'You've got to teach people that racism is wrong and then they won't be racist': Curricular representations and young people's understandings of 'race' and racism

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This paper critically examines the discursive (mis) representation of 'race' and racism in the formal curriculum. Combining qualitative data derived from interviews with 35 young people who were enrolled in a Dublin-based, ethnically diverse secondary school, with a critical discursive analysis of 20 textbooks, the paper explores parallels between young people's understandings of 'race' and racism and curricular representations of these constructs. It is argued that the formal education system reinforces, rather than challenges, popular theories of racism, and endorses the ideological framework of colour-blind racism by providing definitions and explanations which individualize, minimize, and naturalize racism. The analysis centres around four major inter-related themes: (1) the individualization of racism; (2) the attribution of racism to difference; (3) the role of narratives of denial and redemption in the construction of an 'anti-racist' state; and (4) the reification of 'race'. The final section of the paper seeks to synthesize some of the broader political and ethical consequences and ideological effects of dominant discourses on 'race' and racism, and offers some concrete illustrations of how 'race' and racism could be re-narrativized in schools.

Keywords: racism; anti-racism; discourse analysis; curriculum; youth

This paper critically examines the discursive (mis)representation of 'race' and racism in the formal curriculum. Combining qualitative data derived from interviews with 35 lower secondary students enrolled in a Dublin-based, ethnically diverse secondary school, with a critical discursive analysis of 20 textbooks, the paper explores parallels between young people's understandings of 'race' and racism, and curricular representations of these constructs. The paper addresses one aspect of a larger critical exploration of statutory and school-based efforts to 'manage diversity' that were implemented in Irish schools and society during the 'Celtic Tiger' era—a period of unprecedented economic boom which lasted from the mid-1990s until the global economic downturn of 2008. It seeks to inform our understanding of the ways in which inter-cultural and 'anti-racist' elements of the formal curriculum are complicit with the reproduction of racism, to the extent that the racial discourses contained within instructional materials create and sustain the ideological conditions that prevent

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many whites and some minorities from recognizing—or taking action to redress——ongoing racial inequality, while giving the impression that they are tackling racism head on by addressing and condemning specific forms of racism (Forman and Lewis 2006).

The first section of the paper presents a brief overview of some of the key concepts and theoretical approaches informing the research. This is followed by an overview of the methods employed to explore representations and understandings of 'race' and racism in schools. The analysis focuses on four major inter-related themes: (1) the individualization of racism; (2) the attribution of racism to difference; (3) the role of narratives of denial and redemption in the construction of an 'anti-racist' state; and (4) the reification of 'race'. The final section of the paper seeks to synthesize some of the broader political and ethical consequences or ideological effects of dominant discourses on 'race' and racism, and offers some suggestions for how we might re-narrativize 'race' and racism in schools.

The reification of 'race'

The term 'race' became popularized during the 19th century as part of the broader pseudo-scientific project of biological racism which divided human beings according to physical differences or 'phenotype', such as skin colour and biological ancestry, to develop the theory of supposedly distinct superior and inferior human 'races'. Since the 1970s, academics and activists concerned with 'race' and racism have produced a range of sustained political, scientific, and sociological critiques refuting the belief in the existence of discrete human 'races', and the associated idea that 'race' is a scientific or biological 'fact', a reified object or 'thing' that can be measured as it were a real entity (e.g. Apple 2001, Warmington 2009). The belief that 'race' is a social construct is now so widely accepted among the anti-racism scholarly and activist communities that the pseudo-scientific claim that 'race' exists as an objective, biologistic fact has been reduced 'to something bordering occult status' (Warmington 2009: 282).

The idea that 'race' is a social construct draws attention to the idea that 'race' is a social-historical construct which was used to justify imperialistic regimes and practices, and to enable the exploitation and subordination of blacks by whites. Modern race-thinking emerged as the ideological justification for the Atlantic slave trade; in order to legitimate a system of a "racialized 'justice'", which placed slaves outside the realm of human rights, phenotypical differences were used to categorize human beings into distinct, fixed bio-cultural 'types' which were seen to be indicative of a hierarchy of racial superiority and inferiority (Warmington 2009: 285). Despite its status as a socio-historical construct lacking any kind of scientific credibility, the ongoing and pervasive effects of racial ideology are all too real, such that 'race' remains a 'persistent social fact', at the level of lived experience and social organization (Warmington 2009: 284). In other words, as Warmington (2009) reminds us, while the concept of 'race' may be unreal, its manifestations, in the form of racist practices within schools, the media, the labour market and so on are all too

real. This paper seeks to illuminate some of the ways in which the school curriculum—even those elements which purport to teach explicitly about and against racism—is saturated with racialized discourses which individualize and deny racism, falsely attribute racism to cultural difference, and reify 'race'. While this paper focuses on the recent emphasis devoted to inter-cultural education in an Irish context, the findings are reflective of a broader and persistent pattern of the (mis)representation of 'race', racism, and racialized 'Others' in school curricula, which have been documented in geographical contexts with much longer histories and official policies on multiculturalism, such as Canada, the US, and Australia (e.g. Sleeter and Grant 1991, McCarthy 1993, Rizvi 1993, Montgomery 2005). This corpus of work underscores the acute need for radical alternatives to existing multi-cultural educational strategies and content that conceive of the project in far more critical and emancipatory terms.

The banality of racism

The paper is further informed by a number of discrete yet related theoretical and analytical perspectives including: critical race theory (CRT), whiteness studies, critical multiculturalism, and anti-racist education—all of which share certain fundamental understandings of racism and how it operates in society. Each of these perspectives is highly critical of mainstream, liberal versions of multiculturalism and official multicultural policies which fail to foreground anti-racism, to problematize white identities, or to specify how racism might be alleviated though multicultural policies and practices. These perspectives also share the view that racism is a system of power and exploitation which works to advantage whites and to oppress minoritized groups on the basis of their ethnicity, culture, skin colour, etc. Unlike dominant understandings of racism which tend to recognize only obvious and crude acts of racism, those working within the critical multiculturalist, anti-racist, whiteness, and CRT traditions are equally, if not even more concerned with the subtle and hidden racialized processes which have the effect of discriminating against minorities, regardless of their stated intent (Gillborn and Youdell 2009). Education, as a social institution which plays a crucial and very direct role in determining people's life chances, is deeply implicated in the production of institutional and everyday or 'business-as usual' forms of racism which permeate school life (Delgado and Stefancic 2000: 16, cited in Gillborn and Youdell 2009). These include: ability-grouping practices in which minority students are over-represented in lower 'streams', 'tracks', or 'sets'; selection procedures which disadvantage ethnic minority students, and assessment structures which do not merely record educational inequality but actively produce it (Gillborn 2006).[1] These practices are supported by a number of ideological frameworks, such as 'colour-blind racism', which maintain that racial discrimination has all but disappeared, and deny the salience of 'race' and the pervasiveness of racism in people's everyday lives (Bonilla-Silva 2002). Those scholars who are critical of mainstream educational efforts to alleviate racism, point out that while state-sponsored

school curricula 'educate' students about racial disparities, they fail to encourage students of all racial backgrounds to critique white domination, to critically engage them with analyses of institutional racism, or to highlight the problems associated with colour-blind discourse (Leonardo 2004). This failure to interrogate the multi-dimensionality of contemporary racism and the subtleties and dynamics of white supremacy supports the illusion of meritocracy, according to which different outcomes for racially minoritized groups can be 'explained'—not by racial discrimination—but by their cultural deficiencies, such as a lack of motivation or 'ability' (Forman 2004).

This paper seeks to contribute to the literature concerned with increasingly subtle forms of contemporary racist expression in schools and society through an examination of banal manifestations of racisms as they are produced in textbooks designed for use with secondary school students. Specifically, it explores the correspondence between these subtle curricular forms of racism and the ways in which young people themselves construct and articulate ideas about 'race' and racism. This critical exploration of young people's interactions with the formal curriculum took place during an era of unprecedented economic prosperity and a corresponding dramatic increase in the numbers of migrant children attending Irish schools.[2] The next section discusses how inter-cultural education evolved as the preferred philosophical and strategic approach to the increasing diversification of Irish schools and the broader society during this period of intense socio-economic change.

