

Corporate multiculturalism, diversity management, and positive interculturalism in Irish schools and society

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This article offers an empirical critique of recent social and educational policy responses to cultural diversity in an Irish context, with a particular focus on anti-racism, integration and intercultural education policies developed during the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' era. Combining ethnographic and discourse analytic techniques, I highlight the centrality of the Celtic Tiger economy and corporate interests in influencing the particular version of interculturalism promulgated by the Irish state. I argue that broader macro processes and discourses operating at the level of Irish state policy can impact the local school level, resulting in negative consequences for ethnic minority students, particularly those who are least endowed with the cultural and linguistic capital valued by the school and wider society.

Keywords: anti-racism policy; corporate multiculturalism; intercultural education; language support; linguistic minorities; educational policy; symbolic violence

Introduction

The Celtic Tiger era, which signalled Ireland's transition from an out-migration to an in-migration society, is often (erroneously) associated in the popular and political imagination with Ireland's transition from a monocultural to a multicultural society. As the population became increasingly more ethnically diverse in the late 1990s and early 2000s, evidence of growing anti-immigrant sentiment became apparent, exemplified by sensationalist media reports which depicted immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in a predominantly negative and stereotypical light (see Devereux and Breen 2004). Successive eurobarometer polls carried out in 1997, 2000 and 2003 reveal rising levels of concern about the presence of migrant groups in Ireland during the time period coinciding with increased immigration (Hughes et al. 2007). Within schools, there is evidence to suggest that immigrant students are more likely to have experienced bullying than their non-immigrant counterparts (Devine et al. 2008; Molcho et al. 2008; Smyth et al. 2004). Within this context of an increasingly ethnically diverse population and the emergence of new 'configurations' of racism (Garner 2004, 228), Irish social and educational policy began to reflect a commitment to interculturalism and anti-racism.

This article provides an empirical critique of recent social and educational policy responses to cultural diversity in an Irish context, with a particular focus on anti-racism, integration and intercultural education policies developed during the Celtic Tiger era. The research is based on a qualitative vertical case study (Vavrus and

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Bartlett 2006, 2009) combining critical discourse analysis of national intercultural and anti-racism policy documents, curriculum materials and a critical ethnography of one school's efforts to promote a policy of 'positive interculturalism'.¹ In educational research, vertical comparison involves multi-sited, qualitative case study research that 'traces the linkages among local, national, and/or international forces and institutions that together shape and are shaped by education in a particular locale' (Bartlett and Vavrus 2009, 11-12).

I argue that the Celtic Tiger economy was central to influencing the particular version of interculturalism promulgated by the Irish state. I characterise it as a corporate-style multiculturalism that formulates the contribution of migrants almost exclusively in terms of their labour, and the resulting economic benefits they offer the nation. I suggest that it is a weak version of multiculturalism which directly or indirectly invites certain 'foreigners' to call Ireland 'home', so long as they are seen to advance the national interest, while implicitly constructing those who are deemed illegitimate and undeserving of the nation's self-perceived generosity as 'Other'. Shifting the focus to the educational domain, I highlight how discourses and practices at the local level of the school are shaped and constrained by the broader socio-political context, thus examining ways in which larger social forces shape local interactions. Specifically, I examine the ways in which intercultural interventions at the school level are shaped and constrained by a lack of adequate statutory support and resources to schools. I argue that school-based interventions are shaped by an intercultural and anti-racism policy framework which privileges national economic and corporate interests over social justice concerns, and which actively discriminates against, and prevents meaningful inclusion of, those who are least endowed with the kinds of (national) cultural capital valued by the state (Hage 1998).

Intercultural education as symbolic violence

The study builds on previous research carried out in an Irish context which examines the role of state policy in framing perceptions and practice in terms of migrant students in schools (Devine 2005). Drawing inspiration from more established approaches such as critical ethnography, and multi-level case study techniques, the vertical case study approach seeks to capture the ways in which social and educational policy and practice are shaped by, and in turn influence, local, national and international forces, and the ways in which shifting political-economic arrangements become 'charged and enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters' (Tsing 2005, 3). I examine how intercultural discourses and practices in schools are informed by, and intersect with, broader political discourses which emanate from the field of national politics. The notion of a multiplicity of interacting fields (Connolly 1998) is evoked as a means of thinking about how discourses which circulate in one field can both impact, and be impacted by, related discourses operating in another field.

