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Immigrants and Native Families in Schools: Reconciling Trust and Diversity

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Abstract

This paper explores what the main perceptions of immigrant families are by native families and how these reflect in their trust in public schools. It reviews the existing literature on immigration and the main concepts of trust related to school culture and climate. The research is done in Barcelona and is based on in-depth interviews and focus groups, comparing the discourse of the parents of children in schools in neighborhoods with high and low levels of immigration. The data from the fieldwork indicate that the cultural, social and physical distance perceived by the natives, and the different language and religion of the immigrants constitute the major sources of prejudice and racism. Moreover, in my analysis I have distinguished between two different ways that perceptions on immigration result in distrust in institutions: perceptions that result in distrust within the schools and perceptions that result in distrust in higher level institutions.

Keywords

Immigration, Prejudice, Racism, Cultural Diversity, School Trust

Author's biographical note



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Introduction

In Catalonia, every eight student has a foreign nationality; in Barcelona there are 21.192 immigrant children in primary and secondary schools, representing 14% of the student population (Domingo & Bayona, 2016; Consorci d'Educació, 2015). Their distribution in the education system is unequal as they are overrepresented in public schools, although more than half of the centers in Barcelona are private or semi-private (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014). Within the public education system, there is also an overrepresentation of immigrants in certain neighborhoods. The high immigration concentration in certain neighborhood public schools has created a negative public opinion and it has been recorded that natives systematically avoid these centers, inscribing their children to other neighborhoods with less diversity or to semi-private or private centers (Pàmies, 2006). My research provides a more comprehensive understanding of this trend by examining the opinion native families have of the changing demographics due to immigration and how this affects their trust in their public primary schools.

Trust is an essential element for the existence of a positive climate and culture which are the main criteria that adults rely on when deciding to enroll their children in a certain school (Grady et al., 2010). The principal, administrative and teaching staff has a role to build parent trust by creating open and healthy relations, where information is exchanged and parents feel involved in school processes. When there are immigrants, cultural and social distance, as well as differences in norms and codes of conduct, perceived by the natives, are interwoven in the socialization process. This can lead to misunderstandings, ethnic conflicts and tensions that can hamper trust (Webber, 2002; Erdogan, 2016).

In this article the main objective is to understand how perceptions on immigration influences trust in schools. I will add to the existing literature on the topic by identifying the factors and processes native families perceive as being of key importance for trusting schools and how they are affected by representations of immigration.

Therefore, this paper tries to answer the following questions which will be used to guide the reconstruction of the empirical findings based on the perceptions of the interviewees:

What are the most common perceptions towards immigrants in schools?

Which discursive and practical effects do these perceptions have in relation to trust?

For this purpose, the article will explain the theoretical concepts of immigration and diversity and its impact on school trust. The significance of climate and culture and the role of different groups inside the school will be outlined in relation to trust of the family members of

the children. Afterwards, the qualitative techniques used to recollect the information in different neighborhoods in Barcelona will be explained. As perceptions on immigration could differ depending on its percentage, I distinguish between high and low immigration schools. Finally, I will discuss the results of the in-depth study and what are the implications of immigration and cultural diversity on trust.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. School trust

As schools are composed of various groups, such as families, students, teachers and administrators, trust depends upon the relations between these groups and to which extent they regard each other as trustworthy. Therefore, family trust, as I will analyze in this paper, is the combination of trust in the school direction and administration, in teachers and the perception of the culture and climate (Adams & Barneés, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011). Family trust will depend on the interactions and communication, mutual respect and a common view of the education of their children in relation to the staff and their ability to provide a safe learning environment.

In addition, attitudes of trust can differ depending on the type of relations that are at play and on what exactly is being trusted (Frederiksen, 2012). Family trust can develop at the interpersonal level, that is towards the school administration and teachers, as well as at a more abstract institutional level. The degree of trust of families towards their local public school do not have to coincide with their trust towards the education system in general (Richardson & Bucheri, 2016). Nevertheless, interpersonal trust or distrust can spillover to the institutional one and vice-versa. For example, if families have a bad experience with their local school this might reflect in their view of the education system and institutions. Accordingly, in the interview analysis I will differentiate between the trust in the local level and the education system and institutions.

1.2. Trust and immigration

Internal conditions are very important for trust. However, the external context of schools, such as size, a strong community and voluntary associations can create the conditions for fostering trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Parents or family members of the children constitute the main community and their informal relations formed outside the formal hours are indicative of the school culture. The staff is responsible for fostering the feeling of a shared

mission and network of the community. Apart from that, the stability of the student body affects the strength of the community. If the student population changes frequently or the families do not have enough resources to get engaged in extracurricular activities, there is no sufficient dialogue and engagement among parents and among parents and teachers and conditions for less trust are created. This happens in neighborhoods where there is high immigrant fluctuation as the students and families constantly move.

Diversity level, in terms of status, family background, class and ethnicity, can hamper the cohesive relationships and trust formation (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Diversity, such as immigration caused diversity, makes the formation of trust more difficult (Putnam, 2007; Dinesen & Sønderskov 2015). When there are different cultures, nationalities, races and religions shared values, norms and background experiences are less common and this can easily lead to conflicts and misunderstandings (Webber, 2002; Oberg et al., 2011). With diversity there is more incertitude and suspicion about the actions of others and because of a lack of knowledge of different norms, opinion of other nationalities and cultures can stem from stereotypes and evaluations on their behavior can be based on prejudice (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2006). Apart from regarding immigrant with suspicion, these biases can be detrimental as they can lead to unquestioned trust in in-group members, that is other native families and educators.

