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Otherness in Pedagogical Theory and Practice: The Case of Roma

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This paper addresses the topic of the inclusion of Roma children in education in Europe through an examination of theory and practice in relation to the issues of Otherness and foreignness. Roma children entering school encounter a vastly different world from their home culture, with different expectations for teaching and learning, for relationships among learners, and with teachers. We address the question of whether the knowledge of these contradictions or discontinuities and knowledge of the ways in which any child from a minority group learns, is sufficient to address the issue of foreignness in educational contexts. The paper highlights the potential for interculturalism and intercultural pedagogies for engaging children from diverse cultures.

Cet article porte sur la question de l'inclusion des enfants roms dans le système éducatif en Europe et ce, par un examen de la théorie et la pratique par rapport aux questions de l'altérité et l'extranéité. Les enfants roms qui rentrent à l'école sont confrontés à un monde bien différent de celui de leur propre culture, où les attentes face à l'enseignement et l'apprentissage ne sont pas les mêmes que celles qu'ils connaissent, ni les rapports des apprenants entre eux et entre les apprenants et les enseignants. Nous nous demandons si la conscience de ces contradictions ou discontinuités et la connaissance des façons dont apprennent les enfants de groupes minoritaires suffisent pour aborder la question de l'extranéité dans des milieux éducatifs. L'article souligne le potentiel de l'interculturalisme et des pédagogies interculturelles pour stimuler la participation des enfants de diverses cultures.

Looking Back

> The sound of a strange woman's voice shouting on the street wakes me up. I listen carefully to understand the words. The voice is coming closer to my bedroom window. The woman is selling nettles. "Oh, these are the Gypsies," I think. "They must be in town again." I jump quickly and run to the window to see them. My aunt is already out and talking to a woman dressed in a long skirt. The woman had just put down a big hemp bag and a huge iron scale to measure out the amount of nettles my aunt wants to make a soup with. Looking from above, I have an unrestricted view of the woman. She looks old to me, but almost everyone does: I am five years old. Her hair is covered with a patterned scarf whose colours have faded. There are beads, many beads, around her neck. I can hear the clicking sound of her bangles as she puts her bare, dark-skinned hand into the bag and takes out a handful of nettles. I can almost feel the pain caused by the tiny spikes on the plant, which cause a rash, but the woman does not seem to be bothered by it. I see other people coming, too—three barefoot children, no older then myself, wearing clothes with big holes in them. They come close to

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> the woman and carefully observe the transaction as my aunt reaches for her wallet to pay for the nettles.
>
> A second later, a man comes around the corner in a donkey carriage, gets down from it quickly, and offers to sharpen my aunt's knives or shine her copper pots. He seems delighted when my aunt goes into the house to find knifes and pots that need maintenance. With no man in the house, this service is welcomed and very much appreciated.
>
> Once in the house, my aunt calls me and asks me to see if I have any clothes that I no longer use to give to the kids. I obey gladly. Now I have a reason to be outside and see these strange people up closer. By the time I am dressed and out on the street, the entire neighbourhood is there. Women hold their pots and knives in their hands, waiting their turn for service. We, the children, stand by our mothers or aunts, mesmerized by the magic of tinsmithing performed before our eyes. (Kirova, personal account)

This paper addresses the inclusion of Roma children in education in Europe through an examination of theory and practice in relation to the issues of Otherness and foreignness. Roma children entering school encounter a vastly different world from their home culture, with different expectations for teaching and learning, as well as for relationships among learners and with teachers. We address the question of whether the knowledge of these contradictions or discontinuities in addition to knowledge of the ways in which any child from a minority group learns, is sufficient to address the issue of foreignness in educational contexts.

The paper begins with a brief review of historical legislation and other pressures on Roma communities to settle, as well as education initiatives aimed at supporting settlement policies in postwar Europe. It continues by considering the Enlightenment idea of foreignness and attempts to resolve difference through assimilating or "civilizing" the Other; it also looks at the function of schools as agencies of resocialization. The limitations of multicultural education as an approach to schooling minority children, including Roma, are then addressed. The paper concludes by highlighting the potential for interculturalism and intercultural pedagogies for engaging children from diverse cultures, noting that this would require a change, not only in educational practices in schools, but also in higher education and teacher education.

Settling the "Gypsies," and the Possibility for Education

The childhood recollection that opens this article occurred in the early 1960s in communist Bulgaria. It reveals that, even from an early age, children in Eastern Europe constructed an image of the "Gypsy" as foreign, exotic, and a bit intimidating.[1] It shows that traditional Roma skills—such as tinsmithing, knife sharpening, and wild plant and fruit picking—were needed and very much welcomed by the non-Roma community, and it points to the poverty in which many Roma children lived. It also demonstrates that, despite legislation aimed at enforcing the settlement of Roma which was adopted in Bulgaria in 1958, Roma people were still "on the road" in the 1960s. Even in the 1980s Romani were traveling to the Black Sea coast with bears who could "dance" on demand to entertain tourists or Bulgarians on vacation with their families. Settling "the Travelers," as the Romani were also called, was no easy task for the Bulgarian government.

