

# The Ashgate Research Companion to Multiculturalism

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# Introduction: Multiculturalism as a Public Ideal

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## Introduction

Multiculturalism is an awkward term. Some suggest it merely restates the very problem it is meant to resolve; others that it should be abandoned altogether. But what would it mean to abandon multiculturalism? And not just the phrase or concept, but the attitudes, beliefs and practices associated with it?

However inelegant a word, the concept of multiculturalism now occupies a central place in the public culture of Western liberal democracies and increasingly in global political discourse too. Some of the fundamental ideas associated with multiculturalism underlie a remarkable shift in approaches to minority rights that have occurred over the past 25 years in domestic and international law. Multiculturalism has also become a central topos in modern social and political theory, as well in the contemporary social sciences more generally. There is no question that there has been a fundamental shift in our thinking about the nature of ethnic and cultural diversity.

One thing the 'multicultural turn' in political theory has done is put cultural and ethnic diversity at the centre of contemporary debates. It broke up the explicit (and often implicit) monoculturalism at the heart of many of the dominant ways of conceiving of modern statehood and citizenship. It brought to the fore various occluded aspects of the way nation-building often presumed a cultural uniformity that legitimated harmful modes of assimilation, or was indifferent to the aspirations of minorities. Even more recently, multicultural ideas have spread to debates over the nature of global justice and the search for global norms of human rights and redistributive justice.

This volume seeks to bring together some of the leading and emergent scholars working on multiculturalism from a range of different disciplines and approaches – including philosophy, political science, sociology and anthropology. One general background against which the book is set is the rise of multiculturalism as an increasingly global political ideal, and yet also a sense of unease about many of

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its consequences. The book is divided into three thematic sections: 'foundations', 'challenges' and 'alternatives'. Each author was asked to provide a distinctive angle and response to the question they were posing, but also to provide enough background so that someone coming to these issues for the first time would be able to situate the argument in a broader context. What I want to do in this chapter is introduce some of the main themes of the book. But I also want to identify some of the key ideas and questions at the heart of multiculturalism understood as distinctively *public* ideal.

### Three Logics of Multiculturalism

First of all, what do we mean by multiculturalism? Even here there is argument, as we might expect. But for the general purposes of this book, multiculturalism refers to a broad array of theories, attitudes, beliefs, norms, practices and policies that seek to provide public recognition of and support for accommodation of non-dominant ethnocultural groups. The nature of these non-dominant groups will vary: some may be immigrant minorities (including refugees), others will be 'historically settled' minorities such as national minorities (e.g. the Quebecois) or indigenous peoples. These differences are important, as we shall see. However, what is distinctive about multicultural approaches to social and cultural diversity – and especially *liberal* multiculturalism – is the aim is to go beyond the protection of basic civil and political liberties associated with liberal citizenship to forms of *differentiated citizenship* that allows groups to express their distinct identities and practices (Kymlicka 1995b; 2001; 2007b; and Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this volume). Some of these measures include the recognition and support of minority languages, exemptions from generally applicable laws and the recognition of 'inherent rights of self-government' (for indigenous peoples). This means debates about multiculturalism inevitably involve deeper claims about not only the vexed question of culture, but also the nature of freedom, equality, democracy and justice.

It is important to acknowledge an immediate problem with this broad conception of multiculturalism. As this book makes clear, the prospects for multiculturalism, as well as what it means (in theory and practice), can vary from place to place. This is particularly true when comparing attitudes towards multiculturalism in many parts of Western and Eastern Europe, in North, Central and South America, in Australasia, and also increasingly in Africa and Asia. Some of this is to do with different facts on the ground (e.g. different patterns of immigration), and some to do with different histories of settlement and forms of nation-building. So context is crucial; although we can pick out certain broad elements that most forms of (liberal) multiculturalism share, there will also always be important differences. In Canada and Australasia, for example, 'multiculturalism' is not generally used to refer to the situation of indigenous peoples and many indigenous groups resist the extension of the concept multiculturalism to cover their claims. This is because there is a prior question about the legitimacy of the state that remains to be addressed for

## INTRODUCTION: MULTICULTURALISM AS A PUBLIC IDEAL

indigenous peoples (Turner 2006; Ivison 2002). Their situation is clearly not akin to recent migrants. Elsewhere, however, such as in Latin America, 'multiculturalism' is often used to refer to the claims of indigenous peoples as opposed to immigrant groups.

I want to identify three broad 'logics' of multiculturalism that will serve as a general framework for the discussion in this chapter, as well as in the book as a whole. They don't define any particular doctrine, but rather represent three general modes of understanding the nature of multiculturalism.

