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Faith schools and the cultivation of tolerance

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Abstract

Faith schools in England are often regarded as ill-suited to cultivating the abilities, attitudes, and dispositions required for living together harmoniously in an ethnically and religiously diverse society. These concerns might be formulated in terms of the thesis that faith schools in England are considerably sub-optimal for the cultivation of civic virtues compared to the feasible non-faith alternatives. Focusing on one particular civic virtue, namely, tolerance, this article aims to assess this sub-optimality thesis. It identifies a range of factors that might be thought to affect whether a faith school provides an environment that is conducive to the cultivation of tolerance, and then considers the available evidence, both direct and indirect, that bears upon what effect these factors actually have. It argues that the evidence that is available gives insufficient support to the sub-optimality thesis, but it does provide a powerful case for regulating faith schools in various ways.

Key words: faith schools, tolerance, civic education, contact hypothesis, religious identity

Introduction

Faith schools in England are often regarded as ill-suited to cultivating the abilities, attitudes, and dispositions required for living together harmoniously in an ethnically and religiously diverse society.¹ One of the main worries is that by using education as a vehicle for fostering religious belief, and by in effect segregating students by religion, these schools are breeding grounds for prejudice, mistrust and intolerance, and hinder the development of the abilities and dispositions required to be good citizens.

The worry I've described isn't always articulated clearly, but it seems to be rooted in mutually-reinforcing concerns. First, that instilling religious belief is (at the very least) likely to involve a failure to cultivate the capacity to think both critically and impartially, a capacity that is needed for deliberating well about matters of public policy, and the lack of which is conducive to intolerance. Second, that educating separately students from different religious backgrounds is likely to lead to the growth of prejudice, mistrust, and disrespect, and as a result foster intolerance. Without too much distortion, we might formulate these concerns in terms of the hypothesis that faith schools in England are considerably sub-optimal for the cultivation of civic virtues (such as mutual respect, tolerance, and the capacity and disposition to reason impartially about matters of public concern) compared to the actual, or at least the feasible, non-faith alternatives. Let me call this the sub-optimality thesis. This article aims to assess it and speaks to two different audiences: political theorists who would like a better sense of the evidential basis for the claim that faith schools are ill-suited to cultivating civic virtues, and sociologists and social psychologists who would like a better sense of the concerns that political theorists have about faith schools and the relevance of theories in their own disciplines for assessing those concerns.

If faith schools in England are deficient in the way that the sub-optimality thesis claims, then this could be due to any of a number of underlying factors. Indeed some existing faith schools may be better than others at cultivating civic virtues. For example, their effectiveness at doing so might be influenced by the extent to which they enrol children from different religious backgrounds, and whether they have a religious studies curriculum that introduces their students to other faiths and secular worldviews in a respectful manner. In what follows I shall identify a range of factors that might be thought to affect whether a faith school – in England or elsewhere – provides an environment that is conducive to the cultivation of civic virtues. I shall then consider the available evidence, both direct and indirect, that bears upon what effect these factors actually have, before assessing the sub-optimality thesis. In doing so I shall focus on one particular civic virtue that seems particularly germane, namely, toleration. This is one of the virtues that seems most likely to be negatively affected by being educated in a faith school and yet it is crucial for citizens to acquire it if they are to live together harmoniously in an ethnically and religiously diverse society. I shall argue that the evidence that is available with respect to the factors that are identified provides insufficient support for the relevant sub-optimality thesis, but it does provide a strong case for regulating faith schools in various ways so long as they are part of the educational system.

1. Clarifying the sub-optimality thesis

The sub-optimality thesis under consideration claims that in England faith schools are considerably sub-optimal for cultivating tolerance when compared to the actual or feasible non-faith alternatives. This section is devoted to clarifying it. (Those who are

happy to work with an unrefined version of it may prefer to move straight to the next section.)

(a) Faith schools

I shall use the expressions ‘faith school’ and ‘school with a religious character’ to mean the same thing, despite some differences in their ordinary uses and wider resonances. And by each I shall mean a school that has a commitment to a particular religion that shapes one or more of its practices. (According to this definition, being run by, or funded by, a religious organisation is neither necessary nor sufficient for it to count as a faith school. Nor indeed is being designated as a faith school by a government authority either necessary or sufficient.)

A school’s practices may be shaped by a religion in one or more ways. First, it may have a religious ethos, that is, religious beliefs and values may inform its rules and disciplinary procedures, how its staff are expected to behave towards students, how its students are expected to behave towards their teachers and each other, what subjects or issues are taught as part of its curriculum, and what extra-curricular activities it organises. Second, it may aim to nurture in its students the faith to which it is committed, through school assemblies, its curriculum, and its ethos. Third, when it is over-subscribed it may give priority in its admissions to children who come from families that share its faith. Fourth, it may in its employment policy give priority to teachers (and indeed support staff) who share that faith.

(b) Tolerance as a civic virtue

‘Tolerance’ means different things to different people and its proper use is a matter of philosophical dispute.² We can distinguish two rather different ways in which the

term is ordinarily used. In what I shall call ‘the open-minded sense’, it is used to refer to those who co-exist in an open-minded way with others who lead very different lives, where being open-minded means not being inclined to disapprove of the manner in which others lead their lives except when there is good reason to do so.³ Michael Walzer gestures towards this open-minded sense of toleration when he describes as tolerant those who ‘make room for men and women whose beliefs they don’t adopt, whose practices they decline to imitate; they co-exist with an otherness that, however much they approve of its presence in the world, is still something different from what they know, something alien and strange’.⁴ Those who are tolerant in this open-minded sense may be value pluralists, that is, they may suppose that there is an irreducible plurality of values that can be manifested in different ways of life. As a result of endorsing such a view they may be receptive to the idea that another way of living realises genuine values that their own lives do not.

Although it seems to me that this use of the term has reasonably wide currency, it is not the one that has attracted the most philosophical attention. Political theorists have focused instead on a narrower sense according to which a tolerant person has the disposition to refrain from preventing others acting in a manner in which he or she disapproves, even though she has the power to do so. Tolerance in what I shall call ‘the forbearance sense’ has been the subject of much philosophical discussion, and a number of paradoxes related to it have been identified.⁵ Without wishing to get mired in these important but rather involved debates, let me draw attention to two relatively uncontroversial aspects of toleration in this sense. First, at the heart of it is the idea that a person acts tolerantly when she permits behaviour of which she disapproves.⁶ Second, the boundaries of toleration in the forbearance sense are determined in part by moral considerations. There are some actions that are

intolerable, in the sense that it would be morally wrong to tolerate them, and a person who possesses the virtue of toleration, and therefore understands its limits, would not tolerate them. For example, those who intervene to prevent a parent from beating his children cruelly are not displaying intolerance or acting intolerantly.

