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**Young adults of Latin American
origin in London and Oxford:
Identities, discrimination and
social inclusion**

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Abstract

The arrival of families from Latin America has in recent years shaped a new social and cultural setting in the UK. Young adult members of these families, either born in the UK or having emigrated at an early age, carry out a socialisation and enculturation process with bicultural references in a context of inequality, discriminatory practices and assimilationist discourses. However, the results of research carried out with young ten adults of Latin American origin in Oxford and London confirm that they construct flexible identities, which are open and mixed and which allow them to have a double sense of belonging: to their country of origin and to the UK. These new identities give these young people, who are the active players in the construction of a society based on interethnic relations, social and cultural capital.

Keywords

Second generation, Latin American young adults, England, Flexible identity, Social inclusion

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Introduction

"It's as if I were in a limbo, between two worlds, because here I don't feel as if I'm English, but when I go to Ecuador, I'm not from there either" (María)

This piece of work presents the results of research carried out in London and Oxford with young people of Latin American origin. It is a continuation of previous research carried out in the city of Barcelona with young members of non-EU immigrant families, *"Construyendo identidades flexibles. Jóvenes adultos de origen extracomunitario entre procesos de inclusión y exclusión social"* (*Constructing flexible identities. Young adults of non-EU origin between processes of social inclusion and exclusion*) (Roca, 2009)¹. The results of that research project indicate that young people of Latin American origin construct a flexible cultural identity that serves as a bridge between the culture of their parents and of the host culture, while maintaining a common identity which some define as Latino.

The categories of 'young people of immigrant origin' and 'at risk of marginalisation and discrimination' are related. Despite the directives promoted by the EU on integration policies and the consequent rhetoric of inclusion (Però, 2007), discriminatory practices, which occur in most European countries, place these young people at social risk as they are confronted with multiple pillars of inequality, which make their social inclusion as citizens with equal rights difficult. Why have I done this piece of research? It is important to give young adults of Latin American origin in the UK a voice because they are emergent, social subjects and players with little social and academic visibility (PállSveinsson, 2007). It is a question of getting to know, in this context, about their experiences of integration and about their identities and belongingness, taking into account that we are looking at a significant cultural difference (language, religion, food, etc.). Moreover, there are no major historical colonial ties between the UK and Latin America.

Today's neo-assimilationist discourses, based on a strong territorial and national identity (i.e. "Britishness") expressed by the opposition to immigration and with racist feelings and attitudes, are opposed to the reality of the fluid, plural, cosmopolitan, transnational society of the 21st century. Identity policies demanded by the more nationalist sectors clash with critical thought (Bauman, 2005), because nobody can be denied the right to a "different" identity than that imposed by society. In multicultural societies, identities become multiple and variable, and identity processes are much more complex. It has been shown that the construction of identity is non-linear, but that it follows a process in which the socially attributed identity and the identity guided by the purposes of the person acquire a significant role (Maalouf, 1999; Bauman, 2005; Todorov, 2008). Can we affirm that the sons and daughters of immigrant families of Latin American origin in England construct flexible identities? What influence do family migration and parental housing accommodation in the host

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society have on the construction of identity, belongingness and bonds of young people? Do they experience discriminatory situations because of their ethnic origin? How do they affect the identity construction process in a multicultural context but with neo-assimilationist discourses? This research responds to these and other important questions.

Methodology

The general objective of this piece of research is to get to know whether identity flexibility occurs in young people of Latin American origin in different social, political, cultural and national contexts, such as the case of England. The two operational objectives are (1) to reconstruct the identity processes of sons and daughters of immigrants from Latin American socio-cultural contexts in the cities of London and Oxford and (2) to analyse the existing relationship between experience of social inclusion-exclusion and identity construction processes.

It is a qualitative piece of research and the methodology is based on biographical narrations (i.e. life stories). The focus is a humanistic one and takes into account the holistic view of the young people, understanding that context has a decisive influence on personal configurations.

The focus of the analysis is the *identity construction process* and the target population is *young adults, the sons and daughters of Latin American immigrant families in the cities of London and Oxford*. The sample is strategic, not probabilistic. The inclusion criteria are residing in the cities of Oxford and London or surrounding areas, with both mother and father of Latin American origin, a minimum of five years' residence in the UK, aged between 18 and 30 and differentiated social and economic indicators. Ten interviews were carried out in May and June 2011 in London and Oxford. All names given in the text have been changed. The information was compiled by means of in-depth interviews, which were semi structured and open to collect the experiences and life journeys of the interviewees.

The results of the analysis and interpretation of the life stories and the discussion are grouped into three blocks, (1) family migratory process and personal experience, (2) process of social inclusion and situations of discrimination, and (3) identity construction and feelings of belonging. Before presenting the results, I will review some of the theoretical contributions on the concept of identity in a migratory context. I also analyse the current context of emigration from Latin America to England and recent changes that are occurring in the British multicultural model.

Background

Identities and emigration

The identity developed by the offspring of transnational emigrants is determined by social complexity and by the difficulties of constructing an identity in a social and cultural context in which the group

of origin is a minority. Barth (1976) stated that ethnic identity has a marked contextual component. In most of the studies on identity processes of "second and third generations", a clear acculturation in values, situational mobility of the identity, tension between young people and their parents and limits preventing full assimilation are common (Eriksen, 1993). Reflection on identity should be carried out from a dynamic perspective, as a process which integrates the experiences we live and which will shape and modify personal identity; our interaction with the environment: family, friends, certain groups, society, culture, vital events; a multidimensional and structural view of the identity; and as a diachronic unit in the evolutionary process (Camilleri et al., 1990). Classifying people according to their religion, ethnic origin or culture is a mistake and dangerous. It is a mistake because it hides the many filiations of each human being, and dangerous because a singular classification can make the world potentially inflammable (Sen, 2007). Khellil (1997) suggests that people adhere to a system of values and that some of these values are essential, constituting the hard core of the cultural and social system.

Studies carried out on young members of immigrant families (second generation) show that they establish identity strategies to incorporate into the society and feel like participating members (Camilleri et al., 1990). Studies also show that training and educational poverty, language difficulties, cultural poverty and material poverty are easily connected to violence (Jazouli, 1995). School concentration and segregation of the immigrant population in restricted spaces, together with the lack of employment opportunities for young people and the increase in delinquency, favour the stigmatisation of districts and the questioning of interethnic relations and the underlying intercultural problems (Rinaudo et al., 1995). Lack of integration into the labour market can lead these young people to the radicalisation of their cultural identity (Baillet, 1999). In France, many young immigrants are considered to be ethnically different by the majority, while they themselves feel completely French (Lepoutre, 2001). After the clashes in the suburbs in 2005, the young people from these areas were treated as "outsiders" (indigènes) by the Republic through mechanisms of suppression, and denial and discrimination which (re)produce their social exclusion (Castel, 2007).