Bulgaria was not the first or only country to adopt legislation aimed at settling the Romani. In 1952, Poland's socialist postwar government instituted a broad program known as the "Great

Holt" aimed at addressing "the Gypsy question" in an attempt to build an ethnically homogeneous state. Following a similar assimilationist agenda, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria adopted legislation in 1958, and Romania did the same in 1962. However, as Fonseca (1996) points out, Western Europe and the United Kingdom did not attempt to settle the Romani until the late 1960s. In fact, at the time of East European communist regimes' first legislated attempts to impose Roma settlement, the Romani were "legal" in England and Wales only when they were on the move. It wasn't until 1968, when England's *Caravan Sites Act* attempted to regulate Romani movement, that specific sites were designated for their settlement.

With settled life came the opportunity for educating Roma children, which was seen as "the only hope for the emancipation of these people who lived 'outside of history'" (Ficowski, 1990, cited in Fonseca, 1996, p. 8). Although well-intended welfare programs were promoted, at least in the (former) Communist countries, as measures that would greatly improve the Romani's difficult lives, they did not bring about the anticipated results. In his 1984 book *The Gypsies in Poland*, Ficowski (cited in Fonseca, 1996) defined the result of the Great Holt campaign as "disastrous" and explained that "opposition to the traveling of the Gypsy craftsmen, who had taken their tinsmithing or blacksmithing into the uttermost corners of the country, began gradually to bring about the disappearance of ... most of the traditional Gypsy skills." Ultimately, after losing the opportunity to support themselves with their traditional skills, for many Roma "the main source of livelihood became preying on the rest of society" (Ficowski, 1984, cited in Fonseca, 1996, p. 9).

The so-called emancipation of Romani that was to come through education was equally unsuccessful. As the 2000 World Bank report on Roma and the transition in Central and Eastern Europe states, "despite the achievements in reducing illiteracy and increasing school participation, the efforts undertaken during the socialist era laid the foundation for inequities in education quality, as many Roma were channeled into separate or segregated schools outside of the mainstream system" (p. 17). Furthermore, those who were educated according to a country's education standards did not remain in the Roma community—they no longer belonged there. Having once been foreigners in the majority culture, those who were assimilated into it through education became foreigners in their own culture. As Lippitz (2007) reminds us, in relational terms, "foreignness is something that, to various degrees, does not fit into available structures, and that even tears through the warp and woof of the textures of the everyday. In doing so, it leaves behind fibers, fragments, or traces of the contingent and arbitrary" (p. 1).

But are foreignness and Otherness in pedagogical contexts unique to Romani? In the rest of this essay, we will engage in a brief historical investigation of philosophical thought that asks, what made it impossible for Western educational theory and practice since the 17th century to resolve the issues of Otherness and foreignness in the structures associated with (available) pedagogical contexts? We will also explore possibilities for teacher education to address these issues in relation to Roma populations. We begin with one of the projects of modernity, Comenius's *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, originally published in Latin and German in 1658 in Nuremberg.

Creating Universal Benchmarks

Following the political and social chaos of the Thirty Years War (1618 to 1648) that reshaped the religious and political map of central Europe and set the stage for the old centralized Roman Catholic empire to give way to a community of sovereign states, the publication of *Orbis*

Sensualium Pictus (visible world in pictures) offered Comenius's vision of divine (invisible) order within the Christian world, which had been hidden by the war. Comenius made this world visible through text and pictures arranged methodically with a specific didactic/pedagogical intent to achieve "Christian legitimation of the world in its totality" (Lippitz, 2007, p. 4).

The book had an immediate and long-lasting impact on education systems in Europe. For example, it was published in English in 1659, and the first quadrilingual edition (in Latin, German, Italian, and French) was published in 1666. In 1685 it was published in a quadrilingual Czech, Latin, German, and Hungarian edition by the Breuer publishing house in Levoča. Between 1670 and 1780, new editions were published in various languages, with upgrades in both pictures and text content (Vojtechovsky & van Tijen, 1996/2015). Central to the book is the civilizing process of the modern individual through the creation of order.

Although *Orbis Pictus* promoted a particular vision of order, the notion of order itself is not foreign to humankind. Every human order is built on continuity, regularity, and dependability. Lippitz (2007) explains that "these 'orders' suppress disorder in particular ways, in that they privilege some things in particular, and at the same time, through processes of exclusion, segregate that which is considered different, foreign, of less value or simply incapable of integration" (p. 5). Since its publication, Comenius's book has had an impact on pedagogical theory and practice in many ways, including generalizing the manners and customs of the higher medieval class (e.g., cleanliness and order) as a universal benchmark for a civilized modern individual. As a result, the everyday life of the underclass, unable to fit into the perfectly ordered (divine) structure of the world that was desired, was made invisible. The underclass way of living and being was thus excluded; it was seen as a kind of foreignness, that is, a "type of 'sickness' or 'sinfulness' that can always be healed in the great beyond" (Lippitz, 2007, p. 4).

Foreignness as Transitory

The Enlightenment notion of foreignness as a temporary condition resolvable through education as an instrument for "the civilizing process of modernity" and "the cultivation of those less civilized or even 'barbaric'" (Elias, 2000, p. 72) can be detected in the attempts made by the socialist postwar governments in Eastern Europe to settle and thus "civilize" the "barbarians" (i.e., the Roma). Todorov (2010) points out that while there is no precise definition of barbaric savagery, some ancient Greek texts suggested that barbarians are those who "live in isolated groups instead of gathering in common habitats or, even better, forming societies ruled by laws adopted in common" (p. 16). According to these texts, barbarians "are people of chaos and randomness [who] are unacquainted with social order" (p. 16).

