</sup> In the original Spanish: “Las opciones innovadoras se han ido aplicando progresivamente, pero la incorporación paulatina de alumnado día a día y semana a semana, hacía difícil la organización apropiada de cada centro en el que incidía (en casi todos, como resulta obvio), al igual que el desarrollo óptimo de los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje del conjunto del alumnado. Por todo ello, y con ánimo de solventar esa problemática puntual, pero amplia por su extensión, en enero del año 2003 se pone en marcha el programa ‘Escuelas de Bienvenida’...” (Inglés López, “Aulas de Enlace: A Study of the Implementation” 14).

than students in mainstream or more advanced classrooms (Oakes 11). By negatively affecting students' academic achievement, tracking virtually ensures that students who started on lower tracks will stay there. However, educational research has proven that the placement of students generally considered to be of 'lower tracks' in mixed classrooms has absolutely no negative effects on what are considered to be the 'brighter' students in those classrooms; Oakes, for examples, concludes that "*no group of students has been found to benefit consistently from being in a homogenous group... we can be fairly confident that bright students are not held back when they are in mixed classrooms*" (Oakes 7, emphasis in original). The case of the *aulas* demonstrates that Madrid's educational system effectively creates one path for success for those students fortunate enough to have been born in that region; however, that track exists alongside another of total educational failure for those students who have immigrated to Spain. Through excluding difference as such, the *aulas de enlace* actually harm the future educational prospects of both immigrant students *and* native-born Spanish students, while continuing to privilege a monolingual and monocultural construction of Spanish national identity.

Moreover, both the discourse surrounding the implementation of the *aulas de enlace* and the fact that these classrooms tend to be viewed as 'compensatory education' further reinforce the notion that students with limited Spanish language proficiency are in some way deficient simply due to that lack of linguistic knowledge – thereby promoting an exclusive construction of Spanish identity. Two articles from the center-right Spanish newspaper *ABC* demonstrate the popular construction of immigrant students as deficient. In the first, the author writes that "because of the deficit that [immigrant students]

present, they remain in these classrooms...” (Asenjo 2007).<sup>18</sup> In the second, the author argues in an editorial that in mainstream classrooms that integrate both immigrant and native-born students, “the teacher has to divert part of his or her efforts to serving students with linguistic and cultural difficulties, which damage the pace of a class. The *aulas de enlace* appear to be the best remedy to curb shocking revelations such as those made by the Spanish Ombudsman, who warned that almost four out of every ten Spanish students are against having immigrants in their classrooms” (“Aulas de enlace” 2003).<sup>19</sup> This editorial points to a clear preoccupation that immigrant students’ supposed deficits will detract from the education of their autochthonous peers – and why those students supposedly need to be in the framework of compensatory education.

Furthermore, the fact that the *aulas de enlace* group both immigrant students who speak Spanish but are a grade level or more behind their classmates (often those proceeding from Latin American countries) with students who simply do not speak Spanish into one classroom that supposedly has the capacity to solve both of those distinct issues further contributes to the fundamentally compensatory nature of the policy. As Luisa Martín Rojo points out, “compensatory education is not the solution, not only because these groups are composed of children who do not know the [Spanish] language, but are mixed with others with very diverse problems, so that sometimes the level is not

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<sup>18</sup> In the original Spanish: “Según el déficit que presentan, permanecen en estas aulas...” (Asenjo 2007).

<sup>19</sup> In the original Spanish: “...un profesor que tiene que distraer parte de su esfuerzo en atender a alumnos con dificultades idiomáticas o culturales acaba por deteriorar el ritmo de una clase. Las aulas de integración aparecen, por otra parte, como el mejor remedio para poner coto a revelaciones tan espeluznantes como las realizadas por el Defensor del Pueblo, que alertaba de que casi cuatro de cada diez estudiantes españoles están en contra de que haya inmigrantes en sus aulas” (“Aulas de enlace” 2003).

demanding enough and does not respond to students' linguistic needs" (Aguirregomezcorta 2003).<sup>20</sup> Although perhaps not intended as such, a system based on compensating for immigrant students' supposed deficits simply leads to their separation, making it extremely difficult for those students to become re-integrated into the larger Spanish society. Goenechea Permisán and García Fernández, for example, argue that the approach taken by the *aulas de enlace* does not "appreciate the culture of the immigrant nor ask for any change to the mainstream society" (Goenechea Permisán and García Fernández 5). Rather than appreciate the rich and varied cultures of the immigrant students, the model of the *aulas* attempts to compensate and even erase those students' supposed deficits.

### **Conclusion**

The *aulas de enlace* in the Community of Madrid were originally designed and implemented to respond to the influx of immigrant students in the region's public schools. The stated goals of the policy primarily relied upon a notion of successful integration of those students into both mainstream educational structures and broader Spanish society. While the lack of oversight dedicated to the *aulas* makes any quantitative assessment of their success nearly impossible, broader social indicators, such as worsening unemployment numbers and strong critiques from academics and educators point to the failure of the *aulas* to stay true to their original goal of positive educational

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<sup>20</sup> In the original Spanish: "La educación compensatoria no es la solución, pues estos grupos no sólo están integrados por niños que no conocen el idioma, sino que están mezclados con otros con problemas muy diversos, por lo que a veces el nivel no es demasiado exigente y no responde a sus necesidades lingüísticas" (Aguirregomezcorta 2003).

outcomes and societal integration for immigrant students. Although perhaps not intended as such, the implementation of the *aulas de enlace* has been marked by a paradox of exclusion from the mainstream and unilateral assimilation into the dominant Spanish identity. Moreover, the enactment of the *aulas de enlace* cannot be separated from the tensions over the construction of national identity in the Community of Madrid and the very conceptualizations of Spanish citizenship – and the position of immigrants either as a part of or apart from those notions of identity. The means of accounting for immigrant students in public schools pursued by the Community of Madrid, however, contrast sharply to those pursued in Cataluña. Unlike Madrid, the language, history, and national identity in Cataluña are quite distinct from those of the Spanish state – all of which work to create a very strong notion of regional identity and commitment to Catalan nation-building. The salience of that Catalan national identity creates a high incentive for the integration of immigrant youth into Catalan schools and society, as the next chapter will argue.