I shall give the minimum content to these two notions of what it is to be a tolerant person that is required in order to have a meaningful discussion of the issue of whether existing faith schools provide a sub-optimal environment for cultivating the dispositions required to be one. I shall not try to track their precise contours. I shall simply stipulate that in the open-minded sense, a person is tolerant if and only if she co-exists with others in an open-minded way, that is, without being disposed to disapprove of ways of life that are different from her own, including the ways of life that are led by those who subscribe to different religions, except when there is good reason to do so based on the available evidence.⁷ In contrast, a person is tolerant in the forbearance sense if and only if she is disposed to refrain from preventing people from doing what they want when she disapproves of their actions but they are within their moral rights to behave in this way, whereas she is intolerant if and only if she is disposed to intervene to prevent them from doing what they want because she disapproves of their actions even though they are within their moral rights to act in this way. Clearly, this moralises the second notion in way that makes the precise parameters of toleration contestable since what it is to act within one's rights is sometimes a matter of reasonable dispute. Strictly speaking, the first notion is not moralised, but a person can be tolerant in this open-minded sense only if she is capable of discerning whether there is good reason to disapprove of a way of life, and again it may be a matter of reasonable dispute whether there is such a reason in a given case.

If civic virtues are understood as dispositions that help to create and sustain a just society, then there are grounds for regarding tolerance in both senses as civic virtues. If a citizen is intolerant in the forbearance sense, then she will be disposed to act unjustly, for she will be disposed to prevent others from acting in ways in which they have the right to act. The situation with tolerance in the open-minded sense is rather different since those who are intolerant in this sense need not be disposed to act unjustly. They may disapprove of other ways of life without good reason, but nevertheless respect the rights of others by refraining from trying to force them to lead (what they suppose to be) a better life. But, in practice, being tolerant in the open-minded sense nevertheless facilitates just institutions. For the non-ideal societies in which we live are likely to be more just when their members are open-minded since there are likely to be fewer cases where they are inclined to act intolerantly in the forbearance sense.⁸ But tolerance in the open-minded sense does not make tolerance in the forbearance sense redundant. Even though being tolerant in the open-minded sense reduces the number of occasions on which tolerance in the forbearance sense is morally required, there is still conceptual and normative space for the latter to occupy. There may sometimes be *good reason* to disapprove of a practice or way of life, that is, not to be tolerant towards it in the open-minded sense, even though it would be unjust to intervene in it coercively, and hence toleration in the forbearance sense is morally required.

(c) Feasibility issues

Is the sub-optimality thesis meant to apply only to *existing* faiths schools in England or is it intended to apply to any kind of faith school that might feasibly be instituted there, irrespective of whether or not a school of that particular kind is currently in

existence? I shall assume the latter since that is a more interesting hypothesis. It is very likely that existing faith schools are considerably sub-optimal for cultivating the virtues of tolerance compared to some other feasible school, whether that feasible alternative is another kind of faith school, a common school (that is, a school that has no religious character and is not committed to any specific conception of how to live), or some other kind of school without a religious character. (Indeed, it is very likely that existing schools *without* a religious character, including common schools, are considerably sub-optimal with regard to the cultivation of these virtues.) The interesting question for existing faith schools is whether they might feasibly be reformed in such a way that they retained at least some of their religious character whilst at the same time improving their capacity to cultivate these virtues so that they were as good as (or perhaps even better than) the actual or feasible non-faith alternatives. So when it is interpreted in the way I am proposing, the sub-optimality thesis could not be established simply by showing that *existing* faith schools in England provide a worse environment than *existing* schools without a religious character for cultivating the virtues of tolerance. (Indeed, it couldn't be disproved by showing that existing faith schools there provide a *better* environment for cultivating these virtues than existing schools without a religious character.)

We need to be clear about what it means to say that a school, or type of school, is feasible. I shall assume that a school, or type of school, is *feasible* if it is probable that it could be brought into existence were a collective agent, such as the state, or a group acting through public institutions, to try to do so. Imagine a school that is diverse in its composition along lines of religion, class, ethnicity, gender and ability, in which friendships are forged across these lines, and the students treat each other with respect regardless of faith, class, ethnicity, gender, and ability. It doesn't

follow from the fact that we can coherently *imagine* such a school that it is feasible in England at the present time. Even if there was the political will to bring it into existence, various prejudices in the wider society might mean that it is highly improbable that it could be created.

Note also that a school might be feasible in my sense even if it is unlikely to be brought into existence in the foreseeable future. Suppose, for example, that the state could bring a type of school into existence if the will existed in the political community to do so, but the resolve required is unlikely to arise. As a result, even if the sub-optimality thesis is true, there may be a reason for retaining faith schools, and continuing to fund them, if the feasible non-faith alternatives that would do better in terms of cultivating tolerance are unlikely to be brought into existence.

(d) “Considerably” sub-optimal

I am going to leave somewhat indeterminate the issue of what it means for a school to be *considerably* sub-optimal for cultivating tolerance. Note, however, that an educational environment can be considerably sub-optimal in this respect without necessarily being inadequate in relation to it, and that when an environment is considerably sub-optimal in this respect compared to another, then that means there is a weighty moral reason for favouring the alternative. In other words, I am moralising the notion of being ‘considerably sub-optimal’: an educational environment is considerably sub-optimal for cultivating the virtues of tolerance only if its effects on their cultivation provides a weighty moral reason for favouring an alternative environment that could feasibly be created.

(e) Scope of the thesis

The sub-optimality thesis concerns faith schools in England. If it is true of faith schools in England, then it may also be true of such schools in other countries. But it does not necessarily follow that it can be generalised. Faith schools in England might have distinctive features that are resistant to change that make them sub-optimal for the cultivation of the virtues of tolerance. Or it could be that there are features of the context within which faith schools operate in England that are hard to change, such as the existence of a degree of residential segregation between different ethnic and religious groups, that makes it true in general of faith schools in England but not of such schools in other countries. I leave these as open questions.

Having clarified the sub-optimality thesis, it seems likely that there will be a range of factors that affect the extent to which a school with a religious character, whether actual or merely feasible, provides an environment conducive to the cultivation of the virtues of tolerance.⁹ Consider the following list:

- 1) the quality of the formal civic education, if any, that it provides;
- 2) whether it introduces its students to other religions as part of its curriculum and, if so, the manner in which it does so;
- 3) whether it develops its students' capacities for critical reflection;
- 4) how diverse the school is in terms of the religious backgrounds of its students or in terms of other socially significant dimensions along which they may differ, such as their class or ethnicity;
- 5) the context in which the school operates, for example, whether its students live in an area that is diverse in terms of faith, and whether that area is diverse

in relation to other socially significant dimensions along which people may differ, such as class or ethnicity;

6) whether it is “outward-looking”, that is, forges links with other schools, organisations, and groups that lack a religious character or possess a different religious character, or whether it is “inward-looking” and does not do so.

This is not intended as a complete list, but I shall use it as a starting point for reflection. There are a large number of sub-hypotheses that might be generated by reference to it and that can be assessed in the light of the available evidence. In the remainder of the article I shall focus on the potential effect of the following factors in cultivating the virtues of tolerance: the provision of civic education as part of the curriculum (section 2); the way in which the school cultivates its students’ religious identity and values, including the beliefs and attitudes it fosters towards other religions, the strength and nature of the religious commitments it nurtures, and whether it cultivates a capacity for critical reflection (section 3); the composition of the school (section 4).

