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Images of the Other in Childhood: Researching the Limits of Cultural Diversity in Education from the Standpoint of New Anthropological Methodologies.

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the justification, methodology, main results and pedagogical implications of a study on how children represent others, carried out with primary school children in the Madrid Autonomous Community. Based on a methodological design suggested by the new ways Cultural studies and Visual anthropology provide for approaching reality, we have tried to answer the question, "What do these children see in the images of those who are culturally different?" One of the results of the study indicates how cultural differences such as customs and forms of dress outweigh physical differences such as skin color in the representations the children made of others. Most of all, the results reveal the great richness of detail the children saw hidden behind the images of others. We should take steps so that the current education system's efforts to promote tolerance and recognition do not drown that rich and varied detail in conceptions of cultural diversity that are too narrow and unyielding. Now more than ever, cultures ought not be seen as closed units that build walls and unsavable limits between themselves, but as sets of interacting trends. Educating in a multicultural environment thus means teaching to see the relativity and artificiality of cultural borders, helping to find the "you" living in the other, the particular biography superseding all tags and labels.

RESUMEN

Las imágenes del otro en la infancia. Investigando los límites de la diversidad cultural en educación a partir de las nuevas metodologías antropológicas. Este trabajo expone la justificación, metodología, principales resultados e implicaciones pedagógicas de una investigación sobre la representación del otro en la infancia, llevada a cabo con niños de educación primaria de la Comunidad de Madrid. A partir de un diseño metodológico sugerido por los nuevos modos de aproximación a la realidad que han abierto los Estudios Culturales y la Antropología Visual, hemos intentado responder a la pregunta ¿qué ven estos niños en las imágenes de otros culturalmente distintos? Los resultados de la investigación apuntan, entre otros

aspectos, a cómo en la representación que los niños se forman del otro, pesan hoy más las diferencias culturales, como las costumbres o la forma de vestir, que las diferencias físicas, como el color de la piel. Sobre todo, los resultados permiten descubrir la gran riqueza de matices que para los niños esconden esas imágenes del otro. Debemos procurar que los esfuerzos por promover la tolerancia y el reconocimiento, en que están embarcados actualmente nuestros sistemas educativos, no ahoguen esa variedad de matices en función de concepciones demasiado estrechas y rígidas de la diversidad cultural. Más que nunca, las culturas no pueden entenderse como totalidades cerradas que interponen muros y límites insalvables, sino como conjuntos de tendencias que interactúan. Educar en un entorno de multiculturalidad significa, entonces, enseñar a ver la relatividad y artificialidad de las barreras culturales, ayudar a buscar el “tú” que habita en el otro, la biografía particular más allá de las etiquetas identificadoras.

RÉSUMÉ

Les images de l'autre dans l'enfance. Examinant les limites de la diversité culturelle dans l'éducation du point de vue des nouvelles méthodes anthropologiques. Cet article présente la justification, la méthodologie, les résultats principaux et les implications pédagogiques d'une étude sur la représentation de l'autre dans l'enfance, effectuée avec des enfants d'éducation primaire de la Communauté autonome de Madrid. Basé sur un dessin méthodologique suggéré par les nouveaux modes d'approximation à la réalité qu'ont ouverts les Etudes culturelles et l'Anthropologie visuelle, nous avons essayé de répondre à la question, “Qu'est-ce que ces enfants voient dans les images des autres culturellement distincts?” Les résultats de l'investigation révèlent, entre d'autres aspects, comment dans la représentation que les enfants forment des autres, l'emportent plus de nos jours sur les différences culturelles, comme les coutumes et la manière de vêtir, que les différences physiques, comme la couleur de la peau. Surtout, les résultats permettent découvrir la grande richesse de détails que les enfants ont vue cachée derrière les images des autres. Nous devons prendre des dispositions de nous assurer que les mesures prises par nos systèmes éducatifs actuels pour promouvoir la tolérance et la reconnaissance, ne nettoient pas cette variété de détails en fonction de conceptions trop étroites et rigides de la diversité culturelle. Plus que jamais les cultures ne peuvent pas s'entendre comme totalités fermées qui interposent des murs et des limites non récupérables, sinon comme conjonctures de tendances qui interagissent. Eduquer dans un environnement multiculturel signifie, alors, l'enseignement pour voir la relativité et l'artificialité des barrières culturelles, l'aide à chercher le “tu” qui habite chez l'autre, la biographie particulière au delà des étiquettes identificatrices.

Introduction

"I'd say she must think just like us, but of other things, and must feel just like us, but with other customs and other thoughts." (Adela, 11 years old)

At these times in which we live, the subject of collective identity is a current affair making the news almost every day, though regrettably rarely for positive reasons. It seems unquestionable that human beings need a sense of belonging to a group. The trouble is that on most occasions, such belonging turns exclusive and confrontational. The end of this century has been marked by an alarming increase in attitudes of rejection toward others and in the recurring ethnic strife that keeps cropping up around the planet. In our own country, the influx of peoples from other places seeking better conditions has sometimes met with spiteful and intolerant behaviours.

Current philosophical trends have reacted against the idea of a self detached from history and context. Identities never form in a vacuum. Instead, they form within specific frameworks of language and relationships, or, as Charles Taylor puts it, in *webs of interlocution* in the heart of *defining communities*.¹ Identity, then, is never solitary, nor is it closed off. We build on it permanently in the weave of mediating with others. We need the others so that we can be. We become ourselves in the game of belongings and exclusions. Being "myself" always implies referring to "we" and "they".

Such references operate by means of categories of identification: citizenship, nation, culture, etc. Though historically these categories have never had set bounds, perhaps today's world, with its readily available communications systems, has made them even hazier and more uncertain, in turn giving rise to all sorts of proposals regarding a world-wide culture as well as a multicultural, cosmopolitan and global citizenship, which question the traditional boundaries of national identities.² Still, those proposals run into a number of obstacles when put into practice. One of them is that the very thing that blurs the boundaries among categories of identification makes us cling even tighter to local symbols and schemata in an unstable balance. That alone poses serious questions as to understanding the what and how of

1 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 25-52.

2 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Adela Cortina, *Ciudadanos del Mundo: Hacia una Teoría de la Ciudadanía* (Madrid: Alianza, 1997); Martha C. Nussbaum, "Patriotismo y Cosmopolitismo," en *Los Límites del Patriotismo: Identidad, Pertenencia y Ciudadanía Mundial*, ed. M.C. Nussbaum and J. Cohen (Barcelona: Paidós, 1999), 13-29.

education for citizenship.³ Similarly, though nothing at all justifies it, frequently such categories continue to be connected to supposed natural factors which act as sources of political differentiation. Even now, legally, citizenship and the rights it bestows are more often associated with matters of birth, parenthood and suchlike than with wherever a person lives, works, or pays taxes. These kinds of restrictions have lead to saying, for instance, that "citizenship in Western liberal democracies is the modern equivalent of feudal privilege - an inherited status that greatly enhances one's life chances. Like feudal birthright privileges, restrictive citizenship is hard to justify when one thinks about it closely."⁴ Without going to such extremes, and nevertheless symptomatic of that fear behind taking a more flexible view of citizenship, is the legal notion of citizen introduced by the *Treaty of European Union* in 1992. The Treaty, which grants citizens of member states the right to participate in elections in their state of residence at the local and European Parliament level regardless of their nationality, yet does not allow participation at a national level. For some observers, this bleeds the civic and political contents from the objective of a Europe without borders where citizens are free to move around.⁵ For others, the danger of such an idea of European citizenship lies in its potential to reinforce exclusion from abroad, from anyone who is not a Union citizen.⁶

And whether we like it or not, the push towards spaces of greater and greater cultural diversity seems unstoppable. Insofar as the Spanish situation over the last twenty years, Spain has stopped being a country people emigrate from to become one people now immigrate to. In the school system, this is creating a growing presence of children not only from other European Union countries, but also from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe.⁷ Although still some way off, these changes are bringing us within the orbit of the current trends in other European countries. According to a European Union study on the education of immigrant workers' children, cultural and linguistic diversity is becoming the norm at schools in large urban areas around Europe, making it inevitable (the study stresses) to think of a multicultural education for all; one which, above and beyond "stereotypical tendencies," will let students discover "what joins and differentiates the human race,

3 Fernando Bárcena, *El Oficio de la Ciudadanía: Introducción a la Educación Política* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1996), 40-50.

