THE EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ENGAGEMENT WITH DIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The Educational Significance of Engagement with Diversity

This article examines the issue of engagement with diversity and the various problems, tensions and challenges we are likely to encounter when including diversity in classrooms and other educational settings. The introductory section of this article deals with some preliminary considerations associated with the educational significance of engagement with diversity. I then introduce the three basic dimensions of diversity we are likely to encounter when discussing inclusion of diversity in any non-ideal educational environment. In Section III I examine the educational significance of engagement with diversity and identify the different functions engagement with diversity performs. In Section IV I examine the main controversies and the associated shortcomings any intuitive account of engagement with diversity is likely to face. In the conclusion, I specify how we should understand the idea of the fair treatment of engagement with diversity which is consistent with the commitment of educating students so as to recognise and respect one another as free and equal members of a polity.

KEYWORDS: multiculturalism, diversity, pluralism, citizenship education

POVZETEK

Pomen vključevanja različnosti v vzgoji in izobraževanju

Avtor v članku obravnava načine spoprijemanja z raznolikostjo ter težave, napetosti in izzive ob vključevanju različnosti v učilnice in druga izobraževalna okolja. V uvodnem delu predstavi nekaj preliminarnih vprašanj o vlogi in pomenu spoprijemanja z različnostjo v vzgoji in izobraževanju. Sledi predstavitev treh temeljnih dimenzij različnosti, s katerimi se srečujejo neidealna izobraževalna okolja. V tretjem razdelku avtor predstavi vlogo in pomen spoprijemanja z različnostjo v vzgoji in izobraževanju ter identificira različne funkcije spoprijemanja z različnostjo. V četrtem razdelku analizira temeljna protislovja ter z njimi povezane težave, s katerimi se soočajo poenostavljene različice spoprijemanja z različnostjo. V sklepnem delu avtor podrobneje predstavi način spoprijemanja z različnostjo, zavezanega procesu vzgoje in izobraževanja, v katerem učenci spoznavajo in spoštujejo drug drugega kot svobodne in enakopravne člane politične skupnosti.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: multikulturalizem, različnost, pluralizem, državljanska vzgoja

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ENGAGEMENT WITH DIVERSITY: SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS [1]

The terms of debate over the civic purposes of public education in a diverse polity have been centred around the justification of the civic priorities and the individual interests in educating citizens as fully cooperating members of a polity, as the stability of a diverse polity and the maintenance of its basic institutional framework depend in large part on the success of its public, political and educational institutions in reconciling the diverse commitments of its citizens with common principles and shared public values. As Amy Gutmann rightly notes, many contemporary discussions about public schooling 'turn on the clash of two apparently competing educational aims: securing civic values and respecting cultural differences' (Gutmann 1996: 156). Similarly, James A. Banks also emphasises that multicultural societies

> are faced with the problem of creating nation-states that recognise and incorporate the diversity of their citizens and embrace an overarching set of values, ideals and goals to which all citizens are committed. [...] Citizens who understand this unity-diversity tension and act accordingly do not materialise from thin air; they are educated for it (Banks et al. 2005: 7).

In fact, the challenge of any educational theory, as Rob Reich emphasizes, 'is to navigate successfully between protecting the *pluribus* while also promoting an *unum*' (Reich 2002: 116). In particular, discussions over the status, scope and justification of citizenship education in a diverse polity have been largely confined around questions over the educational significance of engagement with diversity, since diversity, as Stephen Macedo emphasises, is the 'original problem of modern politics' (Macedo 2000: 28). Moreover, as the writers of the Ajegbo Report rightly point out, 'concepts of citizenship are deficient without a substantive understanding of diversity' (DfES 2007: 23). At the same time, the landmark US Supreme Court cases *Wisconsin v. Yoder* and *Mozert v. Hawkins* (Burtt 1994; Stolzenberg 1993; Galston 1995, 2002; Gutmann 1995; Macedo 1995), the case of the Islamic veil [*L'affaire du foulard*] (e.g. Laborde 2008; Galeotti 2002 [Ch. 4]; McKinnon 2006 [Ch. 7]) and the publication of the cartoons of the prophet Muhammad in the Danish Newspaper Jyllands-Posten[2] etc. have divided scholars and policy makers engaged in normative discussions over the status, scope and justification of engagement with diversity as part of the educational agenda of citizenship.

