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Postcolonial Perspective, Social Integration and Cultural Diversity vis-à-vis Neoliberal Policies and Practices in Galizan Schooling

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ABSTRACT The authors base this article on findings from two qualitative studies conducted in Galiza (northwest Spain), in the province of A Coruña: an action research project in an early childhood education classroom; and a composite of ethnographic enquiries focusing on secondary education and vocational training programmes. Both studies sought to contribute to a fundamental transformation of schooling toward a more just, integrative and democratic intercultural institution. This effort includes denouncing the processes of social exclusion operating in those contexts, which are closely related to (neo)colonial and neoliberal practices.

Introduction

While the term 'postcolonial' appears to imply a certain temporal order, Dimitriadis and McCarthy (2001) point out that post 'is not to be understood as a temporal register as in "hereafter," but as a marker of a spatial challenge of the occupying powers of the West by the ethical, political, and aesthetic forms of the marginalized' (p. 7). This understanding draws upon Hall's (1996) definition of postcolonial as 'a site of dialogic encounter that pushes us to examine center/periphery relations and conditions with specificity' (p. 255), paying particular attention to the alterability of discursive and material oppression in cultural contexts.

Postcolonial, then, encompasses challenges to new kinds of colonisation, where oppression emerges less from brute force and more from the kinds of stark economic inequities and publicity strategies that present people with 'choices' around, for example, either speaking the language of power or 'some other (minoritized) language'; staying at home and starving or finding work in a more 'developed' country; buying the latest fashions or being the class 'loser'. The situation described in this article exemplifies the broader situation in modern-day Europe: colonialism is no longer tolerated as a legitimate means of achieving power (by the United Nations, for example). Particularly since World War II, the invasion and colonisation of other peoples and nations can no longer be justified in the simple imperialist terms of 'might makes right' (see United Nations General Assembly, 1960). Nevertheless, despite this apparent improvement in our collective values system, new forms of colonialism continue to operate under the guise of more or less legitimate dynamics of globalisation.

The colonial may be defined as a system of socio-political and cultural-symbolic domination; an uneven economic exploitation; territorial occupation; the extraction of material resources; and the appropriation of human resources. In this system, some or all of the representatives of a nation, state or territory claim sovereignty over other territories that lie beyond the limits of their own, and this claim is, for them, a legitimate one. The colonial subjects are considered to belong to a lower cast, and possess fewer civil rights.

Neocolonialism is also characterised by processes of socio-political and cultural-symbolic domination; uneven economic exploitation; territorial occupation; the extraction of material resources; and the appropriation of human resources. However, the controlling state or territory does not feel the need to claim sovereignty over the other, nor would this claim be considered legitimate. This may be because the colonised subject is not legally recognised as a separate or sovereign state. It may also be due to the fact that the borders between territories are incapable of stopping the new processes of colonisation, as these processes are hidden behind other forms of legitimisation.

Our analysis, while inspired by the postcolonial perspective, draws broadly from a diversity of critical scholarship, including our own fieldwork. This helps us understand how neoliberalism – as a relatively recent ideological tenet – affects schooling in *neo*colonial ways. In essence, we argue that the neoliberal agenda is mobilised through public discourse, policy and practice to legitimise an ongoing process of invasion and occupation, so to speak, of social integration in schooling. We realise that conceiving of this process as colonial, per se, runs the risk, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has warned, of engaging postcolonial critique in a way that continues to leave out indigenous voice, but our intention is in fact completely the opposite: we aim to show how powerful that voice has been in allowing non-indigenous researchers, such as ourselves, to 'see' similar processes in today's world, as part of the complex legacy of historic colonialism.