Aversion against immigration can have a racist overtone, which does not necessarily require race but operates through classifications and differentiation based on culture, ethnicity and religion as determinants of behavior (Stolcke, 1995; Lentin, 2008; Nowicka, 2017). This new racism also labeled as culturalist racism ‘emphasizes cultural differences (including lifestyles, habits, customs, and manners) and paints a threatening picture of the mixing and interbreeding of cultures and ethnic groups.’ (Wodak & Reisigl, 1999, pg.181)

Different immigrant groups are more vulnerable to racist attitudes and discrimination by the majority as they vary in their historical relations, marked by colonialism and lower economic and power position, to the dominant society (D’hondt et al., 2015). In Spanish schools, the image of immigration, especially the one coming from non-European economically disadvantaged countries, is associated with degradation, conflict and violence (Aramburu, 2002; Carrasco, 2004). Language, religion, lower level of education of immigrant children, differences in view of education goals by their parents, low participation of families in the autochthonous culture, and inferiority of the immigrant culture are the main problems perceived by the native population (Carrasco et al., 2009). It has been recorded that negative

perceptions about immigrants can derive in low assessment of the schools where immigrants concentrate as well as their overall negative image (Carrasco et al., 2009).

Strenuous intercultural relations, ethnic tensions (Larson, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Dessel, 2010; Erdogan, 2016), different cultural and religious practices, discrepancies in the ways children should be educated and incongruous codes of conduct between native and immigrant families (Carrasco et al., 2009) can pose a major threat to the trust system. Family trust will depend on the schools' ability of diminishing the possible vulnerabilities, risks and conflicts that parents could perceive concerning diversity.

Nevertheless, the negative relationship between diversity and trust can be mitigated by factors such as increased intercultural contact, residential desegregation and open social climates (Gundelach & Freitag, 2014; Koopmans & Veit, 2014; Ziller, 2015). In line with the contact hypothesis, increased intercultural contact and social interactions can have a positive effect on out-group attitudes leading to trust. Studies conducted in neighbourhoods with immigration have shown that when the possibilities of interethnic contact are more frequent trusting attitudes are more probable in context of diversity (Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). Therefore, the possible negative effect that diversity can have on trust can be significantly reduced by intercultural friendships and even sporadic interactions (Laurence, 2011; Gundelach & Freitag, 2014).

Considering the above literature on diversity and trust, in this study I will look at how the perceptions of native families on immigration influence their trust in the school functioning and its ability to cope with diversity.

The existent literature on diversity and trust in education has concentrated on prejudice, stereotypical and racist beliefs held by teachers and principals towards minorities and its effect on the trust culture (Larson, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, 1998; Erdogan, 2016). However, how diversity affects the native parents' trust in schools and institutions that regulate education has not been explored so far.

2. Context and methodology

In primary schools in Barcelona there is a prevalence of immigrants from Asia, Central and South America and Maghreb. In the last ten years, the student population from Asia and Maghreb has doubled and is on the increase, although students from Central and South America are still the majority (Ballestin, 2017). The weight of the rapid growth of these pupils in compulsory education (from 6 to 16) and their high presence in the obligatory pre-school

education has been assumed mostly by public schools (Gibson & Carrasco, 2009). These schools with high levels of immigration, labeled as high complexity schools, receive more resources from the Consortium of Education in terms of extra teachers, lower student-teacher ratio, an extra teaching hour, and depending on their needs they could be assigned social workers, psychologist and intercultural mediators.

In the two districts of Ciutat Vella and Sants Montjuic, where I did my research, the predominant nationalities in schools reflect the city average, mostly immigration from Asia and Maghreb, although in Ciutat Vella students from EU countries and in Sants Monjutic from South America constitute an important percentage of the student body. The two districts are composed of neighbourhoods with differing levels of immigration: Ciutat Vella with Barri Gotic (46%) and Raval (50%); Sants-Monjuic with La Marina Port (15%) and Font de la Guatlla (19%). Although all districts across Barcelona experience segregation in terms of origin of the students in schools, the two districts of my fieldwork have the highest level of segregation between schools with and without immigration (Sindic de Greuges de Catalunya, 2016).

Furthermore, Ciutat Vella started receiving the first waves of immigration that came to Barcelona, and hence schools in this district have more experience in dealing with immigration than the ones in Sants Montjuic which has started receiving immigrants recently. In this way, I could see the different opinions and relations formed between parents in schools with high and low immigration levels as the contact with people from different origins can have an influence on the views of immigration and intercultural relations (Sides & Citrin, 2007). Also, previous research has demonstrated that the ethnic composition of schools can have an impact on the integration, intercultural relations and sense of belonging of immigrants in schools (Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009). Still, these neighbourhoods have a similar socioeconomic status of the residents, with Font de la Guatlla and Gotic having a higher renta per capita than La Marina del Port and Raval². I have purposefully selected schools in context of social inequality as it is well known in education literature that in these contexts family school relations can be difficult (Garreta, 2008; Paniagua, 2017).

In order to answer my questions and to get a general overview of the perceptions about immigration I conducted my fieldwork in ten schools in the two districts where I did my fieldwork Ciutat Vella and Sants-Montjuic. I have contacted native parents of five public primary schools in Ciutat Vella and four in Sants-Montjuic. Apart from this, I have interviewed native parents of two private schools in Ciutat Vella and one private one in Sants-Montjuic who have deliberately chosen not to take their children to public schools because of the high

percentage of immigrants. The parents involved in parent associations (PAs) were interviewed first and, through snowball sampling, I got contacts of more parents as well as through direct approach in the centers of interest and in places of neighborhood gatherings such as public libraries and parks. I observed the interactive patterns and the language used by native parents to describe the existent relations with the teachers, directors and the immigrant parents and children.