The first logic is *protective* or communitarian multiculturalism. Here the basic idea is that the central point of any form of public recognition or accommodation of an ethnocultural group is to preserve the cultural integrity and authenticity of its way of life. This is often accompanied by a reified sense of culture, which is reduced to a discrete set of 'traditional' practices said to be at the heart of the group's identity. Thus in order to protect the individuals you must preserve the group and that means protecting the culture. The right to preserve one's cultural authenticity is assumed then to preclude others from making judgments about the practices involved, including appealing to universal standards of justice or human rights. The legitimacy of the exercise of authority within these groups, along with the consequences of various internal practices for the well-being of its members, are matters for the group to decide and no one else. This links multiculturalism closely to forms of communitarian political thought (e.g. Van Dyke 1982; see also Kymlicka 2001).

The next logic is *liberal* multiculturalism, which has been far and away the most prominent in recent political theory. There are many variations of this form of multiculturalism, which will be explored in the chapters below. However, the basic idea is this: multiculturalism is justified as an approach to accommodating and protecting diversity on the grounds that it promotes liberal values such as equality, autonomy, toleration or equal respect. Thus, although it may well allow a degree of cultural preservation or protectionism, that isn't the central aim or *telos* of this approach. Cultural preservation will be a function of the degree to which it helps promote liberal ends.

Liberal multiculturalism is also universalist in orientation: the value of autonomy or equality is said to be valuable for everyone, whatever their cultural background. Thus, those practices that undermine a person's autonomy, or basic human rights, are not supposed to be entitled to protection or accommodation. Moreover, liberal multiculturalism aims explicitly at *transforming* current social and political arrangements, and especially the cultural dimensions of these arrangements. It seeks to transform the way dominant majorities have treated minorities within their boundaries, as well as the way minority groups have conceived of their claims. It seeks to transform the identities and practices of both minority and majority groups in line with liberal-democratic norms of anti-discrimination, equality and basic human rights. It aims to do so through the distribution of targeted rights and resources for minorities. This includes ensuring minorities enjoy the fair value of their basic civil and political liberties, but also providing differentiated rights tailored to the specific circumstances of the groups in question. Of course, the

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liberal multiculturalist accepts that simply imposing liberal democratic practices on certain groups is often unjustified and also impractical. But ultimately, illiberal practices (whether embraced by minorities or majorities) – defined in relation to certain key liberal principles – ought to be transformed. More controversially, some cultural practices (those which are more ‘liberal’) are clearly seen to be better than others. Liberal multiculturalism is superior to any form of monoculturalism (liberal or otherwise) because – so the argument goes – it increases the range of choices and options available to individuals.<sup>1</sup> This means diversity isn’t valuable in itself, as it might be for the biologist, but because it is correlative with liberty and is crucial for the development of autonomy.

The third logic of multiculturalism is neither protective nor liberal but what we might call *imperial*. Imperial multiculturalism is essentially a new version of the hierarchical and/or racialized modes of political order that it was supposed to have displaced. As a framing device, it provides a critical lens through which the various relations of power that operate via forms of liberal government can be analysed (Foucault 1991, 2007). Critics of multiculturalism are often concerned with the limits of multicultural toleration and accommodation, and especially the practical consequences of ‘really existing liberal multiculturalism’. In particular, they point to the ways in which liberal accommodation is essentially *conditional*: cultures that qualify for rights are assumed to be homogenous and bounded (even as the liberal state is pluralized), and minorities are not expected to challenge the basic legitimacy of the state as well as live up to preconceived notions of what a ‘good migrant’ or ‘indigenous person’ is supposed to be like. Liberal legal pluralism, on this reading, is basically a means of re-subordinating marginal groups within a legal system that leaves their substantive disadvantage intact. Liberal pluralism might be subtle and less heavy-handed than earlier forms of colonialism, but liberal multicultural government (understood in the broadest sense of the term) is basically continuous with it (Day 2000; Povinelli 2002; see also Chapters 11, 13 and 14 this volume). Even more broadly, insofar as imperial multiculturalism puts *power* at the heart of the analysis, it raises questions about the way in which ‘minorities’ and ‘majorities’ are defined and produced in the first place. Who is the ‘we’ that tolerates ‘them’ and what are the underlying assumptions about who or what can be accommodated and why? What are the ontological presuppositions of multicultural theory today? (See Chapter 4 this volume.)

Each of these logics picks out a distinctive strand of both the academic and public discourse surrounding multiculturalism. I think we can identify different clusters and interweavings of these strands in various contexts. There can be harder and softer versions of all three. For example, one can find forms of *protective liberal* multiculturalism amongst scholars for whom cultural difference is the crucial variable in identifying and addressing disadvantage. Within this quadrant there are then any number of variations: some modes of protective liberalism license greater

1 Liberalism then divide between those who think a diversity of potentially monocultural groups satisfied liberal multiculturalism, as long as people have the right to exit, and those who think the value of diversity goes all the way down.

intervention in cultural practices to promote liberal ends; others almost none, save for the right to exit. Some liberals base their arguments on the value of autonomy, others on toleration. An analysis of *imperial liberal* multiculturalism, on the other hand, might focus on the conditions surrounding multicultural citizenship. Or it might question the very ontology of liberal conceptions of 'minorities' and 'majorities' in general.

