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## **The intersectionality of nationalism and multiculturalism in the Irish curriculum: teaching against racism?**

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This research explores the interrelationship between the production of national identity and multiculturalism in Irish schools and society. Working from the perspective that ideas about ‘race’ and nation are inextricably linked, I examine how contemporary nationalistic identity projects and processes map onto the current policy drive towards multicultural (or intercultural) education in Ireland. Informed by the intellectual oeuvre of Pierre Bourdieu, my analysis investigates state-level discourses as they are articulated in recent anti-racist policy documents and in the national curriculum, and how these broader discourses are interpreted at the local school level. Combining discourse analytic, observational and in-depth interviewing techniques, I examine how state and school-based intercultural policies and practices construct difference along racial-ethnic and national lines, and consider the implications of these policies and practices for sustaining and contesting racism. The purpose of the research is to promote a deeper understanding of the ways in which racial inequality is reproduced through policies and practices which are purported to have egalitarian and anti-racist aims. Implications of the study are discussed in terms of the state’s increasing reliance on intercultural education as a policy panacea to the intensification of racism in Irish society.

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

### **Introduction**

This article considers the recent emphasis on intercultural education and anti-racism as interrelated policy responses to growing public and political interest in an ‘increasingly diverse Ireland’ and related concerns about the intensification of racism in Irish society in the ‘Celtic Tiger’ era (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2006, v). Intercultural education, which is defined as ‘a synthesis of the learning from multicultural education and anti-racist education approaches which were commonly used internationally from the 1960s to the 1990s’ is increasingly viewed as a key mechanism through which racism and racial inequality can be ameliorated in Ireland (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2006, i). At the heart of the current analysis is an interrelated critique of national anti-racism policy and intercultural education as policy responses to cultural diversity and racism in contemporary Irish society. Drawing on those approaches which emphasize the extent to which discourses on ‘race’ and multiculturalism are woven into, and can be best understood, with reference to a more general concern with the state of the nation, I seek to problematize interculturalism as

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a policy response to the intensification of racism in Irish society in recent years. Drawing on a corpus of recently published policy documents, textbooks and other educational resources currently being used in secondary schools throughout Ireland, as well as an ethnographic case study of one ethnically diverse secondary school in the greater Dublin area, I argue that racial inequality is more likely to be reproduced – rather than contested or ameliorated – through national and educational policies and practices which are purported to have egalitarian and anti-racist aims (Bryan 2007, 2008).

Recent research conducted in the Irish context has documented the specific experiences of minorities living in – and attending schools – in Ireland, as well as teacher responses to immigration and ethnic diversity in Irish schools (see Devine, Kenny, and MacNeela 2004; Devine 2005). To date, however, there have been no published studies examining Irish curricular knowledge in light of its potential to foster or combat racism within the broader context of the recent evolution of national intercultural educational guidelines and national anti-racism policies. One key aim of this study is to link microevents at the level of the classroom with the broader macro structural context of racism in Ireland by examining how the discourse of interculturalism, which permeates the local level of the school, is informed by broader political discourses which emanate from the field of national politics. Working from the perspective that ideas about ‘race’ and nation are inextricably linked, I consider how contemporary national identity projects and processes map onto the current policy drive towards intercultural education in Ireland. In so doing, I seek to convey the extent to which the discourse of interculturalism intersects with, and is continuously framed, in nationalistic terms, and consider the ‘othering’ effect of this nationalist argumentation for racialized minorities living in Ireland. Drawing on the intellectual oeuvre of Pierre Bourdieu, I conceive of the educational and political domains as ‘fields of struggle for power’ within which the overlapping discourses of interculturalism and nationalism are circulated, and through which racial-ethnic and national identities or subjectivities are formed (Swartz 1997, 117).

Drawing on the work of Ghassan Hage (1998), who extends Bourdieuan analysis to the categories of ‘race’ and nationality, I characterize intercultural education as practised in the Irish context as a form of *symbolic violence* which reproduces and masks relationships of power in society while disguising it as egalitarianism. I employ the concept of *symbolic violence* to suggest that contrary to intercultural education’s egalitarian aims, policies and practices of this nature have the effect of abnormalizing diversity and reinforcing the ‘otherness’ of minority students, of misrepresenting or ignoring their cultural identities, and of reinforcing erroneous assumptions about ‘race’, racism and the nature of difference more generally. It is in this sense that I suggest that intercultural education is, in fact, more likely to reproduce, rather than contest racism and racist ideologies.

The paper is organized as follows: The first section presents the conceptual framework and methodology which informed the study as a whole. I then provide an overview of interculturalism as it is constructed in Ireland within the context of the broad socio-political climate within which the study is situated. The remaining sections provide an account organized around two major interrelated themes that emerged from my analysis of textual, observational and interview data: (1) the management and containment of diversity via the discourse of interculturalism and (2) the ‘Othering’ of racialized minorities via intercultural discourse. The final section of the article considers the implications of this analysis for the state’s increasing reliance on intercultural education as a policy panacea to the intensification of racism in Irish society.

### Conceptual and methodological frameworks

The research upon which this article is based sought to integrate empirical findings with critical theoretical perspectives in an attempt to demonstrate how racial inequality is contested and reproduced in schools. Drawing on the intellectual oeuvre of Pierre Bourdieu, I characterize intercultural education as conceived in the Irish context as a form of *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu 2001). Symbolic violence describes a mode of domination that is exercised upon individuals in a subtle and symbolic (as opposed to physical) manner, through such channels as communication and cognition (ibid). Social inequality – in this instance racial inequality – is thought to be achieved through symbolic violence when social actors *misrecognize* domination as a natural state of affairs, to the extent that they do not perceive it as domination.

Combining discourse analytic, observational and in-depth interviewing techniques, I examined how particular understandings of intercultural concepts are mobilized by actors in the national political and educational fields in terms of the likelihood that they will contribute to, or indeed impede, the development or realization of a truly ‘post-racist society’ (Goldberg 2002). The discourse analysis dimension of the research comprised a critical review of national anti-racism policy documents, textbooks and other instructional materials designed for use with lower secondary school students attending school in the Irish Republic to examine the production of meaning of key concepts related to interculturalism by key players within the political and educational *fields* of power (see Fairclough 1995, 2003; Levett et al. 1997; van Dijk 1997).

