

Education for Democratic Citizenship: Transnationalism, Multiculturalism, and the Limits of Liberalism

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Why and how do shifts in the philosophical underpinnings of education occur? How should students be educated in and for democratic citizenship? In this article, Katharyne Mitchell explores these questions by analyzing a debate regarding the purpose of education in a Vancouver suburb. She shows how immigrants from Hong Kong successfully contest the normative assumptions of Western liberalism, in which the production of democracy, the practice of education, and the constitution of the nation-state are naturally bound together. By tracking the recent ideological debates and the actual decisions made, it is possible to analyze some of the growing rifts between a Dewey-inspired understanding of education and democracy and newer, more global, transnational educational narratives.

Why and how do shifts in the philosophical underpinnings of education occur, particularly with regard to the importance accorded to educating students in and for democratic citizenship? In recent years this question has become increasingly pertinent as the efficacy of public education and its place in society is debated with increasing vitriol. Many critics of contemporary education policies in Canada and the United States are urging a reconsideration of the foundational premises of public education, and the mantra of "reform" has been a common refrain in both countries.¹

In order to answer this philosophical question, however, we must first ask why public education, especially as it relates to the project of democracy, is under siege at this moment in time. Long ago, John Dewey wrote eloquently

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of the importance of education in the formation of a democratic community. Yet Dewey, along with the majority of democratic theorists of the early twentieth century, assumed that "community" was inherently and naturally bound within the contours of the nation-state. In fact, the democratic project that Dewey advocated was aimed explicitly at the *formation* of the nation; Americanism was defined in terms of a conjoint experience of living and learning together in an open, plural, and egalitarian manner (Dewey, 1924; Greene, 1988). In this sense, education for the project of democracy was constitutive of the ongoing construction of a national civilization; it was a civilization, moreover, to be determined by its own historical and geographical context, and explicitly defined against the fascism and authoritarianism then arising in parts of Europe and Asia (Orrill, 1997). Similarly, Canada also sought to address the national question through educating a citizenry in democracy. In both nations, the harmonious coexistence of colonizers and immigrants was predicated on an increasing tolerance of cultural pluralism.

Given the national focus of early democratic theorists, it is worth pondering the connections between education and democracy in the contemporary period of increasing cross-border movements, transnational processes, and the accelerated flow of capital, commodities, culture, and people. What are the effects of these globalizing forces on conceptions of democratic citizenship? How should children be educated within (and for) an increasingly global context? In this article I examine these questions, focusing in particular on the ways in which early formulations of the connections between education and democracy have been disrupted by global forces such as large-scale transnational migration.² I illustrate my argument with a case study of a school district in Richmond, British Columbia, a large suburb outside Vancouver, which has experienced massive immigration from Hong Kong and Taiwan in the past decade. Over the past five years, this school district has been engaged in heated discussions over the philosophy, meaning, and implementation of school reform. By looking at the recent ideological debates and the actual decisions made, I show how immigrants from Hong Kong successfully contest the normative assumptions of Western liberalism, in which the production of democracy, the practice of education, and the constitution of the nation-state are naturally and indissolubly bound together. Although the Richmond school district represents just one instance of a shift in the public attitude toward education in Canada, and what I see as the growing rifts between a Dewey-inspired understanding of education and democracy and newer, more global, transnational educational narratives, I argue that it is precisely the skirmishes in small institutional sites that indicate the direction of broader battles over hegemony in any given society.

Dewey and the Limits of the Nation

Dewey's work spanned decades and many of his ideas changed over time. Nonetheless, his formulation of an ideal liberal education consistently em-

phasized the centrality of the nation-building project.³ In a number of speeches and writings, he linked his epistemological project of context-dependent learning with the imperative to produce a particular type of nation. He wrote in the mid-1930s:

We may continue to permit undirected social changes to dictate what takes place in the educational system, or we must think and act upon the assumption that public education has a positive responsibility to shape those habits of thought and action which in turn shape organized conditions of social action. The latter course cannot be undertaken without profound and courageous will to consider the real meaning of the American experiment and of American life; the obstacles that stand in the way of realizing this meaning; and the means by which its basic ideals can be continuously promoted. I see no other way of rendering education in fact, and not just in name, the foundation of social organization. (Boydston, 1987, vol. 11, p. 235). . .

A national system . . . is an educational system that corresponds to the spirit, the temper, the dominant habits and purposes that hold the people of a country together, so far as they *are* held together in a working unity of life. . . . A national system is an outgrowth from the people. It develops from below, rather than is imposed from above. (p. 357)⁴

What is interesting in the quotations above is the manner in which Dewey incorporated the nation into this democratic project. His emphasis on democratic education for the nation operates both dialectically and spatially; in a mutually constitutive process, democracy expands the nation as the nation expands democracy. In the lived experience and conjoint decisionmaking of the "American experiment," democracy is realizable; at the same time, the narrative of the nation as the open, tolerant, and egalitarian community is ceaselessly performed and supplemented through these democratic practices.⁵

Further national inflections are manifested in Dewey's discussions of the frontier. The frontier can be read as a metonym for the endlessly expandable "spaces" of democracy *within the confines* of the nation-state project. According to Dewey, the literal spaces of the frontier, the "immense amount of land awaiting settlement and inviting possession and use" (Boydston, 1987, vol. 11, p. 168) were "closed" by the 1930s — unavailable to the project of extending democracy across physical space. Dewey advocated a "substitute," the extension of democracy through the spaces of the national body politic. The frontier, for Dewey, shifted from the possibilities inherent in the colonization of physical spaces in the western United States to the possibilities inherent in the extension of opportunity and equality to all members of the national population. He wrote, "At the present time, the frontier is moral, not physical. The period of free lands that seemed boundless in extent has vanished. Unused resources are now human rather than material" (pp. 224–225). Thus, as the concept of the endlessly expansive frontier disintegrated in the national lexicon, Dewey postulated a new narrative of endlessly expansive human possibility. The image of the frontier shifted from the spaces of the "wild West" to the spaces of the "wild" American body, but in both these

“frontier” narratives, the foundational touchstone for democratic expansion remained firmly folded within the national project.⁶

Dewey’s shift in scale from frontier to body facilitated the entrenchment and exportation of liberalism from the crucible of “the American experiment” outward. The more literalist understanding of the frontier, involving the colonization of indigenous lands and the extermination of native peoples, existed in uncomfortable juxtaposition with the imperialist land grabs of Germany and Japan in the 1930s. By contrast, the conceptualization of the national frontier as encompassing the spaces of possibility through liberal education allowed for a direct contrast with fascist and authoritarian systems of government. A national narrative emphasizing the “moral” embodiment rather than the “physical” component of frontier possibility could thus be triumphantly contrasted with intolerant, unequal, and prejudicial regimes in Europe and Asia. The direct link between liberal democratic ideas (of the belief in and necessity to work for equal opportunity for all human beings), America’s national character, and the future exportation of this way of life comes through most clearly in Dewey’s 1942 essay, “Why I Selected Democracy and America”:

As far as democracy lives up to its faith in the potentialities of human beings, by means of putting into practical operation the democratic moral means by which these capacities may be realized, American democracy will do more than aid in winning the war. It will also play a significant role in an even more severe test and task, that of winning the peace. For the foundation of a pacified and unified Europe is the discovery by European peoples of the true nature of the democratic ideal and of the democratic methods by which alone the ideal can be made effective. (Boydston, 1987, vol. 11, p. 368)

Despite Dewey’s exhortations, the limitations evident in the American “democratic ideal” were quickly made manifest when confronted with the actual barriers to opportunity experienced by the non-White American body located in real time and space. Clearly, democracy could not “live up to its faith in the potentialities of human beings” if all Americans were not allowed the opportunity to participate democratically; by the same token, American bodies were unable to represent the new frontier or operate as the new carriers of the national narrative of expandable democracy if they were segregated spatially and disenfranchised legally, economically, and culturally. The patent exclusions and relative immobility of American Blacks in the interwar years indicated a major stumbling block in both the entrenchment and expansion of liberalism that progressive thinkers like Dewey were compelled to address.