'Planning for diversity'

While political leaders in countries with much longer histories of migration such as the UK, Germany, and France have recently declared that multiculturalism has 'failed' and that minoritized groups need to 'integrate' and accept dominant social, cultural, linguistic, and religious values and practices, in Ireland, the debate about multiculturalism is still very much in its infancy. The first official intercultural and anti-racist strategies or policy documents did not come into existence in Ireland until 2005. As a relatively poor peripheral European country with a history of strong and sustained emigration, limited employment opportunities, and no traditional colonial ties to core economies, immigration and multiculturalism had been largely absent from the Irish political and educational agenda. The trend of immigration that accompanied the Celtic Tiger economy—the largest economic boom ever experienced in the history of the Irish State, which lasted from the mid-1990s until the global economic downturn of 2008—resulted in a newfound emphasis on issues related to cultural diversity and interculturalism, as well as rising levels of public concern about, and negative sentiment towards, migrants in Ireland (Garner 2004, Hughes et al. 2007).

In January 2005, the Irish Government launched its first ever National Action Plan Against Racism titled Planning for Diversity (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2005).[3] In the same year, the National

Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)—a statutory body with responsibility for advising the Minister for Education on curriculum and assessment issues—produced intercultural education guidelines for schools, which offered suggestions on how the existing curriculum could be 'mediated' and 'adapted' 'to reflect the emergence of a more culturally diverse society in Ireland' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2005: 110). Intercultural education is defined as a 'synthesis of the learning from multicultural and anti-racist education approaches that were commonly used internationally from the 1960s to the 1990s' (NCCA 2005: 6), but is explicitly identified as being distinct from, and preferable to, multicultural education. Whereas multiculturalism is seen to be concerned with celebrating diversity and promoting positive interaction between different cultures, inter-cultural education is seen to have a more explicitly transformationist agenda that seeks to overcome racial inequalities (NCCA 2005).[4] The inter-cultural guidelines define inter-cultural education as 'education that respects, celebrates, and recognizes the normality of diversity in all aspects of human life, promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination, and provides the values upon which equality is built' (NCCA 2005: 169). Specifically, it is argued that intercultural education can 'help to prevent racism' by enabling students to develop 'positive emotional responses to diversity and an empathy with those discriminated against', and by enabling them to 'recognize and challenge discrimination and prejudice where they exist' (NCCA 2005: 21).

In practice, superficial attempts to 'recognize' and 'celebrate' diversity—reflective of what Troyna and Williams (1986: 24) described as the 'three S's' (saris, samosas, and steel bands) approach—have thus far been the dominant response to diversity in Irish schools. Moreover, the inter-cultural guidelines are reflective of a benign form of multiculturalism, with an associated emphasis on 'content integration' (Banks 1981) which has been heavily criticized for its idealistic and naïve focus on culture and the need to recognize difference at the expense of broader structural and material concerns (May 2009). The problems associated with this 'add diversity and stir' logic as it has been applied in other countries have been well documented (e.g. Mohanty 2003, Roman 2003).[5] This paper seeks to augment these critical perspectives by problematizing specific representations of 'race' and racism within the curriculum and their relationship to young people's own understandings of these issues. Identifying parallels between young people's understandings of 'race' and racism—and how racism is articulated within the formal curriculum—I seek to demonstrate how the formal education system reinforces, rather than challenges, popular theories of racism, and endorses the ideological framework of colour-blind racism through definitions and explanations which individualize, minimize, and naturalize racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006).

While suggesting that the curriculum is implicated in the persistence of racial inequality, it is not my intention to imply a simplistic cause and effect argument that young people's understandings of racism are derived solely from what they learn in school textbooks. As Rizvi (1993) maintains, by the time children enter school, at age 4 or 5, they are

already familiar with, and engaged in, certain ideological practices of popular racism; nor do these 'common-sense' understandings of race or racism necessarily rely on institutional support for their continuation. Yet, while neither textbooks nor the curriculum in and of themselves determine what is taught and learned in and through schools, the dominance of textbooks and their presence in the curriculum and classroom practice endows them with what Rizvi (1993) terms an effective steering capacity which steers readers towards certain interpretations, while steering them away from others. Thus, the curriculum—and the textbook as the major conduit of this curriculum—'screens in and out' certain ideas and realms of knowledge, providing selective access to ideas and information which predispose students to think, act, and imagine themselves and others in certain ways, while foreclosing other ways of thinking, imagining, being, or acting (Sleeter and Grant 1991: 75). Sleeter and Grant (1991: 97) express the significance of textbooks, and their relationship to students' attitudes, understandings, and actions as follows:

> Many students may internalize what they are taught in textbooks, although others may marginalize it within their own thinking or reject it outright. But even if students forget, ignore, or reject what they encounter in textbooks, textbook content is still important because it withholds, obscures, and renders unimportant many ideas and areas of knowledge.

Drawing on these theoretical arguments about the screening and steering capacity of textbooks, and of the relationship between curricular knowledge, power, and action, offered by scholars such as Anyon (1978), Rizvi (1993), and Sleeter and Grant (1991), I seek to demonstrate the ways in which dominant understandings of 'race' and racism presented in the Irish curriculum preclude the kinds of analyses which are required to effectively redress racism in all of its forms—subtle or otherwise—within the context of a racialized social system (Bonilla-Silva 1997).

Methodology

This paper draws upon a larger, qualitative critical ethnographic case study of a large, ethnically diverse secondary school located in a middle class suburb of Dublin called Blossom Hill College (BHC), and its efforts to implement a policy of 'positive inter-culturalism'.[6] The school is situated within one of the most densely populated immigrant 'postcodes' or 'zip codes' in Ireland, and has been characterized by rapid urban expansion as well as social and cultural transformation. BHC was chosen as a research site because it has been identified as a model of best practice where issues of inter-culturalism, inclusivity, and equality are concerned.[7] At the time of the research, approximately 10% of the student body was characterized as 'international', a term which reflected a policy decision taken by the school administration to emphasize the extent to which 'international students are seen as a positive part of Blossom Hill'. The term international was deemed preferable over the term 'non-national', which is the expression often applied to migrants in the media, as well as

in political and public discourse. BHC's location, combined with its 'best practice' status, make it a useful case study from which to examine the philosophy and practices of inter-cultural education in Irish schools.[8]

While the larger study comprised an analysis of national anti-racism and inter-cultural policy documents and instructional resources, as well as observations of school events, classroom lessons, and interviews with school personnel, the present paper focuses exclusively on data derived from in-depth and small group interviews with 35 lower-secondary students from BHC (who ranged in age from 12–16 years), 20 of whom were 'international students' or migrants.[9] While only 10% of the overall study body was classified as 'international' by the school administration, 'international' students were 'over-represented' in the study because understanding the lived experiences of students of migrant origin was a central focus of the research. Informants were chosen primarily on the basis of their willingness to participate in the study. Because I did not have access to an interpreter, only those 'international' students with sufficient proficiency in English were asked to take part in the research. In addition to those 'international' students whom I got to know through the Language Support Department, where I volunteered as an English language tutor 1 day per week, I also approached specific students I had observed in class to ask them if they would be willing to be interviewed, in an effort to obtain a cross-section of perspectives and participants.

Separate, but overlapping interview protocols were designed for racialized majority and minority students, covering a range of topics, including: the meanings that students and teachers ascribed to Irish national identity; to 'race', racism, and anti-racism; their views on the curriculum and its treatment of cultural diversity; their perceptions of the extent to which racism existed at their school; the forms that it took and their experiences of it, and their impressions of intercultural practices at BHC.[10] This was juxtaposed with a discourse analysis of textbooks used by the participating students to examine the relationship between young people's understandings of 'race', racism, and diversity and curricular representations of these issues, by relating students own articulations with those to which they are exposed in school texts.[11] In other words, while the curriculum analysis does not comprise an exhaustive analysis of the junior certificate syllabus, its purpose was to provide illustrative discursive data from those academic subjects which have been identified as lending themselves directly to a consideration of issues pertaining to inter-culturalism.[12] A total of 20 textbooks were subjected to critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995); deconstructing those elements of the texts that explicitly or implicitly addressed issues pertaining to racism, anti-racism, or inter-culturalism, I identified rhetorical strategies and semantic patterns that were employed in the mobilization of particular understandings of inter-culturalism and its articulation with the Irish nation. In so doing, 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).

