Cultural Coherence and the Schooling for Identity Maintenance

MICHAEL S. MERRY

An education for cultural coherence tends to the child's well-being through identity construction and maintenance. Critics charge that this sort of education will not bode well for the future autonomy of children. I will argue that culturally coherent education, provided there is no coercion, can lend itself to eventual autonomy and may assist minority children in countering the negative stereotypes and discrimination they face in the larger society. Further, I will argue that few individuals actually possess an entirely coherent identity; rather, most of us possess hybrid identities that lend themselves to multiple, not necessarily conflicting allegiances.

> *We are, all of us, culture-producing individuals.*[1]

Today many persons feel that society is increasingly adrift owing to a moral void. In the past this was sometimes filled with biblical injunctions and the moral certainties they allegedly provided. Now, the continuing disintegration of public institutions and communal associations thought to provide a fulcrum for social cohesiveness only exacerbates the perceived crisis. This crisis, poignantly heralded in Kubrick's cinematic masterpiece, *A Clockwork Orange*, appears to be especially acute for individuals thought to be products of the modern age. Or perhaps it is simply that the ineluctable rise of capitalism, limitless urbanisation, smaller family sizes, greater geographical mobility and an explosion in information and technology pave the way for a very different world, one that requires flexibility and adjustment. Short of a massive state effort to curtail these freedoms, there can be no reversal of socio-political trends that undo fixed cultural boundaries. Clear identities and purposes, another argument runs, elude today's youth, and fixed standards, by which morally responsible choices might be made, are eroded to the point of non-recognition. This has led one author to note, 'modern individuals lack a clear identity and purpose in life because they lack cultural coherence' (Levinson, 1999, p. 92).

One response to this cultural crisis has been to buttress the crumbling walls of value and belief instantiated in specific cultures. By narrowing the choices available to a community's members and by reasserting moral

truths and reestablishing cultural boundaries, individuals may once again find reassurance and calm amidst the madness of competing claims certain to incur perpetual conflict. If cultural coherence is the key to a manageable range of life purposes, a more lucid personal identity and improved well-being[2], it will be necessary to examine this claim in light of some basic psychological facts about human development and the social modalities one assumes in relation to one's culture. But it will also be necessary to assess the philosophical challenges invited by the reassertion of cultural claims.

In what follows, I will define culture, albeit briefly, and then strive to ascertain the meaning of cultural coherence and to determine whether its cultivation and protection is indispensable to healthy human functioning. Later I will apply the logic of cultural coherence to religious schools, but especially in the early grades, in relation to the fostering better academic outcomes and a stronger sense of self-worth. I will argue that cultural coherence, if not too restrictive, can lay an important foundation for autonomy. This is because coherence itself is a notion fraught with many tensions. Diversity (and sometimes, dissonance) commonly arises within ostensibly closed communities owing to the debates that occur within traditions. Finally, I shall argue that while children may be embedded within communities intent on passing on particular values, they are not *determined* by these cultures, nor must they be unduly burdened with the identity expectations parents and communities may wish to impose on them. Reasonable prohibitions against unduly coercive behavior are therefore warranted.

GETTING AT CULTURE

One's culture provides the 'organizing and legitimating principles' of one's relations and links an individual to various customs and a particular history or language. Culture also often involves a religious orientation. Culture provides us with structured boundaries, the absence of which provides no point of reference for making meaningful decisions. These boundaries provide one with the authenticity of belief that is a necessary foundation for self-esteem and confidence building, giving children the assurance that the ideas they have formed are, to a degree, reliable and trustworthy. Indeed, how one relates to members of other cultures will largely be circumscribed by the values, beliefs and influences promoted within that group.

Defining culture is no easy matter. Its various meanings and boundaries are disputed, and its significance in the lives of its members remains an open question. Yet we can begin to understand culture through approximate descriptions. Culture relates to people (not animals), and it will include their shared history, language, habits, customs and the values that are particular to it. Culture is dynamic; it changes over time and according to place and circumstance. Though culture shapes the thoughts, experiences, meanings and opportunities its members have available to

them, its members are not passive recipients of culture, but rather are like actors, shaping and projecting the culture into the future. And while culture is transmitted from generation to generation—in parts or as a whole—its manifestation in the future may not be recognisable to those in the past. Culture, according to Bhikhu Parekh, is 'a historically created system of meaning and significance . . . a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives. It is a way of both understanding and organizing human life' (Parekh, 2000, p. 143). To expand upon the role that culture plays in our lives, he adds,

> [O]ur culture gives coherence to our lives, gives us the resources to make sense of the world, stabilizes our personality, and so on. Its values and ideals inspire us, act as our moral compass, and guide us through life; its arts, rituals, songs, stories and literature fill us with joy and add colour and beauty to our lives; and its moral and spiritual wisdom comforts and helps us cope with the inevitable tragedies of life (Parekh, 2000, p. 159).

Religion also influences culture. Indeed, culture and religion are often seen as roots of the same tree. Without cultures, the conventional wisdom runs, religions have no vehicle through which they might be interpreted; without religion, cultures lack definite shape, even meaning. Yet while it may be fair to say that each imperceptibly influences the other, in what order and to what degree very few individuals are prepared to say. However, I would argue that it is not only possible to separate religion and culture, but that there is a dangerous reductionism if one does not. For, while culture usually sustains religion, it can also distort it, and religion can be turned against a culture in the form of self-criticism.[3]

An education for cultural coherence tends to the child's well-being through identity construction and maintenance. Critics charge that this sort of education will not bode well for the future autonomy[4] of children. However, as I will argue, to pit cultural coherence against an education for autonomy is to suppose a false opposition. I will argue that few individuals actually possess an entirely coherent identity; rather, most of us possess hybrid identities that lend themselves to dual but not conflicting allegiances. Culturally coherent education, if properly directed, can lend itself to eventual autonomy; as I will show, this requires that culturally coherent education avoid certain things, *viz.*, coercion. Furthermore, by refusing to promote competing voices in the early stages of education, a culturally coherent education can aid children by minimising unnecessary cognitive dissonance in their early years. For minority school children in particular this may assist in countering the negative stereotypes and discrimination they face in the larger society.

CULTURAL COHERENCE

Cultural coherence points to an important aim in the process of passing on deeply held commitments, values and beliefs necessary to sustaining

individuals' identity formation and psychological health. Cultural co-
herence can, and often does, encompass religious identity, though it is not
limited to minority groups. To speak of cultural coherence, then, is to refer
to the shaping of one's identity by a particular group. Coherence with
one's group's identity denotes the psychological congruity that enables an
individual to make sense of the world, relate to others and make evaluative
judgments from within a particular conceptual matrix. It is to attend to the
social needs and attachments of children and their emotional dependence
on others (Halstead, 1995).