4 Joseph H. Carens, "Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders," in *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. R. Beiner (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 230.

5 Christopher Brewing, "Society as a Kind of Community: Communitarian Voting with Equal Rights for Individuals in the European Union," in *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community*, ed. T. Mood and P. Werbner (London, New York: Zed Books, 1997), 223-239.

6 Javier de Lucas, *Europa ¿Convivir con la Diferencia? Racismo, Nacionalismo y Derechos de las Minorías* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1992).

7 In the same way, see the reports on the status and situation of the Spanish educational system released annually by the State School Council. As of 1995-96, there is a computer version at the Ministry of Education and Culture web site <http://www.mec.es>.

in order to appreciate its richness and its diversity, to learn to recognise oneself in every culture (as much in one's own as in others), to exercise critical thinking skills regarding them, and finally, to be prepared to make thoughtful decisions".⁸

We have suggested that first requirement for meeting the educational challenge posed by this new multicultural situation be a rethinking of the very concepts of culture and cultural diversity, given that views too narrow and static can lead to the opposite effects of the ones intended, and reinforce the kind of exclusionary attitudes we were trying to avoid in the first place.⁹ Moreover, it is pedagogically important to recognise that we do not build concepts of ourselves and others just through explicit intentions and formal processes, but also through much more subtle influences: by what we see and hear about ourselves and others. In this way, as Katérina Stenou points out in a wonderful recent book, history is full of tales and images that transmit and distil into the collective conscience an array of stereotyped views of *the other* as an anomalous version of oneself: from the Cyclops of Greek mythology to the various aliens of 20th century cinema, with all the repertory of monstrous being in between: creatures without head or with the head of a bird, people with only one foot, or who walk on all fours. Beyond the historic records, what is most important in this series of warped images is that "because of some perverse and constantly renewed effect, this bottomless well of myths nurtures a whole range of stereotypes, and basically claims that the foreigner, the one who defies normality, is not a human being."¹⁰ The danger disappears: the other is denied. And although many of these figures seem distant to us now, the effects they still have on us linger on. At work behind the image is a protection mechanism that takes root by excluding the outsider. The offspring of images like those mentioned above are today's stereotypical views of others, marked "by a exaltation of cultural difference constantly invoked to justify policies of discrimination and segregation, and even social, religious, or ethnic purity."¹¹

Marc Augé has called attention to the role of mediation in the world traditionally filled by the other. The other is a bridge: s/he is like me, and yet, s/he is there on the outside.¹² This remark gives us a better understanding of the ambivalent sense of the other in those mythical beings who are neither wholly human nor wholly non-human. On one hand, the other provides a point of reference. It is quite reassuring to think that far-off and threatening worlds can not be too inhospitable for people like me to live in. But on the other hand, the need to protect ourselves from those

8 Comisión Europea, *Informe Sobre la Educación de los Hijos de Trabajadores Migrantes en la Unión Europea* (Luxemburgo: Oficina de Publicaciones Oficiales de las Comunidades Europeas, 1995), 25.

9 Gonzalo Jover and David Reyero, "Comunitat, Cultura i Raça: Aportacions de l'Antropolgia a l'Educació Multicultural," *Temps d'Educació* 17 (1997): 33-47.

10 Katérina Stenou. *Images de l'Autre: La différence; du Mythe au Préjugé* (Paris: Seuil – Éditions UNESCO, 1998), 16.

11 Ibid., 79.

12 Marc Augé, *El Sentido de los Otros* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1996), 117-118.

“other worlds” (and from the risk of calling our own world into question because of them) ends up in a denial of seeing the other as other way of being myself.

The situation today, Augé adds, is slightly unlike. “In the age of mass media and of death of exoticism, there is a short circuit that directly sets people off against their perception of the world.”¹³ Characteristic of our times is how the media have turned into mediators, windows that show individuals a disjointed array of text and pictures, constructed bits and pieces of world that each individual must put together in some meaningful way. For that reason, international organisations have been insisting on the educational responsibility of the media and on the need to help read their messages.¹⁴ The predominance of images, along with the illusion they foster of being face to face with the “real world,” makes that need even more pressing. The hermeneutics of words must today be completed with a hermeneutics of pictures and images.

The question today is, what images of the other do we get from television, billboards, etc? And what is it that we see in those pictures of others? The research we present here focuses on the power of images on how children categorise the world. Specifically, our aim is to use images to grasp childhood perceptions of the other. If we are to take educational action in childhood to foster attitudes of tolerance and recognition, we should ask ourselves just what children see hiding behind that image of the other. We may find that they see something quite different from what we adults perceive, and perhaps by taking some actions instead of others, what we really end up doing is fostering the very stereotypes and prejudices we were trying to eradicate in the first place by putting in what, for them, does not exist.

In the following three sections we will outline our methodology, results, and the pedagogic implications of the research. First, we will provide a justification of the methodological design used, which is patterned after the methodology often used in Cultural studies and Visual anthropology. We start out with the belief that in children’s categorisation of the world, of themselves, and of others, pictures are stronger than narratives and speech, and that more and more often, the pictures around us intentionally transmit preconceived views of reality. We then go on to give the main results of field work done with primary school children at two schools in the Madrid area. We finish by extracting some of the pedagogical consequences. As we have already mentioned, we believe that the efforts our school systems currently use to promote tolerance among and culturally different groups and individuals are not always accompanied by an equal emphasis on the need to rethink the meaning of cultural diversity and its limits; in that way, despite those efforts, what remains is the feeling of essential difference that makes any progress at all quite difficult.

13 Ibid., 118.

14 Jacques Delors, *La Educación Encierra un Tesoro*, informe à la UNESCO de la Comisión Internacional Sobre la Educación para el Siglo XXI (Madrid: Santillana/UNESCO, 1996).

Methodological Justification and Design

New Methodological Sensitivity in the Social Sciences

The world of social sciences today features a new methodological sensitivity that differs greatly from the sensitivity underlying quantitative and positivist methods. The new sensitivity springs from the criticism postmodern theorists have made of the paradigm of modernity, which can be summarised in two points that particularly affect methodology.

1. The first criticism centres on the current division of knowledge. The traditional division of disciplines reflects a logic on the distribution of power more than on the logic of reality itself. This means, for example, that to understand the emergence of a specific field of study - of a new department at a university - we need to pay at least as much attention to the specific relations generated in the distribution of power as to the theoretical justifications of a presumed reality behind the division. Quite revealing in this way is Geertz's account of his experience at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, where supposedly only the intellectual elite would work, concerning themselves only with unveiling the reality of things. What Geertz presents is another thing entirely:

A series of bitter, what's mine is mine, what's yours is negotiable quarrels led to chronic discord - quarrels over appointments, quarrels over the formation of schools within the Institute (one in political economy was disbanded altogether; the 'sciences' split, not without pain, into mathematics and natural sciences; the school of humanistic studies evolved, if that's the word for what seems to have been a tortuous change of mind, into the school of historical studies), and, of course, quarrels over salaries, then as now too small for demigods, too large for publication.¹⁵

2. Consequently, knowledge cannot be understood if it is not tied to concrete forms regarding not only the representation of reality, but of its construction as well. As such, this poses new problems for social science. On whose authority are the different human groups described? What consequences do the concrete descriptions made by social sciences have on the groups they describe? How is the researcher influenced by the social actions being taken around him? How is he to interpret them and how does that interpretation influence his scientific endeavours?

