Teaching respect as a civic virtue in diverse societies

Barbara Kelly
Department of Integrated Studies in Education
McGill University, Montreal
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This thesis explores the meaning and educational implications of respect in liberal multicultural democracies. Significantly, I examine respect from a philosophical perspective as a civic virtue, and hence as a central aim of civic education.

I examine and critically evaluate a conception of respect as tolerance, which I argue is deficient for advancing the civic educational purposes central to liberal democracy. As an alternative, I outline and defend a conception of respect as recognition, which I argue remedies the main deficiencies of respect as tolerance. More specifically, I argue that respect as recognition plays an important role in establishing a sense of common membership and belonging in a shared community, necessary for social and political stability in a society characterized by ethical and cultural diversity. I conclude with a brief examination of the conceptual relationship between respect and the notion of dignity.

Throughout the thesis, philosophical analysis is supplemented by illustrative suggestions for incorporating the teaching of respect within civic educational practice.
Résumé

Ce mémoire explore la signification and les implications pédagogiques du respect dans les démocraties libérales multiculturelles. J’examinerai le concept du respect dans une perspective philosophique en tant que vertu civique, et donc comme un objectif primordial de l’éducation civique.

J’examinerai et j’évaluerai de façon critique le respect en tant que tolérance, laquelle est selon moi insuffisante pour l’avancement des buts centraux de l’éducation civique dans une démocratie libérale. Comme alternative, je définis et défends un concept de respect basé sur la reconnaissance, qui pallie aux déficiences du concept de respect en tant que tolérance. Plus spécifiquement, je présente le respect en tant que reconnaissance comme jouant un rôle important dans le développement d’une sensation d’appartenance à une société partagée, laquelle est nécessaire à la stabilité politique et sociale d’une société caractérisée par une diversité éthique et culturelle. Je conclurai par un bref examen de la relation conceptuelle entre le respect et la notion de dignité.

Tout au long de ce mémoire, l’analyse philosophique est accompagnée par des suggestions concrètes visant à incorporer l’enseignement du respect dans la pédagogie civique pratique.
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Introduction

In this thesis I examine the concept of respect and explore how it is understood and analyzed from different philosophical perspectives. I show how this analysis sheds light on how respect should be taught and incorporated as a part of moral and civic education in culturally diverse societies.

1. Respect, Philosophy, and Teaching

Many educators might question why, from a practical perspective, a philosophical analysis of respect is necessary in the first place. The term "respect" is often used in educational circles as if it has a clear, universal and unproblematic meaning. As such, it might seem frivolous to philosophize about it. Is it not obvious that respect is a good thing and that we should teach it to children? Why do we need to ask abstract questions about what respect means when these questions seem so remote from actual teaching practice?

However, a moment’s reflection makes clear that the term respect is likely to be interpreted in disparate and conflicting ways by different individuals and groups. Just about everyone agrees that schools should teach “respect,” but after that, agreement may be hard to come by. It is often not clear what teaching respect actually means in practice when different people draw on very different experiences, cultural backgrounds, moral understandings, and ideals. As such, what respect entails in particular cases will often differ significantly, maybe radically, for different people and in different situations.
This point can be illustrated with some simple examples. Does respect mean supporting a friend’s decision when we think she is mistaken and likely to harm herself? Or does it mean challenging her in an attempt to have her to see the error of her ways? Does respect mean allowing another parent to raise her child as she sees fit? Or should I confront her when I think she is being overly indulgent (or overly strict) with her toddler? What does respect require of me when a narcissistic classmate dominates the discussion even though her comments are off topic? How should I take my professor/teacher’s point of view into account?

In everyday situations like this people have sharply different understandings of what respect means and what it requires of us. In all of these cases, does it not matter whether my friend, the parent, or the classmate, and I share similar cultural meanings and assumptions or if we come from very dissimilar backgrounds? After all, different cultural norms and practices often recommend different courses of action in many cases. So, what respect means and what it requires in practice may not be so clear after all; at least not without engaging in some serious philosophical reflection.

The fact that respect may have multiple interpretations is enough, in and of itself, to warrant the kind of philosophical inquiry I undertake in this thesis. However, to complicate things even further, what happens when the judgments about respect involve political matters of social justice? Usually I cannot simply impose my own (culturally influenced) understanding of respect without at least considering how it might clash with the understandings of my fellow citizen.
What I think is respectful may seem incomprehensible or worse from her perspective. So, if I cannot rely on my cultural understandings of respect alone, what do I do in “public” matters of justice? Is it possible to develop a shared cross-cultural notion of respect? The questions I raise above about respect illustrate the need for philosophical clarity when it comes to questions about teaching respect among citizens in culturally diverse settings. In short, it illustrates the need to examine respect as a civic and not merely a personal virtue.

In this thesis I will be especially concerned with issues of respect that arise among citizens in contexts of cultural diversity. More precisely, I will focus on the question of how the requirements of democratic citizenship in diverse societies shape our understandings of how respect should be understood and taught in schools – the main institutions charged with creating the respectful democratic citizens of tomorrow.

To illustrate more concretely the kinds of educational concerns I have in mind, consider an example of a child whose parents have recently immigrated to Canada. The child’s cultural background largely influences her beliefs and sense of self (Feinberg, 1998, pp. 80-81). Furthermore, a child’s parents normally have a deep and intense desire to ensure that her understanding and appreciation of her ancestral culture be nurtured and strengthened in her upbringing (Callan, 1997, p. 142). As her teacher in a public school my obligation to respect this child can impose complex and conflicting demands. Should I respect the child’s cultural background by trying to reinforce it in my own teaching? Or, as an
outsider, would my attempts to do so be interpreted as condescending and inappropriate? Is the role of a public school teacher to undertake the task of reinforcing the child’s particular cultural identity? Or, as many liberal philosophers of education argue, does respect for the child mean that I honour her by teaching her to autonomously choose her own way of life (Callan, 1997; Feinberg, 2007)? On this liberal view, the teacher’s role is one of opening up new cultural horizons rather than of reinforcing particular cultural traditions. If we accept this liberal view of teaching, how can we nurture a child’s autonomy without showing contempt for or ignorance of her family traditions? Do I not need to understand something substantial about the child’s background culture in order to ensure that I can treat her with respect? And do I not need to demonstrate this understanding to her through my teaching? On the other hand, my primary responsibility seems to be to teach the child how to flourish in a culture that is much different than the one her family knows best and seeks to reinforce (Brighouse, 2006; White, 2006). So, I cannot focus exclusively on learning about and demonstrating my appreciation for the parents’ cultural traditions.

What about the child herself? She has an identity and not just a culture. As Kevin McDonough and Walter Feinberg (2003) point out, a child is not born with an identity; she inherits one (p. 8). But from whom is this identity inherited? The girl in my imaginary example above is a recent immigrant. As a young and new member of a different society, her identity is likely to be challenged and influenced by complex and unfamiliar extra-familial factors,
including those at school coming from her friends, teachers and the setting. As her teacher, surely showing respect for the child’s identity in this context will involve far more than simply addressing her family’s cultural background. It will mean taking into account the complex way in which diverse cultural forces interact to shape this particular child’s identity. As her teacher, I am concerned with supporting her in her pursuit of her own developing and emerging conception of the good life, and not necessarily that conception her parents would have her pursue.

The details of what shape democratic civic respect has will be outlined in subsequent chapters. Here I want to elaborate a bit further on the more general point that the meaning of respect is in an important sense determined by the liberal-democratic political and social context. Most societies include some normative expectations that could be interpreted as a form of respect. But what respect means in liberal democratic societies would differ radically from what is understood as respect in, say, a totalitarian regime. Importantly, a distinguishing feature of liberal-democratic societies, unlike authoritarian and some other non-liberal societies, is that they are specifically based on moral and political principles designed to protect and accommodate a wide range of cultural and ethical diversity within a single society (Rawls, 1993). This feature of liberal-democratic societies profoundly shapes what it means to offer respect to one’s fellow citizens, and therefore what education for respect must entail for children, whose attitudes about respect will be crucially important elements in ensuring
that liberalism’s protection and accommodations of cultural and ethical diversity
and freedom are available not just now but in the future.

To summarize, my thesis is a philosophical examination of the concept of
respect in liberal-democratic societies. Specifically, it is an examination of the
educational implications of liberal-democratic understandings about respect
among citizens. This thesis therefore attempts to answer the following
questions: What can respect mean in liberal-democratic societies? What
understanding of respect is most apt to support a liberal conception of justice,
protect and accommodate cultural and ethical diversity, and foster a sense of
belonging among a morally heterogeneous citizenry? What are the educational
implications of such an interpretation of respect?

My motivations and interest in conducting philosophical inquiry into the
meanings of respect are personal as well. I am a Canadian living in a
multicultural context where conflicting conceptions of the good have the real
potential for divisiveness. The findings of the Bouchard-Taylor commission
report (2008)\(^1\) made vivid to me how cultural misunderstanding and
misrecognition have the very real potential to create tension among the citizenry.
It seems to me that many instances of unproductive and damaging interactions
between people from different cultural and ethical traditions could be avoided if
we had a useful moral guide to refer to when encountering alternative
conceptions of the good life. I wanted to explore the civic virtue of respect to

Reconciliation* explores issues of reasonable accommodation in a multicultural context,
specifically in Québec, Canada. The report highlights how inaccurate perceptions of others
among the public underlie negative reactions or attitudes of rejection when cultural
accommodations are made.
see if it has the potential to serve as a moral guide that would require us to engage with and treat our co-citizens in such a way as to enhance our understanding of the reasons behind and value of different perspectives and ways of life. In what follows I seek to go beyond slogans and platitudes about teaching respect to illuminate a conception that is both practically useful and ethically justified.

2. Conclusion: Overview of the Thesis

The rest of this thesis is divided into three main chapters with a fourth, brief concluding chapter. Chapter one begins with a justification of the existence of diverse moral perspectives in a liberal society. Relying on the concept of affiliation liberalism, I argue why respect must be understood as a virtue. I go on to outline the educational implications for teaching the virtue of respect in pluralist societies.

Chapter two asks whether teaching toleration is adequate for fostering the virtue of respect. The question is significant because the concepts of toleration and respect are closely linked in liberal theory, and they are perhaps often conflated in the minds of liberal citizens and teachers. I argue that toleration is an inadequate substitute for respect and that therefore it is important for teachers to carefully distinguish between the two.

I explore the concept of recognition as a form of respect in chapter three. I introduce two different forms of recognition and argue that they offer a clear
and compelling alternative to tolerance as a form of respect. I discuss the educational implications of teaching recognition as a form of respect. I emphasize the importance of dialogue between children who come from different moral, cultural, and religious traditions as a means of enhancing understanding of the value of diverse conceptions of the good life, increasing awareness of morally viable alternatives, and prompting reflection of one’s own perspectives and ways of life.

Finally, issues of dignity often come up in discussions of respect. It is intuitively plausible that recognition as a form of respect also implies respect for the dignity of people. Chapter four explores how dignity fits with the conception of respect I defend in this thesis. For reasons of space, my discussion of dignity is quite brief. The discussion here is meant to be suggestive of at least one direction that might be fruitful in extending my analysis beyond what I have been able to do in this thesis.
Chapter One: Liberalism, Autonomy, and the Virtue of Respect

1. Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to situate the concept of respect within the theoretical framework of contemporary liberalism. The concept of respect has certainly played a significant role historically and in contemporary liberal theory (Armitage, 2006; Boettcher, 2007; Feinberg, 1975; Gutmann, 1980, 1994; Kant, 1785/1995; Kymlicka, 1989; Taylor, 1994). Contemporary liberal educational theorists are concerned with articulating key principles and policies for structuring moral and civic education in culturally and ethically diverse societies (See, for example, Appiah, 2005; Callan, 1988, 1997; Feinberg, 1998; McDonough, 1992, 1997; McDonough & Feinberg, 2003; McLaughlin, 2003; Reich, 2003; Strike, 2003; Williams, 2003). Notably, respect is a term that occurs frequently in liberal scholarship on civic education. However, the relationship between the notion of respect and other liberal values such as personal autonomy, toleration, and recognition of cultural difference are not always clear in contemporary discussions of civic education in diverse societies.\(^2\) This thesis is in part an attempt to elucidate some of the conceptual connections among these different concepts of liberal education. This chapter focuses on clarifying the relationship between respect, autonomy, and culture.

\(^2\) Coincidentally, just prior to the submission of this thesis, a special issue of the journal \textit{Educational Philosophy and Theory}, 42(1), 2010, focusing on the topic of “Tolerance, Respect and Recognition” was published online. (URL: \url{http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118509536/home?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0}). Although I have not had the time to carefully evaluate the eight papers that make up the special issue, I draw attention to their publication to illustrate the timeliness of my topic.
chapters will focus on the connections between respect and toleration (chapter two), and respect and recognition (chapter three).

2. Chapter Outline

The argument I pursue in this chapter is complex and multi-faceted. For clarity and in order to help orient the reader to what follows, I begin by providing an outline of the chapter as a whole. My discussion in this chapter is divided into four main sections.