Thus, if one were to summarise the educational aims of cultural
coherence, three points would be likely to emerge. First, persons need to
identify with a particular notion of the good and possess the attendant
capacity to pursue it. Second, unless choices are kept to a manageable
level, there will be a lack of the coherence necessary to shaping identity
and fueling agency. Third, without an adequate level of coherence, no clear
standard emerges by which one's decisions may be evaluated. To elevate
choice over a person's need for circumscribed boundaries is to ignore a
person's need for what I will call limited guidance, a resource necessary for
psychological health. While it may be true that older children possess the
capacity to glean insights from alternative cultural views and appreciate the
complexity of moral alternatives seen from multiple perspectives, it is
commonly assumed that younger children lack the cognitive capacity and
emotional maturity to make wise and sensible choices without reasonable
limitations on those options made available to them.

So what can one say about the type of schooling cultural coherence applies
to? Some assume that state schools will pull up the slack and 'naturally and
simultaneously help children achieve a sense of cultural membership'
(Levinson, 1999, p. 55). Other liberals will argue that where parents desire it,
early elementary education ought to be as close an approximation as possible
to the home culture. Eamonn Callan articulates why:

> Separate schooling of limited duration, created for the sake of separate
> education, may be one useful way of creating the developmental
> antecedents of the mature liberal virtues ... [T]he early years of
> schooling may be a crucial stage in securing a deeply felt understanding
> of what [the parents'] way of life means. From the standpoint of the state,
> the experiences that separate schooling furnishes will lay the groundwork
> for the political virtues by cultivating their psychological precursors; and
> given the close and mutually reinforcing relation between the values of
> the family and the ethos of the separate school, it may even be a more
> solid groundwork than common schools could typically provide (Callan,
> 1997, p. 181).

Either way, few are prepared to disallow private, comprehensive schooling
altogether, particularly in the early grades. This is because one's cultural
coherence acts as a kind of developmental antecedent to one's ability both
to understand the life options one has available and to choose from among
them. Being situated in a specific context also delimits the range of

choices available to an individual who otherwise might despair over the sheer volume of possibilities. Limitless choices may paralyse, even undermine a person's capacity to function autonomously, and this has serious repercussions for psychological health. Therefore, it is necessary to speak of an 'enabling restraint' (Spinner-Halev, 2000, p. 61) on options available to children.

Liberals have increasingly responded to challenges such as this in arguing that personal integrity is only possible once individuals humbly acknowledge their cultural and moral debt to a set of practices and norms necessary to the development of rationality and autonomy. Autonomy, after all, must take account of inherited culture; only once this necessary contextual space is granted can autonomy assume any meaning, for individuals bereft of a culture are not capable of autonomy. Indeed, the idea that individuals are able to judge, assess and compare different versions of the good life absent from an identity shaped by their cultural milieu is one that few will venture to defend. This does not require that one's cultural attachments will be uniform or static. The world most of us live in today is pluriform, and the range of influences even young children are exposed to manifold. One's cultural attachments may also be of the sort where flourishing is obtained through being *opposed* to many aspects of that selfsame culture. This tension, construed by many to be misanthropy or incorrigible discontent, enables some to experience a level of well-being they otherwise might not enjoy. Liberalism accommodates a variety of ways of defining the good life (though not those that bring harm to a community's members) without making explicit what those definitions must include. Liberals value pluralism but do not deny that certain values, including specific cultural values, have universal significance and application. They merely ask that justifications for liberal principles and the institutions they support not be grounded in comprehensive claims but on non-coercive public reasons that everyone can share. Therein lies legitimacy, the backbone of the liberal project.

More and more liberals are also questioning the centrality of individual autonomy without jettisoning the incomparable freedom liberalism allows. Callan has eloquently stated that the objective of a sound liberal moral doctrine could not dictate the content of the good life 'in all its fine detail.' Liberals are averse to prescribing the particular ends of cultures or individual lives, but do insist on a particular 'style or manner in which we should conduct our lives' (Callan, 1997, p. 18). Therefore, while autonomy is typically central to the liberal's concern, 'autonomy is not the high road to all that is good nor is its absence a guarantee of evil' (p. 49). If an education for cultural coherence requires that a certain degree of willful consent to prescribed norms and critical reflection on one's beliefs be present, i.e., what some have called minimal autonomy (Reich, 2002) and others non-servility (Callan, 1997), then we have a level of autonomy with which most culturalists[5] can be comfortable. If stronger versions of autonomy are put forward, requiring that *all* espoused beliefs and values be held up to critical reflection (Phillips, 1989)[6] and that *all* other available ways of life be carefully considered, we have

an unrealistic standard that few will attain and possibly not even wish to.

Notions of cultural coherence, however, are less concerned with autonomy and more with well-being. Obviously many individuals identify closely with a set of cultural or religious beliefs and values and experience a measure of well-being far superior to many rationally autonomous persons. Such individuals possess an 'informed commitment to a (perhaps pre-packaged) value system' (Halstead, 1995, p. 40). But the question remains: if autonomy even in some minimal sense is not a coveted value, can an education for cultural coherence suffice to enable students to have the resources necessary to pursuing a particular conception of the good? The answer seems obviously to be yes, but is this enough? To go further: is cultural coherence a necessary psychological precursor to well-being?

CULTURE AND CHILDREN

The argument that exposing young children too soon to alternative choices undermines their sense of identity, and concomitantly their capacity to form judgments about the good in a reliable fashion, must be balanced against other concerns. Should individuals either fail to identify closely with the life that their parents espouse, or even choose to leave, there is equally the need adequately to equip children to encounter views besides those of their parents if they are to lead autonomous lives. An education solely for cultural coherence will not do. Opponents claim that exposure to cultures other than one's parents' will lead to a weaker core identity, but this is far from obvious. Partly this can be explained because cultures evolve and people are adaptable, and there is every bit as much an argument to be made for helping folks to transition from one cultural identity to another as there is for a school (or, a government) to attempt to preserve a culture artificially. More importantly, even if it could be supposed that children were in some sense entitled to be raised in their own culture, no argument could be made for their being raised *exclusively* within the culture of their parents. Harry Brighouse explains:

> Children do not have a culture. Ensuring that children are being raised exclusively in the culture of their parents is not granting them their right to their own culture because they do not have their own culture. To suggest that they do is to suggest that they are the kinds of things that can evaluate and assess the options available to them, which they are not. [Even] if they are raised in their parents' culture there is no guarantee that that will be their culture in adulthood, so for those children who quit we shall have failed to prepare them if we allow them to be raised exclusively in their parents' culture (Brighouse, 2000, p. 101).