Specifically, we explore how educational policy in the Autonomous Community of Galiza (in English know as 'Galicia') has responded to social and cultural inequities stemming from a long tradition of socioeconomic disparities, which the Galizan political economy scholar Xosé Manuel Beiras (1997) has likened to internal colonisation. Moreover, similar disparities have increasingly been associated with a rise in immigration in the region as well. We further explore how young learners from both the dominant and the minoritised ethnic groups are effectively colonised via various conduits of the neoliberal agenda. If neoliberal political media (press and advertising) discourses are helping to shape the beliefs, values and desires of middle-class White families, these discourses serve to further exclude groups already marginalised in Spanish society, most notably the Roma/Gypsies, immigrants, and the poor. We thus critically analyse how not only the 'Other', but the individual and collectivised 'Self' as well, are constructed through official, professional and popular discourses. That is, in what ways might the institution of schooling, with its pedagogical practices, be reinforcing neoliberal conceptualisations and operations, and thus be serving as yet another colonising force? We base our analysis on two studies conducted in and around the city of A Coruña (Galiza, northwest Spain): one an ethnography focusing on secondary and post-secondary education; and the other an action-research project taking place in an early childhood education classroom. On the basis of this research, we propose some curricular orientations that might contribute to a fundamental transformation of schooling towards a more just and democratic institution.

Diversity as Deficit; Integration as Assimilation

Galiza has historically been one of the poorest regions of Spain, with a long history of marginalisation and economic exploitation largely benefiting external centres of power within the Spanish State (Beiras, 1997, 2006). This ongoing legacy of imbalanced regional power relations has given rise to significant waves of emigration from Galiza over the years (Santos Solla, 2004). Nonetheless, with globalisation, Galiza is now commonly considered to have shifted from a point of departure for emigrants to a point of entry for immigrants. However, this is something of an overstatement in the Galizan context because, as of 2005, the loss of inhabitants to other regions was still greater than the influx of newcomers to Galiza (IGE, 2006), this influx slowing down since the onset of the global economic crisis ('Galicia cuenta con un 77% de residentes extranjeros menos', 2011). The most recent data from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics indicate that the nationwide foreign population continues to grow, but at a slower rate. In 2010, 12.5% of the Spanish population was foreign-born, but very unevenly distributed, leaving Galiza, at 5%, with one of the lowest concentrations in the nation (INE, 2011). This imbalanced distribution of immigration levels is in fact an effect of the internal neocolonial dynamics Beiras (1997) has referred to. That is, the long-standing absence of any substantive, statewide economic policy protecting the

regional right to exploit local resources has resulted in wealth traditionally flowing out of the Autonomous Community of Galiza. This process – as an emblematic modus operandi of colonial relations: extracting a territory's natural-resource wealth in order to benefit the inhabitants of an external (dominating) territory – has, according to Beiras (2006), only been exacerbated by the neoliberal trend towards 'liberating' local, state and global markets, or capital flows, from democratic controls. The traditional drainage of wealth from Galiza can thus now flow more freely than ever, making the region hardly a magnet for most immigrants.

Nevertheless, at both the national and regional level, the issue of immigration is experienced not so much in terms of brute numbers and percentages as in terms of a sudden presence of diversity that was inconceivable less than a generation ago. Lack of experience with cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and lack of preparation on the part of social institutions have combined to create popular rhetoric ranging from fascination with the exotic 'Other' to fear and rejection of these cultural 'invasions'. A recent survey conducted by the Ministry of Labour revealed that almost half of Spanish people viewed immigration as a negative phenomenon, using terms such as 'uncontrolled invasion' and 'saturation', and expressing concerns that these immigrants will 'create ghettos' and 'fail to integrate' [1] ('La mitad de los españoles', 2010). In 2009, 4 out of 10 Spaniards supported the expulsion of unemployed immigrants, and on average those surveyed believed strongly (8 on a scale of 1 to 10) that immigrants should be 'willing to adapt to the Spanish way of life' in order to be allowed entry (Cea D'Ancona & Valles Martínez, 2010). In Galiza, a 12-year-old Muslim girl was recently expelled from her primary school for wearing a hijab (head scarf); in order to avoid accusations of discrimination, the school policy had been changed to prohibit any kind of head-covering, its hidden agenda serving to single her out should she refuse to remove her hijab - and refuse she did [2] (Arias, 2011).