However, I would argue that existing conceptions of citizenship education and their accounts of engagement with diversity fail to address adequately the complexity of the educational significance of engagement with diversity, as they are based on an intuitive understanding of diversity that is perceived exclusively as a derivative side effect of various discussions on equality. At the same time, existing conceptions of citizenship education and their accounts of engagement with diversity fail to grasp the complexity of the problem at hand, as they fail to provide a sufficiently elaborated answer to three basic questions associated with the nature, value and the justification of engagement with diversity, i.e. [*i*] what are the foundational dimensions of diversity under the non-ideal circumstances of any educational environment; [*ii*]; why does diversity matter [what are the different functions engagement with diversity performs] and [*iii*] how should diversity be included in a non-ideal educational environment [what are the fair terms of engagement with diversity].

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1 An earlier version of this article was presented at the *Education and Citizenship 2010 conference "Education and Citizenship in a Globalising World"* held at the Institute of Education [University of London] on 19-20 November 2010.

2 For a discussion of the various problems associated with the publication of the cartoons of the prophet Muhammad, see Laegaard 2007a and 2007b.

The main task of this article is to expand our understanding of the educational significance of engagement with diversity in order to clarify the various problems, tensions and challenges associated with its role in the education of citizens as fully cooperating members of a polity. The article is composed of five sections. I start in Section II with some preliminary considerations associated with the educational significance of engagement with diversity and then introduce the three basic dimensions of diversity we are likely to encounter when discussing inclusion of diversity in any non-ideal educational environment, i.e. [*i*] richness; [*ii*] evenness; and [*iii*] distance. I proceed in Section III with an examination of the educational significance of engagement with diversity and the identification of the different functions engagement with diversity performs. In other words, this section identifies the various consequentialist forms of justification for introducing students to the diversity in their own society and the educational environment with the benefits of encountering other cultures, values and ways of life. I then outline in Section IV the main controversies and associated shortcomings any intuitive account of engagement with diversity is likely to face. In the conclusion, I specify how we should understand the idea of the fair treatment of engagement with diversity which is consistent with the commitment of educating students so as to recognise and respect one another as free and equal members of a polity.

ENGAGEMENT WITH DIVERSITY

The arguments for engagement with diversity as one of the basic aims of citizenship education in a diverse polity have been used to advance the educational ideal of making classrooms and other educational settings more diverse in terms of religious, ethnic, cultural and socio-economic status and therefore enabling students to learn from one another about their different beliefs, customs, languages, traditions and practices, rather than having classrooms composed of students from a similar or monocultural background. In this view, engagement with diversity seems to be trapped between two competing aims advanced by existing conceptions of citizenship education, each claiming primacy compared to other civic purposes of public education. On the one hand, the autonomy-based approach to citizenship education promotes engagement with diversity primarily for the development of the capacities associated with autonomy based either on the *maximization of choice view* or the *evaluative significance view*. On the other hand, the toleration-based approach to citizenship education defends students' exposure to diversity for the inculcation of the virtue of toleration and mutual respect and the *maximization of inclusion*.