Rather what is essential is that the children receive the kind of education, i.e., for autonomy, that allows them to quit their parents' culture should they want to. This is not a realistic possibility for those who have little opportunity to be exposed to other ways of life. Those who argue that

members of particular groups enjoy 'freedom of association' overlook the basic fact that children 'do not enjoy even a formal right of exit from the associations into which they were born' (Dwyer, 1998, p. 107). Consequently, claims for special cultural rights or protections typically enjoy little if any favour among liberals who look askance at collective prerogatives that pay little attention to a community's weaker members.[7]

COHERENCE AND LEARNING STAGES

Age appropriate arguments, on the other hand, have a great deal of merit. In the first stage, the form and content of a child's education needs to be consistent with the values espoused by the parents or the community in order to lay the foundation for what later development holds in store. More precisely, it is necessary that the child internalise the values, attitudes, narratives and social roles of one's 'significant others' (e.g. parents or other care-givers). By identifying with one's community in this way, and by seeking to emulate appropriate role models in order to win recognition and approval, a child becomes disposed to acquiring a coherent identity. Of paramount importance is the emotional and social stability of the child whose parents may adhere to a set of cultural and religious values lacking endorsement by the society in which they live. While cultural coherence may apply to *all* families, including those whose values and needs receive widespread approval, it is especially relevant to minority communities, whose specific values and beliefs are more likely to be ignored or even forbidden in certain cultural contexts. For educators, cultural coherence assumes that a learning environment culturally (or religiously) consonant with the parents' is more likely to produce healthy learning outcomes for young children and is more likely to foster a firmer sense of self.

Others suggest that there ought to be a second pedagogical stage to cultural coherence, one consistent with a development scheme that is sensitive to the cognitive processes of children and adolescents. Adolescents will begin to expand the compass of persons in whom they can, indeed ought to, trust. This stage, which will likely focus on the teenager, involves developing the capacity for choice in students so that they come to own the ideas and beliefs they possess in a manner they previously had not. Once children are of an age that they can do this (and the threshold is not clear), educators will encourage a higher degree of critical thinking about the children's own truth claims. This is done, the argument runs, by exposing the young to a variety of ways of life, including different cultural and religious norms, so that they may come to respect truth claims other than their own but in the process be more confident about the uniqueness of their own particular commitments. This approach will not seek merely to support a solid cognitive and emotional identity through passive reception of ideas, customs and beliefs. It will invite the student actively to participate and to contribute to the story or tradition of which she is a part. This will entail an openness to revision of one's identity. On this view, cultural coherence is far from restrictive or

confining; it merely provides the original context from which others are seen, understood and appreciated.

Still, it is not altogether convincing to argue that children need to be protected from exposure to ideas other than their parents'. Living in a pluralist society will make complete sheltering impossible to begin with, and it is unrealistic to assume that children will be protected from exposure to other ideas. The inescapable influences of popular culture, purveyed through various media and the hidden curriculum (not excluding children taken out of the state school system and placed in religious schools), will exert considerable influence on a child's thinking. No amount of moralising will suffice to counter these influences. But there is another reason why age appropriate psychology must not be applied too literally. Given the remarkable dissimilarity of one child to the next, it would seem highly presumptuous to apply a 'one size fits all' approach to an educational model committed to facilitating autonomous selves.

I will not dispute the claim that different children demonstrate varying levels of understanding. Still, there is also no reason to believe that learning about how others live or understanding different culturally specific notions of the good will threaten a child's ability to remain firmly ensconced within her culture or to remain committed to its core values. Indeed, regular contact with others whose cultural identities are markedly different may even enhance one's allegiance to a culturally coherent set of values and norms, as Meira Levinson notes:

> It can be argued, in fact, that being in a school that teaches respect for other traditions may actually *strengthen* children's commitments to their own traditions. When a student sees other students learning respect for his way of life, he feels proud and learns to see his culture as something worthy of respect. Also, in contrasting his own traditions with others', he learns what is distinctive and noteworthy about his own (Levinson, 1999, p. 95).

Growing up within a tradition that provides a coherent framework for understanding the world and for engaging with different views means that an individual possesses an important *comparative* basis for relating to others. This understanding will grow and expand provided authentic exposure to other views is a genuine option. For some, however, a comparative basis is readily available as a result of a culturally hybrid identity.

CULTURAL HYBRIDITY[8]

Culturalists give too little recognition to the widespread hybrid identities of persons living in multicultural societies. It is merely a derisive presumption to say that persons with hybrid identities lack historical depth and the resources needed to make meaningful choices. On this understanding, there is no recognition of the millions of individuals—especially immigrants—whose cultural identities daily overlap with two

or more cultures. One's cultural matrix need not be of a singular type. Indeed, it may encompass many sources, some of them even in tension with others. 'Coherence', then, may involve a great deal of cognitive dissonance, though it is uncertain whether this will be disruptive enough to undermine an individual's sense of self, her primary identity. Jeremy Waldron explains why our identities are complex:

> [M]ost human lives are not led within the confines of a particular culture but are framed and formed both by the movements of people among cultures and by the movements of culture among peoples. Indeed the beginning of wisdom in multicultural education is the rejection of any simple correlation along the lines of 'one-person-one culture' (Waldron, 2003, p. 26).

Each of us, even the staunchest defenders of culture, has qualms and issues with certain customs, norms, prejudices or traits of temperament that hold sway over our respective communities. Each of us is socialised into a particular mode of being, and is even indelibly marked by it, though we may not identify with it from the inside. This is the point of films like *East is East* and *Bend it like Beckham*, in which the children of Muslim and Sikh immigrants struggle to find their own identities and to pursue their own interests, though familial pressures to conform to cultural expectations remain intense.[9]

   Some believe that the absence of 'cohesion and consecutiveness' (Walzer, 1990, p. 9) unavoidably leads to a condition of moral uncertainty. Yet it is dubious reasoning to posit that certain groups of people are uniquely suited for certain traditional ways of life. Culture thus becomes a concealment, a much invoked protection against the encroachment of a democratic society that imperfectly seeks to promote equality of the sexes, education for all, and fair equality of opportunity. By ascribing cultural imperatives to non-majority groups, some are guilty of a double standard that would conduce to great harm in the name of charity. This is because liberals sometimes attribute to themselves a level of autonomy and rational, critical reflection they seldom do to others. Brian Barry has roundly castigated this kind of thinking:

> A great deal of paternalism is embedded in the assumption that while 'we' can survive change and innovation and endure the tensions created by modernity, 'they' cannot; that 'we' can repeatedly reinvent ourselves, our culture, our tradition, while 'they' must adhere to known cultural patterns (Barry, 2001, p. 241).