In the interests of manageability, the analysis of curriculum materials was bounded by a consideration of only five 'junior certificate' subjects: English (six texts), History (one text), Geography (one text), Religious Education (RE) (four texts), and Civic, Social, and Political Education (CPSE) (six texts). Moreover, because the expressed aims of CSPE are so closely aligned with the goals of inter-cultural education, I elected to analyse all six CSPE textbooks that were in print at the time, as well as a number of supplementary CSPE resources with an explicit focus on issues of cultural diversity. The textual analysis of other subject areas was more selective and strategic, focusing only on those required textbooks used by students attending BHC whose classes I observed or interacted with. While the analysis therefore cannot be seen to be representative of the entire corpus of textbooks in use within the school system, textbooks published by all of the major textbook publishers were included in the selection of texts examined. Notwithstanding the presence of inconsistences, contradictions, and exceptions, within and between different texts, commonalities observed across different publishers and subject areas, and the degree to which they mirror official and public discourse on inter-culturalism (see Bryan 2009 a, b), suggest that there exist dominant 'storylines' about diversity in Ireland, which are not merely semantic, but also pragmatic (Parker 2010). Data analysis of both interview and documentary data was informed by a series of analytic questions such as: what vision of the Irish nation is intoned in these discourses? What meanings of inter-culturalism are invoked? To what extent does the privileging of one meaning attached to a particular concept or idea serve to silence or suppress other interpretations? Triangulation techniques, which identified points of connection or discrepancy between the curricular documents and student interviews, were employed to facilitate a comparative analysis of textual and interview data. The next section identifies four discrete, yet overlapping discursive elements of the formal curriculum which are reflective of, and which endorse, the ideological framework of colour-blind racism, and its associated individualization, minimization, and naturalization of racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006).

Analysis

The individualization of racism

As articulated by Doane (1996: 38), racism is a 'contested concept', and different definitions and interpretations of this concept have a range of different discursive as well as material consequences. As outlined above, the theorization of racism adopted here draws from CRT and related fields which conceptualize racism as a pernicious and multi-faceted system of power and dominance which exists to secure and protect the privileged status of whites in societies that allocate differential economic, political, social, and even psychological rewards to groups along (socially con-

structed) racial lines (Bonilla-Silva 1997). Racism can be exhibited through extreme, obvious acts of violence or discrimination, or it can take more subtle forms, rooted in colour-blind ideology, racial apathy, or 'business-as-usual' forms of racism which have racist consequences, even if this is not their intent. Despite its multi-facetedness, racism was almost always narrowly defined in school texts as a set of ideas or beliefs, and was associated with prejudicial attitudes and/or beliefs of superiority which may cause individuals to discriminate against racialized minorities (Bonilla-Silva 1997). Definitions of racism which located it within a discrimination framework were also common in the texts I examined, as were those which emphasized ideologies of racial superiority and inferiority and overt racial practices and blatant displays of racism. CSPE text Impact! (Barrett and Richardson 2003: 182), for example, defines racism as a form of discrimination faced by ethnic minority groups, which is 'based on the false belief that some "races" are superior to others', while History text, The Past Today (Lucey 2002: 352)—in a section on fascism and World War II—defines racism as 'the belief that some races are superior to others'. Similarly, many of the students I interviewed at BHC defined and discussed racism in terms of discrimination based in beliefs of racial superiority/inferiority:

> AB: If I was to ask you to describe racism or define racism, what would you say?

> Ana: Hate. That is the first thing that comes in your head. Hate. If you were to ask any of the people, well at least any of my friends, they would just go 'hate' and thinking you're the best, this kind of stuff. That is the way I see it! (Ana, female, 14, white, Romanian, individual interview)

> Racism? Hmm, pretty much not treating anyone equal. Discrimination against sex, age, or whatever you want. Particularly skin colour, you know. (Milan, male, 15, white, Bosnian, Muslim, individual interview)

Young people's descriptions of racism were generally highly reflective of broader curricular silences about the social and systemic nature of racism or the structured nature of white advantages (Bonilla-Silva 1997, Roman and Stanley 1997). Mirroring how racism was portrayed in their school texts, participants typically attributed racism in society to individual ignorance, a lack of appreciation or awareness of other cultures, or as a natural response to perceived or inherent difference.

> Yeah, like people only started coming in to Ireland as immigrants in the last [decade] since the Celtic Tiger. And Britain and America have had them for decades, you know. And a lot of people are coming in, so immigrants are blended into their society already well long before us so, we're still getting used to that. (Michael, male, 16, white, Irish-born, Catholic, focus group)[13]

> Well if the person doesn't know about that say if they are from, I don't know, Bosnia, and if they don't know about what the culture is in Bosnia, they probably think they are different or they don't appreciate their culture

bly like understand them more or whatever. (Karen, female, 14, white, Irish-born, Catholic, focus group)

Consistent with the ideological framework of colour-blind racism, textbooks advanced restrictive understandings of racist behaviour which reduced it to individual, easily identifiably racist acts:

Racist behaviour can take many forms. For example:

Leaving a person out or snubbing them because of their race, colour, national or ethnic origins.

Making jokes or hurtful remarks or insults about a person.

Physically hurting or threatening a person. (Barrett and Richardson 2003: 182)

In a section marked 'racism' in CSPE text, Connected 2 (deBurca and Jeffers 1999: 125–126), a Ugandan woman—Jumaa Aupai—who had lived in a 'friendly and welcoming' Ireland in the 1980s, describes her experiences as a tourist there over a decade later.

On city streets, we were pushed. People said things like, 'Why don't you go back to where you came from?' or 'Dirty nigger' and 'Lazy spongers'. In a shop, we waited to be served while 'white' people who had come in later than us were attended to. At the airport, we were questioned about … how long we would be staying. I did not notice any 'white' people being stopped. (deBurca and Jeffers 1999: 126)

The narrative continues with an explanation for the 'change in attitude' towards Jumaa which attributes the growth in racism to the 'great increase' in the 'number of immigrants' and the 'problem' of illegal immigration into Ireland in recent years.

My friends explained that the number of immigrants had increased greatly in the previous few years and that there was a problem with people entering the country illegally. That certainly explained the change in attitude but I still felt very sad. (deBurca and Jeffers 1999: 126)

The portrayal of racism as an individual phenomenon which takes the form of overt discriminatory practices on the part of 'prejudiced' people who believe themselves to be superior to other 'races', or as a response to 'illegal' immigrants, precludes any analysis of structural racism, because it locates it within individuals, not social institutions (Bonilla-Silva 1997). On the other hand, theorizations of racism which emphasize its structural basis suggest that racism is not confined to the realm of individual prejudicial attitudes or practices, but also resides in social structures that systematically disadvantage certain groups of people on the basis of their 'race' (Rizvi 1993). The individualized analytic framework does not lend itself to a consideration of the privileges whiteness bestows upon whites themselves, and how this impacts negatively on those who are racialized as other than white (McIntosh 1990, Garner 2007). Whiteness scholars contend that discourses on 'race' and anti-racism cannot be divorced from

a consideration of white identities and white privilege, states of being which are rendered invisible through the very 'anti-racist' discourses which document the disadvantages of those who are racialized as Other. In fact, in most of the descriptions of racism supplied in school texts, the agents of racial discrimination are not named, with one text, for example, describing 'racists' as members of 'the group to which the racist belongs' (Boyle and Boyle 2005: 296). This failure to name the agents and benefi- ciaries of racism arguably promotes a universalist view of racism—the position that anyone can be racist—which implies that whites can just as easily be victims of racism. As argued by Doane (2006: 269), 'the claim that racism is universal … removes from whites the burden of responsibil- ity for past and present racism and even enables assertions of white vic- timisation'. This universalist perspective fits very neatly with the view that racism is merely a matter of individual hatred, stereotyping or unequal treatment (Doane 2006).

Recognition of the structural dimensions of racism is further pre- cluded by curricular accounts which present racism as antithetical to the Irish nation and which attribute negative reactions to 'newcomers', to 'fear of strangers or lack of understanding of others'.

> There are over 160 different nationalities living in Ireland. Ireland has undergone many changes in recent years. Our society is now a multicultural society. Irish people have always been known for their generosity and their friendly and welcoming spirit. Fear of strangers or lack of understanding of others could spoil this spirit. (Barrett and Richardson 2003: 182)

This account of Ireland's 'newfound' multiculturalism suggests that rac- ism can be attributed to individual psychological factors, based in fear or lack of understanding of other cultures, customs, and norms. Describing Ireland as only having recently become multicultural presumes cultural homogeneity as the norm in Irish society. This has the effect of abnormal- izing diversity—by proclaiming it as a new and aberrant phenomenon, and therefore implying that it is something which is at once unusual and alien to the Irish nation (Bryan 2008). Furthermore, the frequent association of racism with Ireland's 'newfound' multicultural status lends credence to the erroneous idea that racism is somehow the product of contemporary migration trends (Lentin 2002a). For example, New Complete Geography (Hayes 2003) attributes an increase in racially-motivated crime in major cities to the recent arrival of asylum seekers and 'other non-nationals'.