Not only do Roma have no common habitats ruled by laws adopted in common, but they also have no home. Descendants of the Rajput (sons of kings) warriors who left India in the 11th century AD (Rishi, 1996)—following centuries of battles and invasions marked by persecution and massacre by the Ghaznavid Empire (Afghanistan)—they drifted across the Bosporus to Europe, with the majority settling in the Balkans (Lee, 1998/2012). Migrating through Eastern Europe and into Russia and beyond, Roma endured centuries of persecution and discrimination. The gravest period of all, which occurred in recent history, was the Roma Holocaust of World War II, during which "possibly twenty-five percent of all European Roma perished" (Greenberg, 2010, p. 985). If we now turn to another characteristic of barbarians identified in the ancient Greek literature by Todorov—"those who deny the full humanity of others" (2010, p. 16)—we cannot help but see who the real barbarians were in the history of Roma peoples. However, as

Bauman (1991) reminds us, the Holocaust and other horrors in recent history were not only outbursts of premodern barbarism, but also products of the permeation of the nation state with the ideals of modernity. Nazi and Communist leaders alike embraced the optimistic vision of a harmonious, orderly, deviation-free society in which “scientific and industrial progress in principle removed all restrictions on the possible application of planning, education and social reform in everyday life” (Bauman, 1991, p. 29).

East European postwar socialist governments’ attempts to settle and thus bring to modern civilization through education those who lived “outside of history” (i.e., the Roma) failed, not because Roma are barbarians who cannot be civilized, but because an education system based on the ideals of modernity is incapable of accommodating “human diversity, complexity and contingency” (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007, p. 22); it is incapable of overcoming the notion of foreignness as a type of transitory sickness. By its very nature, the pragmatic order of the school created, through explicit rules and regulations, a process of exclusion and inclusion of content for learning. Moreover, the medium of instruction—written texts—has resulted in the alienation of minorities of non-European descent, among whom the Roma figure prominently. Since “the idea of civilization implies knowledge of the past” (Todorov, 2010, p. 24), the selective process of including certain aspects of the past and excluding others attempts to create a universal knowledge of the world that would, in turn, create an ideal order in which the dominated populations are subjugated, normalized, and assimilated; their foreignness or Otherness is thus transient.

While the above notion of foreignness as temporary is characteristic of the institutional process of education through which one becomes part of a society and culture, it is also found in the neohumanistic conceptualization of personal formation (e.g., that of Prussian philosopher and linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt, 1767–1835). The self integrates the foreign and Other, and in doing so comes to know itself better, becoming in a sense transparent to itself. Thus, the self establishes its own identity through the reflexive encounter with and adaptation of the Other. In this process, the Other or foreign becomes knowledge, something that is known or knowable, and the initial difference between the self and the other, the starting point of the knowledge of the Other, is effectively erased. In Western philosophy, as Young (1990) writes: “when knowledge or theory comprehends the Other, the alterity of the latter vanishes as it becomes part of the same” (p. 13).

The possibility of the other or the foreign to be understood and thus appropriated has been manifested in the history of European colonization since the 15th century. The “universality” of European cultural and religious values and the elevation of rationality as a logic of domination and oppression by instrumental reason over culture and personality caused Adorno and Horkheimer from the Frankfurt School to ask, “Why mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism?” (1944, p. xi). In their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno (1944) describe how, on the road to modern science, “men are brought to actual conformity” (p. 24). With the help of ever more refined methods of imposing so-called universalism, the school as a system played an increasingly important role in accomplishing some of the main tasks of modernity: achieving absolute truth, pure art, order, and certainty. Through the mechanisms of common curriculum and standardized assessments, the education system exemplifies how modernist philosophy aimed to achieve the same goal as totalitarianism through oppression and uniform sameness (Lévinas, 1969).

School as a Foreign Imposition: The Child as a Stranger in School

Historically, the school's role has been (and still is) to socialize the child into the world outside the home, a world that Collins (1974) calls "the third-person world of political life" (p. 149), a world of a particular order where people—children, teachers, administrators, and parents—relate to each other on the basis of shared expectations about their respective roles. This "third-person world" requires of all children to undertake in what Packer and Goicoechea (2000) describe as an ontological change: from being a member of a family with (ideally) warm, intimate relationships among its members, to becoming a member of a classroom community in which students and teachers are governed by explicit rules and implicit sanctions and apparently objective constraints. These restrictions may include the shape and size of the room, the number of children and adults in it, and so forth.