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

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

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

In an effort to examine interculturalism as it is conceived and practised at the local level, I also conducted observations of classroom and school events and in-depth interviews over a twelve month period at a large, co-educational, ethnically diverse school in a middle class area within Dublin’s ever expanding ‘commuter belt’, which I have named Blossom Hill College (BHC). BHC was chosen as a site within which to examine intercultural policy and practice as it is enacted ‘on the ground’ because the school had been identified as a model of ‘best practice’ in ‘promoting inclusivity, interculturalism and equality’. As the number of immigrant children attending BHC

has increased in recent years, interculturalism has been gaining increasing prominence in the school. Approximately 10% of the student body at BHC are ‘international’, a term which reflects 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’ (BHC Yearbook, n.d.), as opposed to the use of the term ‘non-national’ which is commonly used in media and public discourse.

Combining these discursive and ethnographic methods, the research sought to link microevents at the level of the school with the broader macro structural context of racism in Ireland by examining how the ‘local’ discourse of multiculturalism is informed by broader political discourses emanating from the field of national politics. Informed by the concept of symbolic violence, the findings suggest that state-sanctioned interculturalism as it is conceived in the Irish context, while purported to be egalitarian, actually has the effect of reproducing and masking relationships of power in Irish society (Hage 1998). Building on existing critiques of reforms designed to redress class-based inequalities in education (see Drudy and Lynch 1993), I suggest that the implementation of intercultural education in schools fulfils a political function of providing an educational palliative to minorities while pre-empting resistance, and muting consideration of alternative policy responses that would yield genuine egalitarian outcomes and effects for racialized minorities in Ireland. Similarly, scholars of multicultural education in the US, such as Olneck (2000) have highlighted the role of dominant groups and their agents in blunting the transformative potential of multicultural education. Based on findings from the present study, I maintain that the incorporation of curricular content about diversity and diverse cultural groups in the Irish context is, in effect, an effort to appease and accommodate minority groups’ concerns about their lack of representation in the curriculum which prevents disruption of the status quo. Before presenting some of the major findings which demonstrate some of the ways in which racial inequality is reproduced through policies and practices which are purported to have egalitarian and anti-racist aims, I provide a brief overview of the birth of the Celtic Tiger economy as the contextual backdrop for the evolution of interculturalism and anti-racism in the Irish context.

### **The Celtic Tiger era and the evolution of intercultural education in Ireland**

Unlike other contexts, such as North America, where the very idea of multiculturalism is entrenched in national consciousness and the nation is imagined as having a long history rooted in multicultural beginnings (Montgomery 2005), the idea that the Irish society is multicultural in its composition is typically presented as a very recent or new development in Ireland’s history. As a relatively poor peripheral European country with strong and sustained emigration, limited employment opportunities, and no traditional colonial ties to core economies, immigration and multiculturalism were, until very recently, largely absent from the Irish political and educational agenda. In the 1980s, Ireland experienced a severe economic recession, characterized by high unemployment rates, substantial public debt and mass emigration. Between 1988 and 1989 alone, 2% (70,600) of the population in Ireland emigrated (Mac Éinrí 2001). Less than a decade later, many politicians and social commentators were celebrating what they claimed to be nothing short of a social miracle in the guise of an economic boom which would earn the Irish economy the label the ‘Celtic Tiger’. Fiscal and other investment incentives (including very low export rates) had made Ireland an

investment paradise for multinational firms seeking to gain access to the European Union market, especially those involved in the information technology and pharmaceuticals industries, which resulted in a major increase in foreign direct investment. The unemployment rate fell drastically, from over 15% in 1993, to 6% in 1999, to 4.2% in January of 2006 (EUROSTAT 2006). By the end of the 1990s, economic experts were warning that a labour shortage could pose a serious problem to continued economic growth. In an effort to foster greater economic growth, the government reached out to so-called non-Irish nationals and returning Irish emigrants alike, in order to meet employers' demands for labour. Simultaneously, social unrest in various parts of the world was forcing a small yet significant number of refugees and asylum seekers, primarily from African and Eastern European states, to seek refuge in Ireland. As the demographic profile of Irish society has diversified, so too has the incidence, and acknowledgment, of racist practices against a host of minority groups in Ireland.

The 'Celtic Tiger' era, which signaled Ireland's transition from an out-migration to an in-migration society, is often also associated in the popular and political imagination with Ireland's transition from a monocultural to a multicultural society. This popular understanding of Ireland as a newly emergent multicultural society persists, despite the long presence of a host of racialized minority groups – including Travellers, black-Irish, Jews and Asians in Irish society. This perception of cultural homogeneity has been linked to the political project of Irish nationalism which was embarked upon following Ireland's independence from Britain in the 1920s, a project which was based upon racialized and exclusionary foundations (see Connolly 2006; Loyal 2003; McVeigh and Lentin 2002). As Connolly (2006, 23) explains:

The active process of nation building that took place particularly following the partition of Ireland in the 1920s, both in relation to the newly independent Irish state in the south and among the now politically isolated minority Catholic population in the north, tended to be not only built upon a strong rural idyll but was also inevitably exclusionary, constructing Irishness as an homogenous entity that was essentially Catholic and nationalistic as well as rural (MacLaughlin 1999; McVeigh and Lentin 2002).

In addition to Catholicism, 'whiteness' has been a key component of Irish nationalism and a key aspect of how majority ethnic groups in Ireland view themselves, such that the presence of non-white minority ethnic groups poses a fundamental threat to this racialized sense of identity (Connolly 2006). It is within the context of an increasingly ethnically diverse population and the emergence of 'new configurations' of racism (Garner 2004, 228) that Irish social and educational policy has begun to reflect a commitment to interculturalism and anti-racism (Lodge and Lynch 2004).