15 Clifford Geertz, "Disciplines," *Raritan* 14 no.3 (1995): 90.

The main methodological consequence of the first point is the appearance of so-called confused genres. In other words, research is done under new interdisciplinary parameters that try to reflect a reality that turns out to be fragmentary, diverse and interpretable from different angles once we acknowledge that the traditional disciplinary divisions do not correspond with the reality of things.¹⁶ In our case, we attempt to get a closer look at children's perceptions of the other by using the methodological lens of one of these new genres, Cultural studies, and specifically through the interaction of Cultural studies with anthropology, in what is known as Visual anthropology.

The consequence derived from the second point has been taking into consideration the new questions asked by social sciences, in particular the ones that involve describing the behaviour of the societies they study, such as anthropology, and the ones that are based on such descriptions, such as pedagogy. These new questions, which take into account the researchers' interpretative world and the symbolic codes of their surroundings, are translated into a change in the interest guiding the research. The researcher of today is less interested in the actions of the individuals under study than in discovering their interpretative universe and thus be able to converse with them on the deepest level possible. This new goal is better achieved by using a qualitative methodology tied to hermeneutic tradition than by a quantitative methodology tied to positivist standpoints. What we are interested in doing is to reach a deeper understanding of particular ways of configuring the world. If we are to educate real children, we must find out how real children think as they read reality within specific codes.

We do not mean to say that quantitative research is of little use in the field of social science; we do, however, believe that it is not the only means we have for carrying out scientific research, unless we restrict our view of the term "science" so much as to make it overlap just with the method we want. The profound differences between quantitative and qualitative methods to a great extent determine the style and ends of the research itself. Such differences can be summarised by saying that quantitative methods are closer to positivist views of reality as an object of study that can be apprehended in its entirety, while qualitative methods bear greater affinity to a postmodern sensitivity in which reality cannot be understood strictly objectively, but instead requires being interpreted. Furthermore, qualitative methods seek a closer understanding of the specific mind-set of the subject under study, whereas quantitative methods find it to be a potential source of elements that distort and impede objectivity. In that light, qualitative research is more attentive to the concrete restrictions imposed by social life, and its researchers find themselves more committed to an ideographic *emic* view. And finally, qualitative research places greater value on the richness of descriptions and attention to detail than quantitative research deems dispensable.¹⁷

16 Geertz, *Conocimiento Local* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1994), 32-49.

17 Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Entering the Field of Qualitative Research," intro. to *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (New York: Sage, 1994), 4-6.

In the case at hand, we have sought a qualitative view of the way children perceive others. By means of a methodology we can place within the realm of Cultural studies, we have attempted to bring to full bloom all the details and nuances that are usually trimmed off in more restrictive designs.

What is Cultural Studies?

Cultural studies are a qualitative, interdisciplinary research approach now at its height in the Anglo-Saxon world. Rather than being characterised by a well-defined and closed-off methodology, the latter is created *ad hoc* according to the object of the study. Nor is that object of study exclusive and well-defined. Even though research studies are carried out under the global umbrella of cultural studies addressing such diverse issues as gender and sexuality, policies of national identity, science, ecology, and so forth, we cannot look to them to specify its definition, since they do not bind the activity of the researchers who operate under this umbrella for the future. Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler have attempted a definition, although they acknowledge that it is a field that does not readily take to being defined. For them,

Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary field that operates in the tension between its tendencies to embrace both a broad, anthropological, and a more narrowly humanistic conception of culture. Unlike traditional anthropology, however, it has grown out of analyses of modern industrial societies. It is typically interpretative and evaluative in its methodologies, but unlike traditional humanism it rejects the exclusive equation of culture with high culture and argues that all forms of cultural production need to be studied in relation to other cultural practices and to social and historical structures. Cultural studies is thus committed to the study of the entire range of a society's arts, beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices."¹⁸

To complete this definition, we will now point out two characteristics that help give a more precise description of what research in this field means.

First, cultural studies understands culture as an arena of struggle and response. The many manifestations of culture are seen as ways human groups and individuals represent their sufferings and desires. The definition of these spaces for struggling can be done in such a way that either enhance or hinder the human chances of holding out against the dominant ways of representation. Naturally, "academia" is one of those places, since, from this point of view, the division of knowledge responds in and of itself to specific interests and specific fights in trying to implant representational policies, and thus not exclusively to the reality of things. In consequence, it can be stated that cultural studies tends not only to be interdisciplinary, but also to be often openly anti-disciplinary.

¹⁸ Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler, "Cultural Studies: An Introduction," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. L. Grossberg, C. Nelson and P.A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 4.

Second, and closely related to the other, cultural studies attempts to aid understanding what is happening, and how those spaces of struggling are set up, by means of analysing elements that have been traditionally forgotten. Cultural studies begins with the assumption that all human activity is potentially useful for studying human means of representation. The array of specific subjects that researchers in this field would do well to study is broadened considerably. It now becomes time to look further at events in the media, novels, movies, sports, or any other manifestation open to showing the diverse ways in which humans face reality, as well as the byways we create or find to develop our hopes and fears. In summary, what is stressed are the contingent aspects of social life that prove to be meaningful. Such a broadening of interests responds to the idea that every social practice falls within what Grossberg calls "apparatus" (following a tradition begun by Foucault), which are the specific social customs revealing specific relationships of power, and so their utilisation is fundamental to producing particular spaces where representational policies are set up or circulate. The main function of Cultural studies is to study these apparatus, their workings and methodology.¹⁹ This way, once it is known how these "apparatus" work, we can at the very least take a closer, more critical look at them.²⁰ Included among these "apparatus" are urban planning and spatial layouts, movies, music, etc.²¹

There is no doubt to the relevance of studies of this type to education, since education may be understood as an activity aiming to help individuals to confront and place themselves among the various possibilities for identity-building that are offered by the society in which they live. The more we know about the symbolic networks of the learners (and not just of the educators), the better such an activity can be carried out. Education should give a liberating intentionality to that insertion into the world so that individuals can place themselves in it in a critical way, aware of their limitations and of the sufferings that certain ways of treating people may cause around them.

19 Grossberg, "Cultural Studies and/in New Worlds," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 10 no.1 (1993): 8.

20 Grossberg, "Cultural Studies vs. Political Economy, Is Anyone Else Bored with this Debate?" *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 no.1 (1995): 72-81.

21 In an interview with anthropologist Paul Rabinow, Foucault analyzes the relevance of urban space distribution on the degrees of freedom to act. Foucault, of course, does not mean to be simplistic by saying that just rearranging spaces in cities is enough to improve people's chances for freedom, since we need to study the "apparatus" as a deep interrelation between social practices and economic and ideological factors. Michel Foucault, "Space, Power and Knowledge," in *Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. S. During (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), 161-169.

The analysis of movies as "apparatus" that lead to determinate ways of personal or social reconfiguration is not ignored by cultural studies. In Douglas Kellner's book *Media Culture*, he analyses a number of films in relation to the ways of depicting the family and multiculturalism. Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995). Henry Giroux, in his book *Fugitive Culture: Race, Violence and Youth* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 55-133 also analyses the Disney industry and its children's films from an educational point

From Cultural Studies to Visual Anthropology

To concentrate more on the methodological background of our research, we should now undergo a kind of flash-back and look at a specific way of arriving at Cultural studies. As we have seen, the research in Cultural studies is not particularly linked to any of the traditional disciplines, which means that researchers in this approach come from very different backgrounds, with differing concerns and styles of doing research. We will situate ourselves in Cultural studies from an anthropological viewpoint, and specifically from Visual anthropology. Our aim will, in the end, be pedagogic: to come to set up some educational proposals.