In Spain, basic school-policy documents are designed by the regional (Autonomous Community) governments, with room for adaptation by schools to their local contexts, but always in compliance with national policy. The most recent Galizan policy concerning the education of immigrants dates from 2004, and stipulates that children of immigrant families will undergo an initial evaluation to determine whether they meet one of the following three criteria:

(a) lack of knowledge of the two official languages of our Autonomous Community, Spanish and Galizan;

(b) curricular lag of two or more years, with respect to that which corresponds to their age; and

(c) experienc[ing] serious difficulties in adapting to the school environment due to social or cultural reasons. (DOG, 2004, p. 2628, our translation)

While this list suggests that immigrant children must demonstrate a clear deficiency in one of these areas in order to receive 'special attention', later in the document these measures are described as extending to 'foreign-born pupils/students, even though they do not demonstrate the aforementioned needs' (DOG, 2004, p. 2628). This fourth criterion seems to extend the specific measures described in the policy to all immigrant children, although even a cursory analysis of practice illustrates that this is far from the case.

The following year, the Galizan government published its first Newcomer Reception Plan (*Plan de Acollida*) (Consellería de Educación, 2005). At least in part, this document is couched in considerably less deficit-style terminology than the more comprehensive policy document described above:

The appropriateness of these measures, beginning with the Newcomer Reception Plan, will depend on whether these students rapidly achieve a positive school integration and on whether, no less importantly, their peers are enriched by learning about new cultures and customs, [and]… by living together they develop values of tolerance and mutual respect. (p. 9, our translation)

The wording of this plan expresses an apparent commitment to democratic and intercultural values, expressed in terms of all students being 'enriched' by the tolerance and mutual respect that comes from 'living together.' Nevertheless, a careful analysis of some of the more specific details of the Plan, as well as the wording of the legal framework in which it operates and the actual implementation of these policies in Galizan schools, reveals a variety of contradictory discourses and counter-productive practices.

A closer look at the Newcomer Reception Plan reveals some specific details that are epistemologically incompatible with what Teasley (2008a) has identified as *bi- or multidirectional integration*, as a mutually enriching form of post-inclusion integration, some elements of which appear to be present in the introductory material. The Plan is organised around four overarching objectives:

1. Undertake, as a whole school and in a global sense, the design and implementation of the educational interventions required by *these students*.
2. Foster *in them* a progressive adaptation to the school.
3. Ensure that *the children as well as their parents* are informed about the organisation and operation of the school.
4. Develop attitudes of respect towards *these students* and facilitate the process of *their integration*. (Consellería de Educación, 2005, p. 13, our translation, italics added)

As the wording in italics highlights, the tendency is to direct attention to 'these [immigrant] students' and 'their integration' and adaptation to the school. These are certainly admirable and important goals, but it is the missing part of the equation that interests us here. With this narrow focus, this discourse essentialises the immigrant student as the only object of these processes of adaptation and integration, processes that have been conceptualised in the Plan's introduction as involving the entire school community in a more global process of intercultural exchange and enrichment.

The existing students do not seem to have any need to integrate themselves with respect to these newcomers. Although they are expected to develop attitudes of respect 'towards' their immigrant peers, this does not seem to imply any mutual implication in the integration process. The Plan recognises neither the voices nor the perspectives of the immigrant 'Others', a deficit-based bias that can be seen as well at the national level in the wording of Spain's current Educational Law. Article 79(1), in establishing language [3] instruction programmes for these children, refers to them as 'those children who demonstrate serious linguistic deficits' (BOE, 2006). These children are thus seen exclusively in terms of what they lack, rather than what they can offer in terms of enrichment. In a sense, a child who is still in the process of developing a second (or third, or fourth, etc.) language is cast as possessing less cultural capital than a monolingual one, as long as this monolingual capacity happens to be in the 'right' language. *Our* children have language capacity; the newcomers have language deficits. From this point of view, it is difficult to imagine *their* integration as an intercultural, mutually enriching process.

The notion of integration underpinning these legal and policy discourses is unilateral and unidirectional and has been demonstrated to reify and minoritise these diverse students as 'Others' in various Spanish schooling contexts (Martín Rojo et al, 2003; Carrasco Pons, 2005; Fernández González, 2006). In this sense, the specific policies described in terms of 'integration' in the Plan actually reflect a more assimilationist project. In Figure 1, Teasley (2008a) provides a graphical representation of this unidirectional understanding of integration (aka assimilation), contrasted with what these processes might look like in response to a true policy of integration.