A crucial question for the study of multiculturalism in the humanities and social sciences is this: what or who is the proper *subject* of multiculturalism – individuals, groups, cultures, peoples? Are we seeking to protect various cultural, linguistic or ethnic groups and their practices just because human beings value them? Or are we seeking to promote a greater diversity of cultures, languages and ethnic groups in order to provide a richer set of choices and experiences for individuals? Both perspectives presuppose that protecting cultures is often valuable, but for different reasons. One could easily believe in the former without embracing the latter. I might grudgingly accept that there are different minority groups that deserve minority rights without thinking the world is a better place because they exist. For example, I might think an extant societal culture in some given place should be accommodated, even if it doesn't have all that much internal diversity and doesn't add much to my choice set either. This is very different from thinking that multiculturalism is valuable because it provides a much richer set of options for individuals to choose and learn from.<sup>2</sup> Taking up one or the other of these perspectives will have important consequences for what you think the possibilities and limits of multiculturalism are.

## The Rise of Liberal Multiculturalism

As I mentioned above, liberal multiculturalism has been one of most influential forms of multiculturalism over the last twenty years. The history of the emergence of this cluster of ideas is complex and can't be told in any detail here (see Kymlicka 1989a, 1995b, 2001, 2007b). It's clear that the rise of multiculturalism is connected in various ways to the emergence of the discourse of human rights after World War II, and of a heightened 'rights consciousness' in general. What is striking about the period immediately following the enactment of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948, however, is that minority rights were generally frowned upon as a device for protecting vulnerable individuals and groups. Part of this was driven by straightforward realpolitik, and the desire of powerful nation-states to ensure they wouldn't be threatened by secessionist claims, or be forced to recognize minorities within their own borders. But it also stemmed from a principled argument that suggested that the best way to realize individual freedom and equality was through the protection of *individual* rights, not group rights.

2 This paragraph touches on an important debate between Kymlicka (1995b) and Waldron (1995, 2000). See also Goodin (2006).

Going back even further, liberalism's approach to diversity has its roots in the seventeenth century and the response to the chaos and strife of the wars of religion in northern Europe (Rawls 1993). In this context, ideas of toleration, the separation of church and state and the idea of the state being 'neutral' between different faiths, emerged as ways of dealing with deep social and political diversity (see Chapter 5 this volume). Allowing individuals the right to freedom of conscience in the private sphere, the right to associate with whom they pleased, all the while remaining subject to the judgment of the magistrate in matters of public concern, seemed to provide a framework for mitigating the consequences of deep disagreement over religion and morality. Note that this meant the justification of religious liberty (and religious toleration) was based, ultimately, on the value it has for *individuals*,<sup>3</sup> and as something that should be extended to all (or at least all Christians, in the first instance) as a matter of mutual respect.

Another aspect of the liberal approach to diversity is a link between the protection of basic civil and political liberties and equality. If everyone is fundamentally equal and owed equal respect, then the best way of realizing equality is to ensure people's basic rights are respected and they are able to live their lives by their own lights (consistent with the rights of others to do likewise). Diversity is best promoted and protected by allowing individuals to exercise their freedom as they see fit, regulated by a liberal theory of justice. Recognizing 'special rights' or 'group rights', according to this line of argument, would either break with equality – properly understood – or be redundant. If immigrants or national minorities have been badly treated then this has more to do with a failure to live up to liberal principles than it is evidence for the introduction of cultural rights (Barry 2001; Scheffler 2007; see the discussion in Chapter 3).

The standard liberal response to religious diversity emphasized the neutrality of the state, equal treatment in terms of non-discrimination and the privatization of religious belief as a matter of individual conscience. Multicultural political thought did not reject these ideas outright so much as subject them to critique and reconstruction from the point of view of very different kinds of groups and claims. Although religious diversity remains an important issue, the scope of diversity has been radically extended. It is not only claims by religious minorities that need to be addressed, but also those by cultural and ethnic groups, racial groups, national groups, linguistic minorities, as well as those based on gender, sexuality and disability. The suggestion that liberal democratic states like the United States or Canada were somehow ethnoculturally neutral was taken to be patently false: The history of the way boundaries were drawn, the way symbols were chosen and used in the public culture, the dominance of English as a national language (at least in the US), among other things, all pointed beyond neutrality (Kymlicka 2007a: 33–34).