Portes and Zhou (1993), Portes and Fernández Kelly (2007, 2008) and Rumbautand Portes (2001) explain the different ways of adaptation for immigrants in the United States, in the context of segregation and inequalities, with the theory of segmented assimilation and types of acculturation. Merenstein (2001) understands that ethnic identity may come from belongingness and also from the assignation or imposition of others, stating that racial hierarchy and the existing stereotypes and racism in US society make many people from minority groups² construct negative, conflicting

²The studies by Clark, between 1930 and 40 (before E. Erikson) already analysed the identity of children from minority groups, in particular black groups. In keeping with the period, they indicated that black children identified themselves with success but would prefer a white skin and negated their blackness (the "black self-hatred" theory) (Merenstein, 2001: 99) This theory was applied to the adult population which was granted a very poor original cultural identity, reinforced by the racial stereotypes existing in the US.

identities, which they interiorise. Pyke (2001) highlighted the great weight that racism had on new social groups and Lee (2001) indicated that social class creates structural conditions of ethnic differentiation that influence the meanings of identity. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2003) identify the model of transcultural identity as the most adaptive one in a context of globalisation and cultural diversity. Alba (2005) analyses the borders between society and mainstream culture and the immigrant population, determined by religion, language and "race", which obliges minority ethnic groups to reaffirm their ethnic identities, limited by the discourses, representation and images attributed by the mainstream group (Song, 2003). Berry et al. (2006) identify four profiles of young people with acculturation in other national contexts and define them as young people in cultural transition: (1) Young people with a profile of integration, who want to integrate and reject assimilation and separation; (2) Young people with a strong ethnic identity, use of the language of origin and social networks with co-ethnic groups; (3) Young people with identity of the host society, attitude of assimilation and little ethnic identity; (4) Young people with contradictory acculturation and attitudes, full of uncertainties and ambiguities. Finally, it is important to highlight that the educational level of the parents, the educational results of the children, integration into the labour market, the local context and regimes of citizenship and immigration policies are key elements in the results of the integration of second generations (Alba and Waters 2011).

Latin American immigration and identity construction

Studies that focus on the immigrant population of Latin American origin in England are recent. Worthy of a mention are works by Però and McIlwaine. Despite a strong division and lack of intra-group (such as the case of Bolivians) and intergroup confidence (McIlwaine, 2007), most Latin American immigrants in England maintain a strong feeling of identity and Pan-American belonging as well as to their country of origin, although they relate more to the English society as their years of residence in the UK increase. When the situation deteriorates and the feeling of infringement of civil rights becomes stronger, identity becomes a fundamental element in people, who consider themselves discriminated due to their origin and who wish to vindicate it (PállSveinsson, 2007).

One relevant aspect is that, despite the social, national, economic and cultural diversity of this heterogeneous group, a feeling of common identity is developed (Però, 2008a). First, they identify themselves as Latin Americans and secondly, according to their national origin. Although the common feeling of Latin American identity and, therefore, of expressing the need for ethnic-cultural recognition is strong, the mobilisations have a more social and political character that includes recognition as citizens, positioning themselves against neo-assimilationist trends.

Research on young people of Latin American origin in Spain is also confined mostly to the last decade. According to Feixa et al. (2006), Latin American adolescents and young people who have undertaken the migratory process have an experience marked by deep yearning, an

adolescence lived in a transnational family, a feeling of being uprooted, with an emotional and, at the same time, traumatic re-encounter due to the lack of knowledge of the environment and of their parents. They form new identities that are based on pre-existing features and through the symbolic appropriation of new areas of sociability, the result of new interactions. The result can be a closure within the group of origin or dissolution into the society. Aparicio&Tornos (2006) did not observe humiliating or conflictive integration of young Dominican and Peruvian people in Spanish society. In his study of adolescents, Delpino (2007) pointed out that these young people perceive themselves as adolescents, Latin Americans and immigrants. They tend to feel different from the young people in the host society and experience a period of identity crisis.

On the other hand, the results of my previous research carried out in Barcelona (Roca, 2009) confirm that the identity that the young people interviewed construct is flexible thanks to the learning, resistance and adaptation process, mainly determined by factors of inclusion and/or exclusion that arise throughout their life. This flexible identity gives them cultural and social capital and an advantage in today's multicultural society with better interaction and communication skills to interrelate with other young people. Some experience discrimination due to their legal circumstances or prejudices and stereotypes and see that society imposes differences between diverse groups of immigrants. In the face of xenophobic, racist discourses and practices, young people are not passive but want to form part of society, with their ethnic and cultural peculiarities. They show great maturity and construct firm, coherent identities which allow them to overcome the obstacles and hostilities that, to some degree, they all experience. They have identities that seek legitimacy.

Context

Great Britain and the multicultural model

Great Britain is the paradigm of multiculturalism³ and cultural pluralism in Europe, despite a reality of segregation and separation between communities. Rex (1995) highlights that most institutions work towards racial equality but not for the relations between people of different cultures. Sen (2007) defines the British model of "plural monoculturalism" based on coexistence, without rapprochement, of the different cultural styles and traditions (living together but separated). Racism, ethnicity, inequalities, classes and discrimination against "ethnic minorities" are installed in the British multicultural society, in which cultural pluralism has been developed between the interaction and the

³Due to both its condition as an empire as well as the presence of populations from the former colonies, Great Britain has been a multicultural state for decades. Despite the fact that the 1976 Race Relations Act forbade any kind of discrimination for racial reasons, the efforts carried out to prevent discrimination in health, education and social security and the desire to offer a public space to the various cultural groups, the fact is that the relations between the "mainstream" and the "ethnic minorities" have been plagued with racial and class discrimination.

isolation of ethnocultural groups (LatorreCatalán, 2008). Racial hierarchies limit the social mobility of the population and racism determines inequalities of access to the right of belonging (Back andSinha 2010).

The empowerment of communities is a central matter on political agendas but there is a gap between these agendas and the strategies to promote social cohesion (Mayo et al., 2009). As a result, the ethnification of the relations between the mainstream community and the minorities is highlighted in the diverse areas of life. Minority groups continue obtaining poor results in key indicators such as employment, housing, health, unemployment, academics achievement and salaries.

Nowadays, immigration in England is not a matter of colour but of ethnic origin, country of birth and social class (Rex, 2006). In recent years, it has become a new destination for migrants not coming from the former British colonies, such as the case of those arriving from Latin America, creating great ethnocultural heterogeneity (Però, 2008b), a situation that has been defined as superdiversity (Vertovec, 2010) and hyperdiverse societies (Thomas, 2011).

Also in recent years, there has been tension regarding immigration that has highlighted the achievements and failures of the multicultural model. From right-wing positions, it is judged as a model that disrupts social cohesion and from the left wing, as a model that maintains social inequalities. Thus, the multiculturalism concept has been associated to "disintegrating" effects and has encouraged a return to assimilationism, shown by the tests that recent immigrants must pass to be able to obtain British citizenship (Vertovec, 2010). The discourses are opposed to sharing public spaces and the welfare state and require greater conformity with English (or British) rules and values, and to provide job protection for the natives (Però, 2008b).

