Language and Muslim Immigrant Childhoods
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Language and Muslim Immigrant Childhoods
The Politics of Belonging

Inmaculada Mª García-Sánchez
For Wafiya, Worda, Sarah, Manal, Karim, Mimon, and Kamal
whose real names I cannot reveal but whom I shall never forget.

And

for my nephews Mateo López Gil and Yasin Fervenza Rabah,
whose young smiles give me hope and faith.

And in memory of
Josefa Sánchez Naranjo (1942–2007)
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Introduction

In late October 2005, barely two months after I arrived in Spain with my suitcases and equipment to document the sociocultural and linguistic worlds of the Moroccan immigrant children of Vallenueño, a small rural community in the central southwest of the country, riots erupted in hundreds of immigrant housing estates in France, and spread temporarily into Germany and Belgium. The rioters were not newcomers, but rather second- and third-generation immigrant youth of North African descent who had been born and raised in Europe. Perhaps because Spain is now witnessing the solid emergence of a second generation of Moroccan immigrant youth, the conflicting sentiments aroused by the 2005 events in France found a strong echo in the Spanish media, as well as in Vallenueño, where 38% to 40% of the population has a Moroccan immigrant background.

The string of editorials about the riots that filled the Spanish press during those days emphasized the discontent of marginalized Muslim youth in Europe, as well as how these youth often felt more discriminated against and excluded from the European countries where they were born/raised than their parents’ generation. In spite of the likely relationship between these events and the structural conditions of the daily existence of these youth, the French riots in fall 2005, along with the July 2005 London bombings and the March 2004 Madrid bombings, were portrayed as the main triggers of what soon became widely discussed in the political arena as a full-blown failure of immigrant integration in Europe, or “una crisis de los modelos de integración.” Although the actual promotion of coherent and systematic policies of inclusion prior to these events is highly debatable, the discourse that has indeed come to dominate contemporary political discussion surrounding immigration in Spain, and throughout Europe, is
that of a crisis of the politics of inclusion, especially when it comes to immigrants from North African or other Muslim backgrounds.

The feelings that the 2005 riots in France had generated in Spanish political and cultural circles also reverberated among the local, non-immigrant population of Vallenuevo. I remember vividly the first time I actually saw live images of the pandemonium that had erupted in France. It must have been the third or fourth day of the riots, since I did not have television in the apartment I had rented. That morning I had gone to the local churrería – a bar serving the traditional Spanish breakfast of fried bread – to have coffee and churros with Álvaro, a local farmer and one of my research contacts, who was going to introduce me to some Moroccan families in the town. The television in the churrería was showing the early morning news, and when the riot images of the previous night came on the screen almost everybody stopped going about their business and focused on the small monitor hung high in one of the corners of the bar. My own sense of shock at the level of violence and destruction was compounded by the comments of a few vocal patrons, applauding the actions of the French police and agreeing with the opinions of the most conservative French politicians. As I was pondering over the despair evidenced by the actions of the young rioters, and simultaneously wondering about the complex interethnic dynamics of this rural community that I was by then only beginning to discover, one of the owners of the establishment, to whom Álvaro had just introduced me, looked at me directly and said: “Hay que echarlos a todos, porque esto – esto ahora está pasando en Francia, pero esto va a terminar pasando aquí con los moros” (They must all be kicked out, because this – this is happening now in France, but this is going to end up happening here with los moros).

The chilling nature of this statement, suggesting an ominous inevitability of civil unrest, renders almost invisible a question that was neither adequately posed nor satisfactorily answered by the media, politicians, and the public: how do these youth come to develop such an insidious sense of exclusion and alienation from the European countries where they were born and raised? This was a question that I thought about more and more as the weeks went on, especially in the face of political and everyday discourses that seemed to be more concerned with the emergence of headscarves and other Islamic symbols among the younger generations than with the quality of these youths’ sociocultural lives.

This book is about how Moroccan immigrant children in Vallenuevo negotiate everyday forms of difference and belonging in the contemporary sociopolitical climate of Spain and, to some extent, of Europe. While current
scholarship has increasingly focused on issues of belonging, identity formation, exclusion, and forms of citizenship for those whose lives are characterized by mobility and for those who have to navigate the liminality of geographical and ideological borders (Agamben 2005; Appadurai 1996; Brubaker 1992, 1998, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2010; Clifford 1994; De Genova 2005; Ong 1996, 1999, 2003, 2006; Rosaldo 1994, 1999; Waldinger 2001, 2008, 2010), few studies have examined how these processes emerge and unfold through everyday discursive practices and social interaction. Even fewer have focused on how children who experience migration specifically are affected by and affect these processes through their everyday participation in the multiple communities and institutions that make up their socio-cultural milieus. This book attempts to provide a nuanced picture of Moroccan immigrant children’s lifeworlds, by developing a holistic analysis of the constraints and affordances that this group of immigrant children routinely encounter and negotiate across the social contexts of their daily lives, including family, public school, religious institutions, medical clinics, and neighborhood peer groups.