I have tried to encompass a plurality of opinions by interviewing people with varying characteristics such as different socio-economic status, profession, age and level of education, and low and high levels of commitment to the school. Thirty-two in-depth interviews were conducted in total, 16 in Ciutat Vella and 16 in Sants Montjuic.

Consequently, the research was done through a general interview guide as it gives more room for interactions and lets the interviewees tell a story about their personal experiences. The questions were previously structured, but they allowed the possibility for asking follow up questions or changing the order depending on the responses (Turner, 2010).

The operationalization of parent trust was based on the definitions developed by Bryk and Schneider (2002) and Forsyth et al. (2002). Questions include the different dimensions of trust in schools such as the perception on the openness, reliability, benevolence, honesty, competence and respect of the school and the trust in the direction and administrations and teachers. The questions on perceptions of immigration are based on studies by Pettigrew and Meertens (2006), and Van Dijk (2010). After the data was gathered, I used discourse analysis to identify the main themes that arose around the concepts of immigration and trust in the interviews. The main technique used was the identification of the rhetorical and conversational strategies such as macropropositions which are general topics that are derived from various propositions in the text. To a lesser extent I have used contrast, generalization, exaggeration, evasion, mitigation, displacement, presuppositions, disclaimer, threat rhetoric and associations as categories of analysis (Van Dijk, 2010). In prejudiced discourse contrast refers to differentiating between “us” and “them” and contrasting the difference in lifestyles and customs between the in-group and out-group, generalization is marked by phrases that express an action or an attribute that is always present in the out-group, exaggeration is an overstatement of the characteristics or an event done by the members of the out-group, evasion is the avoidance of stating one’s own opinion directly. Mitigation is used for presenting oneself in a positive light, through showing understanding and tolerance for the out-group, and displacement refers to displacing the negative opinions a person holds by saying that other people hold this prejudice. Presuppositions are those propositions that are generally accepted

as true but actually are not and they might presuppose false beliefs and have indirect connotations. Disclaimer is the semantic move in the text from the positive presentation about “Us” and a negative presentation of the “Other”, for which the first part is used for face keeping and giving a good impression in order to explain the second part which is negative. Threat rhetoric refers to representation of immigrants in terms of threat to the dominant culture and attributing them negative characteristics such as taking away resources from the native population (Van Dijk, 2010).

3. Data analysis

In order to answer the question of which perceptions are the most common about immigrants in the educational setting, I have identified the most frequent thematic areas in the construction of particular perceptions from the interviews. The following table shows the most recurrent thematic areas appearing in discourse and their frequency, measured as the number of interviews in which a particular perception appears.

Main thematic areas	Frequency of appearance in discourse
Cultural distance	35%
Social distance	23%
Lower quality of education	10%
Language	8%
Religion	8%
Deteriorated external image	7%
Social benefits and priority treatment	6%

Table 1: Thematic areas in discourse

Through the data analysis, using macroproposition analysis, I will show what the main arguments are for supporting the most common perceptions and the frequency by which they appear in the interviews presented in percentages. Furthermore, I will explain how each of these perceptions reflects on trust in the community, direction and teachers, and local institutions.

3.1. Cultural distance

The perception of cultural distance is articulated through three main arguments: that immigrants stay within their community without integrating in the host country (44%), that they try to impose their norms (32%), and that their cultural values are backward and incompatible with native's ways of raising children (24%).

In the following example we can see that native families regard immigrants as unwilling to learn more about the culture where they are coming to and that they are not willing to adapt to the native's way of living:

'If you go to one of those schools you will see a group of Pakistanis, Indus, talking in their language, it is their way of thinking and living, they do not integrate with anyone, not even different nationalities between themselves, it is all divided in different groups (by nationality). They should redistribute the school positions for immigrants and natives better. The authorities had to do so from the beginning. If, at the time, the authorities redistributed the different nationalities and cultures better, immigration would not be a problem in Raval at all.' (71, Raval).

In this extract immigrants are seen as the only ones that should put the effort to adapt to the local culture which should not be modified by their customs. The over representation of particular nationalities in schools which is portrayed as a cultural threat leads to a lack of confidence that the governing institutions are managing immigration well. The importance of government intervention is accentuated for the better redistribution of immigrants in the different neighborhoods of Barcelona. Also, a demand for better institutional mechanisms to breach the communication gap between native and immigrant families has also been pointed out by other interviewees.

Secondly, the other most recurrent argument is that immigrants do not respect the norms of the native culture and impose their own norms.

'Because they come with their norms, beliefs and for us this is no good. We are not Senegalese, Jews, we are not Moors. It does not do us any good, we're not used to it.

Q: What should the schools do about this?

I do not know; they should have separate schools for them.' (41, La Marina del Port)

Differentiation and contrast between "our" and "their" norms are used to represent immigrants as a threat to the native's culture. In the extract, this differentiation leads to the

interviewee demanding a different school for immigrants, that is a more restrictive and separatist policy from the authorities.

The third argument supporting the cultural distance perception is that the customs and culture of the immigrants are seen as backward and inferior to the Catalan and Spanish culture and improper for raising children.

‘If the education in their house is the same, the school will not be able to change it.

