

## Challenges of Multiculturalism in Democratic Education

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How can a multicultural society educate its members for democracy? Many contemporary controversies about public schooling turn on the clash of two apparently competing educational aims: securing civic values and respecting cultural differences.<sup>1</sup> This essay argues that democratic education can integrate both civic and multicultural aims, and not merely in a pragmatic compromise, but in a genuinely principled combination. At the outset, I describe two responses that fail to do justice to one or the other of these aims. The first response sets the project of civic unity against the diversifying tendencies of multiculturalism; the second puts cultural diversity above the claims of civic education. Both responses reflect significant political impulses in the United States and throughout the world, and both contain partial insights. I try to capture the partial truth in each and integrate them into a democratic conception of a civic *and* multicultural education.

The second part of the essay develops the integration by considering a test case -- a recent French controversy known as the "Affair of the Scarf" or the "chador case" -- that highlights one of the deepest conflicts endemic to multicultural societies. Can a conception of democratic education accommodate religious differences that conflict with civic values? I defend a democratic response to the chador case that respects religious differences without sacrificing the aims of teaching a common set of civic values to all citizens.

The last part of the essay explores the even greater challenge that multinationalism poses for democratic education. Despite the differences between multinational and multicultural societies, there is an important similarity in the challenge they pose to democratic education. In both cases, educators must cultivate a concern for human beings, whatever their nationality, alongside a sense of civic responsibility. Integrating these two aims, and coping with conflicts between them, is perhaps the most formidable challenge for the philosophy and practice of democratic education. We shall see that there is no justifiable way of escaping this challenge by falling back on either a purely cosmopolitan or a purely civic understanding of education.

### CIVIC EDUCATION, CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, AND MUTUAL RESPECT

Public schools in the United States once included Protestant prayers and readings from the King James Version of the Bible as central parts of the school day. Little or no effort was made to respect the diverse religious beliefs of non-Protestants. Catholic children were sometimes whipped by teachers if they refused to read from the King James Bible. In the same schools, history was taught largely without reference to, let alone understanding of, the experiences of American Indians, blacks, and women. And, perhaps more significantly, all subjects were taught to racially segregated student bodies, for whom even an inclusive, culturally respectful civics curriculum would have been overwhelmed by the civics lesson in white supremacy implicit in the way children were distributed among schools.

This traditional model illustrates the problem with a civic education unmodified by multiculturalism. The traditional model withheld respect from different ways of life, and denigrated the contributions of minority groups and women to American civic culture. It also taught morally skewed lessons in civic virtue. When history classes exalted the contributions of the founding fathers with scant discussion of the institution of slavery, the lives of slaves, the Underground Railroad, or the

contributions of African-Americans to civic understandings, public schools failed, among other things, to teach students the civic values of democratic dissent and disobedience to unjust laws. In not teaching these democratic values, schools diminished the role of dissenters and restricted the range of reasonable political alternatives that children could understand and embrace.

To cite another, not atypical example, from personal experience: The world history texts in my public school devoted as much space to the heroic acts of righteous Christians in rescuing Jews during the Holocaust as to the slaughter itself of millions of Jews. These texts sent an unsubtle signal to every student who read them (which is not to say that every student did read them) that some people count for much more than others in this country. These texts also failed to convey how the historical experiences of minorities can offer American citizens a more adequate understanding of our civic values of "liberty and justice for all."

These purportedly patriotic history lessons were *repressive* and *discriminatory*. They simultaneously restricted understanding of diverse ways of life and denigrated the people who lived those lives. Repression in schooling is commonly identified with banning books and punishing teachers or students for unpopular ideas. But schooling is often repressive, and more insidiously so, by virtue of what it fails to teach. A civic education is repressive when it fails to teach appreciation and respect for the positive contributions by minorities to a society's common culture.

An antidote to this traditional civics curriculum is education that aims to appreciate the social contributions and life experiences of the various groups that constitute society. Such appreciation defines one common conception of multicultural education, a conception compatible with the principles of democratic education. We are a society constituted by many cultures. It is both morally wrong and empirically false to teach students as if it were otherwise.

Some contemporary American educators, however, defend schooling that is multicultural in a different sense. They defend schools designed primarily to cultivate the separatist cultural identities of minorities and to bolster the self-esteem of students based on their membership in a separatist culture. Afrocentrism is a currently controversial instance of such a separatist multicultural perspective, but the perspective is not unique to Afrocentrism, nor is it new to American education. Some all-white schools are designed to serve a similar if less publicly criticized purpose: to teach children a sense of racial superiority, which is taken to justify racial discrimination.

The chief problem with such segregation academies from a democratic perspective is not the inaccuracy of what they teach children about the superior accomplishments of their ancestors, but their attempt to cultivate among these children a sense of superiority based on race. These schools try to teach racial *discrimination*, albeit for differing reasons. Democratic governments cannot prevent private individuals and associations from conveying to children a sense of superiority based on race, religion, gender, or class, but they must not support schools that convey the very disrespect that democratic education should be designed to dispel.

Some educators say that teaching disadvantaged students to identify with the superior contributions of their ancestors bolsters their *self-esteem*, "the favorable appreciation or opinion of oneself." But this way of cultivating self-esteem comes at the cost of undercutting *mutual respect* among citizens, "a proper regard for the dignity of [a] person or position."<sup>2</sup> In a democracy, proper regard for the position of citizens includes the mutual recognition that all persons, regardless of the accomplishments of their ancestors, are entitled to equal political and civil liberties and fair equality of opportunity to live a good life.