> Racially-motivated crime has been on the increase in our major cities. Igno- rance of and racist attitudes towards asylum seekers and other non-nation- als have been largely responsible for such crime. (Hayes 2003: 266)

Young people's own descriptions of racist practices, like those in text- books, tended to focus almost exclusively on individual racist acts, such as name-calling, snubbing, or avoiding someone on the basis of putative phenotypical or cultural differences.

> Discrimination, what religion, and what country you were born in as well, like verbal (pauses), like even crossing the road, like if there is another per-

son you don't like, you cross the road. (Kris, male, 14, white, Albanian, individual interview)

[Racism is] like white people think they're the best. And whoever they see … no offense, but they see black or brown people they're like calling them names or slagging [teasing] them and stuff. (Amel, female, 13, Muslim, Pakistani, individual interview)

Racism is like you are different to most of the other people. Like you are a different colour, nationality, and they annoy you about it. (Muhammad, male, 12, Pakistani, Muslim, individual interview)

On one level, it is understandable that students, particularly those who are racialized as other than white who have themselves experienced or witnessed overt or blatant displays of racism, such as name-calling or 'slagging' (teasing or mocking), etc., would express racism in these terms when asked to define or describe it.[14] However, the absence of alternative understandings of racism within the formal curriculum itself means young people will be far less likely to develop more dynamic and complex understandings of racism—let alone to challenge its more subtle, yet equally or in some respects arguably even more damaging forms. For example, lacking in both curriculum resources and student accounts are more subtle manifestations of racism such as racial apathy or indifference (Forman 2004). Racial apathy—which comprises indifference towards, or lack of engagement with, issues of racial and social inequality—has been identified as the form of racism in contemporary societies that is most responsible, in cumulative terms, for the endurance of racial inequality, because it endorses tacit acceptance of the racial status quo and prevents whites from acknowledging their own complicity with this system or acknowledging the need to take any kind of effective action against it (Wachtel 1999, cited in Forman 2004). Rather, the kinds of 'anti-racist' actions which are encouraged via the formal curriculum are typically undergirded by a logic which restricts the nature and causes of racism solely to the realm of individual ignorance and misunderstanding, and which pre-supposes that contact between members of different groups will result in a reduction of prejudice between these groups and an increase in positive and tolerant attitudes.

'What can you do about racism?' Anti-racism in the curriculum

'Ten point codes' specifying what people can do to 'stop racism', including such simplistic solutions as 'teach[ing] children to respect different cultures', 'looking for opportunities to establish and strengthen your personal ties with local ethnic, religious and cultural minorities', and 'extending a hand of friendship to persons of different cultural backgrounds' featured in a number of the textbooks I analysed (Barrett and Richardson 2003: 183). These models of anti-racism, which target culturally dominant groups, perceive racism as a problem of ignorance or of not knowing any ethnic minorities, such that getting to know ethnic minorities will presumably lead to the understanding that 'they' are just like 'us' and will

result in an end to racial discrimination. Young people's perceptions about what can be done to ameliorate racism in society were highly reflective of the kinds of anti-racist 'solutions' proposed in school texts and within their own school environment.[15]

> If everybody gets a chance to talk to the different people from different backgrounds and nationalities they would get a better understanding and they might get used to them. (Jason, 15, male, white, Irish-born, Catholic, focus group)

> [Anti-racism] is about teaching people what is right and what is wrong. You've got to teach people that racism is wrong and then they won't be racist. (Michael, 15, male, white, Irish-born, Catholic, individual interview)

> I think nowadays you learn … you kind of pick up on things. Like you learn that being racist is wrong. It's just like people probably learned back then that being racist is okay so that is what they think is right because they learned … they were told that, told that was right you know. So we are told that it is wrong now. (Laura, 14, female, white, Irish-born, Catholic, focus group)

Once again, these perceptions are consistent with the perception of racism as a problem of individual attitudes and behaviour, the logical consequence of which is to combat racism by 'educating' people to be more tolerant of difference.

Worrying about the nation

Hage (2003) contends that with the intensification of global capitalism and neo-liberalism, worrying about, i.e., being fearful about the fate of the nation, has become the dominant cultural form of relating to, and expressing one's belonging to, the nation. Hage (2003) relates this mode of relating to the nation to global capitalism's failure to distribute societal hope, or a sense of the possibilities that life has to offer. As hope increasingly disappears and material and psychological insecurity intensify for large sections of the population, resentment builds toward anyone perceived to being 'cared for' by the nation, such as asylum seekers and refugees. In this vein, a number of young people who participated in the study expressed racism—less as the product of individual ignorance or lack of understanding—but rather in terms of a broader nationalistic concern about the future of the nation or its 'own' inhabitants, including questions about who can legitimately claim ownership of, or belonging to, the nation. These accounts, which often implied that it was reasonable or understandable to hold negative beliefs about migrants, or positioned migrants as posing a threat to 'our country's' resources, jobs, cultural traditions, or independence, are reflective of the complex emotional investments and anxieties that often shape individuals' reactions to migration. Milan (who was born in Bosnia but who has been living in Ireland most of his life) recalls a classroom-based discussion which took place earlier that day:

> Well we only started it [in English class] today but we are learning about how people immigrate to Ireland and like every single year more and more people are doing that and it's kind of clogging up the population because there isn't really that many jobs in Ireland or even accommodation for people. (Milan, male, 15, white, Bosnian, Muslim, individual interview).

Whereas Milan's description of what his class were 'learning about' that day implicitly positions those who are 'clogging up the population' as a perceived threat to jobs or housing for 'native Irish', Paula and Caoimhe, two white, Irish-born Catholic students, frame their comments more explicitly in terms of propriety—a sense of ownership over the nation ('people coming into our country')—and defence of territory which was hard won ('people fought hard'). Paula somewhat hesitantly and self-consciously offered the following 'explanation' for the existence of racism in present-day Ireland:

> But I think it is also because we really had to fight, not we … .[hesitating] … no that sounds … I mean when they got their independence, people fought hard to do that and they don't want to lose it again, if you know what I mean. (Paula, 14, female, white, Irish-born, Catholic, focus group).

The notion of Irish cultural authenticity is central to Paula's analysis, such that the mere presence of 'Others' is seen to pose a threat to national sovereignty and the integrity of the homeland. Paula's comments are rooted in a perception of Irishness as culturally homogenous—an understanding which was consciously forged as part of the active process of nation building and the political project of Irish nationalism that was embarked upon following Ireland's independence from Britain in the 1920s (see McVeigh and Lentin 2002, Loyal 2003, Connolly 2006). This process, which was built upon a strong rural idyll, was also inevitably exclusionary, constructing Irishness as an homogenous entity that was essentially Catholic, white, and nationalistic (MacLaughlin 1999, McVeigh and Lentin 2002, Connolly 2006). Following centuries of colonial domination during which time Catholicism was suppressed and subordinated, Catholicism emerged as a defining feature of Irishness in the post-independence era, an identification which was solidified with the 1937 constitution. As Irish national identity was equated with Catholicism, non-Catholicism became a fundamental marker of Otherness, such that Irish non-Catholics came to be viewed as not fully or not really Irish. Both Catholicism and whiteness, therefore, became and continue to be integral to Irish nationalism and key markers of Irishness, such that the presence of non-white or non-Catholic minority ethnic groups poses a fundamental threat to this racialized sense of identity (Connolly 2006).

Caoimhe's explanation for the existence of racism articulates the common misperception that 'foreign people' are given unfair advantages, such as being granted housing and 'free stuff', and alludes to feelings of resentment about losing out in the struggle for these resources (Troyna and Hatcher 1992, Garner 2007).

> Things need to be more level for everyone. Because a lot of racism is there because people see foreign people coming into our country. They say 'it's

our country' and they feel that they get free stuff. And they say 'why should we have homeless and they are giving these people houses and stuff?' I think because of that there is a bit of resentment for it, so if things like that keep happening then, it will always be here, you know. (Caoimhe, 15, female, white, Irish-born, Catholic, focus group)

Caoimhe's articulation of the 'we should look after our own first' justification for a negative attitude towards racialized minorities involves the use of a diminutive to describe reactions towards migrants ('a bit of resentment' towards 'foreign people') which is characteristic of the specific linguistic codes and rhetorical strategies or 'style' of the ideology of colour-blind racism. As Bonilla-Silva (2002: 61) explains, diminutives are often used by whites as 'racial shock absorbers' to cushion their views or 'soften the blow' of negative sentiment towards minorities. Caoimhe's explanation of negative public reaction towards non-Christian minorities became more justificatory in tone as the interview progressed, evoking a defence of territory argument when describing some people's negative reaction to 'assertive' minorities who are purportedly 'taking over':

And even in hospitals they [non-Christian minorities] don't want [Christian religious symbols] and stuff. And a lot of people that are Catholic […] would feel kind of annoyed that someone is just coming in and just kind of taking over. (Caoimhe, 15, female, white, Irish-born, Catholic, focus group)

Once again, Ireland is perceived as a culturally homogenous, Catholic country (in that non-Catholics are portrayed as 'coming in', not already 'here') whose cultural traditions and symbols are under threat by a 'they' who are perceived to be 'taking over'. The difficulty with explanations of this nature is that they locate the responsibility for racism with those individuals whose presence or behaviours (e.g. allegedly questioning the presence of religious symbols within public hospitals) somehow disrupts this perceived cultural homogeneity and implies that such racism would be less likely to exist if only minorities would 'keep quiet' and assimilate better into Irish society by committing themselves to a uniform set of social and cultural values.