We should say at the outset that some anthropologists fear that Cultural studies will encroach on a terrain that has until now been almost exclusively theirs. Their resistance is moulded by arguing that this movement may devoid the concept of culture of its meaning.²² Underlying their argument is a rigid and static view of disciplines which Cultural studies opposes.

In contrast to that initial position, Stanton remarks that, after observing the history of anthropology, we find links that show that, far from being antagonistic, the two approaches have some background in common. Specifically, Stanton focuses on mass-observation, a movement from the 1930s, about 20 years ahead of Cultural studies. Mass-observation shares many of the same concerns as Cultural studies on the need to observe ourselves, and not just far-off peoples; its roots are in traditional anthropology through the influence of Malinowski, a member of the advisory board for the project.²³

Moreover, Scholte stresses that Cultural studies today has three theoretical reference points, one of them being the basic book on postmodern anthropology *Writing Culture*, edited by Clifford and Marcus.²⁴ Indeed, Marcus takes it a step

of view, as well as the meaning of violence in films such as *Pulp Fiction*, *Reservoir Dogs* and *Platoon*.

For an example of a cultural studies analysis of the world of music, see Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose, eds., *Microphone Friends: Youth Music and Youth Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994). Several papers in the book look at the creation of ethnic identity from concrete music pieces and the meaning different styles of music have on politics of representation.

22 Renato Rosaldo, "Whose Cultural Studies?" *American Anthropologist* 96 no.3 (1994): 524-529; Stephen Nugent, "Brother, Can You Share a Paradigm?" intro. in *Anthropology and Cultural Studies*, ed. S. Nugent and C. Shore (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 1-10; Bruce Knauft, "Pushing Anthropology Past the Post: Critical Notes on Cultural Anthropology and Cultural Studies," *Critique of Anthropology* 14 no.2 (1994): 117-152.

23 Gareth Stanton, "In Defence of Savage Civilisation: Tom Harrison, Cultural Studies and Anthropology," in *Anthropology and Cultural Studies*, ed. S. Nugent and C. Shore (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 11-33.

24 Bob Scholte, "The Literary Turn in Anthropology," *Critique of Anthropology* 7 no. 1 (1987): 33-47. See also James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

further by proposing that the old discipline of anthropology be dissolved into the heart of the new area of Cultural studies. To paraphrase him, anthropology has a great deal to offer in terms of searching for alternatives in the framework of strict analysis of culture. Similarly, Cultural studies has a great deal to offer anthropologists in search of contexts in which their research can gain greater relevance.²⁵

We can complete the picture of showing the interaction between the two approaches by taking Paul Willis, who sees them as being mutually necessary, as a critical reference point of their respective practices. In so far as questioning anthropological practices, Cultural studies has undermined the idea of fieldwork as a place far from the pressing affairs of our world; a place where researchers would go for the sole purpose of fulfilling a rite of passage in the hopes of becoming an initiate in anthropological scholarship. Instead, for Cultural studies, fieldwork is more than just an ideal place for theorising on human relationships on an abstract level. It is a place for answering specific problems and relations nearby; a place leading to action and commitment. On the other hand, quoting Willis, traditional anthropology also has something to say to Cultural studies. Mainly, people working in Cultural studies must face up to anthropologists' criticism of their shaky scholarship in methodology. The lack of any real ethnographic roots has given Cultural studies an initial advantage by sparking a theoretical change in the aims of old-school ethnography and the notion of fieldwork. This does not, though, prevent those who study under this approach from taking note of that criticism and making the effort to carry out authentic thick descriptions of the various objects of their study.²⁶

One of the results of such interaction between Cultural studies and anthropology in the revisionist scenario of anthropological research prompted by postmodernism has been the emergence of Visual anthropology.

There is no doubt that in our day and age, pictures and images play a key role in configuring systems of representation. For that reason, its study as Foucaultian "apparatus" through Cultural studies is more than justified. Such interest, however, clashes with what has been the most common position. Traditionally, any attempt at doing research through pictures and images has been systematically trivialised by the crushing weight the scientific community places on quantitative methodologies, which involve a discourse essentially based on words and numbers. This situation has bolstered the belief that the use of such elements in social sciences would only contribute to undermining the little scientific credibility they have.²⁷ Logically,

25 George E. Marcus, intro. to *Rereading Cultural Anthropology*, ed. G.E. Marcus (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1995), VII-XIV.

26 Note that the term used by Paul Willis is the same as the one made popular by anthropologist Clifford Geertz as a base for doing anthropology today: *thick description*. Finally, in the paper we refer to, Willis ends by advocating an abandoning of anthropology and the adoption of what he calls *theoretically informed ethnographic study*. Paul Willis, "TIES": Theoretically Informed Ethnographic Study," in *Anthropology and Cultural Studies*, ed. S. Nugent and C. Shore (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 182-192.

the criticism forces us to be more exacting than ever in order to lend credibility to research on “atypical” components such as images or sounds, which are traditionally kept out of bounds of scientific methodology.

A different way to get closer to the world of images is by turning to two authors who have firmly stated the possibilities of a critical analysis of iconism. The first of the two is the semiologist Umberto Eco. In his analysis of the representative potential of icons, Eco reviews some of the erroneous ideas that mislead us into thinking that icons are beyond manipulation, given that they are limited to showing what something is. A detailed analysis of that belief shows that, like the written sign, an iconographic symbol needs cultural conventions to be interpreted. And though those conventions may be different from and perhaps less arbitrary than those of other kinds of signs, they still exist and must be reckoned with.²⁸

The second author to whom we look for unveiling the meaning iconism holds for human communication is the art historian Erns Gombrich. In his book *Art and Illusion*, he shows how artists over the centuries have depicted reality through objects or representations they were familiar with. That is to say, that when a medieval artist painted a lion, for example, with a number of anthropomorphic features, it is not that he lacked the technical skill to do so or wished to portray the lion metaphorically; rather, his interpretative possibilities as the array of symbols around him lacked enough registers for him to be able to interpret it better, and thus depict the lion more faithfully. Consequently, it took on the features of creatures he knew best, like human beings themselves. This shows that looking is not an innate skill, and that we also learn to see, as we do to speak or write, by following interpretative patterns.²⁹

Visual anthropology shuns the pretence of neutrality in images and the idea that images reflect the world as it is. Instead, it draws them into cultural analysis by studying the impact of the symbols and icons generated by technological means.

Traditional anthropology has always been involved with images. At early stages, images were used as illustrations, e.g., as a way of reinforcing written discourse or positions of authority based on the “I was there, and this is the proof” argument. In this kind of use, which belongs to what some authors call the positivist approach, images were thus not a fundamental part of the research. Currently, however, there are numerous anthropological studies that place images at the heart of their activity and link them in an interpretative approach.³⁰ According to Banks, this

27 Jon Prosser, “The Status of Imaged-based Research,” in *Imaged-based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers*, ed. J. Prosser (London: Falmer, 1998), 97-112.

28 Umberto Eco, *Tratado de Semiótica General* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1981), 325-359.

29 Erns H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961).

30 Paul Henley, “Film-making and Ethnographic Research,” in *Imaged-based Research. A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers*, ed. J. Prosser (London: Falmer, 1998), 42-59. For an example of the interpretive use of visuals, see Collins and Lutz’s research on the construction, distribution, and utilization of images of others and of Westerners in *National Geographic*. The authors attempt to show that the world of images is not as neutral and unquestionable as it

kind of approach makes particular sense within the postmodern paradigm, which considers the visual image as more than just a simple tool for supporting what is said in a report. Rather, it is a way of getting closer to examining human society and social actions located in specific places, recorded not only in emotions and written thoughts, but also in objects, bodies and landscapes that are reflected and reproduced.³¹

Our research is grounded on these new intuitions regarding human and culture. Starting with the possibilities offered by images, their growing impact on our world, and the idea that children configure their portrayal of others more from images than from speeches they have heard, we have aimed to discover how children perceive other people. To that end, we have used images of children from other places, either directly through photos or suggested at through pieces of music.