Based on their sociolinguistic studies of education, Luisa Martín Rojo et al (2003) have revisited and revised the four manifestations of acculturation originally described by Berry et al (1986): marginalisation, separation, assimilation and integration. While the original framework was designed to categorise processes emerging from immigrants' attitudes and actions with respect to their new environment, Martín Rojo et al (2003) place more emphasis on the attitudes and policies of the host community, arguing that the four types of acculturation result from policies concerning intercultural relations that are depicted graphically in Table I. According to this revised scheme, assimilationist ideologies emerge from an institutional *laissez-faire* stance that allows culturally minoritised individuals and groups to lose certain aspects of their identity, which are replaced by those favoured by the institution and by culturally dominant groups, whose own cultural characteristics remain hegemonic.

In the Galizan context, anthropological research has shown how this assimilationist imaginary operated in 1998 in the fishing town of Burela: the segment of the local population with personal or familial ties to Cape Verde numbered approximately 200 at the time, many of whom settled there at the beginning of the 1970s. These residents were mostly found to live in situations either of separation (with as little cultural interaction with the majority community as possible) or of

assimilation (Fernández González, 2006). As a response to this situation, which also involved significantly limited school achievement levels on the part of the Caboverdean youth, these researchers initiated a publicly funded community initiative entitled *Proxecto Bogavante* (Lobster Project), the objective of which was to foster integration in the full, multidirectional sense of 'living together'. Nevertheless, a few years after its initiation, funding had been cut and most activities had adopted a strictly superficial and assimilationist approach (personal communication, Luzia Fernández González, 15 June 2005).
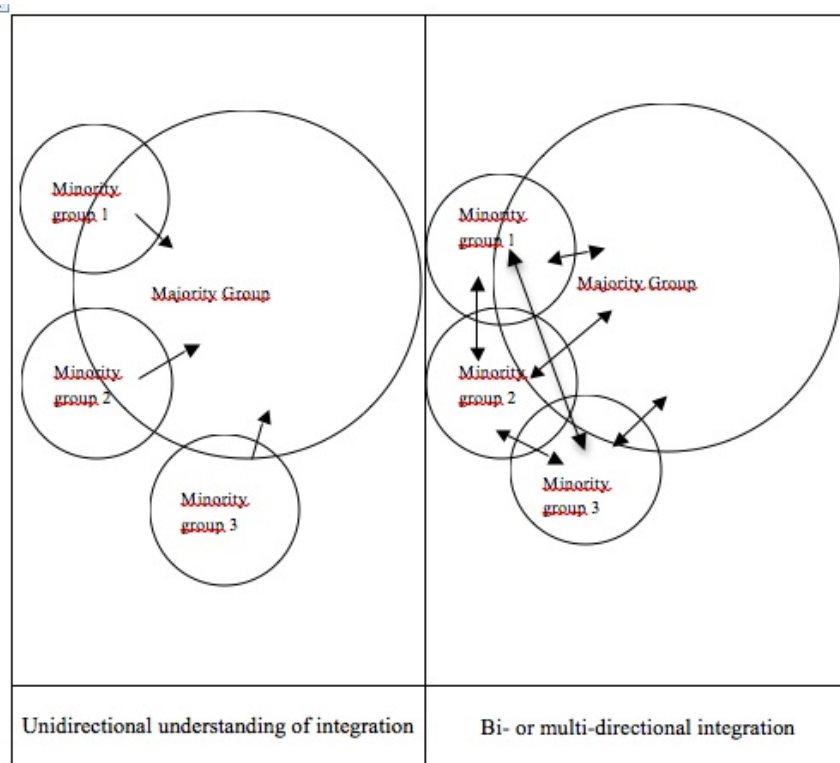

Figure 1. Unidirectional integration (assimilation) vs. multidirectional (true) integration (adapted from Teasley, 2008a, p. 30).

	Is the maintenance of identity and cultural characteristics fostered?	
Are intergroup relations encouraged?	Yes	No
Yes	Integration	Assimilation
No	Segregation	Marginalisation

Table I. Four types of intercultural relations (adapted from Martín Rojo et al, 2003, p. 33).