Culturalists are correct to say that each of us unconsciously acquires from our cultural communities bodily gestures, inhibitions, traits of temperament, effortless communication and a 'body of sentiments and memories'. I would also not contest the view that a sense of well-being may be enhanced because of the traits within one's inherited community. However, it would be unwise to assume that these habits for many

people are anything more than expedient behaviours that facilitate familiar social intercourse. There is no doubt that one *does* share a sense of common identity with others by virtue of a measure of sameness that colours one's experiences in culturally distinctive ways. Even so, it may be a very thin identification indeed. In societies where experiences are manifold, options seemingly endless, and issues dauntingly complex, narrowly circumscribed cultural norms seem inadequate to account for the manner in which millions of persons define themselves and negotiate moral choices by *relativising* their cultural norms. Most importantly, it is imperative that one distinguish between persons who embrace or reject their cultural values and those on whom these elements are *imposed* (Merry, 2005). There may be great suffering and oppression involved with culture, a point to which I return below.

Thus, while it seems true that the desire to remain affiliated to one's culture usually remains strong, it is not clear that a person *needs* her culture to make meaningful decisions, or that culture plays an 'ontological role' (Etzioni, 1996). The point, finally, is not whether most leave the cultures into which they were born, but simply that some do and that many more move back and forth between two or more cultural milieus. One sees this repeatedly in immigrant communities, and cultural belonging is particularly problematic for those who wrestle with intergenerational conflict where ethnicity and religion do not resonate with the youth. Yet unless all citizenship opportunities are denied them, few are prepared to believe that all Vietnamese-American or Lebanese-Canadian citizens feel irretrievably constituted by their cultures of origin, or, for that matter, the cultures of their parents. Culturalists leave little room for those who simply do not identify with their inherited culture and desire little if anything from it. *Some* individuals cannot exist, think, act or relate to others independent of their inherited cultural context. But culturalists overstate their case when they extend this to everyone (Merry, 2005).

In the next three sections, I want to concentrate on some challenges to a theory of cultural coherence. I will contest the first, *viz.*, that religious schools fail to provide a diverse environment necessary for cultivating autonomy. In the second section I will examine how the notion of coherence is itself, at times, *in*coherent. Lastly, I argue that, if left unmonitored, cultural coherence can lend itself to the abuse or oppression of weaker members.

CULTURAL COHERENCE AND DIVERSITY

One routinely encounters the claim that common schools are particularly well positioned to provide a level of diversity that other kinds of schools cannot. This exposure to difference, the argument runs, not only better disposes children to consider the views of others whose ideas, habits and beliefs may differ strikingly from their own, but also better facilitates the critical—though not necessarily detached—examination of their own ideas, habits and beliefs in light of this new information. Assumed in this

portrait of common schooling are the following two points. First, (a) common schools are the locus of diversity unequalled elsewhere in a child's life given the propensity of families and their respective communities to segregate—to take but a few examples—according to the characteristics of class, ethnicity and religion. Second, (b) separate schools, founded upon customs or beliefs distinctive to a particular tradition or ideology, are unlikely to foster comparable exposure to difference and in any event favor the inculcation of highly specific beliefs that are not conducive to a kind of fallibalist critical examination. The end result is not only less awareness of difference in separate schools but also less tolerance of those with whom one may not agree.

There is something deceptively forceful about the argument against religious schools on the grounds that face-to-face contact and genuine interaction with others who are different is the special domain of common schools. One can say two things here. First, it has been observed that many religious schools play host to a wider range of diversity than a great number of common schools. Diversity of ethnicity, class and religion is not uncommon, for instance, in many Catholic schools in Western countries (Grace, 2002; Bryk *et al.*, 1993). Second, and a corollary of the first, when one considers the *de facto* segregation of most American neighbourhood public schools according to race and class, the assumption that children in common schools will receive substantive exposure to difference measurably greater than can be found in many religious schools is an idea that does not inspire confidence (Orfield *et al.*, 1996; McKenzie and Scheurich, 2004).[10]

If, however, diversity is a necessary ingredient for the cultivation of autonomy, surely religious schools fail to provide the kind of diversity of *belief* requisite to promote critical reflection and diversity of opinion. Yet to the claim that many religious schools are doctrinaire when offering answers to life's profound questions, it seems incredible to think that one will find a total absence either of opposing views or discussion about those views (Kroeker, 2004). There are, it is true, limits to the *range* of considerations some schools will allow given the ostensible limitations of canon and creed. Yet there are always alternative interpretations and counter-arguments within all religious schools just beneath the surface of accepted orthodoxies, even within arguably closed communities. In other words, it is highly probable that school staff in the overwhelming majority of these schools do not agree on many things, including the manner in which core beliefs are held.

There are reasons, then, to question the view that religious schools exercise mass and uncritical indoctrination; Jews, Evangelicals, Catholics, Hindus and Muslims all dispute amongst themselves the meanings and applications of their respective texts. Neither are religious schools entirely closed off to outside voices (Parker-Jenkins *et al.*, 2005); even fundamentalist groups 'turn out to have more permeable walls than one might think' (Schrag, 1998, p. 38). This may be explained by recognising that sectarian religious communities are extremely likely to confront the 'deep diversity' that exists and thrives outside the walls of the school and home

environment; indeed, with the exception of the most isolated communities[11], members of cloistered groups are even likely to know *more* about competing versions of the public good than others (Spinner-Halev, 2000).[12]

Suppose, then, that common schools, owing to their (in many cases) more diverse pupil populations, were more effective in fostering tolerance among pupils of different backgrounds within the school. There is still little reason to suppose that this tolerance will prevail *outside* of the school. Geoffrey Short comments:

> Research shows that generalisation does not occur. In fact, there is no reason to believe that inter-racial contact, even under the most propitious circumstances, would ever achieve what was claimed on its behalf. For if people who are prejudiced against a particular group find themselves, somewhat incongruously, enjoying the company of individual members of that group, it would be quite illogical for them to conclude that the company of other (unknown) members of the group would be just as congenial (Short, 2002, p. 569).

Short compellingly shows that certain conditions need to obtain in order for prejudice to be lessened: (1) potential for real (and not artificial) acquaintance, (2) social norms must favour group equality, (3) stereotyping must be avoided at all costs, (4) circumstances must allow for equal status between participating groups, and finally (5) there must be a mutually dependent relationship (p. 568). Additionally, effective curriculum and instruction that seeks to counter stereotyping and intolerance will attempt critically to examine the attitudes and cultural mores that allow prejudice to thrive. Not only are many common schools inadequate to the task of providing these conditions—indeed, they work combatively against them for many homosexuals, and ethnic and religious minorities—but religious schools seem just as capable of meeting these goals, as other studies of Catholic, Jewish and Islamic schools in the United Kingdom amply demonstrate (Parker-Jenkins *et al.*, 2005; Conroy, 2001; Miller, 2001; Hewer, 2001; Walford, 2002; McLaughlin, 1992). The difficulty, of course, may be in monitoring schools to ensure that this happens; but to apply this accountability to religious schools and not to common schools is to engage in a biased account.