In my examination of Moroccan children’s social interactions in all these contexts, I have placed special emphasis on the multicultural politics of difference and belonging in a country, like Spain, increasingly characterized by multilingualism and cultural diversity. In showing how both social difference and commonality of belonging are products of everyday interaction, I have adopted an ethnopragmatically-informed approach, which involves the close study of everyday language use coupled with long periods of ethnographic research to investigate the ways in which speech is both constituted by and constitutive of sociocultural forms of interaction and social organization (Duranti 2007). With this approach, I examine not only the everyday ways in which Moroccan immigrant children become socially marked and discriminated against, but also how they actively and creatively respond to these practices of racialized exclusion and position themselves with respect to the multiple communities to which they can claim membership.

Spain, and Vallenuedo in particular, were interesting places to study Moroccan immigrant children’s lives for several reasons. With increasing numbers of Moroccan immigrants into rural and urban Spanish centers over the last decades of the twentieth and the first decades of the twenty-first centuries, Spain has witnessed the emergence of strong North African and Muslim diasporic communities that are pushing taken-for-granted boundaries of social and institutional notions of membership and identity. The effects of these migratory trends on the demographic, ethnic, and linguistic make-up of Spanish society have generated a number of points of social and political contention. In Vallenuedo, a small rural community that in the span of a decade saw its population of immigrant origin increase from
zero to 37%, these points of contention have been particularly heart-felt by both Spanish and Moroccan communities. Indeed, Vallanuevo was among the growing number of small farming communities all over the country that were rapidly becoming important centers of settlement for migrants attracted to jobs in the agricultural sector.

Ironically, some of these rural communities, like Vallanuevo, had had a long history of emigration during the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1990s and 2000s, however, they had become a prime destination for immigrants and were absorbing a large percentage of the migration flow into the country. Even so, much of the literature on immigrant communities in Spain has continued to focus on the large industrialized centers, like the areas surrounding Madrid and Barcelona (Erickson 2011; Lucko 2007; Martín Rojo 2011; Mercado 2008, etc.), and other urban spaces (see Rogozen-Soltar 2012a, 2012b in Granada). This under-attention to immigration into rural areas is also characteristic of much of the ethnographic work on North African and other Muslim immigrant communities in Europe as a whole (e.g., Bowen 2007, 2010; Ewing 2008; Mandel 2008; P.A. Silverstein 2004).

Of course, there are many important reasons to pay attention to immigration into the hyper-diverse, cosmopolitan cities of the twenty-first century. But it is also crucial to study such processes in rural areas. There are also good reasons to think that immigrants’ participation dynamics will be different in smaller places, where the receiving context is often more homogenous and where the history of immigration is shallow and fast-paced, rather than characterized by longer histories of immigration and by more sociocultural, economic, religious, and linguistic heterogeneity, as in cosmopolitan cities.

Vallanuevo was also a good place to investigate the social and ideological constraints and affordances Moroccan immigrant children experience because, while not immune to the growing problematization surrounding Muslim and North African immigration to Spain, this town’s social services and education institutions had been heralded in the Spanish media for their active promotion of multicultural policies and integration programs. This made it possible for me to consider the extent to which these efforts to mitigate exclusion and promote tolerance and integration were actually experienced by the children in their everyday negotiations of difference and belonging.

1.1 About this Introduction

Attempting to integrate different levels of analysis – macro and micro, global and local, public and private, social and individual forces – that shape the
experience of growing up in immigration contexts is a daunting task. Certainly it is one that defies the artificial boundaries of traditional disciplines and the parameters of single theoretical paradigms or theoretical models. For this reason, this book project draws from theoretical approaches in anthropology, ethnomethodology, sociology, and philosophy to address the lives of immigrant children growing up in a multilingual, multicultural community undergoing rapid social change. The body of theories framing this book illuminate the situated and processual nature of culture, socialization, belonging, inclusion/exclusion, and identity formation within the migration context of contemporary Spain.

