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Theorising the (de)construction of ethnic stigma in compulsory education

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Abstract

Until recently confined to a limited number of mainly Anglo-Saxon countries, anti-racist policies are now being formulated across Western Europe, spurred in part by the top-down influence of EU and global human rights institutions. However, psychological and sociological research on ethnic prejudice suggests that current initiatives seldom address its deep political roots, placing on isolated bodies and interventions the burden of counteracting vastly superior structural forces. This paper examines the unfolding of such a paradox in the realm of primary and secondary education, where notions of interculturalism have become part of mainstream policy and practice. Based on a synthesis of the empirical literature, it argues that biased curricula, overwhelmingly White teachers and inter-school ethnic segregation provide a fertile ground for the development of racist attitudes among children. It then goes on to show that education policies generally ignore, exacerbate or inadequately address these cross-national trends, even when they are explicitly singled out as impediments to migrant integration, social cohesion or equal opportunities. Finally, it outlines the far-ranging reforms that would be necessary in order to establish genuinely anti-racist education systems, as well as political challenges and opportunities for such a transformation.

Keywords

Ethnic prejudice, anti-racism, interculturalism, education policy, segregation, curriculum, positive action, religious schools, national identity, Eurocentrism

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1. Introduction

In recent years, a number of migration scholars have documented the pervasiveness of negative attitudes toward various categories of immigrants and their descendants in Western Europe (Zick & Pettigrew, 2009). They have also set about identifying the structural drivers of racism,[1] such as the media frames (Gattino & Tartaglia, 2015; Blinder, 2015; Igartua, 2011), academic traditions (Reiter, 2012), political discourses (Schmuck & Matthes, 2015; Anderson, 2013), national ideologies (Curtis, 2014; Pehrson et. al., 2009; Weldon, 2006; Hjerm, 2004; De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Dahinden, Duemmler & Moret, 2014) and spatial segregations (Semyonov & Glickman, 2009) that conspire to create perceptions of a migration-related economic and cultural threat (Bloom, Arikan & Lahav, 2015). Since the turn of the millennium, this has been compounded by the rise of the Islamic religion as a source of Western anxieties (Strabac & Listhaug, 2008). Reversing the perspective, research has shown that representations of immigrants as an economic asset (Turper et. al., 2015), interethnic cooperation and friendship (Pettigrew, 2008; Davies et al., 2011), narratives of historical tolerance (Smeekes et. al., 2011) and inclusive definitions of the national community (Pehrson et. al., 2009) tend to increase the acceptance of ethnic minorities.

At a time of official consensus on the need to put anti-discrimination at the core of European integration policy (Guiraudon, 2009; Joppke, 2007), however, there has been little empirical work on the racism-enhancing properties of political institutions themselves. State-centred theories of racism have been more prominent outside the field, especially among historians (Fredrickson, 2002; Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990; Smith, 1991), sociologists (Wieviorka, 1993; Solomos, 2003; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Feagin, 2006; Omi & Winant, 2014; Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991; Brubaker, 2009), cultural studies scholars (Gilroy, 2004), political philosophers (Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2008; Anderson, 2010) and critical legal theorists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013). While providing invaluable insights on the (ab)use of political power for the perpetuation of White domination, these have usually been based on a limited number of case studies (especially in the US and Britain) that limit the transferability of their concepts and results. Moreover, those with a broader scope have rarely engaged with the micro processes that mediate between specific

[1] Racism is a contested concept that has been deployed with varying degrees of emphasis on agents and structure, as well as culture and biology. Since this paper aims to uncover the links between political institutions and individual attitudes, the "racist" label will be applied exclusively to the latter. However, the strong association between cultural and biological stereotypes in contemporary forms of prejudice (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Pettigrew et al., 1997) makes it unnecessary for the present analysis to systematically distinguish these sources of stigma. Therefore, "racism" and "ethnic prejudice" will be used interchangeably.

policies and individual attitudes, hampering the differentiation between core and more peripheral causes of racism. A noteworthy exception can be found in the field of education, which has built on pioneers such as Troyna (1993; Troyna & Hatcher, 1992; Troyna & Carrington, 1990) to produce a number of policy-relevant comparative studies on the determinants of childhood racism. Since ethnic biases emerge as early as five years of age (Raabe & Beelmaann, 2011) and the school environment provides much of the social and normative backdrop for children's development, compulsory education is likely to play a vital role in the overall governance of inter-ethnic relations, along with the citizenship regimes that are more frequently analysed in migration scholarship (Huddleston et al., 2015).