**Chapter Three:**  
**Nation-Building through the**  
***Plan de Lengua y Cohesión Social in Cataluña***

**Introduction**

Cataluña has experienced a remarkable migratory phenomenon similar to Madrid's over the past two decades. As of 2008, approximately 15% of students in Cataluña's public education system were either immigrant students or children of immigrants (Gibson 250). In 2004, as a response to such high numbers of immigrant youth in the educational system, the Catalan regional government implemented the *Plan de Lengua y Cohesión Social* (Plan LICS). Madrid's response to the significant influx of immigrants into its educational system was the creation of a network of *aulas de enlace*, in which immigrant students with so-called curricular and/or linguistic deficiencies attended separate classrooms for up to one year before being incorporated into mainstream classes. In a similar sense, Cataluña's Plan LICS also provides for the creation of specialized classrooms, called *aulas de acogida* (insertion classrooms); these constitute temporary classrooms intended specifically for students who have immigrated to Cataluña within the previous two years and do not speak or understand a sufficient level of Catalan to be able to be placed in a mainstream classroom. After having been in the *aulas* for a certain amount of time (a time period which varies from student to student), they are then incorporated into mainstream classes. The *aulas* thus serve as mechanisms that facilitate students' access to the schools' ordinary curricula (Plan for Language and Social Cohesion; Annex 1, Insertion Class 8). In this sense, education is seen as a starting point for the integration of immigrants into larger Catalan society.

However, in sharp contrast to the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* policy enacted in Madrid, a second integral component of the Plan LICS are the *planes educativos de entorno* (local education plans), which are networks of support that work with a school's surrounding community in order to provide immigrant students and their families with a variety of social services, both within and outside of the school's walls. These *planes* are especially notable in that they extend the reach of the Plan beyond the educational sphere in order to engage a wide variety of social actors, and work with the *aulas de acogida* in order to facilitate the incorporation of immigrants into Catalan society (Besalú 46-47).

Perhaps most importantly, the Plan LICS in Cataluña has differentiated itself from its counterpart in the Community of Madrid by its relative success – success that is due both to its sound theoretical basis as well as its effective implementation. The success of the Plan LICS can be measured both in terms of equity, in that the program has resulted in relatively equitable outcomes between immigrant students and native-born students, as well as its promotion of social cohesion throughout Catalan society. Finally, perhaps the most notable aspect of the Plan LICS is the significance of Catalan national identity in the construction of the Plan; one of the foremost priorities of the policy is the consolidation of the Catalan language in schools as a cohesive element within Catalan society. Whereas in Madrid there exists relatively little political motivation for the enactment of a program that promotes a regional identity, the Plan LICS in Cataluña has been successful precisely because of a distinctly strong political motivation to consolidate the Catalan identity – a historically marginalized national identity within the Spanish state. This process of nation-building and consolidation of identity is accomplished through the education of immigrants, specifically through the strengthening of an

inclusive form of Catalan citizenship as well as the promotion of the Catalan language for all residents of the Catalan nation, both native-born and newcomer.

### **Providing Avenues for Success Through the Promotion of Equity**

While quantitative assessments of the outcomes (specifically measured by the educational achievement of immigrant students in Cataluña) of the Plan LICS are scarce, all available indicators point to a positive impact on the educational achievement of immigrant youth in Cataluña. This is especially true in terms of the relative abatement of the inequities in educational outcomes between immigrant and native-born students.<sup>1</sup> Several scholars and nongovernmental organizations have attempted to evaluate the educational achievement of immigrant students in Cataluña, especially post-implementation of the Plan LICS. Although the findings of the various studies differ somewhat, most reach a similar conclusion: the overarching scheme of the Plan LICS constitutes good policy, especially through increased levels of equity. That is, the policy minimizes differences in educational outcomes among various sectors of the Catalan population.

The region of Cataluña is one in which the levels of equity among students of a variety of backgrounds is relatively high; moreover, the *aulas de acogida* instituted by the Plan LICS play an important role in reducing inequities between native-born and newcomer students. Data from PISA (Program for International Student Assessment)

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<sup>1</sup> The inherent bias in assessing the outcomes of any educational program, however, makes it difficult to exactly determine the successes or failures of a particular program. Lorrie Shepard (2000), for example, cites the negative effects of testing, one of which is the fact that “under intense political pressure, test scores are likely to go up without a corresponding improvement in student learning” (Shepard 9).

collected in Catalunya in 2006 indicate that the average scores of foreign-born students were 71 points below native-born students in sciences, 66 points in math, and 72 points in reading comprehension (as cited in Vila i Moreno 40). That difference in educational attainment undoubtedly continues to be an enormous challenge. However, even a difference in test scores between native-born and immigrant students of that magnitude is considered to be a relatively equitable distribution between those two groups, especially because those differences are significantly less than in many other regions and nations. Ferrer and others, for example, argue that there is a relatively high level of equity in the Catalan educational system, which “would appear to indicate that schools play a significant part in reducing educational differences between students based on social background or cultural context” (Ferrer et al 560-561). In this sense, it becomes apparent that schools can and *do* play a role in reducing educational inequities – one of the primary goals of the Plan LICS.

Indeed, one of the most important successes of the Plan LICS (and especially the *aulas de acogida*) has been the reduction of unequal educational outcomes between native-born and newcomer Catalan students. In a 2006 study conducted by Josep M. Serra, during which time over 10,000 students were enrolled in *aulas de acogida* in Catalunya, the study concluded that the *aulas* improved immigrant students’ Catalan language skills while also facilitating their social integration in schools – thereby placing them on a more equal playing field as their peers. A total of 3,911 students, representing over 30 different languages, were evaluated based on their oral comprehension, oral expression, reading comprehension, and written expression in the Catalan language. The study found that a majority (67 percent) of students who had been in the *aulas* for

between one and two years had achieved “acceptable” levels of oral expression and comprehension; however, only 29 percent of students achieved similar levels in reading comprehension and written expression (Serra 169). The author concluded that the *aulas*, when properly utilized, are:

an excellent resource. They appear to be useful in accelerating conversational resources in the Catalan language and facilitating the active incorporation into the mainstream classroom. All of the data indicate that the primary place in which the students learn the Catalan language is the mainstream classroom. The *aula de acogida*, however, plays an important role both to ensure students’ rapid incorporation into that ordinary classroom and make possible the processes of integration and scholarly adaption. (Serra 170)<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the *aulas* are useful in that they increase students’ knowledge of Catalan, thus facilitating equitable educational achievements. While it will most likely take some time before the quantitative success of the *aulas de acogida* can be absolutely determined, the author of the study summarized his findings as follows: “it appears that the policy and the implementation of the *aulas de acogida* started by the Department of Education has positive effects both in relation to the process of learning the Catalan language as well as the key process of the facilitation of higher levels of integration and