Engagement with diversity takes place at different levels, through different contexts (classroom, textbooks), via different strategies and conforming to different educational policies. Inclusion of and engagement with diversity at the institutional level needs to be differentiated along two distinct dimensions of exposure to and engagement with diversity: [i] direct exposure to and engagement with diversity and [ii] indirect exposure to and engagement with diversity. The direct approach to exposure to diversity is usually associated with classrooms or other educational settings where students from different backgrounds, groups or communities encounter each other in direct contact, whereas the indirect approach offers students the possibility to learn about other cultures and doctrinal beliefs and to come into contact with other forms of diversity via the curriculum, textbooks and other educational materials. While at the moral level there is no difference between the two approaches, at the epistemic and the social level there is supposedly an important difference between the two approaches, which favours the direct approach. At the social and epistemic level, students can experience the different beliefs, values and other forms of diversity directly. As Meira Levinson argues, 'it is so hard for students to learn to be mutually tolerant and respectful of other people, traditions and ways of life unless they are actually *exposed* to them' (Levinson 1999: 114). Similarly, Ian MacMullen points out that 'virtues will only be effectively learned through practice' (MacMullen 2007: 39).

Part of the difficulty associated with diversity and its educational significance stems from the fact that neither the contextual factors affecting engagement with diversity nor diversity itself have been articulated in all their complexity (Heyd 2010). For example, all educational environments differ from each other in a variety of different ways in terms of their student composition and the various forms of diversity they incorporate. Three separate dimensions of the circumstances of diversity can be identified here, i.e. [i] richness [the number of different forms of diversity in a particular educational context]; [ii] evenness [the number of individuals or the size of groups that are present in an educational context]; and [iii] distance [what is the distance between forms of diversity and what is their dissimilarity from the public principles and shared values of a diverse polity].[3] At the same time, not all forms of diversity matter for a given purpose. For example: exposure to or engagement with ethnic or racial diversity might primarily serve for civic purposes, and contribute to increased mutual understanding and respect for those who belong to a different ethnic, racial or linguistic group. On the other hand, a form of conscience-based diversity, such as the examination of different experiences and perspectives associated with a particular doctrinal belief, would primarily serve the promotion and development of autonomy and critical reflection since we could find a particular element of a particular position in need of further clarification and critical examination.[4]

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Inclusion of and engagement with diversity in the educational environment of public education and in society in general is praised by both advocates of toleration-based liberalism (Galston 2002; Kukathas 2003; Rosenblum 1998; Schrag, 1998) and autonomy-based liberalism (Callan 1997; Gutmann 1995; Levinson 1999; Macedo 2000; Reich, 2002) as well as advocates of multiculturalism (Modood 2007; Parekh 2000; Young, 1990), each for a different purpose and each with a different aim and overall educational goal. The advocates of both autonomy-based and toleration-based liberalism claim that engagement with diversity [including both exposure *to* diversity and exposure *of* diversity] is an important component of the educational agenda of citizenship in a diverse polity. While the autonomy-based conception of liberalism maintains that exposure to diversity primarily enhances the development and the exercising of the capacity for critical reflection, the toleration-based conception of liberalism argues that exposure to diversity contributes significantly to the development of tolerance and mutual respect between members of a polity.[5]

At one level, education should enable students to 'learn about other ways of life and acquire some understanding of the history, practices, and values of diverse cultural groups' (Reich 2002: 116). Despite the basically uncontroversial characterisation of the significance of diversity in the educational process,

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3 I borrow the terms *richness*, *evenness* and *distance* together with their basic interpretive framework from discussions on diversity (Weitzman 1992), biodiversity preservation (Metric, Weitzman 1995) and linguistic diversity (Van Parijs 2008).

4 For a comprehensive overview of the role of diversity in a diverse polity, see the special issue of *The Ethics Forum* 'Diversity and the Liberal State' edited by Xavier Landes, Nils Holtug, http://www.erudit.org/revue/ateliers/2011/v6/n2/index.html.