Public schooling in a democracy should not therefore forswear the aim of increasing the self-esteem of disadvantaged students. I have argued only that schools should not try to increase self-esteem by discriminatory means, such as crediting to particular groups of students the superiority of their ancestors. This aim is to be distinguished from recognizing and respecting the identification of individuals with particular cultures. This identification is something that public schooling can

support, as a way of respecting students with different cultural identifications, and also as a way of recognizing the multitude of cultural opportunities that are open to all students as members of a multicultural society. Imagine a curriculum in which the achievements of Africa and Africans, ancient and modern, are given due place alongside the treatment of other continents and peoples, and in which the links (causal, cultural, and emotional) between the history of Africa and the history of African-Americans are made plain. Such a curriculum taught to *all* students puts multicultural education in service to democratic values, not in opposition. Such a curriculum supports rather than subverts one of the most basic lessons of democratic education: that all individuals, regardless of their cultural identifications, have equal civic standing, and are honored or dishonored by their own acts, not by the acts of their ancestors.

For schools to cultivate a sense of self-esteem in students that is sustainable alongside mutual respect among citizens, schools need to help every student succeed academically. Students learn to appreciate themselves as accomplished individuals when schools help them become accomplished learners. This educational task is a lot harder than teaching students to identify with their ancestors. Educational success entails learning something that is worthy of being publicly honored as knowledge and (moral, empirical, or analytical) understanding.<sup>3</sup> The fact that educational success, like self-esteem, is achieved by individuals does not mean that its attainment must be a solitary endeavor. Quite the contrary. Some of the most successful teaching occurs in cooperative and diverse learning groups. The self-esteem that is compatible with civic equality (which, in turn, is based on a commitment to treating people as equals) cannot be acquired by group identification.

We have identified two ways that schools have failed to meet the challenge of securing common values and respecting cultural differences. The traditional civics curriculum imposes a cultural singularity that is false to the pluralism of American life and disrespectful of many of its citizens. A separatist curricula also educates by exclusion by fostering a sense of superiority among some students at the cost of disparaging or degrading others. Neither response promotes mutual respect among citizens, which is still sorely lacking in our society, and many others.

Why worry about cultivating mutual respect, a positive regard for other people who are also motivated to be respectful even in the face of cultural and political differences? Why should democratic education not rest content with teaching the less ambitious virtue of toleration, simply "to live and let live" in the face of our differences? Toleration is an essential democratic virtue and a necessary but not sufficient condition of mutual respect. In a democratic society, mutual respect is a public as well as a private good. It expresses the equal standing of every person as an individual and citizen, and it also enables democratic citizens to discuss their political differences in a productive way by first understanding one another's perspectives and then by trying to find fair ways of resolving their disagreements.

Schools can teach mutual respect in at least two ways that meet the challenge of joining civic and multicultural aims to the benefit of both. Schools can create curricula that recognize the multicultural heritage of the United States as everyone's resource, belonging not only to all of us, but also to future immigrants and generations to come. In addition, schools can teach about foreign cultures in a way that is more conducive to our remaining a society of immigrants. If we are to remain a haven for political and economic refugees, we need to respect not only the diverse cultures that are already ours, but also those that are not presently represented within our borders. (This does not call for an uncritical or static approach to any culture, domestic or foreign.) Recognition of foreign cultures cannot of course be comprehensive. In any case, cultivating a relatively deep appreciation of a few foreign cultures is likely to be more educationally effective than conveying a superficial familiarity with many.

But appreciation of cultural diversity is not enough to teach students the civic virtue of mutual respect, nor is it the toughest task now facing most schools. Expanding the knowledge of students meets only half the intellectual and moral challenge of the democratic ideal that I have been

defending. The second, pedagogically as well as politically more demanding, way in which schools can cultivate mutual respect is to teach students how to engage together in respectful discussions in which they strive to understand, appreciate, and, if possible, resolve political disagreements, including those that may be partly rooted in cultural differences. Mutual respect that rests only on *therecognition* of cultural diversity is an incomplete democratic virtue. Recognition needs to be accompanied by a willingness and ability to deliberate about politically relevant disagreements.

A culturally diverse citizenry dedicated to deliberation strives for reciprocity in political relationships. It seeks agreement on public policies that are (as far as possible) mutually acceptable to all citizens who are bound by them. Reciprocity is a goal which is unlikely to be fully realized. As with many valuable ends, reciprocity is an aspirational ideal, one that is constitutive of the political ideal of democracy. By teaching the skills and virtues of deliberation among citizens, schools can contribute to bringing a democracy closer to its own ideal.

Even if reciprocity may never be fully realized, we can find partial ways of approaching its educational aims of cultivating an inclusive multiculturalism and a morally informed deliberation. We can find examples of promising practices in non-elite public schools in the United States. Deborah Meier's pioneering District 4 in East Harlem and California's statewide history curriculum offer models of inclusive multicultural curricula. Neither model is perfect, but both are better than what has gone before them. Meier's school is successful both by traditional measures (increased reading and mathematical achievement scores) and non-traditional measures (integration of a multiracial student body).

Much more should be said about teaching morally-informed deliberation than this essay permits.<sup>4</sup> I can only point to a good illustration of teaching the virtues and skills of morally informed deliberation. The example comes from an account of an American history class in a Brooklyn high school where students were asked whether it was moral for the United States to drop the atomic bomb on Japan.

The lesson was taught in a Socratic manner. Bruckner [the teacher] did not lecture. He asked questions and kept up a rapid-fire dialogue among the students. "Why?" "How do you know?" "What does this mean?" By the time the class was finished, the students had covered a great deal of material about American foreign and domestic politics during World War II; they had argued heatedly; most of them had tried out different points of view, seeing the problem from different angles.<sup>5</sup>

Like this small but significant lesson in deliberation, a multicultural curriculum dedicated to teaching deliberation would encourage students to respect each other as equal citizens, regardless of the accomplishments of their ancestors, and to take different points of view seriously when thinking about politics. The practice of morally informed deliberation engages students in according each other the mutual respect and moral understanding that is too often lacking in contemporary politics.