COHERENCE OR DISSONANCE?

Notwithstanding all that I have said *vis-à-vis* the good to come of a culturally coherent education, in most communities the notion of coherence is an untidy business. Take the example of Muslims living in the West. It is perhaps true that Muslims are united in their eagerness to communicate their faith in a positive light to other Westerners. It is also true that many Muslims, including non-practising Muslims, are united in their efforts to combat Islamic stereotypes and profiling. For some,

however, Islamic schools are the most effective way to strengthen vigilance and firm up cultural and/or religious identities.

Islamic schools promise to provide an 'Islamic orientation' or perspective throughout schooling, and this is certainly the case insofar as it concerns a few core beliefs and practices. Nevertheless, few schools, including well-staffed Islamic schools, find it desirable (or possible) to provide a uniformity of beliefs. Instead, Islamic schools will usually follow either a specific traditional interpretation or the opinion of the local imam concerning various controversial issues, e.g. Darwinism, whether women ought to be allowed to pray publicly at the mosque or perhaps even the regard one should have for the local community as opposed to 'Islamic causes' (e.g. Jenin, Iraq) abroad. However, each of these issues is handled differently from place to place, and increasingly young Muslims resort to chat rooms (Schmidt, 2004) and other informal channels to arrive at opinions concerning challenges they face.

Unless unprecedented situations and intellectual challenges give rise to new interpretations (*ijtihād*),[13] critics worry that the idealized, 'pristine' conception of Islam will only alienate those who strive to adapt the norms of the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* to modern life. In other words, without a creative and critical approach to the Islamic tradition, several unfortunate consequences are likely to occur. At a minimum, students will feel overly constrained to address contemporary issues with an outmoded and useless vocabulary on the mistaken hunch that the interpretations and rulings (*fatāwā*) issued by Islamic scholars in particular times and places will be adequate to the task in all other circumstances. Increasingly Western Muslims are looking for interpretations and adaptations of Islam that are relevant to their lives. Cultural coherence is the furthest thing from their minds. I will illustrate this tension with two concrete examples: art and the head covering.

First, music and art in the curriculum of Islamic schools continues to be an extremely contentious issue. There are those who would argue that depictions of animal or human faces in drawing or painting are strictly forbidden (*haram*). Others take a more lenient view. Some Islamic schools, for example, allow paintings of persons as long as the facial features are—in a kind of 'impressionist' way—blurred. Or take music. Perhaps a majority of Western Muslims considers music acceptable if one's intentions do not stray from basic Islamic principles. Yet, although they allow *a cappella* choirs, very few Islamic schools will venture to include instruments or musical appreciation into their curriculum. The same can be said for most cinema, photography, sculpture and drawing. The various proscriptions are based on literal readings of the Qur'ān concerning verses that speak to those who craft objects 'in competition with God'. (Moderate interpreters maintain that these references relate to idol worship.) Either way, as the debate unfolds within Islamic schools, one is likely to find many Muslims espousing a position publicly opposed to musical instruments in school while privately seeing to it that their own children receive lessons in the home.

Now take the example of the head covering (*hijāb*). While perhaps the most conspicuous expression of religious piety for Muslim women, the *hijāb* nevertheless proffers more than one symbolic meaning; indeed, it may be seen as a 'contested signifier' *par excellence*.[14] To many Westerners it suggests nothing more than a kind of hyper-control of women, or, worse, a suppression or effacement of female sexuality. In mainstream Islam, however, the *hijāb* is a sign of a pious girl or woman who embodies integrity and modesty. Yet, now more than ever, one hears many Muslim girls and women, especially since 9/11, describing their headscarves as a symbol of emancipation and mobility. These women often position themselves in opposition to a culture that has excluded them from full participation, either through racialised discourse or through some form of religious discrimination. Emancipation is not, of course, the meaning ascribed the *hijāb* in dominant Islamic cultural and religious discourse, and it is dubious whether its liberating significance will manage to resist the prevailing patriarchal meaning (Dwyer, 1999; Abou El Fadl, 2001). Suffice it to say that religious or cultural symbols cannot be defined and compared in the abstract. This, Parekh explains, is both 'because they rarely have exactly equivalent significance and because they acquire different meanings in different contexts and historical periods and might sometimes even cease to be religious in nature' (Parekh, 2000, p. 251). While the *hijāb* continues to be a compulsory dress code requirement in Western Islamic schools, discussions concerning its meaning and importance routinely take place.

Both of these issues (and there are many others) are matters of debate within Islamic schools in the West. Easy answers are predictably elusive. On the one hand, this uncertainty may lead other students to feel that no right answers are to be found on certain topics, thus undermining one of the core purposes of Islamic schools. On the other hand, this uncertainty might lead to greater awareness of diversity and an appreciation for a more complex epistemology. I would argue that the internal debates within ostensibly coherent communities are a sign of vibrancy and health and not of inevitable decay or demise. Moreover, the internal debates that are common to far more insular communities than Islamic ones seriously challenge any facile under-standing of cultural coherence as a set of undifferentiated beliefs, ideas or practices.

CULTURE AND INTERNAL RESTRICTIONS

Earlier I stated the culturalist claim that the resources necessary to criticise culture typically come from the inside; still, we might ask whether the appropriate internal critical resources can truly be summoned on pain of bodily harm, shunning or death. In addition, in many cultural traditions reformers are constrained to draw upon religious texts in order to challenge power structures. If the right to interpret religious texts rest with the clergy or its equivalent elite, prospects for authentic challenge are severely curtailed. Culturalists are correct to underscore the

multifacetedness of every culture, but this does little to console those who attempt to challenge community leaders who claim the right to define cultural norms for all members. Indeed, well-being to some is not well-being to all.

Additional challenges to cultural coherence surface that invoke the state to protect its interests on behalf of its members. One is state-sponsored coercion, while another concerns the presumption that culture is undifferentiated and simple. Most important, perhaps, is the fact that many communities exercise internal restrictions on some of their members, including the denial of the right to exit their community. In order for there to be *real* freedom to choose an exit from a community or its value system there must be adequate information provided concerning alternative ways of interpreting the reality to be faced. The difficulties with exiting a community are admittedly complex. As Leslie Green has said,

> It is risky, wrenching, and disorienting to have to tear oneself from one's religion or culture; the fact that it is possible to do so does not suffice to show that those who do not manage to achieve the task have stayed voluntarily, at least not in any sense strong enough to undercut any rights they might otherwise have (Green, 1995, p. 266).