Liberalism and the Promise of Multiculturalism

The philosophy of American pluralism during the interwar years was soon framed as an extension of equality of opportunity to all members of the na-

tional body, particularly those disenfranchised by racism. In the 1940s, promulgating cultural pluralism, later known as "multiculturalism," became an important project of liberal democrats. They recognized the contradictions inherent in the national practice of racial exclusion and the international language of American liberalism. These contradictions increasingly tore at the fabric of nationhood and undermined its universalizing "potential." For intellectuals of the intra- and post-World War II years, the imperative to heal these rifts and to "secure and justify the nation-state" (Singh, 1998, p. 475) was almost overwhelming.⁷ The moral "solution" to this problem, expressed in the writings of Dewey and other interwar liberals, was the expansion of democratic opportunity for all. In 1939, Dewey wrote:

To denounce Nazism for intolerance, cruelty, and stimulation of hatred amounts to fostering insincerity if, in our personal relations to other persons, if, in our daily walk and conversation, we are moved by racial, color or other class prejudice; indeed, by anything save a *generous* belief in their possibilities as human beings, a belief which brings with it the need for providing conditions which will enable these capacities to reach fulfillment. (Boydston, 1987, vol. 11, p. 226, author's italics)⁸

The expansion of democratic opportunity or, as T. H. Marshall framed it, "social citizenship"⁹ to all members of the national polity regardless of class position or racial categorization became a cornerstone of mid-twentieth-century liberalism and a fundamental and ongoing national narrative in both Canada and the United States.¹⁰ In the 1970s, Canada embraced the Dewey-inspired vision of a nation produced and unified in its diversity through the expansion of democracy. The language of national tolerance and diversity blended well with the earlier rhetoric of cultural pluralism in Canada, initially promoted by French-Canadian Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier in the late nineteenth century. Laurier attempted to reduce conflict between the French and British by alleviating the so-called "racial" tensions between them. (The French and British were considered different racial groups at the turn of the century.) Throughout the twentieth century, Canadian politicians repeatedly invoked cultural pluralism and then multiculturalism as the key frameworks for reducing animosity between these two warring colonial factions (Elliot & Fleras, 1990). Prime Minister Trudeau, for example, introduced the term *multiculturalism* into the debate in 1971 with the explicit intent of resolving the tensions around Canadian national identity at a time of widespread hostility between the Anglophone provinces and Québec.¹¹

As with the United States, the idea of a Canadian national community was built upon the foundation of harmonious relations extended toward differing "racial" groups such as the French, and of the endlessly expandable, ungrudgingly "generous" inclusion of those groups within the tenets of liberal democracy.¹² The profound British centrism of this ideal, "multicultural" national community, however, became increasingly evident in the rancorous

debates surrounding the proposed Meech Lake Accord in 1991. The Meech Lake Accord was an effort to resolve many of the tensions surrounding the passage of the Canadian Charter.¹³ Although the Accord allowed for a “distinct society” clause that would give Québec special rights within the framework of the Canadian nation-state, many Québécois perceived the Charter as hostile to the survival of French-Canadian culture. The allowance of “difference” within the Accord for the purposes of collective cultural survival for the Québécois, however, was antithetical to the model of procedural liberalism most familiar to English Canadians, which had been recently adopted in the Canadian Charter. As a result, there was a profound struggle over what should be given precedence: the “distinct society” clause or the basic proceduralism of the Charter. Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor (1994) noted:

The resistance to the “distinct society” that called for precedence to be given to the Charter came in part from a spreading procedural outlook in English Canada. From this point of view, attributing the goal of promoting Quebec’s distinct society to a government is to acknowledge a collective goal, and this move had to be neutralized by being subordinated to the existing Charter. From the standpoint of Quebec, this attempt to impose a procedural model of liberalism not only would deprive the distinct society clause of some of its force as a rule of interpretation, but bespoke a rejection of the model of liberalism on which this society was founded. Each society misperceived the other throughout the Meech Lake debate. But here both perceived each other accurately — and didn’t like what they saw. The rest of Canada saw that the distinct society clause legitimated collective goals. And Quebec saw that the move to give the Charter precedence imposed a form of liberal society that was alien to it, and to which Quebec could never accommodate itself without surrendering its identity. (p. 60)

In the Meech Lake debates and rejection of the Accord, Canada’s profoundly British orientation, as well as the limits of multiculturalism inherent in the liberal-proceduralist framework, became immediately apparent.¹⁴ In the course of the Meech Lake discussion, differing strands of liberalism quickly came into conflict: the first privileged a neutral, individual, rights-based, and proceduralist vision stemming from a British and American tradition; the second foregrounded a communitarian, group-based vision that allowed for a concept of the “good society” and the right to group separation in order to ensure cultural survival over time. This conflict, which revolved primarily around the issue of separation from the national, liberal, multicultural project, is similar to the conflict over traditional schools in British Columbia that will be taken up in the latter half of this article.

Despite the fundamental national conflict manifested in the Meech Lake debates, the “proceduralist” variant of the liberal philosophy of multiculturalism remains the overwhelming narrative of national unity and the predominant governmental rhetoric and policy in Canada. In the hegemonic rhetoric of the nation, multiculturalism *means* living, working, and learning

together with and through difference. The separation of a group away from this project to *sustain* a different notion of the good life is antithetical to its very definition.

Support for a proceduralist variant of multiculturalism was included in a section of the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 and entrenched in the nation's statutes with the Multiculturalism Act of 1988. In this statute and in numerous other government texts and statements, the earlier seeds of nation-state formation and of the ongoing attempt to reconstitute a "beloved" national community remained firmly embedded in the multicultural language. Multiculturalism in Canada thus remains doubly inscribed: it is inherently nationalist in purpose and orientation, and it is also clearly based on a proceduralist model of liberalism that privileges British philosophy and culture as the national norm.

Liberalism and the Public Sphere

The idea of an expandable opportunity to participate democratically in the nation-state is also part of the rhetoric of the ideal public sphere. In liberal philosophy, the public sphere is the space where rational individuals can come together to discuss the future of society regardless of personal background or characteristics (Habermas, 1989). Ideally, the public sphere is a site located between the state and the market, where democratic participation can occur between all citizens without respect to class distinctions, racial categorizations, or any other marker of "difference." Although never actually "realized" in terms of its idealized implementation, it remains an important cultural touchstone for the imagined community of the ideal Canadian nation (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1991).