What we are going to accomplish is to add some values to the ones they already have and when they grow up the next generation is going to remove something from their values. But this will be hard. We are talking like when Spain was in the postwar period and had land chiefs, we needed more than forty-five years to evolve.

The same thing will happen to them.

Q: Do they have to evolve?

They have to have an internal cultural evolution.

Q: Should they change?

It's better if they're like ... It's not like they have to be like me. But to evolve so that their beliefs are a little more open. They are a little closed now.’ (48, Raval)

Here we can see that the use of the word ‘evolve’ presupposes that immigrants’ culture, in this case the Pakistani, is backward and inferior compared to the native’s culture, which is seen as superior. The culture the immigrants transmit to their children at home is seen as having wrong values that need to be modified. Their homes are considered to be a sphere where the teachers cannot interfere, but at the same time their values and closeness are seen to negatively affect the school culture because they bring in their values.

Similarly, the way immigrants educate and raise their children is regarded as a direct result of their customs which are considered to be improper for raising children.

‘Parents have a lot of influence over a child. When dressing, talking, solving problems, relating to people. The kids are the parents.

Should they make more effort?

Schools with a lot of immigration should work a lot with the parents. In these schools the problem are the families. It is their culture, not because it is bad or wrong, but it is for their country not for here.’ (40, Raval)

In these extracts the interviewee demands a higher school implication with immigrant parents as the norms by which immigrants educate their children are incompatible and clash with the local norms. From this and other interviewees, I have detected that the vision that

immigrant's culture is conflicting with education leads to expectations of stricter policies by the direction and administration.

The perceptions of irreconcilable cultural differences between native and immigrant families, hampers trust in schools. The relations in schools are characterized by the difficulty of establishing contact and an effective communication because of feelings of cultural threat and distance. These strenuous intercultural relations deteriorate mostly the expectations of behavior between families and staff which are necessary for trust and influence negatively the culture and climate. Moreover, perceptions of cultural distance have an impact on the perception of lack of competence by the direction because it is unable to cope with immigration and therefore this results in less trust in the direction and a feeling of insufficient institutional support. Native families expect of teachers and directors to enforce their culture on immigrants, which would increase their confidence in the school. Thus, apart from parent trust in the direction, native parents do not feel that the school is competent enough as it is not carrying out its responsibilities in regard to immigration.

3.2. Social distance

The social and participative relations between parents are also seen as deteriorated because of the presence of non-European immigrants, as native families believe immigrants tend to separate. The interviewees have indicated that they are not very participatory in socializing activities since they are rarely part of the PAs (38%), they do not attend birthday parties that native parents organize (30%) and do not interact with the parents from other nationalities in the school yard and parks (25%) and to a lesser extent that they do not attend parent teacher meetings (7%).

‘Q: Is the PA participatory?

What happens is that in the end the one who ends up taking charge of the PA and of these things is a profile of people who are usually from here or other type of immigrants, as are the English, Italian, with a higher cultural level or more similar to the one here, this is what happens in practice, but it is open to everyone. In the class of my daughter it is more conflictive because there are more communities and less people who are integrated and the parents we have not made a friend circle.’ (48, Gotic)

As we can observe in this extract, the European culture is regarded as superior as opposed to the allegedly backward and distant immigrant culture. Interviewees consider

immigrants from non-European countries to be harder to relate to, which has repercussions in less social relations and cohesion among parents, the PA and in the community.

‘Q: What about the activities of the school, do the parents of the immigrants collaborate?’

No. They make their ghetto. You see someone here except her who is Peruvian. Look they are not around they are out there (in the school yard)

Q: And why do you think this happens?

Because they are raised like this, the Filipinos go all together. That is their culture. They are very closed. You do not see a Moroccan woman here because neither does her religion allow it nor does her husband let her. This is very delicate. You cannot talk about it because they treat you as racist. I'm not racist I'm just telling the truth.

Q: But do they collaborate on the school board, in the PA?

No ... When they have to collaborate they do not collaborate and if they have to leave the school full of shit they do and they even complain.’ (44, Marina del Port)

In the above extract, we see the interviewee expressed, through generalization, that Muslim women are not allowed to participate in the activities and to relate to other parents. The interviewee uses a disclaimer as she denies she is a racist as an excuse of what she is saying and presenting herself in a positive light. These negative opinions and stereotypes she holds of Moroccan women lead her to think that they are disrespectful with the PA as they are uncivil and dirty, and they never collaborate.

As mentioned above, according to native parents, birthday parties of the kids as well as the interaction in the parks are another socializing activity in which there is scarce presence of immigrants. This is inculcated upon the immigrants and it is not questioned whether they are doing something to alienate them.

‘For children's birthdays, parents usually bring cookies, they do not do this. Other parents invite them to birthday parties, and they do not go. And they do not invite us (...) They call us racist but in the park, they make their own group. Who is racist? They do not let their children play with ours.’ (Focus group: 43, 48; Marina del Port)

From these examples we see that the non-participation of immigrants in the social life of the school is regarded negatively by the parents and that it affects the social interactions between parents which are reflected upon the kids. Thus, there is a negative repercussion on the climate as the quality of relations and atmospheres are seen as deteriorated. Local parents

have an expectation that immigrant parents should participate in the PAs, birthday parties, and interact more in the parks.

According to the data I have detected that natives think that immigrant parents do not participate in the PA and consequently certain activities cannot be implemented nor pushed forward. Native parents believe that immigrants are only involved in the PA, in the council, or in parent meetings to discuss issues related to their religion and culture. They are seen as imposing their norms and values and interrupting meetings with their concerns. In contrast, native parents inside the PA are putting a lot of effort to make it function. There is blind trust and no questioning whether native parents are not open enough or whether they do not know how to attract immigrants to participate.