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

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

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

Intercultural education is believed to ‘help to prevent racism’ by enabling students to develop ‘positive emotional responses to diversity and an empathy with those discriminated against’ as well as enabling them to ‘recognize and challenge discrimination and prejudice’ where they exist (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005, 21). As such, intercultural education is deemed ‘one of the key responses to the changing shape of Irish society and to the existence of racism and discriminatory attitudes in Ireland’ (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005, 17). Finally, intercultural education also seeks to reconfigure Irish national identity around a *civic*, rather than an *ethnic* ideal, such that multiple ‘cultures’, ‘ethnicities’ and ‘religious traditions’ can be embraced (Tormey and O’Shea 2003). The goal of cultivating civic nationalism is based in part on the criticism that the ‘traditional view of Irishness – one that does not recognize the cultural and ethnic diversity which has long existed in Ireland – has made many Irish people from minority groups feel excluded’ (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005, 13). As outlined above, this criticism stems from a long-standing perception that Ireland was a monocultural society, despite the long presence of a host of racialized minority groups, including Travellers (an indigenous nomadic group), black-Irish, and Jews in Irish society. Related to the idea of stressing the normality of diversity, then, is the intercultural project of cultivating civic nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

While one of the stated aims of the intercultural movement in Ireland is to challenge restrictive definitions and conceptions of Irishness by reconfiguring Irish national identity around a *civic*, rather than an *ethnic* ideal, such that multiple ‘cultures’, ‘ethnicities’ and ‘religious traditions’ can be embraced (Tormey and O’Shea 2003), I maintain that this goal is compromised and complicated for a host of reasons, not least of which because intercultural education essentially constitutes an ‘add-on’ approach. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment guidelines, for example, are designed to help educators ‘identify the ways in which intercultural education can be *integrated* into the curriculum in post-primary schools’ (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2006, iii, emphasis added) and were the culminating effort of an initiative which sought to determine ‘how the intercultural elements of the *existing* curricula could be maximized by teachers’ (Tormey and O’Shea 2003, 4, emphasis added). In other words, the purpose of the intercultural educational guidelines is to supplement and enhance existing curricular materials,

without radically revising or indeed overhauling the curriculum that is already in place. Analyzing these guidelines in relation to existing curricular content, I have elsewhere demonstrated some of the ways in which the knowledge about interculturalism as it is constructed in the formal curriculum is at odds with many of the key messages that the intercultural guidelines themselves seek to underscore. More specifically, I have argued that curriculum materials construct cultural homogeneity as the norm and diversity as an aberration in Irish society, thereby actively contradicting official intercultural goals which seek to underscore the 'normality of diversity' in all spheres of life (Bryan 2008).

This paper extends this analysis to a critique of the very *raison d'être* of the intercultural project itself, on the grounds that the discourse of 'respecting', 'celebrating', 'valuing' and 'appreciating' diversity has the effect of denying the possibility of a national 'we' which is itself diverse, and ultimately entrenches power relations between culturally dominant and minority groupings in society (see Ang 1996; Hage 1998). To support these arguments, I draw on examples of how interculturalism is both discursively produced in state-sanctioned policy documents and educational guidelines, as well as practised 'on the ground', at BHC. The findings are organized around two interrelated themes. Firstly, I seek to convey how diversity is represented as something which needs to be managed and contained in the 'national interest'. Secondly, I consider the extent to which intercultural policies and practices position racialized minorities as 'other' than Irish, as less Irish or less than Irish. Because multiple ideas are often interwoven into discrete discourses or pieces of text, I do not always treat each theme in isolation, but rather focus on the main ideas being expressed in each section of text or speech. Moreover, through each of these illustrations, I seek to demonstrate the ways in which the nation is invoked directly and indirectly throughout, such that multicultural discourse continues to 'flag' the nation and reproduce nationhood (Billig 1995).

### The diversity management paradigm

Critics of state-sanctioned multiculturalism maintain that it operates as an institutional and conceptual tool which provides the state with an enhanced ability to manage and control difference through its various institutions (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998; Goldberg 2002; Hage 1998; Lentin 2004; Mitchell 1993). This 'diversity management paradigm' is most frequently deployed through policies of containment, in the form of immigration policies, as well as through a preoccupation with managing the negative side effects of unaccepted diversity, e.g., through schemes and programmes to combat racism (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998, 11). In the Irish context, the discourse of diversity management is reflected in a variety of state-sponsored or sanctioned publications or programmes, including *Managing diversity in the workplace: Focusing on the employment of migrant workers* (Diversity At Work Network n.d.); a *Managing cultural diversity in the hospitality industry* series, run by The Irish Hotel and Catering Institute, and *Managing diversity in Ireland: Implementing the Employment Equality Act, 1998* (Fullerton and Kandola 1999). In NPAR, the diversity management paradigm is given voice very early on, in the then *Taoiseach's* (Prime Minister's) foreword or opening remarks which precede the main body of the text.

Racism has no place in the Ireland of today. *We* must actively welcome and *manage our* continuing development as a multicultural society. That is why *combating racism* and

creating a more inclusive society are key priorities for this government. (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2005, 3; emphasis added)

These opening remarks suggest that diversity is an emerging feature of Irish society, which must be ‘managed’ and dealt with ‘in a mature and sensible fashion’, in the best interests of the nation. Indeed, the *Taoiseach*’s emphasis on the need to combat racism as a government priority, juxtaposed with the imperative that ‘we’ must ‘manage “our” continuing development as a multicultural society’ is a clear and succinct articulation of the diversity management paradigm at work. Central to this paradigm is the idea that multiculturalism functions as a conceptual apparatus which allows the state to set the parameters of the debate about cultural diversity within a nationalist framework. Despite the Plan’s appeal to multiculturalism, the discourse of diversity is continuously couched in nationalistic argumentation, through direct appeals to the nation, and through the indirect invocation of the nation through a ‘national deixis’ of pronouns and possessives like ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our’. As Billig (1995) remarks, it is often ‘small words, rather than grand memorable phrases, [that] offer constant, but barely conscious, reminders of the homeland, making “our” national identity unforgettable’ (93). The invocation of a national imaginary through the indexicals ‘we’ and ‘our’ within which ‘we’, the diversity managers (as opposed to ‘they’, the diverse who are managed), are positioned, exposes multiculturalism’s nationalist dimension. Indeed, through the *Taoiseach*’s comments, it is apparent that ‘managing Ireland’s continuing development as a multicultural society’ is more concerned with forging or preserving the national interest, in terms of its ‘well-being and international reputation’ and ‘imperatives for social and economic progress’, than with developing a truly inclusionary society. Indeed, to the extent that ‘racism has no place’ in Ireland, it seems that this has more to do with the fact that it is perceived as a threat to the country’s social and economic interests and its international reputation, and little, if anything, to do with its detrimental and often devastating impact upon those subjected to racist oppression.