At home, a child lives in relationship with particular individuals, and even when there are many children in the home, or these relationships are less than ideal, they are unique with each member of the family. A child then leaves home and enters school "as a stranger to the objective world for which schooling serves as a rite of initiation" (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 148). In school, a child is asked to become one of a type—a student—who is expected to have the same kind of relationship with each teacher based on designated school rules. Or, as Schütz (1964) put it, students are expected to conduct themselves "in the manner of the anonymous type" (p. 102). These rules are abstractions sustained by the school/classroom community and by the requirement that students relate to the world in another way, that is, by mastering symbolic forms such as the alphabet, numbers, musical notes, and so forth, which are required to represent students' knowledge and relationship to the self, others, and the world around them. Thus, school not only necessitates an ontological change in children, but imposes a particular (scientific) epistemological construction of their knowledge of and about the world, which may or may not be similar to the everyday epistemology of their homes. Yet the new kind of individual shaped by school practices does not replace the old: the child goes home every day after school. Thus the child's identity becomes split (Lippitz, 2007). As Lippitz (2007) explains,

> on the one hand, there is the individual in the plenitude of the child's biographical experiences and adventures, which remains foreign to the teacher; on the other, there is the child in his or her role as a student, a role which is a foreign imposition, ultimately remaining external to the child. (p. 7)

Thus a student remains a stranger in school, becoming what Schütz (1964) described as "a cultural hybrid on the verge of two different patterns of group life, not knowing to which of them [s/]he belongs" (p. 104).

If the experience of schooling can be described as a foreign imposition on all children that results in their becoming cultural hybrids, why is this imposition only moderately disruptive for some but shattering for others? In a study that refers to the features of infant child care in two contexts, one African and one middle-class North American, LeVine et al. (1994) provide insight into Western and non-Western visions of childhood via two distinct cultural models of child care—the pediatric and the pedagogical—and consider how these models may affect children's experiences of schooling. LeVine et al. (1994) point to very different conceptualizations of early socialization that tend to persist into later teaching-learning situations, whether formalized or not. Each model has its proponents and detractors; however, in school contexts the pedagogical model is likely to prevail.

LeVine at al.'s (1994) explanation of the two models of child care clarifies how a group's need for economic survival in a rural or subsistence economy can lead to the group adopting the pediatric model, while the pedagogical model is more likely to be utilized in a highly differentiated urban economy. That is, when the home environment is relatively impoverished, nonliterate, and non-Western, the prevailing model of child care will likely emphasize health and physical survival (i.e., the pediatric model). The teaching of morality and other values may occur through oral storytelling, with little use of language between adults and children for encouraging or answering questions, reading stories, or building vocabulary—the kinds of discourse patterns found in schools. Beyond infancy, one may observe a shift in focus to children's mastery of specific skills through observation and imitation via the respect-obedience model (LeVine et al., 1994), a model that suggests a culturally shared vision of the adult-to-be as one who can function within a hierarchical society in which the authority of a parent or other adult (such as a teacher) is not to be questioned (Shumba, 1999).

Studies of Roma children's early socialization and learning (e.g., Adams, Okely, Morgan, & Smith, 1975; Levinson, 2008; Okely, 1983; Smith, 1997) clearly show that in Romani contexts the transmission of knowledge and skills is consistent with the pediatric model: learning relies on observation and participation in everyday life alongside parents and older, more experienced members of the child's community. Levinson's (2008) research on integration of English Roma children in schools shows that in these children's home environments there is a lack of pressure on the learner and a substantial degree of autonomy granted to him or her. Levinson concludes that this autonomy entails "both the (special) freedom to get up and move around during learning, and the (temporal) freedom to decide when to stop, start and take breaks" (2007, p. 241).

In contrast, the pedagogical model of early socialization is adapted to the social and economic structure of societies in which most learners complete secondary school and many receive postsecondary education. In such societies, the dominant group's vision of the adult-to-be is of a person who values individual achievement and competition and is ideologically oriented towards democratic ways of doing things—within families as well as in school and society at large. Typically, the child-rearing methods of educated middle-class parents dovetail with the interaction patterns the child will encounter in school (LeVine, 2003); for example, extensive listening, speaking, reasoning, explaining, asking, answering, comparing, labeling, and counting. Consistent with the approaches to teaching and learning favored by the school, the expectation that all children will achieve a certain level of proficiency and will acquire certain skills by a certain age is a primary organizational principle of Western school systems. This organization itself is fundamentally different from Roma traditional teaching, where there are "no fixed expectations that children will attain a certain level of competency by a specific age" (Levinson, 2008, p. 241). There are, however, expectations of cooperation rather than competition, and of learning alongside other members of the community. Again, these expectations are in sharp contrast with the Western education system. Thus, Levinson concludes, "the highly structured, hierarchical, rule-governed culture of school is both alien and repressive" (2008, p. 247) for Roma children.

Both the theoretical framework offered by LeVine et al. (1994) and the specific research conducted on and with Romani communities since the 1970s (e.g., Berg, 1970; Heath, 1983; Resnick, 1987) demonstrate that there are significant discontinuities between the learning paradigms at home and school. The question of interest in this paper is whether the knowledge of these contradictions or discontinuities, and knowledge of the ways in which any child from a minority group learns, are sufficient to address the issue of Otherness in educational contexts.