By drawing on various types of educational research, including critical theory, policy descriptions, curriculum analyses, attitude surveys and ethnographic observations, this paper seeks to construct a precise yet parsimonious account of the links between state-regulated education systems and ethnic prejudice. Rather than examining a single context in depth, it focuses on the general Western European trends revealed by recurring themes and international projects, interpreting them in the light of similar studies conducted in other comparable settings. Because of the dynamic nature of schooling arrangements and ethnic relations, an effort is made to highlight long-term processes rather than more contingent ones. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that sudden and unforeseen changes might alter the importance of such processes in attitude formation; indeed, an implicit assumption of policy-oriented theorising is that institutional change is both possible and, at least when it comes to eliminating racism, desirable (Apple, 2008).

The argument proceeds in three parts. First, it addresses the problems of curriculum bias, teacher homogeneity and pupil segregation as crucial racist forces ingrained in current education systems. Subsequently, it highlights the lessons learned from unsuccessful attempts to correct these patterns without disrupting their underlying causes. Finally, it identifies a number of promising reforms whose generalisation seems necessary in order to reconcile compulsory education with ethnic and racial equality. The concluding section examines the feasibility of such a transformation within the wider dynamics of citizenship politics.

2. Understanding the problem

Despite the variety of their immigration histories and official "philosophies of integration" (Favell, 2001), Western European states have faced remarkably similar challenges when it comes to normalising ethnic differences in the educational sphere.

Broadly speaking, these can be grouped into three categories: White, European and Christian biases in the curriculum; underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the teaching workforce; and high levels of between-school ethnic segregation.

Attitude research shows a general pattern of positive national identification and selective derogation of other national groups among majority children, although there does not seem to be a direct causal relationship between the former and the latter. It also suggests that national identity is often defined in racial and cultural terms, so that minority pupils sometimes exclude themselves from a national category based on their ethnicity. The precise pattern of preferences varies through time and space, with historical geopolitical rivals (Turks in Greece, Germans in the United Kingdom) arousing the highest levels of hostility and entire continents (Africa, Asia and South America) frequently remaining unknown (Barrett, 2007; Oppenheimer, 2006; Carrington & Short, 1995; Philippou & Theodorou, 2014). Cross-nationally, non-Whites and Muslims tend to elicit the most negative stereotypes (Scourfield et al., 2006; Von der Lippe, 2011; Enesco et al., 2005). Prejudices are often justified in moral terms (the other culture is authoritarian or against human rights) and strongly gendered, representing especially boys as violent and girls as submissive (Dahinden et al., 2014).

The determinants of children's national and ethnic attitudes include such contextual elements as holiday destinations, media discourses and personal acquaintances, but the contents and omissions of the school curriculum also seem to play a significant role (Barrett, 2007). To varying degrees, all European states actively intervene in setting educational standards, evaluating students, training teachers and, in some cases, writing or approving textbooks. This involvement tends to result in the hegemony of the cultural groups that happen to dominate political institutions at a given time and whose perspectives shape the sociological, aesthetic and normative aspects of subjects such as history, geography, citizenship, religion and literature. In history, curricula tend to focus of the emergence and triumphs of the state, glossing over its internal divisions, exaggerating its global influence, downplaying its crimes and disregarding important events that took place beyond its boundaries. In geography, they naturalise existing borders based on outstanding landmarks, such as rivers, mountains and seas, overlook their temporal shifts and inaccurately make them coincide with the distribution of national languages and religions. In citizenship, they equate universal moral principles with national values, ignore the latter's failures to live up to the former and represent foreign cultures as less civilised or outright barbaric. In religion, they simultaneously stress the secularisation of the state and the Christian roots of the national culture, depicting other faiths as incompatible with modernity. In literature, they stick to a narrow canon that exalts dominant social practices and

aesthetic standards and regularly glorifies warfare in terms of expansion, survival and heroism. The development of European Union and Council of Europe institutions aimed at steering state curricula toward a more pan-European perspective has corrected some nationalist excesses but substituted them with an equally exclusivist discourse on the continental identity. This narrative identifies Ancient Greece and Rome, Medieval Christianity, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution as the building blocks of European arts, science, politics, economy and law, paying little attention to the ways in which all of these were affected by external influences (Coulby, 1995, 2000).