Teaching mutual respect among citizens in these ways is a central aim of civic education in a multicultural democracy. Bolstering self-esteem by group identification is not -- not because self-esteem is unimportant or insupportable by education, but because the self-esteem that is compatible with mutual respect among citizens cannot be acquired merely by means of group identification. Just as a civic education, unmodified by multiculturalism, represses cultural differences, multiculturalism, uninformed by civic values, discriminates among citizens on the basis of their group identities. Schools can meet this challenge of multiculturalism by allying common civic values with uncommon cultural appreciations.

#### DEMOCRATIC MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND "THE AFFAIR OF THE SCARF"

I have criticized two common perspectives on multiculturalism in a democratic society. One speaks in the voice of a transcendent universalism, the other in the voice of a separatist particularism. I have suggested that both speak misleadingly in that they fail to do justice to the values of universalism and particularism that they claim to represent. A civic education cannot completely transcend particular cultures, and a multicultural education should not lose sight of the universalist principles of toleration and mutual respect that inform its commitment to cultural diversity. A democratic integration of civic education and multiculturalism can capture the partial truth in the two common perspectives by refusing to divorce the aims of civic education from those of multicultural education, at the same time recognizing that there are potential tensions between these two inter-related strands of democratic education.

"Easier said than done," a critic might reply. This integration of multiculturalism and civic education has yet to confront the challenge of accommodating religious differences. To see if democratic education can meet this challenge, we should consider a controversy in which the aims of civic education are apparently at odds with religious freedom.

In 1989, three Muslim adolescent girls went to their local public high school in Creil, France wearing chadors (head coverings that are associated with religiously orthodox Muslims). French public schools are, by law and centuries-long tradition, secular. A 1937 law prohibits the wearing of religious symbols, or at least conspicuous religious symbols, in government-run schools. (Parents may send their children to private schools that teach religion, but these schools charge tuition and many families cannot afford them.) Citing the 1937 law, the principal of the high school, a Catholic of Martinican origin, told the three students that they must remove their chadors in class. When they refused, the principal, supported by the school's teachers, forbade the girls to attend class.<sup>6</sup>

Controversies like this one pose perhaps the toughest challenge of multiculturalism to civic education. The chador case divided not only French society, but French socialists, who consider themselves as universalist as anyone. Although the socialists could unite in criticizing reactions like those of the conservative newspaper *Le Point*, whose headline read "Should We Let Islam Colonize Our Schools?" and the right-wing politician, Le Pen, who urged the repatriation of all immigrants who had arrived in France since 1974, they were bitterly divided among themselves. Some socialists found themselves allied with conservatives in defending the 1937 law, while others proclaimed it unjust.<sup>7</sup> The debate among socialists helps demonstrate why transcendent universalism is inadequate as a public educational philosophy, and points us to a more defensible way of posing and provisionally resolving such problems.

Socialists who supported the 1937 law argued that the veil is "a sign of imprisonment that considers women to be subhumans under the law of Islam" and should therefore not be admitted by a public educational system committed to teaching gender equality. In opposition to the law, Prime Minister Michel Rocard argued that "tolerance must be put before principle." We might say instead that religious toleration itself is a universal principle to be considered alongside the principle of teaching gender equality.<sup>8</sup> Invoking universal values alone therefore does not resolve the conflict, since religious toleration and gender equality both share the status of universal principles for the social context under consideration. (To say a principle is universal in this sense does not of course mean that it *is* universally accepted or even that it should be universally accepted by all people at all times, but only that it *should* be accepted by all morally-motivated people who find themselves in relevantly similar social and political circumstances.)

Even after we reject appeals to an exclusionary nationalism, the question therefore remains: If French public schools are committed to universalist principles, which principle should take priority in the case of conflict? Should universalists agree with Mme. Mitterrand who took the position that public schools should tolerate all religious symbols, even those that express gender inequality, because teaching religious toleration takes priority over teaching gender equality? Or should they side with Gisele Halimi, a founding member of a prominent anti-racist organization, *SOS-Racism*,

who argued that distinctively public (or civic) values, rather than private (or personal) values, should be taught in public schools? The social equality of men and women is a public value, Halimi argued. The chador is "a humiliating form of dress" symbolizing gender subordination and therefore has no legitimate place in public schools.<sup>9</sup> Although each argument invokes universalist principles, they support conflicting conclusions.

The indeterminacy of universalism is not a reason to abandon it, unless particularism carries with it better moral arguments. Does particularism get the better of universalism in this conflict? Should we give up looking for mutually-acceptable values in public education, and leave education to parents or religious groups? (Might this be a more mutually-acceptable value?) One attraction of particularism is that it offers religious parents effective access to schools that reflect their religious perspectives. Divide school systems into streams, particularists argue, and give every major cultural group the effective opportunity to shape the schooling of its own children. The French government could then authorize each major community, including secularists, to run its own publicly subsidized schools. French secular schools could remain strictly secular, while orthodox Catholics, Muslims, and Jews (among other groups) could send their children to subsidized schools committed to reinforcing their particular communal values. If the government subsidizes separate schooling for each group, then no group needs to compromise its particularist values for the sake of a common civic education.

Although the particularist response would require a radical restructuring of French education, it cannot be rejected on grounds that its values are foreign to French social understandings. Asked about the situation of orthodox Jewish students in France who wish to wear yarmulkes (and might on a strict interpretation of the 1937 law be prevented from doing so in public schools), Sabine Roitman of the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France responded that "Jewish students have had little trouble with the issue, because those who want to wear yarmulkes generally attend private religious schools."<sup>10</sup> What about the fact that many parents, like those of the Muslim girls, cannot afford the private schools of their choice? Particularists can respond by defending public subsidies for all schools, religious as well as secular. Any adequate defense of this response would take us beyond particularism to the claim that subsidies of separate educational streams are more justifiable to citizens than public subsidy of a common civic education.