In the following section I examine contemporary liberal arguments for insisting that respect among citizens must be understood as respect for diversity. This is important because although I assume that most readers of this thesis do in fact accept this conception of respect, respect can be and sometimes is characterized in ways that are hostile to moral diversity. Because this is a logical and a practical possibility, I argue that it is important to clarify why liberals strongly defend respect for diversity against monistic conceptions of respect.

In the second section I introduce a form of contemporary liberalism, which Kevin McDonough and Walter Feinberg (2003) refer to as “affiliation liberalism” (pp. 5-8). Liberals have traditionally argued that personal autonomy is one of the core values of liberalism and liberal education, if not the paramount value (Halstead, 1996). Affiliation liberalism shares this traditional liberal
commitment to individual autonomy. However, it differs from older versions of liberalism (McDonough and Feinberg identify these as "classical" and "contemporary" liberalism respectively [2003, p. 3]) by virtue of its acknowledgement of the robust ways in which individual identity and freedom are dependent upon cultural attachments. I explain what affiliation liberalism is in order to show how this form of liberalism is especially helpful in clarifying the role and significance of respect as it applies in contemporary liberal societies. Specifically, I argue that affiliation liberalism helps to sharpen our understanding of how respect requires us to treat our fellow citizens as autonomous individuals whose identities are dependent on and situated in diverse cultural contexts of choice (McDonough & Feinberg, 2003). Notably, respect for autonomous individuals entails special acknowledgement of diverse forms of cultural situatedness.

In the third section I present arguments for why under an affiliation liberal framework respect must be treated as a virtue rather than a set of simple moral rules. I will argue that following simple moral rules only shows respect for our co-citizens in a very superficial way. The presence of deep cultural and ethical diversity that characterizes our society requires a more complex process of moral discernments to show respect. Thus, I will argue, showing respect in the way the virtue requires is more appropriate in a context of diversity.

Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I briefly outline some important general educational implications of teaching for respect as a virtue. I suggest principles and approaches that may develop children’s ability to respect
each other in ways that acknowledge the cultural embeddedness and relational autonomy of others.

3. *Respect in Conditions of Diversity*

As citizens we must find a means by which to live alongside our co-citizens who subscribe to different culturally-shaped values and beliefs (Taylor, 1994). Charles Taylor and Gérard Bouchard (2008) note that this means fostering a sense of solidarity and cohesion amongst a diverse citizenry to ensure that the egalitarian society to which we belong functions well, liberalism’s commitment to diversity is upheld and ethnocultural differences serve not as a barrier to understanding, but as a means to enrich our perspectives. Having a clear understanding of our responsibilities in engaging with others is essential to appropriately support other ways of life and to foster the kinds of communication and action necessary to avoid feelings of animosity, blame, fear or distrust that can potentially plague a society (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008). Will Kymlicka (1995) reinforces this point by articulating that “citizens [must] have a strong sense of common identity and common membership, so that they will make sacrifices for each other” (p. 77). Kymlicka has in mind the sacrifices needed to maintain such public goods as universal health care. His point is that when diversity is untethered from a common identity, citizens may find that they are unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary (e.g. paying taxes, etc.) to ensure
that all members of society are entitled to this good. They may simply decide that everyone should sink or swim on their own. A sense of common identity and shared membership mitigates these risks. This may sound paradoxical. The idea is that a sense of common identity is necessary in order to ensure that everyone has access to important goods and resources. But these shared goods and resources are also essential for ensuring that we can all benefit from a society that welcomes and accommodates our differences. Without such shared goods, diversity would be threatened through social instability, inter-group conflicts, and the like. Thus, a shared identity is a condition of secure diversity.

My argument is that respect in diverse societies works as such: the concept of respect is fundamental to the sense of civic solidarity and responsibility among citizens of culturally and ethically diverse, democratic societies.

a. Respect for Diversity as a Moral Claim

I said above that respect is a necessary virtue in multicultural societies. I meant, of course, respect for diversity. Respect regulates our conduct and interaction with others who have different, and sometimes conflicting, religious, moral and cultural traditions.

Having said this, it is obvious that respect for diversity is not logically necessary. In some contexts respect could be understood as requiring a
commitment to moral homogeneity, for example. Citizens could conceivably, without logical incoherence, decide (or be encouraged or required by political authorities) to respond to ethical and cultural diversity by giving up their different and mistaken beliefs in order to adopt a single version of “true” and “correct” beliefs. The result would be moral homogeneity (Callan, 1997, p. 26).

According to this view, the proper response to moral error is moral correction. The proper response to moral diversity is moral uniformity. Thus, the aim would be to eliminate or minimize ethical and cultural diversity rather than to “respect” it.

This approach assumes that diversity results from moral mistakes. This line of thinking posits that the reason people believe in and commit themselves to different ethical beliefs is because some citizens have gone morally wrong. The responsibility, then, is for those who have gone right (most notably, perhaps, the educators) to correct the benighted and return them to the shining path of moral truth. Societies like present day Iran approach this conception of respect as a vehicle of political and moral homogeneity; and there are abundant and well-known historical examples of societies that do as well. Nevertheless, Eamonn Callan, John Rawls and many other liberals argue that respect for diversity is itself a moral claim and not merely a logical or practical one. That is, they wish to argue that respect for diversity is morally necessary, at least in liberal societies, even if it is possible to imagine other conceptions of respect that deny or seek to eliminate diversity.
Put differently, the idea that respect is respect for diversity is a moral rather than a logical or empirical claim. But what is the moral argument for favouring respect for diversity? After all, to show that respect is a moral claim is only to clarify the kind of claim that liberal respect makes. It does not show that respect for diversity is morally preferable to competing conceptions. Why, according to liberals like Callan and Rawls, should citizens of liberal societies learn to respect diversity rather than seek to create morally correct homogeneity? What justifies making respect for diversity the basis of liberal citizenship and moral education given that other conceptions of respect are available?

b. Justifying Respect for Diversity: The Burdens of Judgement

As Callan (1997) has argued, to uphold liberal justice we must respect different and conflicting perspectives not as products of misguided morality, but as expressions of the limits of human reason (pp. 41-43). Callan’s point is crucial and worth elaborating. A careful examination of it illuminates why respect for diversity is a necessary condition for social justice in pluralist societies. As such, it shows why respect for diversity is the only viable conception of respect for liberal societies and why respect as a vehicle of moral homogeneity must be rejected.

Callan (1997) introduces his claim about the limits of human reason in the context of his interpretation of Rawls’ theory of political liberalism.
According to Callan, central to Rawls’ theory is “the idea of the ‘the burdens of judgment,’” (1997, p. 25). As Callan says, “Rawls introduces the idea both to explain the possibility of irreconcilable ethical disagreement among reasonable people and to justify the mutual accommodation that public reason will promote when disagreement threatens to become destructive social conflict,” (1997, p. 25). The idea is that we cannot and should not expect that if everyone were to act “reasonably,” somehow this would guarantee we could come to agreement on all or even most matters of ethical importance. Callan says, to expect this “overlooks the general liabilities to error and disagreement that afflict even the most accomplished exercise of reason, as well as the special difficulties we face when reason is harnessed to reciprocity in public deliberation” (1997, p. 25). Neither Callan nor Rawls provides a comprehensive list of specific instances of the “general liabilities to error and disagreement” (Callan, 1997, p. 25) our reason is vulnerable to. But Callan mentions, for example, the fact that different citizens necessarily draw on different “contingencies of experience,” (1997, p. 25) in their ethical judgments, and this fact leads inevitably to diverse judgments “however reasonable we might be,” (1997, p. 25). Also, he mentions the fact that we must choose our values from a broad range of possibilities. We cannot choose all of them in deciding how to live our lives. Furthermore, even when citizens’ choices of values overlap, they are apt to order them differently and give them different rankings of ethical priority. Once again, these inevitable differences lead to diverse reasonable and sometimes incompatible judgments. Additionally, no matter how reasonable and conscientious we may be we have
limited information upon which to act, and we cannot necessarily all have the same information. Once again, this will produce significant differences of judgment no matter how reasonable we may be.

These, among other things, are the “burdens of judgment,” and by accepting them as Rawls argues we must, Callan (1997) points out that we are implicitly accepting the inevitability of reasonable disagreement in our deliberations about justice as citizens of diverse, liberal societies. On these terms, respect cannot be prosecuted if it aims at or insists on promoting ethical homogeneity. Such a conception of respect does not deserve the name because the assumed desire for moral homogeneity means that some reasonable viewpoints must be repressed or eliminated. This is neither reasonable nor respectful.

Importantly, what Callan and Rawls have in mind here is not the problem of the possibility for human beings to do evil to one another or to act selfishly, or with hostility. They emphasize that the limits of human reason apply to even the most judicious, careful, fair-minded and generous of us. Diversity is a permanent social condition and not something to be regretted or eliminated. Callan argues that once we recognize and accept, as we must, the limits of human reason for determining ethical truth, we are compelled to adopt a certain epistemic and moral humility toward our own moral commitments (1997, pp. 41-43). This humility entails significant constraints in how we might approach our relationships with fellow citizens whose conscience compels them to moral commitments that diverge from our own.
4. Affiliation Liberalism

The significant point of the previous section is that respect among reasonable citizens in liberal societies must mean respect for diversity. In this section, I want to extend this point by suggesting that, from the perspective of much recent liberal educational theory, respect for diversity should include the willingness and commitment to empathetically identify with our fellow citizens as individuals who are partially defined by their attachments to particular cultural contexts. My argument here depends on an understanding of what Kevin McDonough and Walter Feinberg (2003) refer to as “affiliation liberalism,” (pp. 5-8).

Liberalism is premised upon basic individual rights such as the right to freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, and freedom of association (McDonough & Feinberg, 2003). However, liberal theory often makes the mistake of assuming that our freedom is formed and practiced in ways that are independent of the communities and society into which we are born (Fernández, 2009, pp. 43-44; Kymlicka, 1989, p. 14). In a diverse liberal society such as Canada, acknowledging that culture influences our moral perspectives is necessary to better understand the role respect can play in protecting and accommodating for diversity. Affiliation liberalism addresses the role of culture that much classical and contemporary liberalism seems to neglect (McDonough & Feinberg, 2003). Specifically, affiliation liberalism makes two important claims, both of which bear importantly on our understanding of respect in
diverse societies: firstly, our cultural embeddedness is an important contributing factor to formation of our identity and so respect must take seriously individuals’ cultural affiliations; secondly, while as individuals we are culturally embedded, we are not defined by or inevitably tied to our existing cultural affiliations. Additionally, cultural affiliations are important sources of our capacities as autonomous, free individuals. Respect, then, must also involve respect for individual autonomy. Ultimately, I shall argue that these two points are connected. That is, I shall argue that respect for our fellow citizens’ autonomy often requires that we engage empathically with their respective cultural backgrounds. I will address these two claims in turn.

a. Affiliation Liberalism and Respect for Cultural Identity

Affiliation liberalism requires that we understand and acknowledge that cultural embeddedness is an important contributing factor to identity formation (McDonough & Feinberg, 2003; Fernández, 2009).³ We do not form and revise our identities independent of cultural communities and society. Rather, individual identity is formed, developed and revised within a cultural context. If this is true, what does it imply for an application of respect?

We may be inclined to think that what it means to treat others with respect is intuitive and can be applied in the abstract without much reflection and

³ Will Kymlicka’s (1989) Liberalism, community and culture was a key text in orienting liberal political and educational theory to the cultural embeddedness of individuals.
without considering the particularities of individuals. For example, one of the dominant Western ethical traditions, Kantian ethics, is often understood as focusing on “respect for persons” where persons are to be understood in terms of some abstract capacity for rationality rather than in terms of their particular, contingent features. This Kantian influence has often been thought to underwrite contemporary liberalism (e.g. Rawls, 1972). However, under a framework of affiliation liberalism it seems inconceivable to show respect for our co-citizens without taking into account fundamental aspects of their identity, which means acknowledging their cultural specificity and trying to understand who they are at least in part because of their cultural affiliations.

In order to see why, consider an example. Here we will take an example of how respect fails badly when it tries to ignore cultural embeddedness. We will imagine how I, as a non-Muslim citizen, might reason about how to respect a Muslim woman who wears hijab (the Islamic veil) by pretending that the cultural background to her commitment to wearing hijab is irrelevant to how I should respect her. I might conceive of showing her respect in the following way: I am a person like you. I respect you as a person, not as a Muslim or Christian or atheist. Thus, religious and cultural affiliations are irrelevant to my treating you with respect. I must respect you as a human being with choices. The fact that you are wearing the hijab, to me, implies that you have chosen to wear it. It cannot define you as a Muslim, since this implies that you have no choice. Your identity would become reduced to being a Muslim. Since I must respect you as a person who chooses, I cannot respect you solely in terms of
your particular and present choices. I have to assume that at some point you might, if you had good reason to do so, choose to reject wearing hijab and even your Muslim identity. To me, as your fellow citizen, you are most importantly the person who autonomously chooses; not the person who is right now a Muslim. As such, I cannot respect you simply as a Muslim. Thus, to me the fact that you wear hijab and all that it symbolizes about your Muslim identity is morally irrelevant, and I will treat it as irrelevant in my interactions with you.⁴

Let us call this the “culture blind” conception of respect. This attempt to understand respect in a “culture blind” fashion is likely to strike us as wrong-headed, but why? First of all, it is not hard to see that most Muslim women who wear hijab are not going to see culture blind reasoning as a form of respect. People generally see their religious identities as something more than merely a superficial “choice” – a mere optional adornment to who they really are. They see their religious identities as central to who they are. So when someone says, or implies, that one’s religious identity is irrelevant it comes as an insult or an injustice and not as a sign of respect. Indeed, most of us are people with identities, not just people in some abstract universal sense. We are not just abstract “choosers.” Some of our choices really do matter very deeply, and we expect others to take these into account in our relationships. Religious beliefs, if we have them, tend to be a part of who we are, and others cannot respect us without also taking that identity into account. The same goes for non-religious cultural aspects of identity. For example, some people may identify strongly

⁴ This is a purely interpersonal interpretation of respect between non-Muslims and Muslims. It is not hard to see how it can be extended on the basis of similar reasoning to government policies to ban wearing hijab in public institutions like schools.
with their choice to devote their lives to environmental causes. Some may choose to identify deeply with their ancestral roots rather than to assimilate into the mainstream culture. If some citizens refuse to treat these choices as relevant when it comes to showing respect, it is likely that we will consider the offer of respect to be artificial or severely misguided.