One way to see these developments goes like this: If the struggle for equal citizenship throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries involved extending the rights of citizenship to encompass a greater number of people, as well as across

3 Though it also generates a very important collective good (i.e. social peace).

a broader range of entitlements (civil, political, social and economic), then the demand for multicultural citizenship was simply the next step along this path. It does not entail a break with liberal citizenship, so the argument goes, but rather the logical extension of it in modern conditions of deep diversity.

In considering the range of claims for recognition, it should be immediately clear that what might be appropriate in one case might not be in another. Religion, for example, entails a commitment to various practices, creeds and institutions, whilst gender and sexuality are often experienced and practiced in very different ways. Indigenous peoples consider themselves self-governing and lay claim to territories from which they were forcibly removed, whilst minority migrant groups often seek forms of recognition that enable them to integrate fairly into mainstream society. Although there are attempts to draw analogies between different groups – between the situation of the disabled and certain racial or national groups, for example – the differences are also significant. There is no standard multicultural formula for minority rights that can be applied to each and every situation, regardless of context.

However, the basic claim at the heart of liberal multiculturalism is that certain social and cultural identities deserve to be recognized because, without them, individuals lack what they need for living decent lives. If human beings are also culturally embedded beings then equal respect for individuals means equal respect for the cultural forms they inhabit and help sustain. There are two important moves here that we need to evaluate. The first has to do with the appeal to equality. The second has to do with the relation between individuals and groups.

### Equality and Culture

The first move is the suggestion that 'recognition', or the accommodation of cultural, national, religious or ethnic difference, is connected to a rich sense of *equality*. Recall that on the liberal neutralist view, we treat someone equally when we respect and protect their basic rights. Lying behind this idea is an appeal to the relation between equality and treating people similarly. Of course, equality is always a matter of treating like cases alike and that means deciding what are the relevant cases to consider. But on the richer view, influenced by the work of John Rawls (1971, 1993), we treat someone equally when they have the resources to genuinely enjoy the fair value of their basic rights as well as genuine equality of opportunity. In a culturally diverse society, members of both majority and minority groups may well have very different capacities and needs that are relevant to judging whether someone enjoys genuine equality of opportunity. A disabled person, for example, will need to be treated differently than an able-bodied person to receive 'equal respect' in many cases. Both are entitled to equal civic liberties, but a disabled person may require more resources in order to realize the equal value of their freedom. The interesting cases are when this analogy is extended to cultural and national groups. Are there



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forms of accommodation or protection for minority groups that can be justified on the grounds of promoting equality (whether of persons or of groups?). This cuts to the heart of recent debates in multicultural political theory and is discussed in many of the chapters here.

There is a related question about different kinds of disadvantage an individual or group might suffer from, and therefore what forms of compensation or public policy might be justified in addressing them. Some argue that another problem with the neutralist model is that it leaves many forms of inequality that are the product of certain *structural* features of society unaddressed. Interestingly, the same argument is applied to multicultural models too. Iris Marion Young, for example, has distinguished between two forms of what she calls 'the politics of difference' (Young 1990, 2007). The first involves 'positional difference' and the second 'cultural difference'. Positional difference refers to the way individuals are structured by various kinds of norms, practices and institutions. That is, it refers to the way norms and practices are reproduced in society through, for example, the division of labour or various decision-making processes that systematically disadvantage certain groups by inhibiting the development of their capacities. These structural inequalities persist despite people enjoying the same (formal) civil and political liberties. Recall the example above to do with the disabled. The claim here is that it isn't simply a case of the physically or mentally handicapped lacking certain capacities required to lead fulfilling lives, but rather that there is a problem with the practices and norms of the *rest of society* that prevent them from exercising their capacities to the fullest extent. What constitutes the 'normal range' of valuable human functioning, for example, includes facts about the built environment, social expectations and attitudes, aesthetic standards and so on, that have real consequences for the handicapped to be able to lead decent lives. Similar claims could be made about the persistence of institutional racism and the gendered division of labour. The argument is that even with the extension of basic civil and political liberties to the handicapped (or to racial minorities and women) certain structural features of society prevent genuine equality being realized for these citizens.

To address positional difference, therefore, requires going well beyond 'difference-blind' or neutralist liberalism. But it's also a *structural* difference as opposed to a cultural one and so focusing on cultural difference might well leave structural disadvantage inadequately addressed. Cultural differences present another set of challenges. Here inequality can exist in virtue of the relation between the dominant 'societal culture' and minority cultural groups with their own cultures. These minority cultures become difficult to sustain and if it is mainly as a result of the circumstances members find themselves in, as opposed to the choices they've made, the situation is potentially unfair. The dominant group can limit the opportunities of other groups to realize their ends, whether through explicit domination or repression, but also merely by growing or allowing minority practices to wither away. Of course, cultural change is not in itself something that can or should be prevented; the case for sustaining a minority culture will depend on the connection between its survival and the well-being of its members.