As with Dewey's earlier formation of expandable democracy through the territorial frontier, and then through the body politic, the ideal public sphere lies firmly fixed within national contours. From the perspective of many non-White groups, however, the democratic potential of the ideal public sphere can never be realized because the national context in which it is constituted is one that is inherently exclusionary. In this view, the nation can never "expand" to include all of the body politic because the nation is *constituted* by the exclusion of certain (non-White immigrant) groups. Many scholars of cultural studies and race theory such as Gilroy (1990, 1991), Hall (1988, 1992), and others associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham, England (e.g., CCCS, 1982; Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978), have documented the ways in which the immigrant of color may be enfranchised in a legal sense, but never actually accorded the full status of belonging. But more than this, they argue that the nation is imagined as a coherent whole (an "us") only through the persistent creation of a group existing metaphorically outside the nation (a "them"). For the case of Britain, Hall's work in the 1980s focused on the ways

in which the ongoing construction of the non-White, immigrant outsider aided in the establishment and maintenance of Thatcher's neoliberal, highly nationalistic and xenophobic regime:

Constructing a "racially" unified image of "Britishness", and correspondingly attempting to erase class differences, became the cornerstone of the neo-conservative strategy of "born-again" nationalism. The "new immigrants" (from the West Indies, or Asia) were scapegoated as the "Others" responsible for the destruction of "law and order" in British society, which (it was implied) was what had led to the decline of Britain and its empire. (Morley & Chen, 1996, p. 12)¹⁵

Similarly, Lowe (1996) discussed vis-à-vis the American context that despite the acquisition of legal citizenship, "cultural" citizenship would always elude Asian immigrants because of their essential position as inherent outsiders. She wrote,

In the last century and a half, the American *citizen* has been defined over and against the Asian *immigrant*, legally, economically, and culturally. These definitions have cast Asian immigrants both as persons and populations to be integrated into the national political sphere and as the contradictory, confusing, unintelligible elements to be marginalized and returned to their alien origins. . . . Rather than attesting to the absorption of cultural difference into the universality of the national political sphere as the "model minority" stereotype would dictate, the Asian immigrant — at odds with the cultural, racial, and linguistic forms of the nation — emerges in a site that defers and displaces the temporality of assimilation. (pp. 4–6, original italics)¹⁶

The public sphere requires actual places of association in order to function; it is an inherently spatial concept. *Where* will people come together to rationally deliberate? Dewey wrote that "the heart and final guarantee of democracy is in free gatherings of neighbors on the street corner to discuss back and forth what is read in uncensored news of the day, and in gatherings of friends in the living rooms of houses and apartments to converse freely with one another" (Boydston, 1987, vol. 14, p. 227). He also spoke frequently of "democracy as a way of life," a process that involves the "personal day-by-day working together with others" (p. 228). Democracy here occurs through participation in the spaces of everyday life. Even if local residential segregation makes multicultural "gatherings of neighbors" problematic, the project as a whole remains worthwhile, as all the gatherings taken together form the real project — the inexorable formation of the democratic nation.

Dewey, writing in the first half of the twentieth century, thus perceived education "for" democracy as explicitly linked with education "for" the nation. In the rest of this article I show how this implicit understanding of a national public sphere and of educating people for national democracy is queried and disrupted by transnational immigrants in the latter part of the twentieth century. These immigrants are part of the global flows characteristic of advanced capitalism, flows that also include massive movements of capital and

information across national borders. In the case study that follows, I examine how a particular movement of migrants from Hong Kong into Richmond in the 1980s and early 1990s led to a renegotiation of the meaning and practice of public education in British Columbia. This migrant group, because of its great wealth and status, was particularly effective in challenging normative assumptions of public education in British Columbia.¹⁷

Globalization, Immigration, and Neoliberalism in Canada

In this article, I use the term *globalization* to refer primarily to a recent acceleration in the international flows of goods, information, capital, culture, and people in the past two decades.¹⁸ These years are characterized by a shifting mode of capitalist organization to one of greater flexibility, and by the structural reorganization (on a global scale) of systems of production, consumption, and exchange. A decline in structures of governance and frequent rhetorical and political attacks on the ideology and practice of welfarism accompanies the greater "flexibility" of capital.

Contemporary flows of people, including laborers as well as an increasing number of wealthy and high-tech professionals, are currently high in various migration systems worldwide (Castles & Miller, 1998). For Canada, migration statistics show a shifting pattern over the last several decades. An earlier predominance of immigration from Europe, particularly Britain, has shifted to a predominance of immigrants arriving from Asia, primarily Hong Kong. After Toronto, Vancouver is the second major destination of all immigrants, and also the second major destination of Hong Kong immigrants. The number of people arriving in Vancouver from Hong Kong has increased dramatically since the mid-1980s, with the largest group, 15,663, entering in 1994, and an average annual in-migration of 10,267 between 1990 and 1996.¹⁹

An important feature of this particular immigrant group is its generally high degree of wealth. As a result of concerns about the transition to Chinese control in 1997, numerous wealthy Hong Kong residents applied for and received visas to Canada in the 1980s. Many members of this group immigrated to Canada in the Business Immigration Program, an immigration category established in 1978 and reworked in 1984 expressly to attract wealthy Asian investors to Canada.²⁰ Although Vancouver is second to Toronto in the overall numbers of people arriving from Hong Kong, it leads as the destination for immigrants who arrive in Canada through this program. The amount of wealth brought in by business migrants alone is astounding — total capital flows between Hong Kong and Vancouver in the late 1980s have been estimated at over one billion Canadian dollars per year (Mitchell, 1993).

The Vancouver suburb of Richmond has experienced the most rapid and intensive settlement by Hong Kong immigrants. Census figures show a major demographic shift in the ethnic profile of the suburb in just a single decade. In the late 1980s, residents of Chinese heritage made up seven percent of

Richmond; contemporary figures indicate that those of Chinese heritage now make up approximately 37 percent of the area's 129,500 residents (Hiebert, 1999). As a result of this demographic shift, there have been a number of changes in the economic and cultural landscape of the area, and conflicts have grown as the older, primarily Anglo-British residents of the neighborhood have attempted to slow or halt the community's transformation.²¹ The struggle over the meaning and practice of public education in Richmond is one of a long series of often bitter confrontations that have emerged between recent immigrants and long-term residents.

A large percentage of Hong Kong Chinese immigrants who have settled in Vancouver and Richmond are part of what has been termed an "ungrounded empire," a diasporic community with a powerful financial position in the global economy, but without an allegiance to a single nation (Ong & Nonini, 1997). As a result of growing up in a politically insecure position in the colony of Hong Kong, many Hong Kong immigrants tend to retain a global, transnational outlook, despite their legal citizenship in particular nation-states (Mitchell, 1997a; Ong, 1993, 1999). One of the features of this global outlook is the desire to remain "competitive" in terms of the world economy and vis-à-vis positions of status and prestige worldwide. This group often perceives education quite strategically as the single most important way of achieving and retaining this competitive edge, particularly for those whose citizenship might have to remain "flexible," given political discrimination or downturns in the economy (Ong, 1999; Wong, 1999). In addition to the economic pressure of globalism, there is also a strong historical and cultural emphasis on education in Chinese society (Lau, 1982, 1988). Academic excellence for most Chinese who have been educated in Hong Kong is defined in terms of an emphasis on discipline, authority, respect, humility, achievement, and memorization. As a result, recent immigrants to Canadian society often advocate for these values in Canadian schools.