The attribution of racism to difference

The attribution of racism to difference (variously presented as perceived or actual) is another common feature of curricular discourses on cultural diversity, and also featured prominently in a number of the students' accounts of racism, as illustrated by the following examples:

Laura: [Racism is] Discriminating against someone because of their race.

AB: Because of their race?

Laura: Because maybe they are different, they are not in the majority, they are in the minority. (Laura, 14, female, white, Irish-born, Catholic, focus group)

> I think people feel inferior to people from other countries just because they are not used to them, so maybe they might like act out on them because they are different. (Jason, 15, male, white, Irish-born, Catholic, individual interview)

> Racism is like you are different to most of the other people. Like you are a different colour, nationality, and they annoy you about it. (Muhammad, 12, male, Pakistani, Muslim, focus group).

The curricular tendency to 'explain' racism in terms of difference is perhaps best illustrated with reference to the representation of Judaism in textbooks. The historical persecution of Jews, which is a prominent feature of the discourse on Judaism in RE texts, is typically explained in terms of Jews' difference, embodied in 'religious practices' which 'set them apart' from 'other' religious groups. Exploring Faith (Goan and Ryan 2004) offers the following explanation of anti-Semitism:

> Since their religious practices, such as strict observance of the Sabbath and kosher food laws, set them apart from other peoples, the Jews of the Diaspora often encountered intolerance and suspicion. With the passage of time and particularly around the period of the Crusades (eleventh to thirteenth centuries), Jews were persecuted throughout Europe. Many Christian preachers used the occasion of the Crusades to blame the Jews for the death of Jesus, and violence against them became widespread. (Goan and Ryan 2004: 173)

Similarly, The New Religion for Living Series, Book 2 (Duffy 2004: 93), contains a chapter on the Holocaust, which seeks to demonstrate 'how the Jews paid a huge price for their commitment to their faith'. This text also explains persecution against Jews as an inevitable result of their perceived intractable cultural or religious differences.

> Like people of all religions, the Jews have certain beliefs and customs that are different to everyone else. Yet the Jews have been severely persecuted because of their difference. (…) Down the centuries, people of other religions such as Christians and Muslims did not always understand the Jews. Sometimes people can be afraid of what they do not understand. (Duffy 2004: 93, emphasis added)

These accounts—which explain anti-Semitism in terms of a failure to 'understand the Jews'—underscore 'their difference' as the cause of the racist persecution to which they were subjected. Once again, the underlying message is that racism can be attributed to individual psychological factors, based on a lack of understanding, or ignorance, of other cultures, customs, and norms; it also implies that there is something about minoritized groups themselves which provides the basis for the racially-motivated persecution to which they are subjected (i.e. in this instance their difference from 'everyone else'). This explanatory framework, which implies that it was the culture or ethnicity of Jewish people which determined racialized hostility against them, leaves little, if any room for young people to consider the role of broader socio-cultural arrangements in determining racism (Hall 2000).

Even when the material conditions which precipitated the Holocaust are highlighted, individualized accounts which privilege 'ignorance of the Jewish way of life' continue to underscore the erroneous belief that 'their' difference is the basis for what befell Jews under the Nazi regime.

> However it has happened that certain groups have used people's ignorance of the Jewish way of life for their own ends.

> The worst persecution of the Jews took place in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s under the Nazis. Germany had lost the First World War (1914–1918). There was a lot of poverty and unemployment in the years that followed. Adolf Hitler was the Nazi leader in Germany at the time. He singled out the Jews and blamed them for all the problems in the country. They were made a scapegoat. (Duffy 2004: 93)

Lacking from any of the accounts of Jewish persecution is any attempt to explicate or theorize anti-Semitism within a culturalist racism framework (Balibar 1991), which would provide opportunities for young people to engage with more nuanced and complex understandings of racism beyond the biological and 'race' based understandings that are commonly advanced in school texts. Cultural racism is a theory of 'racism without races' (Balibar 1991: 21) which performs the same ideological work as biological racism, the pseudo-scientific theory which posited the existence of discrete biological 'races' and the superiority of 'races' which was popularized during the 19th century, but which justifies the subjugation of certain 'cultural' groups, not on the basis of their 'race' per se, but rather in terms of their lifestyles, traditions, tastes, clothing, values, religious practices, etc.[16] In other words, culturalist racism is a process of Othering that constructs perceived cultural or religious difference as natural and immutable and is an important analytical tool in illuminating the ways in which religious identity can be a key determinant of racial inferiority. To the extent that the textbooks banally reinforce the idea that these cultural differences are immutable and are themselves the cause of ethnicized or racialized Others' discrimination, they can be seen to be complicit in the reproduction of the logic of cultural racism.

Narratives of denial and redemption and the construction of an 'anti-racist' state

While, according to New Religion for Living, 'the worst persecution of the Jews' is said to have taken place in Europe, under the Nazi regime, anti-Semitism and racist violence against Irish Jews is presented as an exceptional event or occurrence in the curriculum. Indeed, the idea that Jews have 'fared quite well' in Ireland is a central feature of the discourse. For example, Exploring Faith (Goan and Ryan 2004: 177) states that:

> It is believed that the first Jews came to Ireland in 1079. They were probably merchants from France. In 1496, when Jews were being expelled from Portugal, some of them arrived on the south coast. They seem to have fared

quite well in the area, as in 1555 Youghal became the first Irish city to have a Jewish Lord Mayor.

In addition to homogenizing Jews' experiences on the Southern coast of Ireland, the discourse of the 'successful minority' serves a dual function of demonstrating that structural barriers for racialized minorities don't really exist in Irish society, or that they can be easily overcome, and of depicting the Irish national space as one that is largely antithetical to racism. In other words, it lays the basis for denying the existence of racism in Ireland and gives the impression that anti-Semitism and racism more generally is an issue 'over there' as opposed to 'here' (Roman and Stanley 1997, Montgomery 2005). This flies in the face of a wealth of anecdotal and empirical evidence which points to the 'normality' and acceptability of anti-Semitism in Irish society and contradicts the view that 'Irishness never quite absorbs or recognizes Jewishness as intrinsic to what it means to be Irish' (Lentin and McVeigh 2006: 125). Lentin and McVeigh suggest that anti-Semitism was a prominent discourse during the national pre-State movement. They maintain the Irish State was, in fact, born out of racism and anti-Semitism. For example, Arthur Griffith, one of the 'founding fathers' of the Irish Free State, described 'the Jews of Ireland' [as] 'usurers and parasites of industries' and 'in every respect an economic evil' at the time of the Limerick pogrom of 1902 (see below) (Griffith 1904, cited in Keogh 1998: 42).