2. Civic education and its potential effect on tolerance

Can a curriculum-based civic education have an effective impact on the cultivation of civic virtues such as tolerance? There is some reason to think that it can.¹⁰ First, there is evidence gathered from an experiment conducted in Minnesota involving 300 ninth grade students, which aimed to cultivate tolerance through a four week period of instruction. Although it did not have uniformly positive results, on average students’ tolerance scores went up by two points on a 30-point scale.¹¹ Second, in a study of the impact of a professional training programme in the US for developing teachers’ skills at civic education, it was found that through implementing the methods involved the

civic responsibility of ninth and tenth grade students was enhanced, including their disposition to tolerate.¹² These results may not generalise to schools in England, but they at least show that under some circumstances a civic education of the right kind can have a positive effect on tolerance. Although the available empirical evidence is far from conclusive, there is reason to think that it is a bad idea to leave the cultivation of tolerance solely to families and civil society. Some families may bring up their children to be intolerant in both senses, and there is no guarantee that involvement in civil society will counteract that tendency, especially if it is centred around religious groups that are themselves inclined towards intolerance.

What is the best way of teaching the value of toleration (and its limits) through the curriculum? It is plausible to think that the best approach involves actively engaging with a set of arguments and exemplars of tolerant behaviour that can be readily understood by students given their level of educational development. At secondary school level at least, this process would aim to heighten students' awareness of the reasons for being tolerant towards those who practise other religions (or indeed reject religion) and improve their understanding of what this involves. The arguments need not be presented directly or formally. For example, they might be elicited from students themselves by the skilful use of case studies and by challenging students to reflect upon difficult cases where the limits of toleration are at stake.¹³ Since there is scope for reasonable disagreement, students who actively engage with these arguments may not converge on a particular interpretation of the value and limits of toleration even if the civic education to which they are exposed is successful at inculcating a general appreciation of its value and limits. Let me offer the following untested hypothesis: other things being equal, schools with a religious character that provide a civic education that teaches the value of toleration by actively engaging

with the arguments in favour of behaving tolerantly will be more effective at cultivating the virtues of tolerance than schools with or without a religious character that do not.

I do not mean to suggest that the role of a school in cultivating the virtues of tolerance is necessarily limited to its formal curriculum and the way in which it engages students with arguments that defend the importance of these virtues. In section 4, I shall consider ways in which schools that are diverse in terms of their religious composition may fare better at cultivating the virtues of tolerance than schools that lack such diversity because of the opportunities that the former provide for encounters between students from different religious groups, both inside and outside the classroom. Furthermore, socialisation that takes place beyond the curriculum, informed by the ethos of the school, that is, the beliefs and values that govern or influence interactions within it, not all of which are under the control of the school, may also have an important role to play in fostering these virtues.¹⁴

Of course some schools with a particular religious character may be wedded to religious doctrines that make them less good at teaching the value of toleration with respect to certain kinds of behaviour or certain groups of people.¹⁵ Partly as a result, some faith schools may be worse at cultivating the virtues of tolerance compared to other feasible schools (whether faith or non-faith) in relation to a particular kind of behaviour or in relation to a particular group of people in a particular domain. For example, some faith schools whose curriculum is shaped by a particular tradition within a religion may be as good as other schools at cultivating tolerance except when it comes to tolerating those who follow a different tradition within the *same* religion. Or some schools whose curriculum is shaped by a particular religion may be as good as other schools without a religious character at cultivating tolerance except when it

comes to tolerating those who profess to follow that religion but fail to live up to its standards or who turn their backs on it. Or some schools whose curriculum is shaped by a particular religion may be as good as schools without a religious character at cultivating tolerance in relation to a wide range of practices and forms of behaviour, but there may be a specific form of behaviour towards which they are less good at cultivating tolerance, for example, homosexual behaviour. This raises the general issue of how what is taught within a school, and the manner in which it is taught, may affect the extent to which schools with a religious character are effective at cultivating the virtues of tolerance to their fullest extent.

3. Cultivating religious identities, beliefs and values and its effect on tolerance

Through its curriculum and ethos, a school with a religious character may aim to shape its students' beliefs and values so that they come to share its religious commitments. Let me put to one side the issue of whether it is morally permissible for them to aim to do so and focus instead on the question of in what ways their attempt to do so might affect the cultivation of tolerance. There are two obvious possibilities, one has to do with how in the process it presents other religions or believers in other religions (or indeed how it presents atheistic worldviews or atheists), the other has to do with the strength and nature of the commitment to its religion that it nurtures and whether it cultivates a capacity for critical reflection.

(A) Cultivating negative beliefs and attitudes towards other religions and religious believers or towards atheism and atheists

Suppose that in the school's religious studies curriculum, or in school assemblies, other religions and atheist worldviews are presented in a strongly negative light, and

their adherents are presented as ignorant, backward, or corrupt. If this form of education rubs off on its students, it would tend to undermine the cultivation of toleration in the open-minded sense: students would become disposed to disapprove of other religions and atheist worldviews without possessing good reason, in a way that is incompatible with toleration in this sense. Indeed as a result it is hard to see how this kind of portrayal of other religions and their adherents within a school's religious studies curriculum could be reconciled with a civic education that aimed to cultivate tolerance in the open-minded sense. It might nevertheless be squared with cultivating toleration in the forbearance sense. The negative presentation of other religions might be accompanied by the message that it is nevertheless wrong or inappropriate to force others to abandon their corrupt or misconceived doctrines. Indeed, students might even be taught as a religious doctrine that there is no value in forcing other people to abide by the one true religion, and that each person must make his or her own choice to follow its teachings if their conformity to them is to have any value.¹⁶

More generally, there are a number of ways in which those who adhere to a religion may regard other faiths. Children might in principle be taught to accept any one of them. Religious Studies scholars have distinguished between exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist attitudes towards other religions.¹⁷ Adapting the distinction a little for my purposes, exclusivism is the view that there is one true religion and that other religions are simply mistaken in so far as they depart from that religion. Inclusivism is the view that all religions or, at least, all of the world's major religions, have some value, but one religion is superior, because it contains more truth or the whole truth, whereas other religions contain less truth or only the partial truth. Pluralism is the view that different religions, or the major religions, are equally

correct because in some sense they recognise the same fundamental truth or truths, albeit from different perspectives. To dramatise the differences: an exclusivist might believe that there is just one path to God, that his religion has found it, and that other religions are leading their followers astray; an inclusivist might believe that there is more than one path to God, but that one path is better than another, perhaps because it is more direct or in following it one meets fewer unnecessary obstacles; a pluralist might believe that there is more than one path to God and they may provide equally good routes to Him or Her. From the point of view of cultivating tolerance, does it matter which, if any, of these views is taught as correct in the classroom?