For clarity and ease of exposition, my discussion of these framing theoretical ideas and bodies of literature will unfold in the next four sections. I begin by discussing the ideological and geopolitical backdrop of North African and Muslim immigration in contemporary Europe, emphasizing how a new Orientalism qua security is the unacknowledged elephant in the room affecting Moroccan immigrant children’s everyday negotiations of difference and belonging. I then discuss the theoretical importance of examining immigrant children’s everyday lives holistically in a variety of social settings, particularly immigrant children from heavily scrutinized and racialized communities. This holistic perspective is important so that we can obtain a balanced view of both how immigrant children are affected by these larger geopolitical forces, but also of how they actively negotiate these forces and other structural constraints. In the section that follows, I address some contemporary theories of sociopolitical markedness and membership that frame my understandings of how Moroccan immigrant children negotiate the micropolitics of belonging. The introduction closes with a discussion of how ethnomethodologically informed linguistic anthropology provides a particularly helpful set of theoretical and analytical tools to investigate Moroccan immigrant children’s daily constraints and affordances in negotiating belonging and participation in their multiple communities.

1.2 Orientalism Revisited: North African and Muslim Immigrant Communities in Europe

Although the figure of the immigrant has often been constructed as a problem of integration into national polities both in lay and academic discourses, the experience of Muslim immigrant groups in contemporary Europe falls into a distinctive racialized category of exclusion regardless of country of origin and settlement and other contextual differences. Indeed, the widespread debate about la crisis de los modelos de integración, or failure of integration, in Spain, as well as in the rest of Europe, must be understood
against the backdrop of growing levels of problematization regarding immigrants from North Africa and the Muslim world. In the last three decades, European nations have witnessed how Muslim diasporic communities have taken visible and strong roots in their countries due to both an increase of immigration and of policies of family reunification. The concerns expressed about this taking of roots have significantly gone hand-in-hand with a feeling of exclusion experienced by many members of Muslim immigrant communities.

The feelings of anxiety, mistrust, and suspicion that the presence of Muslim immigrant communities generate among local populations of different European nations have been partly explained by a deeply rooted historical attribution of Otherness to Islamic culture that stems from Orientalist interpretations of the Muslim world (e.g., Asad 2000; Bowen 2004a; Cesari 2004; Said 1978; Werbner 2002). Asad (2000), in exploring the role of historical narratives in the formation of European identity, traced how Muslims since the early Middle Ages have consistently been positioned in historical accounts and other forms of cultural representation as the primary violent and uncivilized Other to Christians; this positioning has been critical to the construction of the modern notion of the cultural and historical unity of Western European civilization.

This historical Orientalist perspective alone, however, cannot explain the current revival of hostilities towards Muslim immigrant communities in Europe. Many scholars have argued that the Orientalist discourse has found renewed prominence in the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attack in the United States, the March 2004 train bombings in Madrid, the July 2005 London bombings, and the ensuing War on Terror. The high profile nature of these international events have intensified the focus on Muslim immigrant communities in Europe, putting entire communities under suspicion and surveillance.

As a result, Muslims are seen not only as a threat to European security, but to European identity itself. This combined problematization has made possible the emergence of a new kind of Orientalism that has found its maximum expression in theses closely aligned with Huntington’s (1992) controversial analysis of the clash of civilizations. A significant amount of attention has indeed been paid to the processes of othering of Muslim populations brought about by new anti-terrorism laws and by the hotly contested issue of racial profiling, which singles out this specific ethnic group as being dangerous for the rest of the society. Since 9/11, much has been written about how immigrants from the Muslim world are viewed from a security paradigm and are subjected to special scrutiny by the state, as well as to potentially discriminatory treatment under the law. With regard to Muslims as a threat to European identity, the construction of Muslims as intrinsically
incompatible with principles of European democracies has become the flagship of a culturalist brand of racism that highlights cultural differences, such as religion, language, dress and so on, and that has also found resonance in state policies targeting Muslims, such as the *headscarf law* in France (Balibar 1991; and Bowen 2004b, 2006).