Design of the Fieldwork

The fieldwork of our study was based on showing three pictures of children from different countries. All the school children taking part in the study were asked to look at the pictures and imagine what the life of these other children was like, and then write a short story on each one. With this procedure, we were able to avoid feeding them any preconceived categories and closed questions; thus, each child could respond as spontaneously as possible. The choice of the three pictures was made with the following criteria:

1. They should show both physical and cultural differences.
2. They should depict the other with whom the children may have had a more direct, less mediated experience, and the other with whom that would be highly unlikely.
3. They should portray someone from a culturally familiar background, and someone from an unfamiliar background children would have few cultural references for.

Based on these criteria, three pictures of children were chosen, and each given a name.

may seem. Specifically, they consider five types of views in the magazine; the photographer's, the magazine's, the reader or viewer's, the non-Westerner's, and the Westerner's. These kinds of views define not the objective reality but the different intentions or approaches to depicting others, that originate in the photographer or the management of the magazine itself. Jane Collins and Catherine Lutz, "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of *National Geographic*," in *Visualizing Theory: Selected Essays From V.A.R. 1990-1994*, ed. L. Taylor (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 363-384.

31 Marcus Banks, "Visual Anthropology: Image, Object and Interpretation," in *Imaged-based Research*, 19.

1. *Tana*. Picture of a Gypsy girl in a flowered dress. The setting chosen is Slovakia, a country the children presumably have no clear references for. The brightly coloured dress stands out against the green background of a forest. This girl represents someone culturally different but with whom the children would have some direct prior experience.
2. *Rekha*. The picture shows an Iranian girl wearing a chador. Only her eyes are visible. The picture reveals no other cultural references. This girl represents the other culturally unknown.
3. *Kevin*. The picture of a black boy dressed like any of the children participating in the study. It is set in the United States, a country the children would presumably have many cultural references for. His picture is set against a brick facade. This child represents someone physically different but culturally close, albeit indirectly known (through the mass media).

As a complement to the story-writing activity, one group of children was asked to listen two pieces of music from different places and draw what they imagined a child their age would be like in that place. The pieces were taken from African Bongi music and traditional Persian music.³²

Two primary schools in the Madrid Regional Community were chosen for the study, one in a neighbourhood with a growing immigrant population, and the other with a large number of socially underprivileged students, most belonging to the Gypsy population. Participating in the study were 100 children between 8 and 12 years old, who wrote nearly 250 stories about Tana, Rekha, and Kevin, as well as some 30 drawings portraying someone culturally different based on musical stimuli.

Results and Interpretation

The Presence of Oneself in the Other

What did the children in our study see in the pictures of the others? The first thing they saw was exactly that: the other. But the "other", whether he or she, is also an "I", just as I am. This becomes evident in that, while practically all the descriptions include specific features of the others, they also contain aspects from each child's own experiences and background, kinds of nexus points joining him or her to the children in the pictures. Each image of the other is a mixture of "otherness" and "selfhood". No one is too strange or different for them that it turns impossible finding some common ground to share. Were that the case, s/he would no longer be an "other;" s/he would simply be something different, and the dehumanisation would be consummated. In the pictures of the others, the children also saw themselves: their own hopes and fears.

³² Both pieces were taken from the recording *Voices for Peace*, produced by the International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation and distributed by Auvidis in 1998.

Aspects of identification are usually associated with whatever the children find most familiar in their day-to-day lives, which mainly involves the family, their course of security. Tana, Rekha, and Kevin are seen as children who are different. Their biographies vary from tale to tale: sometimes happy, sometimes miserable; some go to school, others do not; some rich, some poor; but all three invariably have a family in which there is or was a father, a mother, brothers and sisters, and sometimes grandparents. They may do other things, their lives may be different, but they are like me because they have a family like mine.

Tana lives in a one-storey house. Hers in number 5, and next door in number 4 is her cousin, who she plays with in the afternoons, and her aunt and uncle, and in number 3 are some happy old people who Tana talks to when she's bored. Her house has four bedrooms. The one on the courtyard in back is where her grandma sleeps, the room on the right is hers, and on the left is her brother Paul's, and the one at the front is where Tana's parents sleep. Tana is very happy living with her family (Alicia, 12 years old).³³

It would seem that the children could not imagine cultural differences excluding anything as essential to their existence as belonging to a family unit. That may be why, whenever they want to make a biography particularly unhappy, they turn Tana, Rekha, and Kevin into orphans, they put them into situations of abuse, or they strip them of their natural families altogether.

Tana is a Slovakian girl. She is 6 years old. Her parents abandoned her when she was 2 in Slovakia. Nobody knows where her parents are. But that doesn't bother her, since she has foster parents. They buy her toys (Clara, 10 years old).

Rekha is a very sad girl because her father died in a war, her mother has to work all day, and she has to stay home doing the cooking, the cleaning,...(Myriam, 11 years old).

(Kevin) is a little black boy. I think he's kind of poor....I think his parents make him sell old clothes from the trash cans to get money to buy food....His parents treat him badly, so he has to be strong. So when he grows up, he'll have to be even stronger (Laura, 9 years old).

Games as Cultural Elements

Another element of identification that often surfaces is game playing. Tana, Rekha, and Kevin are children, and being children, they have to play. It is considered unfair when they cannot.

(Rekha) Well, this girl isn't allowed to play anything, just work, and, like, that takes away her childhood and her wanting to play. She must think that she

³³ All the names of the children participating in this study have been changed, although the ages remain intact.

should be playing like the rest of the kids, and should be studying (Adela, 11 years old).

Children recognise cultural elements in games. The games these other children play may be different from ours. Indeed, in some stories, the cultural category of games - the most familiar childhood experience - shows a kind of cultural evolutionism. Kevin, in the United States, plays with video consoles, videos, televisions, and computers (Sara, 10 years old), whereas Tana "usually plays games like dolls, marbles, hide-and-seek, etc..." (Ana, 11 years old), or the games "of primitive people" (David, 12 years old). And in Rekha's country, they play with rag dolls and old wheels (Susana, 9 years old) as well as playing "with bottle caps, marbles, and other old-fashioned games our parents and grandparents used to play" (Myriam, 11 years old).

The feeling of cultural evolutionism touches on other aspects of daily life as well. In Tana's country, "they go to the river to wash their clothes, fetch water, and they cook food on plates made of clay or animal bones" (Samuel, 10 years old), while in Rekha's land, where there might not be any bakeries, "almost all the village men get together and go hunting, and bring home the meat and cook it and eat it" (Laura, 9 years old). A similar attitude is seen in the children's drawings: the children conjured up from the African music are sometimes associated with "primitive" people.

Along with the evolutionism is a degree of ethnocentric attitude, which for these children seems to represent a natural safety mechanism. For instance, their problems all disappear once Tana, Rekha, or Kevin comes to Spain or some other similar country. The best day in Tana's life was when she came to Spain and made so many friends that she didn't want to go back (Andrés, 11 years old). Rekha, who doesn't go to school, is skinny and has scabs where they whipped her, also wants to come to our country (Juan, 10 years old). And Kevin and his family decided to leave the violent place where they lived in the United States to settle down in the suburbs of Madrid (Silvia, 10 years old).

The children's evolutionism and ethnocentrism finds its counterpoint in a kind of naturalistic attitude, probably influenced by the new environmental awareness movement. The children's tales often describe animals of all kinds: dogs, cats, rabbits, hens, horses, and snakes, to name a few. Tana especially represents that natural world (recall that her picture is set against a green forest background), where city shops are unnecessary, since everyone lives off the animals they breed and the food they grow (Beatriz, 12 years old).