Let me simply assume that lives led in accordance with the doctrines of the major religions merit tolerance in the open-minded sense: these lives are worth living and need not be seriously sub-optimal, so there is not good reason to disapprove of them. On this assumption, teaching inclusivism or pluralism as true would seem to cohere well with the cultivation of tolerance towards other religions in the open-minded sense. Teaching exclusivism as true instead need not be incompatible with doing so, for it could in principle be combined with a sincere and successful attempt to nurture open-mindedness, for example, through exploring the values that other religions and humanist worldviews realise even though they are regarded as being founded on a misconception. But unless exclusivism is taught in a way that draws attention to their strengths as well as their (perceived) weaknesses, then it will not involve cultivating the relevant kind of open-mindedness. Indeed an exclusivist belief may form part of an overall identity that puts pressure on a person's capacity to tolerate in the open-minded sense. This seems to be an implication of social categorisation theory when it is combined with social identity theory and developed to

take due account of the ways in which individuals may manage their membership of multiple groups.¹⁸

Social categorisation theory starts from the observation that people place themselves into social categories. The evidence suggests that when they do so, they tend to see those who belong to the same category as more similar to each other than they really are, and they tend to see those who belong to a different category as more different from them than they actually are.¹⁹ In this way categorisation not only creates the foundation for social identities, that is, for identification with groups, but also for biases. According to social identity theory, biases may be generated by the need that is felt by members of a social group to assess it positively in order to bolster their self-esteem, that is, their positive evaluation of themselves.²⁰ A person's self-esteem may be sustained not only by biases in favour of her own group, but also by biases *against* other groups, which may be triggered by aggravating factors, such as the perception of a threat or negative feelings towards these other groups. One way in which this might happen is through adopting an exclusivist belief about other religions. For example, a person may identify with Catholics as a group and regard that group as valuable on the grounds that Catholics live in accordance with the correct religious doctrines, unlike Protestants, or Muslims, or atheists, who she sees as holding deeply mistaken views. In this way other religions become a potential threat to her view that her religion, and her religion alone, is the correct one, especially if these other religious and non-religious perspectives are powerful voices within the society to which she belongs. Her need to maintain a positive evaluation of her group in order to sustain her self-esteem may therefore result in the formation of prejudices about other religious or non-religious groups and their members, and these prejudices may make her intolerant in the open-minded sense.

A further way in which a religious identity of a particular kind may lead to intolerance in the open-minded sense is suggested by work in social identity theory on complex identities. In general people belong to a number of different groups, but can think about their membership of these groups, and manage their relationship to these groups, in different ways.²¹ Suppose that a person comes to think of herself as primarily a member of a particular religious group and subordinates all other potential group identities to that one in such a way that others who are not members of this religious group are regarded as out-group members irrespective of what other group memberships they share with her. In other words, she develops a highly exclusive or dominant group identity, which Sonia Roccas and Marilynn Brewer categorize as a social identity with a low degree of complexity.²² They report evidence that suggests that lower social identity complexity correlates with a higher degree of intolerance, at least in its open-minded sense, whereas higher social identity complexity correlates with a higher degree of tolerance in that sense, and these results have been confirmed by others.²³

When an individual's low social identity complexity takes the form of a single dominant group identity, then she does not regard herself as sharing any identities with out-group members. This precludes various mechanisms from operating through 'cross-categorization' to make her more tolerant in the open-minded sense. When two people belong to different groups (for example, one is a Catholic whereas the other is an atheist), their identification with some other shared group (supporters of the same football team or workers at the same factory) may reduce the distance they perceive between each other. Their identification with a shared group will also mean that it is less likely that they make negative judgements about each other on the basis of the group memberships that divide them, since it will be hard for an individual to judge a

person positively as a member of the same group and negatively as a member of a different group. The need for consistency or cognitive balance will create a pressure against doing so.²⁴ These mechanisms cannot operate when people have a single dominant group identity. Furthermore, when they have such an identity, they experience threats to the positive evaluation of their group and of themselves in a way that cannot be escaped by shifting to another aspect of their identity.²⁵

This generates the following hypothesis: other things being equal, faith schools that (i) cultivate an exclusivist belief about other religions in such a way that members of other religious and non-religious groups come to be perceived as a threat to the positive evaluation of one's own group, and/or (ii) help to nurture a dominant religious identity such that those who do not share this identity are regarded as members of a single out-group, will be less effective at cultivating tolerance in the open-minded sense towards these other religious and non-religious groups compared to schools (with or without a religious character) that do not.

(B) The strength and nature of the religious commitment cultivated and the development of a capacity for critical reflection

Suppose a school with a religious character aims to form in its students an unshakeable commitment to a particular set of religious doctrines by instructing them in the importance of blind faith and by not cultivating in them capacities for critical reflection. The school teaches them that it is through the exercise of these capacities that the devil does his work, and it denies them access to the intellectual and material resources that would motivate them to question what they are taught, for example, they are not introduced to the theory of evolution and there is no book in the school library that mentions it. For good measure let us also suppose that the school aims to

inculcate religious doctrines in a way that would make it very costly for the students to abandon them should it be the case that after their schooling they are left able to do so, for example, it aims to make sure that they would be wracked by feelings of guilt, or by fear of the consequences of abandoning their faith as a result of being taught that the hottest part of hell is reserved for those who do so. Let me define an approach that involves instructing children in this way, and that achieves some degree of success in closing their minds, as *indoctrination*.²⁶

Let me put to one side the issue of whether indoctrination is morally wrong and focus instead on the question of whether preventing or discouraging students from developing a capacity for critical reflection is likely to make them intolerant. There is a well-established correlation between levels of education and levels of tolerance, and some evidence to suggest it is education's effect on cognitive sophistication that is in part responsible for raising levels of tolerance.²⁷ Lack of ability to engage in critical reflection seems to be both necessary and sufficient for lack of cognitive sophistication. It is not obvious, however, what the mechanisms are that link cognitive sophistication with tolerance and the lack of it with intolerance. Lawrence Bobo and Frederick Licari suggest that those with greater cognitive sophistication are more likely to engage in 'sober second thought' when contemplating restricting the rights of those they find disagreeable.²⁸ That may explain why greater cognitive sophistication is correlated with greater tolerance in the forbearance sense – the subject of their investigation – but it does not provide us with any reason for thinking that it will be correlated with greater tolerance in the open-minded sense.

We might speculate that those who lack cognitive sophistication because they do not possess a developed capacity for critical reflection are less likely to be disposed to try to find value in other ways of life, since they do not have the ability to

reflect on those ways of life in an imaginative way and are less likely to possess a developed capacity to put themselves in the shoes of others in the way that is needed to acquire a rich understanding of how others see the world. As a result they will be less likely to be tolerant in the open-minded sense because they will be less able to discern when there is good reason to disapprove of a way of life. In contrast, those with a capacity for critical reflection will be better equipped to identify value in other ways of life, and hence they will be more likely to be tolerant in the open-minded sense. They will also be better able to appreciate the reasons for toleration (and its limits) in the forbearance sense. The possession of such an appreciation is partially constitutive of the virtue of toleration in this sense. This generates a further hypothesis, this time based on indirect evidence: other things being equal, schools with a religious character that do not help to cultivate in their students a capacity for critical reflection will be less effective at cultivating tolerance in both of its senses than schools that do so (both those with, and those without, a religious character).