Showing respect requires that we acknowledge our co-citizens’ cultural specificity. We show others respect by showing that we acknowledge and at least try to understand that they are who they are at least in part because of their religious and cultural affiliations. Conversely, if we ignore or treat as irrelevant others’ religious and cultural affiliations, our attempts to treat them with respect will be apt to go badly wrong.

\[b. \textit{Affiliation Liberalism and Autonomy}\]

In the preceding section, I argued that the basic liberal commitment to respect others as free and independent individuals also requires us to acknowledge their cultural specificity. In this section, I elaborate on the affiliation liberal idea that individual autonomy is dependent on culture. Affiliation liberalism says that our capacity as choosers, as free and rational persons, is itself crucially dependent on the cultural context of choice in which we are situated. As Will Kymlicka (1989) puts the point, “Cultural membership affects our very sense of personal identity and capacity,” (p. 175).
And because it does, respecting others as autonomous individuals means showing respect for their cultural background as well. In short, to respect another as a free and rational person as the culture blind conception of respect insisted, we must also take account of the fact that their identity as free and rational persons is inseparable from the cultural context within which choices are made meaningful. Respect involves the need to understand, appreciate, and recognize the cultural context of personhood in part, then, because culture is a necessary precondition of autonomy.

In recognizing cultural context as a condition of personal autonomy and reflection, affiliation liberalism assumes that our cultural identities are not fixed, but that they are revisable (McDonough & Feinberg, 2003, p.5). Liberalism allows people extensive freedom to choose from a variety of conceptions of the good life, the one that is most aligned with their values, and never forecloses the option of reflecting upon and potentially revising the conception of the good they have chosen (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 80-82). The justification for freedom in choosing a conception of the good life is based on the idea that the value of one’s life would be significantly depleted if one were compelled to pursue a conception of the good that one did not in fact endorse (Kymlicka, 1989, p. 12).

The idea that we can and should develop capacities of autonomous reflection that enable us to revise our existing conceptions of who we are is of great importance (Kymlicka, 1989, pp. 12-13). Importantly, as Kymlicka indicates, the point of the principle of revisability is not simply that we sometimes make errors in judgment and need to correct them; the point is that as
reflective beings we are (or should be) aware that such errors are a permanent possibility and that our own good and flourishing depends on the capacity to make changes and corrections when necessary (1995, p. 81). What we currently believe to be good for us may turn out not to be, and we cannot predict beforehand when and in what respects this might happen. The fact that the possibility for moral error is a permanent and unpredictable feature of human life, Kymlicka (1995) argues, means that as individuals we must develop the capacity to rationally “assess our conceptions of the good in the light of new information or experiences, and to revise them if they are not worthy of our continued allegiance,” (p. 81). As autonomous individuals not defined by our existing cultural affiliations, we may need to critically reflect upon and revise our existing cultural and religious commitments (McDonough & Feinberg, 2003).

Affiliation liberalism’s claim that we are autonomous individuals able to revise our existing affiliations (McDonough & Feinberg, 2003), is especially important in contexts where some of our commitments conflict and we need to revise or reconcile our identities. To illustrate this point, let us look at an example of a citizen whose religious identity conflicts with her sexuality, which is another feature of her identity. In this example, my friend is gay and also part of a Catholic religious community that condemns such forms of sexuality as sinful. If she were unable to revise her existing affiliations, this would mean that both her sexuality and religious identity would be fixed. Respect would pull me in conflicting directions because I cannot respect both at the same time.
However, my respecting only one means showing contempt for the other. So what can I do? The possibility that my friend might revise, alter or reflectively reinterpret her identity to reduce or reconcile the painful conflict between her Catholicism and her lesbianism, is ruled out from the beginning. But some such attempt to reconcile the conflict at hand seems necessary for my friend’s autonomy and well-being in this case. The fact that people do sometimes overcome such identity conflicts suggests that we do have the capacity to engage in such reflective revision of our self-understandings. The liberal commitment to autonomy demands that we be able to develop and exercise that capacity. And the liberal conception of respect demands that we recognize, acknowledge, and honour this capacity in our dealings with our fellow citizens.

Crucially, the notion of culturally embedded autonomous agency that underwrites affiliation liberalism also helps to clarify how respect can address such cases of moral distress and moral conflict. In the case of my Catholic, lesbian friend my respect could be expressed in various ways. One way might be to remind her that in liberal societies it is not a crime for citizens to reject their faith and they may do so without threat of criminal punishment. Another way to show her respect may be to provide her with information about alternative religious communities that are more accepting of homosexuality. There are many other ways that I could show her respect in a just manner. The point I want to make here is that such forms of respect treat individuals as autonomous while also recognizing that in order to show respect in practically, effective ways we often need to take seriously the fact of cultural embeddedness.
In this example, I might acknowledge her cultural embeddedness by recognizing and attempting to understand the pain and difficulty she has in rejecting or revising her existing cultural affiliations. By emphasizing the key role that autonomous agency plays in enabling us to revise and recreate our cultural identities within a particular cultural context, affiliation liberalism helps us to understand why respecting people as autonomous individuals also requires us to take serious account of their cultural identity.

The upshot of my discussion in this section is that respect from the perspective of affiliation liberalism involves two key, related dimensions. First, it requires acknowledging the ways in which our co-citizens are culturally embedded. Second, it is also about respecting their possible need to autonomously revise and create new forms of cultural affiliation that better fit with their own conscience and ethical commitments.

5. Respect as a Virtue

The idea that we must respect others both as autonomous individuals and as culturally embedded persons suggests that learning how to show respect in pluralist societies is likely to be an important and morally demanding task. Public and popular discourse about respect often assumes that it is an important task; but it is not always evident that we recognize how morally demanding respect is. Consider how respect is often discussed in educational circles.
Educators are apt to speak as if respect were something like a simple moral rule or principle whose requirements are relatively clear and easy to follow. It is common to hear teachers say things like “In my classroom, there is only one rule: respect!” The suggestion seems to imply that what is involved in respecting others is pretty obvious and that there is no great need for moral sophistication in determining what these requirements are and how to implement them. But the complexity of showing respect in culturally diverse settings belies this claim of simplicity.

As an alternative to conceiving of respect as a set of simple moral rules, respect can be understood as a virtue (McDonough, 1994). An Aristotelian understanding of the meaning of virtue considers it to be both intellectual (a rational skill) and character-based (developed through moral habit) (Aristotle, 330/2000). Notably, a virtuous person in Aristotle’s sense is the person of “practical wisdom” (Schollmeier, 1989, 124). That is, a person who has both settled traits of character and highly developed powers of moral discernment and perception (Nussbaum, 1992, chpt. 2), and who is capable of bringing those powers to bear on the complex task of reasoning about judgements that are finely tailored to the complexities of particular concrete cases (McDonough 1994, p. 82). As such, the challenges of acting virtuously cannot be realized through simple rule-based patterns of decision-making. Respect in this sense means appreciating that moral perspectives are formed in the context of deep and not superficial cultural differences. Determining what respect requires of us involves careful attention to particular cases. Our judgements about what

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5 See book II, chapters 1-5 in Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics.
respect involves in one case may diverge sharply from judgements about another case, at least to the extent that morally salient particularities require.

Drawing on the discussion above of respect for others as culturally embedded and autonomous individuals, I would like to move forward with my discussion, arguing why the form of respect we use under an affiliation liberal framework must be treated as a virtue rather than a moral rule or a set of simple moral rules. I argue that in the context of deep diversity that characterizes a citizenry who have complex and multiple affiliations, to show respect requires attention to the many subtle and interconnected features in a context of cultural and ethical diversity, to which we cannot adequately respond simply by following prescribed rules.

Before investigating further the notion of respect as a virtue, let us first explore why it is implausible to think that respect can be shown by adhering to a prescribed set of simple moral rules. In following a simple set of moral rules in my relationships with my fellow citizens, I can safely disregard their particularities. Rules are fixed and can be applied universally to all citizens in spite of their (superficial) differences, or in instances where I actively disregard their differences when treating them with this conception of respect. For example, the simple rule “Don’t tell lies” applies the same way in all cases, insofar as it is understood as a simple moral rule. It does not matter if you are friend or foe; stranger or intimate; etc. The rule does not admit of exceptions or of judgement. It just means, “Don’t tell a lie.”
Now apply this idea to the concept of respect. In a context of moral homogeneity, respect might be learned and exercised in terms of following simple moral rules because in a morally homogeneous society people agree not only on a shared set of principles that they understand to constitute respect; they also agree on how those principles apply in particular cases. For example, in societies far more homogenous than our own, respect may involve following rules clearly specifying the types of respectful relationships between elderly and young people. It might be assumed that elderly people should always be permitted to move to the front of line-ups, have a seat on public transportation, and not be expected to work in order to earn an income. Young people, alternatively, would not challenge their elders’ opinions or perspectives, would always take positions at the rear of line-ups, would give up their seats on buses for elderly citizens, and would financially support the elderly people in their communities. We can see that with a morally homogeneous background culture, interpretation of moral rules would (usually) converge and members would know how to apply the rules of respect in specific circumstances without serious disagreements. However, we do not live in a morally homogeneous society where we can show our respect by following simple moral rules.

A very simple and common example can illustrate this idea, while also showing why the notion that respect can be reduced to a simple set of rules is inadequate. It is well known that in some cultures it is disrespectful to look at another (say, an elder or a teacher or a parent) in the eye when speaking with
them. Within a homogenous cultural context of this kind, what respect involves may be relatively simple to determine. It can perhaps be learned as a rule.

But things change immediately when the context is changed to one of significant cultural diversity. Now, basic assumptions that were safe in the original cultural context can no longer be taken for granted. In an educational context, a child who follows this cultural tradition of not making eye contact with adults as a sign of respect might wonder if his teacher knows about his cultural practices. Does she care? Assuming the answer is “yes,” is it appropriate for the teacher to accommodate the child’s practices or to force her to adapt to mainstream norms, where eye contact is a sign of respect? Or should he be gently encouraged (not forced) to learn mainstream practices? If so, how can this be done without demeaning the student’s family and original cultural background? Even if the other questions can be answered clearly, figuring out what this last question requires in practice is likely to be a complex task and will require attention to the particular child, his family, the context, the teacher herself and her personality, among many other things. Obviously, the list of questions and complexities could be extended. But the point I want to stress can be stated already. In contexts of cultural diversity, even relatively simple, everyday matters of respect will require capacities for moral discernment and judgment that go far beyond anything that can adequately be described as following simple moral rules.

Furthermore, if respect is misunderstood as a rule or set of rules, this would be deeply problematic because in a context of diversity not only are our
interpretations of the rules of respect disparate, but they also cannot be applied uniformly to a citizenry that has complex affiliations and identities. Additionally, under a framework of affiliation liberalism that requires us to acknowledge cultural embeddedness (McDonough & Feinberg, 2003, p.5), we cannot simply disregard diversity which, if we followed rules to show respect, we would be forced to do.

In the context of diverse moral perspectives, justice requires that in making moral judgements we are sensitive to the cultural and contextual particularities (Callan, 1997, pp. 29, 43). Following simple moral rules does not enable us, as moral agents, to make judgements in a morally complex world (McDonough, 1992, p.76). Respect as a component of justice cannot be reduced to training in the application of a prescribed way of treating others and is considerably more complex.

To illustrate this point, let us return to the example of my gay, Catholic friend who finds that two of her commitments (her sexuality and her religious affiliations) conflict. I have already shown that respect cannot involve simply accepting as fixed her Catholic identity or her lesbian one. Respect also requires that I show sensitivity to the importance that that identity might have for her, a significance that will be felt even if she is in the process of undertaking the difficult task of self-reflection with respect to her religious and sexual identity. This is obviously a complex task requiring attention to many subtle and interconnected features of the situation. I cannot adequately respond to the situation simply by following prescribed moral rules. Knowing whether or not
my response accords with respectful treatment of my friend in this particular case will involve a complex process of moral discernments and judgements, including judgements about my friend’s feelings, the nature and history of our relationship (even if that history is as short as a single conversation in which we have been engaged only recently), and a multitude of other situational factors.