Drawing on the work of Ghassan Hage (1998), who has applied Pierre's Bourdieu's theoretical framework to an analysis of racism and nationalism in an Australian context, I conceptualise Irish state-sanctioned anti-racism and interculturalism as a form of symbolic violence 'in which a mode of domination is presented as a form of egalitarianism' (Hage 1998, 88). Symbolic violence is a form

of domination that is exercised on individuals in a subtle and symbolic (as opposed to physical) manner, through such channels as communication and cognition (Bourdieu 2001). Critiquing official responses to cultural diversity in an Australian context, Hage (1998) argues that multicultural tolerance functions as a strategy aimed at reproducing and disguising relations of power in society. Applying this conceptual framework to interculturalism and anti-racism in an Irish context, I suggest that while the rhetoric of interculturalism may give the impression that the state and its institutions are responding to racism and to fostering a 'more inclusive Ireland', its underlying logic of celebrating, embracing and respecting diversity reinforces power inequities between ethnic minority and majority groups by positioning the dominant cultural group (white, heterosexual, Irish-born, settled, Catholics [WHISCS]) (Tracy 2000) as the 'valuer', or celebrator of difference, while defining minorities in terms of how they benefit or enrich the 'host' culture. In other words, while the dominant cultural group simply exists, minorities exist to enrich dominant culture and are defined in terms of how, and to what extent, they benefit the 'host' culture (Hage 1998). From this vantage point, the relationship between those who do the embracing and those who are embraced is dependent on the self-perceived altruism or generosity of the 'host' (our perception that minority groups are indeed worthy of our generosity), and a corresponding supplication of minorities (Burchell 2001). This logic is premised on a partial or conditional acceptance (so long as they have something to offer us) which also produces unacceptable 'others' who have nothing to offer (Reay et al. 2007). The power relationship implied in the logic of interculturalism, therefore, is such that those who are not seen to be making a contribution are implicitly positioned as being undeserving of this self-perceived generosity. From this perspective, the embracing of an acceptable ethnic 'other' via interculturalism is, in effect, an 'excluding inclusivity' (Reay et al. 2007, 1054) which fails to disrupt, yet brilliantly disguises, power relationships between majoritised and minoritised groups in society.

This symbolic violence is achieved in part through the strategic deployment of 'condensation symbols' (Edelman 1964; cited in Troyna 1993) and 'slogan systems' (Apple 1979) such as 'equality', 'inclusion', and 'positive action' i.e., symbolic metaphors, slogans, and buzzwords whose meanings are often permeable and imprecise, resulting in a situation whereby rhetoric often far outweighs practical action (Gillborn 2000). As Devine et al. (2008) point out, while the discourse of anti-racism is increasingly prevalent in national policy documents in an Irish context, this has not been accompanied by practical application. Similarly, Gleeson (2010, 121) points to a long historical tradition of 'rhetoric/reality' and 'say/do' dichotomies in an Irish context. This paper seeks to subject the slogan symbols of interculturalism to critical scrutiny in an effort to demonstrate the subtle, symbolically violent means through which racialised power structures within Irish society are reproduced.

Methodology

The research comprised a critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 1995) of official anti-racism policy documents including the National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR) (Department of Justice 2005), Migration Nation (Office of the Minister for Integration [OMI] 2008) and the Intercultural Educational Guidelines produced by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). NPAR

is the most comprehensive articulation of official thinking on interculturalism in Ireland to date. 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 (Department of Justice 2005). Migration Nation is an 'integration' strategy document produced by the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI) which was established in July of 2007, 'as a response to the recognition of the scale of migration to Ireland in the last decade or so, particularly since 2004' (OMI 2008, 67). This office has responsibility for developing and implementing a national integration strategy, a major focus of which is on 'diversity management' or 'properly managed immigration' (OMI 2008, 8). In 2005 and 2006, the NCCA published intercultural guidelines for primary and secondary schools, which focuses is on 'mediat[ing] and adapt[ing] the existing curricula to reflect the emergence of a more culturally diverse society in Ireland' (Department of Justice 2005, 110). The CDA dimension of the research involved a multilayered process of reading, writing, and interpreting each of the texts to derive recurring patterns and themes. I examined various degrees of presence or absence in the texts, such as 'foreground information' (those ideas that are present and emphasized), 'background information' (those ideas that are explicitly mentioned but de-emphasized), 'presupposed information' (that information which is present at the level of implied or suggested meaning) and 'absent information' (Fairclough 1995).

I also conducted a critical ethnographic case study of a large, co-educational, ethnically diverse second level school - Blossom Hill College (BHC) - located in a middle class suburb of Dublin to examine interculturalism as it is conceived and practised at the local level. Adopting a policy of 'positive interculturalism', BHC has been identified as a model of 'best practice' in 'promoting inclusivity, interculturalism and equality', and approximately 10% of the student body is 'international'.² Between September 2004 and December 2005, I observed classroom lessons and school events and conducted individual and focus group interviews with 35 students, five individual interviews with school personnel, and many informal interviews and conversations with others at the school. I spent on average three days per week at BHC, and also volunteered as a language support teacher one day per week, providing 'extra English classes' to individual and small groups of 'international' students. In analysing the data, I identified recurring themes and metaphors and employed triangulation techniques in identifying points of connection or discrepancy between the policy and curricular documents, interviews and observational data.