It was around this time, June 2005, when the first author conducted a small pilot study at both a secondary school and a further education (FE) college in Burela, the findings of which supported Fernández González's perceptions (see Teasley, 2008a, for a more detailed analysis). The five teachers interviewed all expressed a similar concern that the Caboverdean students did not achieve at nearly the levels reached by their majority-group peers. Two of these teachers (a married couple, one of whom taught at the secondary school and the other at the FE college) detailed their views that the school achievement of these immigrant students had actually begun to decline around the same time as funding for the Proxecto Bogavante had been cut. They expressed a belief that this decline was related to the fact that all students, immigrants and locals alike, had stopped receiving services that responded to the needs and desires of the students in terms of intercultural integration, both within and beyond the school setting.

At the time of these visits, educational intervention had become restricted to learning the host community languages (Spanish and Galizan) and to academic support, both of which involved separating the immigrant students out for part of the school day to receive these compensatory classes. All programming involving promotion of cultural recognition and intercultural contact, addressing socio-economic needs, and supporting the Caboverdeans' democratic participation in the school community and the society at large had ceased, despite the fact that all of these initiatives had been integral to the project's original remit.

This kind of focused programming designed to address the specific needs of newcomers reflects a deficit mentality that locates the 'problem' of integration exclusively within the immigrant student, and thus defines successful integration as the solution to, or perhaps more accurately as lack of evidence of, such problems. This mentality was also reflected in the comments of the ex-mayor of another Galizan village with a (relatively) large immigrant population, in Arteixo. In an interview that took place in 2005, following the exploration of Burela, the ex-mayor of Arteixo expressed his 'satisfaction' with the level of 'integration' of these immigrants, adding that 'we do not have problems with them (the Moroccans), but we do have problems with the Roma/Gypsies'. For this government official, integration was synonymous with the absence of conflict.

The educational policies, practices and perceptions described here reflect a unilateral vision of integration that transforms it into cultural assimilation. As postcolonial scholars Cameron McCarthy and Greg Dimitriadis (2000) have asserted, this kind of assimilationist ethnocentrism depends on a process of 'resentment' which is firmly rooted in the dynamics of colonialism: the subaltern or minoritised subject aspires (often in vain) to mimic the identity characteristics of the dominant group by rejecting his or her own devalued cultural markers. Such neocolonial cultural dialectics are supported, rather than challenged, by Galizan educational planning, which in turn reflects a Spanish historical legacy of internal colonisation, both economic and cultural in nature (returning to Beiras's [1997] argument). In educational policy, it plays out not only through the long-standing de facto use of Spanish as the dominant language of instruction - at the expense of Galizan and other languages (DePalma & Teasley, 2012, in press) - but also through stop-gap measures such as pragmatic problem-solving and homogenising approaches to the schooling of increasingly diverse student populations (Varela & Álvarez-Uría, 1991). These policies are justified through technocratic rationality (Williams, 1979), and add up to compensatory strategies that respond to perceived deficits within the newly arrived 'Others,' while failing to identify any such deficits in the system itself, or in the values of the members of the school community who belong to the dominant cultural group.

Early Childhood Education, Competition and the Colonisation of Desire

Dividing Up Scarce Resources: first our own, and then the rest

All children, regardless of their ethnic or cultural origins, physical and intellectual abilities, age, or socioeconomic characteristics, have the same birthright: to develop as responsible citizens with the capacity to participate critically in the public sphere (United Nations, 1989). In Spain, education is compulsory from ages 6-16, but not at the two stages of early childhood education, birth to 3 years and 3-6 years. Under these circumstances, the availability and quality of early education may be subject to the uncertain tides of social and political circumstances, and to public discourses that, especially in times of economic crisis, establish priorities that privilege some social groups over others. This reality makes it all the more vital that we listen to the demands from all sectors, including and especially those from marginalised groups, in times when these demands may not seem politically expedient.

This inalienable right to an equal education is further threatened by professional discourses that seek to categorise very young children in terms of their differential abilities and 'special needs', thus dividing Spanish children from their foreign-born peers and creating the need to decide how much of our scarce economic resources should be allocated to each group. In a cultural framework where teachers and policy-makers alike construct immigrant status as a handicap, a purely economic (and thus neoliberal) logic of capital investment might suggest that our resources may be put to the best use when concentrated on those children who promise the highest rate of return for

the lowest investment of time and resources. Given the current dire economic situation and the prevalence of such deficit thinking, there is no shortage of teaching discourses and practices that prioritise 'our own' native-born children over those potentially problematic 'Others' when it comes to dividing up dwindling resources that are meted out ever more reluctantly by national, autonomic and local educational governing bodies.