4. School composition and its effect on tolerance

When a school with a religious character (or indeed a school without one) concentrates together students from the same faith background, this may reduce their opportunities to come into contact with those from a different faith background or a background not involving faith. This could affect its cultivation of tolerance in at least two ways, indirect evidence for which is provided by two different general hypotheses.

(1) The contact hypothesis and its significance for the cultivation of tolerance in faith schools

According to the contact hypothesis – first formulated by Gordon Allport in the 1950s but now well-confirmed – when people from different socially significant groups encounter each other on a re-occurring basis in a way that enables them to get to know each other, engage together in cooperative activities that are supported by institutional authorities, and have equal status in these activities, then this tends to reduce prejudice.²⁹ There is evidence that the beneficial effects of contact are most pronounced when it occurs within the context of friendship.³⁰

If the contact hypothesis is correct, it would seem to have implications for the capacity of schools with a religious character to cultivate tolerance when they concentrate together those of the same faith to the exclusion of those of a different faith or no faith.³¹ (It would also seem to have implications for the capacity of schools *without* a religious character to cultivate tolerance when they are religiously homogeneous.) But what exactly is the connection between being less prejudiced and being more tolerant? If a person is less prejudiced about a group's members and their practices, then it is plausible to think that he or she will be less inclined to be dismissive of their way of life without good reason. In this way, a reduction in prejudice seems highly likely to lead to greater tolerance in the open-minded sense. What implications, then, does the contact hypothesis have for the effectiveness of schools in cultivating tolerance in the open-minded sense? Does it imply that schools (with or without a religious character) that are mixed in terms of the faith of the children that attend them will be more effective at cultivating tolerance in this sense than faith schools whose students are drawn from a single faith or have no faith? This is not a straightforward entailment of the contact hypothesis, for several reasons.

Even though faith schools that lack religious diversity may provide a considerably sub-optimal environment for cultivating tolerance in the open-minded

sense compared to an ideal religiously diverse school, under non-ideal circumstances when existing religiously diverse schools fail to realise some or all of Allport's conditions, the environment provided by faith schools that lack religious diversity may be no worse (and may even be better) for cultivating this virtue than the existing alternatives – and indeed the other feasible alternatives.³² But that does depend in part on whether contact that occurs in the absence of Allport's ideal conditions nevertheless has significant beneficial effects in reducing prejudice. There is evidence to suggest that provided some of these conditions are realised to some degree, there is still a beneficial effect in terms of the reduction of prejudice, and that the conditions Allport specifies are *facilitating* rather than necessary to produce that effect.³³

Even when schools that are religiously diverse provide better *opportunities* for those from different faith backgrounds to get to know each other under relatively ideal conditions, contact of a sustained kind will not inevitably happen in them.³⁴ There may be informal segregation within such schools, given that children (like adults) are often drawn to spending more time with those with greater similarity to them in various respects.³⁵ Furthermore, the research that Caitlin Donnelly and Joanne Hughes have done on mixed faith schools in Northern Ireland and Israel shows that the ethos of these schools matters when it comes to securing the benefits promised by the contact hypothesis. It is not enough simply to ensure that children from different faiths are enrolled in roughly equal numbers and are educated side by side. Schools need to adopt as one of their strategic purposes the improvement of relations between different faith groups, and to foster dialogue that has this aim, which may be easier to achieve in some cultural contexts compared to others.³⁶

It does not even follow that schools that are more religiously diverse, that provide opportunities for those from different religious groups to interact under

conditions that are relatively ideal, and that are structured in a way that encourages children to take advantage of those opportunities, will necessarily fare a lot better at cultivating the virtue of tolerance in the open-minded sense than schools that concentrate together those of the same religion. First, schools that concentrate together those of the same religion may forge links with other schools that have a different composition, thereby providing a range of opportunities for their students to encounter those of another faith (or no faith) in a manner that realises Allport's conditions. For example, these schools might be involved in twinning arrangements, develop joint sports, arts, and cultural programmes, or organise joint curriculum activities and learning programmes.³⁷ Second, there is evidence that to some extent the beneficial effects of contact of the right kind can be created indirectly, in the absence of direct contact, for example, by having friends who are also friends with members of other groups.³⁸ Third, there is some evidence that some of the same benefits can be created, to some degree, simply by imagining inter-group interactions rather than engaging in them.³⁹ Considered together, these points suggest that the lack of religious diversity within a faith school could *to some extent* be compensated for, so that the school does not fare much worse in terms of cultivating the virtue of tolerance in the open-minded sense compared to schools that are more religiously diverse and that encourage interaction between different groups under relatively ideal conditions.

Taking due account of these points, we might formulate the following nuanced hypothesis: other things being equal, schools with or without a religious character that are mixed in terms of the faith of the children that attend them, that provide opportunities for children of different faiths or no faith to encounter each other in a sustained way under conditions of equality, and that encourage them to take

advantage of those opportunities, are likely to be more effective at cultivating the virtue of tolerance in the open-minded sense than schools with or without a religious character whose students are drawn from a single faith background or have no faith background.

(2) The Aristotelian account of the acquisition of virtues and its significance for the cultivation of tolerance in faith schools

The contact hypothesis suggests it would be a mistake to think that the potential role of schools in cultivating civic virtues such as tolerance is limited to the formal curriculum, or indeed that instruction through that curriculum is the most important way in which these virtues are acquired. This thought is reinforced by Aristotelian moral psychology. From an Aristotelian perspective, it is implausible to suppose that toleration in either of its senses can be effectively acquired merely through the presentation of reasons or arguments for why toleration is of value and where its limits should be drawn, whether through lessons in History, Religious Studies, or Citizenship. According to Aristotelian theory, virtues are developed at least in part through *habituation*; over time acting *as if* one is virtuous dissolves the inclination to act contrary to what virtue requires. Reduced contact with diverse others may make it harder to acquire the virtues of tolerance because there will be less opportunity to act as if one is tolerant in contexts in which one is inclined to act intolerantly. Schools that are diverse in terms of faith provide greater opportunities to resist the urge to rush to judgement in a way that would be inconsistent with the virtue of tolerance in the open-minded sense, and to resist the urge to intervene in a manner that would be inconsistent with the virtue of tolerance in the forbearance sense.

According to Aristotelians, what motivates people to act as if they were tolerant? Broadly speaking, rewards, punishments, and the giving of reasons are all thought to have a role to play, but Aristotelians tell different stories about precisely how they should be combined in order to cultivate the virtues effectively. Some Aristotelians argue that sanctions and rewards must come first and that the furnishing of reasons must and should come later, whereas others argue that in an effective moral education these always go hand in hand.⁴⁰ In the end it seems that this is not something that can be resolved in an *a priori* fashion through philosophical reflection alone. Unfortunately empirical evidence here is lacking. In principle all three – rewards, sanctions, and the giving of reasons – can be provided in a school context where the cultivation of tolerance is at stake, by disciplining those who fail to act tolerantly, by praising and rewarding those who strive to act tolerantly, and by presenting arguments for why toleration is valuable.