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<sup>2</sup> In the original Spanish: “El aula de acogida bien utilizada se muestra como un recurso excelente. Parece ser útil para acelerar recursos conversacionales en lengua catalana y hacer posible la incorporación activa del alumnado de incorporación tardía en el aula ordinaria. Todos los datos informan que el lugar privilegiado donde el alumnado evaluado aprende lengua catalana es el aula ordinaria. El aula de acogida juega un papel muy importante tanto para asegurar su rápida incorporación al aula ordinaria, como para hacer posible el proceso de integración y adaptación escolar” (Serra 170).

school adaption” (Serra 171).<sup>3</sup> While the *aulas de acogida* appear to be an excellent resource for immigrant students, the above study also noted an important caveat – if a student spends over a certain amount of time in the *aula*, then that extra time will actually detract from their learning of the Catalan language. This is because once students have reached a basic level of Catalan language proficiency, it is more effective for them to be in mainstream classrooms with native Catalan speakers, during which time they will have more opportunities to practice the language in both academic and non-academic settings. If students spend too much time in the specialized *aula*, they will face additional difficulties in their eventual incorporation into mainstream classrooms (Serra 170).

Similarly, in what appears to be the only other in-depth study of the effects of the *aulas de acogida*, conducted in 2009, the authors (Vila, Canal, Mayans, Perera, Serra and Siqués) found that the *aulas* promoted relatively high levels of equity between immigrant and native-born students. These authors found that students in the *aulas* obtained acceptable levels of written and oral expression, while also observing a direct relationship between students’ knowledge of the Catalan language and their adaptation to the larger social environment of the school and community (as cited in Sansó Galiay 154).

Anecdotal evidence from those who teach in the *aulas* also points to a positive assessment; Rosa Líndez, who teaches an *aula de acogida*, explains that the plan “functions well because, to begin with, it attaches a name and a location to a necessary

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<sup>3</sup> In the original Spanish: “... parece que la política de aulas de acogida puesta en marcha por el Departamento de Educación, así como su aplicación, tiene efectos positivos tanto en relación a posibilitar el proceso de aprendizaje de la lengua catalana como en relación a otro aspecto que se manifiesta clave en dicho proceso como es el de facilitar mayores niveles de integración y adaptación escolar” (Serra 171).

measure that integrates and assesses the students who arrive here” (M.P. 2004).<sup>4</sup> All available indicators thus point to the *aulas* as an effective resource to increase both the Catalan language skills and social integration of newcomer students – thus helping to minimize the all-too-pervasive educational inequities between immigrant students and their native-born peers.

Another measure that has contributed to the abatement of inequities in the Catalan educational system is the significant amount of oversight that the Generalitat of Catalunya has dedicated to the Plan LICS, especially to the students placed in the *aulas de acogida*. This oversight not only demonstrates substantial dedication to the education of immigrant students, but also increases equity by systematically monitoring students’ progress and ensuring that students are placed in the appropriate classrooms. These evaluations are primarily carried out through Intensive Individual Plans (*Planes Intensivos Individuales*, or PIIs), which are assigned to each enrolled student in the *aulas de acogida*, and are reviewed and updated every three months, based on the students’ progress in the *aulas*. The PIIs also establish learning objectives for each student, and evaluate each student’s learning based upon those initial objectives, primarily examining their language acquisition, their integration into the school, and their progress in various subjects. These documents record every step of students’ transitions to Catalan schools, starting from the first day in the *aula de acogida* until their final transition to a mainstream classroom (Plan for Language and Social Cohesion; Annex 1, Insertion Class 13-14). The fact that immigrant students in the *aulas de acogida* are consistently evaluated based on clearly

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<sup>4</sup> In the original Spanish: “La iniciativa funciona bien porque, para empezar, significa poner un nombre y una ubicación a una medida necesaria para integrar y nivelar a los alumnos que llegan” (M.P. 2004).

established objectives implies that the Plan LICS is not simply a superficial nod to the educational of immigrant students, but rather constitutes a deeper and more prolonged commitment to the equity of the educational system. While the existence of the *aulas de acogida* creates the risk of the segregation and exclusion of immigrant students from mainstream classrooms (and thus Catalan society more generally), the fact that consistent evaluations of students' progress are undertaken demonstrates that both teachers and administrators of the program are dedicated to evaluating their students' knowledge and thereby ensuring their success.

### **Providing Avenues for Success Through the Consolidation of Social Cohesion**

Not only has the Plan LICS played an important role in reducing immigration-related inequities in Catalunya, but it has also proven to be successful by consolidating social cohesion within Catalan society – especially through the *planes educativos de entorno*. These *planes* embody a radical paradigm shift in the education of immigrant youth, in which the social conditions and relationships that govern students' lives are given equal weight to the educational processes that take place within schools. Furthermore, the Plan is unique in that it does not only apply to immigrant students, or only to schools with significant populations of immigrant students; rather, it ensures the enactment of programs that involve all students, regardless of place of birth. This stipulation thereby allows the Plan to become an integral element of curricula throughout Catalan schools and society. By developing the fundamental link between schools and their communities, the Plan effectively promotes social cohesion and integration throughout Catalan society for all residents, native-born and newcomer alike.



Quantitative evaluations of the *planes educativos de entorno* have not been conducted due to the nature of the policy, which impedes any sort of rigorous assessment; however, the theoretical basis of the *planes* implicates increased social cohesion, both in the classroom and in broader Catalan society. According to Josep Vallcorba, the principal coordinator of the *planes*, they function as a “network of support throughout the community, led by the municipality and involving all social, cultural, and recreational resources in that region” (as quoted in Quintana i Oliver 121).<sup>5</sup> That network of support is fundamental for success in the classroom as well as for greater social cohesion. The Plan LICS specifically enacts measures that promote this social cohesion, such as the coordination of extracurricular activities, academic support, various youth initiatives, committees to assist families, and the oversight of festivals and other cultural performances (Quintana i Olivier 126). Although educational results cannot necessarily be traced automatically to a certain disfavored environment, socioeconomic or otherwise, as Álvaro Marchesi explains in “El informe PISA y la política educativa en España” (“The PISA Report and Educational Policy in Spain”), “family conditions are one of the most powerful factors influencing the performance of students and in the operations of educational centers” (Marchesi 343).<sup>6</sup> The fact that the *planes educativos* represent an attempt to improve the conditions for which schools alone cannot account is thus likely to

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<sup>5</sup> In the original Spanish: “Los planes educativos de entorno se deben entender como una red de apoyo a la comunidad educativa con visión y liderazgo municipal e implicación de todas las entidades y recursos de ámbito social, cultural o deportivo” (Quintana i Oliver 121).