In Spain, more specifically, it is also easy to identify the conflation of perceived unbridgeable cultural differences in way of life and religious views with a security paradigm that positions the Moroccan community under suspicion in the eyes of the majority of the population. There are several particularities of the Spanish context, however, that deserve separate attention and that will be addressed at length in Chapter 2. Two that I will mention briefly here are the pervasive cultural representations of Moroccan immigrants as *los inasimilables* (the “unassimilable”) (Bravo López 2004) and the many studies suggesting that Moroccan children are the most racialized and most socially marked immigrant group in Spanish public schools (e.g., Mijares 2004a and Martín Rojo 2010). This positioning as the ultimate Other that Moroccan immigrant communities are confronted with must not only be understood within the more general European reaction against the increasing immigration of the last 60 years from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, but also against the background of a Spanish-specific kind of Orientalism that has historically constructed Spain as the last fortress protecting Europe from Islamic invasions (Martín Rojo 2000; van Dijk 2005; Flesler 2008). Undoubtedly, this deeply ingrained historical consciousness differentiates to a large extent the prejudice and mistrust faced by Moroccan immigrant communities in Spain from other brands of anti-immigrant sentiment directed at other groups.

Specific immigration policies undertaken by successive Spanish governments in the 1990s are of crucial importance as the most immediate socio-political context of contemporary representations of Moroccans as the “unassimilable.” During the mid- to late 1990s, the immigration policies in Spain promoted the idea that there were immigrant groups more compatible with the Spanish way of life and, therefore, more easily assimilable to the fabric of Spanish society. Immigration policies during these years blatantly favored the arrival of Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans who were seen as more desirable for cultural and linguistic reasons, as opposed to other immigrant groups, such as Moroccans, whose language, religion, and culture were regarded as more distant and alien (Bravo López 2004).

These ideas, and the ways in which they resonated with international and national political events, have furthered the association of Moroccan and Muslim immigration with insecurity and have amplified the cultural and historical representations of Moroccans in Spain as the Other, not only different from us, but also dangerous to us. This increased problematization
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resonated particularly forcefully during the period I was conducting my primary fieldwork, from early fall 2005 to the end of summer 2007. Just before the beginning of my fieldwork, two events put the Moroccan immigrant community under a brighter spotlight than ever before in its history of immigration into Spain: (1) the Madrid train bombings of March 11, 2004, many of whose perpetrators were Moroccan nationals, and (2) the 2005 “extraordinary regularization process” (proceso de regularización extraordinaria) of thousands of undocumented immigrants approved by the then newly elected government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero on December 30, 2004. This was a legal measure that was opposed by the conservative opposition and hotly debated in all spheres of politics, from local town hall and union offices of small rural communities, like Vallenueno, to the highest seats of European Union policy-making institutions. The convergence of greater surveillance and suspicion, brought about by the March 2004 terrorist attacks, and the higher visibility of the actual size and proportions of the Moroccan immigrant community, engendered by the process of regularization, is a pivotal historical moment. This is true for both its more negative aspects of how this confluence of factors made the environment in Spain less hospitable for the Moroccan immigrant community, but also for its more positive aspects of renewed hopes for fuller membership and a more permanent future in the country.

The historically-constituted ideologies for “understanding the problem” of Muslims in Europe, as well as the sociopolitical landscape through which their Otherness has been constituted, have received much scholarly attention. Less attention, however, has been paid to how these policies, surveillance, and general suspicion have affected immigrant groups’ ordinary lives and everyday experiences. Yet, examining how the newer generations of North African and Muslim immigrants in Europe, in this case Moroccan immigrant children in Spain, are able to negotiate membership on the ground amidst these complex cultural politics of belonging is particularly important if we want to understand how the immigrant second generation may grow up to develop a sense of commonality of belonging, or conversely, a feeling of not-belonging and alienation, like the young French rioters in 2005.

This book attempts to refocus scholarly attention on the everyday experiences of racialized immigrant groups by focusing on how Moroccan immigrant children in Vallenueno navigate (and are affected by) both local and national politics of inclusion/exclusion. I emphasize the timing of my study because the dramatic bombings of 2004 (Madrid) and 2005 (London), on the one hand, and the 2005 proceso de regularización extraordinaria were the macro sociopolitical backdrop to the daily social encounters of Moroccan immigrant children in Vallenueno during the period of my study (2005–
In this sense, I want to emphasize, more generally, the importance of studying immigrant children’s everyday lives and discursive practices to trace how forces at play in transnational, diasporic settings impact these children’s emerging sense of belonging and processes of identification in the most immediate contexts of their daily existence.