While the specific events and the relative salience of their national and European dimensions may vary from one subject or state to the next, no official curriculum seems to escape the lure of ethnocentrism (Schissler & Soysal, 2005; Faas, 2011). Biases can be transmitted in textbooks through a number of explicit and more subtle means, such as the division of instructional units, the amount of space devoted to each topic, the proportional representation of different racial and ethnic categories, the roles in which they are depicted and the adjectives used to describe them (Portera, 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 1991; Bennett, 2001). Taken together, they contribute to the exclusion of ethnic minorities from national and European prototypes (Wenzel et al., 2007) and impede the creation of superordinate common identities (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).

At school and classroom level, official knowledge is mediated by teaching strategies, which hold the potential of counteracting textbook biases through critical commentaries and additional materials conveying minority perspectives (Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; May, 1999; Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Kincheloe, 2008; Orlowski, 2012). However, standardised evaluations and efficiency concerns provide strong incentives for teachers to adhere closely, and sometimes exclusively, to the prescribed contents (Maroy, 2009; Crawford & Foster, 2006; Baquès, 2006). To the extent that they complement them with personal knowledge and judgments, they are more likely than not to perpetuate rather than undermine existing preconceptions (Sunier, 2004; Mannitz, 2004). A key reason for this is that, as far as the limited data available can show, ethnic minorities are heavily underrepresented in the teaching force (Driessen, 2015; Little, 2010). Social identity theory predicts, and ethnographic research confirms, that (often unacknowledged) racist assumptions may permeate White teachers' interactions with pupils through differential expectations, evaluations and sanctions. Anti-racist and multicultural issues, unevenly addressed in teacher training programmes, are typically seen as a superfluous distraction from more important subjects or reframed in terms of cultural deficit; racist incidents are overlooked or

dismissed as harmless. Overall, teachers tend to agree with the worldview conveyed in the official curriculum, which both validates their own and enhances their status (Lander, 2011; Mansikka & Holm, 2011; Hajisoteriou, 2012; Jarkovská et al., 2015; Crozier et al., 2008; Rosvall & Öhrn, 2014; for US evidence, see McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Picower, 2009; Devine, 2005; Cammarota, 2014). Students whose personal experiences or family histories are left out of the official narrative often lose interest in the related subjects and seldom aspire to teach them as adults (Grever et al., 2008; Harris & Reynolds, 2014; Hawkey & Prior, 2011; Bariso, 2001).

Independently of actual attitudes or behaviours, homogeneous teaching staffs inscribe European Whiteness as an implicit school or classroom norm. According to developmental intergroup theory (Bigler & Liben, 2007), children identify meaningful criteria for social categorization and make stereotypical inferences based on the composition of their social environment, including correlations between ethnicity and the performance of specific roles in various spheres. Because of their high status, teachers provide easily accessible cues for normative group behaviour and characteristics (Hogg & Reid, 2005; Jugert et al., 2011). In turn, pupils who are seen as deviating from the norm become the target of derogation (Marques & Paez, 1994), especially in competitive contexts that increase the salience of group identity and expectations of conformism (Abrams and Rutland, 2008).

Inter-school pupil segregation exacerbates all the above mentioned drivers of racism, as well as creating new ones. PISA surveys reveal that natives attend schools with an average proportion of foreign-origin students below 10% in virtually all EU states, but that this share multiplies two to five-fold for the latter (OECD, 2010: 36). Moreover, immigrants cluster in working-class establishments (OECD, 2013a: 83). Part of this uneven distribution can be explained by residential patterns, although it is unclear how much neighbourhood segregation can itself be traced back to parents' search for homogeneous school districts (OECD, 2010: 82; Van Zanten & Ball, 2003). More recently, market-based policies increasing parental choice, school autonomy and private ownership have provided incentives for race and class-based specialisation, probably leading to greater within-school and between-school segregation (Van Zanten, 2012; but see Alegre & Ferrer, 2010). Whereas upper-class schools adopt an international orientation, focus on achievement and exclude troublemakers, middle-class ones strive to remain attractive by offering special options, multiplying promotional activities and isolating minority students in technical or professional tracks. At the bottom of the hierarchy, "humanitarian" schools adapt to their disadvantaged and racialised intake by developing a strong egalitarian ethos and services for students with learning difficulties (Van Zanten, 2009; Ball & Maroy, 2008). Because of the

frequent correlation between ethnicity and religion, confessional schools provide an additional source of segregation, especially where they are allowed to select their students according to their beliefs or lifestyle (Maussen & Bader, 2015).

