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The co-articulation of national identity and interculturalism in the Irish curriculum: educating for democratic citizenship?

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This article considers social and educational policy responses to increasing ethnic diversity in the Republic of Ireland and related concerns about the intensification of racism in Irish society in the 'Celtic Tiger' era. Drawing on approaches which emphasise the extent to which discourses on 'race' and multiculturalism are woven into a more general concern about the nation, I problematise interculturalism as a policy response to the intensification of racism in Irish society in recent years. Drawing on a corpus of recently published policy documents and curriculum materials currently being used in Irish secondary schools, I argue that racial inequality is more likely to be reproduced, rather than contested, through national and educational policies and practices which are purported to have egalitarian and anti-racist aims. Implications of the study are discussed in terms of alternative approaches to educating for democratic citizenship.

Keywords: intercultural education; national identity; curriculum; racism; educational policy; symbolic violence; democratic citizenship

This paper examines how the Irish nation, 'Irishness' and issues of cultural diversity are articulated in recent statutory anti-racist policy documents and in the national curriculum in the Republic of Ireland. I locate this analysis within the context of the recent emphasis on interculturalism as a policy response to growing public and political interest in an 'increasingly diverse Ireland' and related concerns about the intensification of racism in Irish society (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] 2006, v). Specifically, I focus on the extent to which the discourse of interculturalism intersects with, and is framed, in nationalistic terms, and consider the 'othering' effect of this nationalist argumentation for racialised minorities living in Ireland. In other words, I seek to demonstrate the ways in which the nation is invoked directly and indirectly within multicultural discourse, such that it 'flags' the nation and reproduces nationhood (Billig 1995), and seek to problematise those aspects of the national curriculum as it relates to the representation of national identity and diversity.[1] While education is commonly regarded as being central to a vision that creates space for, and embraces difference, I seek to demonstrate the extent to which intercultural discourse in the Irish context marginalises and constructs racialised minorities in deficit terms, positioning them as 'other' than Irish, as less Irish, or less than Irish.

Drawing on the work of Ghassan Hage (1998), who extends Bourdieuian analysis to the categories of 'race' and nationality, I characterise intercultural education as practiced in the Irish context as a form of *symbolic violence* which reproduces and masques relationships of power in society while disguising these policies and practices as egalitarian (Bourdieu 2001; Hage 1998). I employ this concept to suggest that contrary to intercultural education's egalitarian aims, policies and practices of this nature have the effect of abnormalising diversity and reinforcing the

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'otherness' of minority students. To this end, I suggest that intercultural education is, in fact, more likely to reproduce, rather than contest racism and racist ideologies. As such, the research seeks to promote a deeper understanding of the ways in which racial inequality is reproduced through policies and practices which are purported to have egalitarian and anti-racist aims.

The paper is organised as follows: The first two sections present the methodology and conceptual framework which informed the study. I then provide an overview of interculturalism as it is constructed in the Irish context within the broad socio-political context within which the study is situated. I then examine the representation of diversity in state-level discourses and in the curriculum and consider its co-articulation with the nation in terms of its implications for racialised minorities within the Irish national space. Key findings of the study are then discussed in terms of the state's increasing reliance on intercultural education as a policy panacea to the intensification of racism in Irish society and their implications for educating for democratic citizenship.

Methodology

The arguments outlined below are based on a discourse analysis of national anti-racism policy documents, textbooks and other instructional materials designed for use with lower secondary school students attending school in the Irish Republic (Fairclough 2003; Levett 1997; Van Dijk 1997). Discourse refers to the language and ideas which inform our actions and enable us to make sense of the world. Discourse analysis takes as its starting point, the notion that spoken and written language as it is communicated in textbooks, policy documents, newspapers etc, is a form of power through which social reality is constructed. Using critical discourse analytic techniques, I examined the production of meaning of key concepts related to interculturalism (including equality, inclusion, integration, diversity, race, racism and anti-racism) by key players within the political and educational *fields* of power. The purpose of the analysis was to examine how particular understandings of these concepts are mobilised by actors in the national political and educational fields, and to consider the impact of intercultural discourse in terms of the likelihood that it will contribute, or indeed impede, the development or realisation of a truly 'post-racist society' (Goldberg 2002). As such, the study seeks to transgress boundaries between 'the material' and 'the discursive' by considering both elements of the broader social context within which discursive constructions of 'the Other' are developed, as well as the real material consequences that discourses of this nature are likely to have (Hall 1980).