Those who are critical about this assimilationist positioning emphasise the need to engage with the ethnic minorities in a respectful and continuous dialogue. Through this dialogue, institutions and governments should establish transparent criteria based on values of fairness and social justice, and on decentralising actions of local governments to suitably deal with the needs of each area (Blake et al., 2008). Multiculturalism, which is understood as a failed model, contrasts with post-multiculturalism, based on a strong common identity in values but maintaining recognition of cultural differences. This model merges the proposals of the left wing (celebrating diversity, favouring the social capital of immigrants and decreasing unfairness) with the proposals of the right (promoting national identity, eliminating opposing values and decreasing migratory flows) (Vertovec, 2010). For Thomas (2011), we are entering a new era of multiculturalism that organises the complexity of the identities and experiences of young British people with a strong community agency, of shared identities and of social cohesion to overcome negative experiences of separate identities. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that despite the evidence of inequalities and difficult life conditions, discrimination and racism and anti-migratory and anti-multiculturalism rhetoric, at a

social level the practices and relations show a high level of respect for cultural and ethnic diversity (Vertovec, 2010).

Latin American immigration in England

The Latin American population in England represents a "new integrated population" different from that of the former colonies. In the last decade there has been a significant increase in the number of Latin Americans residing in the country, but they have remained largely invisible (McIlwaine, 2008c,d, 2009; McIlwaine et al., 2011). The feeling among the groups themselves is that they do not count on the political agenda and their voices are not heard.

It is difficult to obtain exact figures for the number of people of Latin American origin living in London. According to 2008 data (Annual Population Survey) 130,186 people born in Latin America lived in the United Kingdom, of whom 79,300 reside in London. Another source of information is the number of new National Insurance Numbers (NIN) assigned to people born in Latin American countries. Between 2002 and 2009, 77,880 new numbers were assigned; 35,690 to people from Brazil and 15,570 to people from Colombia. Of these, 60% were assigned in London. It is calculated that some 17,200 children have been born in London to Latin American parents since 1990 (second generation). The first major migratory flows are found in 1970, when mostly Colombian and Chilean people arrived. The most significant increase was after 2000 with groups of Bolivians and Brazilians arriving (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

They are a diverse community, with different national origins, young, highly educated and with significant levels of employment, although in many cases doing precarious jobs. Political exiles and people seeking asylum are the immigrants who have been in the UK the longest. The UK has been a popular destination for political refugees from countries with dictatorial regimes and with problems of social violence, like Colombia. Recently, economic and political crises have been the main motive of the new migratory flows. The ways of entering the UK range from student visas, asylum seekers, family reunification, residence permits for work reasons, tourist visas and illegal entries. For many immigrants, life is a mosaic of opportunities, deprivations and survival. The possibilities of success and meeting their expectations are reserved for a reduced group, as the majority live in vulnerable conditions (McIlwaine, 2005, 2007; McIlwaine et al., 2011).

Overall, they emigrate without having exact knowledge of the reality that they will find on the labour market or the precarious conditions in which they will live. Accommodation and adaptation to the new society is hard and is aggravated by lack of knowledge of the language. They maintain a feeling of solidarity towards their fellow countrymen but not towards entire Latin American population as there are mixed feelings of lack of trust, envy and competition (McIlwaine, 2007, 2009; McIlwaine et al., 2011). Many perceive that they are in a land of opportunities, while others feel that they merely survive (McIlwaine & Velasquez, 2007) and think that their original life

offered better quality, despite the economic difficulties. As far as gender relations are concerned, patriarchal, sexist ideology is found, even though settling in the English society leads to some significant improvements in the life of women (women have more independence, advantage in labour market, more protection from the state, etc) (McIlwaine, 2008a, b; McIlwaine et al., 2011).

The legal situation is diverse and includes workers with residence permits, people in an irregular situation, students, asylum seekers and refugees. The legal status is dynamic and swings between regularity and irregularity, playing a fundamental role in their migratory experiences (McIlwaine, 2009; McIlwaine et al., 2011; McIlwaine & Velasquez, 2007). Many of them come into the country with a student visa to learn English and become irregular workers. With regard to employment,⁴ they are overrepresented in the services sector, with a high percentage working in cleaning and catering companies. Often, they find work by word of mouth and a significant number work illegally, for cash in hand (Páll Sveinsson, 2007), which aggravates their vulnerability to exploitation. They also work in commercial activity such as ethnic product stores, shops where international phone calls can be made, remittances agencies and others. In general, they suffer from significant deskilling and a fall in their social status as they occupy low skilled jobs, while in their country of origin they worked as professionals (McIlwaine, 2009). They make use of their ethnic networks of friends and families. The evangelical churches play a notable role, with a growing following among the Latin American immigrant population. Despite being a more recent group of the population without a public voice, they have started to become visible through their radio programmes and magazines.

The relationship with English society depends on learning English, on entering the labour market, on the neighbourhood and the social relations that are established. Mastering English determines the other factors to a great degree. Transnational relations move between contradiction for satisfying the need to send money to the family and the pressure this involves when there are economic difficulties. The myth of returning is always present.

With regard to the young adults of Latin American families, a high percentage of them have British nationality and identify themselves as British-Latin Americans although they feel more Latin American. They speak Spanish fluently and are friends with young Latin Americans and people of other origins. To a lesser degree they relate with British young people. They would like to improve their life conditions and aspire to better jobs than their parents have. They have a high level of studies, with a significant percentage of further education. Many refer to continuous discriminatory situations, both at work as well as in the education area and also from the police (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

⁴The labour market in London, with regard to low paid occupation, is super-diverse and more than half the jobs are occupied by low skilled immigrants from the global South who are increasingly vulnerable (Wills et al., 2008).

In general, the Latin American population in the United Kingdom say that the most important problems are discrimination, the barriers caused by their migratory status and the difficulties with the English language (McIlwaine et al., 2011). The legal situation is identified as the most important concern and a cause for stress and anxiety among people in an irregular situation.

Results and Discussion

"I find myself between two very different cultures, but I live with both of them. It enriches me" (Teresa)

The field work was carried out in May and June 2011. It was not easy to make initial contacts and identify candidates for interviews and, at many times, almost impossible. The population of Latin American origin in London is distributed between different districts and neighbourhoods, is relatively recent and the profile required for the research limited access to some young people. I found candidates for interviews in the Seven Sisters (i.e. Puelito Paisa), Elephant & Castle, Holloway, Arsenal, Kilburn, Brixton, Barking and Archway in London. In the city of Oxford, with a sparse population of Latin American origin, I received help from the Oxford University Catholic Chaplaincy. In both cities, I looked in shops, associations and organisations related to people of Latin American origin. Once the candidates had been identified, getting the information was easier. Although the subject matter is complex, the young people interviewed explained their life journeys, relationships, projects and future dreams in a thoughtful way and although they had never thought previously about some of the matters discussed, they dealt with them with maturity and rigour.