The *extent and pace of change* in Ireland is clearly demonstrated by our *transformation* from a country of emigration to one of net inward migration. The *emerging diversity* of Irish society has the capacity to enrich all our communities and to *make Ireland an example of best practice* in promoting inclusion. It also *presents us* with challenges and issues that we must *deal with* in a mature and sensible fashion. As well as the imperatives for social and economic progress, it is clearly important for *Ireland’s well being and international reputation* that we adapt our thinking, policies and laws to this *changing* situation... (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2005, 3; emphasis added)

Diversity is at once celebrated and qualified as a challenge to society in the *Taoiseach*’s address. Ireland’s ‘emerging diversity’ is squarely positioned as *advantageous to the state*; in addition to ‘enrich[ing] all our communities’, it is deemed beneficial in terms of promoting the nation as a ‘best practice’ model of inclusion. However, it is also identified as a threat, to the extent that it ‘presents *us*’ with challenges and issues that must be dealt with in a ‘mature and sensible fashion’.

The diversity management paradigm, and the corresponding representation of diversity as a challenge or threat is also evident at the more micro level of analysis. As stated, BHC is committed to the idea of multiculturalism, and has adopted a policy of ‘positive interculturalism’, incorporating a range of activities that celebrate the cultural diversity of its student body. Yet, as the following quotation from the BHC

yearbook reveals, the presence of students from ‘different nations’ at the school is at once presented as an ‘unprecedented challenge’ and as offering ‘positive possibilities’.

In keeping with the development of Ireland as a multicultural society, BHC is proud to be alma mater to [a host of] different nations. *We* have responded to this unprecedented challenge by engaging in projects designed to open all our minds to the positive possibilities this offers *us*. (BHC yearbook; emphasis added)

Once again, the characterization of Ireland as a ‘developing’ ‘multicultural society’ which is reminiscent of the discourse articulated in the broader social policy field, normalizes and sustains the myth of Ireland’s former homogeneity. The characterization of the presence of students from ‘different nations’ at BHC as an ‘unprecedented challenge’ implies a conditional, as opposed to wholehearted acceptance, such that ‘their’ presence is to be welcomed so long as it does not become *too* challenging and/or so long as the positive possibilities ‘they’ offer ‘us’ materialize.

Relatedly, the cultural enrichment that is associated with diversity is often represented as something that could or will happen, as opposed to something that actually exists by virtue of the presence of a diverse student body at BHC. Consider the perspective of Miss Jones, for example, the teacher with responsibility for coordinating the school’s policy of ‘positive interculturalism’.

But I think it [increasing diversity] is the best thing that has happened Ireland. I think as a nation *we* are very insular and introspective and solipsistic really. And I think that people coming inside and challenging *our* views, and forcing *us* to look at *ourselves* I think is a really healthy thing. And I think it came at a very good time in *our* economic development. I am sorry to see lots of immigrants being used as slave labour. I am really sorry to see that. I suppose it was inevitable it would happen in an economy like *ours*. But I do think if *we* handle this properly, that *we* can create a really rich tapestry, and I think that maybe, I am attempting to do it here in BHC. And I hope there will be some reverberations in the community... and it’s little pockets like that, I think the positive interculturalism can go forward.

Elements of the management paradigm characteristic of state-sanctioned multiculturalism are evident here. The presence of ‘people coming inside’ (i.e., outsiders) is described as something which needs to be ‘handle[d] properly’ by a collective ‘we’. As the discussion takes on a more nationalistic focus, the ‘we’ who are charged with ‘handl[ing] the situation properly’, are presented as distinct from those who ‘come inside’ and ‘force *us* to look at ourselves’ and ‘challenge *our* views’. Interculturalism thus continues to position the dominant cultural group at the centre of the Irish cultural map, a vantage point from which they can effectively guide and ‘handle the [multicultural] situation’.

While ‘their’ presence is to be valued from the point of view of the cultural, social and economic enrichment it will, or has the potential to provide, as symbolized by the tapestry metaphor, it is precisely this enriching function that keeps these outsiders positioned in a space of objectified otherness (Ang 1996; Hage 1998). Hage maintains that the discourse of cultural enrichment assigns to minority cultures ‘a different mode of existence’, such that whereas the dominant cultural groups simply exist, minority cultures exist primarily for the benefit of the dominant groups. In other words, the worth of minority groups comes to be defined in terms of their function as enriching cultures (Hage 1998, 121). I return to this theme below in relation to the abnormalizing effect of intercultural discourse.

### The othering of racialized minorities

In addition to representations of the Irish nation as they are articulated in schooling contexts and anti-racist policy documents, the *trope of the Celtic Tiger* was evoked on numerous occasions at school events that I observed during the course of my fieldwork. Two such events, namely BHC's anniversary celebration and its graduation ceremony for sixth (final) year students stand out in terms of the extent to which they heightened the salience of a reimagined 'multicultural' 'Celtic Tiger' Irish national identity. At both events, explicit imaginings of the nation were evoked, in ways that integrated the related discourses of immigration and multiculturalism. I draw on these events as illustrations of the ways in which interrelated discourses about the nation and cultural diversity position social actors in particular ways, and in turn through which these individuals position themselves. In other words, I draw on these events to convey how intercultural discourses, while imposed from above, are also interpreted and internalized from below, providing the underlying mechanisms by which individuals come to think of themselves as Irish, or indeed as less than Irish or less Irish (Billig 1995; Connolly 1998). I suggest that events of this nature, while comprising explicit, subtle and perhaps unconscious efforts at reminding all members of the BHC community of their belonging to the Irish nation, also have the effect of entrenching the boundaries between nationals and 'non-national' or 'international students' (Goldberg 1994).

On celebratory occasions such as these, BHC is explicitly characterized and advertized as a multicultural environment. For example, the guest of honour at the school's anniversary celebration, Paul McDermott, a member of Ireland's political establishment, explicitly cast BHC's 'newfound' multiculturalism, or 'lived difference' as an opportunity to extend a welcoming hand to the 'others' who are *now* among 'us'.<sup>2</sup>

When I went to school there was one nationality, maybe two. But growing up... I learned about difference in books. *You* live it. *You* have the opportunity to befriend *them*, to offer Fáilte [welcome] to *them*, to meld *them*.

Despite its ostensibly inclusionary content, the you-them discourse prevalent in this glib celebration of cultural diversity has the effect of entrenching the boundaries between national, i.e., Irish students and 'other' 'non-national' students (Goldberg 1994). The discursive positioning of 'other nationalities' as 'them' separates 'them' from 'our' majority and relegates them to the margins of the imagined community that constitutes the Irish nation.