Canadian Neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s

The Business Immigration Program, which facilitated the movement of wealthy entrepreneurs and investors from Hong Kong to Vancouver, is just one example of the growing neoliberal agenda within Canadian government during the 1980s. The rise of Canadian neoliberalism is evident in a number of other areas as well, including, most importantly, the ratification of the free trade agreements: the Canadian-United States Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA) in 1989, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993.²² This rise is also evident in the debates over the Canadian Charter and the ensuing constitutional changes initiated by the Mulroney government. Key aspects of the neoliberal agenda include the decentralization and attrition of federal governance, the accordance of a greater degree of power and control to provincial authorities, the deregulation of banking and other

institutions, the privatization of land and industry, the reduction of frictions for the free circulation of commodities, and the provision of various tax and other incentives attractive for business.²³

Taken together, these institutional transformations of the 1980s and early 1990s manifested a new direction for Canadian society. The changes promoted during this time in trade, banking, and the bureaucratic organization of government occurred alongside a rhetoric of national deficit and decline. Conservative politicians firmly linked that decline with the “excesses” of welfare state provisions initiated under Trudeau’s liberal government. A strong ideological campaign promoting laissez-faire economic policies while simultaneously attacking all areas of public governance facilitated this conservative swing to the right.

In the arena of education, much of this business permeated the discourse of teaching and learning. The language of choice is prevalent in educational circles and is clearly tied to the push for charter schools, alternative schools, and school vouchers in Canada. An image of public education as poorly managed accompanies this push. In British Columbia, the pressure for more choice is highly organized and spearheaded by a few key players and institutions. At the center of the movement is an organization entitled Teachers for Excellence in Education (TFEE). Initially formed by those resisting mandatory membership in the local teachers’ union, TFEE consistently opposes the British Columbia teachers’ union with various litigation strategies. In 1996, it formed the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE) to attain the status of a charitable society. It has received funding from powerful groups on the political right, including the National Citizens Coalition, the National Business Council, the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, the British Columbia Business Council, and the Donner Canadian Foundation (Kalaw, McLauren, & Rehnby, 1998). The mission statement of the Donner Canadian Foundation (2000), as written on their web page, is “to encourage individual responsibility and private initiative to help Canadians solve their social and economic problems.” To achieve these ends, it contributed large amounts of grant money to TFEE, SAEE, the Parent Network, and the Fraser Institution — all conservative organizations committed to promoting the idea of privatization and choice in Canadian education.

The Struggle over Traditional Schools in British Columbia

There are currently three types of schools to choose from in British Columbia: public schools, which are fully funded and regulated under the British Columbia School Act and the Ministry of Education; independent or private schools; and home schools. Within public education there is also another choice, “alternative” schools. These schools are completely funded by the government and can draw students from the neighborhood in which they are located, but they must be accessible to all students in the district.

The Ministry of Education does not play a direct role in the decision to establish a specific alternative program in any given district. Local school boards have the power to develop alternative programs for the district, and generally do so in response to public pressure. Alternative schools usually offer specialized programs such as French Immersion or International Baccalaureate, and are allowed to have their own mission statements, rules, and specializations. Among these separate schools are Montessori, Fine Arts, and career and technical centers. Interestingly, the alternative schools also include a few traditional schools, the push for which are the focus of this study.²⁴ Currently, four traditional schools operate in British Columbia, though none in Richmond. Three of these schools were established in the 1980s, and all were promoted primarily by parents with a strong Christian fundamentalist background. In 1999, there were fourteen additional proposals for the establishment of traditional schools in other districts in British Columbia.

Each of the four traditional schools in British Columbia has slightly varying programs under the general banner of “back to basics” or “fundamental” education. One overarching definition of fundamental education includes the following features: an emphasis on the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic; phonics drills; memorization; consistent homework assignments; moral or character development — including respect for authority and highly controlled pupil behavior (reflected in policies such as uniforms and strict disciplinary sanctions); teacher-centered instructional methods; and high levels of competition vis-à-vis standardized tests.²⁵

Since alternative schools must follow the same basic curriculum as public neighborhood schools, and since most schools claim that they teach the “basics” and also employ a variety of teaching styles, traditional schools are differentiated less on the basis of their instructional focus than on their general atmosphere — particularly the emphasis on competition, parental and teacher authority, and the inculcation of a strict moral code.²⁶ Studies of the four traditional schools in British Columbia now in operation show that the primary differences between traditional schools and neighborhood schools exist in the high level of parental involvement and in the strong coordination of values and learning between home and school (Kalaw, McLaren, & Rehnby, 1998). This type of coordination is both explicit and implicit, and can occur with respect to student discipline issues and to a strong culture of shared morals (often Christian in tone) and “family values” operating between home and school. The home-school coordination and the emphasis on family values and strict disciplining were most frequently mentioned by Chinese immigrant parents as the educational features that made traditional schools attractive to them. The Christian undertone mentioned by outside observers (e.g., Kalaw et al., 1998) was not explicit in any of the existing traditional schools’ public statements, and was either not perceived or not im-

portant to the Chinese parents who advocated for the opening of a traditional school in Richmond.

What separates the neighborhood public schools from the traditional schools that are now functioning in British Columbia is primarily a different emphasis on school culture and moral and political ethos rather than on school curricula per se. The implications of these differing emphases will be discussed further in the concluding section of this article.

The Struggle over Traditional Schools in Richmond

In 1996, the school board of Richmond voted down the first proposal to open a traditional school by a six-to-one margin. At the time of the vote, the school board was composed primarily of teachers with left of center political affiliations (e.g., British Columbia Teachers' Federation, New Democratic Party [NDP]). Within the next two years the composition of the school board shifted toward a more conservative membership (e.g., Liberal Party, Non-Partisan Association [NPA]), and a number of members of the district began a concerted campaign to promote the traditional school proposal.²⁷ On June 15, 1998, the board voted four to three to support further feasibility studies regarding money and space for a new traditional school, with a likely opening date scheduled for fall 1999. What happened in the two years between 1996 and 1998 to spark this change in educational direction?

As discussed earlier, between 1984 and 1998, the Richmond district experienced a massive influx of immigrants from Asia, particularly Hong Kong and Taiwan. Although Joanne Fischer, an Anglo-Canadian woman, originally proposed a traditional school in 1996, the vast majority of public support for traditional schooling in the years between 1997 and 1998 came from recent Chinese Canadian immigrants. One of the galvanizing moments for Chinese Canadians occurred during a Chinese-language radio talk show hosted by Hanson Lau, a former Hong Kong immigrant who has lived in Vancouver for over two decades. In December 1997, Lau hosted John Pippus, founder of an existing traditional school and outspoken traditional school proponent. During the interview, Lau asked listeners to indicate interest in the establishment of another traditional school by phoning the radio station. He received seventy calls from Chinese parents, and followed up by arranging for the parents to meet with Pippus and learn the process of setting up a traditional school in their own neighborhoods.²⁸

In the year after this radio show aired, a blitz of information, discussion, public meetings, editorials, and letters to the editor of the *Richmond News* on the proposed traditional school in Richmond and on the meaning of public education more generally flooded the civic sphere. At public meetings convened by the school board, between one and two hundred people — the vast majority parents of Chinese descent — spoke vociferously for the proposal.²⁹

School board presidents reported receiving numerous phone calls at their homes prior to meetings and decisions, and the local newspaper reported receiving more letters to the editor related to this issue than to any other community issue since the founding of the paper.³⁰