The place where they live is like a forest, but without big houses or any pollution. They don't have cars, they don't have big houses, but they have pets. There are more trees, there's more space to play, and more atmosphere. But it's also more dangerous there, because there are more poisonous animals like snakes, there are more poisonous snakes, like the rattle snake, who's the queen of the snakes. But I think life is better there, because there's no pollution and I want to live there (Julio, 12 years old).

Kevin, on the other hand, represents the “civilised” world, technologically more advanced, the land of skyscrapers (Pablo, 8 years old), of streets full of shops and supermarkets (Milena, 10 years old), but also of violence and pollution, noise and hurries: Kevin does not like his country because his father works too much and can only see him on weekends (Aaron, 12 years old).

Kevin wears clothes like ours and lives in a one-storey house. The house is made of wood. There aren’t any animals or vegetable garden. He buys everything because he is really rich. He lives alone because his parents live next door in a really rich house with animals and a garden (Beatriz, 11 years old).

The Predominance of Cultural Differences Over Physical Differences

The category of “otherness” is influenced more by cultural differences than by physical ones. The word “race” is almost never used and practically does not exist in the children’s vocabulary. The few times it was used, however, it referred most of all to Tana and Kevin. And though Rekha does not belong to a different “race,” she is nevertheless the one perceived as the strangest of the three. “She looks like a Ninja, she probably has ancient Samurai swords” (Antonio, 8 years old). Her identity is the best hidden; hardly enough of her face shows for the children to look at and project themselves onto. Rekha was the only one that made a child draw a blank: “I can’t think of anything to say” (Marta, 11 years old). Gazing at the picture of Rekha bundled in cloth, the children found it difficult to anchor their focus on any points to converse with. Nevertheless, they sought them out anyway. Practically speaking, just the look in Rekha’s eyes was enough to trigger some identification to help find the life hidden behind the chador. Some said her eyes are black (Belén, 9 years old) or brown (Lucía, 9 years old; Javier, 10 years old), while another adds, “I think her life is great, because she’s smiling” (Julio, 12 years old).

Rekha’s life is sometimes set in pitiful conditions, in a country at war, in a small stuffy house, carrying water to and from (Carlos, 12 years old). Still, Rekha is not always perceived as poor. She may be rich and live in a huge mansion (Paloma, 12 years old). “She lives in good, rich conditions, and feels bad when other people suffer, so she always helps out and sends them aid” (Marcos, 11 years old). The difference with her is neither physical nor social. It is something else entirely. She dresses differently (Debora, 8 years old), she speaks a strange language (Irene, 10 years old), she is surrounded by unusual animals (Estrella, 9 years old). Rather than sitting in a chair, Rekha kneels on a cushion, goes to the mosque, observes Ramadan, takes her shoes off before praying, kneels before her king (Lara, 10 years old). “Her favourite food is fish with rotten snake blood, and also rat tails with deer hearts” (Daniel, 9 years old). The stories written about Rekha are most heavily charged with fantasy: she lives in a castle, “the castle of Irán y no volverán” (Sara,

34 A play on words of the Spanish fairytale castle of “*Irás y no Volverás*” (literally, ‘you will go and you won’t come back’) involving “Iran” (literally, ‘they will go’) and the country Iran.

10 years old), she is a princess, a friend of Kicho's, the prince of Chichón (Isabel, 8 years old).³⁴ Rekha from Iran, like the person some children depicted from the Persian music, often represents the mysterious and indecipherable. For them, such music suggests characters surrounded by strange symbols. Faces in these drawings are almost always covered; the pictures portray what is exotic, hidden, and from a far-away land.

The Appearance of Stereotypes

The depictions that the children came up with for the other reveal some of society's most strongly-rooted stereotypes. A stereotype refers to something the children would have had some prior experience with. It is a deformed perception of some person who is not completely unknown to them. Logically enough, of our three pictures, the one that elicited the most stereotyping was Tana, the Gypsy girl: she loves flamenco music; clapping her hands to the beat (Tomás, 10 years old; Lara, 10 years old; Laura, 9 years old; Angel, 11 years old). Although poor, she is happy and fun (Luisa, 8 years old). She usually adorns herself with flowers and wears flowered dresses (Paco, 10 years old; Rosa, 11 years old). She travels a lot (Noemi, 10 years old; Arturo, 10 years old). She lives in a shanty and begs in the street, which is why they will give her family a better house (Nacho, 8 years old).

Tana is a girl with a rose-covered skirt. The fields are full of flowers, and she picks a lot of them. Tana plays toss with an orange. Tana doesn't go to school. What she does is sell fruit with her parents. Tana really likes strawberries the best. She doesn't know about sports, like soccer, tennis, basketball, hockey, etc. Whenever she goes past a school, she tells her parents, 'Daddy, I want to go to school,' but her parents don't answer. Her parents have bought her some cloth for her to turn into a hat. Tana is a good girl (Josué, 9 years old).

Tana is the other who is experientially familiar in a more direct way. That may be why stories about her tend to be polarised. Tana the Gypsy girl is practically the only one who is rejected outright at some time:

The Gypsies play whatever games they feel like. They are free to do whatever they want. They play knucklebones, which is an ancient game of primitive man. They live in houses that aren't very suitable for human beings. And it doesn't matter to them how or where they live. They live the life they want. I wouldn't want to be like them, but they don't mind being the way they are. They can take care of themselves. They don't get sick, because they're used to living in the streets. They eat whatever they see along the street (David, 12 years old).

On the other hand, Tana can still be the girl sitting at the next desk at school, maybe a friend, a girl like any other, who occasionally wears flowery dresses (Noelia, 12 years old). She could be me.

Tana has a lot of friends and lives in a small town. She goes to school and learns a lot. She really likes to play with dolls and has a brother named Mark, and a

sister called Adriana. Her mother is very pretty and her father is handsome. Tana likes where she lives and she likes her friends. She helps the old people who can't see and can't cross the street. She doesn't like bugs. She doesn't have a big family. But even though she has a small family, she likes them a lot. She really likes to play dolls, and ball, and stuffed animals, etc. And she really likes her life (Sandra, 8 years old).

Stereotypes surface in Kevin's case as well. However, the ones from his stories are mostly drawn from the impressions of his country given by the mass media, making the United States a place that feels culturally "close" to Spanish children. These stereotypes override whatever other ways Kevin may be different. Like Tana, Kevin can be just as ordinary as any other child, no farther away than the nearest television set. Kevin plays the same games we do. His surroundings are not unfamiliar. He is a mixture of characters from television series, movies, sports, and so on. His mother is an actress and he lives beside Madison Square Garden (Marcos, 11 years old) or in Springfield (Andrés, 11 years old). He is good at sports, and loves basketball, baseball, and even soccer; some day he will make it in the NBA (Alejandra, 10 years old; Roberto, 11 years old; Fran, 12 years old). He rides a skateboard, eats hamburgers, goes to the disco, dances rap, paints on walls, wears sports clothes, is an immigrant, and his parents are divorced (Juanjo, 9 years old; Álvaro, 12 years old; Raúl, 11 years old; Rosario, 10 years old). Thus far, they are all stock characters from movies, television series, and commercials. However, Kevin's portrayals are also marked by recent events in the news, such as violence in the schools (Silvia, 10 years old), or war:

Kevin is a boy from the USA. He is 19 years old. He is married to an 18-year-old girl from Yugoslavia. Kevin feels really sorry for her, because of the war, and I forget to say, the girl's name is Lidia. Kevin is going to go to Yugoslavia to go get Lidia (Carmen, 9 years old).

Finally, Rekha's stereotypes, which are most likely the product of the growingly intense echoes from those other places, speak of women who have a hard life, of strict morality and religion, of wars ("You can hear the sounds of gunfire" - Raiza, 11 years old). Black, the predominant colour, pervades everything: Rekha even "wears black shoes" (Maria, 11 years old). In her country, there are strict rules (Idoya, 9 years old): Rekha is pretty, but her parents make her wear clothes so that you can hardly see her (Carmen, 9 years old); they don't let her play with other children (Paloma, 12 years old); they make her get married early (Alejandra, 10 years old); the army watches her every move (Luisa, 8 years old); they'll kill her mother if she wears a different-coloured scarf (Pablo, 8 years old) or they'll kick her out and take away her children and her home (Claudia, 8 years old).