If Aristotelian theory in any of its more detailed elaborations is correct, then we would expect the following hypothesis to be confirmed: other things being equal, schools with or without a religious character in which children of different faiths encounter each other, that provide an adequate formal civic education, that reward children for acting tolerantly in those encounters, and that sanction them for acting intolerantly, will be more effective at cultivating the virtues of tolerance than schools with or without a religious character whose students are drawn from a single faith background or have no faith background and do not experience such encounters at school, even if they provide an adequate formal civic education.

5. The normative significance of the sub-optimality thesis

I have examined a number of ways in which the composition of faith schools, their curricula, or their teaching practices, might adversely affect the cultivation of tolerance. None of the factors that I have argued might have an adverse impact on its cultivation are integral to faith schooling, however. Indeed the available evidence is compatible with the view that *provided* faith schools give their students an adequate civic education, present other religions and their adherents in a respectful and fair-minded manner, cultivate in their students a capacity for critical reflection, and achieve some diversity in their admissions so that their students are not uniformly of the same faith, then these schools will fare as well in cultivating the virtues of tolerance as the feasible non-faith alternatives. If this view is correct, then faith schools in England will be sub-optimal for cultivating tolerance only if they are unable in practice to provide an education and environment that meets these conditions. I see no reason to think that they cannot do so. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, concerns about the cultivation of toleration in faith schools in England provide us with no reason to abolish faith schools, or deprive them of public funding, *as opposed to* regulate them in various ways to make them more effective at doing so.

It needs to be emphasized, however, that neither the truth nor the falsity of the sub-optimality thesis would have any *automatic* implications for whether faith schools should be abolished, deprived of public funding, or merely regulated. Before we could make judgements of that kind, we would need to take into account holistic effects and the full range of goods at stake.

First, even if the sub-optimality thesis is false, it might nevertheless be the case that faith schools, even when regulated in whatever ways are feasible, would have a significant adverse effect on the capacity of the educational system to cultivate the virtues of tolerance. The degree of diversity contained in schools *without* a

religious character may be seriously reduced by the presence of faith schools within the educational system since the latter may act as siphons for children from faith backgrounds.⁴¹ Indeed that might be thought to provide a reason to abolish publicly-funded faith schools or prevent new ones from being created, rather than merely regulate them. The claim that the presence of publicly-funded faith schools within the educational system seriously reduces its capacity to cultivate tolerance would be very hard to assess empirically, however. For example, in order to assess it we would need to know what choices parents would make in the absence of publicly-funded faith schools (for example, would they choose to send their children to private faith schools or educate them at home?), and what beneficial effects on toleration might be achieved by placing a cap, or a lower cap, on what proportion of places an over-subscribed faith school is permitted to allocate by giving priority to children from the same faith background, and by twinning arrangements between schools with different religious compositions.

Second, even if the sub-optimality thesis is true, there may nevertheless be good reasons to permit faith schools and provide them with public funds, especially at primary school level. This is not the place to present a comprehensive normative framework for determining whether, or under what conditions, faith schools should be permitted and receive public funding, but any adequate framework of this kind will need to acknowledge that there are a range of goods and interests at stake that need to be given weight.⁴² Even if faith schools are considerably sub-optimal in terms of cultivating tolerance, they may provide various other important benefits to their students and to the wider society, and as a result there may be good reasons to preserve them and indeed support the creation of new ones.⁴³ For example, it may be that schools with a religious character provide a particularly good learning

environment, especially for children from families who share the faith of the school.⁴⁴ Perhaps schools are a confusing place for younger children when the formal education they receive in them differs markedly from the informal education they receive at home. If, for example, they are constantly given religious reasons at home for how they should behave but at school they are given non-religious reasons, then this may be perplexing for them and a source of distress.⁴⁵

In countries such as England the danger of a distressing schism between home and school may be greater for children coming from religious families since the background culture is largely secular and most students at schools without a religious character will come from families that are non-religious. Furthermore, the problem might be exacerbated when a negative view of religion, or of a particular religion such as Islam, prevails in the wider culture. This can make it harder for those from religious families, or from families that adhere to that particular religion, to flourish in the potentially hostile and stigmatising environment provided by common schools, even when these schools present religion, or the particular religion that is regarded negatively in the wider culture, in a positive light within their formal curriculum.⁴⁶

6. Conclusion

The available evidence provides insufficient support for the sub-optimality thesis examined, namely, the thesis that existing or feasible schools with a religious character in England are considerably sub-optimal for cultivating the virtues of tolerance among their students compared to the actual and feasible non-faith alternatives. But the identification of a range of factors that are likely to influence the effectiveness of faith schools in cultivating the virtues of tolerance provides a strong case for the regulation of faith schools, both state-funded and privately-funded, so

long as they continue to be part of the educational system in England. These schools should be required to provide a civic education that is well-designed to help cultivate in children an appreciation of the importance of these virtues; they should be required to cultivate in children a capacity for critical reflection, and to present other religions and their adherents in a respectful and fair-minded way even if they aim to nurture in children a particular faith; even if they are permitted to give some priority in admissions to children from families that share the faith of the school, they should also be required to be welcoming to children from other faith backgrounds, and be required to ensure that they achieve some degree of diversity in so far as the applications they receive permit them to do so.⁴⁷

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Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

None

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 NOTES

¹ See, for example, Home Office, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cantle* (London: HMSO, 2001), pp. 33-37; J. Romain, 'The Lesson of Bradford is Not to Create Apartheid in Our Schools', *The Times*, 26 July 2001; British Humanist Association, *Religious Schools: The Case Against* (London: BHA, 2001), p. 35; R. Berkeley, *Right to Divide? Faith Schools and Community Cohesion* (London: Runnymede Trust, 2008), available at <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/RightToDivide-2008.pdf>; National Secular Society, Working Group on Separation of Religion and Politics: Seminar on Religion and Education. Speech given by Keith Porteous Wood at the European Parliament, 15 October 2008, available at: <http://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/3548f5bde38b20f180618917.pdf> (accessed 10 November 2016); J. Shepherd, 'McKellen criticises faith schools for religious teaching', *The Guardian*, 20 December 2008, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/dec/20/homophobia-faith-schools>. (accessed 10 November 2016); J. Romain, 'Faith schools cannot continue their immoral policy of discrimination', *The Guardian*, 2 September 2013, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2013/sep/02/faith-schools-immoral-discrimination-london-oratory> (accessed 10 November 2016); 'Ban state-funded faith schools and perhaps England would be a better place', *The Daily Mirror*, 9 June 2014, available at <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/force-feeding-faith-school-should-banned-3665556> (accessed 10 November 2016).

² 'Tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs' is listed by the Department for Education as one of the fundamental British values that schools in Britain are required

to promote (see C. Vincent, ‘Civic Virtue and Values Teaching in a ‘Post-Secular’ World’, this issue). As many have pointed out, it is not a uniquely British value, even if the particular interpretation that it has been given in institutions and practices in Britain is somewhat distinctive (see A. Mason, ‘The Critique of Multiculturalism in Britain: Integration, Separation, and Shared Identification’, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 21, 2018, 22-45, at pp. 34-36.)