Furthermore, the use of the phrase '*to meld them*' is suggestive of an assimilationist, as opposed to a truly inclusive ethos, whereby the mythically homogenous dominant cultural group gets to 'live' multiple nationalities, by melding them, thereby granting them the power to manage diversity, and to feel enriched by it, without having to disrupt the power imbalances that exist between racialized majority and minority groups. Furthermore, the command that the national 'we' befriend the non-national 'them' belies the fact that minority students are themselves active agents who have their own role to play in negotiating friendships and/or that 'they' might have friendship groups that the dominant majority might want to join (Roman and Stanley 1997).

Moreover, while this discourse is ostensibly inclusive, to the extent that it rhetorically and symbolically 'welcomes' and celebrates its culturally diverse student body, it simultaneously abnormalizes diversity, in the sense that it represents it as a new and

aberrant phenomenon, and therefore as something which is at once unusual and alien to the Irish nation. In this sense, rather than normalizing diversity, the discourse of ‘welcoming’ and ‘belonging’ serves to marginalize and abnormalize racialized minorities within the Irish national space.

Speaking about multiculturalism in the Australian context, Hage (1998) argues:

The ‘we appreciate’ diversity, ‘we value’ ethnic contributions, etc. attitudes which abound in the dominant political discourse in Australia create a gulf between the ‘we’ and that which is appreciated and valued. In so doing, they work to mystify the real possibility, grounded in the very composition of Australian society, of a national ‘we’ which is itself diverse. (Hage 1998, 139)

At the graduation ceremony for sixth (final) year students, which took place in May of 2005, the Irish nation was repeatedly discursively flagged – a flagging that is enmeshed with the discourse of multiculturalism (Billig 1995). The Deputy Principal, Mr O’Meara, opened the ceremony with reference to President John F. Kennedy’s address to the Irish Parliament in June of 1963.

Forty-three years ago, President John F. Kennedy told the people of Ireland that as a nation, our hour had come; that we had something to give to the world. Though we were a small nation, this should not stop us in taking our place in the world. Today, these words resonate. Ireland has changed dramatically. [Significant progress has been made in terms of] the Northern [Ireland] Troubles. We now boast of newfound wealth in an economy that continues to grow. We now boast a national confidence that was at one time unimaginable. Ireland is now the most popular country for emigration in the EU.

This discursive construction of the nation supports an orthodox reading of the Celtic Tiger, wherein the Irish nation is represented as a modern, progressive, prosperous, culturally diverse society in stark contrast to its former more traditional, poverty-stricken, culturally homogenous self, crippled by emigration. References to a new ‘moral poverty’ that is gripping the nation and the existence of ‘new impoverished in Ireland’ notwithstanding, O’Meara’s speech directly implies that the advent of the Celtic Tiger marks an era in which the Irish Republic emerged from its former underdevelopment in order to ‘take its rightful place as an equal among the nations of the world’ (Coulter 2003, 15). As such, his overall speech can be read as a conscious effort to instill a sense of pride in how far the state has come in such a short space of time, and to secure the notion that ‘Ireland’s hour has come’.

BHC’s culturally diverse student body was a similarly important theme of the Deputy Principal’s speech. Like the rhetoric of McDermott mentioned above, the discourse of welcoming and embracing diversity is evident once more here. Hage’s distinction between ‘different modalities of national belonging’ (1998, 51) is helpful as a means of unpacking the kind of acceptance that multicultural discourse bestows upon others in the national space. It is a discourse deriving from Hage’s concept of *governmental power*, i.e., the power to have a legitimate view concerning the positioning of others in the nation’, including an opinion on ‘who should “feel at home” in the nation and how’, which is claimed by those who are in a dominant position (46). As such, the kind of nationality that is relevant to a consideration of governmental power is that feeling of national acceptance and belonging that one feels or experiences in day-to-day settings, on a communal everyday level (what Hage (1998) calls ‘practical nationality’), as distinct to the more formal nationality one acquires through official channels of citizenship (Hage 1998).<sup>3</sup>

Mr O'Meara's exertion of governmental power is enacted in the following statement about 'belonging'. 'These flags represent the nationalities of the graduating class of 2005. They represent a story of belonging. Each one of those flags and each of those students belongs in Ireland'.

Implied in such statements is that 'international students' can be part of *our* Irish family *too*, i.e., that they belong here *even though* they are outsiders and *even though* they are different to *us* (Ang 1996). This discourse, which seeks to assure minorities of their (passive) belonging, has the effect of positioning the culturally dominant group, represented by O'Meara, at the centre of the Irish cultural map, around which 'otherness' is located (Hage 1998). The relegation of minority groups to a relative position of marginality is also symbolically achieved by the central location of the Irish and EU flags as major focal points at the top of the stage, relative to the positioning of the 12 'other' 'international' flags along either side of the hallway. While explicit attention is drawn to these 12 flags ('These flags represent the nationalities of the graduating class of 2005'), nobody in the audience is reminded of what the Irish and EU flags represent, or that they are indeed part of the 'the story of belonging'.

More importantly, perhaps, once again, the discourse of belonging positions culturally dominant groupings in Irish society in the role of the acceptor, decreeing the acceptability of the ethnic other (Hage 1998). Those utterances which bestow acceptance thus have the effect of entrenching power relations between the acceptor and those whom they accept. The very expression of acceptance (as opposed to an acceptance which goes without saying) implies that it is conditional and that it could be withdrawn, were racialized minority groups to be deemed somehow undeserving of this acceptance (*ibid*).

Hage (1998) extends Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to the national realm, maintaining that nationality can be conceived of as a form of 'national cultural capital'. From this vantage point, practical nationality constitutes a mode of belonging to the nation which is cumulative in nature and which is unevenly distributed amongst its citizens, such that one's position of power within the field of national power is related to the amount of national capital one accumulates. Individuals therefore accrue various nationally-sanctioned characteristics, dispositions, physical and cultural styles in the pursuit of national belonging. That is, they seek to have their 'accumulated national capital recognized as legitimately national' by the dominant cultural group (Hage 1998, 53).