Now these two approaches to the kinds of disadvantage that emerge in modern pluralist societies are clearly not mutually exclusive, despite what some of the literature suggests.<sup>4</sup> Members of a minority cultural group might well suffer from various structural forms of inequality too. Feminist analyses of the situation of women within minority cultural groups, for example, bring this out very clearly, as do analyses of racism (see Chapters 6 and 7). However, it is true that depending on the nature of the disadvantage with which you are concerned, different solutions and approaches may be called for and tensions between these approaches can occur. A move to provide more autonomy for national minorities, for example, will require finding ways of ensuring vulnerable members *within* those groups are treated equally and can exercise their freedom or autonomy in meaningful ways. As we will see, focusing on disadvantage through the lens of structural disadvantage tends to shift discussion towards ideals of democratic citizenship that cut across cultural and national differences (see Chapter 8). Focusing on the accommodation of cultural differences, on the other hand, tends to shift discussion towards forms of autonomy and freedom, especially of groups. Needless to say, any adequate analysis of the challenge of diversity will require a subtle interweaving of the two.

Up until now we have been moving between ideas of what is owed to individuals and groups, as if this relation was relatively unproblematic. Remember that one of the crucial moves we identified above was equal respect for *persons* being extended to equal respect for *cultures* or *groups*. But we need an argument to link these two claims; one does not follow automatically from the other. The tension is neatly demonstrated in the frequent slippage between talking about the 'rights of minority cultures' and the 'rights of cultural minorities'. Are cultures the kind of things that can have rights? Or are we instead concerned mainly with the rights of the individual members of those groups?

### From Persons to Groups and Back Again

One of the most influential arguments linking the well-being of individuals with the public recognition of minority groups has been provided by Will Kymlicka. For Kymlicka, access to a secure cultural structure provides a 'context for choice' for individuals (1989a, 1995b). Culture, in other words, or at least what he calls a 'societal culture', helps people realize their autonomy – their freedom. This is a universalist claim about the value of autonomy for persons in general. A societal culture is basically a territorially concentrated culture, centred on a shared language used in a wide range of societal institutions in both public and private life (schools, media, law, economy, government etc.) (Kymlicka 2007a: 34–5). So a societal culture is different from a set of religious beliefs or personal lifestyles; skateboarders may well share a common subculture, but they don't share a societal culture. Societal

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<sup>4</sup> See especially the so-called 'recognition vs redistribution' debate, discussed in Chapters 7, 9 and 10.

cultures are, however, inevitably pluralistic; they may contain different religious faiths, sexual orientations and class differences. But that pluralism is balanced by a certain amount of linguistic and institutional cohesion, often created through deliberate state policies.

Many have criticized Kymlicka for this seemingly overly homogenous and bounded conception of culture, however much he has used it to try and pluralize the singularity of the nation-state (e.g. Carens 2000). However, for our purposes, it's important to see how he thinks access to a societal culture and freedom are connected. Providing some groups with support for the preservation of their societal culture is something that not only extends a privilege larger groups enjoy, but helps promote important liberal goods. What is being protected through self-government rights or language rights isn't the particular *content* of any culture, but rather the *structure* within which people can exercise their freedom and through which they can make sense of the world. This content/structure distinction is supposed to track the idea that what some cultural groups may therefore be entitled to are certain *external* protections that enable them to sustain their cultural structures, as opposed to *internal* restrictions on the rights and liberties of their members. The closer we get to considering the actual cultural structures and practices at issue, however, the harder it gets to keep these distinctions apart. Protecting cultural structures in practice seems inevitably to have consequences for the choice-sets of members of the group. We'll return to this issue below, especially in relation to questions of gender.

Kymlicka's argument is not the only one to link cultural membership with liberal values, and indeed many have criticized it for appealing to a value that might not be as universal as he thinks (i.e. autonomy). There are at least two other ways of linking cultural membership to liberal ends. For Charles Taylor, 'recognition' is a crucial human good, given the way it is linked to forms of personal and collective identity that enable common deliberation about the good in the first place. Because our sense of self is shaped by the recognition (and indeed *misrecognition*) of others, the way the group I identify with is recognized matters too. For Taylor, our identities are fundamentally intersubjective, and this has important consequences for thinking about how we should manage the deep diversity of modern societies (see Chapters 3, 9 and 10). Joseph Raz (1998), on the other hand, appeals to the values of equal concern and dignity: if we take the equal worth of persons seriously then we need to be concerned about the well-being of the cultural groups to which they belong and help sustain.