Once we teach that attention to particularities requires complex moral responsiveness or judgement, the viability of respect as a moral rule fades away. This is where respect as a virtue comes in as an important alternative to the inadequate notion of respect as a set of simple moral rules. Respect must be taught as a virtue in order to take account of the complexities that shape moral perspectives, and develop appropriate attitudes, motivations, abilities and actions (Callan, 1997, pp. 28, 43). Attention to such complexities is especially crucial under conditions of cultural and ethical diversity.

6. Educational Implications of the Virtue of Respect

Here I would like to speak about the implications of these arguments for moral education, which is tasked with developing an appropriate sense of respect in children who are born, raised, and expected to become citizens of pluralist democracies. To ensure that children’s capacity for respect as a virtue is developed educationally, particular educational principles or approaches are needed; namely principles or approaches that develop children’s abilities to
acknowledge the cultural embeddedness of others. What I offer here are preliminary suggestions for what those principles or approaches may entail.

I have argued that respect is properly understood as a virtue rather than as the application of simple moral rules. The sort of moral education involved in developing this capacity for respect must be sustained over the course of a child’s education in order to develop a rich sense of moral discernment regarding the particular and complex salient features of moral judgement in particular situations. In a pluralist society, the situations within which respect must be shown are apt to have unique features or to occur in new contexts. Thus, not every situation will be exactly the same, and some will be unfamiliar or unlike anything we have experienced before. We cannot merely apply the same principles (i.e. simple moral rules) we have applied in past situations to these new situations. We will often have to creatively and with morally intelligent sensitivity interpret how principles of respect can be extended and shaped to fit in new and different circumstances.

To respect others in contexts of ethical and cultural diversity requires that we have had significant practice in developing our moral discernment. This is why education concerned with developing the capacity for respect must be a long-term component of children’s moral education. The actual content of moral education must also provide enough variance and richness in situations presented to children so they will have significant exposure to diverse and complex situations. Developing children’s abilities to acknowledge the cultural
embeddedness of others in this way may improve their abilities to show respect for others in contexts they are unfamiliar with.

In addition to acknowledging the cultural embeddedness of others, I have shown that having a sense of respect in pluralist democracies is also concerned with autonomy. What is required is having a sense of autonomy oneself, as well as the inclination and capacity to respect the autonomy of others. The sort of education (very broadly speaking) that might lead to the development of such a capacity for respect should provide the space for children to critically reflect upon their affiliations and learn how to potentially revise their own identities. To respect the autonomy of others, children need to have opportunities to meaningfully engage with other children (perhaps through sustained and thoughtful dialogue) to understand that others are not defined by a fixed identity and are instead complex beings with multiple commitments. This kind of interaction develops children’s understanding that they are one moral agent among many, and must give consideration to moral perspectives that are not their own to justify why they are committed to a particular view.

Beyond the possible principles and approaches I have offered here, we can see the potential that moral education has in developing children’s ability to treat each other in ways that the virtue of respect requires, with sensitivity to the cultural embeddedness of their peers and acknowledgement of the role that autonomy plays in establishing our commitments and forming our identities.
7. Conclusion

Respect is assumed to be a fundamental liberal value (Callan, 1997, p. 3). I have argued in this chapter that in pluralist democracies learning the virtue of respect helps to regulate and guide our interactions with others who have substantially different moral perspectives and projects from our own. I maintain that respect in pluralist democracies depends on citizens acknowledging other ways of life and points of view—in particular by respecting others’ cultural affiliations and attachments. Importantly, I have shown that only respecting others’ cultural affiliations is not sufficient for respect. Respect also requires acknowledging others’ capacity for autonomous reflection and revision of their cultural attachments.

In this chapter I have examined the ethical and educational dimensions of respect when that value is to be realized in contexts of ethical diversity. I have argued that respect under such conditions must be understood as a virtue that is fundamentally oriented to the acknowledgment of the necessity and value of cultural diversity, and as such is aptly understood as a liberal conception of respect. However, liberals have not always understood the virtue of respect in ways that are compatible with all of the features of respect outlined above. In fact, the liberal commitment to tolerance can, if it is understood as embodying a form of respect, run counter to or at least neglect the emphasis on attentiveness to cultural embeddedness I have emphasized here. Because the concept of toleration is such an important one in liberal tradition, it is crucial that I address
the tensions between liberal tolerance and my own liberal conception of respect.

That is my focus in the next chapter.
Chapter Two: Respect and Toleration

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I critically explore the applications of the conception of respect developed in chapter one, as it relates to the moral concept of tolerance. I have several reasons for doing so. First, many liberal educational and political theorists, both classical and more contemporary thinkers have traditionally posited that tolerance is a key moral and civic virtue. Second, tolerance is a virtue that is often equated with or closely associated to the value of respect (Dent, 1988; Mendus, 1988; Raphael, 1988; Raz, 1988). Third, tolerance and respect seem closely connected in ordinary language. When we say that something should be tolerated, we assume that it should not be condemned, banned, eradicated, etc. But we also do not seem to think that it should be celebrated or embraced unconditionally or without qualification. It seems more appropriate to say that our acceptance of the thing we tolerate is deserving of at least a measure of respect.

With these points in mind, this chapter explores how adequately the liberal interpretation of toleration fulfills the dual aims of respect outlined in chapter one. In other words, I ask “if respect is to be understood as adopting attitudes or dispositions of toleration, does respect work to serve the diversity-

6 In her edited book Justifying toleration: Conceptual and historical perspectives (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Susan Mendus indicates the historical longevity of the moral concept of tolerance, discussing its meaning and application from perspectives of such classical philosophers as John Locke and John Stuart Mill, to more contemporary theorists such as Hannah Arendt and Joseph Raz.
accommodating purposes of respect, on the one hand, and the stability- and justice-maintaining purposes of respect, on the other?"

My main argument in this chapter is that toleration is not a sufficient basis for respect in contemporary pluralist societies, and that it would be a mistake to conflate them. If we do, as liberal theorists are perhaps often inclined to, then we are apt to misunderstand respect’s role as a civic virtue and hence to miseducate liberal citizens by teaching them to internalize a badly flawed conception of civic respect.

2. Chapter Outline

I investigate whether toleration can be interpreted as a form of respect that enables us to make complex judgements that accommodate diversity and maintain stability in accordance with the principles of justice. I argue that toleration satisfies (at least superficially) one condition of respect outlined in chapter one. That is, toleration respects individual autonomy. However, it fails to satisfy the other condition, namely, the need for cultural engagement and empathy. Finally, because (as I argued in chapter one) respect for autonomy is closely bound to the need for cultural engagement, it is far from clear that toleration actually fulfills the first condition in anything more than a nominal sense. Thus, I argue, the deeper flaws of toleration render it inadequate as a conception of respect in the context of deep cultural diversity.
I support this conclusion by discussing the kinds of complex ethical and political judgements that citizens of diverse societies must address. I argue that while toleration is important in that it allows for the autonomous pursuit of diverse conceptions of the good, the concept is not instructive in telling us how to practically resolve the real life problems that diversity presents.

I conclude this chapter by discussing whether toleration is sufficient for teaching children to be respectful in conditions of cultural and ethical diversity. I argue that although teaching children to be tolerant is valuable in some regards, it ultimately fails to achieve the moral depth required by being respectful of diverse cultural affiliations.

3. **Toleration and Autonomy**

In chapter one I argued that one of the liberal requirements of respect is for people’s autonomous agency; that is, their capacity to choose and revise beliefs. Here I explore the meaning and features of liberal tolerance to see if it satisfies this condition of respect. I endeavour to show here that toleration from a liberal perspective is not toleration for individuals and their current beliefs. It is toleration for individuals who are free, rational beings capable of revising their commitments.

According to Mendus (1988), “toleration is of and by persons, and the tolerator’s disapproval of the tolerated is compatible with his acting virtuously in
tolerating precisely because such action alone can show due and proper respect for persons” (p. 5). This conclusion is based on liberalism’s commitment to “the idea that individuals should be free to rationally assess and potentially revise their existing ends” (Kymlicka, 2002, pp. 231-232). To support this conclusion that liberal toleration is respect for autonomy we can refer to what Susan Mendus (1989) calls “the paradox of toleration” (p. 161), which asks “why it can be right to tolerate that which we believe to be morally wrong” (p. 161). Mendus responds that:

In the liberal scheme of things the answer to this question is (often) that toleration implies respect for persons as autonomous agents. It is the need to respect that autonomy which solves the paradox of toleration: we ought to tolerate what is morally wrong because it is part of being an autonomous agent that one should be allowed to do what is morally wrong. (1989, p. 161)

In this regard, toleration seems to be an important virtue in a liberal society because it respects others’ autonomous agency. If the capacity to be autonomous were not respected, not only would liberalism’s commitment to diversity be undermined, but individuals would be unable to choose and revise their beliefs. Let us look at the features of toleration to see if this conclusion can be supported.
Catriona McKinnon (2006) provides a detailed summary of the features of toleration, which she says are:

1) *Difference*: what is tolerated differs from the tolerator’s conception of what should be done, valued, or believed.

2) *Importance*: what is tolerated by the tolerator is not trivial to her.

3) *Opposition*: the tolerator disapproves of and/or dislikes what she tolerates, and is *ipso facto* disposed to act so as to alter or suppress what she opposes.

4) *Power*: the tolerator believes herself to have the power to alter or suppress what is tolerated.

5) *Non-rejection*: the tolerator does not exercise this power.

6) *Requirement*: toleration is right and/or expedient, and the tolerator is virtuous, and/or just, and/or prudent. (p. 14)

Tolerance emphasizes the need to restrain our disapproval of others and to suppress the desire to dominate, alter or repress their conceptions of the good life. It says we do so out of respect for others’ autonomous capacity to choose what they currently view to be the conception of the good life most compatible with their cultural and ethical commitments. Thus, tolerance seems to satisfy (at least superficially) one of the conditions of respect: to respect others’ autonomy.

However, it is not immediately apparent if toleration fulfills the other requirement of respect, namely, mutual understanding or empathetic engagement.
with different cultural and ethical ways of life. It seems that toleration’s feature of restraining our inclinations to change ways of life we disagree with, is essentially an attitude of forbearance that requires little in terms of empathetic engagement with fellow citizens as culturally situated persons. Toleration does not seem to instruct us to understand or learn much about how others’ autonomous choices are based on culturally specific traditions or beliefs. Taking this into account, can toleration be interpreted as a form of respect that enables us to make complex judgements that accommodate diversity and maintain stability in accordance with the principles of justice? Let us consider some examples to address this question.

4. Toleration, Justice, and Diversity

I suspect that my neighbour may be the victim of domestic violence due to instances when I have overheard her and her partner fighting with each other. When I approach her to offer assistance, she strongly denies that she is the victim of any abuse and is quite defensive. It is entirely possible in this situation that she suffers from Stockholm Syndrome and believes that her partner’s actions stem from genuine consideration for her well-being or that she is to blame for causing him to be angry and abusive. I have outlined that toleration implies respect for others’ autonomy. Will toleration of her account of her domestic situation enable me to adequately show her respect?
If I tolerate my neighbour’s genuine belief that she is not the victim of any kind of domestic abuse, I must refrain from exercising my power to challenge her account. Tolerance seems to be “merely a negative matter, a matter of ‘living and letting live’” (Mendus, 1989, p. 5), and this attitude of forbearance implies a very non-interventionist and “hands-off” policy of respect. However, simply standing aside in this case leaves me powerless to address the many complex ethical questions about my neighbour’s well-being, including how genuine her autonomy is under such brutal circumstances and whether her autonomy has been comprised. The problem is that toleration, by equating respect for autonomy with forbearance, seems to provide little or no basis for addressing other complex ethical questions associated with justice. Justice requires more than simply tolerating others through restraining our inclinations to dominate or alter their perspectives or ways of life. We can see in the following salient examples how justice requires us to go beyond mere toleration as forbearance.

In some cases, full respect should obviously be withheld (for example, to members of the Ku Klux Klan) even if racist beliefs must be tolerated. Only those perspectives that take a genuine moral position are ones we can fully respect (Gutmann, 1994, p. 22). However, if we merely tolerate social groups whose beliefs may be incompatible or conflicting with our own, such as the Amish for example, there are many other issues that justice requires us to consider. Should the state do whatever it can to make sure the Amish way of life is protected? Should it offer help to Amish children who wish to escape that
way of life? How? Or what about groups like polygamist religious sects?
Should we try to intervene in such groups to aid young girls who are forced to marry? If we should do this, does it mean we should also allow the adult members of such groups to continue to live according to their polygamist ways? Or should we send them to prison? What about the Ku Klux Klan? Should we legally prosecute and punish every known case of racism? Or would doing this only increase the visibility of such groups and attract new members who might find the idea of standing up to the state alluring?

In order to intelligently address these additional complex questions we may need to think carefully about why those who hold “repugnant” views value what they value. We may need to listen more carefully than we tend to, to what they say and we may need to pay more careful attention to the cultural context of their beliefs than we are otherwise inclined to. In short, something like respectful engagement with cultural embeddedness may be necessary even in our relations with citizens whose attitudes we are normally inclined merely to treat at best with grudging and reluctant tolerance.