When we look at data on the level of activity of the different PAs across Catalonia it is true that more active ones usually have lower levels of immigration and they are usually composed of parents that have university studies and pertain to the middle to higher social class (Alegre et al., 2010; Sindic el defensor de les persones, 2016). On the contrary, schools with more immigration and lower family socioeconomic status have weak associations and it is more difficult for them to get more resources. The associations that are most active and have the power to promote numerous activities are also the ones who can more easily get subventions from the Education Department. This leads to a competitive advantage of schools that already have a strong functioning association that can promote better services to its students. Therefore, parents, with higher socioeconomic status, that want more extracurricular activities, trips and overall services would choose a school with lower immigration and a better functioning association of mothers and fathers reproducing the same social division between centers. Native parents associate more immigration levels with less cohesive associations and less attractive activities, leading to distrust in these schools. However, the reasons why native parents believe immigrants do not participate in associations is rather because they have a prejudice that they are not interested, and their culture is inferior and backward. While it is these native parents that have higher socio-economic status that because of bias tend to avoid centers with immigration and at the same time they have more economic and cultural capital to make the associations function.

Consequently, we see that immigration is associated to feelings of less cohesion among the immigrant and native parents and children. Being part of the community and voluntary associations reinforces social cohesion which is an important predictor of trust relations. Therefore, immigration is seen to be influencing negatively an important predictor of trust in

schools. Overall, less feeling of cohesion, shared values, and quality of relations leads to a perception of a poorer culture and climate.

3.3. Lower quality of education

Another perception about immigration is that it necessarily lowers the quality of the classes, while it does not present any benefits. The main arguments supporting this perception is that immigrants slow down the pace of class (73%) and that they have a low level of education (27%).

The interviewees regard the low quality that immigration poses as something the Consortium of education should regulate.

‘The quality of education is low. But there are people that are from abroad that until they integrate and learn the language it takes time. If they do not know the language they slow down the pace of the class (...) I think there should be more teachers. If the neighborhood has more conflicts, there should be more teachers. In this neighborhood there are problems like poverty, immigration...It is the Consortium for Education that should do it. The level is low.’ (35, Raval)

In line with that, in the next example the interviewee acknowledges that his child benefits from the diversity in the school, but the level of education is low because of it.

‘Q: Would you later put your children in a school without diversity?’

Yes. Of course. I like the high school San Ignacio on Caspe Street because if they want to have a university degree, I would like them to be more equal in education with others if not it is going to be hard for them.

Q: Is there less diversity in this school? Of course it is a private school and you pay 500 euros per month for the child and there are many people here who cannot pay, they do not have this option.’ (48, Gotic)

The perception that immigration lowers the quality of education makes natives believe that the public schools cannot keep up the same standard for all kids and therefore are not as competent, which is an indicator of trust. The academic results are in most cases unknown by parents because of their scarce dissemination by the public administration. Therefore, the academic performance of schools is based on parent’s assumptions and on the ethnic or socio-economic composition of the school (Ortiz, 2014). They believe that semi-private schools are better because immigration is more regulated and not overrepresented thus not burdening the class dynamics. This generates distrust towards immigration policies of public schools which are mainly seen as the responsibility of the Consortium of Education.

Further to this, certain countries of origin where immigrants come from, such as India, Pakistan, and Morocco are regarded as having less demanding and deficient education systems. Immigrants from these countries are considered to have a low level of education as the next extract indicates: ‘In my daughter’s class there are two Hindu kids and it’s very hard for the teacher to make them understand anything’ (Focus group: 39, 40, 45; Marina del Port).

The interview presents the teacher in a positive light while the two immigrant students are presented as problematic. Other interviewees, as well, regard teachers as doing everything that is in their means, but because of immigrant students they cannot achieve a higher standard in the classroom. Despite this, almost all of the interviewees said that they have complete trust in the teacher’s competence.

Overall, the competence indicator of trust is affected by negative perceptions of immigration, while trust in teachers is maintained. In addition, the data from the interviews indicates that this distrust in the performance capability results in families with higher education emphasize the importance of the education project when choosing a center. However, schools with high immigration also have very innovative projects but this is disregarded in the case of native parents.

3.4. Language

The fact that immigrants do not know the language well or that they do not use it enough is regarded negatively by the natives and as they are unwilling to fully integrate in the life and culture of the city. The interviewees have the view that there are communication problems with immigrants because they do not know the language (60%) and they are not willing to learn the language (40%).

Native parents condemn immigrants from Morocco, Pakistan and India for not willing to communicate with them and for not understanding what the teachers have to tell them about their children at the parent teacher meetings: ‘They are at a school meeting, the first class meeting and it is not in Catalan, as there are foreigners, it is in Spanish. And they do not understand anything. Because they have no interest.’ (Focus group: 39, 40, 45; Marina del Port).

The perception that immigrants are not willing to learn the language is reflected in the complaint that the higher institutions for education should change their policies of providing translators and giving too much support for language reinforcement as we can see in the example below:

‘Do you think there should be reception classrooms, or there should not be spending on these things?

I think it's up to you. You have to be aware that you are going to another country.

Let the child learn by playing with other children in the park, let him learn little by little.’ (47, Raval)

Apart from this, interviewees perceive that the language difficulties of the immigrants interfere with the performance capability of the school affecting the trust in the competence of the school, although, the work of the teachers is not questioned.