National level analysis: 'planning for diversity'

The discourse on diversity that is evoked in national social policy documents and curriculum guidelines is ostensibly one of 'celebratory interculturalism', which recognises and welcomes the fact that Ireland is a diverse society and that people from 'different' cultural and ethnic backgrounds enrich the social fabric. As outlined above, opponents of state-sanctioned multiculturalism have critiqued this *raison d'être* of the intercultural project, on the grounds that assigns to minority cultures 'a different mode of existence', defining their worth in terms of their function as enriching cultures and hence their existence primarily, if not exclusively, in terms of the benefits they offer to dominant groups (Hage 1998, 121).

Corporate multiculturalism: business as usual

In NPAR, the benefits minority groups offer are typically framed in economic terms, with references to 'the contribution of labour migration to Ireland's economy' (Department of Justice 2005, 53) and to 'inward migration' as one of the main mechanisms through which 'the imbalance between the number of active workers and the number of retired pensioners (the old age dependency ratio)' can be redressed (Department of Justice 2005, 54). Indeed, migrants are defined, either implicitly or explicitly, primarily, if not exclusively, in terms of how they benefit majority culture and the state more generally. References to the non-economic benefits of increased diversification are scant in documents like NPAR, and tend to take the form of vague pronouncements, such as:

The contribution that students and visitors make to cultural diversity in Ireland is of increasing significance. . . . Diversity among students and staff is now a key feature in many of our third level colleges and has added to the educational, social and cultural experience of participating in college life. (Department of Justice 2005, 55)³

My aim is not to deny the political and pragmatic importance of conveying the positive economic contribution that immigrants make to society; after all, statements of this nature provide a welcome corrective to the all too common construction of immigrants (and refugees and asylum seekers in particular) as a drain on public resources, or as 'welfare tourists'. However, this limited and unidimensional characterisation of migrants as human capital or taxable labour who can 'fix' socio-economic problems like labour shortages (typically in those sectors which 'native' Irish are reluctant to fill) and population imbalances is hardly convincing as a deep-seated commitment to combating racism on social justice or human rights grounds. Furthermore, the discourse of celebratory interculturalism, and the 'vital contribution' (Department of Justice 2005, 29) that minorities (and labour migrants in particular) have made to Irish society, positions culturally dominant groupings in Irish society as the valuer of others, decreeing the acceptability or otherwise of the ethnic other (Hage 1998). Those utterances which bestow acceptance thus have the effect of entrenching power relations between the acceptor and those whom they accept. In other words, the very expression of acceptance (as opposed to an acceptance which goes without saying) implies that it is conditional and that it could be withdrawn, were migrants to be deemed somehow undeserving of this acceptance (Hage 1998).

'Ireland's commitment to equality and human rights' is identified as a strong rationale for the development of Irish anti-racism policy within NPAR (Department of Justice 2005, 41). The vision of equality which the plan supports, however, is a liberal rather than a radical version, premised on equality of opportunity, which stresses equal competition (in terms of access, participation and outcome) for scarce resources (Troyna 1993). In fact, equality of opportunity is inscribed in the very conception of what an inclusive and intercultural society is: 'Developing a more inclusive and intercultural society. . . is essentially about creating the conditions for interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding and respect' (Department of Justice 2005, 38; emphasis added).

Elsewhere in the document, the government's response to asylum seekers and refugees is described as a 'fundamental expression of Ireland's humanitarian ideals'

(Department of Justice, 2005, 54) and its commitment to human rights. Yet the state is implicitly characterised as having already fulfilled its humanitarian obligation to accept refugees and asylum seekers, and while this obligation is recognised, it is presented within a restrictive framework within which ‘the Irish government must continue to ensure that immigration policy is not compromised’ (Department of Justice 2005, 54).

NPAR puts forward a number of additional arguments, beyond ‘Ireland’s commitments to equality and human rights’ as rationales for developing a comprehensive anti-racism policy. In a section marked ‘Why a national action plan against racism?’ the ‘reputation case’, the ‘social cohesion case’, and the ‘business case’ are advanced.⁴ The reputation case is premised upon the belief that:

Ireland has an international reputation built on proactively supporting human rights and speaking out on human rights abuses at a global level. Ireland has an international image of being a warm and welcoming place to visit and to live. It is important that racism is not allowed to undermine or tarnish this reputation. (Department of Justice 2005, 41; emphasis added)