1.3 The Everyday Landscapes of Immigrant Childhoods

In the last few years, a growing number of ethnographic studies have considered issues of identity and community identification in the lives of transnational migrant youth (e.g., Baquedano-López 1998, 2000; Hall 2002; Klein 2009; LaBennet 2011; Lee 2005; Maira 2002; Mendoza-Denton 2008), as well as how children’s everyday lives are shaped by sociopolitical forces, including the attitudes, stereotypes, and ideologies of the receiving community towards specific immigrant, diasporic groups (e.g., Hall 1995; Orellana 2009; Sarroub 2005; Shankar 2008; Reyes 2007). In spite of these important studies, the dominant tendency is still to consider the different spheres of immigrant children’s everyday lives in relative isolation from one another. One of the most important goals of this book is to consider the social contexts of immigrant childhoods integrally in order to construct a holistic understanding of the sociocultural and linguistic matrix of Moroccan immigrant children’s everyday lives. Documenting immigrant children’s experiences and across contexts, and studying family, educational, institutional, religious, community, and peer practices, highlights both the constraints and affordances that Moroccan immigrant children face in and negotiating membership and belonging in different realms of their social relationships.

Each of the following chapters presents how Moroccan immigrant children negotiate participation in different but concurrent spheres of their lives. Taken together, the chapters allow us to examine integrally the (co-)occurrence of features of both communicative and social practices. Building on a strong tradition of scholarship that has already established that immigrant children, the world over, have the daunting task of coping with the sociocultural expectations of their immigrant and receiving communities, this book aspires to trace the landscapes of Moroccan immigrant children’s worlds in a way that allows us to capture and appreciate holistically the social complexity of immigrant childhoods. Understanding the sociocultural and linguistic lifeworlds of immigrant children is ever more important now, with children and youth being the fastest growing sector of the more
than 214 million transnational migrants found throughout the world (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011).

In accounting for how Moroccan immigrant children in Vallenuelvo manage the local and global forces that impinge upon their lives and upon their emerging sense of belonging and identification, I have tried to avoid two common traps that characterize the study of immigrant and minority children: either romanticizing the affordances and agency that these children are sometimes able to exercise, or, conversely, highlighting social, political, and economic constraints to the point of abnormalizing their childhoods. Documenting different arenas of the children’s social lives has helped me with this difficult task. Being able to examine a wide variety of contexts has allowed me to present the interplay between the constraints and affordances children experience in different settings. Another way in which I have tried to avoid these pitfalls is by capturing as faithfully as possible the perspectives of the children themselves. Listening to children’s ongoing reflections on their lives has been the main compass I have used when I felt I was being pulled too far in one of those two directions.

Throughout the writing of this book, I often found myself drawn to a series of interviews and lifemaps (see Chapter 3) that I collected from some of the children featured in the study. The drawings always reminded me of the exceptional but also of the more commonplace circumstances of immigrant childhoods. They struck me as powerfully illuminating perhaps because, as forms of self-presentation and narration, they function as tours in De Certeau’s (1984) sense of the term – Moroccan immigrant children’s everyday narrations of movement through their lives as subjectively experienced by them. In these pictorial narrations, children casually traverse national boundaries, lived-in spaces, temporal boundaries, linguistic codes, and cultural and imaginative domains. In the lifemap reproduced in Figure 1.1, Worda, age 9, represents with drawings and text captions significant events in her life, from her birth in Morocco to her current life in Spain, as well as favorite activities and her future dreams. At first glance, this lifemap may not seem very different from one that any Spanish girl of Worda’s age could have produced, and, in many ways, it is quite similar: the prominence of school and play in her life, her love for sports and physical activities, such as swimming and running in the track-and-field team, and her aspirations to become a computer science teacher and to have a family when she grows up.

A closer look, however, reveals a more complex picture. As illustrated in the three subsections of Worda’s map featured in Figure 1.2 below, we see the intrinsic hybrid nature of her daily life, as well as the situated negotiation of languages and practices that children like her must perform on a daily basis. For example, in Worda’s own representation of her favorite play activities, she seamlessly transcends linguistic boundaries and displays her
bicultural repertoire, by describing these children’s games as *chereta* (šereta\(^{14}\) – Moroccan Arabic word for “hopscotch”) and *comba* (Spanish word for “jump-rope”) in the same sentence.

The enduring importance of the practices of her immigrant diaspora community are represented in culinary traditions, such as Moroccan tažine
and couscous. These meals are not only presented as Worda’s favorites, but from further conversations I learned that these are dishes that she routinely helps her elder sister prepare when their mother is working (see Chapter 4). In many Vallenuavo Moroccan households, children are expected to undertake significant household responsibilities from an early age as part of an ethos of generational interdependence and appropriate development. Moroccan immigrant children’s contributions to the sustainability of their communities, through the responsibilities expected of girls like Worda, are also prominently represented in the depiction of the household chores that Worda enjoys doing, that is, sweeping and mopping. These tasks, which would be rare in lifemaps produced by Spanish children of her same age, are even represented before Worda depicts her favorite games and pastimes.