5 Three capacities for engagement with diversity can be identified in the scholarly literature, i.e. [*i*] *critical reflection* or the capacity for the exercising of public reasonableness (e.g. Galston 1991; Kymlicka 1999); [*ii*] *reflective distance* or the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions (e.g. Brighouse 1998; Levinson 1999); and [*iii*] *imaginative engagement* or the capacity for narrative imagination (e.g. Callan 1997; Nussbaum 1997). The development and the exercising of these three capacities should offer students the possibility to learn about diversity in their own society and in their educational environment with the benefits of critical engagement and understanding of other cultures, values or conceptions of the good.

celebratory rationales and the associated arguments for inclusion of and engagement with diversity in the educational environment of a diverse polity vary considerably and depend on the various characteristics of a particular form of diversity as well as a number of contextual factors. The educational significance of engagement with diversity can be distinguished with respect to the predominant function associated with a particular form of diversity, either [*i*] the integrative function; [*ii*] the justice-based function; [*iii*] the pragmatic function; [*iv*] the virtue-based function; [*v*] the self-respect function; or [*vi*] the epistemic function.

The integrative function

Public schools bring together students from a wide variety of backgrounds and conditions, including socio-economic; residential/legal status; families or social groups whose foundational conceptions of the good (including religious or other doctrinal beliefs) might deviate substantially from the shared public values of a diverse polity; ethnocultural minorities and racial groups; special education needs and different abilities. 'The whole point of a common school', writes Stephen Macedo,

> is to be a primary arena where children from the different normative perspectives that compose our polity encounter one another in a respectful setting, learn about one another, and discover that their differences do not preclude cooperation and mutual respect as participants in a shared political order (Macedo 2000: 194).

At one level, the basic function of the inclusion of and engagement with diversity in public education is integrative and is based on the principle of civic equality, which is the first normative commitment associated with the liberal version of the rights-based conception of citizenship. Including students from diverse cultural backgrounds, marginalized or disadvantaged groups etc. needs performs a basic function of giving everyone an equal right to education as well as bringing students from different social spheres into a single educational environment. This justification for the inclusion of and engagement with diversity makes no reference to any past wrongdoing associated with a particular form of diversity [either individual or group-based]. It basically defends the inclusion of and engagement with diversity in the curriculum and the classroom on the assertion that recognition of diversity and being in contact with one another in an educational environment that is both open and respectful expresses the civic equality of the members of the different groups.

The justice-based function

The justice-based function of inclusion of diversity in the educational environment of public education can perform a twofold task. On the one hand, it can be compensatory so as to alleviate some past wrong-doing such as the discrimination, marginalization and oppression of blacks in the case of the US. On the other hand, it can serve the purpose of preservation of a particular (minority) culture. The justice-based function has been primarily advanced by advocates of multiculturalism based on the experiences of oppression and marginalisation which many non-dominant minority groups have experienced. Justifications of inclusion of diversity in public education and the claim to include the different perspectives associated with minority groups in the curriculum and other educational materials comes in two main types. The first, compensatory-based arguments make essential reference to the previous exclusion of a range of perspectives associated with minorities and other vulnerable groups from the curriculum and textbooks. Examples of these are the exclusion of 'black' history, women's contribution to society and the presence of gay and lesbian people in public life. These justice-based claims argue that a more inclusive educational programme or curriculum would compensate for previous discrimination and oppres-

sion and would advance a more positive attitude of their culture to themselves and to others, including students' self-respect. An educational environment that recognizes diversity in both the composition of its student body and its curriculum is said to be just. However, this justification is insufficient in two important respects. First, it lacks an examination of the culture it tries to include: we may ask if a particular point of view or perspective associated with a particular minority or a previously discriminated group is a unified one. Second, is the perspective that is to be included equally representative of all members of a particular community or [at least] of its majority.