<sup>6</sup> In the original Spanish: “... las condiciones de la familia son uno de los factores más poderosos que influyen en el rendimiento de los alumnos y en el funcionamiento de los centros docentes” (Marchesi 343).

result in immigrant students' improved academic performance, thereby creating a mutually reinforcing cycle of not only academic success, but also social cohesion and integration within Catalan society. As Quintana i Oliver argues, "the school cannot do everything, and neither can the educational system. Education is the duty of the school, but, above all, the entirety of society with the assistance of the families" (Quintana i Oliver 122).<sup>7</sup> The *planes* are a fundamental measure for the promotion of social cohesion of immigrants in both the Catalan educational system and Catalan society as a whole.

Through the local education plans, the Plan LICS specifically develops the fundamental link between schools and their communities, further promoting social cohesion. The link between the social processes of exclusion and inclusion in communities and similar processes in schools has been proven to be a strong one. In his article "Communities and Schools," Mark Warren argues that attempts at educational reforms for social justice through collaboration with larger-scale community development projects can be beneficial for a number of reasons, especially in those communities with limited resources. These reasons include the fostering of parental and community participation in school activities, the improvement of the social context in which education takes place so that students are better equipped to learn during the school day, and the creation of a political constituency for public education that would support the channeling of greater resources to schools (Warren 135-136). In an editorial in the newspaper *El País*, the Director of Basic Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Jaume Graells, voiced a similar sentiment, explaining that the Plan:

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<sup>7</sup> In the original Spanish: "la escuela no puede con todo, que con el sistema escolar no basta. La educación es tarea de la escuela pero, sobre todo, del conjunto de la sociedad con la complicidad de las familias" (Quintana i Oliver 122).

... works to improve academic and social integration, to coordinate professional educational services and social care services, to ensure that all families receive specialized professional care, that they have the information and training sufficient to decide for themselves, and to exercise that right to choose freely... [The Plan works to] initiate processes of becoming a part of a new culture through educational workshops and cultural and sporting events, thus projecting a gradual process of adaption to facilitate the effective integration of students into their educational environment... This is an initiative for the municipalities so that they can pursue nothing less than a progressive ideal: equality.<sup>8</sup>

(Graells 2008)

Indeed, scholars and other academics within Cataluña have also observed that the support of a strong network of social actors and processes is integral to the successful integration of immigrants within Catalan society. In asserting the need for the *planes educativos de entorno* in *El País*, Joan Subirats writes that those involved in such plans “work closely with other members of the community and educational network to mediate conflicts, find

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<sup>8</sup> In the original Spanish: “Se trata, pues, de mejorar el progreso de integración escolar y social, de coordinar el trabajo de los profesionales de los servicios educativos y socio-sanitarios, garantizar que todas las familias reciban una atención profesional especializada, que tengan la información y la formación suficiente para disponer de criterio propio, más allá de estereotipos culturales, y poder ejercer su derecho a elegir con total libertad... De iniciar procesos de familiarización con nuestra realidad cultural mediante talleres educativos, culturales y deportivos. De proyectar, por tanto, un proceso gradual de adaptación para facilitar la integración efectiva del alumno en su entorno educativo... Nada menos que una iniciativa para municipios con una alta movilidad de la matrícula durante el curso que persigue una idea progresista: la equidad” (Graells 2008).

solutions, and usher processes... The school and the social environment have to share solutions – just as they also share problems” (Subirats 2007).<sup>9</sup> Albert Quintana i Oliver, meanwhile, points out that this network of support is integral to the academic and social success of immigrant youth due to the *planes*’ promotion of educational, academic, job-related, and social success (Quintana i Oliver 123). The encouragement of immigrant students’ success in Catalunya allow both the students and their families to become integral to their communities, thus facilitating their societal integration and bolstering broader social cohesion.

Moreover, the Plan LICS does more than just account for the immigrant students, but rather considers and involves all students in its enactment of comprehensive programs in Catalunya. As Xavier Besalú points out, “the Plan LICS isn’t only directed at immigrant students or those pertaining to ethnic and cultural minorities, but rather at all students in the region, independent of their condition, situation, or origin” (Besalú 46). Joaquim Arnau echoes this sentiment, writing that the policy “implicates a global model – a project of multilingual and multicultural education that considers all students, not only immigrant students” (Arnau 281).<sup>10</sup> This fundamental aspect of the Plan LICS, which is especially relevant to the *planes educativos de entorno*, works to involve families, teachers of all subjects (not solely the teachers in the *aulas de acogida*), and other local

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<sup>9</sup> In the original Spanish: “Esas personas trabajan codo a codo con el resto de integrantes de la red comunitaria y educativa para mediar en conflictos, buscar soluciones, acompañar procesos... La escuela y el entorno social tienen que compartir soluciones como de hecho comparten problemas” (Subirats 2007).

<sup>10</sup> In the original Spanish: “El nuevo plan implica un modelo global proponiendo un proyecto de educación plurilingüe y pluricultural que considera a todo el alumnado y no sólo al alumnado inmigrante” (Arnau 281).

social actors. The Plan explicitly recognizes that the learning of the language(s) in a given society are processes that take place throughout students' academic lives (Pujolar 233-234). These processes are not limited to the physical space of a school or solely to newcomer students; rather, they involve the entirety of society; as such, the Plan works to solidify the social cohesion of Catalan residents of all backgrounds.

### **The Plan LICS: Integral to Catalan Nation-Building and Identity**

The relative success of the *Plan de lengua y cohesión social* cannot be separated from the nation-building processes within Cataluña and the promotion of the Catalan identity. The position of Cataluña as a distinct nation within the Spanish state has created a particular incentive to maintain and build upon both the Catalan identity and language. The Plan LICS implements various measures to facilitate the integration of immigrants into Catalan society, which increase immigrant students' access to the Catalan language, as well as opportunities for educational success. The increased prominence of Catalan among immigrants and the inclusive conceptualizations of Catalan citizenship promoted by the Plan are significant in that they allow Cataluña to consolidate its own identity and language while also fostering social cohesion and integration within the Catalan nation.