Although seeing the benefits of the existent linguistic diversity in schools, the interviewees do not regard all languages to be prestigious and not all are seen as beneficial for their children which is why they do not support extracurricular classes teaching immigrant languages. In this context of linguistic hierarchies (Casco, 2015), based on the utility in the labour market, Arabic and Urdu are not regarded as useful as English, French or other European languages.

3.5. Religion

Religion is another important aspect which seems to determine perceptions on immigration. Different religions, in particular Muslim, are regarded as more problematic and more disturbing for the education system. The main reasons that the interviewees have enlisted are that religion is an impediment for immigrants to participate in organized activities (43%) and that they impose their religious practices in schools which are secular (43%).

In the following example the interviewee sees the Muslim religion as interfering too much in established practices:

‘Q: Do you think immigration is harmful?

Immigration is not harmful. We are harming ourselves by helping too much. Things should not be made so easy for them. You have to know how when to stop. This is a non-religious school. If they are celebrating Ramadan it should not matter, they should do a field trip. We cannot leave a whole class without going on a field trip because it is Ramadan, although more than 30% is Muslim. This means to make things easier for them. That does not seem right. And the school changes the field trip.

Q: If you have a complaint about this to the school can you vocalize it? Or they do not care?

They do not care. They do not care.’ (48, Raval)

In this interview we see that Muslim immigrants are seen as receiving a better treatment and more concessions from the administration, while the natives' opinions on the matter are not taken into account. This deteriorates the relations between native parents and the direction, and it worsens the perception of the reliability of the school because it is too loose with immigrants. The differentiation as a result of diverging religious practices creates tension among immigrants and natives which replicates in their relations and in socializing activities.

Similarly, the imposition of the religious practices such as special dietary requirements are seen negatively by the native parents. The school is seen as a public space where religion should not interfere and this should be assured by the Consortium of Education, as we can see in:

'I am shocked that these families who could take their children home leave them in the school and want to impose that there must be a halal option... eh ...it is a public education ... I think the Consortium should make a decision about what should be the dining options. But I do not agree with the decision they have made. I believe that religion should be totally out of this matter. And that's it.' (Raval).

In this center in Ciutat Vella, a group of native parents also tried to protest against this policy by contacting the direction and the Consortium of education. As the interviewee noted the imposition of the halal food⁸ contrary to the native's parent opinion made them feel they do not have much influence on policy, which is important for parent trust as it shows the school considers parents' opinion (Forstyh et al., 2011).

Consequently, the perception of intrusive religious practices results in less trust in the direction and it affects the perception of reliability as it is not imposing stricter policies.

3.6. Deteriorated external school image

Overall, a bad external image of schools is associated with immigration.

'And I tell you that I have no complaint, I do not care that they come, because poor children it is not their fault. But it should be regulated a little who enters the school. Because there is a bad image of this neighborhood that does not correspond to it. And we already have too much of it. This neighborhood has been a marginal neighborhood always. So that now certain people come to the school so that we become even more marginal.... And this is what she (the director) should watch out for.' (44, Marina del Port).

The interviewees' demand for stricter controls, selection of who enters the school and the bad image it projects to the outside is inculcated on the direction. The bad image is

attributed to the low socioeconomic position and allegedly backward cultural baggage of the immigrant families. In the next extract we can see immigrant children are portrayed as disrespectful: 'The public schools are a disaster (in Raval), there is the high school Mila and Fontanals, it is a disaster. If half the children do not speak Spanish or Catalan what can you expect (...) the kids are the problem, they go to war.' (Raval).

This bad image associated with immigration, especially non-European immigration, in public schools is the cause for parents choosing private centers or outside of the neighborhood. The main complaint from native families is that they do not want their children to go to a center where the majority is immigrant. The interviewees with higher education always stress using a disclaimer that they are not racist but it is rather the levels of immigration that are too high. They explain that they do not want their children to be the stranger among their classmates as they are worried that they would not be equally accepted by the kids of other nationalities. There is a sense of group threat, which makes it unconceivable that natives can be a minority in a school or that there is another predominant nationality which is not Catalan. This idea is linked to an imaginary threshold of tolerance which if surpassed the cohesion and identity of the group are seen as destabilized (Pamies, 2006). However, it is mostly the immigrants from non-occidental cultures that are regarded as a threat. For this the direction and higher-level institutions are blamed and there is a demand for a better redistribution of immigration in the schools that it is more representative of the immigration of the neighborhood which is not the big majority as it happens in some schools.

'What they do not like is the public that goes to school. And this I know from the parents who are my friends. Everyone is gone, everyone.

If there would be only 40% of children from outside and 60% of children from here, then people would take their child and that 40% (of immigrants) would be dragged by that 60% (of natives) and this would greatly improve the level of the school. It should not be the opposite distribution, that you are the immigrant in your own neighborhood.

Q: What about the Consortium of Education, and the Generalitat?

All of them are just so intelligent. What they do is make schools that are ghettos and these schools are behind other ones.' (Raval)

In both districts, it is the parents that did not take their children to the public school that have said that they do not trust the public education in their neighborhood because of high levels of immigration. While, the families with children enrolled in public schools, even though they are not too satisfied with the fact that immigration levels are too high, are overall trustful

of the functioning of the school. Therefore, negative perceptions of immigration affect more parent trust when they are deciding to enroll their children in the school than when they are inside.