Since teachers and principals tend to align their practices with the preferences of the population they serve, White schools and classrooms are less likely than multi-ethnic ones to stress minority rights, enforce strict sanctions against racist behaviour and present counter-hegemonic perspectives on historical, artistic and social issues (Gaine, 2000; Milner, 2005, Allemann-Ghionda, 2008: 40; Pratas, 2010; Garreta Bochaca, 2006; Aguado & Malik, 2011). They also provide a fertile ground for overt or covert discrimination in staff recruitment and management, strengthening the personnel's homogeneity (Mirza & Meetoo, 2012; Bariso, 2001). Perhaps more importantly, they greatly reduce the opportunity for White children's interaction and friendship with minority peers (Bagci et al., 2014). Available evidence suggests that cooperative contact can contain and even reverse the rise of prejudiced attitudes between middle childhood and adolescence (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011), especially when it is endorsed by egalitarian school norms (Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). This condition appears more likely to obtain in older immigration countries, whereas new ones evince no significant relationship between the share of foreign-origin students in classrooms and pupils' inclusive attitudes (Janmaat, 2014).

3. Learning from mistakes

At the level of official policy, several European states and international organisations have recognised the need to promote interethnic tolerance or dialogue through various forms of multi/intercultural education (Grant & Portera, 2012; Faas et al., 2014). While the scope and implementation of these initiatives depends on the local and national context (Qureshi & Janmaat, 2014), a growing number of policy statements conceive biased curricula, homogeneous teaching bodies and segregated students as sources of racism that should be addressed in one way or another (Szalai et al., 2009; Maussen & Bader, 2012). However, past research (mainly conducted in the US) suggests that some of the well-meaning remedies that are currently being tried out might ultimately prove ineffective or even counter-productive.

Where schools have received incentives for the implementation of anti-racist programs, one of the most popular strategies has been to develop specific didactic units or activities exposing children to minority traditions, experiences and achievements, on the premise that better and more positive knowledge about minority groups can displace negative stereotypes. Textbooks, literature, music, food, pictures

and films have been put to this purpose in primary and secondary-level classes of citizenship education (Eurydice, 2005), world religions (Pépin, 2009; Santoro, 2008; Albert, 2010; Jackson, 2014) and history (Zajda, 2015; Hawkey & Prior, 2011), among others. Unfortunately, the desired effects often fail to materialise, for a number of reasons. First of all, the limited class time devoted to these additive approaches (Banks, 2004) cannot counterbalance the considerably greater amount of stereotype-consistent information transmitted by the curriculum. Moreover, very young or highly prejudiced children typically forget most counter-stereotypical information or use it to create new subtypes (say, Black scientists) that leave the prototype of the general category (Black people) intact. As a result, activities that convey a mix of stereotypical and counter-stereotypical information may actually lead to an increase in prejudice, as the latter is discarded in favour of the former (Bigler, 1999; Aboud & Levy, 2000; Pfeifer et al., 2007; Paluck & Green, 2009; Walton et al., 2013; Aboud et al., 2012).

Despite their laudable goals, curriculum planners and teachers may also fall in the trap of benign prejudice, transmitting positive stereotypes that validate rather than undermine prevailing conceptions. Recent research has shown that most prejudices are not uniformly negative but rather ambivalent, focusing either on the warmth or the competence of a given social category: whereas powerful outgroups tend to be seen as cold but skilled, subordinated ones elicit perceptions of warmth and ineptitude (Fiske et al., 2002). To the extent that such images have entered common sense, education professionals will be tempted to depict, for instance, economically successful minorities as hardworking and struggling ones as sociable (Portera, 2004; Harris & Clarke, 2011; Archer & Francis, 2005; Ng et al., 2007). Of course, such discourses do little to alter feelings of envy toward the former and pity toward the latter (Cuddy et al., 2007). Moreover, all stereotypical representations ultimately accentuate the perception of intra-group homogeneity and inter-group difference, the basic cognitive process that should be superseded in order to prevent the development of discriminatory attitudes (Brewer, 1997; Levy, 1999; Rattan & Ambady, 2013).