Conspicuous by its absence was any acknowledgement of those Jews who sought refuge in Ireland during the Second World War but who were refused entry. In an account of the declining Jewish population of Ireland, Exploring Faith refers to the fact that 'only a handful of Jews 'came' [to Ireland] during and after the Second World War (Goan and Ryan 2004: 177, emphasis added), conveniently neglecting to mention that the reason why so few Jews 'came' to Ireland was because the Irish government actively refused to allow more than a 'handful' to seek refuge there (Lentin 2002b).[17] While the curriculum demonstrates cultural amnesia in relation to the Government's blatantly racist and inhumanitarian treatment of Jewish refugees during and after the war, a wholly benevolent representation of the nation is advanced in relation to non-Jewish refugees during this time. Casting the Irish nation and its citizenry within a frame of benevolence and altruism precludes consideration of the newly formed nation-state's obstructive practices and racist response to the plight of Jews who were starving and dying in Europe at the time. English textbook Chrysalis (Nolan 2007: 171), for example, presents the short story of 'Hans', a young German boy who was 'brought to Ireland from war-torn Germany' as a refugee under 'Operation Shamrock' which had 'the full support of the Irish government of the time'.[18] Meanwhile, the preface to the short story about Hans' experience in Ireland informs students that 'some of the children remained in Ireland and became Irish citizens through their "adopted" families'. This story is in stark contrast to the unreported story of 100 orphaned Jewish children who had survived Bergen Belsen concentration camp who were initially refused entry as refugees in Ireland by the then Minister for Justice, Gerry Boland, on the

grounds that an increase in the Jewish population would give rise to anti-Semitism in Ireland. These children were eventually granted permission to enter the country on the proviso that they would be removed elsewhere as soon as arrangements could be made.[19]

Further misrepresentation of the Jewish experience in Ireland is evident in another section of Exploring Faith on 'anti-Semitism in Ireland', where readers learn that:

> With one notable exception, the experience of Jews in Ireland has been quite positive. The exception is known as the Limerick Pogrom. This began in 1902 and was led by a priest in the city of Limerick whose name was Fr. John Creagh.
>
> Many of the Jews who had come from Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century had settled in Limerick. Some local traders became jealous of their success in business, and called on Fr. Creagh to do something. He began to preach sermons accusing the Jews of all kinds of crimes and urging local Christians to boycott their businesses. This went on for a period of 2 years, during which time many Jews in Limerick experienced beatings, abuse and intimidation. By 1904, the majority of Jews had left the city. (Goan and Ryan, 2004: 177–178)

Temporal containment strategies are deployed to present anti-Semitism in Ireland as an isolated, anomalous incident—a 'notable exception' which happened at the turn of the 20th century. Hence anti-Semitism in Ireland is represented as an aberration of the past, and therefore no longer a significant social problem in contemporary Irish society (Roman and Stanley 1997).

Another notable feature of the way in which the Pogrom is represented is the deployment of a redemptive nationalistic narrative, which has the effect of alleviating the sense of shame that the national 'we' might feel due to the behaviour of 'some local traders', 'local Christians', and 'Fr. Creagh'.

> At the time not everyone supported this anti-Semitic behaviour. The famous Irish patriot Michael Davitt, one of the founders of the Land League, objected to it:
>
> I protest as an Irishman and as a Christian, against this spirit of barbarous malignity being introduced into Ireland ... The Jews have never done any injury to Ireland. Like our own race they have endured a persecution, the records of which will forever remain a reproach to the Christian nations of Europe. (Goan and Ryan 2004: 178, emphasis added)

The story of the Limerick Pogrom is thus concluded with a redemptive narrativization of the nation, symbolized by Michael Davitt, a 'famous Irish patriot' no less, whose nationalist rhetoric ('I protest as an Irishman') helps to distance the Irish nation, as represented by Davitt, from the anti-Semitism of its ordinary citizens. That other prominent nationalist figures were instrumental in fuelling the anti-Semitism of the Pogrom is conveniently overlooked in this text.[20] Rather, these strategies of denial and redemption help to promote a 'rotten apple' theory of racism

(Henriques 1984), which paints racism as a set of beliefs and practices perpetrated by a few isolated individuals (such as Fr. Creagh) whose actions can then be broadly condemned by the remainder of the country's moral and upstanding citizens and political figures. Furthermore, Davitt's rhetoric is notable in that it conflates both Irishness and Jewishness with 'race', thereby aiding the persistence of race-thinking ('Like our own race they have endured a persecution'), i.e. of designating Irish and Jewish people as belonging to distinct racial groups. More importantly, however, this statement constructs Jews as not Irish, thereby lending support to Lentin and McVeigh's assertion that Jews are never really or fully recognized or accepted as Irish.

The reification of 'race'

Despite the fact that theories of biological racism and the associated idea of race-thinking, which maintains that every individual could be categorized according to one of a number of discrete 'races' are now widely discredited, existing research suggests that contemporary curriculum materials can contribute to a fundamental misunderstanding of 'race', to the extent that they neglect to convey the notion of 'race' as a social construction that exists only because of human ideas, beliefs, and practices (e.g. Montgomery 2005). My own analysis of textbooks found that there were, in fact, some efforts to convey the idea of 'race' as a social construction within the Irish curriculum and related materials. However, as the following example reveals, efforts to denaturalize the very notion of 'race' can revert to a hegemonic understanding of the concept which continues to add authenticity and legitimacy to the idea of separate and fixed human 'races'. One of the more elaborate and sophisticated definitions of of racism which I encountered during the course of my analysis was presented in RE text All About Faith (Boyle and Boyle 2005).

> We may define racism as: prejudice against people of another race or ethnic group. […]

> Racists believe that all human beings can be divided up into separate racial groups.

> Most of these groups will be considered inferior, while the group to which the racist belongs will be identified as superior, perhaps the only superior race.

> Scientifically speaking, this is nonsense. Differences in skin colour, facial structure and so on are of no real significance. All people are members of the same biological species—the human race.

> Hostility towards people of other races can range from mild dislike to an extreme hatred, which can be expressed in acts of violence in passing laws to deprive people of their rights. Where racism is put into practice in this way, it is called racial discrimination. (Boyle and Boyle 2005: 296, emphasis in original)

Although the above passage has every intention of refuting the erroneous belief that humanity can be meaningfully divided into discrete 'races', it actually has the effect of continuing to encourage or impose race-thinking by repeatedly using the term 'race' in a way which banally reinforces assumptions about inherent racial difference. In other words, even this relatively sophisticated definition of 'race'―which dismisses as 'nonsense' the idea that differences in skin colour, facial structure, and so on, have inherent meaning―reinscribes 'race' as a real category through its repeated and unmarked use of the term (e.g. 'We may define racism as: prejudice against people of another race or ethnic group;' 'Hostility towards people of other races can range from mild dislike to an extreme hatred …'; 'Jews were instructed to treat other races with respect'; 'a person's race or gender are unimportant to God'; 'People are usually discriminated against on the grounds that they belong to a particular; race, religion, and gender (usually female), age (especially the elderly), disability (physical or mental)' (Boyle and Boyle 2005: 295–296, emphasis added). While the banal reproduction of race-thinking within textbooks is in part a reflection of the limitations of the prevailing lexicon of 'race' to capture the nuances and complexities of the concepts being explored, the problem is compounded by a failure to provide any kind of explanation as to why the belief in distinct 'races' came to exist in the first place, and why it continues to hold such powerful ideational and material weight. In other words, while arguing that the notion of racial superiority and inferiority, and the existence of distinct 'races' is 'nonsense', 'scientifically speaking', there is no attempt to explain how, why, or indeed when racism emerged as a 'scientific' justification for inequalities between nations and peoples. As such, the narrative fails to meaningfully destabilize 'race' or to illuminate the historical, economic, and social functions that the process of racialization serves.

Students' understandings were also indicative of the taken-for-grantedness of 'race' as a meaningful category, indicating how difficult it is to escape the racial categories and meaning systems into which we are socialized (Omi and Winant 1994).

> I think that when something bad happens, if a bad experience happens with a coloured person or something, they will hold it against them and they will say that all people of that race are like that. And then if something bad happens with a white person they wouldn't hold it against them, like that is just a bad, that is, it's just like one person. But if it happened to someone of a different race they would hold it against them, and kind of stereotype everyone. (Fiona, 14, female, majority, white, Irish-born, Catholic)

> It's like when you first come into this school for like any child it is tough, it is hard like, but especially for a student that like is from a different country, or a different race and everything else. (Milan, 15, male, white, Bosnian, Muslim)

Another feature of these student narratives is the way in which white subjectivity is normalized through their 'racetalk'. The phrase 'a different race', which features in both of the above narratives, marks whiteness as a default category―the normative 'race' against which non-white identities

are positioned as Other or 'different'. Fiona, a white, Irish-born student, alludes directly to white identity in her account of stereotyping ('if something bad happens with a white person'). Her reference to 'coloured' people implicitly identifies whiteness as being 'not of colour', while simultaneously positioning 'coloured' people as belonging to a 'different race'. In the case of Milan, a white, Bosnian-born student who also identifies as Irish, whiteness retains a silent presence, operating as an unspoken norm, an unmarked identity that has the effect of marking those who are not racialized as white as Other.