These remarks are replete with what van Dijk (1997) has coined ‘positive self-presentation’ strategies which are deployed to bolster national self-image. Racism is deemed problematic first and foremost in this instance because it could ‘undermine’ or ‘tarnish’ the nation state’s ‘international reputation’ as a promoter of human rights and as a welcoming place to visit or live – and not because it might actually be in violation of human rights. Furthermore, comments to this effect can be construed as disingenuous when one considers the broader legislative and political-economic context within which Irish anti-racism policy was developed. In the same year that NPAR was published, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) raised 17 specific concerns regarding the state’s approach to issues relating to racial discrimination, including its failure to recognise Travellers as an ethnic group, its policies in relation to the dispersal and direct provision for asylum seekers, and the exemption that denominational schools currently enjoy from equality legislation, which allows them to give preferential treatment to those who support the ethos of the school when making decisions about which students to enrol or which teachers to employ (UNCERD 2005, cited in Nowlan 2008).⁵ Moreover, in 2004, the Irish government launched a ‘common-sense citizenship’ campaign in a successful effort to secure a constitutional amendment resulting in the introduction of a three-year residence qualification for non-Irish national parents of Irish born children, thereby altering the hitherto automatic right to citizenship available through *ius soli* (or birthright citizenship). This campaign was predicated on popular racist assumptions about the need to defend the national territory (Rizvi 1993) and to protect Irish cultural heritage and limited national resources from ‘illegitimate’ and unassimilable ‘others’ (Bryan 2010; Crowley, Gilmartin, and Kitchin 2006; Garner 2007).

The reputation and business rationales for combating racism in NPAR work collectively to eclipse the need to challenge racism on social justice and equality grounds. As the following excerpt about the need to preserve Ireland’s ‘reputation as a destination of choice for all potential overseas visitors’ suggests, racism is deemed

potentially deleterious to the economy, rather than to those individuals and groups who are actually subjected to racism.

It is important that visitors coming to Ireland continue to have a positive experience and leave with a positive image of Ireland, both from an intrinsic and business perspective. Tourism is an important part of Ireland's economy. . . . Travel guidebooks are increasingly likely to offer advice to visitors on whether they are likely to encounter cultural insensitivity and racism in the countries they intend to visit. The government aims to double the number of overseas visitors to Ireland by 2012 and to double the revenue earned through tourism. In this context it is important that Ireland maintains its reputation as a destination of choice for all potential overseas visitors. (Department of Justice 2005, 56)

NPAR is equally forthright in its concerns about the strategic use of pluralism to fulfill a corporate agenda.

There is a strong 'business case' for the NPAR. At a global level, the world's economy is becoming increasingly globalised and Ireland must continue to ensure it plays an important role in this process. This requires greater understanding of the needs and greater interaction with our existing and potential international trading partners. (Department of Justice 2005, 41)

Integration strategy document, Migration Nation (OMI 2008) further underscores the instrumentalist ideology underpinning integration policy in an Irish context. 'In order to consolidate our position of affluence, continued inward migration must be accompanied by a renewed investment in social stability with its demonstrable link to productivity gains' (OMI 2008, 8).

The deployment of multiculturalism as a means of securing corporate success and competitive advantage within the context of a globalised economy that requires individuals who can interact easily and with confidence with people of 'other' ethnicities has been well documented (see Mitchell 1993; Reay et al. 2007). The foregoing examples reveal the extent to which concerns about global competitiveness and productivity are central to influencing the particular version of interculturalism and anti-racism promulgated by the Irish state. They illustrate the ways in which competing ideologies of instrumentalism and humanitarianism coalesce to advance the national interest, based in a desire to secure competitive advantage in a global economy and enhance the nation's reputational image on a global stage. The formulation of the contribution of minorities almost exclusively in terms of their labour, and the resulting economic benefits they offer the nation, works against the promotion of anti-racism on social justice grounds. Rather, it assigns 'a different mode of existence' to minority groups (Hage 1998, 121), defining their worth in terms of the extent to which they serve the national interest, or enrich dominant cultural groups, while the 'national' we simply exists. The problems associated with framing migrants primarily in terms of their economic contribution to the nation have become all too apparent in the post-Celtic Tiger era, where migrants, as well as members of other ethnic minority groups, are reporting a marked increase in racist incidents in the context of economic recession (Lentin 2009). In other words, the framing of migrants in terms of their economic contribution to the nation implies a partial or conditional embrace of diversity, one that is contingent on their not being perceived as a threat in times of increased resource scarcity, including job scarcity or insecurity. The conditionality

underlying this instrumentalist construction of migrations is such that this welcoming embrace can be easily withdrawn ('sorry no more jobs, go "home"') when they are deemed to be no longer worthy or deserving of its reception.

In *Migration Nation*, the conditional and contingent nature of Irish state-sanctioned interculturalism is further underscored in terms of which kinds of migrants are deemed to be of value or worthy of the state's self-perceived welcoming and generous nature. The gains to be had from migration are clear in the government's commitment to 'immigration laws that control and facilitate access to Ireland for skilled migrants with a contribution to make' (OMI 2008, 9, emphasis added) and in reference to the 'societal gains from properly managed immigration' (OMI 2008, 8). Statements such as these, which bestow acceptance exclusively on those migrants who are perceived to be skilled, hard-working, and a benefit to Irish society in economic terms, have the effect of entrenching power relations between WHISCs and migrant groups, and of legitimising negative responses towards those who are deemed less skilled, and, thus, who do not have a contribution to make, as defined by dominant cultural groups. From this perspective, negative reaction to unskilled or 'undeserving' minorities who do not make the kinds of economic and social contributions deemed healthy for Irish society becomes natural, acceptable, or at least understandable (Blommaert and Verschuere 1998; Gillborn 1995).