The Attitude of Respecting and Valuing the Other

Children are aware of cultural differences and the fact that different places have different customs. A normal day in the life of Tana, Rekha, or Kevin "can be normal for their customs" (Eduardo, 12 years old). However, they are also aware of the

possible effects and social consequences of those differences. For Kevin, the colour of his skin can be a hindrance, since "in America the coloured children are discriminated" (Lucas, 10 years old).

The place where he lives is like a garbage dump full of filth, but in the end the people are happy. But more than anything, there are fights, racism, and more....His skin is dark, his forehead is big, his eyebrows are brown, his eyes are big, his nose is fat, his cheeks are chubby, his mouth has thick lips, his limbs are long and his chest is thin, his feet are big and his hands are slender (Elena, 11 years old).

In Rekha's case, the cultural difference itself may be a source of negative effects. "Women over there are discriminated against. They have to wear clothes covering everything but their eyes" (Lucas, 10 years old). Rekha is usually at home, and hardly ever goes out, and might not even go to school: she learns alone or with private tutors (Javier, 10 years old; Paloma, 12 years old). Rekha likes to travel, but the kids in other countries laugh at her clothes (Noelia, 12 years old).

Tana also suffers from discrimination. Sometimes the rejection is direct; at other times, it is more the effect of adverse social conditions. In contrast to Kevin and Rekha, what does not often appear is the third-party rejection by "everyone else". As we have seen, Tana is the only one to be rejected in first person. In the relationship with the figure of the cultural "other" with whom there has been some direct experience, what is sought is not a set of mediators, but "reasons" to "justify" one's personal stance. Third parties are not needed to release such attitudes, just being together with the other in the same social setting. In fact, the setting itself may turn against Tana:

At birth, Tana had few economic resources, because her parents didn't have a steady job or a good enough income. At 5 or 6, Tana will go to school if her parents can afford it. Her school isn't like the ones in Madrid. It's in an old and broken-down house with a few materials like pencils, erasers, crayons, and little else. There are about 30 kids in each class, since so many want to learn. After school, she probably goes straight home. When she gets there, her parents give her something to eat from their not very abundant pantry, and a few hours later she goes out with her friends to play ball, or maybe 'hide and seek,' or 'grab the scarf,' etc. At home she lives with her father, her mother, maybe even a brother or sister. The clothes Tana wears, made by her mom or some relative of hers, are from rags and cloths, tassels and hats, etc. Her daily meals are not very filling, just some fruit and a glass of milk for breakfast, and some white rice for lunch. For drinking water, they have a well, or maybe a little creek, and a bucket to carry it in. Her surroundings are full of wild flowers, fields, trees, and all kinds of natural habitat (Alberto, 11 years old).

The children have an internalised sense of duty toward respecting and valuing others with their differences. Many of the descriptions include comments along the

lines of "Kevin is a smart kid, he has dark skin, does what any other kid does, and has what any other kid should have" (Mónica, 12 years old). "Rekha is black, but it doesn't matter to her, because her friends all love her like they do for everyone else" (Rodrigo, 9 years old). "Tana is a girl like any other; just because she's a Gypsy doesn't mean she's a bad person, dirty, or that she doesn't go to school. We are all equal, and nobody should mistrust people from other countries, because the person who mistrusts other people could have more faults than them. Everyone is what she or he is" (Sonia, 10 years old). Statements such as these are more like reaffirmation of prescriptive values. When the children say that the differences are not important, what they mean is that they should not be important and should not be grounds for rejection. Above and beyond our differences in skin colour or customs, deep down inside, in our capacity to think and feel, we are all equals and different at the same time: "I'd say she must think the same as we do, but of other things, and must feel the same as we do, but with other customs and thoughts" (Adela, 11 years old). However great the difference may be, the shared ability to experience joy and pain leads the way to opening a dialogue.

Every interpretation of the other is bound to be forced, and even more so in attempts such as this to rewrite what another has said about yet another. The children's stories mix and match profiles, lives criss-cross each other. No two stories are alike, because no two lives are the same. One hundred children are a hundred biographies, a hundred different ways of seeing the world. Tana, Rekha, and Kevin are simply Tana, Rekha, and Kevin, three lives that are hard to press into moulds.

Conclusion: Education and the Limits of Cultural Diversity

The results of the study we have laid out above are open to various readings. Like the children's gaze at the three pictures of Tana, Rekha, and Kevin, the researcher's gaze at their tales is affected by his/her own interpretative schemata from the outset. A psychologist, a sociologist, and a philosopher of education, for instance, will not see the same in these results. To finish, we will essay a basically anthropological and pedagogical reading centred on the question "What consequences can we draw from these tales so that we may revise our programs in multicultural education?"

The conclusion that stands out most at first glance is the predominance of cultural differences over biological or racial differences as seen throughout the children's stories. As we mentioned earlier, the word "race" was almost never used. Differences with others are marked more by cultural aspects such as customs and forms of dress than by biological features such as skin colour.

Underlying this distinction is an old anthropological conundrum. For years, anthropologists have argued over the concept of race and its relationship with culture. As a recent revision of Cartmill shows, there is to date still no agreement on the validity of such a concept. Relying on genetic arguments, many physical anthropologists still advocate using racial taxonomies for their usefulness in preventive medicine and forensic anthropology. For others, however, such racial

categories lack any scientific basis, are biologically incoherent, and utterly misleading. An analysis of the use of these taxonomies over the last thirty years in professional literature reveals that neither the advocates of racial classifications nor their detractors have any motive to think that the detectable trends in anthropology are on their side.³⁵

All in all, the debate allows some conclusions to be drawn. Practically no one today doubts that the existence of differences such as skin colour does not justify thinking that "race" in and of itself (i.e., independently of the social conditions operating on those differences) is the main factor determining identity. Genetically, it seems proven that the difference within so-called racial groups can be greater than that between individuals of different groups. In other words, "race" would, in genetic terms, explain at best approximately 6% of the variability among human beings. This sort of data, along with a clearer perception of the movements and exchanges among human groups throughout history, has meant that nowadays, "biophysical variations are seen as continuous and gradual, overlapping population boundaries, fluid, and subject to evolutionary changes"³⁶

Races are above all social constructions. As such, they exist more in the minds of the people than in the colour of their skin. Claims of a causal relation between biological origin and behaviour make up the same racist view of the world, as the American Association of Physical Anthropology Statement on Biological Aspects of Race spells out:

There is not necessary concordance between biological characteristics and culturally defined groups. On every continent, there are diverse populations that differ in language, economy, and culture. There is no national, religious, linguistic or cultural group or economic class that constitutes a race. However, human beings who speak the same language and share the same culture frequently select each other as mates, with the result that there is often some degree of correspondence between the distribution of physical traits on the one hand and that of linguistic and cultural traits on the other. But there is no causal linkage between these physical and behavioral traits, and therefore it is not justifiable to attribute cultural characteristics to genetic inheritances.... The people of the world today appear to possess equal biological potential for assimilating any human culture. Racist political doctrines find no foundation in scientific knowledge concerning modern or past human populations.³⁷

35 Matt Cartmill, "The Status of the Race Concept in Physical Anthropology," *American Anthropologist* 100 no. 3 (1998): 651-660.

36 Audrey Smedley, "Race and the Construction of Human Identity," *American Anthropologist* 100 no. 3 (1998): 699.

37 "AAPA Statement on Biological Aspects of Race," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 101 (1996): 570.