I conducted in-depth interviews, to obtain biographical stories, with 10 young people of Latin American origin: seven young women and three young men, aged between 18 and 28 years of age. Two were Ecuadorians and eight were Colombians. Two of the boys had been born in London and the rest of them came through family migration. Their time of residence in the UK varied between seven and twenty-five years. Seven of them had British nationality, two had Spanish nationality and, therefore, are European citizens, and one young girl had permanent residence and was waiting to apply for British nationality this year. All the families live in rented accommodation, five of which are council houses. One of the aspects that should be highlighted is the difficulty to reach non-Colombian young people, as shown by the origin of the young people interviewed. Whether it is because the Colombian population has greater visibility or whether it is the snowball effect of the sample or whether it is because they are the greatest in number, the fact is that contacting and getting to know young people from Bolivia, Peru, Brazil or other Latin American countries was difficult.

All these young people have different but parallel biographies and, as social players, their stories enable us to look at a group about which little is known. The information we extract is necessary and important in order to know them better and, above all, to understand current English

society, where identity construction processes and contexts of inequality interact in these young people, as a result of the most recent migratory flows. As it is research based on biographical stories, the number of subjects is small. The objective of this research is not to extrapolate results to the rest of young people of Latin American origin in England. The research, based on their biographical story, is adapted to each of the social players given a voice, so that the researcher can extract the most significant information and thus reconstruct and interpret their universe.

The young people interviewed are part of the first cohort of children born in the destination or who arrived during their childhood or adolescence, of the Latin American group in England, recently incorporated into English society. The stories, full of subjectivity but also objectivity, are based on experiences from the past, the reality of the present and their expectations for the future. They tell us about their memories of the family migratory process, or what their parents have told them, as well as their own experiences in a society that they have got to know gradually and to which they have accommodated and adapted, overcoming difficulties and making the most of opportunities. Their narrations show that they have great social and cultural capital and that they make significant efforts to overcome situations of discrimination and assimilationist tendencies. Overall, although there are differences, they have adapted better to English society than their parents, results that coincide with studies carried out in Australia, Finland, Sweden and the United States (Berry et al., 2006).

For this research, we were interested in getting to know: (1) the influence of the family migration on the identity construction; (2) discriminatory situations experienced and; (3) whether they constructed a flexible identity in a socio-cultural context different from that of their origin. The analysis of the most significant information from the biographical stories allows us to come up with the following contributions:

1. The influence that family migration and parental accommodation, in the host society, have on the construction of identity, belonging and bonding of the children:

In this part, the family migratory process experienced is summarised, with the guidelines for incorporation into English society, the difficulties, losses and yearnings, just as the young people explained them. This part also discusses the reasons that caused their families to leave their land, their loved ones and many of their belongings and how they compensated for the pain with their expectations and dreams. We will see in their stories how the families give the young people rules, practices and resources to ensure a successful future that complies with the expectations placed on the emigration.

The goal of migration in all the families was to look for a better life, whether with the idea of a better economic situation or to ensure a better education and future for their children, to have greater opportunities or to make the most of a job offer. In all cases, the dream to improve life

conditions served as a magnet that attracted them to England, as a land of opportunities. Family networks play an important role in the decision to emigrate, with regard to when, where and how.

Family emigration has an impact on each of the members. As Teresa explained, it is an extreme change. The experiences and feelings are strong and painful. It was a very hard period that Liliana knew very well, because her mother told her about it,

"Of course, because she didn't know English, the job, helping in the house, looking after us, working. It was all very different for her. As this place is more technologically advanced, it was a different world for her. The language ... Mama says that leaving Ecuador was a big, very hard blow. We had a very big family; she was never on her own. She came here and just had one brother who already had his family. She had to make her own life here and she says that she felt really lonely, that she had no friends, that she didn't know how to speak. She found it very difficult. A tremendous change".

For parents, emigration means lack of continuity and negotiating meanings, guidelines and values. They have had to make an enormous effort to accommodate and adapt to a new and unknown society, without losing their cultural baggage, while their children socialise, with enculturation or acculturation, with a double reference from early age. These are families that have carried out a gradual incorporation into British society, without serious psychological drama (although with evident difficulties), which has helped their children integrate. The main objective of the parents is to improve their children's future; they are aware of it and value it, recognising that it is the most transcendental event of their lives. Over time, all the families start a process of selective acculturation, incorporating the guidelines, traditions and values of the host society with those that most identify them, which reflects their desire to adapt and the need to be accepted and included in the community.

An important feature, which represents great difficulty at the beginning, is the deep sense of loss caused by emigration. Cristina's story shows this pain and grief:

"The worst part is the loneliness because here everyone has their own worlds. It's a routine. Everyone has their job, their house and that's it. There, we have all the family, it was easier to get together, to go and visit, if we needed one or another. Here we don't have them."

The idea of return, which is present in almost all the families, decreases the feeling of loss and being uprooted. The dream of returning, once certain goals have been met, makes the migratory process a parenthesis in the lives of its protagonists. Sometimes it is only the parents who intend to return, and sometimes the children as well, although at a different time.

Learning English, the knowledge of which is positively valued by all the families, is the most difficult challenge at the beginning and acts as a barrier in social relations and in the search for

employment. For many of the parents, relationships are reduced to people of Latin American origin, extending to English people and those of other origins when their work requirements so dictate. This is evidence that the persistence of intragroup relations makes interethnic contacts, learning the language, getting out of labour niches and better social integration difficult; however it decreases the feeling of loss and solitude and keeps bonds with the origin country alive, which is positive psychologically.

The structural situation, at an economic, social and political level, generates segregating tendencies that affect most of the families, favouring situations of vulnerability and social precariousness that their children suffer during their infancy and childhood. However, the parents' expectations and the hope for a better future for their children work as a system of protection against inequality and discrimination. In many cases, the parents (and therefore the family) lose the social status they had in their countries and must start from scratch based on great effort, resistance and self-improvement. Their academic qualifications are not recognised and therefore their jobs are precarious, with a tendency to ethnic labour niches in some cases, the result of a racial or ethnic ordering of the labour market in England. Initially, they are employed in the cleaning sector and as they become economically and socially established, they improve their position in the labour market (some even set up their own businesses) and in the social structure. Acquiring British nationality is an aspect that can explain the desire to integrate into the society and to improve their social rights.

Our young people show significant differences from their parents, due to age but also because their social and cultural identity is different. However, relevant transgenerational conflicts do not occur because they are young people with a strong ethnic and cultural feeling towards their origin, which focuses on parental and family respect. They have a more open mind than their parents and act like young people of their generation, whether English by birth or not, they are more independent when making decisions and in their everyday activities.