Susan Moller Okin furthers the critique of culturalist claims by showing that those who invoke a right to culture do so usually at the expense of women and girls who occupy a patently lower status within the communities. She argues that cultures are not only highly differentiated, they are also gendered. In many cultural minority groups, girls often feel they must choose between respecting their parents—which may entail arranged marriages, strictly monitored domestic work and having several children—and 'furthering their educations and developing work skills so as to retain more control over their own lives' (Okin, 1998, p. 682). Among some immigrants, behaviour that would be shameful in their home country is curiously tolerated, reinforced and justified by invoking 'culture' in their adopted homeland. Those who would speak out from among them are frequently co-opted by group identity politics so that their public stance stands in conflict with their inner convictions. This means that individuals from cultural minority groups may feel tremendous pressure to affirm primary identities that reflect the political interests of a few, rather than individual pursuits that more accurately reflect personal interest (Wikan, 2002; Steele, 2002; Rorty, 1994). The repercussions for failing to comply with family and communal expectations can be very exacting.

Furthermore, Moller Okin notes, group rights theorists pay precious little attention to the private sphere, where a great deal of 'internal constraint' in the form of discrimination and abuse occurs (Okin, 1998, 1999). To the plea that cultures need special protection, she has this response:

> While a number of factors would have to be taken into account in assessing the situation, [minorities] *may* be much better off, from a liberal point of view, if the culture into which they were born were either

gradually to become extinct (as its members became integrated into the surrounding culture) or, preferably, to be encouraged and supported to substantially alter itself so as to reinforce the equality, rather than the inequality of women—at least to the degree to which this is upheld in the majority culture (Okin, 1998, p. 680).

To insist, as culturalists often do, that liberals are in no position to assert moral truths where they pertain to the codes of conduct circumscribed by various cultures is to court the worst kind of moral relativism, one callous to the injustices perpetrated within cultures whose survival depends in some measure on group rights and protection.

CONCLUSIONS

There are several challenges for educators here. Some might still wish to argue that an education for cultural coherence moves us away from autonomy and rational thinking, or, that one is far less likely to learn tolerance of others if day-to-day contact with genuine difference is systematically denied. What is more, many liberals insist that cultural coherence invites coercive action on the part of the parents/community. These are legitimate concerns but no smoking gun can be found pointing to invariable harms to result from an education of this sort. Autonomy and rational thinking, while they are to be valued, must be seen against the backdrop of another good, one that is connected to the lives of students. In sections of some of the West's largest cities, for instance, where minority communities comprise a significant portion of the population, it is not an unreasonable goal—nor does it militate against the aims of liberalism—to inculcate values that are endemic to these communities and that affirm them in an identity that is commonly dismissed elsewhere, including in the schools. As for the argument that tolerance of difference is less likely to come about in culturally or religiously homogeneous schools, we have little solid evidence for this. However, there *is* plenty of evidence to suggest that public/state schools play host to a very socially stratified culture of their own.

   In response to the charge that religious schools are likely to engender prejudice, separatism and hostility towards difference, I have followed Short in arguing that it is not the type of school one attends that matters but the type of curriculum and instruction a school provides, as well as a staff that is committed to teaching respect and tolerance of others regardless of their differences. A religious school is just as capable of promoting tolerance of differences and respect as any other, including, it might be argued, less homogeneous schools. In brief, mere exposure to difference does not ineluctably result in tolerance; conflict and phobias may actually increase if the school fails to provide the ethos necessary to foster tolerance and mutual respect. Attitudes of intolerance and its converse are more likely derived from the home environment. Even positive contact with others from different backgrounds is as likely to

result in imagining those individuals as the exception to their respective groups and not the norm.

Owing to the minority status of many children, moral courage derived from an education for cultural coherence is extremely likely (though not guaranteed) to lead to some degree of critical distance from one's inherited beliefs by virtue of the inescapable differences one encounters in the larger society. This daily encounter particularly with secular, materialistic difference is very likely (though again not guaranteed) to encourage critical reflection on one's ideas and convictions, certainly to a higher degree than is likely to be the case for many cosmopolitan people for whom principled encounters with difference are often incoherent or irrelevant. Perhaps most importantly, an education for cultural coherence may very well provide persons with a vantage point from which to critique a culture of mass conformity, consumerism and materialism; it also may provide one with an efficacious moral foundation from which one draws strength in countering social injustice.

Where an education for cultural coherence should especially give us pause concerns the manner in which certain minorities within minority groups—including women and children but also homosexuals and the lower classes—receive treatment inferior to those who hold positions of power. There will always be those who do not identify from the inside with the culture or religion given them, and they must be granted real freedoms to exit if they are to follow the logic of the position I have argued. One cannot legitimately claim that our inherited identities are immune to revision.[15]

I have argued that my defence of an education for cultural coherence does not conflict with cultural hybridity. Neither should we assume that coherence denotes an absence of internal debate. Each of us, while embedded to varying degrees in at least the culture of one of our parents, is nevertheless capable of adapting to a new set of circumstances and carving out modified, if not altogether new, identities. This does not mean that we will ever completely shed the encompassing influential bonds that shaped our identity in childhood especially when most individual identities are already 'defined through many collective affinities and through many narratives' (Benhabib, 2002, p. 16). This is because an education for cultural coherence is not to be confused with brainwashing and the stuff of cults, but also because we inhabit a world where 'global civilizational encounters' are no longer a thing of the future. Human cultures, far from seamless wholes that neatly distinguish themselves one from the other, are 'constant creations, re-creations, and negotiations of imaginary boundaries between "we" and the "others"' (p. 8).

I have argued that an education for cultural coherence is able to satisfy the demands of liberal education because of its ability to satisfy the requirements of individual well-being. Well-being and autonomy are not inevitably incompatible aims. To wit: if autonomy, in some piecemeal form, entails the capacity to identify from the inside with a set of beliefs, values and norms, then an education for cultural coherence that has the well-being of children as its central aim is likely to satisfy the other

conditions of autonomy upon which liberals insist. The trick is discerning the cultures that foster the requisite openness from those that do not.[16]

Correspondence: Michael S. Merry, Department of Education, Beloit College, 810 Chapin Street, Beloit, Wisconsin 53511, USA.
Email: merrym@beloit.edu