³ Gordon Allport uses the term in a similar sense when he says that a tolerant person is one who is ‘on friendly terms with all sorts of people’, ‘makes no distinction of race, color, or creed’, and ‘not only endures but, in general, approves of his fellow man’ (G. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954, p. 425).

⁴ M. Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 11

⁵ For relevant discussion, see J. Horton, “Three (Apparent) Paradoxes of Toleration”, *Synthesis Philosophica* Vol. 17, 1994, 7–20; R. Forst, ‘Toleration and Democracy’, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 45, 2014, 65-75.

⁶ Although this is central to the notion, it’s not clear that it picks out a sufficient condition of a tolerant act, for there are cases in which a person disapproves of an action without intervening to try to prevent it but where we are not inclined to say that she is acting tolerantly. Consider, for example, the racist who curbs his inclination to prevent black people from walking down the street in which he lives. We would not regard him as being tolerant. We should say instead that he cannot be a tolerant person so long as he has this inclination.

⁷ In this context, disapproving of a way of life may involve the belief that it is not worth living and that there are other feasible ways of life that are worth living, or the belief that it is seriously sub-optimal compared to these other ways of life.

⁸ Even if tolerance in the open-minded sense did not play a role in facilitating just institutions, we might regard it as valuable in its own right, or as an ingredient of a harmonious society.

⁹ See G. Short, 'Faith Schools and Social Cohesion: Opening up the Debate', *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 25, 2003, 129-141.

¹⁰ Some are sceptical about the cultivation of civic virtues in general and doubt whether civic virtues could play the role in creating and sustaining just institutions that many theorists assume. The so-called 'situationist challenge' argues that people's behaviour is best explained by features of their environment rather than stable character traits, and the idea that we might inculcate civic virtues, whether at home or in schools, is based on a misconception about human psychology. See E. McTernan, 'How to Make Citizens Behave: Social Psychology, Liberal Virtues, and Social Norms,' *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 22, 2014, 84-104. I am broadly sympathetic to Eamonn Callan's response: see E. Callan, 'Liberal Virtues and Civic Education,' *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 23, 2015, 491-500.

¹¹ P. Avery, D. Hoffman, J. L. Sullivan, and K. Thalhammer, 'Exploring Political Toleration with Adolescents', *Theory and Research in Social Education*, Vol. 20, 1992, 386-420; W. P. Vogt, *Tolerance and Education. Learning to Live With Diversity and Difference* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997), pp. 192-5.

¹² See D. Barr, B. Boulay, R. Selman, R. McCormick, E. Lowenstein, B. Gamse, M. Fine, and M. B. Leonard, 'A Randomized Controlled Trial of Professional Development for Interdisciplinary Civic Education: Impacts on Humanities Teachers and Their Students', *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 117, 2015, 1-52, especially pp. 31-33.

¹³ Cf. Avery, Hoffman, Sullivan, and Thalhammer, 'Exploring Political Toleration with Adolescents', p. 394.

¹⁴ See A. Inkeles, 'The School as a Context for Modernization', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 14, 1973, 163-179, at pp. 175-178; P. W. Jackson, R. E. Boostrom, and D. T. Hansen, *The Moral Life of Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973), see, e.g., pp. 238-39; H. Everett, *Faith Schools and Tolerance: A Comparative Study of the Influence of Faith Schools on Students' Attitudes of Tolerance*, PhD thesis, Institute of Education University of London, 2012, pp. 51-52.

¹⁵ I am here bracketing the important normative issue of whether religious communities might reasonably object to a civic education of the kind I have described because it conflicts with some of their doctrines or is likely to be corrosive of faith. For relevant discussion, see E. Callan, *Creating Citizens. Political Education and Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁶ See B. Cooper, *Schools with a Religious Character and Community Cohesion: A Study of Faith Based Approaches to Educational Environments and Aims*, PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 2015, pp. 201-202, for evidence that some faith schools do draw upon distinctive religious resources as part of their attempt to cultivate tolerance.

¹⁷ See A. Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (London: SCM, 1983). Race devises the distinction in order to characterise Christian attitudes towards other religions, but it can be used to characterise any religious believer's attitude towards other religions.

¹⁸ For relevant discussion, see J. C. Turner, M. A. Hogg, P. J. Oakes, S. D. Reicher, and M. S. Wetherell, *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); K. Schmid, M. Hewstone, and A. Al Ramiah, 'Self-

Categorization and Social Identification: Making Sense of Us and Them', in D. Chadee (ed.), *Theories in Social Psychology* (Malden, MA & Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 211-231; H. Tajfel, H. and J. C. Turner, 'The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour', in S. Worchel and W. G. Austin (eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relation*, second edition (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986), 7-24; S. Roccas and M. R. Brewer, 'Social Identity Complexity', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2002, Vol. 6, 88-106.

¹⁹ R. Crisp and M. Hewstone, 'Multiple Social Categorization', *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 39, 2007, 163-254, at p. 176.

²⁰ Crisp and Hewstone, 'Multiple Social Categorization', pp. 204-205.

²¹ Roccas and Brewer, 'Social Identity Complexity', pp. 90-91.

²² Roccas and Brewer, 'Social Identity Complexity', p. 90.

²³ See Roccas and Brewer, 'Social Identity Complexity'; M. B. Brewer and K. P. Pierce, 'Social Identity Complexity and Outgroup Tolerance', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 2005, Vol. 31, 428-437; K. P. Miller, M. B. Brewer, and N. L. Arbuckle, 'Social Identity Complexity: Its Correlates and Antecedents', *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, Vol. 12, 2009, 79-94; K. Schmid, M. Hewstone, N. Tausch, E. Cairns, and J. Hughes, 'Antecedents and consequences of social identity complexity: intergroup contact, distinctiveness threat, and outgroup attitudes', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 35, 2009, 1085-1098.

²⁴ See M. Brewer, 'Social Identity Complexity and Acceptance of Diversity', in R. Crisp (ed.), *The Psychology of Social and Cultural Diversity* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 13.

²⁵ Cf. Crisp and Hewstone, 'Multiple Social Categorization', p. 173.

²⁶ Indoctrination can be defined in different ways. Eamonn Callan, for example, defines it in a way that departs from my characterisation. He seems to suppose that indoctrination occurs whenever a belief is inculcated without due regard for relevant evidence and argument (see Callan, *Creating Citizens*, p. 115). Michael Hand also maintains that indoctrination would ‘be involved in any attempt to make children believe that there are good reasons for subscribing to a moral code when in fact there are not.’ (M. Hand, ‘Towards a Theory of Moral Education’, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 48, 2014, p. 526.) For my purposes, nothing turns on precisely how we define ‘indoctrination’; my definition is purely stipulative.