The transmission of cultural capital from parents to children is a fundamental aspect in the families of our young people. The parents keep the maternal language alive in the family relations, although among siblings it starts to be lost. Food, traditional festivals and enculturation in values and practices of their origin culture keeps affective bonds alive and ensures they do not lose their identity or references, which they remodel through their belonging to and integration into English society. The myth of return, present in their parents, reaffirms and maintains this bond. The positive feelings towards their origins, in the young people interviewed, are based on the values received from their family. Intra-family and community respect and solidarity are the pillar of an attitude and way of being that they maintain over time and that makes them different from young English people, in their own opinions. However, even though the family legacy and the belongingness to their origins is enriched with holiday trips back home, they are critical and carry out an objective social and political analysis of what they see there.

In this part we saw how the young people interviewed explained the family emigration through their own experience or family memories. In one way or another, these experiences help them to mature and encourage them to become adults faster than many young English people. They are aware of the efforts that their parents have made and everything that emigration has meant in their lives. They are grateful and consider themselves to be lucky.

2. Experience of discriminatory situations due to origin and how they affect the identity construction process in a multicultural context impregnated with neo-assimilationist discourses:

Overall, the young people interviewed stated that they had not suffered from serious discriminatory situations that modified their life journeys. To the contrary, they greatly value the opportunities that English society has given them. However, when they do refer to any other type of discrimination, they say that it is unpleasant and that it affects them emotionally, whether it happens to them or to people from their environment. To better understand these experiences and feelings, I classify the young people into three groups, (1) those who have never experienced discrimination and consider that English society does not discriminate, (2) those who have not suffered discrimination personally but have seen other people being discriminated (friends or family) and (3) people who have been discriminated and have seen others being discriminated.

(1) In the first group, there is Diego, born in London. He has never felt discriminated against, nor does he consider that English society carries out practices of exclusion. *"People say to me "Ah, Colombian, what's it like in Colombia?" English people have never treated me badly. I have always had opportunities to study. I don't think they discriminate. I've not seen discrimination here. English people are used to having people from Asia, Africa, America; after so many years, they're used to it."* He is convinced that his family would never have had the opportunities they have had in England in Colombia.

(2) The second group includes Liliana, Isabel and Verónica. The three of them came to London during their infancy. They have not suffered from discriminatory practices themselves but have seen them in other people. In this case, their opinion is very different to that of Diego. They have seen discrimination against close friends and against the Muslim population after the terrorist attacks in London. They believe that English society has a negative, inferior vision of working-class immigration and see foreigners as a threat to their cultural identity. Liliana has seen social discrimination in other people. She considers that the terrorist attacks in London were a time of inflection in the attitude towards the Muslim population. She feels that English society sees immigration as a danger to its cultural identity,

"... as if they were taking the place of the British. Many people think that it's a place with many cultures, and that if more and more Latin Americans come, there won't be much left of what's English."

They also feel that they established differences and hierarchies between countries. As far as facilities for entering the labour market are concerned, they state that English people and foreigners do not have the same level of opportunities.

(3) The rest of the young people belong to the third group. John and Teresa have not felt discriminated against at school or at work but they have experienced social, police and political racism. Due to his Colombian origin, although he has a British passport (John was born in London), they have seen how border checks in airports have become a ritual of suspicion, control and lack of trust in them. When they return from Colombia on vacation, they have repeatedly been obliged to explain where they have come from, why they have British passports, how they got them, what they have in their suitcases, where they are going, etc. This did not happen to their non-Colombian companions. This, closely related to the stereotypes and prejudices towards everything Colombian, although it affects them personally, and momentarily complicates their lives, does not create complete rejection. They take on an attitude of understanding that allows them to relativise and explain it from the lack of knowledge which, according to them, English society has about Latin American people and countries. María explains it as racism and hate towards foreigners and also speaks about lack of knowledge.

"When I hear them say racist things against foreigners, it's as if they were rejecting me, it's the same, because I'm not from here. The more multicultural, the greater the rejection. It's worse. More rejection from English people towards foreigners. Here in Oxford there are more Brazilians and Poles. They're discriminated against even more. They almost hate them, because they hate the larger groups."

María does not wish to generalise and she feels that there are people of all kinds everywhere, but she is hurt by the unfortunate experiences that her family has undergone. This lack of knowledge and the resulting creation of stereotypes and prejudices against non-EU immigration is framed in the discourses and rhetoric against non-EU immigration found in many European states. Cristina, Alejandra and Julio referred to discrimination at school and at work. Specifically at school, most of the difficulties were concentrated around the time when they arrived and joined the education system. The problem with the language was the main drawback and the reason is that they felt mocked by their companions which, at a young age, they experienced as rejection or non-acceptance, in addition to requiring greater effort to integrate into the society. It was not a question of lack of opportunities but of an added difficulty. However, it is at work where we see the highest levels of discrimination in the young people interviewed. Whether they themselves are the victims, or their families or friends, the difficulties in accessing a job adequate for their level of qualifications shows that the structure of opportunities for the immigrant population, in comparison with the native population does not respond to the principle of equal rights in a democratic state. Access to work or the possibility of ascending mobility requires, according to the young people interviewed, an

enormous effort which in many cases decreases the expectations for long-term improvement. It is an important factor because it can mean success or failure for the young people and for the family migratory project.

Their opinions confirm that classism and racism continue to be present in English society. The white English society model ("Britishness") continues to reign in discourses, looks and social practices.

"Before it was a little bit more welcoming, they were more willing to accept the fact that people came. Now, the government does not offer the same opportunities to people from outside. They are restricting a lot. The truth is that for England, South America does not exist. They do not take the Argentine, Colombian, etc. population into account in anything. They always see the Latin American population as tourists, they haven't realised that although we are a minority, there are lots of us." Julio explained.

The young people of Latin American origin, many of whom were born in England, are seen as foreigners in their own country due to their ethnic origin, the colour of their skin or physical features, name and social class, and are not recognised as full members of society. These pillars of inequality continue to act as a base in the processes of discrimination and social exclusion (Modood & Salt, 2011). The domineering and the exclusionary practices shown towards groups from Latin America (as well as other ethnic minorities) show the tension in English society between the need for immigration and the attitude maintained towards the diversity that the foreign population brings, which leads to situations of marginalisation and racism (Back & Sinha, 2010).

3. Do young people of Latin American origin in England construct flexible identities similar to those of youths in Barcelona, despite the cultural differences between both of them?