Thinking seriously about Moroccan immigrant children’s critical role and active participation in important sociocultural processes of settlement and transformation, such as when they help in their homes or when they translate for families and doctors in institutional contexts, may seem paradoxical, given forms of social exclusion and discrimination that Moroccan immigrant children in Vallenuavo face and that this book also describes. It is precisely this nuanced complexity in Moroccan immigrant children’s lives, however, that this book attempts to capture. Yes, Moroccan immigrant children’s dreams and aspirations for the future, like Worda and Wafiya’s illustrated in Figure 1.3, may be challenged by social exclusion and discrimination, structural economic disparities, community expectations, and differential access to (and distribution of) resources. Yet, Moroccan immigrant children in Vallenuavo are not passive subjects in these processes of inclusion/
exclusion through which belonging (or lack thereof) is negotiated. One of the most important things that this book shows is how this group of children actively try to negotiate their positions in their social worlds from a very early age, even in the midst of social relations that are clearly asymmetrical, and involving large power differentials. Yes, Moroccan immigrant children act contextually against a number of adverse constraints due to their subordinate positions as children and as immigrants from a particularly undesirable group (los moros). Yet, social actors are never wholly drained of agency, even those who occupy subaltern positions or are on the margins of power (Ortner 2006). As the new second immigrant generation in the making, Moroccan immigrant children in Valluenuevo often find themselves at the forefront of the negotiation of some of these sociocultural processes, and are able to exercise different degrees of agency against these constraints in different contexts of their lives.

Their socio-culturally mediated capacity to engage in everyday tactics (De Certeau 1984), however, varies in the different social settings where these children negotiate their emerging sense of belonging. A crucial focus of this book is how Moroccan immigrant children negotiate belonging and difference through everyday discursive and interactional practices, as these practices are differentially configured through the structural constraints and affordances of different social fields. To capture this, I draw inspiration from the children’s lifemaps and offer the reader a tour (De Certeau 1984) of the everyday landscapes of Moroccan immigrant childhoods in Valluenuevo.

### 1.4 Theoretical Paradigms for Understanding Difference and Belonging

As debates about the failure of integration gained momentum in Spain, as well as in many other European countries, notions of *acculturation* and
assimilation of immigrants into dominant society polities have been one of the leading heuristics through which institutions and politicians, increasingly concerned about national integrity and cultural cohesion, have attempted to address the dynamics of immigrants’ processes of settlement. The dominance of these assimilationist constructs, such as integración social, is particularly visible in the area of public policy, in spite of competing discourses of interculturalidad (inter-culturality) and of a new convivencia (living-together).

It may be surprising how older models of immigrant incorporation have persisted and resurfaced in European discourse, given the ways in which these paradigms have been critiqued in the last few decades in academic discourse. This assimilationist tendency has become more prominent in debates over membership after 9/11 and after the attacks in Madrid, 2004, and in London, 2005 (Brubaker 2010).

In this book, I consider how Muslim and North African immigrants in Spain have come to be viewed as unassimilable, focusing on how this affects Moroccan immigrant children’s opportunities to develop commonality of belonging to their multiple communities in the immediate contexts that constitute their everyday existence. I am concerned with the politics of difference and belonging and how it is negotiated, contested, and politicized in quotidian sites of social life. Therefore, while the book offers a multi-layered account, attempting to integrate local histories, discourses, debates in the public sphere, and the globalizing forces of late capitalism that brought Moroccans to Vallenuedo in the early 1990s, the focus is on how Moroccan immigrant children in this rural community navigate the politics of difference and belonging in their daily interactions with teachers, peers, family members, friends, doctors, coaches, and religious figures. This book emphasizes the importance and the complexity of what have been called “the informal aspects of the politics of belonging” (Brubaker 2010, pp. 65–66). I outline the dynamics of processes of categorization and identification and of practices of inclusion/exclusion in everyday, seemingly innocuous and mundane encounters. I focus especially on these dynamics as refracted through the lenses of ethnopragmatically-informed linguistic anthropology.

In providing theoretical and ethnographic specificity to these informal aspects of the politics of belonging, this work attempts to complement the body of contemporary scholarship that has been devoted in the last few years to formal aspects of the politics of belonging, such as forms of citizenship and political rights for immigrants and other transnational populations (e.g., Brubaker 1989, 1992; De Genova 2005; Ong 1996, 1999, 2003, 2006; Rosaldo 1994, 1999). After all, the ways in which immigrant groups are treated, accepted, and recognized (or not) in their daily social life, can often belie and be at odds with codified forms of membership. In this sense, everyday social relationships can be as important and consequential for the wellbeing of
individuals and communities as the more formal aspects of the politics of belonging, at the very least phenomenologically and experientially.