The Promise and Perils of Multicultural Education

At about the time that East European governments were pursuing the goal of settling the Romani in an attempt to create ethnically homogeneous states united under Communist (modernist) ideology (i.e., the 1960s), Western philosophical thought was becoming more skeptical about the possibility of accomplishing modernity's goals of uniformity and universalism. The acknowledgment of uncertainty, complexity, diversity, nonlinearity, subjectivity, and multiple perspectives has given rise to the "project of postmodernity," which Lather (1991) explains this way:

> Philosophically speaking, the essence of the postmodern argument is that the dualisms which continue to dominate Western thought are inadequate for understanding the world of multiple causes and effects interacting in complex and non-linear ways, all of which are rooted in a limitless array of historical and cultural specificities. (p. 21)

Responsibility for the Other has become the central feature of postmodern ethics (e.g., Bauman, 1993; Lévinas, 1969). The shift from assimilating the Other through a totalizing system of knowledge that obliterates the Other into being the same, to respecting the Other signifies a new way of addressing the ever-persistent issues of foreignness and otherness in education. The responsibility for foreignness and otherness in the sense of responding to the indispensability of difference is born of the recognition that to obliterate the Other is simultaneously to undermine the potential of the self for renewal. Related to this idea is the notion of the inaccessibility of the Other: it is impossible to understand the foreign on the basis of our norms; the foreign is accessible only "in the mode of inaccessibility" precisely because of its foreign generativity or historicity (Steinbock, 1995, pp. 244–245). Thus, as Waldenfels (1996) puts it, "alienness has nothing to do with mere lack or deficiency—as if the alien were something not yet or no longer known, but waiting to be known. On the contrary, absence, distance or inaccessibility constitutes alienness or otherness as such" (p. 9). In fact, an explained or fully understood alien would cease to be an alien, which in turn would lead to the disappearance of home. Particularly important for our understanding of the relationship between home and alien is Steinbock's (1995) description of the relationship as "liminal," that is, home and alien are formed by being mutually delimiting as home and as alien:

> This constitutive duet unfolds as the *co-constitution of the alien through appropriative experience of the home, and as the co-constitution of the home through the transgressive experience of the alien*. Here neither homeworld nor alienworld can be regarded as the "original sphere" since they are in a continual historical becoming as delimited from one another. This is the sense in which home and alien are co-generative. (p. 179, emphasis in original)

Home worlds and alien worlds, therefore, are intertwined as their limits shift and become transformed in the process of cogeneration. In order to discuss the structure of home and alien, Steinbock (1995) further describes the process of normalization as a "liminal experience" that has two modes: "appropriation" (i.e., repeating, ritual, communication, narrative, renewal, etc.) and "transgression" (i.e., encounter with the alien).

In the broadest sense, the shift in understanding of the Other is represented in multicultural philosophy born out of opposition to Western chauvinism supported by the epistemological shackles of positivism. Rather than supporting an assimilationist agenda through advocating for the superiority of one particular culture, multiculturalism adheres to the principle of cultural relativity, which posits that all cultural traditions have value and cannot be judged from the perspective of another culture. From this vantage point, narrow exposure to a singular cultural tradition would be deemed harmful because it would narrow the scope of one's experience and limit exposure to the knowledge encapsulated in diverse communities.

The primary goal of multicultural education is to develop awareness of and respect for cultural diversity (Portera, 2011). Inherent in this educational philosophy is respect for human dignity and the promotion of social justice and greater equity within society (Bennett, 2007). Multicultural education is further predicated on reducing discrimination, promoting enhanced self-understanding through expanding one's cultural lens, and liberating individuals from the restraints of cultural boundaries (Banks, 2008; Eckermann, 1994). Although multicultural education is often perceived as primarily benefitting minority groups, this is an erroneous assumption, as dominant groups often have a limited cultural scope based on the perceived superiority of their own culture and reinforced through respective societal norms (Banks, 2001; Ghosh, 2002). Thus, multicultural education assists students from the dominant culture by challenging their tacit assumptions of superiority and encouraging them to develop more diverse cultural understandings. However, according to Gibson (1984), the field of multicultural education theory generally "abounds with untested and sometimes unsupportable assumptions regarding goals, strategies, and outcomes" (p. 109). Indeed, Gibson suggests that unless these assumptions are made more explicit, multicultural education as a whole risks being dismissed as not only ineffective but as "potentially encouraging of even greater educational inequalities" (1984, p. 546).

For the purposes of this paper, we are interested in the ability of multicultural theory and practice to address the question of Otherness and/or foreignness in congruence with the postmodern ethical notion of respect of the other as Other. A review of literature on multicultural education discourses (Kirova 2008) suggested two pitfalls of the practice of multicultural education in relation to this paper's main focus:

1. that emphasizing exoticized, knowable (Other) cultures solidifies the boundaries between majority and minority cultures (p. 107); and
2. that multiculturalism's view of the self/culture relationship reiterates the cultural hegemony associated with Eurocentrism (p. 109).

We discuss each of these pitfalls below.

1. Emphasizing exoticized, knowable (Other) cultures solidifies the boundaries between majority and minority cultures (Kirova, 2008, p. 107).