The construction of identity and the belongingness in a multicultural situation was previously described as a complex process (Berry et al, 2006; Roca, 2009), difficult to conceptualise. Experiencing diverse cultural references (re)shapes the identity of our young informants, over time; of the interactions they set up and of the situations that the social, economic and political contexts offer them. The enculturation and acculturation processes create bonds with the culture of origin and the mainstream culture.⁵ This is not a linear processes for all young people (Berry et al, 2006), but we can affirm that young people who are born in the destination country or who arrive at an early age show a greater bonding with it. In all the young people interviewed, we can see that the management of the two systems leads them to forming a cultural and social identity, open to values, rules, principles and practices learned in the family and the social context that complement and enrich them. They are new identities and feelings of belonging, different to those of their parents

⁵ As Modood & Salt (2011) point out, the concept of mainstream society is very difficult to define and conceptualise in a multicultural context.

because they add diverse cultural and social features, that require balances between the family values and practices and the need for a pragmatism that ensures them social recognition and civil rights. The length of time they have been residing in the destination allows them to create bonds and acts as a protection against closed, opposing identities, because even though emigration during adolescence or at a young age is more complex and creates greater emotional impact, (such as the cases of Cristina and Julio), the young people adapt to an unknown, sometimes hostile, environment, but one that also attracts them and enriches them at a personal level.

The results of the research carried out in Barcelona (Roca, 2009) enable young people to be classified into four categories, depending on the construction of a flexible, open identity and the discrimination they have experienced. In the current piece of research, continuing with the same types, we can group these young people into two. As I stated in my previous piece of work, it is not a static classification because the same identity flexibility shows its mobile, changing character (Roca, 2009). There are no limits set between the types and some of the characteristics are repeated. In any case, the most important aspect to be highlighted is that all the young people interviewed in London and Oxford also construct flexible identities that show the wealth of growing in a culturally diverse society, and that are the result of the social and cultural capital that these young people acquire during their infancy, adolescence and youth, the result of a mixture of bicultural references. The two groups are:

- ❖ **Young people with a flexible cultural and ethnic identity, with bonds with the mainstream social and cultural context, but with greater emotional bonding and belongingness to their culture of origin, without perception of school and/work discrimination in their experience.**
- Liliana, Isabel, Diego and Verónica belong to this category. They are young people who were born in London (Diego) or who arrived during their infancy (before the age of 7).
- Their bonds with British society are longstanding (more than 14 years) and they did all their schooling in the English education system. Interaction with children of diverse origins has enabled them to establish intercultural relations, which they still maintain. They have enjoyed successful school careers and Liliana and Isabel intend to study at the university. Diego is studying to be a commercial pilot and Verónica has finished a university degree in accounting.
- Liliana and Diego do not work, although Diego helps his parents in the family business. Isabel works as a secretary in a lawyer's office (she wants to study law) and Verónica works as a cashier in a remittances company. They all have expectations of getting a job in keeping with their education. Liliana and Isabel as lawyers, Diego as an airline pilot and Verónica as an accountant.

- Apart from Diego, who has a Colombian partner, they have no preferences about the origin of their partner. The girls are open to people of any origin, as they consider that the most important thing is the person and not their origin. Diego explains his preferences because *"the relationship is easier if we are from the same culture."*
- They all have interethnic relations with young people of English and other origins. They have friendships with schoolmates and their social networks go beyond co-ethnic acquaintances, although Diego and Liliana have more relationship with young Colombians and young Ecuadorians, respectively. It should be pointed out that Verónica's friends *"are English but with foreign parents"*, from different African countries.
- The language they habitually use with their siblings and friends is English. This is not surprising as it is the language that they learnt at school as young children, which is where social relations are started, which later extended to other groups and people. They reserve Spanish for speaking to their parents and communicating with other people of Latin American origin with little or no knowledge of English.
- Three of these young people have British nationality. Isabel will be applying for hers shortly. Liliana's and Diego's families also obtained it years ago, and Isabel's parents have permanent residence. In Verónica's case, her mother and her brother have British nationality and her father has residence.
- The factor that determines classification in this type is that these young people have never suffered from discrimination although, apart from Diego, they have seen it in other immigrant people, such as Isabel, *"I have often seen work given to people who are English instead of foreign people who have the same level. But they prefer English people to others (with the same level of training). This has happened to friends of mine."* At the same time as being critical about discrimination, they value the opportunities that the society offers them. Diego's opinion is that it is an open, non-discriminating society, used to living with people from all origins and of all conditions. *"I am very proud to be here, to be here in this country. It has given me everything. What I've got is because my parents worked here. If my parents hadn't come, I wouldn't have the things I've got. England has given me opportunities."*
- The four young people say that they have mixed identities, with bonds of affection with the family origin, but closely related to English society, in which they have grown up. *"I also feel English. When I am with people who are, I feel very good. Let's say that I wouldn't be able to always do Latin American things. I like the mixture. It will be 50% of each"*, Isabel explained, stating that she feels at ease in England, she speaks the language well and she feels like a native. They coincide in

their belongingness to their ethnic group of origin; the national reference is England for Verónica, Isabel and Diego and Ecuador for Liliana; and it is in the definition of cultural identity when they show a mixture of bonds and belongingness that helps them to construct a flexible, open, rich identity. They like to be "seen" by society as young people equal to others of their age, without giving up their Colombian origin in the case of Diego and Verónica and Ecuadorian origin in the case of Liliana. *"I feel that I'm Colombian because I was born there and my parents are from there. But I know that I'm more English, although I do not deny that I'm from Colombia, although I'm honest and say that I don't know much about Colombia. So, from both of them. More English references but I'm never going to deny that I'm Colombian."* This is Verónica's reflection, who also expresses a bond with Latin Americans when asked about her ethnic group. The bond with the culture and ethnic group of origin is explained by affection and loyalty to the family reference. The hard core of the family culture is transmitted from parents to children and the shared rules and values, the cooking practices, the use of Spanish and the idealisation that parents make of the country where they spent an important part of their lives can be seen in the family relations.

❖ **Young people with a flexible cultural and ethnic identity, with bonds with the mainstream social and cultural context, but with greater belongingness to their culture of origin, with perception of school and/or work discrimination in their experience.**

- The young people in this group are John, Cristina, Alejandra, Julio, Teresa and María.
- Apart from John, 25 years old and born in London, and María who came to the country at the age of eight, the rest of the young people were born in their country of origin and experienced the family migratory process after the age of 11, and have been residing in England for between 7 and 15 years. Julio and Cristina came to the country at 17 and 21, respectively.
- With regard to their studies and their permanence in the British schooling system, John received all his education in England, María joined the system at the age of 8 and Alejandra and Teresa at the age of 11. Julio completed the last few years of secondary school and studied at university and Cristina studied tourism (a non-University course) in London. In all cases, except for that of John, the beginning of their schooling was difficult and required a complementary effort due to lack of knowledge of the English language. At present, Julio, Teresa and María have successfully completed their university degrees, while Alejandra and John intend to study at the university or do an advanced level professional training course.
- After a difficult, disappointing entry into the labour market as he spent some time working in the cleaning sector (he could not find anything else), John has improved his position and is currently working as a manager in a museum. Alejandra, Teresa and María are employed as shop assistants (María is a supervisor) in clothing shops, Julio is the co-owner of a Latin American discotheque

and Cristina works part-time in several jobs. They are all happy to be able to work, but John refers to the great personal effort required to be promoted in his company. Cristina has experienced inequality in the labour market first-hand, as has her mother, who has always worked as a cleaner. They say that they only get jobs in Latin American companies, which greatly limits their expectations to improve and to work in tourist companies.