A key dimension of the informal aspects of the politics of difference and belonging are the notions of identification and commonality, insofar as they represent the emergent and historically-situated nature of processes through which individuals categorize themselves and others (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Identification refers to the processes through which people come to experience a sense of commonality or difference. Identification involves acts carried out by agentive subjects, as well as people and objects who undergo the act of being identified. Commonality refers to the affective sense of belonging or to the affiliative feeling of being connected to a group. This perspective is complementary to my analytic lens focusing on Moroccan immigrant children’s situated negotiation of belonging and difference because this paradigm captures the contingent, emergent quality of how processes of categorization, similarity, membership, and difference are made relevant in everyday social interactions and practices.

Thinking about how Moroccan immigrant children navigate the informal aspects of the politics of belonging, brings me to address one of the most popular exegetic keys to interpret the experience of immigrant children and youth: the metaphor of in-betweeness. Tropes of caught in between two cultures or existing in between two worlds have been commonly used to explain the sociocultural, psychological, and educational lives of immigrant children of the so-called 1.5 (brought to the receiving country at an early age) and second (already born in the receiving country) immigrant generations. The more I became involved in the children’s lives and the more I have thought about my observations of them and our interactions and conversations together over the last few years, the less helpful I have found these tropes from both an ethnographic and a theoretical point of view, at least to capture the lifeworlds of the Moroccan immigrant children in Vallenueno.

Theoretically, as an enduring legacy of acculturation and assimilation models, these metaphors contain the residue of linear and teleological developmental narratives by which immigrants will integrate themselves into the “mainstream” culture over the course of the generations. Ethnographically speaking, I believe that these analogies privilege excessively the perspective of adult researchers, like me, who arrive in a community to study immigrant children, and recognizing areas of discontinuities between practices and expectations across contexts, map the analytic experience of their own discernments onto the lived experiences of immigrant children. While understanding that all academic metaphors have limitations and that complete identification with an emic perspective is an impossibility, it seems to me, however, that children do not experience these differences with the same
sence of rupture and disjuncture than outside observers do, but rather within the situational fabric of their daily lives.

More resonant with the contradictory positionalities that Moroccan immigrant children often inhabit, especially when it comes to negotiating difference and commonality of belonging, is having to navigate these politics from the position of being both insider and outsider at the same time. That is in some ways children are positioned by others (or position themselves) as more or less outsiders or insiders in given social domains, but very often they have to contend with both poles of the membership/marginality continuum simultaneously. In thinking about this framework, I have been influenced by concepts emanating from contemporary political philosophy, particularly that of Agamben’s zone of indistinction or indifference (1998, 2005), as it intersects with Deleuze’s notion of zone of indiscernibility (1981, and Deleuze and Guattari 1980). Although there are clear differences between these two notions, what I find powerful about them is how both of these types of zones are considered to be ontological realms in which dichotomies that have come to be understood not only as distinct but also as opposites are seen to coincide or overlap – for my purposes here, dichotomies about membership, such as sameness/difference and exclusion/inclusion. Most evocatively, Deleuze discusses these zones as primordial domains for becoming. Also, both Deleuze and Agamben think of these zones as the underlying ontological logic that persist beneath fields that we have ordered around relational opposites, including, I think it is safe to assume, those systematic taxonomies that are produced around the identification, categorization, and social sorting of individuals, in this case immigrant children.

Although these notions have been helpful to me in thinking through these issues, there are some crucial differences between the ways in which I describe children’s lives and participation in ontological-social domains of simultaneous exclusion and inclusion and Deleuze’s zone of indiscernibility and Agamben’s zones of indistinction, particularly the latter. Agamben (1998) developed the notion of “a zone of indistinction, between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit . . .” (pp. 170–171) around extreme cases where exceptional sociopolitical relations have become rule and individuals are almost devoid of power, such as prisoners in concentration camps or refugees in contemporary nation-states. Even if it is possible to say that some aspects of the problematization of Muslim and North African immigrants in contemporary Spain are reminiscent of sociopolitical abnormalization as discussed in Agamben’s (2005) analysis of post-9/11 events, clearly, Vallenuevo is a far cry from any of the draconian sociopolitical conditions found in concentration camps or in places like Guantánamo. Moroccan immigrant children in Spain today obviously do not suffer the indignities
of such extreme human conditions. Yes, Moroccan immigrant children experience historically-informed discrimination and everyday *microaggressions*, but even in the settings where they encounter most constraints, they are sometimes able to assert themselves and counteract how they are being characterized.