NOTES

1. M. Walzer (1983) *Sphere of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), p. 314.
2. Well-being is an imprecise descriptor that speaks to the pursuits individuals take up that contribute to a flourishing life, including habits, vocations, activities and relationships that are intrinsically worthwhile as defined by socially-embedded individuals. What remains a matter of considerable dispute is whether well-being is a psychological state of mind (informed, say, by needs and preferences) or an objective state of affairs. A very judicious account has been made in J. Griffin (1986) *Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement and Moral Importance* (Oxford, Oxford University Press). Many have argued that culture offers the means to achieve well-being provided that no harm is done to its members and that persons possess the ability to quit their culture should they choose to. Doret de Ruyter invokes Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* and argues that human flourishing exists to the extent that an individual finds purpose and meaning in the pursuits he or she undertakes. These pursuits ought to reflect personal interest, including the interests of others over oneself. See D. J. de Ruyter (2004).
3. Mohatma Ghandi did this when he challenged the caste system in 1948, claiming that Hinduism's viability as a religion was contingent on its reforming the caste system. Hinduism—privileging the Brahmins—has historically been a religion that has rationalised and defended the castes (including the *shudras* or "untouchables") as a religiously sanctioned cultural practice. Some might consider the fact that Russian Orthodoxy outlasted seventy-four years of militant atheism as an instance of religion's resilience in a situation where it was not sustained by culture; yet in fact it was the political leaders and their policies and not the culture *per se* that aimed to root out religion. Similar examples can be drawn from Buddhism in China and Catholicism in various South American countries during communist rule.
4. John White says that an autonomous person is one who determines how he or she should live according to her own, unpressured picture of a worthwhile life. However, liberals will insist that autonomy must be weighed against other goods, including an equality of consideration for the pursuits of others, truth-telling, and a sympathetic concern for others. See J. White (2003), pp. 147–148.
5. I have opted for 'culturalist' owing to the slipperiness of terms like communitarian and multiculturalist. I am aware that culturalist is hardly better, and may even be worse, but it is offered without the trappings of the other two labels and is meant to capture those who would prioritise cultural identity as a primary good. For an interesting discussion of communitarianism and its inherent ambiguity, see D. Miller (2000) *Citizenship and National Identity* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 97–109. For one concerning the ambiguities of multiculturalism, see C. Torres (1998) *Democracy, Education and Multiculturalism* (Lanham, Maryland, Rowland & Littlefield), pp. 175–222.
6. Denis Phillips offers his requirements for autonomy thus: 'A child would have to analyze her own intended actions, and sort out which other people would be likely to be impacted by this action; then she would have to be able to determine, again by analysis, if there is a prima facie case that any of the rights of these people ought to be respected in the situation in which she is about to act. Furthermore, to do this she would need to have a reasoned grasp of the concept of a right' (Phillips, 1989, pp. 348–349).
7. On a cultural rights view, the interests of children are seldom taken into consideration. Yet children's best interests and equality of opportunity cannot be dispensed with so that cultural survival may be ensured. Inadequate information to weigh one's viable options—to say nothing of coercion, betrayal, or threats—may account for the number of people who remain, against all sound judgment, in less than favorable conditions. See A. Mason (2000).

8. Claire Dwyer is astute to point out that hybridity as a concept is problematic inasmuch as it assumes the fusion of two distinct cultures, ignoring the extent to which the fusion has been continuous as well as the fact that there is no such thing as a pristine culture or identity prior to the fusion (Dwyer, 1999, p. 22, n. 3).

9. This reality can also be turned on its head, when children are led to believe that their parents are too directed by folk culture and are not serious enough about religion. This tension is disturbingly captured in the film, *My Son, the Fanatic*.

10. Furthermore, the virtue of tolerance that liberals extol in their educational philosophy is one that several researchers have found to be morally inept; a veritable fragmentation of values prevails in most American high schools that can provide, at best, a kind of vapid neutrality. Indeed, according to Powell *et al.*, even the notion of communality in schools passes as little more than an absence of conflict (Powell *et al.*, 1985, pp. 54–58). The authors further remark that sexist comments were still rife during the period of their study (p. 339, n. 4), and I would add from my repeated observations in dozens of schools in two large Midwestern school districts during 2002–2005 that homophobic and racial slurs continue to be pervasive. Elsewhere, with characteristic severity, Michael McConnell avers, 'The common school movement now teaches our children, unintentionally, to be value-less, culture-less, root-less, and religion-less' M. McConnell (1991) Multiculturalism, Majoritarianism, and Educational Choice: What Does Our Constitutional Tradition Have to Say? *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 123, p. 150. McConnell favours a wide scale voucher programme.

11. A film like *Devil's Playground*, which explores the decisions that Old Order Amish youth make with respect to life outside of their closed communities, gives the impression that these teens are well-informed of options outside their communities. But this is misleading. Not only do Amish youth—like most teenagers—underestimate the range of options available to them, but the alternative lifestyles most of them associate with the 'English world' amount to little more than heavy alcohol consumption, promiscuity and the option to live apart from one's parents. This hardly paints a balanced picture where options are concerned, and it certainly does little critically to examine the tremendous psychological costs that Old Order Amish youth pay should they decide—on pain of ostracism from family and friends—to leave their communities.

12. This does not, however, remove the worry that while some sectarian religious communities may know more about groups outside of their cloistered walls, the *manner* in which this knowledge is studied and purveyed to children is far from even-handed. Many sects, for example, rigorously study other religious and secular groups so that they may *refute* them or simply dismiss them as damnable and errant in their ways. Others, not given to theological quarrels and having a more charitable disposition, merely study other groups in order to have a better, more secure appreciation of the views that they already possess. Few if any sectarian religious communities encourage their members to study other ways of life for the truths that may be gained from them.

13. *Ijtihād* is the third arm of Islamic jurisprudence (the other two being the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*) though it is usually thought that only the jurist (*mujtahid*) or legal expert (*mufti*) is qualified among the leaders (*ulamā*) to make decisions according to *shari'āh* where the other sources are silent. The difficulty remains, however, because there are several traditional schools of law (*madhāhib*), including Shāfi'ī, Hanbalī, Mālikī and Hanafī. One's position with respect to *Ijtihād* will determine a great deal about one's position as an Islamic traditionalist, modernist, fundamentalist, etc. Traditionalists and fundamentalists (not to be confused with Radicalists) will incline towards the view that all truth for Muslims was canonised prior to the 13th Century, and thus no *ijtihād* is acceptable. All authority lies, therefore, in the period of the four major schools of interpretation, and interpretation, and application of these canonised truths are limited to the *ulema* or clergy.

14. Reasons for wearing the head covering vary widely; indeed, 'headscarves [may] be worn strategically to negotiate different spaces' (Dwyer, 1999, p. 18).

15. This is why I believe Shelley Burtt is mistaken to claim that persons are 'irrevocably constituted' (though elsewhere she appears to give the nod to Callan's phrase, 'revocably encumbered') by the cultures of their parents. Moreover, she is presumptuous to claim that because some people are able to leave communities into which they were born, we have sufficient evidence for the freedom to exit. Burtt is correct, however, to say that consistent messages conduce to the psychological health of children, and that autonomy can be cultivated from within schools that promote cultural coherence. I believe she is also correct to discern the 'three goods' to come

of an education for cultural coherence, *viz.* (1) moral courage, (2) character pluralism, i.e. the recognition that one inhabits a set of values and norms different from others, and (3) the ability to identify with a set of beliefs from the inside (Burtt, 2003).
16. I would like to thank Walter Feinberg, John Ambrosio and two anonymous referees for their comments on earlier drafts.