Something more is missing from this particularist perspective that a more democratic perspective provides. The particularist response to religious diversity neglects, or at least downplays, the government's role in regulating the schools that it subsidizes. The particularist response is radically indeterminate when it comes to specifying what governments must do to ensure that schools adequately educate future citizens. It is this aim of educating future citizens that justifies massive state subsidies of schooling. So particularism cannot escape the question that it lacks the resources to answer: What may citizens reasonably expect of schools as a condition of their receiving public funding and accreditation? The silence of particularism in response to this question sustains the worry that separatist education is not designed to promote the civic values that justify public funding in the first place.

Unless schools serve civic purposes that citizens can share, their support should be left primarily to parents and private associations. Particularists who favor public support therefore should recognize that all streams of schooling must be publicly regulated to the extent necessary to ensure that they promote civic educational purposes. This recognition opens the door to giving precedence to democratic principles (such as teaching mutual respect across cultural differences) over and alongside particularistic purposes. Particularism, so modified, is far more defensible, but it no longer can claim the attraction of avoiding controversies over the content of civic education by ceding to each religious (or ethnic) group its own autonomous sphere of schooling. Nor is this kind of particularism easy to distinguish from a universalism that recognizes the value of religious (or ethnic) diversity.

The problems of unregulated particularism are the mirror-image of those confronting a universalism that tries to transcend particularist cultures. While transcendent universalism expects too much uniformity in the content of public schooling, separatist particularism expects too little.

Public schools are the primary institution by which a democratic society educates future citizens, preparing them to share in responsible self-government. Teaching the elements of responsible self-government -- which include mutual respect for basic liberty, opportunity, and a commitment to deliberate about politically relevant issues -- is a major reason for mandating and publicly subsidizing schooling for all children. These lessons are constitutive of the purposes of public schooling in contemporary liberal democracies, or aspiring liberal democracies.<sup>11</sup>

Suppose we grant that teaching students the values of basic liberty, opportunity, and deliberation is a primary purpose of public education. We must still wonder whether any conception of education that recognizes this purpose can find a way of resolving the chador case and similar conflicts that pit civic education and cultural diversity against each other. Is there a way of resolving the conflict between religious freedom and a civic education that aims to educate children for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, where religious beliefs apparently conflict with the aims of civic education?

We cannot defer as a matter of principle to religious freedom regardless of its claims against civic education, as does a particularism unmodified by civic values. Nor can we defer as a matter of principle to a civic education that would expel religious dissenters, regardless of the content of their claims against civic education, as would one version of the universalism represented by the French left -- a transcendent universalism that is unmodified by particularist values. This kind of universalism in effect denies that religious freedom, like freedom of conscience more generally, is a basic liberty, necessary to the integrity of persons as we know them.

Public schools have a responsibility to teach and practice religious toleration as *part* of civic education. Both a universalism that respects particular values and a particularism that respects civic values can recognize this responsibility. The critical question remains: To what extent can schools teach and practice religious toleration without sacrificing civic equality and mutual respect among men and women?

We can begin to answer the question by recognizing that there are principled limits to the religious freedom that the law must respect, and therefore also limits to the religious practices that a public school must tolerate. (Insisting on wearing a chador is not the same as insisting on being taught in classes that are segregated by religion, gender, ethnicity, or race.) We need to determine the substantive limits of religious toleration in a particular context of public schooling and therefore to consider in the chador case whether the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols -- especially religious symbols of gender inequality in a public school classroom -- exceeds those limits.

We can locate religious practices that lie beyond the legally protected realm of religious freedom and toleration. The legally protected realm excludes religious practices that conflict with other basic democratic rights and which are themselves less valuable than the particular rights with which they conflict. Examples of religious practices that may be outlawed in order to protect more valuable rights are ritual human sacrifice and the denial of essential health care to children.

In harder cases where rights conflict, we encounter more uncertainty. These conflicts must be resolved, at least provisionally, but they cannot be even provisionally resolved without our rendering some substantive judgment, which will not be neutral, among particular ways of life. The position of deferring, either to established religious practices or established state policy, is not morally neutral, nor does liberal democracy establish a presumption in favor of either position. We have no better alternative than to assess the conflict as carefully as we can and at the most specific level that public policy can handle. We cannot legitimately counterpoise teaching gender equality against protecting religious freedom in its entirety. Instead, we need to focus on the specific aspects of gender equality

and religious freedom that are at issue -- that is, the school's obligation to teach students, regardless of their religion or gender, to associate as civic equals in the classroom, and the students' freedom to wear conspicuous religious symbols to school, including those that are commonly associated with gender subordination. We now must ask: Is there any way to reconcile these two apparently conflicting values? If not, which value is the more important to secure in this context?

If we recognize the school's dual responsibility -- to teach the civic equality of men and women, and to respect individuals regardless of religious differences insofar as these differences are consistent with civic values -- we can develop an alternative way of viewing the conflict, a principled integration of the central purposes of the two perspectives. The liberal democratic values that give public schooling its primary social purpose guide the integration. Schools should tolerate the religious difference represented by the chadors without acquiescing in the gender segregation and subordination that typically accompanies this dress in religious practice outside of schools. The French public schools could have made an educational opportunity out of the girls' wearing of the scarves in school in order to express a democratic commitment to educate all students, regardless of their gender and the religious convictions of their parents.

Schools can teach these democratic lessons in different ways, but the way in which the French government recently resolved the chador controversy is not one of them. In September 1994, the government reversed an earlier ruling by the *Conseil d'Etat* that would have allowed the wearing of chadors in public schools. Under the new policy, students are not permitted to wear "ostentatious religious signs" in the classroom, and chadors count as ostentatious signs. Crucifixes and yarmulkes, on the other hand, are considered discrete and are therefore permitted. Thus, Catholic boys and girls who wear crucifixes or Jewish boys who wear yarmulkes will be welcome within French public schools, while Muslim girls who insist on wearing chadors will not.