Similarly, classroom lessons and debates aimed at tackling racial injustice can easily be subverted by the rearticulation of implicitly racist discourses (Gorski, 2008, 2006). Such discourses might state, for instance, that racism is an exceptional phenomenon affecting a limited number of ignorant or deluded individuals; that it expresses itself exclusively in overt name-calling or aggression; that it is a direct product of migration and (problematic) cultural differences; that it is actively combated, rather than reproduced, by public institutions; and that it can effectively be eliminated by providing people with facts and moral guidance (Bryan, 2012). At the same time, teachers' willingness to prevent inappropriate comments and overheated reactions can

inhibit the establishment of an open dialogue where opposing viewpoints can be expressed and scrutinised (Radstake & Leeman, 2010; Modica, 2015; Rivière, 2008).

The shortcomings of curriculum reform have spurred some minority parents to look for more adequate educational offerings, either in the abovementioned "humanitarian" public schools or in privately managed and often religious establishments (Denessen et al., 2005; Weekes-Bernard, 2007). This poses a challenge to states' overtly integrationist policies and raises moral and legal dilemmas in terms of weighing individual autonomy against long-term social equality (Bader, 2007; Merry, 2013). Depending of the social context and the structure of local, regional and national policy arenas, a variety of contradictory responses emerge. On the one hand, educational authorities are overcoming their traditional reluctance to license Muslim and other minority religious schools, breaking a long-standing Judeo-Christian monopoly on the religious education market. Combined with the long-term trend toward near-equal public funding of faith schools and parents' strategic use of religious identity as a proxy for ethnicity, this ensures the enduring popularity of religious schools in otherwise highly secularised societies (Dronkers & Avram, 2015; Maussen & Bader, 2015; Merry, 2015). Targeted funding for "humanitarian" public schools, theoretically designed to improve the quality of their teaching and infrastructure, can add incentives for segregation in the form of specialised services for newcomers, bilingual instruction and minority teaching assistants (Eurydice, 2014: 36-37; OECD, 2010; Bénabou et al., 2009: 352).

On the other hand, political concerns about ethnic isolation and religious radicalisation trigger sporadic attempts to counteract these structural forces through imposed mixing schemes. These may involve bussing minority students to White schools or, conversely, restricting exemptions to district-based allotment, merging majority and minority districts, closing segregated schools and opening new ones in more diverse areas or setting an upper limit on the proportion of minority pupils enrolled in a given public school, allegedly below the "tipping point" of White flight (Bakker et al., 2011). While such initiatives hold the promise of rebalancing the distribution of students in public schools, they often fail to deliver their intended outcomes. One of the main reasons is that, thanks to the thriving private education market and loopholes in residence-based allotment mechanisms, White parents can usually shun multi-ethnic public schools without having to undertake a costly change of domicile (Van Zanten, 2011; Oberti & Rivière, 2014). Alternatively, they can mobilise in favour of internal re-segregation or a reversal of mixing policies. Since minorities typically bear a disproportionate cost of mandatory desegregation in the form of longer

travel times and job losses, they sometimes join White opponents or remain divided on this issue (Schofield & Hausmann, 2004).

Even when a degree of diversification takes place, both majority and minority children tend to show a preference for same-ethnic friends, especially when their in-group condones such discrimination and when neighbourhoods remain segregated (Quintana, 2007; Vermeij et al., 2009). Equal-status interactions are also hampered by the persisting "whiteness" of the curriculum and staff (Schofield, 2004: 802), which exposes minorities to the aforementioned "black sheep effect". In particular, their relative powerlessness makes them vulnerable to various types of racist victimisation (Graham, 2006; Juvonen et al., 2014; Thijs et al., 2014), including name-calling, harassment, physical attacks, as well as more subtle (and often gendered) forms of depreciation and exclusion (Duncan, 2002; Hällgren, 2005; Devine et al., 2008; Due & Riggs, 2009; Phoenix, 2009; Pagani et al., 2011; Cammarota & Aguilera, 2012; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Ipsa-Landa, 2013). Increasing the number of minority students offers a higher degree of peer protection but can be perceived by natives as a threat to their privileged position, which translates into more in-group preference (Smith, 2015; Stefanek et al., 2015). In the worst cases, mixing schemes that lack broad support from the community provide a breeding ground for pervasive neighbourhood conflict and acts of violence (Miah, 2012). Since the net effect of contact on attitudes depends on the relative amount of positive and negative interactions, dysfunctional schools can actually lead to an intensification of ethnic hostility (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2013).