The proposal to open a new traditional school in Richmond became a condensation point for broader societal conflicts related to demographic change and to the transformation of the community's social identity and the ongoing reproduction of that identity through the educational process. A series of letters to the editor of the *Richmond News* reflects some of the differing conceptualizations of education, authority, community, and citizenship that underlie this profound community conflict. In a May 1998 letter, a recent immigrant from Hong Kong wrote:

We came to this lovely city five years ago. After spending half of our wealth settling down here, our children were registered into the neighborhood school under the public school system and curriculum. We were so pleased to be here. . . . But after a while, everything turned into a nightmare. The economy is down and falling, and worst of all, our children's performances are much lower both in academic and moral areas. I noticed the children have learnt very little academically. They learned to have self-confidence instead of being self-disciplined; learned to speak-up instead of being humbled; learned to be creative instead of self-motivated; and learned to simplify things instead of organizing. All of these characteristics were not balanced, and will be the source of disadvantage and difficulties in children in this competitive society. . . . It is time to change, because it is our children who face the future. They should be better equipped and I think "traditional" schooling would help them to build a solid ground. (Leung, 1998)

A number of scathing responses followed. For example:

The letter from May Leung entitled "Back to Basics" annoyed me. I have lived in Richmond all my life, and am still "pleased" to be living here, unlike Ms. Leung who says she is no longer pleased to be living here. . . . I have committed my whole life and my family's future to this community. These characteristics she disapproves of are the very characteristics I encourage in my children, as do their teachers and the public schools. Self-confidence, creativity, and individuality are wonderful qualities, which in no way detract from a child being respectful and pleasant, and achieving academic success. . . . These are the basics in my books. . . . The people who made the biggest impact in our world were all creative individuals who chose to follow their own path, sometimes at great personal cost. (Tillyer, 1998)

May Leung sets out the case for "traditional" schools more succinctly than most in her May 13 letter. She wants her children to be self-disciplined, humble, self-motivated and organized, instead of being self-confident, assertive, creative and analytical. . . . These repressive, authoritarian "traditional" parents who hanker for the days of yore, when fresh-faced school kids arrived all neatly decked out in drab-grey uniforms and shiny lace-up leather shoes, are a menace to society. They desire their kids to sit quietly in tidy serried ranks while Teech [*sic*] in gown and mortar board, drills them relentlessly in their ABCs

and times tables. Should they err in any way, a thousand lines or a good beating will learn 'em real good. Give 'em chalk and talk, make 'em learn by rote, have 'em regurgitate scads of Wordsworth and Formulae on demand and test the little dears weekly. That's the order of the day. If it was good enough for us, it must be good for them, mustn't it? Stands to reason, after all. The world has changed, and the education system with it. No longer do we have grinding production lines or clerk-filled office blocks ready to receive the output from scholastic factories, tutored to be polite, obliging little cyphers complying with the whims of magisterial management. Such humble folk have been down-sized onto the dole in the interests of globalization and the next quarter's bottom line. (O'Connell, 1998)

In these letters to the editor, a number of themes are immediately apparent. The most obvious differences between the first letter and the responses to it reflect the first author's emphasis on morality, authority, and efficiency. This differs sharply from the following two letters, which emphasize creativity and nonconformance to authority. The letter by O'Connell satirizes the perceived desires of Leung by painting a picture of a repressive school *cum* factory, where students are produced to be obedient workers in a larger system of corporate management. The recent immigrant, May Leung, desires an ethical code within the school system that will ensure that her children are "well-equipped" to live and work efficiently within an increasingly "competitive" society. Her position validates achievement, organization, and submission to authority over the "assertive" but potentially inefficient and disorganized individual. This position is denounced by long-term residents of the neighborhood, who assert the child's right to be individualistic. O'Connell also questions whether submission to authority represents the best strategy in the era of globalization, noting ironically, that "humble folk have been down-sized onto the dole."

The idea of an individual child's right to be "different" also appeared in a discussion of broader social differences, such as those based on class or children with special needs. Many respondents in the papers and in interviews suggested that the advocacy for traditional schools reflected a desire to return to a perceived era of order and efficiency that, by its nature, excluded a number of so-called "unassimilable" individuals and social groups.³¹ They felt that the stated traditional school emphasis on "same-age" groups, tracking of the brightest students, uniforms, morals, and strict consistency in teaching and homework indicated a desire for classrooms of children who were essentially alike. Those children who were "different" because of their family background, learning abilities, or style, or just individual quirkiness would not fit into this type of school. One respondent wrote:

The advocates of "traditional" schools are trying to recreate the past, a past that did not include recognition of individual differences, differing levels of English understanding, the mentally and physically challenged and the new world of computer technology among other things. . . . Aside from the monetary cost of even the research into such a change to the system, the division in our society

which would be created would separate our citizens into "classes" — a type of society which my father and many other people came to Canada to escape. Minority pressure groups should not be allowed to use public money to alter a system that has taken years to develop. We must look to the future, not the past. (Parper, 1998)

The perspectives expressed in these letters are just a few of the many positions taken in the debate over the opening of the traditional school in Richmond.³² Yet these views represent, in many respects, some of the key differences that emerged between the longer-term Anglo residents and the more recent Chinese immigrants with regard to the discussion of educational practice and philosophy. These philosophical differences led to the mobilization of an activist and powerful ethnic community around the education issue. They also led to political and educational changes in Richmond within a relatively short period of time.

After the June 1998 school board decision to initiate a "feasibility" study of the traditional school proposal, a sixteen-person committee was formed by the Richmond school superintendent, Chris Kelly, to discuss the issue further. This committee, which was comprised primarily of teachers interested in this issue, met ten times between July and February and, following great deliberation, arrived at the decision to introduce many of the changes demanded by the proponents of the traditional school to *all* the schools in Richmond (personal communication, R. Chang, committee chair, May 10, 1999). Instead of opening one traditional school, which committee members felt could become, by default, a school populated only by Chinese children, the committee recommended that the Board adopt many of the traditional school suggestions for all schools in the district. Otherwise, according to the committee chair, "If the majority of the students are Chinese, how are they going to learn English? Also, how are we going to encourage them to get into the mainstream? It's not subscribing to the multicultural philosophy of the community." The two key recommendations for change identified by the committee were increased communication between school and home and greater consistency in practice across schools and across grades within the same school.³³

Following the committee's recommendations, the superintendent of the Richmond school district decided to establish a "Foundations Program" for the Richmond schools.³⁴ In order to establish what the new foundations of the Richmond schools might look like, he initiated a series of public "Let's Talk" meetings for administrators, parents, and teachers, aimed at beginning a dialogue about educational practice and pedagogic philosophy. In the second meeting, on May 11, 1999, the conversation at one table circled around the question of learning as content or process.³⁵ One woman who had recently immigrated from Hong Kong but was not a major proponent of the traditional school said that the main concern of Hong Kong Chinese parents was the sense that there was no way to assess their children's progress

through the school year or in comparison with other children. She claimed that many Chinese parents were frustrated by the lack of standardized textbooks, the small amount of homework required of children, and the lack of standardized testing.³⁶ In Hong Kong, in contrast, tests were administered at least once a month in order to evaluate students' progress, and parents were required to go over large amounts of homework with their children every night. Most homework, moreover, was taken directly from chapters in a textbook that was used consistently in all classes in Hong Kong at that grade level. The two Richmond schoolteachers replied that strict standardization and consistency in classes and across schools was not conducive to learning as a process. One teacher said, "Children learn in different ways. One size does not fit all. All children are different and each child can and must learn differently. Learning is not episodic but a process, where some things may not be learned right away but over time."