3.7. Social benefits and priority treatment

In the interviews it has come up that there is a perception that immigrants receive more aids than the natives and are given priorities and better treatment. This negative image of immigrants and a stereotype that they all are all taking advantage of the system is blamed on the administration that allows this behavior. The administration is seen as responsible for managing aid more equally between the immigrant and native families and also the local Catalan government is seen as the responsible institution for managing better school scholarships. The perception that immigrants are benefiting more leads to the feeling of lack of control and low quality of services of the school and the local government.

‘We should assume that they (immigrants) take advantage of everything. The PA has a big part of the responsibility. They take advantage and there is a lack of good management. If there was better quality and more control we would all benefit more. If this worked well then there would be good quality for everyone and there would not be these small differences. Because I would also like to benefit and have three months of food allowance for free. In all these years I did not get anything. I have no right to anything ... The Generalitat has a strong voice, but the school allows it...’ (49, Marina del Port).

In the extract, there is a generalization and exaggeration that all immigrants take more benefits and there is a contrast compared to the natives who are presented as more deserving of these social aids. In the other interviews the perception is towards immigrants in general with a special accentuation on immigrants from Pakistan, India, and Morocco, who are seen as abusing the aid that are given. The regional institutional body as well as the school is considered to be allowing these practices and being too generous with social aid. The overall opinion from the interviews is that there needs to be more transparency and a higher quality of services and more control of who benefits from these aids.

Accordingly, the perception that immigrant children and families receive more benefits and preferential treatment lowers trust in the competence of the direction and administration and higher-level institutions.

4. Data discussion

My data reveals that non-European immigrants, especially the ones from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Morocco and India are the object of negative representations and are differentiated from European immigration. Immigrant parents are perceived as not providing a healthy home environment because they are not aware of their children's behavior in the school yard and park and they are not disciplined enough. In interviews, it has also come up that immigrant parents use physical violence with their children, do not care to communicate with the teachers and do not attend meetings to hear about their child's advancement. Also, native families believe that immigrant families do not transmit the right educational values to their children because they believe that their values and cultural practices clash with the school's (Smyth, 2009). Therefore, parent responsibilities such as being aware of child's behavior, providing a healthy home environment and promoting educational values are seen as unfulfilled by immigrant parents. Native families do not think that immigrant parents are fulfilling their responsibilities towards school which leads to distrustful relations between them (Forsyth et al., 2011). Most of these negative representations that I have detected in the interviews are related to immigrant parents' lower socio-economic status and their necessity to work under inflexible working hours, all of which can pose difficulties for their involvement in formal and informal school activities and learning the language. However, the interviewees saw ethnicity and culture as the main impediment in the adaptation of immigrant families in schools. They ascribed the underachievement of immigrant students to their deficient culture and place of origin rather than to the structural obstacles that these students face (Dei, 2008). As explained by Franze (2003) the educational difficulties of immigrants are attributed to their ethnic and cultural differences which are exaggerated and are portrayed as insurmountable giving away to a culturalist discourse of exclusion and racism (Stolcke, 1995). The categories of ethnicity, culture and religion are primordialized and are seen as the determinants for the uncivil and morally deficient behavior of the families (Lentin, 2008; Geulen, 2011). The Muslim religion in particular has a negative connotation, and as other school ethnographies have revealed it is linked to the pejorative historical connotation of "Moors" (Franze, 2008; Rios-Rojas, 2014, pg.10). As Carrasco et al. (2011) pointed out, Islam is seen as a barrier for the learning and participation of Muslim families in schools.

These representations reinforce the idea of exclusion and give away to the possibility of exercising racism where more restrictive policies are demanded from schools and local institutions, thus affecting the native parents trust in them. There is a perception that these

institutions are prioritizing the needs of the immigrants at the expense of the native population (Finney & Simpson, 2009).

At the school level, the aspects of trust that are most affected are the competence, reliability and openness of the administration and teachers. The interviewees that have a negative image of immigration do worry that the administration is not doing enough to counteract the negative effects of immigration and that is not implementing the right policies or undertaking the necessary measures. They have pointed out that the staff should make the values of the school clear to the immigrant parents, have more cultural mediators, and not let their religious and cultural norms influence the school. As to the measure of reliability, the interviewees have also said that the school cannot have an equal standard for all students as they have to pay more attention to immigrant children. Interviewees have mentioned that the openness of the schools is slightly deteriorated as native parents think that the administration and direction does not listen to their demands regarding immigration and prioritizes the needs of immigrant parents, pointing out that there are not enough channels for native families to share their concerns. However, my data shows that the interviewees who have not taken their children to a public school of the neighborhood because of high levels of immigration are most distrustful of these centers. While the ones that have children inside the public schools, have a better opinion and are overall more trustful of them. Therefore, the image of deteriorated high diversity schools can be mitigated by the staff once parents inscribe their children. This is in line with the studies that show that more intercultural interactions and open social climates, as the ones in high diversity schools, where tolerant social norms are promoted lead to more tolerant attitudes towards immigrants and more trust (Ziller et al., 2019; Tolsma & Van der Meer 2017).

The data collected indicate that a negative representation of immigration does have an impact on the perceived relationship between children, between parents, between children and teachers, and between parents and administration. The relationship between these different groups is essential for forming trust. Unhealthy school relations do lead to a worse perception of the climate by the parents and family members of children. The interviewees expressed feelings of less social cohesion, community and social networks, all of which impedes trustful relations to be formed (Coleman, 1988). Prejudice and racial bias lower the possibility of contact, communication and community building between immigrant and natives accentuating the differentiation between them even more.