- María has an English partner. The rest of them do not have a partner and their preferences are not limited to their ethnic group. Cristina, who is separated, had a Colombian partner. She expresses no preferences of any kind.
- With regard to social relations, all of them, apart from Cristina—who does not have many friends and the few relations she has are with young Colombian people—cultivate intercultural relations with young people of highly diverse origins. However, John, Teresa and Julio tend to mix more with Latin Americans while Alejandra has very little relationship with Latin American groups. María has more English friends and some Latin American friends.
- In this group, English continues to be the predominant language in social relations, although Cristina uses Spanish with her friends. There is also a generalised use of English among siblings.
- Apart from Cristina and Alejandra who are European citizens with a Spanish passport, the other young people have British passports and nationality, like the rest of their families.
- All these young people have experienced discrimination and inequalities at school, at work, in social relations, in immigration policies and border controls or in the view that society has of them as immigrants, even if, like John, who was born in England, they never have been. They say they have the same opportunities as English people though with a lot more effort, but *“suddenly people think that I'm not English. For example, at the airport, they nearly always register my cases because I'm of Colombian origin. But when I show my passport and they ask me where I live, then that's it. So I don't really see it as discrimination. I don't suffer because of it.”* However, they feel integrated and adapted to English society and they value having had more opportunities (supposedly) than in their country of origin. They believe that the family migration changed their lives forever.
- As far as identity is concerned, we see that the origin still bears great weight on their identity feelings, even though their bonding with English society is strong, as with John, Julio and Teresa. Nevertheless, despite this bonding, they identify with Colombia more than with England, with its culture and with the Colombian ethnic group, apart from Julio who feels himself closer to English people as a reference group, perhaps because of *“his European mentality”*.⁶ María, who has been

⁶A significant part of the British population do not feel European.

living in England for 15 years, feels that it is a mixture of the two cultures and nations that is difficult to explain. *"It is a mixture of both of them, of many things. Until recently my values were Ecuadorian but I have incorporated English things. Over time, I identify more with England. Before, only with Ecuador."* However, she says she feels Ecuadorian even though she has British nationality. In the case of Cristina and Alejandra, the years they spent in Spain continue contributing to their identity and belongingness, even more so in the case of Alejandra who spent a significant part of her infancy there. Cristina, who is older and who spent more time in Colombia, expressed close bonds with Colombia as far as a nation and an ethnic group, and says that she has a mixed Colombian-Spanish culture. On the other hand, Alejandra has Spain as her national and cultural reference, and feels belongingness to the Colombian ethnic group. The greater contact with the culture and the country of origin, and the later in their lives that incorporation into the host society took place, explains the identification of all these young people with Colombia. The exception is John who, in recent years, has changed his identity, now more English than before and more bonded to the English culture. These young people hope to be seen as being equal to others, not as immigrants, although Julio wants to be seen as a Colombian who has grown up in England and John prefers to be seen as an English person with Colombian heritage. Above all, as María says, they want to be seen as just one more person without anybody discriminating against them. This combination of identities and belongingness, facing situations of inequality, also shows the flexibility of identity processes under construction.

Although María feels she is in a limbo, between two worlds that do not recognise her and Teresa between two very different cultures, the truth is that they live with both cultures and this enriches them, as the young people interviewed expressed. Living with bicultural references allows them to construct flexible identities which, according to them, gives them affectionate bonds with the society and culture of origin and integrates them into British society and culture. They are open, fluid, mixed identities, the result of the incorporation into the everyday life of shared, complementary practices and values. The young people interviewed show a high degree of integration into English society despite the structural barriers that can be seen in the form of discrimination. They are not fully assimilated because the strength of the values and the affective bonds transmitted by their parents maintains a strong ethnic capital (Modood and Salt, 2011). Unlike the theses backed by Berry et al. (2006)⁷, their ethnic profile shows good psychological and socio-cultural adaptation, without having been significantly affected by discrimination experienced.

It is not easy to define identity or belongingness (Roca, 2009; Weller, 2011). It is true that some contradictions can be observed in the young people's stories. Sometimes they are more closely identified to their origin and at other times more closely identified to England. These

⁷ For Berry et al. (2006) the characteristics of the ethnic profile are good psychological adaptation but poor socio-cultural adaptation.

contradictions can be understood in this context of being "between two and with two" cultures and societies. It is a situational mobility of identity that occurs when the references are multiple and the identities are flexible, fluid and open. The intersections between identity and belongingness and the perception of discrimination can be seen in these two types. The young people who have been subject to discrimination are much more of British society but without rejecting or denying belonging to it. It is also true that social relations, the time of residence and the family adaptation to the host society play a significant role in the identity construction process. The general characteristics of the young people interviewed are the following:

- Origin of families, of working-class, with a marked ethnic and cultural profile, who have transmitted permanent affective bonds with their origin to them and who migrated to ensure a better future for them. The bonding with the land in which they were born or from which their parents came is maintained through family relations and transmitting values, regulations and customs.
- Despite the experiences of discrimination and the following feeling of rejection and unfairness they felt, the attitudes towards English society include recognition and gratitude for the opportunities experienced; the feeling of being at home; reaffirming values such as tolerance, freedom and respect for human rights; intercultural relations and the pride of being a member of society. They value the difficulties of adaptation (those who emigrated later), individualism, coldness in social relations and attitudes of rejection towards the foreign population as negative.
- The young people interviewed had grown up in a very diverse society which has allowed them to get to know a whole world of relations and ways of thinking that are richer and more varied, they state. They maintain interethnic relations with young people of many origins (also English, of course) who they met during their school years, during free time activities and at work, and show a better ability to establish social relationships than their parents. In general, they use English with their friends and siblings, because they have been used to it since they were little. Mastering the English language opens doors, being able to approach other collectives allows them to enter other social and cultural contexts and their greater knowledge and belongingness to English society helps them establish open relations, making a bridge between their parents and their society.
- They see people from their ethnic group who have recently arrived as different, because now their way of thinking and acting is more English. Those who migrated later see themselves reflected in these newcomers, due to the way they dress and the "ways" in which they maintain relations. They understand that they need time to adapt to a society with an open, free way of thinking.
- They have all followed or are following successful academic careers, confirming that the main objective of their parents was to obtain a better level of life for their children. In gratitude and

recognition of the parental effort, they have made the most of the education opportunities they have been given. They and their families value education as a central aspect, not just for acquiring competences and social and cultural skills, but also for establishing intercultural relations and to achieve ascending social mobility. Most of them have got into the labour market, with the difficulties and limitations imposed by age, ethnic origin and the current structural situation. Their future involves continuing to learn, getting suitable jobs for their academic qualifications, improving their social position and achieving ascending mobility that meets their parental expectations. They are very motivated in their education and have high future expectations which, nevertheless, sometimes do not correspond to the results achieved.