The recent Hong Kong immigrant, who represented herself as someone who was introducing the views of Chinese parents but was not committed to any particular position herself, said that Chinese parents feared that, with different evaluation structures, a child might fall behind and neither the parents nor the child would be aware of it. She said that ongoing and standardized assessment is part of the communication process, the mechanism through which parents know where the child is in terms of his or her level. The second teacher responded that learning is a process that occurs unevenly over time, and yearly standardized tests do not adequately measure that process. Moreover, constant comparison with other children is highly problematic, since parents then measure "success" by what other children accomplish rather than the child's own learning progress. The first teacher added, "Competition is the problem. It comes into conflict with many ways of knowing."

The "Let's Talk" conversations reflected a variety of viewpoints about educational philosophy, but notably there were no representatives of the traditional schools present at the meeting. At the end of the two meetings, Superintendent Kelly gave a short speech in which he made an effort to find some common ground between the educational changes advocated by traditional school proponents and those who felt that these changes threatened the fabric of progressive education. He emphasized three main themes, which he believed would be acceptable to a majority of Richmond parents and teachers, and introduced them under the rubric of "foundations." These themes, which later were written up and published as a brochure that was subsequently distributed by the Richmond school district to residents in the area, were those of "clarity, consistency and communication in the partnership between parents, teachers, and students."³⁷ Kelly then discussed a number of possible ways to introduce these foundational "themes" into the classrooms of selected elementary schools in Richmond. The philosophy of educational foundations was initiated in a handful of schools in September 1999, and will

be extended to all schools in the Richmond district if deemed successful. District administrators circulated information about the new Foundations focus to residents of the Richmond district in the form of brochures and via a web page in the summer of 1999. Exactly how and to what degree the ideas of increased consistency and communication will be implemented in the schools remains unclear at this time.

Both the ongoing pedagogic discussion and the decisions recently made in Richmond reflect a new and evolving concern about public education and its role in society. The extent of the transformation in thinking is yet undetermined, but there is clearly a marked shift in the types of issues arising and influencing the tenor of philosophical debate. In the next section I discuss these shifts in the context of the broader questions related to the formation of democratic national communities in a time of major transnational flows. What are the indications of changes in thinking with respect to educating students in and for democratic citizenship?

Discussion

Over half a century ago, Dewey framed educating citizens in and through democratic practice within a national context. His ideas were, moreover, part of a broader project within American liberalism that sought to hold together the shards of class and racial antagonism through the frontier of endlessly expandable democratic opportunity. This impulse to “solve” the national question through educating a citizenry in democracy became a powerful discourse in both the United States and Canada. In both these nations, the component of associationism between colonizers and immigrants — that is, the “conjoint, communicated experience” essential to the democratic project (Dewey, 1924, p. 101) — was predicated on an increasing tolerance of cultural pluralism. According to most contemporary liberal thought in educational theory, democratic practice in Western education occurs in and through communal efforts to work through problems in a fundamentally multicultural student body (e.g., Fass, 1989; May, 1999; Reeher & Cammarano, 1997; Tyack, 1974, 1997). Within this theoretical framework, by virtue of collective, plural education, Americans and Canadians simultaneously extend both democratic possibility and the ongoing maintenance of national unity and identity.

The contemporary acceleration of transnational forces and the decline of welfare-state governance, however, have called the idea of an implicitly “national” education project into question. Evidence indicates that the intensifying forces of globalization, especially the rapid and large-scale movements of people, commodities, and capital across national borders, are influencing public discussion about education and its role and meaning in contemporary society (Torres, 1998). The ideological struggle in Richmond suggests a key shift in the discourse around education and further suggests that recent

Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong provoked and eventually galvanized the implementation of change in that district. This transnational group expressed concerns about mixed-age classes, the lack of consistent standards in education, the lack of morals and discipline in the classroom, and a pattern of learning set by the child rather than by the teacher. Instead, they advocated an educational model based on streaming children by achievement level, stronger discipline and morality within the classroom, firm and measurable standards of achievement within grades and across grades, and regular and consistent testing for academic progress. They argued that this type of education was more conducive to regulating, measuring, and tracking the child's level of "success" on a regular, short-term basis comparative to other children of the same age.

This case study of the movement in Richmond toward traditional schools provides an example of how different cultural values can shape different conceptions regarding the purpose of education. The discussion by Richmond immigrant parents in letters, interviews, and public meetings can be seen as indicating less interest in educating children to be members of a national community and more in educating them to be successful global citizens. Regular standardized testing that is consistent by age and geography allows individuals more ability to move both locally and internationally and remain at the same educational level. Individuals are also better able to retain educationally based cultural capital.³⁸ For many immigrant Chinese Canadians, the preparation of individuals to become high achievers in a global workplace is more practical *and more attainable* than their constitution as citizens of a particular nation-state.³⁹ In this vision, inherently national narratives, such as that of multiculturalism, are willingly sacrificed for a more flexible notion of educational excellence.

In addition to the critique of education *for* the democratic nation, the Hong Kong immigrants implicitly make a much broader critique of Western liberalism itself. Some of the foundational principles of Western liberalism — the separation of the public and private domains, for example — have been shown by a number of scholars (e.g., Fraser, 1990; Mansbridge, 1990) to act as cultural barriers to the actual participation of women and non-White citizens in the public sphere. Historically, liberal practitioners have "generously" attempted to include members of the nation who have been disenfranchised legally and culturally in the past. Yet, this inclusion springs from the premise that Western liberalism is not only a superior philosophical foundation but also that its institutional application in realms such as education is good for everyone. The "generous" inclusion of "others" aids in the ongoing constitution of the beloved national community. Precisely because of their Asian "otherness," however, the Chinese residents represent the constitutive outside of the nation;⁴⁰ they can never participate fully or unproblematically as democratic citizens of the nation because they are always already located outside of it.⁴¹ Thus, there exists a strong tension between a Deweyan promotion of

multicultural education for (national) democracy and the Chinese immigrant's interests in a potentially separate education, articulated as promoting global citizenship, but not linked to a national narrative.

The essential "illiberalism" of liberalism is manifested in the reaction of "progressive" Richmond parents, teachers, and policymakers who opposed the traditional school. What is unacceptable within the parameters of a procedurally based conceptualization of liberalism is to step outside the discourse and argue for separateness as being *more* advantageous for the cultural survival of certain minority groups *and* for the nation. Although none of my informants expressed a desire for an ethnically separate school, it was generally understood that if a traditional school was established in Richmond after all the controversy that had surrounded it, it would de facto be almost completely ethnically Chinese. This possibility did not appear to worry the traditional school proponents, whose actions can be interpreted as reflecting the belief that this type of school, filled with highly motivated and successful students, might represent a superior strategy for the nation in the contemporary period of globalization. National competitiveness could, in fact, be improved by allowing a group of high achievers to separate out from the multicultural mainstream to continue the culture of success formed through a long history of educational distinction.

In many respects, this implicit critique of liberalism from "outside" the liberal project can be read as a radical move that points to the limits of liberalism, especially those pertaining to its inherently nationalist and proceduralist enframing. In the perspective of numerous scholars of racial formation (e.g., Gilroy, 1991; Hall, 1980; Lowe, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1994) non-White, non-Western "citizens" cannot be part of the nation-building project because the nation is constituted by their very exclusion. This critique disrupts unspoken assumptions such as the idea that the rhetoric and policies of multiculturalism always benefit immigrants and people of color.