The apparent commitment to the integration of immigrants in Cataluña is not new, nor simply the result of one specific policy, such as the Plan LICS. As Kitty Calavita points out in her book *Immigrants in the Margins*, Cataluña was the first region in Spain to create the position of Secretary of Immigration (in the year 2000), and was also the first region to draft a long-term plan for the integration of immigrants; as such, Calavita writes that Cataluña is often described as a “‘pioneer’ of integration... Some have

attributed its proactive approach to nationalist ‘nation-building,’ and there is some evidence that nationalism and pride in the Catalan language and culture have contributed to their integration politics...” (Calavita 95). In 1996, the Generalitat of Catalunya issued its ‘*Eix transversal sobre educació intercultural*’ (‘Central Theme for Intercultural Education’), in which it affirmed the role of education within Catalan society as necessary for developing in all students a set of attitudes respecting both their own culture as well as school- and society-wide cultural diversity. As Bochaca and Calvet summarize, the document “should not be considered a superficial educational practice, at the margin of the ordinary curriculum, nor directed only at cultural minorities. Intercultural education is designed for the entire student body to achieve ‘cultural competence’ and for the entirety of the school and classroom” (Bochaca and Calvet 44).<sup>11</sup> And in the year 2000, the Catalan Department of Education enacted a policy aimed at giving necessary information related to education and other social services to newcomer families with school-age children, translation services, and grants to buy school supplies and books for those who needed them (Bochaca and Calvet 48-49). All of the aforementioned actions took place prior to the implementation of the *Plan de lengua y cohesión social*, thus demonstrating that a commitment to newcomer immigrants has been a priority of the Catalan government for some years now, both within and outside of the educational system. It is possible that this attention to the successful incorporation of immigrants could derive from the fact that Catalunya has received more internal migration

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<sup>11</sup> In the original Spanish: “... considera que no ha de ser una práctica educativa superficial, al margen del curriculum ordinario, ni dirigido sólo a los alumnos minoritarios culturalmente diferentes. La educación intercultural está pensada para todo el alumnado para lograr la citada ‘competencia cultural’ y para todo centro y aula” (Bochaca and Calvet 44).

than have other regions in Spain, especially over the past half-century, thereby giving the region a more extensive know-how of best practices for the integration of migrants.

Nevertheless, it undoubtedly points to a commitment to both educational and societal integration of those migrants – one that has been a priority for a number of years.

The 2004 Plan LICS solidifies that proactive approach and commitment to nation-building through prioritizing the social cohesion of all citizens living in Cataluña. The ever-present notion of social cohesion is, as Carlota Solé Puig and others explain, “attached to ideas of stability and overcoming inequalities. The responsibility of the Catalan government consists in channeling these challenges to build a stable society” (Solé Puig et al 22).<sup>12</sup> Specifically through the *planes educativos de entorno*, immigrant students and their families are able to access vital resources, especially important social services, within their communities. At least theoretically, access to such resources allows for the creation of the stable and egalitarian society that the Plan proposes.

Social cohesion, as laid out in the Plan LICS, also takes the form of linguistic policies that prioritize the use and maintenance of the Catalan language, both in everyday use and in the education and incorporation of immigrant students into society. Moreover, these linguistic policies are fundamental to the Plan’s very conceptualization of social cohesion within the Catalan nation. Through the teaching of the Catalan language in the *aulas de acogida*, students learn Catalan – defined by the Plan as the language of equality and of opportunity – thereby consolidating the Catalan language while increasing social cohesion within Catalan society. The Plan’s reformulation of the usefulness and

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<sup>12</sup> In the original Spanish: “... el significado vinculado a las ideas de estabilidad y superación de las desigualdades. La responsabilidad del gobierno catalán consiste en canalizar estos retos para construir una sociedad sin fracturas” (Solé Puig et al 22).

importance of Catalan thus views it as a unifying tool that has the potential to facilitate social cohesion in a diverse and multilingual region; subsequently, the Generalitat of Catalunya has allocated additional resources to ensure access to the Catalan language for all, and especially for immigrants. Furthermore, the Plan states that it “guarantee[s] equity and creat[es] the appropriate conditions to facilitate equality of opportunity and possibilities, through access to quality education” (Plan for Language and Social Cohesion; Annex 1, Insertion Class 4). According to this construction, knowledge of the Catalan language – the language most emphasized in the *aulas de acogida* – is implicitly defined as the means to which students can access increased opportunities in Catalunya. That access thus allows for all of Catalan society to build upon a more equitable and just educational system. Moreover, immigrant students’ knowledge of Catalan is viewed as a vehicle by which those students are able to become a part of, first and foremost, a mainstream classroom. The theory then goes that this transition allows the students access to a larger and more inclusive conceptualization of the Catalan nation and identity – one that is not solely limited to native-born Catalan citizens.

Furthermore, the significance of the Catalan language in the *Plan de lengua y cohesión social* is not limited to its usefulness as a tool for greater social cohesion and integration of new immigrants, but rather the very particularity of the language. In other words, one of the primary reasons for the comprehensive (and seemingly effective) response to immigrants in the Catalan educational system, especially in the *aulas de acogida*, has resulted from the particular circumstances surrounding the relationship of the Catalan language to the Spanish state. In describing Catalunya and the autonomous



community of Galicia (another region in which a language other than Spanish is widely spoken), F. Javier García Castaño writes that the two regions:

are the Communities that, we could say, are most interested in the welcoming of immigrants, which can be traced to their linguistic peculiarities. Both possess very complete and specific welcome plans, in which they offer basic orientations for the elaboration of the welcome plan; guiding protocols about steps for concrete actions in schools... contact with the families, etc. In both regions, the necessity to take individualized actions for each student and not forget the importance of communication with the families are emphasized. (García Castaño et al 336)<sup>13</sup>

The Plan LICS is thus not only an effective policy tool for the education of Cataluña's immigrant youth population, but is also in accordance with the consolidation of the Catalan language. According to Melinda Dooly and Virginia Unamuno, authors of "Multiple languages in one society: categorisations of language and social cohesion in policy and practice," the Catalan language serves as "a guarantee of social inclusion for the new citizens; thus, it is categorised as a means of egalitarian social participation" (Dooly and Unamuno 222). The Plan LICS thus guarantees, at the very least, equality of

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<sup>13</sup> In the original Spanish: "Cataluña y Galicia son las Comunidades que, podríamos decir, más se interesan por la acogida y ello puede deberse a sus peculiaridades lingüísticas. Ambas poseen planes específicos de acogida muy completos, en los que se ofrecen las orientaciones básicas para la elaboración del plan de acogida; protocolos orientadores sobre la concreción de actuaciones y acciones en los centros... los contactos con las familias, etc. Se hace hincapié, en ambas Comunidades, en la necesidad de realizar actuaciones individualizadas para cada alumno y no olvidar la importancia de la comunicación con las familias" (García Castaño et al 336).

opportunity for both native-born Catalans and those who have migrated to the region, provided that they know Catalan.