I relied almost exclusively on one policy document to analyse the discourse of interculturalism as it is articulated in the national political field, titled 'Planning for diversity: The national action plan against racism' (NPAR) which was published in 2005. NPAR is the most recent and comprehensive articulation of official thinking on interculturalism in Ireland; as the cornerstone of the Government's anti-racism policy, its overall aim is to:

> … provide strategic direction to combat racism and to develop a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland based on a commitment to inclusion by design, not as an add-on or afterthought and based on policies that promote interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding and respect. (Department of Justice 2005, 27)

In the educational domain, I analysed both policy documents and curricular materials relevant to the secondary curriculum. More specifically, I analysed intercultural educational guidelines which were recently produced by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (discussed in more detail below), as well as curriculum materials pertaining to five academic subjects (English, history, geography, religion and *civic, social, political education* [CSPE]), designed for use with lower secondary or 'junior cycle' students.

Conceptual framework

The research sought to integrate empirical findings with theoretical arguments based largely on critical theoretical perspectives in an attempt to explain how racial inequality is contested and reproduced in schools. Drawing on the intellectual oeuvre of Pierre Bourdieu, I characterise intercultural education as practiced in the Irish context as a form of *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu 2001). Symbolic violence describes a mode of domination that is exercised upon individuals in a symbolic, rather than a physical way, through such channels as communication and cognition (ibid.). Social inequality is thought to be achieved through symbolic violence when social actors, in taking the world for granted, *misrecognise* domination as a natural state of affairs, to the extent that they do not consider domination as such. Symbolic violence, therefore, is achieved when individuals collude in their own subordination by gradually accepting and internalising those very ideas and structures that tend to subordinate them (Connolly 1998).

Drawing on symbolic violence as a conceptual lens through which to view the policy and practice of interculturalism in Ireland, I suggest that state-sanctioned interculturalism as it is conceived in the Irish context, while purported to be egalitarian, actually has the effect of reproducing and masquing relationships of power in Irish society (Hage 1998). Drawing on the work of Ghassan Hage (1998), I seek to demonstrate the ways in which domination and subordination are reinforced by some of the core concepts of interculturalism, such as the ideologies of cultural pluralism and tolerance – the very principles that are supposed to transcend them (ibid.). Building on existing critiques of reforms designed to redress class-based inequalities in education (see Drudy and Lynch 1993), I suggest that the implementation of intercultural education in schools fulfils a political function of providing an educational palliative to minorities while pre-empting resistance, and muting consideration of alternative policy responses that would yield genuine egalitarian outcomes and effects for racialised minorities in Ireland. In other words, I maintain that the incorporation of curricular content about diversity and diverse cultural groups in Irish society is, in effect, an effort to appease and accommodate minority groups' concerns about their lack of representation in the curriculum which prevents disruption of the status quo. Within this context, I maintain that the relegation of social problems such as racism to schools may at best have the effect of easing the polity's conscience while creating a ready scapegoat that can be blamed when racism persists (Page 1994).

The Celtic Tiger and the evolution of intercultural education in Ireland

The question of what constitutes an ethically, socially and educationally legitimate response to cultural diversity has been one of the most controversial issues in academic and policy debates in education in recent years. While many established western nation states have adopted official multicultural policies, the debate about cultural diversity, including what the appropriate educational response should be, is still very much in its infancy in less established, post-colonial (western) nations like Ireland. As a relatively poor peripheral European country with strong and sustained emigration, limited employment opportunities, and no traditional colonial ties to core economies, immigration and multiculturalism were, until very recently, largely absent from the Irish political and educational agenda. Unlike other contexts, such as North America, where the very idea of multiculturalism is entrenched in national consciousness and where the nation is imagined as having a long history rooted in multicultural beginnings in school texts (Montgomery 2005b), the idea that the Irish society is multicultural in its composition is typically presented as a very recent or new development in Ireland's history.