So the most important forms of group membership are those that provide people with access to valuable human goods. For many people, these forms of identity are not easily shed, but nor are they so constraining as to be necessarily incompatible with a conception of liberal freedom. For Kymlicka and other defenders of liberal multiculturalism, the main task then is to distinguish between ways of accommodating diversity that are compatible with liberal ends and those which are not (as well as thinking of ways of 'liberalizing' currently illiberal practices). And this is a difficult task, as many of the chapters in this book make clear.

For Kymlicka, groups that violate their members' basic liberties, or prevent them from exercising their autonomy, are not entitled to multicultural accommodation or protection (although how we handle these situations in practice is a separate issue). For Raz, similarly, the value of the equal worth and dignity of each individual constrains what cultures can do to their members. In each case, individuals must be free to exercise their right to exit – however difficult that can be – and it must be a genuine right, not merely a formal one. The right to freedom of association is only really valuable if it also includes the freedom *not* to associate.<sup>5</sup>

At this point, for many critics, liberal multiculturalism begins to look less multicultural and more about a particular liberal way of life. As we've seen, for some liberal multiculturalists, this is hardly a contradiction: the whole point of liberal multiculturalism, in their view, is to transform the way states engage with minority groups and the way minorities understand the nature of their practices. But the deeper critique of the liberal neutralist perspective we explored above also points to a deeper critique of liberalism itself. Recall that for Iris Marion Young, the positional or structural disadvantage suffered by some individuals in society was, in part, a product of how they were treated as a group or class.<sup>6</sup> This is another reason why groups matter. But it also implies going beyond not only the liberal paradigm of ensuring non-discrimination and equal rights, but also the almost exclusive focus on the activities of the state. A more thoroughly critical approach to liberal multiculturalism would question this assumption as well, and focus equally on the way that non-state processes and institutions help reinforce and reproduce structural inequalities that cut across cultural and positional differences (Young 2000).

## Multiculturalism and its Discontents

Multiculturalism is not only an awkward word; it is a demanding and risky ideal to realize in practice. Adopting a multicultural perspective and implementing multicultural policies has real costs. It asks people to change not only the way they think about the world, but also how they interact with others, and especially the shape and look of their public institutions. It asks states to change the way they engage in nation-building, and it changes the distribution of economic and political power.

There are clearly social, economic and political conditions required for multiculturalism – and especially liberal multiculturalism – to succeed as a public ideal. In many ways, research into exactly what these conditions are and how they can best be promoted is still patchy. Kymlicka lists five crucial conditions that enabled

5 A rich literature has grown up around the meaning of the right to exit. For helpful discussions see Okin (1999), Shachar (2001), Gutmann (2003) and Kukathas (2003).

6 This can also generate reactive modes of collective identification, driven in part by the harms people feel they are suffering from. See Brown (1995).

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liberal multiculturalism to emerge in the West: (i) increasing rights consciousness; (ii) demographic change; (iii) multiple access points for non-dominant groups to press their claims; (iv) the de-securitization of ethnic relations; and (v) consensus on human rights (Kymlicka 2007b: 122ff.). Where one or more of these elements is missing, we can expect trouble for certain forms of multiculturalism, whether in the West or elsewhere.

In fact, the success or failure of multiculturalism is highly context-sensitive. The presence or absence of crucial variables will shape how multiculturalism develops (or not) in particular ways. The general prospect for multiculturalism in the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe will be very different then in Africa, which will be different again from Asia and Latin America. The variations within these regions will be significant too. The intellectual sources may be different (see Chapters 12 and 15), the 'subject' of multicultural rights may vary, and the power relations and histories will be different.

For example, in some contexts there may be no dominant cultural group, but rather a mix of roughly equal groups in terms of influence or size. This will shape the range of multicultural rights deemed necessary. In some contexts, a minority group may be both economically and politically weak, but in others, a group might be politically marginalized but economically powerful. Once again, this will shape how receptive a society might be towards accommodating minority rights. Granting self-government rights to national minorities might seem politically impossible for various historical and practical reasons. Where there are still deep security fears about the stability of the state or region, and where minority groups within one set of borders are linked to groups in neighbouring states, multicultural accommodation might seem incredibly difficult. These complexities are reflected at the international level too. Although there has been an internationalization of multicultural norms and a global diffusion of various policy models over the past 25 years, they are also running into a 'veritable minefield of conceptual confusions, moral dilemmas, unintended consequences, legal inconsistencies and political manipulation' (Kymlicka 2007b: 8).