The weakness in toleration is in its inability to answer the multitude of complex ethical questions about justice that citizens in diverse societies must address once the limits of toleration are identified. We could conclude that the concept of tolerance is inadequate when applied to civic relationships, where respect requires more of us than merely restraining our disapproval and desire to alter the ways of life and perspectives of others. While toleration does counsel us to refrain from judging others too quickly by imposing our own cultural
standards, adopting an attitude of forbearance may not only be insufficient for respect; it may be harmful. It is not clear if toleration requires us to make attempts to understand or empathetically engage with our fellow citizens who are culturally embedded. As such, toleration does not seem to help us address such problems as ignorance, cultural confusion, misunderstanding, misinterpretation of cultural traditions, or substituting our own cultural biases for the cultural meanings of someone else.

I would like to reinforce this point by examining an additional example – an example that has garnered a good deal of attention in educational circles recently. We can look at the controversy that surrounds Muslim women wearing hijab (the Islamic veil) (Gereluk, 2007). Let us consider an example where a colleague of mine is a Muslim woman who wears hijab. I assume that hijab is a symbol of oppression and control without necessarily finding out what it means from my colleague’s perspective. Tolerance counsels me to be careful here through adopting an attitude of forbearance in order to refrain from judging her too quickly by imposing my own culturally-defined moral standards. However, it is not clear whether toleration requires me to go beyond this. In other words, it is not clear whether toleration requires me to more proactively engage in the hard work and effort of trying to find out more about her perspective, or to develop the imaginative and moral capacity for empathy required to interpret my

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7 In her article entitled “Should Muslim headscarves be banned in French schools?” published in Theory and Research in Education, 3(3), 259-271, Dianne Gereluk (2005) discusses the controversy over the French state’s decision to prohibit wearing hijab in public schools, and argues that such a ban of religious symbols in public spaces is unjustified.
new knowledge of the Muslim woman's cultural background from her point of view.

I have suggested that toleration may require adopting an attitude of forbearance in applying culturally specific moral standards in cases of culturally conflicting attitudes and practices. My example suggests more than this. If I accept that my colleague’s point of view needs to be taken seriously before any reasonable and respectful judgement can be made, then it seems to follow that respect should go further than mere forbearance. It seems to suggest that we should actively try to learn more about and to empathetically engage with different cultural perspectives. Otherwise, our attitudes of respect are likely to go badly wrong when we try to understand and develop intelligent views and judgements about issues like the banning of hijab in schools. Toleration falls well short of what I previously argued respect requires – namely an understanding of, and empathetic engagement with, our fellow citizens as culturally embedded persons. Thus, the value of toleration seems to be even more limited as a resource for respectful citizenship than some liberal theorists have suggested, and the need for the virtue of culturally engaged respect is correspondingly greater than proponents of toleration are likely to recognize.
5. Educational Implications of Teaching Toleration

At this point, it will be useful to review the argument I have developed so far in this thesis. In chapter one, I argued that mutual respect is a requisite feature of a cohesive citizenry in the context of moral diversity and is necessary to develop the kinds of relations with our co-citizens that maintain political stability and uphold justice. I also showed that respect is best understood as a virtue, as opposed to a simple moral rule. As such, it requires that in making moral judgements we consider the complexities that shape perspectives and ways of life of fellow citizens whose cultural and moral outlooks diverge significantly from our own. Importantly, in order to meaningfully and intelligently reason about these complexities, citizens must have significant understanding and empathetic appreciation of the meaning and point of alternative conceptions of the good life. In short, respect requires that we attempt to identify with other ways of life in a deep, engaged manner.

In chapter two, so far I have added to this argument by considering the value of toleration as a component of, or equivalent to, the virtue of respect. The concept of toleration I have discussed so far in this chapter essentially entails an attitude of forbearance towards rather than one of empathetic engagement with different moral perspectives and ways of life. The capacity of forbearance does not require us to attempt to empathetically understand or discern the meaning and value of alternative moral perspectives and ways of life. However, if, as I argued in chapter one, the virtue of respect requires that we understand and
appreciate the complexities of different conceptions of the good life, then toleration would appear to be a poor substitute for genuine respect.

As I indicated at the outset of this chapter, I am exploring whether there is any educative importance in teaching children to tolerate others as a means of respecting others. Here I will outline some justifications for understanding respect as toleration, and explore some inherent problems with an education aimed at teaching solely for this conception of respect. My argument is that while teaching children to be tolerant is a valuable aim of civic education in pluralist societies, it alone is insufficient for teaching children to be adequately respectful in conditions of ethical diversity. I argue that toleration ultimately fails to account for how and why children need to learn to appreciate the cultural affiliations of their fellow citizens. Tolerations also fails to adequately account for the significance of respecting others’ autonomous capacities. While toleration does require children to take some account of others’ cultural affiliations and their autonomy, it does so in an overly superficial way.

My key conclusion in this chapter is that toleration alone fails to address or understand the moral depth that civic respect requires, and that as such a civic education focusing on toleration as a moral equivalent for respect would result in an overly superficial and weak capacity for respect. I argue that a moral and civic education for respect requires much more than an education for mere tolerance.
Public schools are spaces of considerable ethical and cultural diversity, where children are unavoidably placed in a context of pluralism they will have to make sense of (MacLeod, 2010, p. 11). In this multicultural context, toleration may be considered an appropriate means to regulate the conduct and relations between children who are suddenly exposed to what they (or their parents) consider objectionable cultural and ethical perspectives (McLeod, 2010, 11). Tolerance allows children to express their moral attitudes towards other ways of life that they disapprove of and do not endorse, while restraining from forcibly oppressing other children’s beliefs or cultural affiliations. In this sense, toleration allows children to respect others’ autonomous capacity to choose their beliefs. Thus, proponents of teaching toleration could argue that this attitude enables children to reconcile diversity on a basic level, and is an important educational aim. However, teaching children only to be tolerant is problematic in many regards.

I have shown that toleration implies respect for another’s autonomy. Yet children are not fully autonomous moral agents because their commitments, beliefs and identities are not yet fully formed (MacLeod, 2010, 14-15). They do not have the same strong commitment to a conception of the good that their adult counterpart may have. This is due, in part, to that fact that children “lack the developed moral, rational, and emotional capacities constitutive of the kind of autonomy that gives adults presumptive normative warrant to shape the character of their commitments and the direction of their lives” (MacLeod, 2010, 12). Teaching children to tolerate each other’s perspectives and ways of life
mistakenly presupposes that they have the necessary autonomous capacity to make carefully considered commitments to a particular conception of the good life, in the first place. Engaging with each other at arm’s length with an attitude of forbearance, as toleration seems to require, may deny children the opportunities they need to meaningfully interact with each other and consider the full range of cultural and ethical choices.

According to Colin MacLeod (2010) “autonomy has a ‘contemplative’ dimension: it depends on the development of capacities for reflective consideration of ends” (15). The ability to reflect on and revise one’s ends depends on having access to information about viable alternatives one may pursue (MacLeod, 2010, 15). Yet, as Walter Feinberg says, toleration “does not address the value that the culture contributes to thinking and understanding” (1998, p. 148). Toleration only compels us to acknowledge and have a rudimentary understanding of the features of different moral perspectives and ways of life, which is a very minimal – and I have argued inadequate – way of supporting diversity. An education for toleration does not expose children to diversity in the sense of encouraging them to consider alternative conceptions of the good to the one they currently hold. Children are only exposed to diversity in the sense that they understand what it means to tolerate particular perspectives and ways of life that seem incompatible with their own.

In addition to limiting the potential for revision of ends, if we were to teach children to tolerate each other as a means of showing respect, this may actually demean and denigrate the ethical and cultural commitments they are
already in the process of developing. With an already fragile relationship to a particular way of life, children may be “especially vulnerable to criticism and negative scrutiny of their (provisionally held) commitments,” (MacLeod, 2010, 13). Yet teaching children to tolerate others is teaching them that they are also objects of toleration, a realization that may negatively affect children’s sense of worth and feeling that they are part of a supportive community of peers. To create a sense of belonging within a larger national community, every individual must feel that they are esteemed and respected by their counterparts (Mendus, 1989, pp. 158-159). According to Kymlicka (2002), “Liberal justice requires a sense of community: a sense that citizens belong together in a single country, should govern themselves collectively, and should feel solidarity towards each other” (p. 254). Indeed, ensuring these feelings is necessary if citizens are to accept liberal justice’s obligation of respect (Kymlicka, 2002). Toleration does not seem to foster the sentiments necessary to achieve this.

To teach children to tolerate each other does not assist children in making meaningful sense of the diversity that exists, or encourage them to understand or even imagine the possibility of alternative perspectives and ways of life. Teaching toleration as an educational aim not only limits children’s own abilities to revise their beliefs, but is also insufficient for teaching children to empathetically engage with and respect the cultural embeddedness of children who have different perspectives or ways of life. This may have negative consequences for fostering a sense of unity and belonging among children in a context of deep cultural and ethical diversity.
6. Conclusion

I have argued that toleration is a very minimal means of opposing bridging views, and requires no more of us than an attitude of forbearance to respect others’ autonomy. Yet to show respect in contexts of deep cultural and ethical diversity also requires a significant degree of empathetic engagement with fellow citizens as culturally situated persons. Toleration is not compatible with this conception of respect, and is problematic as an ethical substitute for it. The next chapter investigates if another liberal virtue, recognition, is a more adequate interpretation of respect.
Chapter Three: Respect as Recognition

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I concluded that in contexts of deep cultural diversity toleration is insufficient as a form of respect. I argued that where a conception of the good life has been autonomously pursued, toleration requires that we adopt an attitude of forbearance where we restrain our inclinations to dominate, oppress or alter a perspective or way of life we dislike or disapprove of. As such, in tolerating others we are not required to make attempts to comprehensively understand or empathetically engage with our fellow citizens as culturally embedded persons. Rather, toleration requires us to nominally respect others’ autonomous capacities to live their lives in a manner of their choosing. The limited way in which toleration respects diverse cultural and ethical perspectives and ways of life renders the conception of toleration as a form of respect, inadequate.

2. Chapter Outline

In this chapter I explore whether an alternative moral concept, recognition, is a better interpretation of respect in contexts of deep cultural diversity. I begin by introducing the concept of recognition and explaining what
it means or entails when it is understood as a form of respect. I endeavour to show why recognition rather than tolerance better accounts for issues of diversity, belonging and justice. I do so in part by showing how the notion of recognition overcomes the limitations identified in the previous chapter that limit tolerance as a form of respect. As such, I argue that conceiving of respect in terms of recognition highlights the role of respect in empathizing with others as culturally situated individuals and enhancing a sense of shared membership in the larger social and political community.

My discussion will proceed with an investigation into a more nuanced understanding of recognition in two different forms, which I refer to as robust collective recognition and weak collective recognition. I argue that while both forms of recognition can pose problems for autonomy, this dilemma can be reconciled with careful attention and appropriate response to the degree to which children have secure affiliations with their primary cultures.

I conclude the chapter by suggesting some practical ways in which education can support recognition as the basis of civic respect.

3. Recognition as a Basis for Civic Respect

This chapter investigates whether the virtue of respect can be better interpreted as the principle known in recent philosophical discourse as
Peter Nigel Jones (2010) indicates a key point that I feel needs to be articulated here. The term recognition is a very general notion that has been interpreted disparately by social and political theorists who have analyzed its application in different spheres (for example by states at a political level, or between citizens at a social level) (p. 51). Recognition is a means of relating to others who have different conceptions of the good (Lægaard, 2010, p.27), but the context in which this concept is applied would change its significance. For example, if at a political level the state officially “recognizes” cultures or group members who have been historically oppressed or demeaned, the government as an extension of the collective citizenry may owe these historically oppressed people special obligations now to try to understand and appreciate those aspects of their way of life and identity that have historically been misunderstood, misrecognized, distorted, or oppressed. This cultural group’s demand for recognition in the political sphere may take the form of laws or policies introduced to preserve and protect their culture.

In this initial discussion of recognition, I investigate recognition’s application between individual citizens as “a guiding idea inviting further critical engagement with differences rather than a final judgement about their worth” (Lægaard, 2010, p.32). The understanding of recognition I apply here does not necessarily entail affirmation or positive evaluation of difference, but rather acknowledgement of and attention to the experiences, perspectives and identities of others. This is a key difference between toleration and respect, one which I

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8 Charles Taylor has brought the concept of recognition to the forefront of contemporary philosophical scholarship with his seminal work, Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition” (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).
argue makes recognition a better interpretation of what it means respect our fellow citizens.

Toleration, as I argued in chapter two, only requires that we respect the autonomy of others to have moral perspectives and ways of life that differ significantly from our own. The associated attitude of forbearance does not require that we attempt to understand or empathetically engage with our culturally embedded co-citizens. Recognition, by contrast, seems to require a more dialogically engaged relationship with others that, I argue, makes it a better interpretation of respect for a number of key reasons. I endeavour to show how this dialogical engagement works to develop a sense of self and place in our social fabric, reconcile diversity in an atmosphere of respect, foster cooperation and positive social relations among citizens, and secure a more just multicultural society.