State-level 'anti-racist' discourses of this nature, which explicitly or implicitly suggest that immigrants are welcome so long as they benefit Irish society and are therefore deserving of its resources, serve as a basis for promoting – as opposed to contesting – racism against those who are deemed undeserving of the state's generosity. In this sense, exclusion and inequality are embedded within the very logic of interculturalism and anti-racism (Reay et al. 2007) which positions minorities as deserving of the state's welcoming embrace, in so far as they economically and culturally benefit the nation and its inhabitants. It is a form of symbolic violence whereby the nationalistic, economic and political interests beneath the impressive rhetoric of celebrating diversity are mystified, and existing racialised power structures are reproduced.

School-level analysis: positive interculturalism at Blossom Hill College?

Existing Irish research highlights the implications of the state's restrictive response to rapid immigration for how migrant children are constructed in schools (Devine 2005). The remainder of this article considers how broader macro processes operating at the level of Irish state policy intersect with, and constrain, local level school responses to cultural diversity. Similar to the celebratory tone of national level intercultural and anti-racism policy, BHC is committed to the idea of interculturalism, and has adopted a policy of 'positive interculturalism', incorporating a range of activities that celebrate the cultural diversity of its student body. This pride in the multicultural composition of the school is evident in official school publications, and the virtues of cultural diversity are extolled, both rhetorically and symbolically, at major school events. This official celebratory rhetoric coexists, however, alongside a more generalised anxiety and uncertainty expressed by some teachers and administrators about the lack of appropriate resources available to them in terms of language support, or in-service intercultural educational training more generally.

I made some phone calls to the Department of Education as soon as I discovered I was getting this job and really there was absolutely nothing on offer that I could find.

I have had no in-service training in terms of multicultural education. And there's talk about this school being a role model. Yeah that's management. ... None of us [teachers] have ever been pulled aside by management and the Department of Education and Science and said 'this is what it is, and this is how you should be addressing it in the classroom'. So I often feel it is a token gesture sometimes to hear [BHC] is a model of multiculturalism because it looks very well on paper. ... If we are going to be a model, the teachers have to be trained, but we are not.

Despite being heralded as a model of best practice where intercultural education was concerned, at least some of the some of BHC's intercultural policies and gestures had clear, albeit unintentional, negative consequences for at least some minority students (Bryan 2009b). The situation at BHC mirrored patterns identified in the existing literature which suggests that intercultural interventions are often token gestures that risk confirming the 'other' status of migrant students in the eyes of the majority Irish student population (Devine 2009).

One of the most obvious ways in which ethnic minority students at BHC were segregated, marginalised and in some respects stigmatised was through the model of language support offered at BHC. BHC operates a 'withdrawal' system whereby small groups of English Language learners are withdrawn from regular classes for additional English tuition during the normal school day for an hour and a half per week. In the first academic year that I conducted research at the BHC, language support was coordinated through the learning support department, i.e., the department which coordinates 'provision for students with disabilities or special educational needs' (BHC handbook). The association of stigma with English as an Additional Language was thus institutionalised at BHC, a stigma which was reflected in the confusion and at times resistance to having to take extra English classes exhibited by some students, their parents and teachers at the school.

The problems associated with coordinating language support provision through the Learning Support Department were obvious to many at the school, and by the beginning of my second year of fieldwork, a separate Intercultural and Language Support Department had been established, under the direction of a new intercultural coordinator, Miss Jones. Nevertheless, the practice of withdrawing students from regular classes persisted, despite an expressed awareness on the part of Miss Jones of its marginalising and exclusionary impact.

I also recognise the dangers in doing what I am doing in so far as isolating my students to some degree, excluding them, marginalizing them to some degree, but... in order to give them a kind of identity, you have to separate them first, to take ownership of themselves, and facilitate the movement of that back into the community.

BHC's approach to linguistic minority students mirrored the Irish government's deficit approach to the language needs of ethnic minority students, which defines them linguistically as 'non-English speaking,' and fails to promote other languages besides English (Ward 2004). In the education section of NPAR, for example, enhancing 'provision of English as a second language' is identified as one of the expected aims of the plan, yet at no point does it acknowledge the need to promote and maintain students' first languages. The NCCA's Intercultural education guidelines

offer, ostensibly at least, a more progressive approach to linguistic diversity, maintaining that schools should 'use every opportunity to respect the students' native languages and encourage continued development of these languages, where possible' (NCCA 2006, 110, emphasis added). The framing of 'native language' preservation in aspirational, and hence non-committal terms, is thus hollow rhetoric in the absence of state funding or commitment to hire sufficient numbers of suitably qualified bilingual teachers (Devine 2005). Moreover, the sentiments of the NCCA document are further undermined by the OMI's exclusive focus on 'English language acquisition' and a significant state-imposed reduction in the number of language support teachers working in schools which took effect in September 2009.