Similar problems arise when ad hoc attempts are made to diversify the teaching force, usually on the rationale that minority teachers will act as role models or buffers against systemic racism (Driessen, 2015; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). While the latter effect may sometimes materialise, as the above discussion and some empirical studies suggest (Quicho & Rios, 2000; Kohli, 2014; Hickling-Hudson, 2011; Salinas & Castro, 2010; Sensoy, 2007; Carr & Klassen, 1996), it comes at a high cost. Targeted with suspicions of inferior qualification or inappropriate cultural practices, ethnic tokens often face distrustful colleagues and parents, irreverent students, limited administrative support and restricted prospects of advancement (Lee, 2013; Nguyen, 2012; Schmidt, 2010; Subedi, 2008; Castaneda et al., 2006; Maboleka & Madsen, 2003; Haynes, 2003; Quiocho & Rios, 2000). They also risk being pigeonholed into the role of "minority experts" in charge of all ethnicity-related school issues, diminishing the time available for other activities and relieving the rest of the personnel from the burden of developing culturally responsive practices (Santoro, 2013; Brown, 2012; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Maylor, 2009; Kelly, 2007). As early as teacher training courses, expected hardships push many to segregated minority schools or alternative careers

(Brooks, 2014; Carrington & Skelton, 2003; Carrington et al., 2000; Basit, 2007). White teachers in predominantly non-white schools can also become ostracised as unprepared or insensitive by their colleagues and students, even when efforts are made to uphold strict taboos on racial discourses (Buehler, 2013).

4. Looking for answers

The fundamental flaw shared by many anti-racist educational policies is that they are implemented on top of existing sets of racist rules and practices, placing on isolated schools, programmes and individuals the burden of counteracting vastly superior, ongoing structural forces. A more promising approach would consist in modifying the underlying institutions that create the conditions for the development of childhood racism, building on the insights of critical theorists and the experience of innovative educational authorities. Such reforms should start by correcting the biased knowledge teachers are currently entrusted to impart, before moving on to increase the number of minority professionals within their ranks and ensure that (especially White) students are offered sufficient opportunities to meet and befriend ethnically diverse peers.

In many European states, textbooks are regularly screened in order to remove blatant stereotypes (Fuchs, 2011). Educational authorities have also undertaken to complement national, European and regional themes with global issues and perspectives (Soysal & Wong, 2007; Buckner, 2013), in line with a worldwide educational ideology emphasising individual development, economic efficiency, democracy and human rights (Fiala, 2007; Meyer et al., 2007; Moutsios, 2009). While this evolution stops short of evacuating the racist assumptions that have shaped contemporary understandings of history, citizenship, religion and the arts (see e.g. Maylor, 2010; Faas & Ross, 2012; Engel & Ortloff, 2009), the partial rescaling of the "politics of knowledge" to supra-national arenas (Soysal & Schissler, 2005) does hold the promise of increasing pupils' appreciation of previously neglected Asian, African and Native American viewpoints (Ramirez et al., 2009). Judging by the Council of Europe's experience in promoting international exchanges and coordination among educational stakeholders (Low-Beer, 1997; Council of Europe, 1995) and similar initiatives currently led by UNESCO (Pingel, 2010), this would not entail much reduction in nationally specific knowledge but rather the replacement of "nationalist" by merely "national" curricula, where locally relevant topics would be framed by their global underpinnings and implications (Soysal & Wong, 2007; Lechner, 2007; Banks, 2008; Giroux, 2005). Previously obscured achievements would come to the fore, whereas some national heroes would lose their aura of moral superiority. National

indebtedness to foreign contributions would also be addressed, challenging colonial narratives of victimhood and helplessness (Council of Europe, 2008; UNESCO, 2006; OSCE, 2007). More problematically, the less palatable realities of enduring inequality and conflict might be downplayed for the sake of international trust building, thus trading mythical national narratives for utopian visions of an emerging world society (Meyer, 2007).