Similarly, negative perceptions on diversity derive in less trust in the direction and administration. Native parents think that there should be more control of who enters the school

and how immigration is managed. Contrary to these trust relationships, native parents have complete trust in their teachers. They believe that teachers deal with immigration adequately, teach well, and are very competent and reliable. There is no questioning whether teachers are in any way excluding immigrant children in the classroom or that simply they are unprepared to deal with diversity. Also, there is high trust in the way that PA representatives are organizing the activities and native families are seen as investing time and a lot of effort in making the community function.

We see that the effect of negative representations of immigration do not affect the same way all school groups. There is high in-group trust (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 2006), that is in teachers and other native families, however this is not the case with the direction. There is less trust in the direction which is seen as having a more implementationist role for executing restrictionist policies, while teachers or PA representatives do not.

Apart from the quality of relations, other elements of school climate such as the atmosphere of the school, and elements of school culture, the norms and values, are seen as deteriorated by immigrants. Exemptions because of religious holidays, wearing a veil, the lack of participation of the immigrant parents in formal and informal activities, religious practices interfering with field trips, segregation in the school yard, not attending birthday parties of native children, not knowing the language, and not integrating in the native's culture and deteriorated exterior image of the center are seen as damaging. Parents felt there was a lack of common values with immigrant families and as a result less clarity of common educational goals and interconnectedness.

Thus, when there is a negative image of immigration based on native's opinion on the school relations and norms, features of climate and culture important for trust, are seen as deteriorated.

Analyzing the connection of immigration and trust, I have detected that when there is a positive opinion, perceptions about immigrants do not affect negatively trust in schools. Parents with no prejudice and racial bias do not think that immigrant families are not educating their children properly or not participating in activities because they are careless. They believe that the staff and native families in the PA are mutually responsible for approaching immigrant families, although they think there needs to be more institutional support for approximating immigrant families to the school. They do not perceive that immigrants impose their norms and values and even see it beneficial if their religion, culture, and languages are incorporated into the programme. As they are more understanding of immigrant behavior and culture, they described the community as cohesive where a generally positive atmosphere prevails. Also,

there is no perception of a lower quality of education. This is why they do not have more demands from the direction and administration in relation to immigration.

However, all interviewees, regardless if their opinion is positive or negative on immigration, generally think that the effects of immigration should be resolved by the city level institutions rather than just their local schools. The education institutions and local government are seen as the main institutions that did not react on time when immigration became more prominent in Barcelona and they allowed the formation of “ghettoes” by different nationalities and an overrepresentation of immigrants in certain schools. They are urged to redistribute the levels of immigration across the education system and to promote a better image of these centers. The interviewees complained about the institutional abandonment and neglect of high diversity centers seen in the lack of human and financial resources and unequal conditions in comparison to other schools with lower levels of immigration.

The distrust in the local level institutions is followed by general distrust in the education system, portrayed as antiquated and in the need of renovation, which projects negatively in the trust that native parents have in public schools. Therefore, many opt out for semi-private schools which apart from having fewer immigrants follow more closely the work of their students and have more means to fulfill their educational project.

We have to have in mind that the reduced government spending in education as a consequence of the recent austerity measures that Spain has undergone has caused a general institutional dissatisfaction. The negative image of immigration coupled with the previous discontent with government policies results in an overall distrust in the education institutions.

The fact that many of the criteria of good school functioning are not so easily identifiable when choosing the place of enrolling their children (Sindic el defensor de les persones, 2016) has a consequence that a significant part of parents makes their judgment based on opinions of other parents and rumors about a certain school and its social composition. Therefore, the ethnic composition of a school becomes an equivalent measure for its quality (Alegre et al., 2010). So, parents are guided by the social composition, avoiding high levels of immigration, rather than being guided by the educational project. Even though in the discourse of parents with high education the educational project masks the importance they give to the social composition which ends up weighing more.

Comparing the two districts, Ciutat Vella and Sants Montjuic, I have detected a more negative opinion of interviewees living with more immigration. Especially cultural distance and the bad image of schools has come up as a more recurrent theme in Ciutat Vella, while the topic that immigrants receive priority treatment and more social benefits has come up equally

in both neighborhoods. This can be related to the fact that in Ciutat Vella there is more immigration from Pakistan and Morocco, which are seen as more culturally distant and different from the natives than the Latin American immigrants who are more present in Sants-Montjuic.

5. Conclusions

In this paper I have looked at how opinions of immigration reflect on the trust in local schools of the native families. Also, I have tried to depict which are the main perceptions about immigrants that natives view in the educational context and which aspects of trust are affected by these representations.

The data from the fieldwork indicate that the evaluation of the immigrants by the natives is based on their value system. The cultural, social and physical distance perceived by the natives, and different language and religion of the immigrants constitute the major sources of prejudice and racial bias. Immigrants are attributed negative characteristics and modes of behavior which are stereotyped and generalized into a whole group taking away their individuality.

In the interview analysis, we have seen that these negative representations, marked by prejudice and racism, derive in distrust within the schools and in higher level institutions such as education and city or regional level institutions. While there is complete trust in teachers and native families. However, regardless if the perception of immigration is positive or negative, all interviewees have expressed a general distrust in higher level education institutions and their negligence when dealing with schools in diverse neighborhoods.

Further research should explore the effect of immigration on trust in a different institutional setting than the Spanish one and see to what extent can a trustful school environment mitigate the effects of prejudice and racism and whether with prejudice reduction practices trust is increased. Another point worth contemplating is the mechanisms through which negative representations lead to less trust in implementations institutions that is the regional government, municipality and the Consortium of Education and the administration while trust in teachers is not altered.

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