The pragmatic function

Strategically, the inclusion of diversity in the classroom or in the curriculum is advantageous because it enables students to be exposed to cultures, points of view and social experiences they would otherwise not have the opportunity to encounter. For example, it exposes children from the majority who would otherwise not experience a particular form of diversity that was traditionally excluded from the curriculum and other materials. Since inclusion and exposure to diversity mixes students who would otherwise not have the possibility of contact, it is beneficial in the basic instrumental sense. All children, writes Stephen Macedo, 'should be made aware of the ethnic, racial and religious diversity that constitutes our society so that they can think as citizens and so that they will not live in a mental straightjacket at odds with freedom' (Macedo 2000: 240). Still others have endorsed exposure to diversity on the grounds that exposure to diversity has beneficial effects on students who are exposed to diversity. Since these beneficial effects of exposure to diversity are thought to be worthwhile in themselves, they count in favour of exposing all students to diversity.[6]

The virtue-based function

The virtue-based function is premised on the assumption that exposing pupils to diverse ways of life either through a curriculum or via the school ethos is important in the development of children's moral competence and responsibility since it challenges one's set of values and has an important interaction effect 'for the sake of learning to respect as fellow citizens those who differ with them in matters of religion' (Macedo 1995b: 68). A society-like educational environment that is non-discriminatory has a number of social benefits and individual gains. First, students encounter one another on equal terms, without the fear of prejudice, stereotyping or discrimination. They tend to develop mutual understanding, solidarity and toleration irrespective of their religious affiliation, ethno cultural background, socio-economic position, racial group or any other background characteristic of their identity. As Sanford Levinson points out,

> In order for people to come to tolerate and respect others, it is generally thought that they need to interact with these 'others' in close, meaningful ways that enable them to see the commonalities among them (that serve to generate mutual respect) and at least to understand the reasons for their differences that remain between them (Levinson 2003: 104).

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6 The liberal educational ideal of the 'detached school' advanced by Meira Levinson (1999) implies considerable state intervention in the educational ethos of schools. Similarly, the idea of a 'discontinuous ethos' advanced by Harry Brighouse fails to take into consideration the possibility that pupils from a disadvantaged background might be negatively affected by this pedagogical strategy.

At the same time, the sense of mutual respect and understanding developed among students correlates positively with the maintenance of social cohesion and the development of civic unity. In this sense, the stability of a diverse polity and the sustainability of its basic institutional framework also depends on students' cooperation with other members of their political community who might differ from them.

The self-respect function

Alongside the justice-based function, the self-respect function points to the value of the exposure *of* diversity for the exposed agent, which is the group that acts as the object of engagement within the educational environment. By having one's own diversity publicly exposed, the self-respect of the exposed agent is supposedly increased. In this regard, when diversity is included either directly or indirectly via the curriculum, those that are exposing themselves are recognized as equals. The recognition of the equal standing of a particular form of diversity alongside the mainstream culture supposedly increases the self-respect of those that are being exposed or present their particular culture to others. However, students coming from an ethical environment that does not support common principles and shared public values are at risk compared to students whose familiar or associative social life supports as well as practices the values that are part of the shared public life. These students therefore have to 'correct' their values and beliefs and therefore face a risk of diminishing their self-respect.

The epistemic function

One of the most important social as well as individual benefits associated with the educational significance of engagement with diversity is its factual contribution to the enlargement of one's knowledge. The value of diversity, writes Cass Sunstein, 'comes from seeing a range of perspectives, including the emotions attached to them – and from being in the actual physical presence of people who have those perspectives and cannot be easily dismissed' (Sunstein 2003: 205). By being exposed to the diversity of values, cultures and traditions or by having at one's disposal different experiences and perspectives over a particular issue there is a twofold advantage for those who are exposed to diversity. By having more information and knowledge on a particular issue or being acquainted with different experiences and perspectives, the agents have more options available to choose from. To imaginatively experience a particular conception of the good or value offers one the possibility to entertain the same choice-enabling conditions as the agent who holds a particular belief or value, and therefore to obtain an insight into the shaping of an individual's motivations and choices. In this interpretation, engagement with diversity offers students the possibility to entertain different perspectives on a particular social fact.