Implications

Drawing on the Republic of Ireland as a case study, this article makes a broader contribution to our understanding of the ways in which subtle forms of racism banally inscribe themselves in school-based practices, discourses, and curricular representations. In so doing it has focused as much on how racism and 'race' are not discussed in school texts, as much as how they are. It has illuminated the ways in which dominant frames endorse a colour-blind theory of racism, which reduce it to the realm of individual beliefs, prejudices, and ignorance, minimize (or deny) the problem of racism in society, and naturalize it by attributing racism to 'fear of strangers' who are somehow 'different'. Of course, as Rizvi (1993: 138) makes clear, school is not the only site where children learn 'the grammar of popular racism'. They are also influenced by institutions such as family, the peer group, the church, and the media in its various forms. While it is impossible to neatly identify or fully disentangle the full range of proximal and distal influences informing one's understandings and perspectives on topics as contested and complex as racism, this article has sought to highlight the curriculum as one influential discursive space where the lexicon of 'race' and racism is deployed.

The similarity across different texts has the cumulative effect of solidifying the dominance of colour-blind ideology which makes it hard to imagine competing or alternative understandings which privilege the systemic nature of racism and the structured nature of white privilege and dominance. These reductive and sanitized representations of racism insulate young people racialized as white from the 'ugly truth' that they benefit from, and actively participate in, a racialized social system, thereby 'letting them off the moral hook' (Forman 2004: 46). Thus, inter-cultural content creates and sustains the ideological conditions that prevent many whites and some minorities from recognizing, or taking action to redress ongoing racial inequality, while giving the impression that they are tackling racism head on by addressing and condemning specific forms of racism (Forman and Lewis 2006). Meanwhile, the perpetuation of the 'felt reality of race as a way of understanding the world' within the curriculum has a range of possible effects (Willinsky 1998: 169), including the perception that conflict among different 'races' or civilizations is inevitable, or that inherent differences justify unequal power relations (Montgomery

2005). This implies that nothing can be done to alter the racial status quo and forecloses possibilities for genuine anti-racist struggle.

Exposing the extent to which racism is misrepresented within the formal curriculum shows up the inadequacies of existing intercultural educational approaches in Ireland and elsewhere, which propose that a mere tinkering with the curriculum is sufficient as a means of 'helping to prevent racism' in society. Rather than seeking to underscore the 'normality of diversity', inter-cultural education needs to work to undermine the very processes by which some become normalized and others abnormalized and marginalized (Luhmann 1998). In tandem with the need for a far more candid analysis of the exclusionary and racist foundations of the State, and of the ways in which it was intimately bound up with anti-Semitism, there is a clear need for alternative discourses which problematize white Irishness as an assumed and normative identity. Stated another way, there is a clear need to destabilize the cultural hegemony of the WHISC—the white, heterosexual, Irish-born, settled, Catholic in Irish society (Tracy 2000), and to dismantle the power relationship implied in the logic of interculturalism which 'celebrates' those diverse Others who have something to offer a 'culturally homogenous' us (Bryan 2009a, 2010).

In suggesting that there needs to be a far more radical pedagogical approach to inter-culturalism, I do not mean to imply that teachers merely banally reproduce what is stated in textbooks in their classrooms. As Apple (2000) points out, teachers have a long history of mediating and transforming textbook material in their classrooms—accepting, reinterpreting and rejecting what counts as legitimate knowledge (Apple 2000: 191). Equally, students also have the capacity to engage in negotiated or oppositional, as well as dominant readings of a text.[21] Bryan and Bracken (2011b: 114), for example, have documented the experiences of students who actively contested inaccurate representations of their faiths or cultural practices or to provide alternative understandings of representations to those presented in the textbooks; however, this research also revealed a tendency for teachers to 'stick with the book' when teaching about cultural practices with which they are unfamiliar. Thus, structural and external pressures—such as the exam-driven nature of the Irish education system—constrain the extent to which oppositional readings are possible. The reluctance to deviate from textbooks may also be related to the fact that many teachers feel anxious and unsupported in the teaching of 'controversial' issues such as racism—anxieties which are heightened when there are minority students present in the class (Bryan and Bracken 2011a). Moreover, the hegemony of colour-blind racism within and across textbooks means that those teachers who do seek to discuss and debate alternative theorizations may find it difficult to convince students of the validity of alternative discourses. The challenge of encouraging students to 'read against the grain' is compounded by the fact that individuals are racially and ethnically located, and are hence emotionally as well as politically and economically invested in, and attached to, a particulate way of viewing the world. As Troyna and Rizvi (1997: 254) point out, popular racism is constructed around certain 'structures of feeling' and has a

socio-emotional dimension that cannot easily be tackled by intellectual argumentation.

A related difficulty is that white teachers themselves can be equally socially and emotionally invested in these discourses, and do not always receive multicultural or anti-racist education in the way that teacher educators intend (Lesko and Bloom 1998). In other words, learners—whether children or adults—can be deeply resistant to the kinds of knowledge which demand that they engage with difficult truths about themselves and their world that can be very difficult to tolerate or to accept. Drawing on their experiences of attempting to engage predominantly white, middle-class teacher education students with the 'truth' about social injustices and inequalities, Lesko and Bloom (1998) show how knowledge is constrained by epistemological and discursive limits. It would be naïve to suggest, therefore, that the act of replacing 'bad ideas' about race and racism in the curriculum with 'good' ones, will, in and of itself, radically disrupt the existing racial status quo.

Notwithstanding these pedagogical limitations, in the absence of more wide-ranging and sophisticated curricular representations of racism, which foreground the broader social processes, institutions, and structures—as well as attitudes and ideologies—which support racial inequality, it becomes increasingly difficult to conceptualize, let alone challenge, the perniciousness of racism within societies which espouse values of tolerance, equality, and human rights (Bonilla-Silva 1997). It is in this vein that I conclude the paper with some concrete illustrations of what a counter-discursive approach to dominant representations of 'race' and racism in the curriculum might look like. The first example is a descriptive account of how the illusion of race-thinking evolved and has come to have such significance in people's lives. The second illustration builds upon this explanation with a reflection activity that would enable students to engage with themes of racial privilege and racist oppression, and to prompt critical self-refection about their own racial identities.

> Although 'race' is a word that most people take for granted as a 'real' idea in their everyday lives, this way of dividing human beings (into 'black', 'white', etc.) is a fairly recent idea which did not exist until the 18th century. Social scientists have shown that the idea that human beings belong to different 'races' is false, but that the language of 'race' was invented to bring about a powerful system of social domination, based on the idea that light-skinned people of European origin were naturally superior to those with black skin whom they wanted to portray as inferior. The concept of 'race' was first developed to justify the brutal treatment of indigenous populations (like Native Americans or First Nations peoples in North America), African slaves, and colonized peoples. Even though the research used to develop this belief in the existence of different 'races' has been shown to be flawed and it is now accepted that human beings all belong to the same species, the effects of this language and way of thinking about human beings have been very powerful. In other words, human beings still tend to think of themselves and others as 'raced'; we identify—and are identified by others—as white or black etc. White people experience many social advantages that they often take for granted, while black people are still discriminated against on a daily basis in places like schools, in the media and by the legal system.

The second example of 're-narrativizing' 'race' takes inspiration from Leonardo (2004), who builds upon an analogy by James Scheurich of what the experience of being white is like.

> It has been suggested that the experience of being white is like walking down the street with money being put into your back pocket without you knowing, while the experience of black people is like walking down the street having your money taken from your pocket.

- In the foregoing account of what it is like to be black or white in today's society, what kinds of things might the money represent? (In providing your answer, think of different resources from around the world that are taken or 'extracted' by large companies that are based in the US and Europe).
- What does the description suggest about what racism is and what it looks like? (Compare this analogy to more obvious or extreme forms of racism).
- What does it suggest about white people's awareness of the fact that they have a lot of social advantages?
- What does it suggest about the part played by whites in promoting racial inequality?
- If you identify as white, what does it feel like to know that you are given advantages that you haven't earned, because of your identity as a white person? (Think of some examples of advantages or 'privileges' that white people take for granted).
- Do you see any limitations to the analogy of 'being white'? For example, what does it tell us about how the money gets there in the first place?
- Who do you think takes the money from the black person's pocket?
- What does it feel like to have money stolen from you? What would it feel like to have this happen to you on a regular basis, while someone else is given money, without even trying?