Hage (1998) maintains that although nationality is something that can be accumulated, there are limits to the amount of nationality that one can acquire. As a consequence, the accumulation of national capital results in quantitatively as well as qualitatively different modalities of national belonging, in the form of *passive belonging* (the feeling that 'I belong here') and *governmental belonging* (the feeling that 'this is my nation'). Whereas those who feel a sense of passive belonging to the nation might feel, or be allowed to feel that *they belong to the nation* (in the sense of being part of it, and of expecting to 'fit in', or to feel 'at home' within it) those who possess governmental power feel that *the nation belongs to them*, such that they feel they possess the right to contribute to its management, and to hold a legitimate view concerning the positioning of Others within it (*ibid*). To elucidate more fully, governmental belonging is:

... the feeling that one is legitimately entitled in the course of everyday life to make a governmental/managerial statement about the nation – to have a view about its foreign

policy, for example, or to have a governmental/managerial attitude towards others, especially those who are perceived to be lesser nationals or non-nationals, to have a view about who they can be and where they can go. (Hage 1998, 46)

Certain forms of capital, therefore, while allowing passive belonging, are not valuable as a means of enabling one to stake a claim to governmental belonging, and to assume a dominant position within the field of national governmental belonging. In other words, the national capital one needs to accumulate in order to maximize *passive belonging* is not equivalent to that which one needs to secure *governmental belonging*. This is because culturally dominant groups ‘tend to construct themselves into an aristocracy vis-à-vis other subjects’ by conveying their dominant national cultural capital as ‘an intrinsic natural disposition rather than something socially and historically acquired’ (Hage 1998, 62).

In the Irish context, a distinction can be drawn between those who struggle to accumulate national capital to ‘be like’ white Catholic, settled (i.e., non-Traveler) Irish and those who appear to be naturally white Catholic, settled Irish. When culturally dominant individuals speak about cultural diversity they are speaking from a privileged position of governmental belonging wherein they feel a sense of entitlement to express opinions about the state and fate of ‘their’ nation. This sense of entitlement applies not just at the level of society, but also to the more local level of the school. The following comment by Michael, a third-year-student, is indicative of the unspoken privilege which cultural dominants possess, wherein they get to decree acceptance on a ‘non-national’ Other.

Times are changing. There are more people from other countries coming in so that means that well, naturally we’re gonna have more national foreign students coming in to the school. So we *have* to accept it.

According to the aristocratic logic to which Hage (1998) refers, irrespective of how much national capital, for example, a ‘Third World-looking’ migrant accumulates, the fact that he or she has acquired it, rather than being born with it, devalues it, relative to the ‘essence’ possessed by the national aristocracy. Kiran, who was born in Pakistan, and who has been living in Ireland for most of her life, eloquently captures this feeling of being made to feel like a lesser national than others in the Irish context.

I came here when I was three or something. So like I’ve been here since then. And like the whole time like everyone just asks you the same questions and stuff. They don’t really care. They think it’s their own country. They can rule over it. They don’t care about everyone else. Even if you do have a nationality over here, people just think because you look different then they just think that you are different. Even if you do have a nationality here, they don’t really care. They don’t want to know that. They just want to tease you and just get to you, like, you know, to make you cry. That’s their aim. That’s just it!

She further captures the essence of governmental belonging when she states:

They rule over it [the country]. So that means that anyone that comes inside their country they think that they can rule over that person as well. Because it’s their country and they rule it so they just think that everything that’s in it is theirs.

Hage’s (1998) adaptation of Bourdieu’s theorization of the aristocracy of the field, which distinguishes between culturally dominant groups who ‘are nationals and

behave nationally because they are born nationals', as opposed to Others, who have to 'behave nationally to prove that they are nationals' is also helpful in interpreting how other racialized minority students position themselves in relation to their national identity (Hage 1998, 62). This is Milan, for example, who came to Ireland as a programme refugee from Bosnia in the early 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

Milan: Most people now, but like back in the old times when I first came here like around '92 or '93 people were like more kind of lookin' at us from another country. You know like don't know anybody. Then like over the term we have been treated badly when we came here. But over the other term more and more people, basically we have become more kind of Irish internally. People think when you become more Irish you are more like them but you're not.

AB: Would you identify as Irish?

Milan: Well I have an Irish passport, Irish citizenship. But like always my first is going to be Bosnian. My first language is going to be Bosnian, my first country is going to be Bosnia. Generally since I am livin' here I can't ever put myself into the same position as like an Irish person that kind of has been born in Ireland and like raised in Ireland. I'm just kind of getting more in terms with the Irish lifestyle and all that.

Individuals like Milan, who have been living in Ireland for most of their lives, are conscious of the fact that they have to prove their Irishness by accumulating capital, in the form of Irish lifestyle habits, that will enable them to 'becom[e] more Irish' or act more Irish. Yet Milan is equally conscious of the fact that no matter how much national capital he accumulates, 'I can't ever put myself into the same position as like an Irish person that kind of has been born in Ireland and like raised in Ireland'. In other words, being Irish comes to be viewed, not as a matter of acquisition, but something which one is born, or which can be inherited from one's 'Irish' parents, as the following account of what constitutes Irishness by Anne, a racialized majority student at BHC reveals.

If your parents are Irish and you move back here, just because you weren't born in the country [pauses]... that doesn't make you less Irish. But there are some circumstances where you parents aren't Irish and your parents just came over here maybe for a better life and they are not [pauses] and I don't think that makes you Irish, just coming over here and claiming that you are Irish.

Siddhi, an Irish citizen who was born in India and who had been living in Ireland for close to a decade at the time of interview, negotiates her identity as a balance between Irishness and Indianness. Having described Ireland as her 'home' yet equally maintaining that 'there is always a sense of me that is Indian', she articulates her feelings of Irishness as follows:

If I didn't feel Irish I wouldn't feel comfortable around my friends. If I didn't feel Irish I wouldn't feel comfortable with people asking me about my religion or about my culture. I feel as though I am different but I am part of your community, I do feel that I belong here. So it is kind of a balance.

While Siddhi feels part of the Irish imagined community, 'that [she] belong[s] here', her comments earlier in the interview suggest an awareness that the national acceptance bestowed upon her is somewhat different to the nationality that 'natural born' Irish people possess.

If you come into this school having just moved from another country, you find it very hard to actually fit in, but if you have been here years... like we have been here since primary school, so all our friends *kind of* think of us as one of them, they don't see us as any different, like they understand that we have different cultures and things like that, but they don't see us as *completely* different.

In other words, that Siddhi feels that her friends only *kind of* think of her as one of them, and that they don't see her as *completely* different, suggests that she is nevertheless not *totally* one of them, and that she is still seen as *somewhat* different. 'Hage maintains that it is the accumulation of "insignificant" moments that the national aristocracy distinguishes itself from other nationals in everyday life' (Hage 1998, 64).