By asking students to use their imagination and exercise critical judgement, according to Amy Gutmann, 'schools can help students distinguish between understanding, respecting, and accepting unfamiliar ways of life not their own' (Gutmann 1995: 572). In this respect, the epistemic function is best represented by the marketplace of ideas rationale for engagement with diversity traditionally associated with the classical Millian argument for the development and promotion of diversity. At the same time, by having a range of different options available, individuals are in a better position to evaluate their own particular perspectives or experiences. Exposure to other ways of life, writes Will Kymlicka, 'helps people make informed judgments about what is truly worthwhile' (Kymlicka 1996: 89–90).

As these examples clearly illustrate, the most common way to defend the educational significance of engagement with diversity is premised on the contact hypothesis,[7] namely the assertion that the

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7 For an exposition of the contact hypothesis, see Allport (1954) and Putnam (2007). As Putnam emphasises, the 'contact hypothesis' suggests that inclusion of diversity erodes the distinction between groups and at the same

exposure of students to different practices, customs or conceptions of the good fosters interracial, interethnic, intercultural, interreligious toleration and solidarity among individuals and is conducive to a more stable and cohesive polity. In this respect engagement with diversity is conducive to the overall civic good as well as individual benefits. As I have presented in this section, the major arguments associated with engagement with diversity include arguments about social stability, truth discovery, self-respect, civic unity etc. Some of these functions are primarily social in nature, for example the integrative or the pragmatic function, and some are primarily individual, like the virtue-based or the epistemic function. For example, two different outcomes are commonly associated with the social nature of inclusion of and engagement with diversity. First, empowerment of the marginalised or otherwise disadvantaged social groups or individuals. Second, improvement of the relationship between the majority and those groups and individuals that are – in one way or another – not part of the mainstream society. The first social effect would contribute to the creation and maintenance of stable social relationships within a diverse polity. The pragmatic social effect would create a sense of civic unity and solidarity and the improvement of trust among different social groups and individuals.

On the other hand, the individual benefits associated with the inclusion of and engagement with diversity refers to the improvement of the character of citizens. This can be described as the virtue-based effect or the increase of the options available, which is the result of being exposed to different experiences and perspectives. At the individual level, exposure to diversity primarily encapsulates the development of toleration and the appreciation of the values, beliefs and different social practices of those students who are diverse. At the same time, exposure *of* diversity is likely to increase the self-respect of those individuals that present themselves in the public educational environment.

By introducing and elaborating on these distinct functions of inclusion of and engagement with diversity I aim to articulate the challenges faced by any educational agenda of citizenship and its approach to engagement with diversity. Below I examine three of these principal challenges.

ENGAGEMENT WITH DIVERSITY: THE MAIN CONTROVERSIES

Despite the fact that engagement with diversity can have a number of positive functions [as identified in the previous section of this article], an indiscriminate approach to engagement with diversity can also have a number of potential shortcomings which are likely to create a number of difficulties at the level of educational practice. Three separate shortcomings can be identified, i.e. [*i*] civic shortcomings; [*ii*] moral shortcomings and [*iii*] epistemic shortcomings.

Civic shortcomings

Irrespective of the view under consideration, the civic shortcomings associated with both the exposure *to* diversity view and the exposure *of* diversity view can be elaborated along a more primordial dimension that determines the value of diversity and its significance for citizenship education. Three different approaches can be identified, i.e. [*i*] the containment of diversity approach; [*ii*] the protection of diversity approach; and [*iii*] the promotion of diversity approach.

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time enhances the solidarity between groups. In contrast, the 'conflict hypothesis' argues that the increase of diversity within a society creates distrust between groups and in-group solidarity. Social conservatives and civic republicans as well as political parties that pride themselves on being nationalistic and/or patriotic usually rest on arguments which use the 'conflict hypothesis' about engagement with diversity.

In the case of the containment of diversity approach, engagement with diversity should come only after the promotion of unity. While claiming legitimacy for both exposure *to* and exposure *of* diversity, its educational significance is largely dependent on the priority of the promotion of unity. In this interpretation, the relationship between unity and diversity is that of either-or options and is constructed in terms of priority assigned to the former. In this case the role of diversity is exclusively instrumental as it functions primarily for the purpose of promoting unity. The development and the exercising of the three capacities for engagement with diversity that have been identified in the previous section of this article would thus fail to pay equal civic respect to diversity, as those that are diverse do not count equally compared to those that that are part of the mainstream. To indiscriminately promote the development and the exercising of the capacities for engagement with diversity would rule out any of those forms of diversity that are inconsistent with the common principles and shared public values of a diverse polity.