²⁷ See L. Bobo and F. Licari, ‘Education and Political Tolerance: Testing the Effects of Cognitive Sophistication and Target Group Affect’, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 53, 1989, 285-308; Vogt, *Tolerance and Education*, pp. 130-143; U. Wagner and A. Zick, ‘The Relation of Formal Education to Ethnic Prejudice: Its Reliability, Validity and Explanation’, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 25, 1995, 41-56; P. Peri, ‘Education and Prejudice against Immigrants’, H. De Witte, “‘Everyday’ Racism in Belgium: An Overview of the Research and an Interpretation of its Link with Education’, J. Winkler, ‘Explaining Individual Racial Prejudice in Contemporary Germany’, P. Sniderman and E. Gould, ‘Dynamics of Political Values: Education and Issues of Tolerance’, all in L. Hagendoorn and S. Nekuee (eds), *Education and Racism: A Cross National Inventory of Positive Effects of Education on Ethnic Tolerance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). Some of the evidence cited in these studies concerns the correlation between education, cognitive sophistication, and lower levels of *prejudice* rather than lower levels of *tolerance*. See section 4 below for a discussion of the relationship between levels of prejudice and tolerance. It is unlikely that cognitive sophistication is solely responsible for explaining the link

between education and levels of tolerance. Indeed there is evidence to suggest that this link is explained in part by the socialisation that occurs within schools, especially the effect of social structures on personality development: see Inkeles, 'The School as a Context for Modernization'; Vogt, *Tolerance and Education*, pp. 108-128.

²⁸ Bobo and Licari, 'Education and Political Tolerance', pp. 291; 299.

²⁹Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*; T. Pettigrew and L. Tropp, 'A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 90, 2006, 751-783; N. Tausch and M. Hewstone, 'Intergroup Contact', in J. F. Dovidio, M. Hewstone, P. Glick, and V. M. Esses (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination* (London: Sage, 2010), pp. 544-560. The hypothesis has become more nuanced over time, with a better appreciation of what kind of factors might inhibit the reduction of prejudice and of the kind of mechanisms involved: see Tausch and Hewstone, 'Intergroup Contact'.

³⁰ See E. Uslander, *Segregation and Mistrust. Diversity, Isolation, and Social Cohesion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 14-15, 210.

³¹ See M. Hewstone, A. Al Ramiah, K. Schmid, C. Floe, M. van Zalk, R. Wölfer, and Rachel ?, 'Influence of Segregation versus Mixing: Intergroup Contact and Attitudes among White-British and Asian-British Students in High Schools in Oldham, England', this issue.

³² See W. New and M. Merry, 'Is Diversity Necessary for Educational Justice?', *Educational Theory*, Vol. 64, 2014, 205-225, especially pp. 207-209.

³³ See T. F. Pettigrew and L. R. Tropp, 'Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence', in J. F. Dovidio, P. Glick, and L. A. Rudman (eds), *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 271; Pettigrew and Tropp, 'A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory'.

³⁴ See Hewstone et al. 'Influence of Segregation versus Mixing'.

³⁵ See Uslaner, *Segregation and Mistrust*, p. 40; Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, p. 260.

³⁶ See C. Donnelly and J. Hughes, 'Culture and Context: Evidence from Mixed Faith Schools in Northern Ireland and Israel', *Comparative Education*, Vol. 42, 2006, 493-516.

³⁷ See Home Office, *Community Cohesion*, p. 35, and section 5.8.12 passim. For evidence that sharing classes can improve inter-group relations, see J. Hughes, S. Lolliot, M. Hewstone, K. Schmid, and K. Carlisle, 'Sharing Classes between Separate Schools: A Mechanism for Improving Inter-Group Relations in Northern Ireland?', *Policy Futures in Education*, Vol. 10, 2012, 528-539.

³⁸ For a meta-analysis of 20 years research on this issue, see S. Zhou, E. Page-Gould, A. Aron, A. Moyer, and M. Hewstone, 'The Extended Contact Hypothesis: A Meta-Analysis on 20 Years of Research', *Personality & Social Psychology Review*, forthcoming.

³⁹ See R. Crisp and R Turner, 'Can Imagined Interactions Produce Positive Perceptions?: Reducing Prejudice Through Simulated Social Contact,' *American Psychologist*, Vol. 64, 2009, 231-240.

⁴⁰ See K. Kristjansson, *Aristotle, Emotions, and Education* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), Ch. 3; M. Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good,' in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980); N. Sherman, *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), Ch. 5.

⁴¹ See H. Brighouse, 'Faith Schools, Personal Autonomy and Democratic Competence', in G. Haydon (ed.), *Faith in Education: A Tribute to Terence*

McLaughlin (London: Institute of Education, 2009), p. 85. At the most fundamental level, we also need to consider the impact that different policy proposals in relation to faith schools would have on the entire educational ecosystem's capacity to cultivate tolerance, taking into account families, communities and the broader culture.

⁴² For such a framework, see M. Clayton, A. Mason, A. Swift, and R. Wareham, 'The Political Morality of School Composition: The Case of Religious Selection', in progress; H. Brighouse, H. Ladd, S. Loeb, and A. Swift, *Educational Goods: Values, Evidence and Decision Making* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2018).

⁴³ See I. MacMullen, 'Religious Schools, Civic Education, & Public Policy: A Framework for Evaluation & Decision', this issue.

⁴⁴ In fact, there is not much evidence to suggest that faith schools provide a better learning environment *per se* once we have controlled for the quality of their intake, though there is evidence that when these schools serve religious or ethnic minorities that are the object of prejudice, they may do so: see G. Driessen, O. Agirdag and M. Merry, 'The Gross and Net Effects of Primary School Denomination on Pupil Performance', *Educational Review*, Vol. 68, 2016, 466-480, for a study of faith schools in the Netherlands.

⁴⁵ See MacMullen, *Faith in Schools?*, p. 186.

⁴⁶ For relevant discussion, see D. Moulin, 'Religious identity choices in English secondary schools', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 41, June 2015, 489-504. For a defence of Islamic faith schools on the grounds that they do less harm than the available alternatives, see M. Merry, 'Indoctrination, Islamic Schools, and the Broader Scope of Harm', this issue. Indeed in common schools where religiously motivated bullying is rife, intolerance rather than tolerance may be cultivated and entrenched.

⁴⁷ This last requirement is vague: in order to give it greater precision we would need to be able to quantify, at least roughly, the level of diversity in a school that is either optimal or adequate for creating the potential benefits of contact and habituation, but we do not yet have the knowledge that would be required to do so. The Cattle Report (Home Office, *Community Cohesion*) regarded religiously homogeneous schools as a potential barrier to community cohesion. In order to overcome this barrier, it argued that all schools should offer at least 25% of places to reflect other cultures or ethnicities in the local area (*ibid.*, p. 33), that faith schools in particular should offer 25% of their places to other faiths or denominations (*ibid.*, p. 37), and that education should in general be multicultural, and should be designed to promote understanding of, and respect for, the cultures in the school and the surrounding area (*ibid.*, pp. 35, 49). The Report's proposals concerning admissions were not adopted but in England since 2010 newly-created Academy schools with a religious character have been required to restrict the proportion of students selected on religious grounds to 50%. In the academic literature Harry Brighouse suggests that 70% of places at a faith school should be allocated by a lottery that gives no preference to those who come from families that share the faith of the school: see Brighouse, 'Faith Schools, Personal Autonomy and Democratic Competence', pp. 89-90.