REFERENCES

Abou El Fadl, K. (2001) *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* (Oxford, Oneworld Publications).

Benhabib, S. (2002) *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

Brighouse, H. (2002) A Modest Defence of School Choice, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 36.4, pp. 653–659.

Brighouse, H. (2000) *School Choice and Social Justice* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Bryk, A., Lee, V. and Holland, P. (1993) *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Burtt, S. (2003) Comprehensive Educations and the Liberal Understanding of Autonomy, in: K. McDonough and W. Feinberg (eds) *Citizenship and Education in Liberal-Democratic Societies* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 179–207.

Callan, E. (1997) *Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Chaves, M. and Gorski, P. S. (2001) Religious Pluralism and Religious Participation, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, pp. 261–281.

Conroy, J. (2001) A Very Scottish Affair: Catholic Education and State, *Oxford Review of Education*, 27.4, pp. 543–558.

De Ruyter, D. J. (2004) Pottering in the Garden? On Human Flourishing and Education, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 52.4, pp. 377–389.

Dwyer, C. (1999) Veiled Meanings: Young British Muslim Women and the Negotiation of Differences, *Gender, Place and Culture*, 6.1, pp. 5–26.

Dwyer, J. (1998) *Religious Schools vs. Children's Rights* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press).

Etzioni, A. (1996) A Moderate Communitarian Proposal, *Political Theory*, 24.2, pp. 155–171.

Fish, S. (2000) Mutual Respect as a Device of Exclusion, in: S. Macedo (ed.) *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement* (New York, Oxford University Press), pp. 88–102.

Galston, W. (2002) *Liberal Pluralism: The Implications of Value Pluralism for Political Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Grace, G. (2002) *Catholic Schools: Mission, Market and Morality* (New York, Routledge).

Green, L. (1995) Internal Minorities and Their Rights, in: Will Kymlicka (ed.) *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (New York, Oxford University Press), pp. 257–272.

Gutmann, A. (1995) Civic Education and Social Diversity, *Ethics*, 105, pp. 557–579.

Gutmann, A. (1987) *Democratic Education* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

Halstead, J. M. (1995) Should Schools Reinforce Children's Religious Identity?, *Religious Education*, 90.3–4, pp. 360–376.

Hewer, C. (2001) Schools for Muslims, *Oxford Review of Education*, 27.4, pp. 515–527.

Kozol, J. (1991) *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (New York, Harper).

Kroeker, F. (2004) Overcoming a Crucial Objection to State Support for Religious Schooling, presented at the Philosophy of Education Society Annual Conference, Toronto, Ontario, March 21–25, 2004.

Levinson, M. (1999) *The Demands of Liberal Education* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Mason, A. (2000) *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: Levels of Community and Their Normative Significance* (New York, Cambridge University Press).

McConnell, M. W. (2002) Education Disestablishment: Why Democratic Values are Ill-Served by Democratic Control of Schooling, in: Macedo Stephen and Yael Tamir (eds) *NOMOS 43: Moral and Political Education* (New York, New York University Press).

McKenzie, K. B. and Scheurich, J. J. (2004) The Corporatizing and Privatizing of Schooling: A Call for Grounded Critical Praxis, *Educational Theory*, 54.4, pp. 431–443.

McLaughlin, T. (1992) The Ethics of Separate Schools, in: M. Leicester and M. Taylor (eds) *Ethics, Ethnicity and Education* (Kogan Page, London), pp. 114–136.

Merry, M. S. (2005) Embedded Identities and Dialogic Consensus: Educational Implications from the Communitarian Theory of Bhikhu Parekh, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 37.4, pp. 495–517.

Miller, H. (2001) Meeting the Challenge: The Jewish Schooling Phenomenon in the UK, *Oxford Review of Education*, 27.4, pp. 501–513.

Okin, S. M. (1998) Feminism and Multiculturalism: Some Tensions, *Ethics*, 108, pp. 661–684.

Orfield, G. and Eaton, S. E. and The Harvard Project on School Desegregation (1996) *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York, The New Press).

Parekh, B. (2000) *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).

Parker-Jenkins, M., Hartas, D. and Irving, B. A. (2005) *In Good Faith: Schools, Religion and Public Funding* (Hampshire, Ashgate Publishing).

Phillips, D. C. (1989) Directive Teaching, Indoctrination, and the Values Education of Children, *Social Theory and Practice*, 15.3, pp. 339–353.

Pope, D. C. (2001) *Doing School: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students* (New Haven, Yale University Press).

Powell, A., Farrar, E. and Cohen, D. K. (1985) *The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin).

Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, Simon & Schuster).

Rorty, A. (1994) The Hidden Politics of Cultural Identification, *Political Theory*, 22.1, pp. 152–166.

Schmidt, G. (2004) Islamic Identity Formation among Young Muslims: The Case of Denmark, Sweden and the United States, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 24.1, pp. 31–45.

Schrag, F. (1998) Diversity, Schooling and the Liberal State, *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 17, pp. 29–46.

Short, G. (2002) Faith-Based Schools: A Threat to Social Cohesion? *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 36.4, pp. 559–572.

Spinner-Halev, J. (2000) *Surviving Diversity: Religion and Democratic Citizenship* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press).

Steele, S. (2002) The Age of White Guilt and the Disappearance of the Black Individual, *Harpers* (November), pp. 33–42.

Tamir, Y. (1999) Siding with the Underdogs, in: S. Okin (ed.) *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L. and Brady, H. E. (1995) *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).

Waldron, J. (2003) Teaching Cosmopolitan Right, in: K. McDonough and W. Feinberg (eds) *Citizenship and Education in Liberal-Democratic Societies* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 23–55.

Walford, G. (2002) Classification and Framing of the Curriculum in Evangelical Christian and Muslim Schools in England and the Netherlands, *Educational Studies*, 28.4, pp. 403–419.

Walzer, M. (1983) *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Walzer, M. (1990) The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism, *Political Theory*, 18.1, pp. 6–23.

Wells, A. S. and Crain, R. L. (1997) *Stepping Over the Color Line: African American Students in White Suburban Schools* (New Haven, Yale University Press).

White, J. (2003) Five Critical Stances towards Liberal Philosophy of Education in Britain, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 37.1, pp. 147–161.

Wikan, U. (2002) *Generous Betrayal: Politics of Culture in the New Europe* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).