At the same time, the public ideal of multiculturalism has come under sustained criticism in the West. After the bombings of the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001, and the subsequent bombings in Bali, Madrid and London, along with the wars launched in Iraq and Afghanistan, some commentators have questioned the value of multiculturalism and indeed linked it to the rise of extremism itself. Many critics associate multiculturalism with three worrying claims: (i) that it entails moral relativism or nihilism (Finkelkraut 1988); (ii) that it undermines social cohesion and 'social capital', and especially the trust required for cooperative and productive social relations (Barry 2001; Putnam 2007<sup>7</sup>); and (iii) that it encourages

7 Note that Putnam is not a critic of multiculturalism per se. In fact, he thinks something like a liberal approach to cultural and ethnic diversity is necessary, given the unavoidable increase in ethnic diversity. However, he claims that his research on diversity and social capital points to some worrying short- to medium-term trends. For more discussion of his thesis see Chapter 6.

separatism and conservatism that threatens the rights and well-being of the most vulnerable members of minority groups, especially young girls and women (Okin 1999). Perhaps the most extreme version of anti-multiculturalism has been associated with a deep anxiety over Muslim migration in Europe in particular. The title of a recent book epitomizes this kind of reaction: *Surrender: Appeasing Islam, Sacrificing Freedom* (Bawer 2009). The author considers multiculturalism to involve nothing less than the evisceration of Western civilization.

This is nonsense, to be sure, but these kinds of arguments tap into a general unease about multiculturalism that has permeated Western democracies in recent years. Having said that, it's important to identify exactly what is at issue. Although one can find arguments justifying multiculturalism as a means of protecting and promoting cultural or ethnic separatism, or as grounded in a form of cultural relativism, the overwhelming focus of attention has been on justifying and implementing *liberal* multiculturalism. That is, a form of multiculturalism that is an *expression* of liberal democratic values, not a repudiation of them. Liberal multiculturalism, as we've seen, is a concept that is closely tied to the principles of individual freedom and equality. If you turn to any of the major international documents concerning minority rights, or national legislation embedding multiculturalism in law and public policy, what you find are references to the protection of basic human rights, to fundamental equality, or to the promotion of equal citizenship.<sup>8</sup> Of course, that doesn't mean there aren't lively debates about the nature of those values, but the choice is not between nihilism and liberal democracy. That is a false dichotomy. So the first worry about multiculturalism entailing relativism or nihilism is either wildly overstated or simply false.

The second worry is one about multiculturalism undermining social cohesion, and especially support for the kind of redistributive policies associated with liberal democratic welfare states. Once again this requires careful consideration. Part of the answer will be a straightforward empirical matter: it will involve examining the levels of support present in a country for various kinds of welfare programs and correlating this to attitudes towards immigration etc. It will also involve studying the extent of the various redistributive policies of different states and comparing that with the degree to which each has embraced 'strong', 'weak' or no multicultural policies at all. (Preliminary research suggests there is no significant correlation between strong multiculturalism and weak redistributive policies; see Banting and Kymlicka 2006.<sup>9</sup>)

8 See for example the *UN Declaration on Minority Rights* 8(2); *European Framework Convention on the Rights of National Minorities* Article 21; Canada's *Multiculturalism Act* (1988). The latter declares in its preamble that just *because* everyone is equal before the law and has the right to protection under the law without discrimination, and because everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression etc., it is adopting an official policy of multiculturalism.

9 However, in some cases (especially Latin America) multiculturalism has been used in tandem with neo-liberal privatization policies. See the chapter by Van Cott in Banting and Kymlicka (2006).

A related concern is more abstract. This is the claim that minority rights, although not inherently unjust, make it more difficult to generate and sustain social cohesion. This forms part of a more general concern about the decline of public spiritedness and engagement in Western liberal democracies today (Putnam 2000, 2007). It also raises larger questions about the nature of democratic stability. This is an important issue. Multicultural citizenship is undoubtedly demanding (Iverson 2008). It requires citizens not only to act in such a way that promotes justice through a fair distribution of resources, and participate in a political process that holds their leaders accountable, it also requires living and working closely with others who have very different worldviews and cultural practices. It asks minority groups to remain committed to a political system in which they will always struggle to match the influence larger groups are able to exert on the broader public culture. However, there isn't any actual evidence that countries which have pursued liberal multiculturalist policies experience greater political instability or alienation among migrant groups than others. In fact, research suggests quite the opposite (see Kymlicka 1998; Adams 2007). Even where there have been serious problems, such as in parts of Europe, this has had more to do with the lack of properly inclusive forms of multicultural integration, as opposed to multiculturalism per se.