The 'Celtic Tiger' era, which came into being in the mid 1990s, signaled Ireland's transition from an out-migration to an in-migration society, and is often also associated in the popular and political imagination with Ireland's transition from a monocultural to a multicultural society. This

popular understanding of Ireland as a newly emergent multicultural society persists, despite the long presence of a host of racialised minority groups – including Travellers, Black-Irish, Jews and Asians in Irish society.

In the 1980s, Ireland experienced a severe economic recession, characterised by high unemployment rates, substantial public debt and mass emigration. Between 1988 and 1989 alone, 2% (70,600) of the population in Ireland emigrated (Mac Éinrí 2001). Less than a decade later, many politicians and social commentators were celebrating what they claimed to be nothing short of a social miracle in the guise of an economic boom which would earn the Irish economy the label the 'Celtic Tiger'. Fiscal and other investment incentives (including very low export rates) had made Ireland an investment paradise for multinational firms seeking to gain access to the European Union market, especially those involved in the information technology and pharmaceuticals industries, which resulted in a major increase in foreign direct investment. The unemployment rate fell drastically, from over 15% in 1993, to 6% in 1999, to 4.2% in January of 2006 (EUROSTAT 2006). By the end of the 1990s, economic experts were warning that a labour shortage could pose a serious problem to continued economic growth. In an effort to foster greater economic growth, the government reached out to so-called non-Irish nationals and returning Irish emigrants alike, in order to meet employers' demands for labour. Simultaneously, social unrest in various parts of the world was forcing a small yet significant number of refugees and asylum seekers, primarily from African and Eastern European states, to seek refuge in Ireland. As the demographic profile of Irish society has diversified, so too has the incidence, and acknowledgment, of racist practices against a host of minority groups in Ireland. As a response to this, Irish social and educational policy began to reflect a commitment to interculturalism and anti-racism (Lodge and Lynch 2004).

Ireland's first ever *National Action Plan Against Racism* (NPAR) was officially launched by the *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister) and the Minister for Justice in January of 2005. The development of NPAR arose from a commitment made by the Irish Government at the UN World Conference against Racism in 2001 to prepare and implement such a plan. Its five stated objectives are: effective *protection* and redress against racism; economic *inclusion*, with an emphasis on employment, the workplace and poverty; 'accommodating' diversity in service *provision*; *recognition* of diversity, with an emphasis on raising awareness in the media, arts, sports and tourism; and *participation* at the political and community levels. As a framework for public policy-making, the plan promotes interculturalism as an effective means by which racial discrimination can be opposed and, ultimately, eliminated.

Whereas earlier official policy documents on education have been critiqued for their failure to devote 'substantive treatment of the issue' of diversity (DES 2002, 15), more recent policy documents privilege the notion of diversity and of intercultural education in particular as a means of underscoring 'the normality of diversity in all areas of human life'. Respecting, celebrating and recognising diversity as normal is identified as one of two 'core focal points' of intercultural education, alongside the promotion of 'equality and human rights, challeng[ing] unfair discrimination, and promot[ing] the values upon which equality is built' (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] 2005, 3).

In recent years, a host of intercultural educational materials and guidelines have been produced by various statutory and non-statutory agencies. Most recently, the NCCA, the body with statutory responsibility for developing school curricula in Ireland, published intercultural guidelines for both primary and secondary schools which focus on 'mediat[ing] and adapt[ing] the existing curricula to reflect the emergence of a more culturally diverse society in Ireland' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2005, 110).

Intercultural education is believed to 'help prevent racism' (NCCA 2005, 21) by enabling students to 'develop positive emotional responses to diversity and an empathy with those

discriminated against' as well as enabling them to 'recognise and challenge discrimination and prejudice' where they exist. As such, intercultural education is deemed 'one of the key responses to the changing shape of Irish society and to the existence of racism and discriminatory attitudes in Ireland' (NCCA 2005, 17). Finally, intercultural education also seeks to reconfigure Irish national identity around a *civic*, rather than an ethnic ideal, such that multiple 'cultures', 'ethnicities' and 'religious traditions' can be embraced (Tormey and O'Shea 2003). The goal of cultivating civic nationalism is based in part on the criticism that the 'traditional view of Irishness – one that does not recognise the cultural and ethnic diversity which has long existed in Ireland – has made many Irish people from minority groups feel excluded' (NCCA 2005, 13). This criticism stems from a long-standing perception that Ireland was a monocultural society, despite the long presence of a host of racialised minority groups, including Travellers (an indigenous nomadic group), Black-Irish and Jews in Irish society. Related to the idea of stressing the normality of diversity, then, is the intercultural project of cultivating civic nationalism.