- They live in neighbourhoods with a higher percentage of immigration from other countries and continents which, on the one hand, favours intercultural and intergroup relations, preventing separation and segregation in a group, although in some cases this makes full integration into English society more difficult. However, the way in which young people manage their intercultural relations with other similar young people is a good indication of their level of accommodation and adaptation to the multicultural reality. The use of shared spaces and relations promotes solidarity between communities and decreases tensions (bridging capital) (Blake et al, 2008) allowing conflicts to be negotiated from a better knowledge of "the other".

Recapitulating, we can state that despite the negative discrimination that affects them, these young people have established a strong bond with English society, while solidarity and intragroup feelings should not be understood as reactive ethnicity that is defensively positioned against situations of discrimination, but as affection and loyalty to their family and origin. Nevertheless, the repetition of dynamics of differentiation and of non-inclusive practices can interfere with their future expectations and have a negative effect on their identity. As I stated in my previous piece of research (Roca, 2009), conditions of inequality have a negative effect on identity and a feeling of social belongingness. When negative discrimination is perceived, the results of the adaptation process change, as it is experienced as an individual and collective attack, affecting intergroup relations (Berry et al., 2006) and social cohesion.

Awarding deficits of bonding and adaptation cuts the access to free choice of identity because it is imposed through social discourses and worldviews. To the contrary, the structure of opportunities, interethnic social relations and social, political and legal rights ensure the young people a capital and are arguments for social inclusion and for obtaining flexible, open, positive identities. Unlike the stance of some assimilationist positions, the young people interviewed confirm that not having full assimilation in the host society does not break down social cohesion. Having multiple cultural features gives them a great intercultural capacity, necessary in today's multicultural society.

Conclusions

The objective of this piece of research was to reconstruct the identity processes of children of families of Latin American origin in London and Oxford and to analyse how discriminatory experiences influence this construction. The results explain how the family migration occurs and how it affects the young people, their enculturation and acculturation in their new society, and how they overcome experiences of discrimination at the same time as defining their personal identity and their feeling of belongingness.

Individual identity is fundamentally constructed based on the perception that people have of our position in society and of the vision and identity that society grants us. The cultural and ethnic diversity of 21st-century societies confer social and cultural capital onto the young people who have experienced family migratory processes.

Despite the fact that society perceives these young people as ethnically and culturally different and not as citizens with full rights, through their biographical stories we can see how they construct open identities in the multicultural context in which they live, which are flexible and mixed because they show the capacity and skills to live together and to participate in a double, bicultural reference which enriches them. Therefore, they are identities that are shared due to their close bonding and belongingness to English society and due to maintaining the affective bonds with their origin. In this sense, we can affirm that they shape an ethnogenesis (new culture) on an ethnic and cultural base of origin, transmitted by the family legacy, with a strong socialisation and enculturation (those born or who arrived during their infancy) or acculturation (young people who emigrated later) in English society. They are positive identities of the intercultural character that surpass the idea of British identity reduced to "white nationals".

The ethnic identity which they have stated bonds to their origin, does not position them against British society or its culture, of which they say they are proud, nor does it prevent or limit their social interactions. They set up social networks with young people of other origins and cultural practices that convert them into active players in the construction of an intercultural, cohesive society that ensures the integration of all its members (intercultural living). In this sense, it is important to take into account that their social and cultural capital is a great potential in establishing relations between heterogeneous groups and communities.

The young people interviewed show a desire for adaptation and social participation, but not of assimilation of British society. They wish to maintain the family legacy alive, along with their ethnic identity and their origin, yet integrated into English society and culture, from which they become acculturated and enriched with the guidelines, values and practices that they considered to be most valid and positive for themselves. They have carried out a process of effective and efficient social adaptation that allows them to face up to and resist discriminatory practices. Their flexible, open, multiple identities, together with positive bonds and belongingness help this process and allow them

to demonstrate that they are young people without problems of adaptation and integration. As other authors have confirmed, a positive attitude towards the culture of origin and the mainstream society leads to better social adaptation than when the focus is placed on just one of them. When one is rejected, the adaptation is more difficult (Berry et al., 2006). It is society which, with its inequalities, prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination, excludes people and collectives, making their full social inclusion difficult. Resistance to the integration of the immigrant population and being given foreign identities by British society (as the consequent construction of intragroup closed ethnic identities) is an error and a barrier to social cohesion and the development of the intercultural society.

As I observed in my research in Barcelona (Roca, 2009), the young people of Latin American origin interviewed break down many of the topics, images, discourses and current perceptions about immigration in European societies. Flexible, open identities show that essentialist positions that consider identities to be permanent and unalterable are a mistake in 21st-century multicultural societies. These young people contribute to social change and, with their presence, the social and cultural setting is enriched.

Implications for the future

Academics, institutions and organisations must all be aware of the transcendental role that children of immigrant families play in the construction of an intercultural society. They make up an important, necessary collective to achieve the passage to a multicultural society with recognised but separate groups, in an intercultural society based on the practice of living together. The future lies in interethnic relations, in shared identities and in the cohesion of the community (Thomas, 2011).

Social inclusion and the construction of an intercultural society is an arduous task that requires a two-way effort, in other words, that of the desire for integration of recently arrived immigrants and that of the institutional resources. It is important to take into account that state and local immigration policies and discourses and attitudes, whether political or from the mass media, are factors that impact the adaptation of the families and the young people.

In recent years, we have witnessed an increase in nationalistic identity rhetoric. It is a new model of institutionalising exclusion, of legitimating the general rejection of the different "other", which will make it difficult to lead to the construction of an intercultural, inclusive, egalitarian society. Blaming immigration for the lack of resources for the native population (and the consequent marginalisation of a significant share of this population) is small-minded and it goes against the most elementary human rights and fractures society. In times of anti-immigration sentiments, the repressive closing of borders and a criminalising view of the immigrant population, there is the danger that the ethnic groups will close in on themselves and intercultural relations will not be feasible (Massey and Sánchez, 2010). Hoping to assimilate the recently arrived immigrants to

"preserve" national identity attacks cultural rights and human diversity and creates closed, excluded identities. We should not forget that it is discrimination, among other things, that determines bonds, belongingness and identities. The perception that the young people interviewed have of discrimination may, in the future, lower the level of adaptation and acculturation that they currently have, if we do not work on a society that neutralises racism, advances in equal opportunities and favours relations between groups and communities.

We need to continue advancing with new research that brings us closer to better knowledge about an emergent group in English society, which claims its own space and belongingness; and social, political and economic conditions need to be created to prevent situations of inequality and discrimination.

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