As I mentioned, the current anxiety over multiculturalism is actually a very specific kind of worry (or set of worries). The concern is essentially to do with Muslim migration, especially in countries that have experienced large inflows of 'illegal' migrants (e.g. Italy), or where migrants have struggled to integrate (e.g. in the Netherlands, and in parts of the UK). Concerns about Muslim migration are often linked – however clumsily – with fears about international terrorism (see Chapters 11, 13 and 14). This links multiculturalism with domestic and regional security issues. As Kymlicka points out, Canada's (and Australia's) original multiculturalism policy was developed in the context of large inflows of mainly white ethnic groups, whereas the largest group of non-European immigrants in Western Europe has been Muslim (Kymlicka 2007b: 55). This accounts for the close association between 'multiculturalism' and Muslim immigration in public discourse in Europe.<sup>10</sup> There are clearly extremists at work in some Muslim minority communities in Europe and this is a problem that needs to be addressed, but this is hardly the *result* of multiculturalism as many critics in the UK and the Netherlands have suggested. Where policies have been implemented that have enabled extremists to gain a foothold in a community, or unjust practices to go unchallenged, they should be stopped and the consequences carefully considered. Where reasonable and fair integration has failed to occur, more work on identifying the obstacles needs to be done. But any long-term solution will inevitably require developing new ways of accommodating and engaging with diversity, not suppressing it (see Chapters 2 and 13).

10 Some of this has spilled over into other parts of the world, including Australia and the US. Muslim migration, however, represents a much smaller proportion of total immigrants in those countries. See the discussion by Hage (Chapter 13).

Anxieties about Muslim migration touch on the second but also the third worry about multiculturalism; that multicultural policies provide cover for illiberal practices within minority cultures. Sometimes these fears are based on misunderstanding and misinformation, as much as anything else (see Bouchard and Taylor 2008 and Chapter 13 this volume). In other cases there are genuine concerns for the rights and interests of the most vulnerable members of minority groups, especially young girls and women.<sup>11</sup> Gender is clearly becoming one of the litmus tests of multicultural toleration, both in the West and elsewhere (see Chapter 7), but it also raises complex issues about gender inequality in general, which cuts across cultural lines. As we have already seen, this challenge requires a more sophisticated approach than simply posing a stark dichotomy between 'culture' and 'reason', or the assumption that women face a choice between 'their culture or their rights' (Shachar 2001; Gatens 2008; cf. Phillips 2007b).

Take, for example, the issue of recognizing supplementary or alternative forms of jurisdiction based in religious and cultural practices. This has proven to be an explosive issue in relation to both indigenous customary law and Islamic sharia. First, there is the issue of whether a liberal state should allow any exemptions at all from generally applicable laws (Barry 2001). Assuming there are plausible grounds for some exemptions, the next question is whether these particular kinds of exemptions are eligible and how they ought to be coordinated with other legal norms and practices. If women, for example, are taken to be severely disadvantaged by customary rules concerning marriage, conflict resolution and property (however true it might be that they assent to the alternative jurisdiction), then how can this be accommodated within a wider system of law based on respect for human rights and the equal treatment of men and women? As I mentioned above, this raises a general issue about gender equity, and it isn't clear liberals have a monopoly of virtue on this front. However, these are still genuine concerns. The most interesting and innovative approaches have attempted to ensure that any accommodation of alternate jurisdictions is coordinated in such a way that individuals' basic rights are respected and that they have genuine options within those frameworks for informed and effective choices (see Shachar 2001; Deveaux 2006; Gatens 2008). The aim is for mutual accommodation – or as Shachar aptly puts it – *transformative* multicultural accommodation (2001). Still, defending and implementing these kinds of ideas has not proven easy, as recent experience in the UK, Canada and Australia has shown (Phillips 2007b; Eisenberg 2007).

Having said all this, the contested nature of multiculturalism – at least within liberal democracies – should not be overstated. Despite many concerns, most liberal democratic states have not abandoned multiculturalism as such. And international norms that recognize and protect minority rights remain in place, as weak and imperfect as those processes often are. There is, however, a need to find new ways of articulating and defending multiculturalism as a distinctly public ideal in light

11 The issue of so-called 'honour killings' in the UK in some migrant communities presents a striking example of the complexity of the challenges here; see the discussion in Brandon and Hafez (2008).



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of new circumstances and in ways that can be endorsed by the citizens in whose name it is proclaimed. This is difficult when the rhetoric of multiculturalism can be deployed in so many different ways. Subtle distinctions between internal and external protections, protective and integrative models and between autonomy and diversity etc. can get lost in the cacophony of public debate driven by fear, and the short-term agendas of politicians and the media. The challenges of defending pluralism in newly democratizing states and those emerging from civil war or authoritarian rule are even greater.

At the heart of multiculturalism as a public ideal is the notion that we are all members of a range of overlapping (and sometimes conflicting) communities. Our membership in these communities can be liberating but also constraining. These forms of belonging can help define who we are and what ends are worth pursuing and yet also shrink our moral world and thus the scope of moral concern. The challenge is to find political forms that manifest this diversity and yet at the same time keep these different identities and commitments engaged in an expansive and civil conversation. This book is a modest contribution to that task.<sup>12</sup>

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