While one of the stated aims of the intercultural movement in Ireland is to challenge restrictive definitions and conceptions of Irishness by reconfiguring Irish national identity around a *civic*, rather than an ethnic ideal, such that multiple 'cultures', 'ethnicities' and 'religious traditions' can be embraced (Tormey and O'Shea 2003), I maintain that this goal is compromised and complicated for a host of reasons, not least of which because intercultural education essentially constitutes an 'add-on' approach. The NCCA guidelines, for example, are designed to help educators 'identify the ways in which intercultural education can be *integrated* into the curriculum in post-primary schools' (NCCA 2006, iii, emphasis added) and were the culminating effort of an initiative which sought to determine 'how the intercultural elements of the *existing* curricula could be maximised by teachers' (Tormey and O'Shea 2003, 4, emphasis added). In other words, the purpose of the intercultural educational guidelines is to supplement and enhance existing curricular materials, without radically revising or indeed overhauling the curriculum that is already in place. Analysing these guidelines in relation to existing curricular content, I seek to demonstrate some of the ways in which the knowledge about interculturalism as it is constructed in the formal curriculum is at odds with many of the key messages that the intercultural guidelines themselves seek to underscore.

The (ab)normalisation of diversity

At the heart of this paper is the idea that the ideologies of interculturalism and anti-racism are intimately bound up with, and articulate the (trans)-formation of the Irish nation. In this section, I seek to convey that this coarticulation is largely achieved, in the Irish context, through the trope of the *Celtic Tiger* – a discourse which has come to symbolise not only Ireland's unprecedented economic boom, but also a dramatic transformation of the manner in which Irishness and Ireland are projected and perceived, both inside and outside of Ireland (Coulter 2003). This new image of Ireland as a thriving, open, tolerant, cosmopolitan, multicultural and tourist-friendly society that emerged in the mid 1990s provides a stark contrast to what was previously thought of as an isolated, insular, monocultural society (Coulter 2003; Fagan 2003; Loyal 2003). I maintain that the discourse surrounding this sudden 'watershed' in Irish history, and the trend of immigration which accompanied it, is mobilised to construct homogeneity as the norm and diversity as an aberration in Irish society, thereby actively contradicting official intercultural goals which seek to underscore the 'normality of diversity' in all areas of life. Equally important, I maintain, is the suggestion that the nation is invoked to portray cultural diversity, and the racism which 'inevitably' and 'invariably' results from it, as threats to the national social, political and economic interest.

Notwithstanding references to 'the rich cultural diversity that has always existed in Ireland' elsewhere in NPAR, the emphasis devoted to the 'extent and pace of change', the 'transformation' of the country, its 'continuing development as a multicultural society' and a 'changing situation' in the form of 'emerging diversity' in the document has the effect of negating or obscuring the reality of diversity as a preexisting feature of Irish society (NPAR 2005, 40). In a Foreword to the National Anti-racism Awareness campaign's 'Final report on activities', for example, which is incorporated into the NPAR policy document, Joe McDonagh, Chairperson of the High Level Steering Group for the programme, is quoted as saying: 'As I have stated on many occasions in the past, Irish society is *now* a multicultural society. *We* must accept the responsibilities and challenges that change brings to us' (2005, 6, emphasis added).

A similar idea is conveyed in a passage from CSPE textbook *Taking action revised,* which describes the national anti-racsim awareness campaign within the context of recent demographic changes in the Irish landscape (Quinn, Misteal and O'Flynn 2004).