One of the great ironies of this "radical" critique of the liberal project in Canada, however, is the way it articulates directly with a profoundly conservative trend in Canadian thought and politics. Conservative attacks on liberal policies associated with the Canadian welfare state, for example, have gone hand in hand with recent shifts in the nature of capitalism toward greater flexibility in systems of production and finance (Harvey, 1989), the deregulation and privatization of industry and banking (Leyshon & Thrift, 1992; Tickell, 2000), and the promotion of more and more individual "choice" in areas ranging from children's breakfast cereals to the type of school they will attend (Appadurai, 1990).

Canadian neoliberal critics of Trudeau-era liberalism voice many of the same arguments as those heard during the Reagan-Bush era in the United States. In the arena of U.S. public education, the discourse of disaster is omnipresent (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Clark, 1996). Critics of public education attempt to persuade the general populace that public education is of such

poor quality that without immediate and profound changes in the system, their children, as well as the nation, are "at risk" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The solution, according to this conservative faction, is to make education "accountable" to the market; only through greater individual choice can the problems associated with public education be ameliorated. The demand for separate public schools, such as the traditional schools in Richmond, dovetails precisely with this neoliberal movement. Thus, in this particular case, the philosophy and practice of Deweyan liberalism in education is caught in a pincer movement between a conservative economic faction on the right and what might be termed a "progressive" critique of its nationalist enframing by immigrants of color (sometimes embodied in the same actors). The profound tension between an economically based global agenda and a socially based national narrative also helps to explain the intensity of the fight over the philosophy and practice of education at this current historical moment.

The question for progressive educators and thinkers to resolve relates to the potential for educating students *for* democracy in a *non-nationalist* framework. What are the possibilities for creating a transnational public sphere or global civil society? How is it possible to incorporate socially progressive ideas in education in a transnational vein? The limits to Deweyan liberalism are manifested in the case study of the Richmond Chinese immigrants for whom multiculturalism appears to be empty nationalist rhetoric. Rather than through the "generous" inclusion of outside groups into a hegemonic nation-state project, how can the project itself be reformulated from the "bottom up"? How can multiculturalism be given teeth through a reconstitution of the project "from below"? How can national responsibilities articulate with global ones and vice versa? These questions indicate both the difficulty of and the necessity to escape from the bounded contours and mentality of the nation-state, yet not leapfrog from there directly into the netherworld of global capitalism.

Notes

1. One of the primary vehicles for reform promulgated by both politicians and businesspeople is the "choice" movement in education. Greater parental choice in education takes the form of vouchers, charter schools, and other modes of educational privatization in both Canada and the United States. See, for example, Wells (1993, 1998); Wells, Lopez, Scott, and Holme (1999); Fuller, Elmore, and Orfield (1996).
2. *Transnationalism* is defined as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994, p. 7). It differs from the standard conceptualization of international migration primarily in the emphasis on the simultaneous economic, social, and political connections that bind immigrants to two or more nation-states. Rather than a movement "from" a society of origin "to" a country of settlement, the migrants operate in a social field of networks and obligations that extend across international borders. For

more discussion of this phenomenon, see Mitchell (1997b); Smith and Guarnizo (1998); and Rouse (1995).

3. Although Canadian nationalism developed historically along a different trajectory from that of the United States, many of the ideas associated with Deweyan liberalism began to permeate the Canadian civic sphere in the Trudeau era. In 1982, for example, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was entrenched as part of the Canadian Constitution. The Charter promoted a vision of individual rights, duties, and responsibilities, which were viewed by government figures such as Trudeau as necessary in unifying the two major linguistic groups of Canada. This importation of American liberalism for the purpose of national unification was reflected in numerous institutions, including education. For a good discussion of the Charter and its American roots, see Mandel (1989).
4. Dewey made the connections between the educational system and a liberal democratic project in numerous essays, books, and articles throughout his life. See, for example, *Democracy and Education* (Dewey, 1924); "School and Society," "The Challenge of Democracy to Education" (Boydston, 1987, vol. 11, pp. 181–190), and "The Democratic Faith and Education" (pp. 251–260).
5. According to scholars like Bhabha (1990), the various myths and ideologies that make up a sense of nationhood must be continually "performed" in order for the idea of the nation to be sustained. To "perform" the nation is to inexorably rework national narratives of origins or "community" values through time and space. Dewey's pragmatic philosophy of learning through practice and democracy as community always in the making and forever incomplete articulates well with the linguistic and psychoanalytic ideas of performance and supplementarity on which Bhabha draws.
6. I use the term *wild* ironically here. Just as expansion into the western regions of the continent was explained and legitimated through a discourse of a civilizing mission (the taming of the Indians and of the land itself), so too the expansion of democratic ideals to "non-Whites" (specifically the "Negro" population) was framed as an effort to civilize as well as to enfranchise this group. Both these narratives of expansion were important nationalist touchstones in the ongoing formation of Americanism. For a further discussion of the incorporation of the "wild" body into American national narratives through nineteenth-century fiction and other texts of that era, see Wald (1995).
7. In his innovative examination of "color and democracy in the American century," Singh has shown how the "moral status of American nationhood and the status of Black nationality" were inextricably intertwined during the decade of the 1940s. It was only with a more "just" society at home that the United States could claim the rhetoric of a "civilizing" mission abroad. The democratic impulses behind the early formulations of multiculturalism were thus clearly linked with "America's world-ordering ambitions" of that time (see Singh, 1998, pp. 475–479).
8. The use of the word *generous* here underscores an idea that I develop further in the conclusion. One of the features of Western liberalism that is implicitly critiqued by the Chinese immigrants is a patronizing assumption of national primacy and cultural superiority. Liberals are *obliged* to be munificent and provide the conditions for human possibility because they operate from a loftier philosophical vantage point. In this sense, White liberals are positioned as the primary creators and maintainers of the nation-state, and are expected to generously share the national cornucopia with those who are not yet properly contained (enfranchised and included) within its territory.
9. In the 1940s, famed British sociologist T. H. Marshall gave a series of lectures on the concept of "social citizenship." According to Marshall, social citizenship was the extension of participatory democracy made realizable through welfare benefits aiding the poor in areas of education, housing, and health care. He argued that these benefits, disbursed through the welfare state in Britain, allowed those who were socially disenfranchised as a

result of poverty or other forms of marginalization to actually participate in democratic life. Marshall's vision, like that of Dewey's, was one of endlessly expandable democracy both constitutive of and confined by the nation-state. His ideas were important for intellectuals and policymakers in both Britain and Canada (see Marshall and Bottomore, 1992).