The foregoing accounts of BHC students' sense of Irishness suggest that the identity traits and characteristics that need to be accumulated in order to feel at home in Ireland are not enough to constitute their holders into a national aristocracy (Hage 1998). At the same time as interculturalism, as practised at BHC and in society more broadly, bestows homely belonging, allowing people like Siddhi feel 'part of *your* community', it fulfils a symbolically violent function of naturalizing the position of culturally dominant groups by imposing a natural 'national order' in which they hold the dominant position. As Hage puts it:

On the one hand, the fact that national capital can be accumulated operates like a 'democratic incentive' which provides aspiring nationals with the impetus to 'play the game.' It is the belief that capital is 'up for grabs' for whomever can grab it and accumulate it, that it will lead anyone who succeeds in accumulating it to gain more recognition and power (symbolic capital), which provides the national field with its dynamic. On the other hand, however, the aristocratic ideal aims at stunting this dynamic of accumulation and at entrenching a static order. It fosters the belief that no matter how much capital one acquires through active accumulation, the very fact of this acquired capital being an *accumulation* leads to its devaluating relative to those who posit themselves to have inherited it or to possess it innately without having to accumulate it (Hage 1998, 63–4; emphasis in original).

This section has looked at some of the ways in which the nation is discursively and symbolically produced and reproduced at BHC, and how these particular representations articulate with the newfound discourse of multiculturalism in Ireland. One of the major purposes of this paper has been to demonstrate that despite statutory agencies and institutions like BHC's appeals to inclusivity, the promotion of positive intercultural educational policies and practices actually serve to reinforce a homogeneous Irish (white, Catholic, settled) centre, against which Others are positioned. Furthermore, within the ideological framework of 'positive interculturalism' at BHC, school culture itself is not implicated in maintaining racial and ethnic divisions and is therefore effectively absolved of any responsibility for racism. Positive interculturalism serves a useful impression management function for the school, casting it as an essentially benign peacemaker through its various efforts to encourage greater contact and positive attitudes between various racialized and ethnicized groups (Fitzduff 1995; cited in Connolly 2000, 170).

### Implications

One of the main aims of this paper has been to trouble the assumption in recent education policy documents that intercultural and anti-racist education necessarily 'helps to prevent racism'. The discourse of 'positive interculturalism' at BHC reflects the

discourse of interculturalism and anti-racism emanating from the broader political field. It is a discourse which is inclusive on the one hand, to the extent that it rhetorically and symbolically ‘welcomes’ and celebrates its culturally diverse student body. Yet it simultaneously abnormalizes diversity, presenting it as a new and aberrant phenomenon, and as something which is at once unusual and alien to the Irish nation. Ultimately, it is a discourse which merely bestows a conditional passive national belonging upon racialized minorities, while simultaneously entrenching power relations between the acceptor and those whom they accept.

Interculturalism is at best a weak, and at worst a counterproductive policy response to the increased diversification and intensification of racism in Irish society. Despite recent efforts which cast the government as actively working towards ‘challenging racism and promoting intercultural practices in Ireland’ (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005, 17), I maintain that an interculturalism which fails to acknowledge institutional or structural fields of racialized power is a form of symbolic violence which has the effect of containing the legitimate political and economic interests of racialized minorities in Ireland (Hage 1998; Rizvi 1993; Troyna 1993). To this end, I suggest that interculturalism as a statutory and educational policy has become part of a ‘slogan system’ aimed at diffusing social conflict and maintaining social order without challenging mainstream structures (Troyna 1993). As such, the paper builds upon an existing body of international literature which suggests that state-sanctioned multiculturalism ironically reinscribes the very racist ideologies it claims to overcome (see Connolly 1994; Crozier 1989; Hage 1998; Rizvi 1991; Varenne and McDermott 1998).

The foregoing critique is not meant to imply that schooling has no role in teaching about cultural diversity and against racism. After all, if we are to better understand and overcome racism in society, there needs to be sustained attention to the role that schooling could play, both in delegitimizing, as well as legitimating, racialized identities and in promoting and contesting racism. However, I have argued that struggle to reflect the interests, and validate the identities of, racialized minorities in the Irish curriculum via intercultural education has taken the form of an accommodation, rather than radical change – an accommodation which while likely to ease the polity’s conscience (Page 1994), constitutes a form of symbolic violence which perpetuates – rather than eliminates – existing relations of racial dominance and subordination.

Collectively, these findings underscore the need for alternative pedagogical strategies which extend far beyond curricular supplements, add-ons and intercultural guidelines (Roman and Stanley 1997). It implies the need for a far more critical vision of what multicultural education might entail, something akin to a:

... radical redefinition of school knowledge from the heterogeneous perspectives and identities of racially disadvantaged groups – a process that goes beyond the language of ‘inclusivity’ and emphasizes relationality and mutlivocality as the central intellectual forces in the production of knowledge. (McCarthy 1993, 290)

Stated another way, what is needed is a reconfiguration of the existing curriculum so that it is reconstituted from the point of view of those who are most marginalized within society (Connell 1993, 2000).

Furthermore, it is argued that education should be viewed as but one channel through which we should attempt to alleviate racism in society, in light of the extent to which racism, as well as anti-racist educational interventions, are shaped by both

national and international forces that extend far beyond the school. In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of racism and anti-racism in the Irish context, it is important to highlight the ways in which schooling is linked to these broader political or economic structures and forces. The foregoing analysis of Irish national anti-racism policy suggests that Irish state-sanctioned multiculturalism is far more concerned with sustaining and enhancing the national interest through economic growth and income generation, than it is with developing a truly inclusionary or post-racist society. To the extent that education systems are deeply implicated in this economic development agenda, it is likely that schools will ultimately privilege those elements of the curriculum likely to enhance prospects for economic growth over and above genuinely progressive anti-racist interventions.