> Ireland has undergone major changes in the past few years and *has become* a **multicultural** society, i.e., a society made up of several different cultures. In response to reports of racist incidents in Ireland and to promote the message that minority ethnic groups are a positive part of Irish society, the Irish government has started a National Anti-Racism Awareness Programme, called **KNOW RACISM.** (*Taking action revised*, 26; bold emphasis in original, italics added)

These combined representations of the Irish nation and recent statutory initiatives to promote 'anti-racism' in Irish society are illustrative of the abnormalising logic of intercultural discourse in recently produced anti-racism policy and curricular materials. The use of the adverb of time 'now' (in the first example) and the depiction of Ireland as having become multicultural in 'the past few years' (in the second), combined with the emphasis on change in both instances ('Ireland has undergone major changes in the past few years'/'We must accept the responsibilities and challenges that change brings to us'), implicitly paints Ireland as a hither-to-fore culturally homogenous society and explicitly proclaims diversity as a recent phenomenon which has altered the Irish demographic and social fabric. Similarly, in the *New religion for living series, religion book 1* (Duffy 2004) the failure to recognise religious diversity as a pre-existing feature of Irish society is apparent in the following extract through the use of the adverb of place, 'now', which explains:

> The majority of people living in this country belong to the religion of Christianity. Yet people of other religions live here too. Many families come to this country to find new jobs and a better way of life. Some even come here to escape war and violence in their own countries.
>
> When people settle in a new place, they bring their religious beliefs and a way of life with them. So the religions of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism have become part of life *here now*. (*New religion for living series, religion book 1,* 63, emphasis added)

The foregoing description is followed by a photograph of a woman wearing a headscarf holding hands with a small child in a shopping centre with green posters hanging from the roof saying 'St Patrick's Day'. Beneath is a caption which reads: 'People of many religions live here *now*'. The use of the adverb of time carries the implicit message that 'people of many religions' who 'live here now' did not live 'here then', thereby denying the normality of diversity and the rich tradition of diversity that intercultural educational policies are so eager to demonstrate.

In other religious texts I examined, the representation of the Irish nation contributes to the marginalisation of racialised groups by projecting a normalised image of the nation that is Christian and specifically, Catholic. *Exploring faith* (Goan and Ryan 2004), for example provides a statement from a research article written by Fr Andrew Greeley, a US-based academic, on attitudes to religion in Ireland. The quotation is notable for the extent to which it conflates Irishness with Catholicism.

> If the proper measures of Catholicism are faith and devotion, then *the Irish are still Catholic.* There has been no change in their belief in God, heaven, miracles and life after death in the last decade, and church attendance rates are still the highest in Europe. (*Exploring faith* 2004, 245, emphasis added)[2]

The phrase 'the Irish are still Catholic' is a striking illustration of the deployment of a narrowly conceived sense of ethnic citizenship – supporting an exclusionary and restrictive definition of Irishness as Catholic by conflating Irish identity with Irish Catholic identity. If those who are Irish are also Catholic, then those who are not Catholic, must be somehow less Irish, or not even Irish at all. While the text claims to represent the 'rich and varied religious traditions of contemporary Ireland', the discourse of Catholic Ireland has the effect of denying religious diversity as an historical feature of Irish society which intercultural educational resources are at pains to point out.

One of the main arguments I seek to advance in this paper is that contrary to interculturalism's aim of 'normalising diversity', national anti-racist policy documents, curricular materials and intercultural practices ironically have an abnormalising effect. This abnormalisation of diversity is partly achieved through a set of discursive acts which inform readers, listeners and/or participants that Irish society has only recently *become* multicultural, thereby implying that a homogenous society is seen as the norm and that that diversity presents a deviation from this norm (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998). While not disputing that increasing diversity is indeed a feature of contemporary Irish society, I wish to argue that statements of this nature presuppose that the Irish population prior to the most recent wave of immigration which began in the 1990s was culturally and ethnically homogenous. This has the effect of casting homogeneity as the norm and diversity as an aberration in Irish history.