Counterdiscursive approaches of this nature are by no means a panacea to the ongoing problem of racism in schools and society; indeed, as Kitching (2011) reminds us, the acts required to overcome racial inequality are 'limitless'. However, being able to learn about and imagine 'race' and racism differently is one small, yet essential part of what Britzman (1998: 119) refers to as the 'interminable work of social justice and ethical understanding'. In an Irish context, as the boom years of the Celtic Tiger have given way to a new post-Celtic Tiger era, characterized by the loss of economic sovereignty, austerity, skyrocketing unemployment, and forced migration, the need for alternative radical pedagogical anti-racist strategies, in tandem with broader political-economic reforms that promote greater levels of equity, not greater levels of economic disparity and insecurity, are all the more timely if we are to avoid projection of hostility and anxiety onto migrants (See also Bryan 2009a; Bryan 2010). Yet, if we

are to better understand and overcome racism in society, there needs to be sustained attention to the role that school curricula play in delegitimizing, as well as legitimizing, racialized identities and in promoting and contesting racism. Re-imagining textbooks so that they 'screen in' counter-discursive understandings of 'race' and racism is a crucial means of enabling young people to think, act, and imagine themselves and the world 'otherwise'.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Under the terms of the Equal Status Act (2000, 2004), schools in the Republic of Ireland are permitted to discriminate in their admission policies in order to ensure the maintenance of the religious ethos of the school, so long as this discrimination is publicized in the school's admissions policy.
2. The 2006 census shows that 10% of the total population were classified as non-Irish nationals and that there was an 87% increase in the number of non-Irish nationals resident in the State in the 4-year period between 2002–2006.
3. Despite a professed commitment to 'combating racism', the National Action Plan Against Racism devotes minimal attention to issues of 'race' and racism and rationalizes the need for anti-racism in terms of securing economic competitiveness and bolstering the country's national reputation, not because racism has profoundly unjust and devastating consequences for those who experience it. For a critical analysis of Irish anti-racism policy outside of education, see Bryan (2010) and Lentin and McVeigh (2006).
4. There is little distinction between how the concepts of interculturalism and multiculturalism are deployed and operationalized in practice. Moreover, despite rhetorical nods to 'inclusion', 'equality', and 'human rights' in official discourse, inter-culturalism has become increasingly integrationist and assimilationist in its ideological approach as it has evolved as a policy response to the increasing diversification of Irish society. In 2010, an Intercultural Education Strategy 2010–2015 was launched by the Department of Education and Skills and Office of the Minister for Integration. 'Successful integration' of migrants is one of the dominant themes of the strategy, and the word 'integration' appears 89 times in the document. Successful integration is identified as a 'precondition for Europe's economic competitiveness and for social stability and cohesion' (Department of Education and Skills and Office of the Minister of Integration [DES and OMI] 2010: 57), as opposed to say a means of the tackling the historical and contemporary injustices of racism. Moreover, the expectation that Ireland should 'accommodate' or 'respect' cultural diversity is repeatedly expressed in conditional terms. For example, successful integration is defined as comprising a two-

way dynamic, with 'mutual respect for cultural differences, 'as long as these do not conflict with the fundamental democratic values of society' (DES and OMI 2010: 48, emphasis added). The strategy further maintains that diversity should be respected and accommodated 'where it contributes to the social good' and that 'cultural and identity values' should be protected 'as long as they do not infringe on the overall good and wellbeing of Irish society' (DES and OMI 2010: 47–48).

5. Specific problems with how this additive logic intersects with the existing curriculum in the Irish context have already been addressed as part of the larger project on which the present study is based (Bryan 2008, Bryan and Bracken 2011b).

6. All names used to refer to people and places in this article are pseudonyms.

7. The source of this quotation is deliberately omitted to protect the identity of the school.

8. One of the somewhat unique features of the Irish education system, relative to other liberal democracies, is the level of Church involvement in the ownership, governance, and running of schools. While the education system is funded or 'aided' by the state, ownership and control of schools rests predominantly with Trustees or Patrons; these patrons are defined almost exclusively in denominational terms (Devine 2011). BHC is a Community college, under the control of the County Dublin Vocational Educational Committee (CDVEC). While community colleges are theoretically non-denominational, in the sense that they neither admit nor refuse to enrol students on the basis of their religion, in practice, the underlying ethos or spirit of many such schools often remains overtly or subtly Christian. Community Colleges (also known as vocational schools) comprise about a third of all second-level or post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland, and cater for a similar proportion of students. They are administered by local Vocational Educational Committees (VECs), which are statutory bodies with responsibility for providing a broad range of educational and training programmes, including the management and operation of second-level and further education colleges. Secondary schools, which comprise 54% of post-primary schools in the Republic, are, in contrast, privately owned and managed, in most cases by religious communities (predominantly Catholic), and can give preference in enrolment to students whose religious identification supports the ethos of the school. The remainder of second-level schools in the Republic of Ireland are community and comprehensive schools, which were established in the 1960s as a new model of post-primary education, most of which are under the control of the VECs.

9. The term 'international students' was the term used by school administrators to refer to ethnic minority students of migrant background, irrespective of how long they had lived in Ireland or whether they were Irish citizens. Nine of the 'international' students were of Eastern or Central European origin (from countries such as Bosnia, Albania, Romania, and Russia) and were white. The remainder were from Africa, South East Asia, or the Middle East (India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo) and were racialized as 'other than white'.

10. To the extent that I drew on the discourse of 'race' in at least some of the interview questions means that I am equally guilty of encouraging young people to think uncritically in racialized terms.

11. I spent on average 3 days per week at BHC, and also volunteered as a language support teacher 1 day per week, providing 'extra English classes' to individual and small groups of English as an additional language (EAL) students. My own whiteness, as well as my positioning as an Irish-born adult and as a language support tutor within the school who was asking about a 'controversial' topic, was a persistent feature of the research process and surely shaped how young people chose to respond to the interview schedule and to express their views on 'race' and racism. See McLeod and Yates (2003) for a more detailed discussion of the

ways in which researcher and participant positionality affects responses in interviews about racism.

12. Out of a total of 26 examinable subjects, students are typically examined in 8 to 10 subjects for the junior certificate exam. English, Irish, Mathematics, Science, CSPE, History, and Geography are mandatory subjects in most schools.

13. Some of the racialized minority students whom I interviewed self-identified as Irish or as both Irish and another nationality, and some had Irish citizenship. The term 'Irish-born' in this context refers to students who were born in Ireland.

14. As I have discussed elsewhere, at least some racialized minority students who attended BHC experienced racist name-calling, verbal insults, and 'slagging'; in one reported instance, a group of female Pakistani Muslim students were targeted by a group of white Irish boys in the schoolyard during the holy month of Ramadan. Aware that the students were fasting, these boys threw food and stones at the female students, hitting them in the face and head (Bryan 2009b).

15. BHC's policy of 'positive inter-culturalism' was largely focused on informing students that racism was unacceptable or 'wrong' during events to 'celebrate' the cultural diversity of its student body and on facilitating and ensuring positive interaction and social integration between Irish and 'international' students and members of the wider community, through such activities as a 'buddy-system' pairing Irish and international students and social evenings for parents from different cultural backgrounds. A more detailed analysis of the school's positive inter-culturalism policies and practices is described in Bryan (2009a) and Bryan and Bracken (2011b).

16. Jews in many European nations and the Irish in the UK have, of course, indeed, historically been treated as racial groups, but the reasons for this did not feature in the texts I analysed.

17. Between 1933–1946, the Irish government admitted only 60 Jewish refugees, and Jewish immigration was actively obstructed by a number of Irish civil servants, including Charles Bewley, the Irish envoy in Berlin in the 1930s. Bewley claimed that that Jews monopolize academic positions, dominate the financial world, refuse to assimilate, and 'invariably sacrifice the interests of the country of their birth to Jewish interests' when 'the interests of the country of their birth come into conflict with their own personal or racial interests' (Bewley 1938, cited in Keogh 1998: 132–133).

18. 'Operation Shamrock' was an initiative by the Irish Red Cross which ran between 1945–1950 to save German, British, and French children from starvation and the destruction of post-World War II Europe. Approximately 1000 children—most of whom were German Catholics—were taken to Ireland to be cared for by Irish foster families. While most of the children returned to their countries of origin after a number of years, some remained in Ireland.

19. The Irish Taoiseach, Eamon De Valera, eventually granted permission for the children to come to Ireland on the grounds that their stay would be for a limited duration of 2 years, that they would be removed elsewhere as soon as arrangements could be made, and that the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council would take full responsibility for the proper care and maintenance of the children while they remained in this country (Department of Justice memorandum April 1948, cited in Keogh 1998: 211).

20. Arthur Griffith, founder of Sinn Féin, published an editorial in and around the time of the Pogrom in the United Irishman, which identified Jews as enemies of the nation, depicting them as '… strange people, alien to us in thought, alien to us in sympathy' and as 'people who come to live amongst us, but who never become of us' (cited in Fanning 2002: 49).

21. Apple (2000) differentiates three ways in which people can potentially respond to a text: dominant (where one accepts the messages at face value); negotiated (where a reader may dispute a particular claim but still accept the overall interpretation); and oppositional (where the reader rejects dominant interpretations and repositions herself in relation to the text).

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