The previous ruling by the *Conseil d'Etat* had been more defensible on democratic grounds, though it too fell short of a fully principled integration of particularism and universalism. The wearing of religious symbols, the *Conseil* had said, is permissible so long as it does not involve one of the four *Ps*: "pressure on others, provocation, propaganda, or proselytism."<sup>12</sup> The ruling raised a critical question concerning moral responsibility in an educational context: What if the wearing of chadors provokes some students to taunt the girls? The ruling suggested that discipline may be directed to the girls rather than the taunters. Yet this way of resolving the problem of provocation would be unjust to the girls, who should not be held responsible for the uncivil behavior of students who fail to respect their right to religious freedom.

Educators should be able to distinguish such uncivil behavior from another kind of reaction among students, which would be fully consistent with democratic education. The wearing of chadors might provoke criticism among some students for being a symbol of women's second-class citizenship. This criticism, in turn, might provoke the Muslim girls to respond with a defense of their tradition. These forms of civil provocation might be discomforting to all parties, but such discomfort is not unwelcome to democratic education. While multiculturalism, informed by democratic principles, encourages us to understand the value that different ways of life have for people who live them, it also exposes every way of life to civil criticism.

The democratic rationale for opening schools to the display of religious difference, along with other kinds of cultural difference, is therefore not to protect each particular way of life from criticism or even from erosion.<sup>13</sup> The rationale is rather to encourage citizens to understand, appreciate, and evaluate politically relevant differences among ways of life. Because some ways of life are more open to criticism and change than others, reflection on politically relevant differences is bound to be more unsettling to some students and citizens than to others, but the non-neutrality of a democratic education is a virtue as well as a necessity. Non-neutrality is a necessity because an educational program would be empty were it to rest upon neutrality among different conceptions of the good life. Non-neutrality, more interestingly, is a virtue because citizens should support an educational



system only if it is *not* neutral between those ways of life that respect basic liberty, opportunity, and deliberation, and those that do not. A liberal democracy should take its own side in arguments about teaching the skills and virtues that are constitutive of its own flourishing.

Among the various responses in France to the chador case, the one that best reflects the democratic aim of integrating particularism and universalism was that of Souad Benani, a spokesperson for *Les Nanas Beurs*, an organization of women of North African descent. "As Arab feminists of Muslim culture," Benani said,

we believe that fundamentalism in all its forms is dangerous and the scarf is oppressive. But it should not be used as a pretext to exclude twelve- or thirteen-year-old girls from school when it is precisely these secular schools that should offer them the opportunity to learn, grow, and make their own choices.<sup>14</sup>

Informed by a larger conception of democratic education, this response does not simply defer to the religious beliefs of Muslim parents or students, nor does it claim to be transcendent in its universalism. Its guiding principles -- which include basic liberty and opportunity for all individuals, and their effective freedom to deliberate as civic equals about collective choices -- are arguably universal for our world as we now know it, but these principles are also importantly open-ended in their content. Not only will their implications vary with the facts of particular societies, but the principles themselves are also legitimately subject to interpretation by the ongoing public deliberation that democratic education ideally supports.

The principles of democratic education do not comprehensively specify what constitutes a *good* education independently of particular cultures, life projects, and democratic deliberations. Democratic education rejects the separatist strand of particularism, which would give up on the project of educating all children for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, regardless of their familial culture. But it respects the widest range of cultural differences compatible with teaching those rights and responsibilities. These differences include cultural practices that you or I may judge wrong, or of lesser value than competing practices, but that we can still recognize as reasonable for those who adopt them.

Democratic education would not force the girls to give up wearing chadors in class, but it would expose them to a public culture of gender equality in public school. This exposure gives them reasons why women should view themselves as the civic equals of men, and it opens up opportunities (to pursue a career or hold public office, for example) that are not offered by their families and religious communities. By opening up such opportunities, democratic education may lessen the likelihood that certain kinds of cultural practices will perpetuate themselves. A democratic government should not go out of its way to perpetuate cultural practices that conflict with its constitutive principles.

Some critics suggest that this position of partial accommodation is little more than a pretense of accommodation with ways of life that dissent from liberal democratic orthodoxy. "Funny-hat liberalism," it is sometimes disparagingly called.<sup>15</sup> Why? Because the price paid by orthodox Muslim parents for accepting the accommodationist position of democratic education may be a serious weakening of the hold of their religious convictions and inherited way of life on their children.

The critics are correct in suggesting that democratic education does not grant illiberal ways of life nearly all that they claim for themselves, nor even all that they may need in order to perpetuate themselves in their present form. Democratic education does not claim to support any cultural way of life on its own terms, or even to the extent necessary to guarantee its survival as such. Nor should it. Cultures do not have rights to survival.<sup>16</sup> People have rights to religious freedom, along with other basic liberties and opportunities, that place demands on democratic education. The right to religious freedom, as we have seen, has principled limits. Among those limits is the right of children to be educated for full citizenship in a democratic society, and the responsibility of publicly-

supported schools to secure that right for students, even when it conflicts with religious commitments of their parents.

Moreover, the critics' disparagement of accommodating the wearing of chadors in public schools is not true to the experience of the Muslim parents and the girls themselves. The Muslim parents and the girls in this case preferred, and had good reason to prefer, the earlier accommodation by the *Conseil d'Etat* to the more recent banning of chadors. The parents argued for the right of their children, *dressed in accordance with their religious convictions*, to be educated as future French citizens within the public schools. They did not argue for their right to be *religiously* educated, as fundamentalist Muslims, in public schools.

The critics seem to assume that religious education in publicly subsidized schools is the only consistent position available to any truly religious parents. Many religious parents reasonably believe otherwise, and it is the willingness of the vast majority of citizens to draw some line of separation between civic education and religious education that permits any religiously pluralistic democracy to pursue liberty and justice for all.