These exclusionary discourses are being strategically taken up in certain political circles. A recent political campaign video published by a Catalonian nationalist party depicts two young white women happily jumping rope, until their short skirts and fashion tops are suddenly transformed into burqas and a voice intones, '*Primer, us de casa*' [Our own come first]. Another conservative party campaign video took the form of a video game that cast the party candidate as the protagonist. As 'Alicia Croft', one of the objectives of this superhero-politician is to shoot down a plane releasing illegal immigrants with parachutes, all the time replenishing her energy reserves by consuming icons depicting 'the elements that unite us' (such as bulls and barretinas, a traditional Catalonian cap) (León, 2010). There is a cruel irony to a product like this, in that not only does it promote symbolic violence by allowing players to (virtually) shoot down what may very well be political and/or economic refugees, but its very name, *Rescate*, meaning 'Rescue', deals yet another blow.

This kind of political rhetoric, which employs the logic of economic scarcity to justify exclusionary discourses, is satirised in a recent political cartoon that reads, 'It's not racism; it's making it clear that our own come first. If they want to live here, they should adapt to our customs, not the other way around… it's a sensitive topic: if we open the tap for everyone, it will eventually dry up' (Fontdevila, 2010, our translation). As this satirical representation suggests, assimilationist and xenophobic discourses are closely intertwined with classist discourses of scarcity and (the implied) need to redistribute these scarce resources among those who 'most' deserve them. These campaign slogans do not promise the traditionally disenfranchised in Spain (the poor, the Roma, the disabled and, in some respects, Galizans themselves) that resources will be more justly distributed, but rather warn them that new waves of 'undeserving' immigrants are coming to take a piece of their (very small) pie.

As a result of these divisive and marginalising discourses and practices, disenfranchised groups, who should be more unified than ever, end up accusing one another of receiving more than their fair share of the few resources allocated to them. In the face of such stress and frustration, the indigenous poor lose track of the common source of their oppression and forget that these 'Others' suffer the same discriminations and silences that they have been subjected to (Sánchez-Blanco, 2006). To this otherwise classic scenario of class struggle and ethnic-group divisiveness, there is now a neoliberal twist that works in neocolonial ways: the freed-up movement of capital means that the aforementioned disenfranchised groups, in order to combat capital's global forms of oppression, must now seek a *global* common ground on which to unite. Education can provide that site, and postcolonial scholarship, which highlights the global pervasiveness and operations of (neo)colonial cultural and economic dynamics past and present, helps us to see this reality. But dominant discourses that taint the school climate by deploying segregationist popular discourses based on 'us' vs. 'them' artificially divide members of the school community into mutually suspicious subgroups with irreconcilable and conflicting interests. Teachers and students, parents and teachers, Spanish-speakers, Galizan-speakers and speakers of other languages, Gypsies and non-Gypsies, heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals, etc. stare suspiciously at each other across enemy lines. The lack of both adequate economic resources and recognition of certain cultural identities translates into an environment of profound social injustice. Redistribution and recognition, although they may spring from different philosophical sources, must therefore go hand in hand if we are to find viable alternatives to such painful and dangerous segregationist mindsets (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 21). Those children whom we provide with an early education that fosters critical thinking and participation are those who will be better equipped to continue the struggle for equality and justice (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005).

Consumer Culture as a Mechanism for Social Exclusion: colonising young minds

Geopolitical relations underlying processes of migration and economic inequity operate alongside other neocolonial processes involving multinational corporations and mass media. Postcolonial theorist Paul Gilroy (2004) has gone as far as to link corporate control with 'the colonization of all life' (p. 84), for even our youngest children are strongly influenced by the pervasive culture of consumption as certain foods, toys, games, and entertainment are converted into objects of desire and prestige by the mass media. The symbolic capital of Sponge Bob, Pokémon, Barbie and Bratz, among others, has the power to divide children into subgroups and even to inspire confrontations between those who belong or not to the in-groups created by these coveted products (Sanchez-Blanco, 2009). While the neoliberal processes of advertising propaganda specifically aimed at children and their carers can be said to colonise the minds of an entire population, their effect on already marginalised groups serves to further divide an already fragmented society into insiders and outsiders, divided along consumerist lines. A child who does not watch a particular television series can become an outsider, and may be marginalised for not understanding the rules of the games associated with these shared cultural products practices. A child who does not or cannot follow the current fads is not able to demonstrate that he or she belongs to a social group that bases membership upon the consumption of a particular product (Entwistle, 2000).