The concept of recognition is important in a context where diverse forms of the good exist within a common or shared society (Taylor, 1994). The reasoning behind this point stems from how we as individuals construct our identities and perceive ourselves within the larger social fabric. We define ourselves through dialogical relationships with others around us, discovering our identities through contact, negotiation and exchanges with other people in our process of self-discovery and self-affirmation (Taylor, 1994, p. 32). Identity here refers to one’s “fundamental defining characteristics as a human being” (Taylor, 1994, p. 25), as we individually define them for ourselves. Our identities are not pre-determined and it is through interaction with others who
may hold the same or alternative conceptions of the good that we develop and shape who we perceive ourselves to be. We come to understand who we are in relation to and sometimes in tension with those with whom we share a common society. We cannot develop a sense of self and shape my beliefs and values in a vacuum, isolated from engagement with others. Rather, our sense of identity is dependent on the recognition given by other citizens, which creates the space and opportunity for dialogical engagement where we can reflect upon and revise who we are in response to our relations with others (Gutmann, 1994, p.7; Taylor, 1994, p. 36). This underscores the importance of engaging with others who have different perspectives and ways of life. Recognition requires that we attempt to identify with our co-citizens who have different perspectives and ways of life, and seems to facilitate the kind of dialogical relations with people that are needed to shape our own identities and sense of self. This required attempt at identification with others’ ways of life may help us to reconcile diversity and conflicting beliefs in a more meaningful way than toleration allows.

In a context of cultural and ethical diversity it seems likely that disputes will arise regarding, among other things, how tax-payer dollars should be spent, whether abortion should be legal, if capital punishment should exist within the judicial system, etc. Toleration does not seem to provide a means of reconciling conflict arising from morally viable alternative conceptions of the good, whereas recognition may. I argue that recognition seems to better enable us to address diverse and conflicting perspectives and ways of life that have the potential to become divisive and damaging to any sense of social cohesion.
Let us look at an example. Pretend that I am a devout Catholic with school-aged children. I believe that taxpayer dollars should be used to fund a separate Catholic school system. My atheist neighbour does not have children, and argues that while public funds should support children’s education, tax money should not be allocated for separate Catholic schools. We have conflicting perspectives on this issue. If we tolerate each other, we are only required to respect each other’s autonomous capacity to hold alternative perspectives. However, this seems to leave us at a standstill. Simply saying “to each her own,” and continuing to tolerate each other’s views on this matter is not possible. If applied to the country’s education policy, the two views, as they stand, are not capable of joint existence. Funding from taxes cannot be allocated to Catholic schools, and also withheld.

Some sort of reconciliation is necessary, and being able to do this in an atmosphere of respect seems highly desirable, since such conflicts are common in democracies characterized by deep cultural and ethical diversity. When conflicts arise, there is the potential for the conflict to degenerate and be corrosive of civility, cooperation, and peace. Justice is threatened if citizens cannot respectfully reconcile their conflicting views, so this is a case that illustrates the crucial need for civic respect. Toleration as an attitude of forbearance will not help in reconciliation of the conflict that we must address. How can we attempt to reconcile or resolve this dispute if we do not make meaningful attempts to understand why the other holds a particular perspective? How can either one of us ever modify or evolve our way of thinking if we are
not required to consider other points of view as being viable moral alternatives? How can we move beyond our conflicting perspectives?

Here is where recognition makes a significant improvement over understanding tolerance as a form of respect. While recognition highlights the differences that characterize us as individuals with unique identities, it also demands “room for us to deliberate publicly about those aspects of our identities that we share, or potentially share, with other citizens” (Gutmann, 1994, p. 7). Recognition, then, requires a deeper acknowledgement of the differences that characterize individuals within a common society, while creating the potential for identification of a shared good and a deeper sense of commonality. In order to understand others’ perspectives and interests we must engage with them (Laegaard, 2010, p.29), as recognition requires us to do.

Let us return to the example of funding for Catholic schools to see how the act of recognition may allow us to reconcile our diverse perspectives. I am committed to my belief that public funding from taxes should be allocated to the Catholic school system. If I recognize my neighbour I must empathetically engage with her and attempt to see the issue from her perspective. Perhaps she feels that having a separate Catholic system denies children the opportunity to engage with and learn about other religious perspectives, thereby limiting the range of moral choices children in this system are able to choose from when they are establishing their cultural and ethical commitments. My neighbour, in our engaged dialogical relationship, must also make meaningful attempts to understand why I think Catholic schools should be funded, namely, because I
believe the kind and quality of education in the Catholic system serves to reinforce and strengthen the associated moral perspectives and ways of life that I feel are important to maintain a strong sense of membership and belonging within the Catholic community. In this example I am not opposed to government funding for other faith-based schools, and believe that parents should have the opportunity to make a choice regarding where their children receive their education.

Dialogical engagement and attempts to understand each other’s perspectives could “result in the recognition of something of value in it, even though it remains a position that we reject all things considered. Similarly, an appreciation of what it is like to be another, with that person’s beliefs and values and heritage, can do much to foster greater generosity of spirit” (Jones, 2010, p.53). Thus, my neighbour and I, even after attempting to understand each other’s perspectives, may not fully support each other’s views, but through mutual respect for and engagement with each other we do not foreclose the possibility of compromise on the issue or further collaboration to find solutions amenable to both perspectives. The point I would like to stress here, is that recognition may not guarantee that conflicts can be solved. Rather, recognition creates a respectful environment where conflicts resulting from ethical and cultural diversity can at least be addressed through dialogical engagement with each other. Indeed, I would argue, the kind of atmosphere created through recognition of each other fosters cooperation and positive social relations among citizens even where full agreement on an issue is unlikely.
In order to see how recognition works in this way, it is useful to examine how the moral capacities that underwrite recognition parallel in the civic arena the kinds of capacities that are required for individually autonomous reflection in the personal sphere. Recall that as autonomous individuals with an interest in pursuing a particular conception of the good that is personally significant and fulfilling, we must have the ability to meaningfully examine and evaluate a range of morally viable alternatives from which to choose. In doing so, we have developed a healthy appreciation for those aspects of different ways of life that are valuable and worthwhile for those who are already committed to them. We have some sense of what it is like to love and cherish the things about this or that way of life that “insiders” have (McDonough, 1997; 132-133).

In the case of autonomy, these capacities for examining and comparing and deliberating about diverse ways of life are undertaken for the purposes of pursuing one’s own well-being. Recognition works very similarly as a moral capacity designed for the purposes of social cooperation and solidarity (Gutmann, 1994; McDonough, 1997; Taylor, 1994). So, recognition like individual autonomy involves developing an appreciation for those aspects of different ways of life that are valuable and worthwhile for those who are already committed to them – i.e. developing a sense of the “insider’s” perspective. But here the purpose is not primarily to deliberate about our own individual well-being. Rather, it is to deliberate about issues of the common good and social justice.
There are important social reasons for creating opportunities for deliberation and developing appropriate attitudes of cooperation, namely furthering the common good while avoiding free riders, selfishness and apathy among the citizenry. In the absence of a sense of connection to others in society we may be more likely to act out of self-interest and only make personal sacrifices when the outcome will also serve our own narrowly defined interests. However, if we feel a sense of connection with and accountability to our fellow citizens we may be more likely to sacrifice and cooperate with others who hold morally viable alternative conceptions of the good, behaving in such a way as to further public initiatives through cooperation and collaboration with others who on an ethical and cultural level may differ significantly from us.

My point here has been simply to illustrate the way in which recognition constitutes a moral capacity that involves a richer and fuller engagement with our fellow citizens than does toleration when it comes to issues of civic deliberation. Recognition, unlike toleration, requires that we consider alternative conceptions of the good as being morally viable, thus enhancing the diverse moral perspectives and ways of life from which we may choose. Recognition is importantly connected to the idea of civic respect in contexts of deep cultural and ethical diversity.
4. Robust and Weak Collective Recognition

I have discussed the merits of a general understanding of recognition in order to show that respect in diverse societies requires recognition and not merely toleration. Recognition helps us to see, in ways that toleration does not, how respect can foster crucial relationships between ethically and culturally different citizens that are based on trust, cooperation and solidarity. At the outset of this chapter, I cited Jones (2010, p. 51) who pointed out that often theorists have different interpretations and understandings of what the concept of recognition entails. Up until this point, I have been examining a general idea of recognition in its application to citizens. The following section looks more closely at two different forms of recognition that scholars such as Feinberg (1998) and McDonough (1997) have distinguished as strong or robust collective recognition and weak collective recognition. I use the term collective here, to refer to cultural formations that influence our unique identities.

It is important to make a distinction between the two forms of recognition because they both have implications for another important liberal value (autonomy), which I showed in chapter one is crucial to liberal respect. Here, I argue that these two forms of recognition bear on autonomy in the form of a dilemma. On the one hand, robust collective recognition threatens

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9 These two forms of recognition I call robust collective recognition and weak collective recognition are inspired by two concepts introduced by Walter Feinberg in Common Schools/Uncommon Identities: National Unity and Cultural Difference (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). Feinberg discusses two forms of recognition he refers to as robust recognition and collective or minimal recognition. Although we use different terms to refer to the two forms of recognition, the meanings and implications of both are similar.

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autonomy by rooting children too strongly to a single, narrowly defined culture. On the other hand, weak collective recognition fails to account for the fact that children of some very vulnerable and historically oppressed groups may need, at least initially, a stronger and more robust grounding in their parents’ or local community culture in order to develop a strong basis for autonomy later on as they develop and mature.

I begin this part of my chapter by examining more closely the dilemma for autonomy that both robust and weak collective recognition pose. I use an educational perspective to propose a way around this dilemma by showing that in certain contexts robust collective recognition is appropriate, and necessary, but merely as a provisional measure to strengthen children’s affiliation to their primary culture, a crucial precondition for their autonomy- and identity-development. I argue that once children have a secure affiliation to their primary culture, weak collective recognition is more appropriate because of the emphasis it places on autonomous choices and unique identities within a broader multicultural context.

After discussing the appropriate contexts and application of robust collective recognition and weak collective recognition as a means to solve the dilemma pertaining to autonomy, I move on to discuss what an education for recognition can entail. I do not carry out a comprehensive analysis, but rather offer practical suggestions for a classroom context.
a. The Dilemma for Autonomy: Robust Collective Recognition

Robust collective recognition acknowledges individuals’ affiliation with and membership in their primary cultural structure (Feinberg, 1998, pp. 169-170). This form of recognition acknowledges this commitment in a strong way by equating the identities of individuals with the larger group identity of their primary culture (Feinberg, 1998, pp. 169-170). In this way, robust collective recognition appears to threaten autonomy by emphasizing the sources of individual identity with a single, fairly narrowly-defined cultural boundary.

Robust collective recognition means treating others as if they are products of a single culture, thereby ignoring or treating as misguided or irrelevant any attempts to define themselves apart from their “ancestral” culture. This form of recognition seems to deny autonomy to people by boxing them into a predetermined culture, which may constitute a form of misrecognition or oppression rather than respect. Thus, robust collective recognition seems to misrepresent the nature of individual autonomy and identity. While individuals are influenced by their culture, they are not equivalent to it because identities are formed and influenced by multiple sources some of which exist outside of their culture (McDonough, 1997, 312-133), and reducing people to one cultural identity is too thin an understanding of what constitutes the individual.

Recognition in a robust way poses a serious problem if we adopt it as the basis for respect among citizens and, especially, as the basis for civic education. In an
educational sense, it seems to indoctrinate children to affiliate themselves exclusively with their primary culture, rather than fostering true autonomy.

b. The Dilemma for Autonomy: Weak Collective Recognition

Weak collective recognition, in contrast to robust collective recognition, acknowledges the features of an individual’s unique identity, and considers the multiple sources that influence or shape this identity (Feinberg, 1998; pp. 168-169). The weak view of recognition insists we recognize that culture is only one source among many that influences our identity. Culturally specific meanings are not rigidly attached to individuals through this form of recognition, which require us to consider others not as simply products of some predetermined culture, but as products of both a primary culture and other cultural choices. Weak collective recognition seems more respectful than robust collective recognition insofar as it gives more emphasis to people’s autonomous choices and how they ultimately define themselves, while also recognizing that people’s choices are often based on a primary cultural affiliation that must be taken into account. While weak recognition may seem more attractive than robust recognition in this regard, there are still tensions between weak recognition and autonomous development.

For example, people from historically oppressed or disadvantaged cultures may not have the advantage and security of an upbringing or life in a
secure primary culture. As such, they may fail in the first place to develop the capacities to make choices autonomously; a capacity that builds upon and draws from a primary cultural identity (McDonough, 1997, 133-134). Instead of a sense of autonomy grounded in a secure primary identity and the capacity for autonomous choice making, these citizens may have a sense of identity grounded in a profound and debilitating ambivalence or a sense of cultural incoherence. They may feel “lost” between two worlds, neither of which provides a comfortable home. This, for example, may be the condition of many children and citizens who grow up in troubled, isolated and poverty-stricken minority cultures such as Inuit and First Nations communities in Canada.