A related feature of intercultural discourse is the *abnormalisation of the foreigner* strategy which is deployed via an ambiguous and simultaneously inclusionary and exclusionary narrative which at once depicts 'minority ethnic people' as 'part of Irish society' and as 'strangers'. The Foreword to the The National Anti-racism Awareness campaign's 'Final report on activities' by Joe McDonagh, for example, which features as part of NPAR, maintains that:

> As I have stated on many occasions in the past, Irish society is *now* a multicultural society. *We* must accept the responsibilities and challenges that change brings to us Irish people are traditionally generous, friendly and hospitable. It would be wrong to allow fear of strangers and intolerance to spoil this traditional spirit and change our attitudes towards the minority ethnic people who are part of Irish society ('Final report on activities' 2001–2003, 6, emphasis added)

This discourse has the effect of positioning minorities as existing or residing within the boundaries of the Irish nation but more powerfully as 'strange' outsiders whose presence might cause 'our' traditional Irish spirit to change. The reinforcement of an idealised and stereotypical notion of Irish people as 'traditionally generous, friendly and hospitable', the portrayal of diversity as a new phenomenon ('Irish society is *now* a multicultural society'), and the depiction, or abnormalisation of minorities as 'strangers' work collectively to naturalise negative reaction to racialised minorities by making it seem acceptable, or at least understandable (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998; Gillborn 1995). In other words, by presenting homogeneity as the norm and diversity as new, and therefore as an aberration, and by abnormalising minorities by depicting them as 'strangers', 'fear' and 'intolerance' are presented as natural or at least legitimate tendencies, not necessarily as racist responses (ibid.). This troubling logic is compounded by the fact that the utterer is one of the key players in the National Anti-Racism Strategy, rendering its efficacy as a means of 'stopping' or 'combating' racism all the more questionable. In addition to squarely positioning 'ethnic minorities' as strangers, McDonagh privileges a minimalist and individualised account of racial intolerance which identifies the problem as largely one of attitude.

Educating for democratic citizenship?

This paper has thus far attempted to demonstrate that although intercultural discourse deployed in state-level discourses in the Irish context is the one hand inclusive, to the extent that it rhetorically and symbolically 'welcomes' and celebrates cultural diversity, it simultaneously abnormalises diversity, in the sense that it represents it as a new and aberrant phenomenon, and therefore as something which is at once unusual and alien to the Irish nation. In this sense, rather than normalising diversity, the discourse of 'welcoming' and 'belonging' serves to marginalise and exclude racialised minorities from the Irish national space. The emphasis on the extent to which the discourse of diversity has an abnormalising effect forms part of a larger critique of intercultural education as a policy response to the existence of racism in society outlined elsewhere, which stresses the extent to which policies and practices of this nature reinforce the 'otherness' of minority students, misrepresent or ignore their cultural identities, and reinforce erroneous assumptions about 'race', racism and the nature of difference more generally (Bryan 2006, 2007).

In the remaining section, I consider the question of the role of schools in educating for democratic citizenship as it relates to issues of racism and cultural diversity. Having outlined some of the problems with relying on schools to teach for democratic citizenship within the context of regressive political–economic climates, I sketch some possibilities for how social actors in schools might seek to kick back against those hegemonic discourses and policies which promote and sustain racism in the first instance.

(De)contextualising racism

One notable feature of the dominant narratives of the Irish nation and Irishness that are articulated in intercultural and anti-racist policy documents and instructional materials via a discursive *Trope of the Celtic Tiger* is their failure to emphasise the extent to which the high economic growth rates of the 'Celtic Tiger' era were accompanied by growing relative poverty, inequality and occupational stratification, and by a diminished welfare effort. As outlined above, to the extent that racism and/or discrimination are acknowledged to exist in Irish society, explanations for their existence are often reduced to the realm of individual attitudes and fear of strangers, a discourse which has the effect of obfuscating the state's role in producing these discriminatory attitudes in the first place and, indeed, producing and institutionalising the actual marginalisation and exclusion of racialised minorities (Bryan 2007). In addition to deflecting attention from the systemic features of racism, this reductive and individualised logic has the effect of prioritising ineffective and at times counterproductive 'softly-softly' approaches to anti-racism.