Social cohesion through the Plan LICS is inseparable from the construction of a shared Catalan identity. Public discourse surrounding immigration generally, and the *Plan de lengua y cohesión social* specifically, demonstrates this link: when Catalan society promotes its common cultural elements, it thereby solidifies an inclusive notion of the Catalan identity. This process allows for expanded opportunities for immigrants. Shortly after the implementation of the Plan LICS, Josep Bargelló Valls, a councilman for the Generalitat of Catalunya, wrote an editorial for the newspaper *El País*, in which he argued that “Catalan national construction and social cohesion are two sides of the same inescapable task” (Bargelló Valls 2004).<sup>14</sup> A comprehensive and inclusive educational model, such as the Plan LICS, does just that: it works toward accomplishing social cohesion through the promotion of the Catalan language, while solidifying processes of Catalan nation-building at the same time.

### **Caveats and Challenges**

Despite the apparent successes of the *Plan de lengua y cohesión social*, both in terms of the minimization of inequities and the promotion of social cohesion, the model behind the Plan is not without certain internal contradictions, and the policy is not without future challenges. One significant paradox of the policy is the risk of exclusion and social marginalization of immigrant students who have not yet learned Catalan. The

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<sup>14</sup> In the original Spanish: “Porque construcción nacional catalana y cohesión social son para nosotros dos caras de una misma e ineludible tarea” (Bargelló Valls 2004).

Plan LICS explicitly defines knowledge of the Catalan language as the tool that allows for integration, social cohesion, and even equity; this discourse implicitly places the burden of learning Catalan on any students who do not speak the language, thus creating further risks of social exclusion. Carlota Solé and Sonia Parella argue that Catalan policymakers must consider the tensions between the defense of Catalan and equal opportunities for all, asserting that “an egalitarian discourse can become a tool for segregation if unequal starting conditions of the most marginalized social sectors are not taken into account” (Solé and Parella 99).<sup>15</sup> Because many immigrant students indeed come from some of the most economically and marginalized sectors, there undoubtedly exist very real obstacles that stand between those students and a complete grasp of the Catalan language – and the accompanying social inclusion and equity.

The combination of good theory and good practice has also been a significant challenge faced by teachers and administrators of the *aulas*, especially regarding the prioritization of the Catalan language over the native languages of immigrant students. The Plan specifically states that the diversity of languages in schools enriches communities, and that the teaching of these languages “cannot simply be an ‘addition’ to the instructional program, but should rather be understood as a time in which values and principles are shared...” (Anexo 2: Orientaciones para las líneas de intervención y sus actuaciones 12-13).<sup>16</sup> However, in an ethnographic study conducted by Dooly and

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<sup>15</sup> In the original Spanish: “Un discurso igualitario puede resultar altamente segregador si no se toman en cuenta las desiguales condiciones de partida de los sectores sociales más deprimidos” (Solé and Parella 99).

<sup>16</sup> In the original Spanish: “La educación intercultural derivada de las clases de lengua de la nueva ciudadanía en horario extraescolar no puede ser un simple “añadido” en el programa de instrucción, sino que ha de entenderse como un espacio que comparte

Unamuno of *aulas de acogida* in Barcelona, the authors found that the native languages of the immigrant students were often relegated to extracurricular activities, separate from the official school curriculum. They argue that the Plan LICS theoretically recognizes “the social importance of ‘knowledge of languages’ while clearly attributing values to certain languages and practices over others” (Dooly and Unamuno 224). One of the stated objectives of the Plan LICS was intercultural education; however, this cannot be achieved unless immigrant students’ access to their native languages is prioritized both in practice and in theory.

There appears to be a significant amount of political will in Cataluña that supports the implementation of the Plan LICS, especially due to its promotion of the Catalan national identity; however, the financial resources necessary for the implementation and maintenance of the program are significantly more challenging. Solé and Parella, for example, recognize the need for the devotion of resources to this project; they write that it “requires an educational system equipped with the tools and resources to offset the starting economic and social disadvantages to affect equality of opportunity and a quality education for all. The Department of Education has the power to be able to take on this challenge” (Solé and Parella 99).<sup>17</sup> The Catalan educational system appears to be equipped with the policy necessary to at least begin to offset those structural impediments to educational success, but requires sufficient tools and resources to be able to execute

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valores y principios con el resto del tiempo educativo escolar” (12-13).

<sup>17</sup> In the original Spanish: “requiere de un sistema educativo dotado de instrumentos y recursos para compensar los déficits económicos y sociales de partida, que hagan efectiva la igualdad de oportunidades y una educación de calidad para todos. El Departament d’Educació cuenta con competencias educativas para poder asumir este reto” (Solé and Parella 99).

that project. In an editorial for the newspaper *El País* about the importance of the *planes educativos de entorno*, Joan Subirats writes that although “strengthening the powers and responsibilities of the municipalities regarding educational issues may not be strategic politically, it will undoubtedly end up being much more effective” (Subirats 2007).<sup>18</sup> This is especially true of the *planes educativos de entorno*; during an economic crisis, such as the one that has consumed Spain over the past several years, the dedication of funds to a policy that does not appear to have clear and tangible benefits is, as Subirats rightly points out, perhaps not the most electorally smart move, and is therefore in danger of severe budget cuts.

A final challenge that the Catalan educational system must face in the coming years is the fact that students’ overall levels of educational achievement are relatively low, despite high levels of equity among different student populations. As Joaquim Prats points out, “we can say that the Catalan education has reached a minimum level for the entirety of the population, but that it is still far from reaching an optimal level. Education in Catalunya is as effective as the average of OECD countries, and the degree of fairness and the equalizing effect of the system is quite high. It is also true that that the average levels are in the lower range of European countries...” (Prats 17).<sup>19</sup> It appears that,

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<sup>18</sup> In the original Spanish: “Perseverar en la línea de reforzar las competencias y responsabilidades de los municipios en las cuestiones educativas, puede ser menos impactante electoralmente, pero sin duda acabará siendo mucho más efectivo” (Subirats 2007).