Parents who are faced with broader social forces of economic and/or social marginalisation may find themselves making difficult choices: Should I use my limited family food budget to buy these popular but over-priced juice-boxes for my child? We have seen children form groups on the playground around possession of these juice boxes, with their attractive designs and articulated straw that can be used for certain kinds of make-believe play. Parents know that participating in these consumeristic rituals, even if it means making economic sacrifices or adopting cultural practices that are at odds with their own, is a way to de-emphasise their children's Otherness. Immigrant families learn that dressing their children according to the latest clothing fashions can be the first step in becoming native, this perhaps even taking priority over learning the native language. These kinds of market-driven conformities may be seen by parents as an opportunity, albeit a false one, to feel included in the social fabric of the community.

Certain food products advertised on the television can also serve to produce groups of alimentary insiders and outsiders, as corporate marketing strategies serve to create and reinforce the connection between brand names and social prestige through the deployment of various marketing strategies (Klein, 2000). These strategies, furthermore, target young consumers through the design of attractive labels and even online games that appeal to young children (Schor, 2004). We have seen children become angry, even cry, because they had never had the opportunity to try an Actimel (a yogurt-based drink created and aggressively marketed in Spain by the dairy company Danone). The current television-based ad campaign in the UK is entitled 'Bring it on' [4], and suggests that children will have no difficulties fearlessly taking on challenges (diving from a great height, riding a big horse) as long as they've been regularly consuming Actimel. The question 'Has your family had their Actimel today?' clearly suggests that children of those families who fail to provide this product on a daily basis may not be up to these challenges.

What effect could these kinds of advertisement campaigns possibly have on the early childhood classroom? We have seen one pair of Actimel-deprived children console themselves by 'drinking' from the empty containers that their more fortunate classmates had left in the classroom rubbish bin. We have seen children eating the crumbs from an empty but fashionable pastry packet, or hiding their own unbranded snack – a humble piece of fruit brought from home - so that a classmate might be inclined to share out a more fashionable snack. Such behaviours were not caused by hunger, as these children's families, or their teachers, had provided them with more mundane foods, such as biscuits, fruits and traditional yogurt. These furtive eating rituals allowed children to feel, just for a moment, that they belonged to an in-group of winners, a social category that had been produced as a by-product of a successful globalised industry.

If, as Judt (2010) argues, inequality is capable of corroding a society from within, responding to these corrosive forces is a crucial part of responsible teaching. While it may be tempting for teachers to incorporate familiar and attractive advertisements and product labels in the classroom as a strategy to encourage early reading development – for some students, that is, because many of the cultural references projected through the mass media are not equally familiar to all school

children, especially when the latter come from immigrant families – this approach has the obvious disadvantage of supplying these products with free advertising. Such usage therefore exacerbates their divisive effect on classroom culture(s) (Sanchez-Blanco, 2008). This type of propaganda, if used in the classroom, must be accompanied by a critique of the kinds of social messages it disseminates, and by more general analyses of the effects of publicity in a multicultural market society.

While market-driven messages are strong, it is important for teachers to remember that childhood holds the power to reinterpret and reconstruct such discourses. Schools need to tap the creative power of childhood by fostering a critical analysis of children's favourite television programmes, films, toys and advertisements, and by allowing them to create their own messages by using a broad variety of media (video, photography, animation, etc.). Given the proper guidance and creative freedom, children can transform themselves from passive receptors who are easily manipulated by corporate interests and publicity, into informed consumers and critical thinkers.