Far from helping to prevent racism, therefore, the kind of state-sanctioned interculturalism and anti-racism I have profiled here merely serves to deflect attention from a host of broader economic policies coinciding with the Celtic Tiger era that are implicated in the production and intensification of racism in Irish society through their heightening of material inequalities and psychological vulnerabilities (e.g., Garner 2004). Under such conditions, many have been left behind by the economic boom and still many others feel that their middle class privilege has been threatened, *inter alia*, by flexible labour market conditions and an out-of-control property market. As many are left behind in the race for higher-paid jobs and consumer goods, and as the middle classes feel that their ability to pass their privilege on to their offspring is increasingly compromised by an increasingly insecure job market, soaring cost-of-living, etc, hostility towards the presence of 'Others' within the idealised Irish national space rises correspondingly. As a consequence, anxieties are projected onto vulnerable groups like Travellers, asylum seekers and economic migrants who are deemed privileged recipients of diminishing national resources, such as welfare payments, jobs or land (Garner 2004). To this end, the intensification of racism in Irish society is best understood, not as a consequence of an

individualised and decontextualised 'fear of strangers' as those who spearhead national anti-racism policies and awareness campaigns would have us believe, but, at least in part, as 'a corollary of the mismatch of expectations and reality in a period of intense economic and social change' (Garner 2004, 227).

Educationalists have long recognised that schools are often called upon as a solution to complex social problems when policy-makers and politicians are unsure about what to do, or in which government policies and practices are themselves implicated. Too often, the relegation of social problems to schools has the convenient effect of absolving the polity's conscience, while simultaneously creating a ready scapegoat that can be blamed when the problems are not resolved or ameliorated (Page 2004). Yet, for those who seek to more effectively educate for democratic citizenship, the question remains as to how we should go about seeking to promote meaningful dialogue about 'race', racism and cultural diversity so that young people will emerge from their schooling experiences more inclined to challenge major social injustices of this nature. While education should be viewed as but one channel through which we should attempt to alleviate racism in society, I conclude with a number of suggestions for how we as educators might seek to engage students in educating for democratic citizenship.

Re-narrativising 'race', racism and interculturalism

Unlike the 'softly softly' approaches to anti-racism often promoted in multicultural curricula, educators who seek to more effectively teach against racism should be prepared to utilise teaching methodologies that are as creative and engaging as they are unsettling and discomforting for students. It is argued here that a certain degree of discomfort is necessary if we are to implement educational interventions that do more than merely look different on paper but rather have the potential to effect real social change (Finders 2002). Part of this discomfort, for example, will stem from helping students to recognise the ways in which they are variously privileged and/or marginalised within given political–economic arrangements and of their own role, and indeed the government's role, in producing and sustaining racialised problems. It is through this form of individual and national self-criticism and discomfort that we may come to see, think and behave differently where issues of racism and anti-racism are concerned. While asking students to critically reflect on their own lives runs the risk of alienating them and is likely to be met with some resistance, one way around this is to locate the analysis within a broader consideration of the structures and systems which cause and sustain racialised power and material imbalances in the first instance, and to stress the extent to which all of us are implicated in maintaining and reproducing them, sometimes unconsciously or unwittingly (Smith 2004).

Another tool in minimising disengagement is to use examples which convey the extent to which we are all, to some extent, disadvantaged by systems which are designed to maintain the privilege of culturally dominant groups in society. R.W. Connell, for example, has demonstrated the extent to which school systems which disadvantage some students while privileging others degrades the quality of education for all (Connell 1993).

Educating for democratic citizenship should also comprise a combination of analytical and normative dimensions, that is, knowledge that at once represents the nature and severity of both historical and contemporary racisms, on both a local and global scale, while also stressing progressive alternatives to the political and economic arrangements which support and sustain them in the first instance. The need to examine racism on both a local, as well as a more global scale, is important as a means of combating temporal and spatial containment strategies which are often evident in curriculum materials, wherein racist incidents are represented as aberrations within the nation, alien to the nation, or part of a dim and distant past (e.g., Montgomery 2005a, b). In the Irish context, for example, temporal containment strategies are deployed to represent

the manifestation of anti-Semitism in Ireland as an isolated, anomalous incident – a 'notable exception' which happened at the turn of the twentieth century (Bryan 2006). Hence anti-Semitism in Ireland is represented as an aberration of the past, and therefore no longer a significant social problem in the present time (Roman and Stanley 1997). This contradicts a wealth of anecdotal and empirical evidence which suggests that a significant degree of anti-Semitism exists in contemporary Ireland (Lentin 2002). Space should also be devoted to the consideration of alternatives to contemporary regressive political arrangements so that students can imagine a post-racist society predicated on a more humane political economy and ethical world order.