Ethnic minority students at BHC were often very conscious that they were perceived as non-English speaking, an assumption which was a source of considerable frustration to those students who had spoken English their entire lives, and/or who had lived most of their lives in Ireland. While some characterised their experiences of language support as helpful, a number of students felt infantilised in language support classes, or did not gain much from these classes.

Sometimes they make you feel that you have to do it [extra English] like. The teacher treats us like little babies sometimes. They ask you to spell things like 'rain' and 'sun'. But we are still like humans. We don't have to be treated that way. (Kris, male, age 14, Albania, third year)

The first thing with a teacher is they think you are foreign and they don't think you can speak English. . . . When all the teachers meet you for the first time, they automatically assume that you cannot speak English. And they will talk down to you or they will talk condescending to you, or whatever. And they won't think that you are like one of the others. (Siddhi, female, Hindu, age 15, India, fifth year)

The remainder of the article seeks to draw attention to the manner in which external constraints and conditions intersect with national level discourses about diversity to influence attitudes and practices in relation to racialised and linguistic minority students within schools. Using a case study approach, I seek to demonstrate how broader macro processes operating at the level of Irish state policy constrain and frame responses at the local level of the school, resulting in negative consequences for those racialised minority students who are least endowed with the cultural and linguistic capital valued by the school and society.

Yvette and Chantal were two first year students 'from Congo' with whom I worked closely in my capacity as language support volunteer tutor. Both students lived with their parents and siblings and were believed by the school administration to be asylum seekers. While Yvette's parents were new to the locality, Chantal had attended one of the local primary schools for about two years, during which time she experienced racist name-calling from peers.

Yeah, like in primary school, in my old school, some people called me like monkey or something. But I'm not a monkey, you know? I'm a person. That made me sad like, you know? I hate people calling me monkey. It made me annoyed. (Chantal, female, age 13, DRC, first year)

Yvette and Chantal quickly became close friends, but within weeks of starting at BHC, they had developed a reputation as 'troublemakers', based on their

perceived refusal to make an effort to speak and learn English, their 'disruptive' behaviour, and their apparently disrespectful attitude. Both students were often reprimanded for their inappropriate 'body language', their 'refusal to make eye contact', and their tendency to 'slouch in the chair'. On one of the many occasions I witnessed Yvette and Chantal being chastised about their perceived disrespectful behaviour and their refusal to 'make an effort to learn English', they were informed by the Learning Support Coordinator, Miss O'Shea, that they 'were in an Irish school now' and that 'there were no cultural differences when it came to respect'. On more than one occasion, Miss O'Shea complained to me that Chantal and Yvette 'weren't even speaking French' with one another, but rather some 'African dialect'. Rather than recognising Yvette and Chantal's multilingual capabilities in Lingala, French and English as a strength, Miss O'Shea and others, such as their Year Head, Mr Lewis, tended to focus on their perceived lack of progress in English, and their perceived unwillingness to make an effort to speak English, including amongst each other. Miss O'Shea's comment that Yvette and Chantal were not even speaking French, but rather some African language, suggests a privileging of European languages over non-European ones, and a misrecognition that French is somehow of greater intellectual worth than Lingala (Blackledge and Pavlenko 2001). Statements of this nature have the effect of devaluing not only the languages spoken in countries throughout Africa, but also the students' very identities as Congolese and African. A deficit model of language development, reflective of the broader national realm, existed at BHC, where students like Yvette and Chantal's previous experiences of language and learning were deemed irrelevant by school personnel, rather linguistic minority students were appraised on the basis of their perceived ability and willingness to communicate and learn in and through English (Moore 1999).

Chantal and Yvette's withdrawal from regular classes for an entire day per week was never problematised; on the contrary, Miss O'Shea frequently reminded them how 'lucky' and 'privileged' they were to have the 'special help' that I was providing. On more than one occasion, she threatened to withdraw this 'privilege' if their behaviour did not improve. As time went on, the school authorities became increasingly suspicious of Yvette and her family's motivations for 'coming here'. On two separate occasions, Miss O'Shea informed me that she and another member of the administration believed her parents were 'running a scam', on the grounds that Yvette appeared to be using second-hand textbooks while she had been supplied with new ones when she began at BHC.⁶ As the year went on, Yvette became increasingly disruptive in class; she developed a particular dislike for her English teacher, Miss Lenihan, who wrote frequent discipline notes in her journal. Towards the end of the year, she was suspended from school for starting a physical fight with a group of students.