Criticisms of multiculturalism come from scholars who argue that multicultural discourse premised on the idea of heritage results in a reductive striving for cultural "simplicity and knowability" (Walcott, 1997, p. 122) by relegating ethnic and, in particular, racialized Others to static, externally rooted identities. Troyna (1993) similarly argues that "increased knowledge of other groups might in fact enhance feelings of differences" (p. 313) and does not necessarily lead to critical examination of the dominant culture. According to Stables (2005),

> multicultural education in schools often comprises of exposure to the cultural practices of 'other' ethnic and cultural groups, on the understanding that this will: (i) reduce discrimination on grounds

> such as colour; and (ii) develop empathetic relationships between people from different ethnic and cultural groups. (p. 188)

Given this assumption, the need for learners to “study ‘foreign’ cultures, participate in ‘multicultural days’ or go on field trips to ‘cultural communities’ and community centres” (Pon, 2000, p. 284) was viewed by multicultural educators as a remedy for racist and ethnic hostilities stemming from people’s lack of familiarity with other cultures (see also Gosine, 2002). From its inception, its principle aim was to develop knowledge and an understanding of the Other, or of minority groups. Intercultural and antiracist education emerged in opposition to this solidification of borders between majority and minority cultures.

Building on James’s (2000), Pon’s (2000), and Walcott’s (1997) work, Gosine (2002) argues that both multicultural and antiracism education oversimplify the dynamics of cultural diversity and racism because both emphasize the defensively situated collective identities or essentialisms that racialized communities construct in relation to a dominant culture that represents them in homogeneous and stigmatized terms and fails to adequately consider the multifaceted subjectivities such seemingly homogeneous identities can often mask. Thus, although antiracism represents a leap forward in the fight against racism and racial inequality, in the past decade scholars (e.g., Yon, 2000) have critiqued the antiracism movement for what they see as an uncritical reliance on essentialized or homogenous conceptions of racialized communities. Gosine (2002) believes such a strategy suppresses intragroup divisions and ruptures, and is misguiding in its effect of reinforcing the notion of the essentialized (and stigmatized) racial Other (see also Hall, 1996; Yon, 2000). In Gosine’s (2002) view, the strategy of antiracism further reifies the very normative-deviant binary it is designed to critique. Such an approach perpetuates a we-them view of difference—a simplistic, binary perspective reinforcing racist discourses. Gosine (2002) warns that arguing for such a perspective potentiates falling into a fragmented universe of situated identities and forms of consciousness that make it seemingly impossible to think about group-based identities, issues, mobilization, and interventions (see also Collins, 2000; Diawara, 1993). Treating cultures as discrete units strengthens the boundaries between majority and minority cultures and facilitates creating difference in relation to the “norm.” As Perry (1992) states, “the tendency to view non-Western cultures as stable, tradition-bound, timeless entities shifts us dangerously back toward viewing others as beings who are profoundly and inherently different from ourselves” (p. 52).

In the case of Roma populations, their defining characteristic is their diversity, which includes “numerous subdivisions based on various crosscutting cleavages, including family groups and religion, many of which have little or no contact with each other” (Wheeler, 1999, cited in Ringold, 2000, p. 6). This characteristic of Roma populations makes “essentialized” approaches to integration that suppress intragroup divisions largely unsuccessful. What such approaches do succeed in, however, is to solidify the distinctions between Roma and non-Roma (*gadje* or *gadze*, the Roma words for non-Roma people) that have “reinforced stereotypes and mistrust on both sides” (Ringold, 2000, p. 7).

2. Multiculturalism’s view of the self/culture relationship reiterates the cultural hegemony associated with Eurocentrism (Kirova, 2008, p. 109).

The essentialized views of culture assumed in multicultural education lead to understanding self/cultural identity and self-esteem as fundamentally the same in all cultures and ethnic groups (Hoffman, 1996). This view is found in both Taylor’s (1994) and Kymlicka’s (1995) conceptualizations of self as a property of human nature animated by those human qualities assumed to be universal. In multicultural education theory and practice, it is assumed that there is “a one-to-one relationship between self and culture characterized by a clear, fixed commitment to a particular cultural or ethnic identity” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 557). The argument goes further to suggest that the ownership formulation of identity as something one has (e.g., “all students have an ethnic identity” or “every student has a culture”) represents the relationship between person and culture as one of possession, which reflects notions of property rights and makes ethnicity compatible with the dominant economic structure of society. This argument is supported by Appiah’s (1997) assertion that most of the social identities that make up our diverse society do not actually have independent cultures that need to be represented in school curricula. He maintains that what are frequently coded as cultural identities are, in fact, social identities that cannot be understood as independent cultures. Thus, by being told that everyone should have a clear ethnic or cultural identity, minority children are forced not only to choose their identity, but also to “live within separate spheres defined by the common culture of their race, religion, or ethnicity” (p. 34).

Related to the self/culture property assumptions are identity politics that have emerged in tandem with minority cultures’ demands for political and cultural recognition. These demands are often articulated with the supposition of an authentic, already formed or pre-given, stable minority identity constructed in relation to Whiteness. In the case of Roma, their ethnic identity is constructed in relation to non-Roma, mainly White Europeans, as Fraser (1995) explains:

> [Roma] ethnicity was to be fashioned and remoulded by a multitude of influences, internal and external, they would assimilate innumerable elements which had nothing to do with India, and they would eventually cease to be, in any meaningful way, Indians; their identity, their culture would, however—regardless of all the transformations—remain sharply distinct from that of the gadze who surround them, and on whom their economic existence depends. (p. 44)

In sum, the current multicultural education practices based on ethno-racial distinctions (i.e., curricula that essentialize knowledge about Other cultures and celebrate them) have not contributed to eliminating racism or the unequal treatment of minority, non-White students. Nor have they led to a critical examination of the dominant White, middle-class, Eurocentric culture. Therefore, although multicultural efforts that take the form of curricular add-ons about the “Cultural Other” (Montecinos, 1995) take steps towards challenging and altering the mainstream curriculum, they have their own hidden curriculum, a major outcome of which is the reinscription of essentialized notions of culture and essentialized representations of the members of cultural groups.