In addition to international cooperation, the inclusion of new actors and concerns in national-level processes of curriculum and textbook development could do much to transform prevailing representations. Despite much criticism of the so-called "culture wars" and other forms of identity politics, a greater politicisation of curricular content seems like a logical by-product of citizens' interest in checking the misuses of institutionalised discourse (Lebow, 2008; Repoussi & Tutiaux-Guillon, 2010). In this sense, ethnic mobilisations against biased histories, religious exclusivism and literary canons should be encouraged and exploited through high-level consultation and representation (Dunne, 2003). Nation-wide standards, which restrict the autonomy traditionally enjoyed by some schools and teachers in content selection and assessment, have often been used to enforce assimilation and prevent ethnicised schools from questioning dominant perspectives (Stoltz, 2011; Moore, 2006; Sleeter, 2005). However, loosening elites' stranglehold on the definition of legitimate knowledge would allow them to be harnessed in the service of critical pedagogy, by obliging reluctant (White) establishments to follow in the steps of their more diverse counterparts (Maylor & Read, 2007).

In addition to forging inclusive national identities, improving perceptions of ethnic warmth and competence and undermining race or culture-based categorization (see Stephan & Stephan, 2004 for a list of prejudice-reducing processes), a more even-handed curriculum may stimulate minority students' willingness to enter the teaching profession, mitigating their paucity among trainees (see Osler, 1994; Ryan, 2009). Another positive feedback on teacher diversification would come from the anti-racist knowledge acquired by White trainees, who might develop more complex professional identities and offer less resistance to the incorporation of minority colleagues (Vavrus, 2002). Provided with a more welcoming environment and greater opportunities, minority teachers would become more likely to complete their training, find work and remain in the profession (Dieker et al., 2003). In turn, their increased representation in the educational field would induce incumbents to adapt their own practices and spur structural changes throughout the whole system, from management to pedagogy, discipline, assessment, dress codes and community relations (Johnson, 2003; Blair, 2002; Walker & Dimmock, 2005; Zirkel, 2008).

Admittedly, some bastions of whiteness might remain shielded from this virtuous cycle, especially if they are allowed to depart significantly from curricular guidelines or select their staff based on a vaguely defined religious ethos (Ward, 2008). In most cases, however, such loopholes could be closed through tighter regulation and/or incentives. Quality standards could once again provide a persuasive rationale for extending national curricula and examinations to all state-funded schools, including privately managed ones. To the privately funded, which could only cater to relatively affluent and/or reclusive communities, states would offer a choice between upholding somewhat less stringent criteria, consistent with the rights of the child, or renouncing official certification (for similar proposals, see Callan, 1997: 162-195; Gutmann, 1999: 64-70, 115-121; various chapters in McDonough & Feinberg, 2003). The resulting centralisation of curriculum-setting prerogatives would almost certainly trigger new culture wars on the national political scene (Moreno, 2007), but these could only strengthen the symbolic position of currently subordinated social categories (for a more sceptical assessment, see Apple, 2003). Ending religion-based recruitment might be less polemical, to the extent that the practice only persists in a few states under a legally questionable exception to existing prohibitions on employment discrimination (Bribosia & Rorive, 2010: 48 ff). Since covert biases are likely to linger long after their explicit forms have been banned (Devine, 1989; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), a combination of financial penalties and rewards could prompt laggards to follow suit. Such measures should be sensitive to a variety of ethnic categories and to the specific position of minority employees, preventing their concentration at the bottom of the hierarchy (see European Commission, 2009, for a list of recommendations on the implementation of positive action schemes).

Mirroring the knock-on effect of curricular reform on teacher diversity, the transformation of all primary and secondary schools in multi-ethnic environments would encourage parents to pay greater attention to non-racial indicators of school adequacy, such as proximity, pedagogy, infrastructure, optional courses or extracurricular activities (OECD, 2012a: 136-137). To speed up this process, ethnicity-based positive action in staff recruitment could be extended to student enrolment, following the lead of several European states where resources are adjusted to pupils' socioeconomic, linguistic or ethnic background (European Commission, 2014: 37). The resulting opportunity structure would prod overwhelmingly White schools to provide racialised families with better information and services (OECD, 2012b: 70-79) and catalyse attempts to lure White families to racialised public schools (Peters and Muskens, 2011). It would also give a competitive edge to secular or genuinely ecumenical private

schools (see Murphy, 2005; Arthur, 2005), gradually undermining the predominance of their sectarian counterparts.