<sup>19</sup> In the original Spanish: “...podemos afirmar que en la educación catalana se ha alcanzado una escuela de mínimos para el conjunto de la población, y que todavía está lejos de alcanzar una escuela de óptimos. La educación en Catalunya es tan eficaz como la media de los países pertenecientes a la OCDE, y el grado de equidad y efecto igualador del sistema es bastante alto. Es cierto que los niveles medios están en la franja baja de los países europeos...” (Prats 17).

although the Catalan educational system has been able to increase educational equity among various groups, the overall outcomes of that system in comparison to other regions in Spain, as well as other European countries, are relatively low. Cataluña has undoubtedly taken important steps toward the abatement of the educational achievement gap, especially between native-born and immigrant students. However, the improvement of the region's overall educational outcomes has been unsuccessful so far.

### **Conclusion**

Cataluña's *Plan de lengua de cohesión social*, which encompasses both the *aulas de acogida* and the *planes educativos de entorno*, entails a paradigm shift for a number of reasons. First, all available indicators point to positive outcomes in student achievement, especially in the reduction of inequities between immigrant students and their native-born peers. Second, it explicitly recognizes that the social processes that take place outside of the educational arena play an important role in the success, academic or otherwise, of immigrant students, and its measures to counteract exclusionary social processes demonstrate this commitment. Third, it promotes the Catalan language as a vehicle for social inclusion and cohesion within society, allowing immigrant students access to an inclusive notion of Catalan citizenship. However, the policymakers behind the Plan LICCS still face several challenges, especially those regarding the necessary resources to fund the policy, the risk of social exclusion for students who do not speak Catalan, and the maintenance of students' native languages while continuing to promote Catalan language learning. In the coming years, it remains to be seen if policymakers are able to both fund

and deploy the Plan in such a way that it remains true to its original principles of promoting equality, inclusion, and social cohesion for all.

## Conclusion

Over the past two decades, Spain has witnessed more immigration than during any previous period in its modern history. This influx of immigrants has had important political, economic, and social ramifications throughout Spanish society, but the sector that has been most affected by these changes has arguably been the state's educational system. A country's educational system is often viewed as a first responder to large-scale social changes, such as sudden and massive immigration. As Bochaca and Calvet argue in *El Espejismo Cultural*, "in a changing society, the school becomes the institution charged with solving all or many of the new situations that appear, attributed to its capacity to instruct and socialize new generations according to this changing reality. Education in general and schools in particular become the receptacles into which the insolvable problems are deposited" (Bochaca and Calvet 8).<sup>1</sup> Education is a fundamental aspect of the incorporation of immigrants into a given society; the responses of the educational system to newcomers can have significant effects on not only their future educational success, but also their future life prospects. For these reasons, an educational system that fulfills certain tenets of social justice – most notably, the equitable distribution of costs and benefits in fulfillment of the common good – is fundamental.

The very design of the Spanish nation-state is an oft-overlooked component of the study of the educational responses to immigration in that country; however, that design

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<sup>1</sup> In the original Spanish: "En una sociedad de cambio y en cambio, la escuela se convierte en la institución que debe resolver todas o muchas de las situaciones que van apareciendo pues se le atribuye a la capacidad de instruir y socializar a las nuevas generaciones para esta realidad cambiante. La educación en general y las escuelas en particular se convierten en los receptáculos en que se deposita, sin ceremonias, lo que la sociedad no consigue resolver y los problemas insolubles" (Bochaca and Calvet 8).



cannot be discounted for a thorough understanding of such responses. Indeed, the distinct characteristics of the various nations and regions within Spain determine their responses to immigration, shape their educational policies, and affect their political will (or lack thereof) to effectively respond to and integrate newcomer citizens. The decentralized Spanish state gives each autonomous community the ability and the means to shape its own educational policies in response to immigration as it sees fit.

In some regions, such as the Community of Madrid, the history, language, and culture of the autonomous community are difficult to separate from the larger Spanish state; as such, the regional identity of that autonomy has relatively little importance for the citizens of that region. The minimal salience of regional identity gives little incentive to policymakers and other political and social actors to provide avenues for educational success and societal integration to immigrants in order to promote that identity – reflected by the implementation of the *Escuelas de Bienvenida* policy, the primary component of which are the *aulas de enlace*. Enacted in 2003, the policy provides specialized classrooms for newcomer immigrant students who do not speak Spanish and/or have instructional delays. While the goal of the program was admirable in aiming to provide specialized resources for immigrant students and thereby facilitating their integration, the implementation of the program has been immensely problematic. By excluding immigrant students from mainstream education, tracking those students to create an educational second class, and maximizing the benefit to native-born students (rather than immigrants), the policy has failed to fulfill its original goals. This problematic implementation, and the lack of oversight that has accompanied it, reflects the tensions over the discourses surrounding national and regional identity in the Community of

Madrid – oscillating between exclusion from and direct assimilation into the mainstream, without providing any clear path toward effective societal integration and success.

However, in other Spanish regions – most notably in Cataluña – the history, language, and culture of the autonomous community are quite distinct from that of the larger Spanish state. As such, there is a strong political motivation and commitment to the promotion of that identity. Moreover, the education of immigrants has been framed so as to promote that identity, and has specifically placed increased prominence on the historically marginalized Catalan language and a clear value on social cohesion for all Catalan residents. This conceptualization is apparent in both the theory and implementation of the *Plan de lengua y cohesión social*, adopted by the Generalitat in 2004. The Plan LICS, as it is known, is a set of measures that work to integrate immigrants into broader Catalan society; the two primary components of the Plan are *aulas de acogida*, or temporary classrooms intended for immigrant students who do not speak Catalan, and *planes educativos de entorno*, which establish the fundamental link between schools and their communities through the provision of social services to immigrant families and engagement of a wide variety of social actors. The Plan LICS has been successful in two significant ways: it has abated inequities between native-born and newcomer students, and has increased social cohesion throughout Catalan society. Furthermore, one of the primary reasons that the Plan has been successful has been the significant amount of dedication to the implementation of the policy. Because the Plan so explicitly promotes the Catalan language and identity, many Catalan policymakers have demonstrated significant motivation to support it. Joan Pujolar argues that the Plan LICS:

... clearly displays progressiveness and commitment to ‘civic’ conceptions of identity. It successfully integrates nationalist agendas and left-wing principles in relation to language... However, it remains to be seen whether the new ‘social’ or ‘welfare’ agenda attached to Catalan is actually deployed in ways that are actually conducive to equal opportunities socially and economically, and it remains to be seen the extent to which the unplanned practices of social classification, integration or exclusion on the ground help or hamper the social cohesion desired. (Pujolar 241)

Indeed, as Pujolar points out, the Plan is far from perfect. The policy’s formulation of Catalan as the language of inclusion and the gateway to equality creates a very real risk of the social exclusion of immigrant students, especially for those who have not yet learned Catalan. Finally, given the myriad social processes that take place throughout a student’s day-to-day life – during which the risks of social exclusion are compounded even further – the more permanent effects of the policy on immigrant students’ actual societal integration remain to be seen.

### **Possibilities for Further Investigation**

This thesis has argued that certain outcomes, especially the integration of immigrants into the host society, are beneficial for all involved. By taking such outcomes for granted, it has not critically examined the processes behind these outcomes and their significance, especially regarding the identities of the immigrant populations in Spain.

The very model of multiculturalism and multicultural education, specifically related to immigrants, has been criticized by many postmodern scholars, who argue that this model is based upon an overly simplistic notion of equality that emphasizes procedural, rather than substantive, equality. As Ziauddin Sardar argues, this model assumes “that there is only one and the same way of being human” (as quoted in Xuereb 38). Applied to Cataluña’s Plan LICS, this critique questions the Plan’s formulation of knowledge of Catalan as the basis for equal rights in that society: if immigrants do not immediately become fluent in the language that is so key to integration, then there still exists a serious risk of social exclusion. This perspective also questions the process by which Cataluña pursues nation-building, seeing a tendency to assimilate or even homogenize the diversity of immigrants in that process. Moreover, integration does not always occur on an upwardly progressive trajectory – the very notion of a linear model of immigrant integration elides a structural analysis that has the capacity to account for the daily struggles of immigrants in a new society.

In a similar fashion, this thesis has placed significant responsibility upon the educational system for curing a number of social ills, including chronically high unemployment rates of immigrants and their systematic societal exclusion. Schools, however, are but one facet of society; as such, the educational system simply does not have the capacity to absolutely determine the success or failure of a student, immigrant or otherwise. García Castaño points out that “... the correlation between success (understood as employability and citizenship) and the family network of each student is absolute, while the influence of the school on their future life is minimal. It is in this variable in which we find a great deal of explanation, because all studies reference the

necessary relationships between the school and the family and the influence of these in the educational processes” (García Castaño 43).<sup>2</sup> In this sense, policies such as the *planes educativos de entorno* in Cataluña take on even greater importance for establishing the connection between educational inclusion and broader societal inclusion.

Spain notably lacks any comprehensive evaluative systems that oversee educational equity, especially between immigrants and native-born students. This is primarily due to the decentralized nature of the Spanish state, in which autonomous communities have competency over their individual educational systems. Jorge Calero Martínez, for example, observes that “the fact that [competencies] are greatly territorially decentralized makes an integrated evaluation difficult. The relative newness of the majority of these programs along with the limited reach of the policy evaluation processes in Spain are factors that contribute to this situation” (Calero Martínez 68).<sup>3</sup> The lack of program oversight in Spain demonstrates a serious need for more longitudinal studies about the effectiveness of various Spanish policies for immigrant education – it is difficult to theorize a way forward without knowing the success (or lack thereof) of past policies.

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<sup>2</sup> In the original Spanish: “... la correlación entre éxito (entendido como inserción laboral y en la ciudadanía) y entramado familiar de cada sujeto es absoluta, mientras que la influencia del centro educativo en la vida futura es mínima. Es en esta variable en la que encontramos un gran acuerdo explicativo, pues todos los estudios encontrados hacen referencia a las necesarias relaciones entre la escuela y la familia y la influencia de estas en los procesos educativos” (García Castaño 43).

<sup>3</sup> In the original Spanish: “El hecho de que éstos estén en buena medida descentralizados territorialmente dificulta una evaluación integrada. La relativa novedad de la mayoría de estos programas junto con el limitado recorrido de los procesos de evaluación de políticas deductivos en España, son factores que coadyuvan a esta situación” (Calero Martínez 68).

Finally, the importance of the enactment of effective educational measures for immigrant students cannot be underemphasized. While it is true that schools cannot do everything, they nevertheless form the basis for the social inclusion of immigrant youth. However, there lacks an incentive to fund certain measures, especially in the educational sector, that do not appear to have immediate and tangible benefits. Spain's recent and ongoing economic crisis, for example, highlights this lack of foresight – given certain economic burdens, many national policymakers have chosen to cut funding for education, among other social programs. In response to the proposed funding cuts to education, Francisco Imbernón writes in an August 2011 editorial in *El País* that such cuts will have disastrous long-term consequences for the country: “reducing educational resources is like collective suicide. When a country reduces their investment in education, economic and social poverty increase... And ultimately, we will all pay for this” (Imbernón 2011).<sup>4</sup> By failing to dedicate financial and other resources to effective educational measures for immigrant students, policymakers are setting those students up for educational failure and social marginalization. Despite the seemingly dire economic straits of Spain, the funding of educational programs is integral to the country's future success.

Immigration is a term used to describe the movement of persons across national borders – movement which may occur for a variety of reasons, including pursuit of economic opportunity, political or religious persecution in the home country, familiar reunification, and many more. The national borders across which this phenomenon takes place are often historically and/or artificially created; however, that fact does not mean

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<sup>4</sup> In the original Spanish: “...reducir recursos educativos es como un suicidio colectivo. Cuando un país reduce la inversión en educación, aumenta la pobreza económica y social... Y eso a la larga lo pagaremos todos” (Imbernón 2011).

they are not important or do not have meaning. Rather, this thesis has argued that the nation-building processes that have created these very borders play a fundamental role in the lives of persons who move across them. The history, language, and construction of national identity in a given setting unquestionably affect the future life prospects of immigrants. In constructing educational policies so as to meet the needs of immigrant students while fulfilling the basic tenets of social justice, questions of cultural identity and nation-building processes should not be taken for granted, but rather seen as fundamental concerns that inform such educational policies.

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