In spite of these important and significant differences, I want to suggest that this idea of being both outsider and insider at the same time, experiencing both exclusion and inclusion simultaneously (Agamben 1998, p. 181) might be very fruitful in understanding people’s everyday lives in less extreme, contemporary sociopolitical conditions like of Moroccan immigrants in communities such as Vallenuevo, or, more generally, of (un)documented immigrants and their families, permanent-resident card holders, and other denizens of modern nation-states whose de facto status and rights are often uncertain and imprecise.

Across the social contexts of immigrant children’s everyday lives, I explore what negotiating participation and belonging may mean in contexts where Moroccan immigrant children experience themselves as being both insiders and outsiders to varying degrees. In proposing that the development of immigrant children’s sense of membership is dependent on having to negotiate the boundaries of their simultaneous inclusion/exclusion in the social spheres of their everyday life, what I am trying to capture is how this group of children bargains for commonality of belonging within domains where sameness and difference are sometimes muted, but are sometimes marked and made socially distinctive.

Moroccan immigrant children in Vallenuevo, who are either born in Spain or brought to the country by their parents when they are toddlers, cannot be considered as Spanish citizens, according to Article 17 of the Spanish Civil Code, by which only children of Spanish nationals are considered citizens by origin (*españoles de origen*). Moroccan immigrant children can only become citizens by residence, or *españoles por residencia*, through a process that requires one to 10 years of legal residence in the country (depending on whether they were born in Spain) and that can only be initiated by them when they reach 18 years of age, or by their immigrant parents after they reach 14. Yet, educational laws in Spain recognize the right to a free public education and provide for the full inclusion of immigrant children until the age of 16, regardless of their parents’ legal status. Other social policy follows this same reasoning, providing medical and social services to immigrant children, who for most purposes are accorded the same rights as their native-born peers at least until their late teens. The enormous contradictions of being institutionally treated like insiders, but being legally and ideologically considered outsiders reverberate throughout the social interactions I analyze.
in subsequent chapters of this book, as children make sense of different aspects of membership and belonging to their multiple communities.

1.5 A Linguistic Anthropological Lens on Negotiating Difference and Belonging

Linguistic anthropology is helpful in understanding the everyday politics of Moroccan immigrant childhoods in Vallenueno because of its focus on how the variety of cultural- and group-specific subject positions that people enact or attribute to others inheres in social interaction and is an “outcome of cultural semiotics that is accomplished through the production of contextually relevant sociopolitical relations of similarity and difference” (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, p. 382). Within linguistic anthropology, along with related disciplines, such as sociolinguistics and conversation analysis, much scholarship has been devoted to theorizing how social actors enact and construct categories for themselves and others in the midst of social activities, and otherwise position themselves as interactions unfold (e.g., Agha 2007a; Benwell and Stokoe 2006; Goffman 1981; Gumperz 1982; Mendoza-Denton 2002; Ochs 1992, 1993, 2002; Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1991, 1992). Such work has also demonstrated how everyday micro-level interactions, like the ones with which this book is mostly concerned, are consequential for the subject positions individuals come to occupy in the world and for larger social and political issues related to collective identifications, distribution of power, and representation (e.g., Baquedano-López 2000; Bucholtz 2001; Chun 2001; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1995; Klein 2009; Mehan 1996; Mendoza-Denton 2008; Reyes 2007; Rymes 2001; Shankar 2008).

In trying to understand how Moroccan immigrant children make sense of their lives and negotiate their social relations, I take an ethnopragmatic and ethnomethodological-informed approach that privileges the analysis of everyday language use and interactions in both its most immediate communicative and its larger sociocultural contexts (Duranti 2007; Duranti and Goodwin 1992; Ochs and Schieffelin 1984, 2012). This book draws heavily from these approaches in linguistic anthropology to delineate the micro-genesis of membership and belonging for Moroccan immigrant children in Vallenueno, paying particular attention to how difference, (mis- / non-) recognition, and inclusion/exclusion are discursively constructed in quotidian social encounters. The analysis in this book underscores, on the one hand, how difference and commonality of belonging are, at its most primordial level, products of everyday practices and interactions. On the other hand, it also emphasizes how immigrant children’s everyday social encounters involve