The complexity of the issues identified as problematic in multicultural theory makes it difficult to formulate a unified multicultural education mission that speaks to the multiplicity of identities, the fluidity of culture, the negotiation of power in the cultural space, and the new politics of difference based on universal dignity and equality.

Interculturalism: An Underutilized Opportunity

Whereas multiculturalism was primarily concerned that majority students learned about other cultures, newer approaches seek to include all students. Developed mainly in France and Québec, intercultural education aims to create a common space, a *vivre ensemble* (McAndrew, 2004; Porcher & Abdallah-Pretceille, 1998) based on mutual understanding and recognition of similarities through dialogue. However, this conceptualization may be problematic if it is assumed that engagement is between clearly defined, homogenous cultures. To avoid such a simplistic understanding of culture, Abdallah-Pretceille (1990, cited in Portera, 2011) suggests the term *intercultural*, explaining that “the prefix *inter*- implies relations, interaction, exchange of two or more elements” (p. 20). This understanding of intercultural is more closely related with the notion of reciprocity encapsulated in Abdallah-Pretceille’s definition of *inter*, as it invokes a sense of respect and openness to change. Moreover, it ascribes to a different, less rigid definition of culture that would make notions of homogeneity impossible.

Although there are various conceptualizations of intercultural with subtle differences, at its core intercultural education involves engagement among cultures. Open, respectful dialogue among cultures, which is at the heart of intercultural education, is believed to promote cross-cultural sensitivity and increased understanding, not only about diverse cultures encountered but about one’s own and the general influence of culture on how we perceive and interact in the world. The intercultural perspective derives its foundations from the principles of liberalism and hermeneutics. Intercultural philosophy highlights the importance of understanding through intercultural dialogue; however, understanding and agreement are not synonymous. Therefore, while openness to difference and the expansion of understanding through cross-cultural dialogue is central to intercultural education, blanket acceptance of all cultural perspectives and practices is not. However, Shi-Xu (2001) argues that mainstream pedagogy of intercultural contact and communication has tended to give precedence to “accurate” cultural and linguistic information/knowledge and, as a result, “the essential power saturation of intercultural encounters” (p. 279) has been overlooked. The potential for power imbalance in intercultural education is related to symbolic power, whereby one group becomes dominated, excluded, and/or prejudiced against another.

In terms of the focus of this paper, alterity is a key concept in interculturalism. It derives from the Latin word *alter*, which means other. Other and Otherness, and, more specifically, alterity, are recurring themes in recent intercultural literature (e.g., Abdallah-Pretceille, 2004). These themes deal with the relation of Self to alterity. Although Other was used most often in the late 1990s, alterity seems to be the preferred term today. In multicultural discourse, the question of the other is primarily that of the other human being, the Other (*l’autre*, in French). The central question governing philosophical discussions of alterity is not that of who the Other is, but that of our access to alterity. Abdallah-Pretceille (2004) argues that the question of who the Other is leads to the reification of culture and should be avoided. She points out the interdependence of the concepts of self and the Other as represented by the paradox that “*l’identité de l’un exige la reconnaissance de l’Autre comme Je*” [the identity of one requires the recognition of the Other as I] (p. 42).

The distinction here is between two definitions of “other” in French: *autre* versus *autrui*. *Autre* refers to what is known as Other in the English literature, or that which is different. In schools this difference is seen as problematic and in need of redress. *Autrui* is linked not to difference but to uniqueness, as in the expression “one among many.” Whereas Other/Autre calls forth notions of outsider or difference, autrui/alterity is used to reference Otherness as a human phenomenon more generally, as opposed to being linked to cultural divisions (Ardoino, 2001).

In this view, knowledge of the Other is experienced as a process in which one needs to remain open to the perspectives of the Other as a possibility for questioning one’s own. Kramsch (1993) maintains that when engaging in a “third space” at the interstices between cultures, individuals must name and interpret the world in alternative ways, leading to novel understandings about their own culture and the culture(s) of their partner(s) in dialogue. Thus, intercultural interaction is a unique process for every individual, because the third space will be variously located depending on the context and the interpretive frame of the interactors.

When the intercultural is seen as a dialogic process rather than a product, culture is understood as a cultural frame that influences how people perceive and interact in the world while they develop the ability to operate in multiple cultural settings. Conceptualizing interculturalism as a dialogic process is both pedagogically appealing and theoretically supported. First, the dialogic conceptualization adheres to contemporary definitions of culture as plural, dynamic, and multifaceted. Second, postulating culture as a site of negotiation among interlocutors is supported by postmodern theory (Crawford & McLaren, 2003).