In the case of the protection of diversity approach, accommodation of diversity should be maximally expanded and should be limited only in relation to the stability and unity of a diverse polity. In this interpretation, while diversity is praised, no positive entitlement alongside freedom of expression and freedom of association should be granted. In this case, the development and the exercising of the three capacities for engagement with diversity can result in the weakening of the bonding ties of individuals with their communities and do not necessarily lead to the bridging capital of engaging with others.

In the third approach identified above [the promotion of diversity approach], diversity should be actively promoted and encouraged. In this interpretation, accommodation of diversity is of equal importance as the promotion of unity and will create allegiance to the basic institutional framework of a diverse polity. The development and the exercising of the capacities for engagement with diversity might disproportionately disadvantage those members of minority groups or communities who do not fully identify with its constitutive elements, e.g. a religious belief or conception of the good.

Moral shortcomings

Both the exposure *to* diversity and the exposure *of* diversity raise a range of potential problems for students who come from groups or communities that are part of the most vulnerable groups in a diverse polity, such as those who are marginalised or disadvantaged groups. The first problem is associated with exposure *to* diversity. Two well known legal disputes that have examined different elements of exposure *to* diversity were the *Wisconsin v. Yoder*[8] case and the *Mozert v. Hawkins* case.[9] In the first case, the Amish parents insisted that their children be exempted from compulsory attendance of a public school. They argued for this on the assertion that their children's exposure *to* diversity would jeopardize their group integrity and the sustainability of their religious community over time [the cultural coherence objection].

On the other hand, the *Mozert v. Hawkins* case involved religious conservative parents who claimed that the exposure of their children to certain reading material jeopardized the personal integrity of their children and threatened to undermine the viability of their ethical environment [the individual vulnerability objection]. Both cases claimed that exposure *to* diversity can have deleterious effects on the cultural cohesion of a religious community as in the case of the Amish community or the exercising of freedom of conscience as in the case of the case of religious conservative group examined in the *Mozert v. Hawkins* case.

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8 For *pro* and *contra* arguments on the *Wisconsin v. Yoder* case [*Wisconsin* v. *Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972)], see Callan 1997; Macedo 2000; Nussbaum 1999; Shapiro and Arneson 1996.

9 For a discussion on the *Mozert v. Hawkins* case [*Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education*, 484 U.S. 1066 (1988)], see Coleman 1998; Galston 2002; Macedo 1995; Stolzenberg 1993; Tomasi 2001.

Next, the idea of an educational environment characterized by a 'discontinuous ethos' (Brighouse, 1998) or the idea of the 'detached school' (Levinson, 1999) offering an ideal educational environment where the development and the exercising of the three basic capacities for engagement with diversity would be carried out faces a twofold risk, as it fails to take into consideration the possibility that pupils might be negatively affected in their families and their social environment. On the one hand, it can alienate students coming from a non-dominant minority group from the shared public values and their commitment to the basic institutional framework of a diverse polity [the challenge of alienation]. On the other hand, as the experiences and perspectives that constitute one's core commitments are not widely shared by other students, one can turn out to be disproportionately disadvantaged [the challenge of cognitive dissonance].