The critics are therefore correct in claiming that the earlier ruling by the *Conseil d'Etat* did not provide the Muslim girls with a public education that conformed to their religious convictions, but the critics fail to defend their presumption that public education should be judged by its conformity with the religious convictions of parents. The critics offer no reason to reject the view that publicly subsidized education should serve distinctively civic purposes, which can be shared by a diverse citizenry, not distinctively religious purposes which divide us.

Democratic education respects religious differences that are consistent with expecting all citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs, to honor a set of civic responsibilities. Those civic responsibilities include allowing one's children to be educated for democratic citizenship. Democratic education thereby integrates particularist and universalist values. A religiously diverse citizenry can honor this integration as long as they are willing to share a society together on terms that they can justify to one another.

#### MULTINATIONALISM AND EDUCATION

Not all persons are so willing to share a society together. The unwillingness to share a society on mutually-justifiable terms is often rooted in a kind of cultural diversity that we have yet to consider: multinationalism as distinct from multiculturalism. While a multicultural society contains many cultures whose members typically overlap and willingly interact with each other in significant ways,<sup>17</sup> a multinational society is composed of two or more "peoples" who share a language, history, and territory, and either enjoy or aspire to enjoy as much political autonomy for themselves as practical circumstances permit.<sup>18</sup> Not every nationality has its own state, but most if not all aspire to the largest possible degree of political autonomy from other nationalities.

By this understanding, the vast majority of contemporary societies are multicultural. This is an important, although unstartling, truth. Some contemporary societies, but far from all, are also multinational. A nationality, by definition, is not morally committed to sharing a sovereign society with any other nationality on democratic terms. That aspiration would transform the nationality into a culture. (There are, to be sure, gradations between nationality and culture, but I focus here on the defining difference of multinationalism because it poses a distinct challenge for democratic education.) The United States is more distinctively multicultural than it is multinational. The former Soviet Union, in contrast, was as distinctively multinational as it was multicultural. Belgium is distinctively bi-national as well as multicultural. Thus, not all contemporary societies are multinational or multicultural to the same degree, and the degree makes a difference: the political challenges and therefore the educational challenges of multiculturalism and multinationalism are different.<sup>19</sup>

The distinctive challenge facing multinationalism is whether democratic education is possible in a society in which people identify as members of different nations. The logic of a nationality is to seek its own sovereign society. Out of necessity, however, nationalities sometimes seek a *modus vivendi* with other nationalities by demanding separate, semi-autonomous spaces within a sovereign multinational society. One consistently democratic resolution would be to establish separate sovereign, democratic societies for groups who are opposed to sharing a society on terms of equal citizenship with each other, but who would honor the democratic sovereignty of other societies, and do their best to make it possible for all individuals to share, as civil and political equals, in some decent democratic society.<sup>20</sup>

Where sovereignty for each nationality is not possible, another kind of political accommodation may be justified. Large parts of the political system, including the educational system, may be divided into national streams. Each educational stream would then be authorized to teach its own distinctive national values but also obligated to teach a universal set of civic values, including toleration and mutual respect for different national, cultural, and individual identities.

The worry about dividing schooling within a society into national streams parallels the worry that attends the more inescapable division of schooling among sovereign societies: will the division of students and curricula carry with it a message of group superiority, and a concomitant lack of concern for the interests of outsiders and disrespect for their rights? Or can the division of schooling within a society, along with the division of schooling among societies, be conceived in a way that helps to create a world combining respect for particularistic loyalties with mutual respect among persons?

Education in a multinational society, like education in a multicultural society, need not sacrifice the universal to the particular, or vice versa. All national groups within a multinational society can teach respect for a robust set of human rights -- such as those articulated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights -- that are due all people regardless of their nationality. A democratic multinational education would teach universal values as well as particular ones within an educational system that is segregated by non-antagonistic nationalities.<sup>21</sup> The problem with this conception is that nationalities as we know them are more often antagonistic than respectful of each other's particularities. Were they respectful of each other's particularities, they would probably feel less of a need to segregate the education of their children by nationality. (I say "probably" because there is a benign rationale for separation by nationality to perpetuate ways of life that people recognize as valuable to them, partly because it is theirs, rather than as objectively more valuable than any or all other ways of life.<sup>22</sup>)

I have suggested that the question of whether multinationalism can be reconciled with democratic education parallels a question about multiculturalism within a single society: Must the division of schooling by a sovereign society also carry with it, implicitly if not explicitly, a message of nationalistic superiority and neglect of outsiders? The division of schooling by states more often than not carries this message, but is it because the division is inherently suspect? I think not. The problem lies elsewhere than in the division of education by sovereign societies. It lies in the nationalistic content of the education itself.

The challenge of reconciling democratic education with separate sovereign societies is importantly different from the challenge we just posed of reconciling multinationalism with democratic education. In the case of multinationalism, separate national identifications among adults create the demand for educating children in separate national streams within a single society. The demand for educating children in separate sovereign societies would exist even if all adults identified themselves not primarily as members of this or that nation or society, but as equal persons committed to the aim of establishing liberty and justice for all other persons, wherever they happen to reside. The demand for educating children within a sovereign society makes moral sense if only because each sovereign society is a major political actor in bringing about better or worse conditions for its own citizens as

well as other people significantly affected by its policies. The best way we now know to bring about justice for all people on a global scale is to educate children as free and equal citizens of separate democratic societies. Our moral aim, then, should not be to abolish the sense of patriotism that attends education for democratic citizenship, but to educate children, whatever their citizenship, to be concerned with pursuing justice for all people as far as the division of moral labor among societies makes possible.