10. The development of Canadian liberalism paralleled that in the United States in many respects, with a strong connection to early British thinkers and a similar national context of colonization and immigration. This said, there is a large literature on the differences between Canada and the United States. An influential book by Lipset, *Continental Divide* (1990), summarizes many of the popularly understood differences between the two countries. One of the most important stems from the history and early development of Canada, which was colonized by the French and the British, and still recognizes the languages and cultures of both. Perhaps even more important was the ongoing connection to London, where the Privy Council remained technically the highest level of Canadian government until 1982. The similarities and differences between U.S. and Canadian branches of liberalism are discussed in Taylor (1991, 1994); Kymlicka (1989, 1995); and Cairns (1992, 1999).
11. French Canadian discontent was expressed in the 1960s in the "Quiet Revolution," the first major expression of Québécois separatism in Canada (Behiels, 1985).
12. See the selected essays of Alan Cairns in Williams (1988).
13. The Canadian Charter of Rights was legislated in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982. It was the first full expression of Canadian autonomy from Britain. In many respects the Charter was patterned after the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.
14. *Proceduralism* can be defined as a form of liberalism based on the notion that rational individuals can communicate transparently and that this process creates distributive justice. See Rawls (1971) and Sandel (1982).
15. For a more complete discussion of Hall's work, see Morley and Chen (1996).
16. For similar arguments related to Canada, see Ong (1999) and Mitchell (1998).
17. The timing of the migration wave was also an important factor. The migrants arrived during a major process of change in state governance. During the 1980s and early 1990s in Canada there was a strong push toward greater privatization, deregulation, and devolution of federal power; as a result, the demand for changes in public education articulated well with a more general call for less governmental control and greater individual and market choice. For a good analysis of these changes in Canada, see Rekart (1993).
18. The literature on globalization is immense and widely varied. For a good introduction and analysis of the types of economic changes described above, see Cox (1997); King (1991); and Burbach (1997).
19. Employment and Immigration Canada, *Annual Immigration Statistics* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1999).
20. The first Business Immigration Program (for the self-employed) was begun in 1978, but it was not until 1984, the year the Basic Law agreement was signed in Hong Kong, that procedures were adopted to attract highly qualified entrepreneurs into Canada. Another category, the "investor" track, was introduced in 1986. The express intent of this program was "to attract qualified business persons to Canada on the basis of their willingness to invest their capital in Canadian business ventures which create jobs and contribute to business expansion" (*Immigrants to Canada*, 1990, p. 30).
21. One of the major struggles in both Vancouver and Richmond has been over the so-called "monster house." These extremely large, box-shaped houses were built in the late 1980s by developers attempting to attract Chinese buyers. Many new Hong Kong immigrants did purchase these homes, and they were then perceived as negatively altering the cultural landscape traditions of the city (see Mitchell, 1998).

22. *Neoliberalism* is a term widely used in the social sciences; it relates primarily to the freeing up of capital from various types of restrictions and blockages — including any form of regulation or subsidization from government.
23. For a further discussion of the two Free Trade Agreements and their links with neo-liberalism, see Clarkson (1993) and Drache (1993). For more on the Canadian charter, see Mandel (1989). On the constitution, a useful source is McBride and Shields (1993).
24. The term *traditional* is the label given to schools that advocate a “back to basics” approach to education.
25. This definition has been culled from the traditional school proposals and from the available literature. See, in particular, the interesting analysis of traditional schools in British Columbia undertaken by Kalaw, McLaren, and Rehnby (1998).
26. In the case of the existing traditional schools, the moral code that is most often promoted is one of a disciplined obedience to normative structures of authority, particularly those of the nuclear, patriarchal family.
27. In the Canadian context “liberal” refers to the party of the political center; the NPA is considered a conservative party. The teachers’ union and the NDP are considered more progressive or “leftist” political affiliations than either of these two.
28. Thirty of the parents were from Richmond; forty were from Vancouver (see Howell, 1998c).
29. I attended several of these public meetings, and interviewed members of the school board and others associated with the traditional school proposal. On-site research was conducted in Richmond in the summer of 1998 and in May of 1999.
30. This was related to me by Mike Howell, the reporter of the *Richmond News* responsible for covering the traditional school controversy.
31. Interviews with Richmond residents were conducted primarily in the summer of 1998, with follow-up telephone interviews and some personal interviews in 1999. Fourteen open-ended, in-person interviews were conducted, lasting approximately one hour each. Twenty telephone interviews were also conducted during this time, with nine follow-up interviews in 1999. The Richmond research is part of a broader study on Hong Kong immigration in Vancouver that has been ongoing between 1990 and 2001.
32. These letters were culled from twenty-one published letters to the editor on this issue that were sent to the *Richmond News* between March 1998 and July 1999. They are generally representative of the types of schisms that were aired in the community during this time, although numerous other issues pertaining to the traditional schools were also raised.
33. The language in which these recommendations were made was quite vague and unspecific. The idea of increased communication referred generally to making sure that information about school practices, homework, and their children’s progress was getting through to parents and that they were familiar and comfortable with the school. It also referred to parental involvement in the school through volunteering and through educating themselves about school events and activities. Greater consistency referred to an effort to coordinate learning across grades so that all children of a certain age would be following the same general curriculum.
34. The use of the word *foundations* corresponded generally with the advocacy of a more back-to-basics type of learning pushed by traditional school proponents. Exactly what would constitute those foundations, however, was not specified initially by the superintendent.
35. There were ten round tables at the meeting, each representing different Richmond schools within the Richmond school district. There were eight to ten people at each table. Notably, none of the traditional school proponents participated in these public meetings. I was told by several people that the traditional school advocates felt that their

- needs were *not* being addressed by the Foundations Program concept and thus they declined to attend.
36. The viewpoint expressed here was corroborated in a number of interviews I conducted with Chinese traditional school proponents in 1998. See also the reports by Howell (1998a, 1998b) and Bermingham (1998).
 37. The quotation is from a brochure entitled "The Foundations Program," which was circulated by the Richmond school district in June 1999.
 38. The idea of "cultural capital" was first introduced by Bourdieu (1977). It can be described as a system of internalized values and ways of being in the world that have some degree of "currency" in social and economic relationships. For an immigrant group perceived as culturally and racially different by the host society, sometimes the only form of cultural capital that is available to that group (and portable, in times of economic or political distress) is educational capital. For this type of cultural capital to be useful to the transnational immigrant, however, it must be standardized to the extent that the level of achievement garnered in any one locale is also valued across cultural and national borders.
 39. As discussed earlier, scholars such as Lisa Lowe (1996) and Aihwa Ong (1999) have argued that the attainability of national "cultural" citizenship and complete membership in the national project is something that perpetually eludes Asian immigrants.
 40. The idea of a constitutive outside is that in order for a nation's territorial borders and narratives to "work" as containing devices for a given population, there must be another population that is forever located outside and in opposition to it. In other words, in order to constitute a "we" there must be a "they."
 41. Some readers might question whether the Richmond Chinese parents' engagement in the traditional school controversy did, in fact, represent full democratic participation. I would argue, in response, that political involvement and competence is not the same as inclusion in the national project. The many roadblocks and difficulties the Chinese immigrants encountered along the way are just a few indicators of the perpetual struggles of non-White immigrants in Canadian and U.S. societies. The fact that this group is heard at all has to do with their elevated class position and cosmopolitan savvy in the attempt to use the local systems to their advantage. (And in this case, moreover, the immigrants felt that their desires were NOT met, as a separate traditional school was not established in the end). More importantly, however, I am linking this very small and specific case to a much broader anti-racist literature of the 1980s and 1990s, which documents and theorizes racial formations from a radical perspective — one that, I believe, effectively critiques liberal ideas of multiculturalism and eventual inclusion in Western, liberal national projects. In addition to the literature cited above, a useful source on the paradoxes of multiculturalism as it is played out in the national narratives of many countries, including Canada, is Baumann (1999).

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