Educationalists have long recognized that schools are often called upon as a solution to complex social problems when policy makers and politicians are unsure about what to do, or in which government policies and practices are themselves implicated. Importantly, Page (1994) suggests that the relegation of social problems to schools has the convenient effect of absolving the polity's conscience, while simultaneously creating a ready scapegoat that can be blamed when the problems are not resolved or ameliorated. Similarly, problematizing what she describes as the *education as panacea* perspective, Vavrus (2003), highlights that schooling occurs within specific social and political-economic contexts that may mitigate – or even reverse – its progressive effects. Drawing on this argument, I suggest that the potential for intercultural education to help to alleviate racism, as its goals suggest, is all the more blunted as its implementation coincided with a set of political-economic arrangements which provided the structural basis for the intensification of racism in Celtic Tiger Ireland. Garner (2004), for example, outline a series of ideological and economic processes that have given rise to what he dubs the 'current configuration' of racism that emerged in Ireland in the mid 1990s which co-exist alongside older versions of racism, including anti-Semitism and anti-Traveller racism (Garner 2004, 228). More specifically, he offers the following explanatory framework for the emergence of newly racist configurations during the so-called Celtic Tiger era.

Labelling the economic situation a 'boom', then, distracts attention from other trends, such as income polarization, regional wealth discrepancies and a changing relationship between income and profits... It is against centripetal forces, a background of increasing profitability of companies, increasing wealth but also increasing discrepancies of wealth (regional, sectorial and by quintile) and an overall perceived drop in the quality of life (Deegan 2002), that the resurgence of racist ideas and practices must be read. (Garner 2004, 48)

Other facets of the Celtic Tiger paradox (Loyal 2003), including increasingly flexible labour market conditions (in the form of part-time and temporary employment contracts), an out-of-control property market, and soaring cost of living more generally, have also contributed to the development of what has been described in other geographical contexts as a new politics of uncertainty and insecurity (Ball and Vincent 2001). It is against conditions such as these which result in heightened material and psychological vulnerability that the new configurations of racism against indigenous and exogenous Others must be read (Garner 2004). To this end, the intensification of racism in Irish society is best understood, not as a consequence of an individualized 'fear of strangers' as those who spearhead national anti-racism policies and awareness campaigns would have us believe, but, at least in part, as 'a corollary

of the mismatch of expectations and reality in a period of intense economic and social change' (Garner 2004, 227). Referring specifically to refugees in Ireland and Europe more generally, Loyal (2003) argues that they are often represented as being responsible for numerous social and economic problems that typically already existed long before their arrival, including housing shortages, unemployment and a lack of adequate statutory provisions. He explains how:

For many disempowered sections of the population, racist discourses often constitute a description of, and explanation for, the world they experience on a day-to-day basis. Racist discourse is an ideological account of the social world which recognizes and offers an explanation for the housing crisis, for the lack of jobs, for the continuance of poverty – experiences which many marginalized groups face. As a correlate of racialization, racism therefore serves to make a causal link between observed, material differences in Irish society and signified phenotypical and cultural differences of black and ethnic minorities. It helps to make sense of the economic and social changes accompanying poverty, urban decline and social exclusion, as they are experienced by sections of the working class within the context of a booming Celtic Tiger economy. (Loyal 2003, 87)

While the unprecedented wealth of the Celtic Tiger has also been accompanied by increased relative poverty and social exclusion amongst the working classes, it can also be argued that middle classes privilege and security have also been somewhat disrupted, by *inter alia*, competitive pressures, an increasingly flexible and insecure labour market, patterns of performance-related pay, the property market and soaring cost of living. Within such contexts, the response to immigrants, as well as to indigenous minorities who are deemed unproductive and/or undeserving, is likely to depend on the extent to which indigenous and dominant cultural groups feel that their jobs, living standards, or economic and cultural privilege are threatened, or secure (Rizvi 1991). From this vantage point, racism can also be understood as a response to socio-economic conditions which heighten material vulnerabilities and anxieties, anxieties which are projected onto vulnerable groups like Travellers, asylum seekers and economic migrants who are deemed privileged recipients of diminishing national resources, such as welfare payments, jobs or land (Garner 2004; Hage 2003; Rizvi 1991).

Far from helping to prevent racism, therefore, the kind of state-sanctioned interculturalism and anti-racism I have profiled here merely serves to deflect attention from a host of broader economic policies coinciding with the Celtic Tiger era that are implicated in the production and intensification of racism in Irish society through their heightening of material inequalities and psychological vulnerabilities (Garner 2004). This is all the more problematic when viewed in light of the increasing reliance on intercultural education and state-sanctioned interculturalism and anti-racism as policy panaceas to the intensification of racism in Irish society. Rather, as I have been attempting to highlight here, schooling should be viewed as one channel through which we should attempt to alleviate racism in society. Those educational interventions which are most likely to be effective are those which foreground racism's structural foundations and which place racialized minority groups at the centre, rather than at the periphery of the intercultural debate. This necessitates displacing the nationalist argumentation that remains at the core of intercultural discourse, and replacing it with a more global lens from which to consider the social construction and complexity of racisms in their historical and contemporary forms, in both local, and global contexts.

## Notes

1. A consideration of curricular initiatives to enable students to develop a specifically 'European identity', and their relatedness to the intercultural educational project is beyond the scope of this paper and has been addressed elsewhere (see Bryan 2006). It is important to note, however, that intercultural education is being implemented at the same time as a specifically 'European dimension' has been incorporated into all levels of the national curriculum in Ireland. The European dimension is designed to inculcate not only information and knowledge about the European Union, but the promotion of values that are purported to be characteristically European, with an emotional identification with Europe, or a sense of 'Europeanness' (Sultana 1995). From an (official) Irish perspective, European identity does not present a challenge to Irish identity, but rather 'complements it' (Department of Education and Science 1995, 213).
2. The exact details of the anniversary, such as when BHC was established, as well as when the celebrations were held, have been omitted, as have identifying details of the political figure's real name and title to protect the identity of the school.
3. This consideration of nationality pertains to the 'nation' side of the nation-state formulation, i.e., that which relates to one's sense of belonging at the cultural level, in terms of one's sense of being part of the Irish 'imagined community', and not to the state *per se*, which pertains more directly to the political realm of governance (McCrone 2005).
4. The term 'refugee' refers to the legal status conferred by the relevant host society authorities on an individual whose personal circumstances meet the criteria stipulated in the 1951 Geneva Convention (Galvin 2000). As defined by this Convention, a refugee is a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his [sic] nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it' (Article 1A(2)). 'Programme refugees' are groups who, in cases of manifest crisis, are granted temporary protection in the country by government decision on an organized basis. Programme refugees are thus distinct from 'Convention refugees' (after the 1951 Geneva Convention), namely those persons who are granted asylum on the basis of individual applications which they have made on the grounds of fear of persecution.

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