The point I would like to make here, is that weak collective recognition is problematic because, although it is a form of respect that assumes and affirms a strong and secure primary identity, many citizens may not have such an identity in the first place. As such, weak recognition is, at least in some cases, likely to lead to civic misrecognition rather than respect.

c. Reconciliation of the Dilemma Posed by Two Forms of Recognition

How can this dilemma for autonomy be resolved or reconciled? Robust collective recognition seems to restrict autonomy by affiliating people’s identity solely with a primary culture, while weak collective recognition may threaten autonomy by mistakenly assuming that people have a secure identity with their
primary culture that is a necessary precondition for making autonomous choices pertaining to their sense of self and place in the broader social fabric.

To resolve this dilemma, let us look at the issue from an educational point of view. Ideally, from a liberal perspective, respect involves a form of recognition that incorporates a sympathetic acknowledgement of citizens’ primary affiliations as well as of their autonomous capacities. But in cases where citizens do not have such affiliations, or in contexts where children are born into economically impoverished, historically oppressed communities, robust collective recognition may be necessary as the basis for civic respect. In these cases, robust recognition is employed as a moral response to motivate social and educational policies and inform treatment that will enhance the security and strength of children’s affiliation to their primary culture, especially young children who require such cultural security for their psychological and moral well-being. The idea would be to strengthen primary cultures through robust recognition so that children have a stable foundation for developing a broader and more capacious sense of multicultural identity and autonomy.

We, as moral agents, do not exist detached from any kind of social, cultural or political context, able to employ an impartial perspective when making decisions regarding how we want to live our lives (Mendus, 1989, p. 100). We are situated within a certain cultural structure, which serves as a starting point when pursuing a particular conception of the good life (McDonough, 1998, 464). Developing our identity requires that we are first able to find value in our primary cultural structures before we evaluate its features
and choose from a selection of viable moral alternatives a particular conception of the good that resonates with us (McDonough, 1997, 133). In order to explore and assess potential alternative conceptions of the good life we must first have the sense of being situated in a secure cultural structure to know what it means to have a conception of the good life, and to critically evaluate our primary culture’s conception of the good. Robust collective recognition contributes towards a secure cultural structure from which children can ground their explorations of alternative conceptions of the good in two key ways: by encouraging and strengthening children’s affiliations with their primary cultural group; and by teaching other children outside of this cultural group to understand and appreciate its features from the perspectives of members of a particular culture (Feinberg, 1998, pp. 169-170).

It seems, then, that robust collective recognition is appropriate in children’s early years to lay the foundation for a healthy identity and the basis for a strong sense of self-respect. However, once the child is situated within a secure primary culture and has the capacity to autonomously explore moral alternatives, showing the child further respect through robust collective recognition risks reducing the child to their primary culture, foreclosing their opportunities to engage with perspectives and ways of life that exist outside of their culture. At this point, privileging the primary culture at the expense of individual identity through robust collective recognition will only reduce the individual to a mere extension of their culture and actually becomes a form of oppressive misrecognition. Thus, robust collective recognition is a provisional
measure and must be so from a liberal perspective that values children’s autonomy. Because liberal respect also requires respect for autonomy, robust recognition in the early years must be supplemented by educational policies that are more autonomy-sensitive as the child matures. This is where weak recognition comes in as an important guide for civic respect. Weak collective recognition acknowledges the multiple sources that form our identities and opens up a space for deliberation and dialogue with our fellow citizens where we are prompted to defend, reflect upon, and potentially revise our conceptions of the good.

Thus, using robust or weak collective recognition is not an “either/or” situation. Rather these two forms of recognition exist on a spectrum where we may use both to varying degrees depending on the context and extent to which the child’s affiliations with their primary culture are secure.

I would now like to briefly explore some ways in which recognition as a form of respect can be taught within an educational context.

5. *Educating for Recognition*

In order to protect and accommodate for ethical and cultural diversity, we must ensure that citizens of culturally and ethically diverse societies deeply appreciate diversity and treat each other in a way that reflects this commitment. This is where education has a role to play. Respecting others through
recognition of differences is an educational pursuit that is not only important for broadening children’s awareness of diversity. Educating for recognition as respect can be instructive in fostering appreciation for the perspectives of others who have alternative cultural and ethical perspectives. What educating for recognition may entail is encouraging children to express their differences, teaching them the importance of respecting the rights of others to hold different moral perspectives and ways of life, raising awareness of the concepts of culture and identity and the relationship between them, and providing opportunities for open dialogue between children where they learn about other conceptions of the good, defend, reflect upon and potentially revise their own ends.

The classroom serves as a safe environment in which children can learn and practice engaging with others who are different, in preparation for the future roles they will play as citizens in a multicultural liberal democracy. The emphasis placed on equal participation in the classroom can develop the value of equal participation in the larger democratic society. Equal opportunity for self-development and self-determination is an initial step towards social justice in the larger society (Enslin, 2006, p. 58; Young, 1990, p. 37). As children reach adulthood, they may carry with them the tools to participate in democratic decision-making and understand the equal right of all to do so.

Culture plays an important role in establishing moral frameworks and enabling individuals to make sense of their experiences and connections with others (Feinberg, 1998, p. 65). To emphasize the notion of equal respect for diverse conceptions of the good, it is important to appreciate the plurality of
cultures that exist in a multicultural society and avoid feelings of cultural inferiority that result from emphasizing the dominant culture (Taylor, 1994). Discussions of diversity are important for “expanding the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual horizons of all individuals, enriching our world by exposing us to differing cultural and intellectual perspectives, and thereby increasing our possibilities for intellectual and spiritual growth, exploration, and enlightenment,” (Gutmann, 1994, p. 9). Bringing discussions regarding cultural diversity into the classroom may assist children in fully developing and clarifying their perspectives and ways of life through dialogue and exploration with their peers. It is through this dialogical relationship fostered in the classroom that children are given the opportunities to defend their own perspectives and ways of life and learn first-hand from others about alternative conceptions of the good (Feinberg, 1998, p. 212). This dialogue and engagement between children may help to identify the limits of some perspectives and ways of life, create awareness of other viable moral alternatives, and help to identify commonalities necessary to develop a sense of connection to peers (Feinberg, 1998, p. 217-218). The absence of dialogue and interaction with those who are different in schools may limit children’s scope of experience and ability to make sense of the diversity that exists in one society.

In teaching about culture and diversity, questions arise regarding what specifically should be taught to children. To gain an appreciation and understanding of diversity, should students be exposed to information about as many different sub-cultures as possible that exist in Canada? Would this result
in a shallow appreciation of difference? Would students then be ill-equipped to know how to appropriately treat others who have different perspectives and ways of life? While knowing that their culture is being recognized by co-citizens may positively impact children’s self-esteem, education should primarily be concerned with enhancing children’s understanding of difference, encouraging development of their unique identities, giving opportunity for reflection and contributing to personal growth (Feinberg, 1998, chpt. 8). Perhaps educational institutions should not teach solely about the unique characteristics of a plurality of different cultures because cultural characteristics are not wholly representative of the unique identities of individuals (Appiah, 2007, p. 258). Merely learning about another culture may not foster understanding of the complexities of individual identities that influence how we pursue and live the good life. It is also important to recognize that sharing the same culture does not necessarily mean that all members of the group are united in their perspectives on every issue. Assuming that all members of a particular culture think about and view the world in the same way does not develop true understanding of difference and risks misrecognition by placing individuals in cultural boxes that do not fit with their identities.

Instead of only teaching children the characteristics of different cultures, emphasis should be placed on exploring how culture influences our identities. Our identities are not pre-determined by the culture we are born in to, and, in fact, we may find that we belong to more than one cultural group. This awareness is necessary for children to recognize that identities and subsequent
perspectives and ways of life are flexible and able to change. Individuals will interpret and reflect in unique ways their experiences, interactions with other people, and exposure to different cultures (Gutmann, 1994, p. 7). Even individuals comprising the same social group will hold unique identities that are expressed differently. Individuals cannot be conceived of solely as a member of a homogeneous social group because individuals form their own unique identities based on past and present cultural identifications (Gutmann, 1994, p. 7). Understanding that our identities are formed through a process of interaction with others who may not necessarily belong to the same cultural group is important for realizing that there is no reason why we should perceive a connection with only our own main cultural group. Identification of connections with others outside of our own cultural groups is important for developing the kinds of cooperative relationships with others that I have previously identified as being important to furthering the common good in contexts of deep diversity.

This discussion of the differences between culture and identity may help to clarify some questions regarding the content of discussions about culture when teaching recognition as a form of respect. It is not so important to teach particular features of a wide array of different cultures, as it is to foster an understanding in children that culture influences our moral perspectives and ways of life. In a multicultural society, this means that there will be diverse and morally viable conceptions of the good life. Encouraging identity development and creating opportunities to discuss, defend, and potentially revise conceptions of the good life creates awareness that within the same cultural groups, different
children (and adult members) are still unique in their perspectives and cannot be categorized simply according to the culture they belong. This awareness in children is important to treat each other in the way that recognition as a form of civic respect requires.

6. Conclusion

As a moral guide, recognition seems to be better at fostering cooperative, collaborative relationships with co-citizens who have different cultural and ethical affiliations, than does an attitude of tolerance. By understanding recognition as a form of respect, in recognizing others and the ways in which their culture influences their perspectives and ways of life, I myself am also being recognized. This attempt to understand each other on a more informed level may avoid instances of misunderstanding, help to identify shared goals, and create cooperative relationships with co-citizens who are culturally and ethnically diverse. Developing this sense of connection with my co-citizens may be crucial in avoiding problems of free riders, selfishness and apathy, in order to work together for the common good. Recognition may also be a way for us to reconcile the existence of cultural and ethical diversity that exists within a single society. To recognize others, I must allow them to voice their perspectives and defend their ways of life, which develops my understanding of their conceptions of the good as being morally viable alternatives.
Chapter Four: Respect and the Notion of Dignity

1. Introduction

Up to this point in my thesis, I have been exploring and assessing different understandings of what respect entails according to contemporary philosophers and philosophers of education. After evaluating these different interpretations, I have defended a conception of respect based on recognition. In this final, concluding chapter I want to discuss a concept that often arises in discussions concerning the virtue of respect; that of *dignity*.

Dignity is a concept that seems to be considered an implicit part of morality or moral education. However, in contemporary philosophy of education there is limited analysis of the concept within a context of moral education. I do not intend to undertake a rigorous analysis of dignity here. Rather, I will explore the concept of dignity in a more limited and speculative way by addressing the following questions: If many people are likely to associate the notion of respect with the notion of dignity (as in “people should act in ways that respect the dignity of others”), which of the conceptions of respect discussed so far seems to make clearer sense of the concept of dignity? Which coheres better with dignity as we normally understand that term?

While there is more limited philosophical analysis of the concept of dignity in moral education, it has been analyzed extensively in the broader
I will not attempt here to engage in the broader philosophical dialogues pertaining to the notion of dignity. My discussion will be somewhat more loosely argued than the discussions of previous chapters. My aim here is simply to suggest, not demonstrate or “prove,” that one additional powerful reason for endorsing respect as recognition as the basis for moral and civic education in pluralist societies is that it seems to cohere better with and to help us more fully understand the important, if vaguely defined, notion of human dignity.

One purpose of this chapter is simply to support my preceding argument by indicating how respect as recognition supports and reinforces other related intuitive moral notions such as dignity.

Another, secondary, purpose is to suggest that future research on moral education might benefit from fuller examinations of the conceptual links between the concepts of respect, recognition, and dignity. Close attention to these links might, I want to suggest, bear fruitful insights into moral educational practice and policy.

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10 Although I do not discuss it here, Immanuel Kant’s philosophical discussions about dignity are considered highly influential for contemporary discussions of the topic. An English translation of Kant’s explorations of the concept of dignity can be found in Kant, I. (1995). Foundations of the metaphysics of morals, and What is enlightenment. (L.W. Beck, Trans.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall (Original work published 1785).
2. Chapter Outline

In this concluding chapter I begin by reviewing the arguments I have made in this thesis, and provide a synthesized summary of the various educational recommendations I have made throughout my chapters. I then extend the argument to address some speculative and tentative thoughts about the relationship between education, recognition, and the notion of dignity. I begin by briefly outlining the common understanding of dignity. I endeavour to show why dignity does not cohere well with respect as toleration, arguing that recognition as respect helps us to better understand the notion of human dignity. I ultimately suggest that moral education based on teaching for recognition as respect will aid children in better understanding how to treat others in a way that also respects human dignity. While my thesis is an exercise in educational theory, not meant as a replacement for practitioners’ and policy makers’ approaches to education, the conclusions I draw here may make valuable contributions to the field.

3. A Review of the Argument for Recognition as Respect

I have endeavoured to show that the virtue of respect can act as a moral guide in our treatment of others who have different and potentially conflicting conceptions of the good. The way in which we understand what respect means
and entails changes our engagement with and understanding of our co-citizens who are ethically and culturally different from us.

Tolerating others respects their autonomous capacity to have moral perspectives and ways of life that may differ significantly from our own. But toleration does not require us to attempt to understand or empathetically engage with our fellow citizens as culturally embedded persons. Rather, the attitude of forbearance we must adopt when engaging with others only restrains our inclinations to dominate, oppress, or alter features of their lives that we may dislike or disapprove of. Toleration, I have argued, is insufficient for fulfilling the diversity-accommodating purposes of respect, on the one hand, and the stability- and justice-maintaining purposes of respect, on the other.