In light of the increasing interdependence of sovereign societies, democratic education must more than ever try to teach students not only about their shared citizenship, but also about their shared humanity with all individuals, regardless of their citizenship. The same values that support the commitment to using public schools to develop a shared sense of citizenship among all citizens, regardless of their more particular identities, also support a sense of our shared humanity with all individuals, regardless of their citizenship. Whereas empowering children as democratic citizens cultivates patriotism, conveying concern for all human beings, regardless of their citizenship, cultivates a kind of cosmopolitanism.<sup>23</sup>

Patriotism and cosmopolitanism, at their best, complement each other, both practically and morally speaking. Multicultural societies whose citizens care for each other establish the kind of social security that encourages citizens to care about people who live beyond their borders. Multicultural societies whose citizens care about people who live beyond their borders support the kind of patriotism that eschews parochialism and injustice. The aim of developing a sense of shared humanity as individuals in all citizens regardless of our particular citizenship, does not take us beyond democratic education. Quite the contrary, this educational aim follows from the most basic democratic commitment to treating all people as equals.

This aim, what might be called the cosmopolitan core of democratic education, should not be confused with the aim of educating children to be cosmopolitans in the sense of being citizens of the world. There is, after all, no world polity to be a citizen of, and were there a world polity, it would probably be a tyranny rather than a democracy. We are citizens of our own particular societies, but we should not therefore be educated to care only for members of our own societies. Quite the contrary, just democracies will educate their citizens to extend their concern to the equal liberties and opportunities of all human beings. Even in a world of just democracies, we could not assume that each society, taking care of its own citizens, would produce the most moral results. How much less can we assume that justice today will result from an education that neglects the duties of citizens to people who live beyond their country's borders.

Whereas educating children for world *citizenship* misrepresents the political aim of a democratic education, teaching children to care only for their fellow citizens misrepresents its moral content. Because there is no world polity to be a citizen of, it is all the more important that democratic education seeks to develop in all students a sense of shared humanity with concomitant responsibilities to people who live beyond their national borders. This commitment of democratic education does not presuppose either unlimited generosity or the existence (or even potential) of a democratic world polity. It presupposes only that we have moral obligations as citizens and as individuals that extend beyond national boundaries, and that we can also learn something important about our own lives by learning about the lives of culturally and geographically distant people.

Recognizing the need to teach children about foreign countries and cultures is consistent with giving greater attention to the history, cultures, and politics of our own country than we do to any other. There are at least three reasons that justify a greater (but not exclusive) focus on our own country.

The first and perhaps most basic reason is that particular cultures and politics would not thrive were people to take an equal interest in, and feel an equal commitment to, every existing culture and politics on the face of the earth. Cultures and politics are like friendship and love in this limited respect. They require particularistic commitments on the part of individuals, but those commitments

-- at least in the case of culture and politics -- should be consistent with respecting the rights of all people and securing their capacity to enjoy similar benefits. Because most people do not enjoy the benefits of even the imperfect system of liberties and opportunities available to United States citizens, it is particularly important that we learn about foreign cultures, politics, and people.

A second reason why schools may concentrate on domestic cultures and politics, especially in the early years of schooling, is that children often learn to respect other human beings by first learning to respect people who are close and familiar to them. It is important, however, that the focus broaden over the years, and perhaps never be exclusively on one's own country, so as to begin cultivating even in young children the capacity to identify with members of other societies.

A third reason for focusing in far more detail on the politics of the students' own country is that this is primarily -- but again not exclusively -- the politics that they must enlist to help people not only within, but also beyond their national borders. There are of course less local forms of politics, but these are typically less effective in enlisting the political energies of ordinary people, and not primarily because education fails to familiarize people with these political possibilities. Most people want to live their lives on a local, rather than global, level. There is much that they can do to further the cause of global justice on this level, provided they learn how to be effective citizens of their own society.

These three reasons explain why public schooling in the United States, for example, may rightly focus *more* on national (including state and local) history, culture, and politics than on the history, culture, and politics of every other country. But the three reasons do not together justify the neglect of world history and politics beyond national boundaries that has characterized public schooling in the United States. If public schooling teaches respect and understanding only of already familiar people, it teaches too little to satisfy the fundamental democratic ideal of treating *all* people as equals, an ideal which informs a moral commitment to democracy at the national level. If schooling fails to familiarize students with the various means of improving the world that extend beyond their national government, it deprives citizens of a complete sense of their political power and their opportunities to create a better world for themselves and other people.

In this significant sense, multinational and multicultural education, at their democratic best, share similar aspirations, even if the means of achievement vary with local contexts and conditions. Teaching respect for basic human rights is necessary, but insufficient to satisfy either democratic ideal because democratic education also requires teaching the virtues and skills of citizenship among people who share the same sovereign society. But teaching the virtues and skills of a shared citizenship is also insufficient if schools do not count among those virtues moral responsibility toward, and intellectual curiosity about, people who happen to live in other societies. An adequate educational response to the challenges of both multiculturalism and multinationalism therefore combines respect for individuals who have particularistic identities in addition to the cultivation of common values among those individuals.

This integration is unlikely to take hold without lessons in democratic deliberation, lessons which invoke universal and particular values that are central to democratic self-government and also cross national boundaries. The history class in Brooklyn where students were asked to discuss the morality of dropping the bomb on Hiroshima is a good example of such a lesson in democratic deliberation. It demonstrates that democratic education need not be parochial or unc cosmopolitan even when it is particular in its focus and provisional in its precepts. Quite the contrary, only when children are educated for a deliberative citizenship that is informed by multiculturalism and committed to treating all individuals as equals, regardless of their nationality, can we begin to reconcile civic education with cultural diversity.

