ABSTRACT

Multiculturalism and National Identity in an Ethnically Diverse Society

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This thesis examines the relationship between multiculturalism and national identity particularly through the lens of the moral and political arguments for and against ethnic diversity. As a preliminary assessment, this thesis will first outline relevant definitions of identity, diversity, and national identity. Then it will analyze the various arguments in favor of multiculturalism on both the moral and political grounds, followed by the ethical and political criticisms, respectively. By examining the various arguments for and against multicultural diversity, it becomes clear that the ethnocentric conception of identity that follows from multiculturalism challenges civic unity and national identity. It not only diminishes individual rights but incentivizes ethnic division, competition, and hostility in the public sphere. If diversity truly is a societal good, it must be adjusted to uphold universal values and civic virtue upon which national unity depends.

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MULTICULTURALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN AN ETHNICALLY

DIVERSE SOCIETY

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The concept of identity has shaped public discourse for decades, and its prominence becomes more evident as the discussion moves out of the philosophical realm and begins influencing policy decisions and institutions. The growing emphasis on diversity in political, academic, and professional spheres of public life reveals a much deeper tension between two different concepts of identity rarely studied in conjunction with one another: ethnocentric or multicultural identity on the one hand and national identity on the other. The question this paper seeks to answer is how have multiculturalism and ethnocentric identity challenged the traditional conceptions of civic nationalism, and what does this mean for American national identity going forward? Are they compatible with one another, or do they stand in opposition? If the latter is true, what are the consequences of choosing one or the other?

The current political conversation regarding the nature of the relationship between multiculturalism and democratic citizenship reveals an absence of unified consensus around national identity. As ethnicity moves to the forefront of politics, multiculturalism successfully redefines the public debate in terms of justice and human dignity, rejecting other forms of identity as demeaning or repressive of ethnic minorities. The burden of proof has shifted to those who oppose this framing of civic identity, which arises out of concerns for the decline in common citizenship, to demonstrate not only the benefits of

an alternative conception but the absence of any negative consequences on minority rights.

This paper does not in any way argue in favor of cultural hegemony or ethnic homogeneity. Rather, it seeks to evaluate the multicultural emphasis on ethnic diversity and its severe implications for a common civic identity grounded in social and political unity necessary for a thriving democratic community. It seems as if the culture at large has accepted the belief in an inherent value of diversity without critically considering its defects or logical inconsistencies.

Ethical and Political Advantages of Diversity

Multiculturalists support diversity for its ethical goal to restore human dignity and equality. Many defenders hold that the lack of proactive efforts to promote ethnic or cultural diversity suppresses and devalues individual identity. Human dignity is restored by encouraging free expression, an essential component of identity which itself must be acknowledged and celebrated by society to be truly valued. By framing the argument in terms of justice, multiculturalists balance individual identity against the expectations and privileges of society, thus requiring the restoration of equality for ethnic minorities and retribution for historical injustices evidenced by disparities in outcome.[1]

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[1] Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Multiculturalists also praise diversity for its ability to create a new and inclusive understanding of the world, a more utilitarian perspective.[2] The amalgamation of different experiences creates a broader and more complex depiction of the world than when those experiences are isolated (assuming those with different ethnic or cultural identities experience the world differently *due to* their identity). Thus, by engaging with different identities, their unique perspectives will be incorporated into a communal understanding of the world while validating their lived experiences. This exposure to and incorporation of new perspectives stimulates creativity and innovation when confronted with an issue or obstacle. It also nurtures empathy within members of the community and compassion for those with different experiences than their own, creating a new sense of connectedness.[3] Lastly, it builds resilience within the community: "Unity in diversity" ensures the community is stronger together than it is apart.[4]

Another alleged benefit of multiculturalism and diversity initiatives is that they satisfy the requirements of social justice by redistributing benefits to those who have been historically marginalized and denied the same opportunities as the majority.[5] This argument asserts modern disparities between minority and majority groups is the result of

[2] Neil L. Rudenstine, "Why a Diverse Student Body Is So Important," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, last modified April 19, 1996, accessed October 23, 2021, https://www.chronicle.com/article/why-a-diverse-student-body-is-so-important/.