Where ethnicity closely correlates with class, as is the case in most Western cities, enrolment fees might still function as tools of racial exclusion and perversely allow White schools to make up for eventual financial penalties (OECD, 2012b: 66; Levin, 2013). For this reason, as well as to fight the inherent injustice of class segregation (Robertson & Dale, 2013), all state-funded schools should be banned from charging them (Levinson, 1999: 145). Fully independent private schools would still be left off the hook, but their residual presence would become an innocuous reminder of liberal limits to individual coercion in the name of the common good. Besides, they might ultimately prove keen to welcome wealthy fee-payers whatever their ethnicity or the colour of their skin.

5. Putting theory into practice

If a primary purpose of policy-oriented theorising is to clear the path for institutional change, as posited at the beginning of this paper, it seems fitting to conclude with an outline of the challenges and opportunities currently faced by anti-racist educational reformers, some of which have already been glanced over. These can be envisaged from at least three theoretical perspectives: public opinion, electoral politics and legal constraints.

Citizens' support for pluralist policies is generally predicted by their positive views toward cultural diversity and immigrants, as well as by their confidence in the perpetuation of their own cultural identity, to the extent that it is an inclusive one (Berry, 1997). In most Western societies, all of these conditions have been seriously undermined by negative media portrayals of immigration and its consequences (Blinder & Allen, 2016), leading to a backlash against multicultural ideology and many policies signalling migrant-friendliness (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). At the same time, "interculturalism" and "integration" have consolidated themselves as conceptual and normative rallying points for the development of measures that had previously fallen under the rubric of multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 2012; Favell, 2003). This shift legitimises the reintroduction of traditionalist elements in the definition of national identities, including in the educational sphere, but it also highlights racial inequalities and conflicts and stresses the promotion of cross-ethnic interactions (Meer & Modood, 2012). Such a context provides a fertile ground for the rehabilitation of the "common school" ideal as a buffer against the atomising implications of neoliberal privatisation and the self-segregating impulses of White majority parents.

Where large-scale immigration is a recent phenomenon or strict citizenship regimes have hampered the naturalisation of ethnic minorities, progressive reforms are likely to be slowed down by their main beneficiaries' lack of political power (Huddleston & Vink, 2013). Even after these have acquired voting rights, their electoral clout is often diminished by low turnouts or limited access to political organisations and mainstream media outlets (Morales & Giugni, 2011). Thriving populist parties add a further challenge, skilfully exploiting (exclusive versions of) national identity as a rhetorical device against attempts to demythologise historical heroes, teach about previously ignored or despised religions and inject cosmopolitan values in citizenship classes (Apple, 2006; Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002; Koopmans et al., 2005). On the other hand, the stubborn reality of globalisation and its implications in terms of cultural mix are inexorably narrowing the political space for White supremacists (Joppke, 2010). The rise of the "new left" and its moral focus on the plight of discriminated social categories, from ethnic and sexual minorities to women, elders and the disabled (Fraser, 1995), also holds the potential of catalysing broad-based alliances in support of equity policies.

Last but not least, the international development of anti-discrimination law, best exemplified by a series of equality directives adopted by the European Union at the turn of the millennium (Fredman, 2011; Bamforth et al., 2008), is currently putting pressure on the remaining political and legal obstacles to the implementation of proactive anti-racist initiatives. Privacy laws are being fine-tuned in order to enable the large-scale collection of ethnic data, a vital precondition for the identification of systemic discrimination and the formulation of effective remedies (Makkonen, 2007; Bribosia y Rorive, 2010). Non-discrimination requirements are being reinterpreted in a more context-sensitive manner, opening the door to positive action in public employment and procurement (De Vos, 2007; Uyen Do, 2013). In the European Court of Human Rights, school segregation has been found to fall foul of international standards on the right to education in a string of cases concerning the Roma (Broderick, 2015), setting a powerful precedent for similarly situated ethnic minorities (Alpert, 2014). However, considerable challenges remain in the adaptation of human rights law to culturally diverse and racially stratified European societies (Solanes, 2013). Recent setbacks in minorities' right to manifest their religious identity in the educational sphere (Bosset, 2013), as well as in the disestablishment of majority religions (Ronchi, 2011), have thrown into sharp relief the law's deep embeddedness in the very social context it is sometimes called upon to transform.

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