Devine (2005) has highlighted the difficulties schools in an Irish context have encountered in distinguishing those linguistic minority students with a defined learning difficulty from those who have difficulty with the English language. The lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment tools for students for whom English was an additional language was a particular source of frustration for Miss O'Shea, who suspected that Yvette and Chantal may have 'a general learning difficulty'. In the absence of appropriate tools, Miss O'Shea resorted to 'translating' a pre-existing English language intelligence test into French, which I

was then asked to administer to both students. The modified instrument comprised a non-reading (oral/verbal) intelligence test where Miss O'Shea recorded individual questions in English onto an audiotape which were then translated into French by Miss Downes, a learning support teacher who had a bachelor's degree in French. During the test, Yvette and Chantal listened to an audiotape with a voice recording of Miss O'Shea reading aloud the English-language version of each question, which was then repeated in French by Miss Downes. While Miss O'Shea felt this method of testing actually gave the students an advantage, because they could listen to each question in two languages, the 'bubble sheets' where they recorded their answers were based on the original English language version of the test (hence requiring them to choose from a number of possible answers in English). Both students were therefore required to know the English words (and their spelling) in the first instance and to perform mental translations of their answers from French back into English. Following the test, Miss O'Shea identified Yvette and Chantal as 'mildly mentally handicapped' and 'learning disabled' respectively, based on their scores on what was indisputably a highly complex and deeply flawed testing process.

Although fluent in French (far more fluent in fact than 'national' students, most of whom would have only taken up French in the past year) by their second year at BHC, Yvette and Chantal were placed in 'parallel French' classes, i.e., classes taught by a learning support teacher for students with special needs. This resulted in Chantal developing a 'hatred' for the subject, despite it having been one of her favourite subjects the previous year.

Chantal: I hate French.

AB: That's interesting because you used to like French, right?

Chantal: Yeah, before I used to be but em, I just hate it. I don't like to hear French.

AB: French is one of the languages you speak, right?

Chantal: Yeah, I speak French but I hate it. I'm not really interested in it anymore. I just hate French. It's boring.

Following their poor performance in the intelligence test, Miss O'Shea's attitude towards Yvette and Chantal became increasingly negative. Directly following her calculation of the results of the test, she informed me that she suspected that the students' parents were 'welfare tourists', and may have previously spent time in the UK before coming to Ireland in search of better social welfare benefits. Despite BHC's policy of celebratory positive interculturalism, those students with limited English proficiency and/or limited financial resources came to be viewed by at least some teachers as a burden - and in some cases undeserving of the 'additional' resources allocated to them in the form of language support. To the extent that minority students like Yvette and Chantal are perceived as a threat to the school's reputation for academic excellence and its ability to attract 'the best' students in the locality, the discourse of positive interculturalism can be seen as contingent on minority students being perceived as beneficial and non-threatening to the school community. From this vantage point, educational responses to minority students reflect state-level discourses which explicitly or implicitly suggest that immigrants are welcome so long as they benefit Irish society and are therefore deserving of its resources (Devine 2005).

Discussion

The foregoing vertical case study is part of a broader effort to trouble 'optimistic', common-sense policies regarding interculturalism and anti-racism that have been implemented as a response to Ireland's 'newfound' diversity and racism (see Kitching 2010). These optimistic responses are difficult to contest, precisely because they assure minorities that they are to be welcomed, tolerated, celebrated and embraced. Yet it is precisely this logic, the very *raison d'être* of interculturalism in fact, which subtly reinforces the privileged status of culturally dominant groups within society by positioning them as the 'embracer' or 'tolerator' of difference, who get to decree the acceptability (or otherwise) of the ethnic Other, thereby negating the possibility of true equality ever being achieved. In other words, power imbalances are constructed and reinforced through the very discourses and practices which claim to promote equality and human rights (Hage 1998). It is in this sense that interculturalism constitutes a subtle, symbolically violent means of reproducing existing racialised power structures within Irish society while giving the illusory impression that it is egalitarian.

At the local level of the school, interculturalism is informed by broader state discourses and policies which bestow conditional acceptance on minority groups, whose 'welcome' is contingent on what so-called 'non-national' migrants have to offer a national us, and is linked to a broader discourse which explicitly or implicitly suggests that they are welcome so long as they benefit Irish society and are therefore deserving of its generosity. As Osler (2010) points out, contemporary political and educational programmes draw a distinction between rightful, deserving citizens and an alien Other. She elaborates:

In such an atmosphere, refugees and asylum seekers are no longer vulnerable people in need of assistance and with an entitlement to have their claims considered, but are portrayed as unscrupulous individuals exploiting both international law and those who rightfully belong. (Osler 2010, 219)

While many ethnic minority students who attended BHC – particularly those of Indian, Pakistani, and Eastern European origin – were perceived as well-behaved, 'docile', academically motivated, and likely to enhance the reputation of the school by doing well in state exams, the children of asylum seekers like Yvette and Chantal were perceived as being of no value to the school or society because they lacked the cultural and linguistic capital necessary to fulfil the enriching function that the logic of interculturalism entails. Rather, they came to be perceived as a threat to the school's reputation for academic excellence, a perception that was exacerbated by the school's declining enrolment and the associated perception that some 'Irish' parents were concerned about the growing diversity within the school.