Teachers also need to design classroom communities that are more resistant to the social divisions that originate outside the classroom, thus creating democratic communities where children openly debate and define rights and responsibilities that apply equally to all. As Nussbaum notes, effective citizenship education must begin at an early age, in classrooms where teachers

> show our students the beauty and interest of a life that is open to the whole world, to show them that there is after all more joy in the kind of citizenship that questions than in the kind that simply applauds, more fascination in the study of human beings in all their real variety and complexity than in the zealous pursuit of superficial stereotypes, more genuine love and friendship in the life of questioning and self-government than in submission to authority. (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 84)

Conclusion

Such egalitarian ideals in schools and classrooms require a critical examination of existing neoliberal and assimilationist discourses that support incompatible practices. Ignatieff (1999) argues that it was European imperialism that divided the world into 'us' and 'them', 'Black' and 'White', 'Christians' and 'pagans', 'civilians' and 'savages'. In our research, we have found that these early imperialistic impulses have not been completely eradicated, but have taken on new guises. Newcomers are expected to shed their alien trappings and simply learn to blend in with 'us'. Young children learn to identify and exclude the 'savages' among us by the way they dress, the toys they play with, the food they eat. Perhaps even more alarming, in this last case, is the fact that this learning takes place beyond the reach of teachers and parents, even beyond the realm of the society itself. This is a clear example of the global shaping the local: children arranging their playground friendship groups according to, in part, the marketing strategies of multinational corporations.

Both kinds of marginalising processes explored in this article – the deficit view of diversity and inclusion, and the neoliberal colonisation of desire – lead to detrimental cultural assimilation. This reality in turn calls for ethical educational responses. Confronting and revising assimilationist ideologies around the 'integration' of immigrants, for example, can begin with a postcolonial analysis of daily choices. Gilroy (2004), for example, sets forth some of the work of postcolonial culture building, which would include interrogating the colonial habits and implications of hegemonic understandings of both liberalism (especially its neoliberal variant) and racism, which is all too often resignified as a matter 'of taste, preference, and, ultimately, of consumer or lifestyle choice' (p. 162). Making visible the broader socio-political and economic realities that underpin migrations, and placing them in historical perspective, can help improve intercultural understandings. A postcolonial perspective takes into account the economic legacies of colonialism and the globalised realities of the neocolonial present (Rizvi, 2007), and helps to account for the role of resentment (McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2000) in such assimilationist interpretations of the ideal of integration.

School-based responses to such neocolonial realities include the use of an integrated, interdisciplinary and critical curriculum (Torres Santomé, 1998), one that rejects pre-packaged and marketed educational materials, with all of their implicit biases and exclusions. This is not a strategy of censorship. While we have criticised some teachers' practice of using product packaging

and endorsements as literacy materials, the problem lies not in the materials themselves, but in the lack of room for critical analysis of these materials. Rather than searching vainly for the perfectly unbiased textbook, or returning to bland texts that have no connection whatsoever with children's lived realities, it may be more effective to help children better interpret and navigate the increasingly rich and varied forms of literacy they encounter in their social lives (Torres Santomé, 2011). In concrete terms, if a popular film has been criticised for xenophobic or racist implications, or a popular and expensive snack food uses spurious scientific 'evidence' to demonstrate its health benefits, these materials can still provide opportunities for learning that is relevant, complex and critical.

An educational response to postcolonial realities does not translate into a set of compensatory strategies for those who have 'special needs' or 'deficits', practices which often serve to segregate the 'Other' so that the 'real' education can continue to take place elsewhere (Teasley, 2008b). The kind of inclusive and integrative education we advocate here is multidirectional: aimed at all students, the haves and the have-nots, newcomers and natives alike. It means interrupting the official, hidden curriculum that tacitly accepts and even fosters consumerist and assimilationist rhetoric. It means shifting the attention from the needs and problems of 'Others' to ourselves, as school communities and as co-participants in pluralistic societies.

Notes

[1] On the positive side, 27% alluded to potential 'cultural enrichment.'

[2] The legality of this action is currently under debate, as school policy cannot contravene national law, which provides for religious freedom (Ley Orgánica de Libertad Religiosa), or the Spanish Constitution (article 9.2 of which states that public entities must not only guarantee but foster the exercise of fundamental rights, that include religious freedom).

[3] It should be kept in mind that Spain has, in additional to Spanish, three other indigenous languages that are protected by law: Catalan, Euskera (Basque), and Galizan. See DePalma & Teasley (2012, in press) for a more detailed analysis of Spain's educational policies with respect to minoritised languages.

[4] Current and past televised advertisements can be accessed at Actimel's website: http://www.actimel.co.uk/News/Current-TV-Campaign.aspx

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