Despite its potential to transform education, intercultural pedagogy is not prevalent in everyday classroom practice. In the presence of a common curriculum and standardized testing practices that are becoming increasingly globalized, pedagogy “as a radical form of dialogue with the Other ... whose purpose is not to make the Other into the same but to work alongside the Other in a relationship where neither is a master and each listens to the thought of the Other” (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007, p. 41) is yet to come. To be successful, any pedagogical approach must be founded in, and supported by, the broader societal context. What suffuses intercultural pedagogy with potential for use with Roma populations (with implications for other minority populations) is that in recent years governments—both of former Communist countries and in the West—have realized that the “participation of Roma [in policy making] is essential for any kind of program to work” (Ringold, 2000, p. ix). Consultation and consensus building between government and Roma communities is a real opportunity to infuse alternative epistemologies into curricula.

As stated in the *Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion*, signed on February 2, 2005 at Sofia, Bulgaria, the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Spain pledged to work toward eliminating discrimination and closing the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society. The nations stated,

> We declare the years 2005–2015 to be the Decade of Roma Inclusion and we commit to support the full participation and involvement of national Roma communities in achieving the Decade’s objectives and to demonstrate progress by measuring outcomes and reviewing experiences in the implementation of the Decade’s Action Plans. (Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, 2012, para. 2)

Disappointingly, in the area of education, inequality persists for Romani people despite a decade aimed at Roma inclusion. A recent report on testing for school readiness practices in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovakia shows that, in spite of the adopted discourse on inclusion, the percentage of students segregated in special schools in these countries remains well above the European average. Additionally, for Romani children in Central and Eastern Europe, “a disability label generally serves to segregate them and provide them with an inferior education under the law through streaming into special education on the basis of testing prior to or in the first years of primary education” (White, 2012, p. 7). The report also points to teachers’ low expectations of students from Romani communities. These students are still presumed to have academic and social deficits and are blamed for their failure in school. In order to achieve better integration for all children, including those from Romani communities, the report suggests a number of measures, including universal access to inclusive preschool education, active parent involvement, utilization of assessments that are culturally and class relevant, and restructuring of teacher education to include courses on inclusion of students with disabilities, those considered to be gifted, and students from cultural and linguistic minority communities.

Conclusion: Where to Next?

This brief review of educational theory and practice in relation to the issues of otherness and foreignness as they relate to the education of Romani children was intended to foster what Kenny (2014) refers to as the “deep and rich understanding of [a people’s] historic and current reality” that is essential to inform the “dialogical engagement between systems and people” (p. 40) needed to create effective educational policies and programs. Our review has confirmed that there are no simple or universal approaches to resolving the issues of foreignness and Otherness. One of the main reasons for such difficulty is that the issues are always embedded in a complex matrix of historical, social, political, economic, and cultural contexts that are uniquely intertwined. However, regardless of these intricate contexts, the European philosophical tradition of perceiving the Other as “less-than” with fixed, discrete, and easily represented identities (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), which started with the ancient Greeks’ view of “barbarians” as radically different from Greeks (Todorov, 2010), has persisted even in the most well-meaning approaches to managing cultural diversity, such as multicultural and antiracist education.

Postmodernity has resulted in a substantial shift in understanding identity and culture. Identity is now understood as hybrid and can include contradictory concepts that are continually produced and reproduced in relation to shifting constellations of knowledge (e.g., racializing discourses) and power in the larger society (James, 1996; Yon, 2000). Culture is seen as “both historical (‘backward-looking’) and dynamic (‘forward-looking’),” and as able to re-form and transform itself (Shi-Xu, 2001, p. 283). These changes in understanding open up spaces for intercultural dialogue in education to allow new identities to be forged through negotiation and a new, shared culture to be created.

Radical reconstruction and democratization of education are the major tasks of new critical pedagogy. In the case of meeting the educational needs of Roma children, knowledge of the existing contradictions or discontinuities between Romani traditional ways of teaching and socializing young members of the community, and knowledge of the ways in which any child from this particular minority group learns, is not sufficient to address the issue of foreignness in educational contexts. If radical change is to occur in education, higher education institutions (in general) and teacher education programs (in particular) must actively seek students from traditionally underrepresented or marginalized cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, including those of Roma decent. These preservice teacher educators need to be actively encouraged to participate in experimental pedagogies wherein student teachers interrogate, disaggregate, and understand the forces and historical processes that have contributed to the identities they have formulated for themselves. Such praxis has the potential to position students to “self-consciously and forthrightly decide if these identities are ones that they, in full self-awareness, wish to continue to embrace, or if these identities are in need of revisions and reconstruction” (Wilgus, 2013, p. 192). Only when conditions are created for educators from traditionally underrepresented or marginalized cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, including Roma, to move from the periphery to the centre of educational praxis can the issues of foreignness and otherness be meaningfully addressed, and a theory based on such praxis be generated.

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Note

1"Gypsy" is the name given to the Roma people by outsiders who initially thought that the Roma migrated from Egypt, where Gypsy is a shortened version of "Egyptian." The preferred and more accurate name is Roma, derived from Dom, meaning a person or a human being in Sanskrit, the original language of northern India. The use of Gypsy at the beginning of the paper is related to the time the story occurred, when the term Roma was not used at all by non-Roma. For the duration of the paper, Roma and Romani will be used to acknowledge how the Roma identify themselves as well as reflect changes in terminology over time.

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