I maintain that both the ideal of the detached school as a policy proposal of common education as well as the pedagogical strategy of imaginative engagement are likely to create a *disproportionate disadvantage* for those students whose foundational beliefs or conceptions of the good are not part of the mainstream or can depart from the shared public values of a diverse polity. Moreover, the development and the exercising of the capacity for critical reflection can result in the weakening of the bonding ties of individuals with their communities and do not necessarily lead to the bridging capital of engaging with others. Neither critical reflection nor imaginative engagement, I maintain, are sufficiently sensitive to the issue of distance identified above. Furthermore, the development and exercising of the capacity for reflective distance can result in a detachment from one's constitutive commitments and allegiances and therefore jeopardize both the maintenance of cultural coherence and personal integrity. Moreover, the model of the detached school is likely to disproportionately disadvantage those students whose foundational beliefs depart from the shared public values or prevailing norms of a society. It jeopardizes the personal integrity of students and the cultural coherence of their communities.

In the case of exposure *of* diversity, students coming from an ethical environment or an ethnocultural group that is not part of the mainstream are disproportionately disadvantaged compared to those that are part of the mainstream. Those children representing the majority will be in a privileged position compared to those who come from a minority position since the first position is the 'normal' one. For example, if I present myself in front of a group of students who find my own experience – for whatever reason – unfamiliar, I am likely to experience an integrity-based asymmetry. As some proponents of multiculturalism view emphasise (e.g. Parekh, 2000), the regime-level principles and institutional structures of a liberal democratic society unfairly exclude minority groups and religious associations from its basic structure. As he states,

> liberals are not and perhaps cannot be liberal in all areas of life, and entertain and live by nonliberal ideas, a mixture of liberal and nonliberal ideas, or even by instincts, faith and habits in matters relating to intimate interpersonal relations, moral values, ethnic, political or national loyalties, and religious beliefs (Parekh 2000: 241).

The vulnerability of students who are not part of the mainstream is therefore disproportionately more burdensome compared to those students who are part of the mainstream. In other words, this argument has led to insensitivity to the other part of engagement with diversity, leading to an asymmetry between those exposing themselves and those who benefit from this exposure.

Epistemic shortcomings

There are three epistemic shortcomings that can arise with both the exposure *to* diversity view and exposure *of* diversity, i.e. [*i*] stereotyping; [*ii*] reductionism; and [*iii*] rejection. Let us examine each in turn. The shortcoming of stereotyping concerns examples where a particular trait of character or characteristics of diversity becomes generalised. For example, if students from a distinctive cultural background

present their views in the classroom, they might present a stereotyped version of their culture due to [i] children's limited knowledge about their culture [the limited knowledge objection] and [ii] due to their lack of knowledge about the internal diversity about their culture [the partiality objection]. As related to both [i] and [ii] elaborated above, this partial treatment of a cultural practice or religious belief runs the risk of distorting the cultural and moral distinctiveness of a particular religious belief, conception of the good or cultural practice. Next, reductionism arises where those who are exposed to diversity receive a false impression that one view of a particular culture is all there is to this culture. This short-coming makes the error of reducing the internal heterogeneity and pluralism of a particular culture and reducing it to one dimension only. Finally, rejection concerns the rejection of the viability of a particular culture. Instead of appreciating a particular culture, the exposure to it leads to the rejection of it. In this sense, the presentation of a culture might strengthen the prejudices that the majority and other students hold of a particular culture and/or its practices. If teachers do not have at least a minimum degree of knowledge about and familiarity with these cultures, presentation of these 'simplified' narratives might create a false description or interpretation of a particular culture.

CONCLUSION

The fundamental challenge any account of citizenship education in a diverse polity needs to address is thus to articulate a conception of engagement with diversity which is sensitive to the complexity of the educational significance of engagement with diversity. Any educational agenda of citizenship in a diverse polity that claims to educate students so as to recognise and respect one another as free and equal members of a polity needs to address two separate issues. At one level, it needs to identify the civic and the individual interests in educating citizens as fully cooperating members of a polity. At the other, it needs to articulate the principled bases of the institutional arrangement and curriculum design of public education which is sensitive to the normative significance of individuals' diverse commitments and allegiances. In this sense, any educational agenda of citizenship needs to address adequately both the distributive and the agent-relative specification of engagement with diversity so as to be consistent with the fair terms of engagement with diversity.

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