[3] George Sher, "Diversity," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 28, no. 2 (1999): 85–104, accessed February 17, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2672819.

[4] Francis Fukuyama, "Why National Identity Matters," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 4 (2018): 8, accessed November 6, 2020, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/705713.

[5] Margaret Y. K. Woo, "Reaffirming Merit in Affirmative Action," *Journal of Legal Education* 47, no. 4 (December 1997): 514–523, https://www.jstor.org/stable/42898260.

historical discrimination, and therefore positive, or affirmative, action is needed to correct it. Social justice takes a collectivist approach to justice, and success is achieved when all groups receive proportionate representation in all sectors of society as well as an equal share of the social and material benefits.

As for the political justification, diversity is thought to be consistent with democratic and classically liberal ideals.[6] First, diversity is the realization of democratic pluralism through which many identities have access to the means of promoting their interests in the public sphere, for democracy is defined by uninhibited political participation. It is imperative that individuals are not demanded to conform to a particular culture or identity but free to embrace multiple identities or choose which one is preeminent. Individuals are free to fully express themselves when their culture is accommodated and represented in the political sphere. Diversity is also consistent with the liberal commitment to equality, breaking down the social hierarchy and instituting an egalitarian society. This is expressed through differentiated citizenship rights granted according to minority status. Lastly, diversity produces a truly pluralistic society and allows for equal participation of all members where all can represent their cultural interests. This often manifests in calls for new means of democratic representation that fully incorporate all voices in political decision-making.

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[6] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford University Press, n.d.), accessed February 14, 2021, http://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/0198290918.001.0001/acprof-9780198290919.

Ethical and Political Costs of Diversity

Despite these advantages, there are many other concerns regarding the role of citizenship and social cohesion. Efforts to improve diversity have led to an ethnic-centered framework that diminishes individuality and human dignity; ethnicity is elevated above individual characteristics and merits that deserve recognition. Ethnic differences are also used to assign guilt or blame for inequality, resulting in a victimhood mentality and self-perpetuating cycle of underachievement while also deterring investigation into the real causes of group disparities. Multiculturalism also results in a collectivist mentality where group identity is the focus of civic and social organization. Collectivism strips individual autonomy, instead holding to a deterministic view of ethnicity. When experience and outcome is attributed to ethnic identity, minorities are treated as a monolith with no individual value or opportunity. The social justice implications of multiculturalism have resulted in preferential treatment for the sole purpose of rectifying disparities caused by supposed historical injustice, all without proving historical injustice is the cause of the disparity. This view incorrectly assumes that disparity between ethnic groups is the result of injustice and must therefore be countered with the redistribution of resources and privileges based on group membership. In using collectivist means to address disparities between groups, social justice has caused further division and social stratification. True equality will never be achieved through collectivism, which only reinforces division and ignores individual decision-making and minimizes efficacy.

The politicization of identity and diversity has caused a host of political problems. By emphasizing group differences and access to the political process, it fosters group

competition for recognition and benefits from the state at the expense of the common good. Institutions incentivize the mobilization of ethnic groups with appeals to feelings of victimhood and resentment by rewarding those groups with social and political benefits. This also creates an incentive to divide; by creating resentment towards nonmembers, groups strengthen their own solidarity and form subgroups so long as it is politically salient. Racial narratives therefore become the chief organizing principle of politics, reinforcing the division diversity advocates are seeking to eradicate. Multiculturalism reinforces a hierarchy of identity, ascribing victimhood to historically oppressed minorities and creating a culture of resentment. In contrast with the sense of connectedness multiculturalists claim they seek to achieve, emphasizing an ethnocentric conception of justice and equality may foster an "us versus them" mentality that fractionalizes society into competing ethnic groups. While democracy does consist of diverse interests, these interests are to be evaluated in a public forum until a consensus can be reached as to how to advance the common good. Multiculturalism substitutes "common good" consensus with group competition for government resources and power, thus providing an environment rife with ethnic conflict.