Thus, a logical consequence of rethinking the notion of race should be a revision of its use in multicultural education programs. As we pointed out elsewhere, equating cultural diversity to racial diversity means unwisely curtailing the concept of culture. Furthermore, any attempt at linking cultural diversity to allegedly racial determinants may lead to a view of multicultural education that goes against the objective of the educational activity itself. The mistake has often been made of reducing such activity to an almost acritical (one cannot be critical of genetic characteristics) conservation of learner cultures exactly as they have been handed down from generation to generation, it being the educator's role to foster them regardless of their values.³⁸

The troubles do not stop there. To cite Banks once again, "although some anthropologists tend to see race only as a mistaken scientific prejudice of the nineteenth century and dismiss any discussion of it, they fail to appreciate the significance of it in popular discourse."³⁹ Questioned by science, the idea that natural barriers exist between human beings, implicit in the concept of race, still plays an important role in the social constructs of reality as transmitted by means of communication and schools. The concept of race is sometimes replaced by others less charged with negative connotations, such as ethnicity, or even culture. But shifted right along with the concept are all the attitudes toward the other. Specifically, as Banks shows, in the field of education the attitudes of rejecting whomever is different by those claiming not to be racist are hidden behind the shield of cultural diversity, following a concept of culture that adopts the same features of a fixed and unchangeable reality as were once applied to race.⁴⁰

A new "racism without race" lies behind the supposedly unbreachable wall of cultural barriers. The former director of UNESCO, Mayor Zaragoza, recalled the fact in the foreword of Katérina Stenou's book, which we referred to at the outset of this paper:

In the course of the 1960s, stress was put on the fight against racism; UNESCO helped establish and make it generally understood that there is no scientific basis to the notion of race. Today, though without fully discarding the risk of some pseudo-scientific regressions, the most imminent dangers are of another, more insidious kind. There is a new racism, a new xenophobia, a new intolerance. The acquired immunity loses its effect, because the vaccines made to fight against the old forms of the epidemic no longer work. What are these new forms? They always wear the symptomatic mask of cultural difference, or rather, of a cultural difference claimed in order to create discord and justify exclusion.⁴¹

38 Jover and Reyero, "Comunitat, Cultura i Raça," 41-42.

39 Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (London: Routledge, 1996), 178.

40 Ibid., 171-178.

41 Federico Mayor, préf. dans *Images de l'Autre: La Différence; du Mythe au Préjugé*, ed. K. Stenou (Paris: Seuil – Éditions UNESCO, 1998), 9.

The new forms of exclusion oblige us to rethink our educational strategies and conceptions, and the representations of the diversity of cultures underlying them. As Geertz noted with a suggestive image, cultural diversity currently resembles a collage more than a still life, a blurring of cultural contrasts that, in his opinion, makes it impossible to maintain the attitude, which Geertz exemplifies in Lévi-Strauss's *Race and Culture* and Richard Rorty's "Postmodern Bourgeois Liberalism," of the impermeability of we are who we are and they are who they are. Today, when foreignness does not start at the river's edge but in the perimeter of the skin, there is no choice but to meet the other and live with that knowledge, or else condemn oneself to an absurd solipsism.⁴² Diversity is no longer a particularity, but a new cultural lifestyle. More than ever before, cultures cannot be understood as closed-off, walled-in totalities with insurmountable limits, like billiard balls colliding one against the other, but as sets of interacting trends. An education in accord with this reality must, then, teach how to see the relativity and artificiality of cultural borders. In McCarthy's words, "proponents of multicultural education must cease to understand culture and identity in static and atheoretical terms, but instead must highlight the complex interpenetration of cultures."⁴³

This does not mean that, as Richard Rorty contends in his reply to Geertz, one would have to give up every reference we cling to, to open our minds so far that our brains fall out.⁴⁴ Not even from the most cosmopolitan stances, such as Martha Nussbaum's, is it expected to have to "abandon our personal affects and identifications."⁴⁵ As a prescriptive attitude, the children in our study have shown that they have a very internalised duty to accept and value others with their differences, and the conviction that such differences should not turn into sources of exclusion. But, as a life position, that duty is accompanied by a clear reference to one's own as an environment of safety. Perhaps that explains why the more familiar the other person is (i.e., the closer to a more direct experience), the greater the incidence of both identifications and explicit rejections becomes. He or she is the one who poses the greatest risk of questioning myself. It is an immediate presence, without any interceding filters: the other and I, fighting over the same space at the same time.

The children's tales suggest the unavoidable need we have to feel tied to some environment. If we always form ourselves within specific frames of reference, if the subject does not exist in abstract solitude, but always as a contextualised self, we cannot place ourselves in front of reality from no-place, nor from every-place at once. At the end, fostering respect and recognition of the other, as a moral attitude rather than only as something inevitable implies taking a specific position, one

42 Geertz, *Los Usos de la Diversidad* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1996), 67-92. See also Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Raza e Historia, Raza y Cultura* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1993); Richard Rorty, "Liberalismo Burgués Postmoderno," in *Objetividad, Relativismo y Verdad: Escritos Filosóficos I*. (Barcelona: Paidós, 1996), 267-274.

43 Cameron McCarthy, *The Uses of Culture: Education and the Limits of Ethnic Affiliation* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 154.

44 Rorty, "Sobre el Etnocentrismo: Respuesta a Clifford Geertz," in *Objetividad, Relativismo y Verdad: Escritos Filosóficos I* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1996), 276.

45 Nussbaum, "Patriotismo y Cosmopolitismo," 20.

which affirms the inherent value of each human being. Yet at the same time, since that position refers to humans without distinction, strict adherence means trusting the possibility to defend the general value of broadly shared aspirations such as equality, freedom, or rights.

Education cannot fall into empty relativism nor into self-complacent ethnocentrism. Reality is much more complex, and even more so when that reality is the other. No other is the same as me, but it is also true that no one is so strange that I cannot find something to share with him or her. Even in the most distant and hidden other, we can find something to talk to: "I think that her life is great, because she's smiling." Perhaps the main lesson to be learned from the children's tales is so evident that it may go unnoticed: of the 250 stories written by the children in this study, not one is the same as another, since no other is either completely the same nor completely different. Or, said another way, what is clear in the children's stories is that the other as such does not exist. What exists is Tana, Rekha, Kevin, Elena, Marta, Tomás,.... Teaching in a multicultural environment thus means helping to find the "you" that lives inside the other, being unique beyond tags and labels.

Something similar to what happens with the concept of race also happens to the concept of culture. Anthropologists do not agree on what we are supposed to make of it, and definitions vary widely. It has even been proposed that it also be abandoned as a category of analysis.⁴⁶ In any case, it seems clear that, certainly even more than race, the concept of culture cannot be understood statically and without life. If the notion of race can only explain 6% of the variability among humans, what percentage could explain the notion of culture? The way in which cultural influences work does not correspond exactly with the model of concentric rings of stoic cosmopolitanism.⁴⁷ Rather, it more resembles a complex network of interacting meanings.⁴⁸ That is why cultural twins do not exist. No map of cultural influences and experiences is the same as another. What we have, as Ortega y Gasset suggested, are particular biographies in specific circumstances, sharing some degree of biological characteristics and subject to cultural influxes at various proximities, and from which each individual story is written. Educating means helping someone permanently reconstruct his or her story in conversation with others.⁴⁹ Others who do not necessarily dress the same way I do, or perhaps have a skin tone different from my own.

46 Ayse S. Caglar, "Hyphenated Identities and the Limits of Culture," in *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community*, ed. T. Mood and P. Werbner (London. New York: Zed Books, 1997), 169-185.

47 Nussbaum, "Patriotismo y Cosmopolitismo," 19.

48 Geertz, *La Interpretación de las Culturas* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1995), 20.

49 Fernando Gil Cantero, "Educación y Narrativa: La Práctica de la Autobiografía en Educación," *Teoría de la Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 9 (1997).