The corporate-style multiculturalism promulgated by the Irish state, which privileges business, international reputation and social cohesion arguments as to why anti-racism policies should be enacted, formulates the contribution of migrants almost exclusively in terms of their labour, and the resulting economic benefits they offer the nation. It constitutes a very weak basis for anti-racism, legitimating it in terms of its ability to enhance the nation's sociocultural prestige on an international stage, and to assure trading partners and tourists alike of its friendly and welcoming

nature, while implicitly constructing those who are deemed illegitimate and undeserving of the state's self-perceived generosity as 'other' within the Irish national space.

Of course, as Connolly (1998, 38) persuasively argues, rather than simply determining the way people think, discourses produced within the field of national politics 'feed off and essentially rely on the local experiences and concerns of... people'. Moreover, as Dale (1989) correctly points out, the state is non-monolithic and comprises a range of disconnected institutions which do not necessarily act in a harmonious fashion. Indeed, Fanning (2002) has pointed to the coexistence of policies in Ireland aimed at promoting inclusiveness and contesting racism on the one hand, alongside others aimed at promoting the exclusion of certain migrants, namely asylum seekers, on the other. While documents such as NPAR and Migration Nation clearly privilege the economic dimensions of immigration, and construct immigrants along these lines, other documents such as the NCCA's Intercultural Education Guidelines promote a more holistic view of ethnic minorities and their contribution to society. However, as the name suggests, guidelines are not enforceable; nor has their distribution been accompanied by any meaningful effort to provide in-service training in interculturalism. More problematically, however, these guidelines constitute an 'add-diversity-and-stir' approach to the curriculum which seeks to accommodate change without altering the existing curriculum to any significant extent (Bryan 2008). Intercultural education thus constitutes a slogan system that may suggest curricular reform while actually conserving existing restrictive practices and understandings of Irishness and identity. In other words, the inclusive and anti-racist aims and civic nationalist ideologies of intercultural education are often not realised in practice, but rather function as a means of enabling the state to attempt to restore legitimacy within a context of state-led racist policies and political-economic arrangements and escalating racism (Bryan 2010). It is in this sense that those discourses operating at the level of Irish state policy, which distinguish economically useful migrants who can serve the national economic interest from those whom it must carry as part of its humanitarian or altruistic burden, from those who are mere 'citizen tourists' and hence undeserving of the state's generosity, are more likely to have an impact at the local level of the school. Strategically, the interrelated discourses of anti-racism and interculturalism serve to placate their proponents with the idea that something is being done about the problem of racism in Irish society, thereby eliminating the need for any real interrogation of its structural dimensions and the political-economic arrangements and political discourses that are ultimately responsible for its existence and intensification (Bryan 2009; Solomon et al. 2005). Exposing and contesting this form of symbolic violence is a small, but essential part of the process of fostering more progressive forms of anti-racism in schools and society.

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Notes

1. Ethical issues were addressed through, and this study was approved by, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Teachers College, Columbia University.
2. All names used to refer to people and places in this article are pseudonyms. The source of this quotation is not provided to protect the identity of the school. The term 'international students' was typically applied to ethnically and/or linguistic minority students at BHC, irrespective of how long they had lived in Ireland or whether they had Irish citizenship.
3. One could equally argue that so-called 'international students' at third level, particularly those from non-EU countries are economically valuable to third level colleges, because of the significantly higher fees they are required to pay. See, for example, University College Dublin's (UCD) Strategic Plan-2014, *Forming Global Minds*.
4. Due to space limitations, I analyse only the reputation and business cases here.
5. The system of direct provision was introduced in April 2000 and consisted of providing limited support to asylum seekers in the form of basic accommodation, meals and cash allowances of IR£15 weekly for adults and IR£7.50 weekly for children (Fanning 2002, 103). Asylum seekers were also dispersed outside Dublin to centres of direct provision, often local hostels and hotels commandeered for the purpose (Crowley, Gilmartin, and Kitchin 2006).
6. While families were typically required to purchase their own textbooks, at the time of fieldwork, the DES offered a 'School Books Grant Scheme' which allocated funds to primary and post-primary schools to provide schoolbooks for children whose parents/guardians were unable to do so. The 'scam' in question was that Yvette/her parents were allegedly selling on the new books and obtaining second-hand ones in their place.

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