Ethnocultural diversity is often accepted on its face as a social and even moral good without much consideration of the negative effects on social unity and national identity. My aim is to challenge these assumptions and provide a more balanced view of diversity and all its facets. In the next chapter, I will first define what I mean by identity and how this manifests itself in the modern discussion of diversity before analyzing it the political context as it relates to the different conceptions of national identity.

CHAPTER TWO

Understanding Diversity and National Identity

The new language of identity and diversity have challenged traditional conceptions of national identity as well as social and political unity. Inconsistent terminology and semantics have detracted from the substantive debate surrounding ethnocultural diversity and multiculturalism in American institutions and civic life. In an attempt to answer the question regarding how ethnocultural identity has influenced traditional American national identity, it helps to first develop a framework for looking at this complex issue. I should start by defining the terms I will be using to avoid any confusion or misinterpretation. This chapter will begin by unpacking what exactly is meant by "diversity," particularly in terms of identity and the various forms of self-expression, before moving on to the political context of national identity and nationalism.

Postmodern Self-Expression

The positive view of diversity in civil organization is a recent development. It signals society's shifting priorities in response to changing social and economic conditions. Politics in the twentieth century was organized mainly along an economic spectrum, a balancing act between freedom and equality advocated by the right and the left, respectively.[1] Now that material well-being is largely taken for granted, "modern"

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[1] Fukuyama, "Why National Identity Matters."

values such as objectivity and rationalism are replaced with "postmodern" values of self-expression and autonomy that have a greater consideration for quality of life and equity. The current emphasis on diversity in all aspects of social organization therefore reflects this cultural shift in values and may explain the resistance to modernist criticisms.

This attention to diversity is in part shaped by a new conception of identity. This understanding "grows out of a distinction between one's true inner self and an outer world of social rules and norms that does not adequately recognize that inner self's worth or dignity."[2] Individualized self-expression "is increasingly equated with liberty" in pursuit of greater fulfillment.[3] Two changes that contributed to this reinterpretation of identity are the rise of social egalitarianism -- promoting universal human dignity over where someone falls in the greater social hierarchy -- and "authenticity" to one's inner self. Everyone has a unique measure of what it means to be human, and one's *potential* is defined by articulating one's *originality*. This reinforces the view that society systemically devalues the inner self and that it is society that needs to reassess its standards. However, there is also a dialogical component to identity that uses shared modes of expression ("language") and contribution from "significant others."[4] In other words, identity is not formed in isolation but in dialogue with the inner self and external influences.

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[2] Ibid., 6

[3] Yuval Levin, *The Fractured Republic: Renewing America's Social Contract in the Age of Individualism*, [Revised paperback edition]. (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 148.

[4] Taylor, *Multiculturalism.*

The need for recognition is not a new concept, but the changing conditions in which adequate recognition is withheld has made the conversation more explicit. While toleration is merely the removal of limits on expression, recognition is a positive acknowledgment of one's equal value. One example of this is the case for multicultural education: it is not primarily an issue of diversifying content so that students gain a more robust picture of the world or are exposed to different perspectives, but that "students from the excluded groups are given, either directly or by omission, a demeaning picture of themselves."[5] As the argument goes, as much as the inner self needs recognition it can also be damaged by non- or mis-recognition. It is important to note the connection between self-identity and cultural group; recognition of equal value is only achieved when one's group identity is also acknowledged. In this way, "misrecognition" of cultural identity is thought to be a harm to the individual just the same as inequality, exploitation, or injustice.[6]

The Politics of Diversity

These contrasting interpretations of equal recognition have drastic implications in the political sphere, which is the focus of this thesis. How one defines identity (in terms of the individual or the group) has implications for how one expresses his- or herself in the context of the political community. This brings us to the tension between two forms of equal recognition in the public sphere: the politics of equal dignity, based on

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[5] Ibid., 65

[6] Ibid., 64

"universal human potential," and the politics of difference, which recognizes individual distinctiveness.