I previously argued that we define ourselves in response to our relations with others. Not interacting in a meaningful way with co-citizens who have different moral perspectives may limit development of our sense of self because we are not required to defend, reflect upon and potentially revise our own conceptions of the good. This minimal engagement with other perspectives and ways of life also limits the scope of moral alternatives from which we may choose when developing our own conceptions of the good life. Our moral horizons\footnote{\textsuperscript{11}} are more limited than they potentially could be.

I argued that recognition as the basis of respect makes significant improvements upon an interpretation of respect understood by mere tolerance.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{11} The term I refer to here as “moral horizons” is adapted from what Charles Taylor (1991) has coined “horizons of significance,” which he refers to as “backgrounds of intelligibility” (p. 39) against which we can determine the worth of our lives and pursuits independent of self-determination and choice. For a more detailed exploration of the concept of moral horizons, see Taylor, C. (1991). \textit{The ethics of authenticity}. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.}
Recognition requires that we not only acknowledge the existence of other conceptions of the good life, but attempt to understand the perspectives of our fellow citizens who are culturally and ethically different from us. Conceiving of respect as recognition requires that we empathetically engage with others in order to explain and defend our own ways of life, attempt to understand alternative conceptions of the good, and reflect upon and potentially revise our own. Recognition not only protects and accommodates for diversity, as justice\(^\text{12}\) requires, but also exposes us to alternative perspectives and ways of life that enrich our understanding of what is morally significant in other conceptions of the good life.

In theory, recognition as a form of respect seems that it would better enhance understanding between citizens who hold alternative conceptions of the good, than would toleration as a form of respect. It is important to develop a sense of connection and positive relationships to co-citizens based on understanding in order to develop an attitude of cooperation on initiatives that further the common good, even where individual citizens may have to make sacrifices. This kind of mutually supportive and cooperative relationship between citizens may avoid problems of free riders, apathy and selfishness that characterize a society where citizens hold an attitude of forbearance towards and minimal understanding of their counterparts. The act of recognition and its associated attitudes may achieve a deeper level of understanding between

\(^{12}\) Here I am referring to liberal justice. Chapter one of this thesis elaborates on what liberal justice demands.
citizens and develop feelings of connection necessary to cooperate on issues that further the common good.

My arguments thus far have shown why recognition as respect is an improvement on an interpretation of respect based on tolerance.

4. *Summary of Educational Recommendations*

This section is a synthesis of the various educational recommendations I have made throughout the thesis. I have already defended the arguments behind these educational recommendations and do not re-state them here.

To ensure that children’s capacity for respect as a virtue is developed educationally, the policies or approaches taken must develop children’s abilities to acknowledge the cultural embeddedness of others. Moral education for this virtue should be sustained over the course of a child’s education in order to develop the skills associated with discerning moral judgement such as creativity, imagination and morally intelligent sensitivity. Education concerned with developing the capacity for respect should provide opportunities to practice interpreting how principles of respect can be extended and shaped to fit in new and different circumstances. The actual content of moral education must also contain enough variance and richness presented to children so they will have significant exposure to diverse and complex situations.
The sort of education (very broadly speaking) that might lead to the development of an autonomous capacity for respect should provide the space for children to contemplate and critically reflect on their ends and learn how to potentially revise their commitments. The capacity to reflect and revise is dependent upon having access to information about viable moral alternatives. In an educational setting, children should be exposed to diverse cultural and ethical perspectives, and encouraged to engage dialogically with their peers to develop the capacity for empathetic understanding and to broaden their own moral horizons. Dialogue and discussion should be a significant part of children’s moral and civic education, wherein they are encouraged to reflect upon, defend, and potentially revise their commitments as they develop and mature into fully autonomous adults.

Teaching children to be tolerant is only useful insofar as it allows children to express their moral attitudes towards other ways of life that they disapprove of and do not endorse, while restraining from forcibly oppressing other children’s beliefs or cultural affiliations. However, to make meaningful sense of the cultural and ethical diversity that exists in a multicultural democratic society requires not only an awareness of diversity but an appreciation for the perspectives of others. Thus, teaching for civic respect should be based on recognition that not only encourages children to express their unique perspectives and ways of life, but also requires them to empathetically engage with each other. These activities are important to foster meaningful understanding of the differences that characterize us, and the role that cultural
and religious affiliations play in developing identities and a sense of self in the larger social fabric.

5. The Notion of Dignity

Here I would like to introduce the notion of dignity to support my argument for a conception of respect based on recognition. There seem to be links between dignity and recognition, and areas of mutual reinforcement in their conceptualizations. It is desirable before moving forward in this discussion to first explore what dignity can mean.

Daniel Maguire (1979) discusses a principle he refers to as “the sanctity of life” (pp. 83-84). He argues that “moral experience cannot be explained nor can we be true to our own experience if we do not accept the foundational role of our perception of the value of persons and their environment” (p. 84). Without accepting this basic principle of the sanctity of life, any subsequent moral discourse cannot exist. I would suggest that one important and enriching way of thinking about the concept of dignity is based upon the principle of the sanctity of life, and can be conceived of as the sacred value of persons or what James Boettcher (2007) refers to as “our inestimable worth” (p. 228). Dignity in this sense is importantly related to respect, because we must first accept the principle of dignity of persons in order to respect another’s sacred value in the way that justice requires. It is “on the basis of this principle (dignity) [that] moral rules
have been framed; human rights claimed and defended; and cultural, political
and social priorities established” (Maguire, 1979, p. 83).

The notion of dignity and its significance have evolved over time. Once
understood as a possession or entitlement held only by people of privilege,13 in
contemporary times dignity is understood to be possessed equally by all humans
(Taylor, 1994, p. 57). It does not seem reasonable to assume that some people
have more or less dignity than others, because the notion of dignity is not
something quantifiable, nor should it be. We are unable to conceptualize dignity
in such a way as to determine what it would mean or look like to say that the
capacity differs among people. To attempt such a comparison of the amount of
dignity we have relative to all others is to violate the very notion of respect for
other’s sacred value as persons.

Let us take an example of a person born into abject poverty, and a person
who belongs to an upper socioeconomic class. Could we say with any moral
certainty that one or the other has lesser or greater capacities for dignity? Could
we convincingly argue that their respective sacred values as persons are unequal
and, thus, one person has inherently more dignity than the other? Do our
culture, identity, and context determine our capacity for dignity? I would argue
that the response to all three of these questions is a firm “no.” The principle of
the sanctity of life exists as a foundational condition of the human experience,
and precludes any value judgements of the degree to which the lives of persons

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13 Taylor (1994, p. 26-27) equates historical understandings of dignity with the notion of honour, bestowed only upon some. The notion of honour was upheld by the existence of social hierarchies where the concept of dignity was not yet in the lexicon.
matter (Maguire, 1979, pp. 83-84). It seems that the particularities\textsuperscript{14} of our lives have no bearing on our right to respect for our sacred value as persons. This is not to say that, due to features of our identities and lives, all other people honour our dignity in practice. Instances of racism and discrimination demonstrate that some people misguided do not respect our sacred value. Yet this is a different matter.

We all inherently have the equal attribute of dignity, and it is through using refined moral capacities to respect one another that we honour this equality despite the differences that may exist between us. Of course, we have our own views and thoughts about what constitutes the good life, but treating our co-citizens with equal respect means acknowledging that my view is not everyone’s view (Taylor, 1994, p. 57). Regardless of what people have made out of their universal human potential, they command our respect in order to honour their dignity (Taylor, 1994, p. 57). The notion of dignity helps us to understand why in the context of ethical and cultural diversity, we must show respect to others.

Dignity is also closely associated with autonomy. If I am to respect the sacred value of my co-citizens, I must recognize that their dignity is predicated on their autonomy (Appiah, 2003; Feinberg, 1998), “the ability of each person to determine for himself or herself a view of the good life” (Taylor, 1994, p. 57). Specifically, to exercise the capacity for dignity what is of greater importance is the ability to autonomously pursue a conception of the good life, than

\textsuperscript{14} I use the term particularities here to refer to features that are part of our identities or that influence our conceptions of the good, such as age, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.
understanding conclusively what the good life entails (Taylor, 1994, p. 57). If our autonomy is constrained or not developed to the extent that we are able to freely pursue a particular conception of the good life (even one we may later decide to reject), and flourish to our full human potential, we have lost some of our dignity. If the outcome of our deliberations on what constitutes the good life for us is foreclosed, our dignity is not respected (Taylor, 1994, p. 57). Let us look at an example to better understand this idea. If in a marriage one partner were to regard herself as intellectually subservient to the other, she would not hold perspectives and pursue a way of life of her own free choosing. This relationship violates the subservient partner’s dignity because she is constrained from flourishing to her full potential. She requires autonomy in order to maximize her capacity for dignity expressed by the ability to freely pursue a conception of the good life.

To summarize, all persons have an equal capacity and right to respect for their dignity: their sacred value as persons. One’s dignity must be honoured regardless of the ethical or cultural traditions to which they belong. The notion of dignity helps us to understand why in the context of deep cultural diversity we must still respect each other. Dignity is also closely linked with autonomy. In order to flourish to our full human potential, we must be autonomous agents. To respect our co-citizen’s capacity for equal dignity means we must also respect their autonomy.

It follows that the form of respect we use as a moral guide in our treatment of our co-citizens should require us to treat each other in such a way
that supports the notion of equal human dignity. In the following section I
endeavour to show how recognition as respect better coheres with the notion of
dignity than does a conception of respect based on tolerance.

6. Dignity and Respect

The form of respect that acts as our moral guide should require us to
regard our co-citizens in such a way as to support the notion of equal human
dignity. Here is where recognition seems to better cohere with the notion of
dignity, than a form of respect based on tolerance.

Taylor (1994) argues that regardless of what people have made out of
their universal human potential, they command our respect in order to honour
their dignity (p. 57). Tolerance does not clearly reflect that we honour the dignity
(inestimable worth) of others, because tolerance implies that respecting others
means we have already negatively judged the value of what they have made out
of their universal human potential in the pursuit of the good life. Tolerance, as a
concept, cannot exist without passing this judgement. Thus, respect for the
dignity of persons irrespective of their conception of the good life cannot be
achieved through toleration.

By contrast, recognition seems to better support the notion of dignity
because, as I have argued throughout this thesis, respect based on recognition
requires that we empathetically engage with others to acknowledge their cultural
embeddedness. In doing so we make sincere attempts to understand the value that alternative beliefs, pursuits, and aims hold for our fellow citizens. Instead of merely judging negatively other people’s conceptions of the good life as tolerance has us do, recognition acknowledges their valuable status as persons with important contributions to make to the common good, and their capacity to enrich the social fabric through different beliefs and perspectives. Respecting others through recognition means we are not able to disregard our co-citizens and are required to acknowledge their equal human dignity.

Additionally, recognition as a form of respect may provide more opportunities for people to flourish to their full human potential; to lead a dignified life. Our identities are forged dialogically, that is to say, through our interactions with others we come to define who we are (Gutmann, 1994, p. 7). If we are to flourish to our full human potential, we must have the capacity to interact with those around us in meaningful ways. Recognition requires that we engage with each other by listening to articulations and defences of perspectives and ways of life, after which we are in a better position to reflect upon and potentially revise our own. Recognition not only protects and accommodates for diversity, as justice requires, but also exposes us to alternative perspectives and ways of life that enrich our understanding of what is morally significant in conceptions of the good. Recognition as a form of respect opens up the space for deliberations with others, which assists us in forming our identity and sense of self. Thus, recognition not only helps to develop our autonomous ability to pursue a particular conception of the good. Recognition also requires that we
respect other’s autonomy, which is necessary if we are to respect their dignity as persons.

Here I have suggested that recognition as a form of respect better coheres with the notion of dignity than does respect interpreted as toleration. Toleration implies that we have passed judgement on the ends of our co-citizens’ lives, which conflicts with the notion of dignity. Dignity is more concerned with respect for the capacity to flourish to our full human potential than with what people have made of this potential. In contrast with toleration, recognition requires us to treat our co-citizens in such a way that supports their autonomous ability to pursue the good. Respecting others as recognition requires opens up spaces for deliberation between citizens when establishing a morally viable form of the good to pursue. Respect for autonomous pursuit of the good life is essential to respecting and supporting the notion of equal human dignity.

7. Concluding Thoughts

Dignity is understood as “a universal human potential, a capacity that all humans share” (Taylor, 1994, p. 41). We are obligated to respect our co-citizens for their equal capacity for dignity, regardless of whether the conception of the good they have autonomously chosen to pursue complements or conflicts with our own. It seems that recognition helps us to better understand the notion of
human dignity, than does an understanding of respect based on tolerance. The notion of dignity and its relationship to key civic virtues such as respect, tolerance and recognition deserves fuller attention from educational theorists. Nevertheless, it is evident from the brief discussion in this chapter that a clear understanding of the concept of dignity provides, along with the notions of tolerance and recognition, yet another compelling reason to teach for the virtue of respect.
References


(Original work published 330 A.D.)


(Original work published 1785).