In light of the criticisms about the construction of curricular knowledge outlined above, educators should equip their students with the critical literacy and critical discourse analysis skills necessary to develop deep and nuanced understandings of the implications of the various representations of 'race', and racism that exist in educative materials currently being used in schools. Skills of this nature will enable both teachers and students to critically and meaningfully engage with issues such as racism, international terrorism, etc, to become more attentive to these issues, and to feel a sense of connection and empathy towards those peoples who may have once seemed remote and disconnected from their everyday lives (Rizvi 2003).

Finally, there is a need to equip educators with knowledge and skills which promote alternative understandings to traditional liberal and state-based notions of democracy and citizenship. In other words, there is a need for substantial consideration within teacher education and in the primary and post-primary curriculum of notions of citizenship and identity beyond traditional notions of formal national or supranational citizenship, if students are to meaningfully engage with the nuanced and differentiated models of citizenship that have emerged as a consequence of globalisation, along regional, transnational and global lines.

Alternative global visions of democracy, such as 'normative democracy' (Falk 2004), 'cosmopolitan' or transnational versions of democracy (Held 1995) represent an important way forward in advancing more meaningful version of educating for democratic citizenship. This implies that curriculum resources should focus less on describing the institutionalised norms of traditional democratic decision-making processes, such as electoral systems, branches of government, parliamentary arrangements, bureaucratic functions, etc (Sneddon, Howarth and Norgaard 2006) and more on the role of global or transnational social movements that are compatible with global and social justice, environmental sustainability and human rights.

In this article, I have argued that struggle to reflect the interests, and validate the identities, of racialised minorities in the Irish curriculum via intercultural education has taken the form of an accommodation, rather than radical change – an accommodation which while likely to ease the polity's conscience (Page 1994), constitutes a form of symbolic violence which perpetuates – rather than eliminates – existing relations of racial dominance and subordination. From the point of view of educating for democratic citizenship in ways that more effectively teaching against racism, there is a clear need to re-narrativise the story of racism and migration in a way that places historically marginalized groups at the centre, rather than at the periphery of the intercultural debate. This re-narrativisation necessitates displacing the nationalist argumentation that remains at the core of intercultural discourse, and replacing it with a global or transnational lens from which to consider the social construction and complexity of racisms in their historical and contemporary forms, in both local, and global contexts.

Notes

1. Official policy documents and curricular guidelines identify multiculturalism and interculturalism as discrete philosophies. For example, according to the K*n*ow Racism program, a three year government-sponsored Anti-Racism Awareness Campaign launched in 2000, the term *intercultural* is preferred over the term *multicultural* because 'an intercultural society is one that has a positive interaction between

different cultures, as distinct from multiculturalism which describes societies where cultures exist side by side with little interaction' (Know Racism Information Pack, p. 8). Similarly, it is argued that 'intercultural education' is preferable to 'multicultural education,' in that intercultural education seeks to contest racial inequalities, as opposed to merely celebrating and respecting diversity (NCCA 2005). However, I use the terms interchangeably here to denote the lack of meaningful distinction between how these concepts are deployed and operationalised in practice. In other words, despite official discourse that interculturalism is a preferable model to multiculturalism, I argue that the concept of interculturalism has been appropriated by state institutions to denote a weak version of multiculturalism which embraces diversity while failing to disrupt power imbalances between culturally dominant groupings and racialised minorities in Irish society.

2. The quotation is taken from an article titled 'Religion in the Emerald Tiger' which appeared in the March 2001 edition of *America: The National Catholic Weekly*, available online at http://americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=1843. Notably, *Exploring Faith* does not quote the statement which follows the one presented above, which reads: 'If, on the other hand, the proper measures of faith are acceptance of church authority and adherence to the church's sexual and reproductive ethic, then the Irish are no longer Catholic – but then neither are any other people in Europe, including the Italians and the Poles. Like many other Catholics all over the world, the Irish are still Catholic, but now on their own terms'.

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