The politics of equal dignity relies heavily on the principles of classical liberalism. Liberal nations are important because they ensure universal rights and freedoms by acknowledging their inherent value and origin outside of the state: "only a nation can be large and diverse enough, and at the same time specific enough, to sustain a liberal civic polity--not a narrowly ethnic or sectarian community--in which people tie group narratives to institutional structures that vindicate universal, individual rights."[7] Liberal nations are living communities of individuals agreeing to dwell in harmony despite conflicting interests by adhering to a set of legal and social rules that moderate debate. "Democracies require deliberation and debate, which can take place only if people accept certain norms of behavior governing what can be said and done. Citizens often have to accept outcomes they do not like or prefer in the interest of a common good; a culture of tolerance and mutual sympathy must override partisan passions."[8] National identity "begins with a shared belief in the legitimacy of the country's political system"[9] and its institutions but also includes the acceptance of common cultural values and shared history. National identity is a large component of individual identity and the values one holds, and individuals self-identify within the context of the larger political

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[7] Jim Sleeper, "American National Identity in a Postnational Age," in *One America?: Political Leadership, National Identity, and the Dilemmas of Diversity*, ed. Stanley Allen Renshon (Georgetown University Press, 2001), 319.

[8] Fukuyama, "Why National Identity Matters," 11.

[9] Ibid., 8

community. But how this is contrasted with the politics of difference is that this identity is not found within *ethnic* groups but among those who hold the same commitment to a political ideal.

On the other hand, what about societies with collective goals, like cultural preservation? Relevant to our discussion about the effects of multiculturalism, it is the politics of difference that recognizes group identity and cultures more generally as worthy of equal recognition. Whereas the politics of equal dignity attempts to eliminate distinctions on the basis of common humanity, the politics of difference requires that distinctions remain to allow for differential treatment. Ideally this involves giving "due acknowledgement only to what is universally present… through recognizing what is peculiar to each."[10] We are all equal in that we are all different, and some differences require unique attention. Because it cannot completely separate the political from the cultural or the religious spheres, "liberalism can't and shouldn't claim complete moral neutrality."[11] There may be instances when promoting cultural survival, a collective goal, may outweigh the importance of uniform treatment, which is a moral judgment of their worth. Instead, "society can be organized around a definition of the good life, without this being seen as a depreciation of those who do not personally share this definition."[12] Thus, according to the politics of difference, a liberal society can have collective goals, "provided it is also capable of respecting diversity, especially when dealing with those

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[10] Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 39.

[11] Ibid., 62

[12] Ibid., 59

who do not share its common goals; and provided it can offer adequate safeguards for fundamental rights."[13] Equal rights liberalism rejects the notion that rights can be applied differently across cultural contexts with different collective goals.[14] Thus, the fundamental distinction between the politics of equal rights and the politics of difference is that the latter prioritizes ethnic or collective group identity above a common national identity.

National Identity

This then leads to the question of why a unifying national identity is important. According to Francis Fukuyama, a common national identity is "critical to maintaining a successful modern political order."[15] It promotes domestic security and strength, quality civil government, economic development, social trust, welfare programs and equality, and the legitimacy of liberal democracy.[16] A weak national identity produces failed states and ethnic conflict. "Political order at both the domestic and the international level depends on the continuing existence of liberal democracies with the right kind of inclusive national identities."[17] If that is why national identity is so important, what does this national identity look like? As Americans try to understand their national identity in a

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[13] Ibid. 59.

[14] Ibid., 52, 56-57.

[15] Fukuyama, "Why National Identity Matters," 9.

[16] Ibid., 9-11.

[17] Ibid., 15.

multiethnic society, contrasting conceptions of this identity have developed to address the political salience of ethnic identity and how it relates to the existing culture.