1. When speaking of public education or public schooling, I include all publicly subsidized and publicly accredited institutions that satisfy a mandatory schooling requirement, whether they are actually controlled by public or private organizations. Accredited private schools in the United States and public schools in Great Britain, for example, are all part of the public education systems of those countries.
2. These definitions are taken from the Oxford English Dictionary. My discussion here draws on two more general comparisons of self-esteem and self-respect, those of David Sachs, "How to Distinguish Self-Respect from Self-Esteem," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 10 (Fall 1981): 346-60; and Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 272-80.
3. What is worthy of being publicly honored is not the same as what schools have traditionally taught. Gender discrimination, for example, is not worthy of being publicly honored, despite the fact that many public schools have long taught this lesson.
4. For a detailed development and defense of deliberation as constitutive of democracy, see Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, forthcoming, 1995).
5. Diane Ravitch, *The Schools We Deserve: Reflections on the Educational Crises of Our Times* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 288.
6. *New York Times*, 12 Nov. 1989 and 3 Dec. 1989. The various news stories raise an important issue: whether the parents of the adolescents gave them the option of deciding on their own whether to wear chadors in class or whether the parents decided on their behalf. According to the news accounts, the girls' fathers were committed to their wearing chadors in school. The accounts say nothing about the commitments of their mothers or the girls themselves except by implication.
7. *New Statesman and Society*, 15 Dec. 1989, 13-14. According to this report, Le Pen claimed that repatriation "would go a long way to solving...the problems of law and order, drugs, AIDS and the Paris traffic jams!" For a sociological interpretation of the controversy, see David Beriss, "Scarves, Schools, and Segregation: The Foulard Affair," *French Politics & Society* 8 (Winter 1990): 1-13.
8. *New York Times*, 12 Nov. 1989, 10.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Washington Post*, 23 Oct. 1989, 12.
11. I discuss deliberation in the context of a conception of democratic education in *Democratic Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 50-2. A detailed discussion of the values of basic liberty, opportunity, and deliberation as constitutive of deliberative democracy can be found in Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, forthcoming.)
12. *The Guardian*, 1 Dec. 1989, 38. For the most recent ruling of the French government, see Youssef M. Ibrahim, "France Bans Muslim Scarf in Its Schools," *New York Times*, 11 Sept. 1994, 4; and Lynn Terry, "French Girls Expelled for Wearing Islamic Head Scarves," transcript of *Morning Edition* (National Public Radio), 1 Nov. 1994.
13. Compare the perspective of Charles Taylor in *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 25-37. Taylor suggests that democratic governments should be committed to securing the survival of cultural communities into the future insofar as their survival is consistent with respect for basic individual rights.
14. *The Guardian*, 23 Nov. 1989, 38.
15. For a critique of the disparagement of liberal toleration conveyed by the term "funny hat liberalism" and a discussion of the chador case, see Anna Elisabetta Galeotti, "Citizenship and Equality: The Place for Toleration," *Political Theory* 21 (November 1993): 585-605.
16. Compare Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"*, esp. 58-9. For an important discussion of the ways in which individual freedom depends on membership in a culture, see Joseph Raz, "Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective," in *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 155-76. Raz's essay appeared too late to be discussed in this essay.
17. For our purposes, we can consider a culture to be a human community (larger than a few families) that is historically associated with common ways of seeing, doing, and thinking about things. A culture is not only a set of behavior patterns but also a set of social standards, which can change over time. See R. LeVine, "Properties of Culture: An Ethnographic View," in *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, ed. R. A. Shweder and R. A. Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 67. See also Clifford Geertz, "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man," in

*The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 44. Compare Richard A. Shweder, *Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

18. This is a working definition which eschews any kind of essentialist understanding of what makes people conceive of themselves as a nation. The notion of a nation is "socially constructed," typically over a long period of time as the product of a complex history of social practices that shape people's self-understandings. The self-understanding of people as a nation, although socially constructed, is therefore not simply subject to alteration at anyone's will. It can however change over time partly as a consequence of human intentions and designs. For a more extensive discussion of nationalism and an illuminating critique of alternative understandings, see Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

19. For an illuminating discussion of the political implications of multinationalism, especially in the Canadian context, see Will Kymlicka, "Three Forms of Group Differentiated Citizenship in Canada," paper presented for the Conference for the Study of Political Thought (CSPT) on "Democracy and Difference," Yale University, April 16-18, 1993. Kymlicka notes that although the United States contains national minorities, it is, with few exceptions, not a multinational state (15). He does not discuss the implications of multinationalism for educational policy, except to oppose allowing national minorities to pull their children out of school before the legally mandated age for all children (footnote 42, 22).

20. Honoring the sovereignty of other decent democratic societies is a necessary but insufficient condition for honoring the rights of all individuals. We also need to consider potentially more demanding obligations such as resource transfers to poorer societies for the sake of providing a decent life for the most disadvantaged individuals. A discussion of the source and nature of these obligations is far beyond the scope of this essay.

21. The teaching of respect for human rights is always a moral imperative, but it is also often a prudent public policy, and therefore need not be utopian in many multinational contexts. In the absence of teaching respect for human rights, nationalist suspicions and hatreds are likely to be inflamed, preventing the establishment of even minimally peaceful and cooperative relations among national groups.

22. For an insightful defense of a similar rationale for multicultural education within a single society, see Susan Wolf's contribution to *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 75-85.

23. The kind of cosmopolitan that democratic education fosters is the commitment to securing liberty and justice for all individuals, regardless of their nationality. It does not claim that children can or must be educated to be "citizens of the world" above all. Compare Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," *Boston Review*, October/November 1994, 3-6. See also Anthony Appiah's comment on the compatibility of cosmopolitanism and patriotism: "We should...as cosmopolitans, defend the right of others to live in democratic states of which they can be patriotic citizens; and, as cosmopolitans, we can claim that right for ourselves." ("Loyalty to Humanity," *Boston Review*, October/November 1994, 10). For a more extended discussion of the issue of cosmopolitanism and patriotism in education, see the *Boston Review*, October/November 1994, 3-34.

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