Nationalism as defined in this paper is a common loyalty to the nation built upon a set of shared principles. Liberal nationalism defines national identity in terms of a commitment to political values such as equality, individualism, and tolerance which are fundamental to the nation's constitution. An individual's identity as a citizen becomes the primary identity when participating in the public or political sphere. This view minimizes the relevance of ethnicity and rejects ethnic assimilation or cultural hegemony. Ethnic diversity does not threaten allegiance to civic values since the political community is united through an inclusive and all-encompassing common citizenship, although critics would argue this is true more so in principle than practice. This approach is best demonstrated by the "melting pot" analogy: minority cultures supplement the continuously evolving national culture, creating a much richer blend of language, customs, and traditions. Ethnic minorities coexist by maintaining shared democratic values and working out disagreements through intermediary institutions, thereby preserving individual rights and cultural diversity while avoiding fractionalization.[18]

Liberal nationalism is not to be confused with nativism, which arose amidst the perceived threat of immigration and an emerging multiethnic society to preserve national solidarity. This historically dominant perspective embraces "Americanization," assimilation into the dominant national culture, and tends to focus on ethnic identity. Nativism is often conflated with nationalism in contemporary public discourse, giving

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[18] Yuval Levin, *The Fractured Republic.*

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nationalism a negative connotation and providing an excuse to dismiss arguments in favor of a strong national identity.

The alternative conception of national identity—multiculturalism—centers on ethnic identity as a significant element of national identity. Multiculturalism exchanges the melting pot for an ethnic mosaic with each tile retaining its unique and uncompromising cultural identity. Multicultural identity is described solely in ethnic or racial terms and replaces national identity as the primary political connection. Seeking to keep ethnic cultures separated, multiculturalists oppose assimilation as an expression of Western hegemony. They argue any attempt to claim moral supremacy is oppression of minority culture by the dominant cultural hierarchy. Naturally, this ideology results in policies such as affirmative action that promote the collective equality among marginalized or dispossessed ethnic groups.[19] As Kymlicka notes, "If state institutions fail to recognize and respect people's culture and identity, the result can be serious damage to people's self-respect and sense of agency."[20] Multiculturalism has grown in popularity in both the academic and political spheres and continues to oppose any countervailing conception of national identity.

While the focus on distinct ethnic identities weakens national cohesion internally, external pressure from globalism also diminishes national identity. Cosmopolitanism, a

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[19] Frank H. Wu, "A New Thinking about Affirmative Action," *Human Rights* 26, no. 3 (1999): 19–22, accessed October 20, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27880157.

[20] Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, "Citizenship in Culturally Diverse Societies: Issues, Contexts, Concepts," in *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, ed. Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (Oxford University Press, 2000), 5, accessed March 22, 2021, https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/019829770X.001.0001/acprof-9780198297703-chapter-1.

modern development in response to globalization, not only threatens national identity as the primary affiliation but questions its political and social utility. As the global economy and communication system grow more interconnected, increasing cultural exposure has advanced the concept of a single human identity, eroding national distinctions and suggesting that nations themselves are obsolete in the modern age. Global identity devalues allegiance to a common national identity without providing an alternative for social solidarity, aside from mutual tolerance. This view of universal membership fails to provide sufficient social cohesion and satisfy the inherent human need for community and belonging. "Even if we can agree that human dignity and rights are universal, we can no more rely on a world government or the 'global village' than we can on sub-national ethnic or racial groups to nourish a predisposition to respect individual rights or a political consensus to defend them juridically."[21] Social needs cannot be met within a global community. It takes civic culture, which acknowledges and gives meaning to universal rights, for granted.

This is not an exhaustive list of the many interpretations of national identity, nor is it comprehensive of the many ways that traditional civic nationalism is threatened. However, the postmodern conception of identity and self-expression is responsible for some of the greatest implications of diversity in both social and political life. In the next chapter, I will attempt to outline the ethical benefits of diversity proposed by multiculturalists, including arguments for inclusion of diverse perspectives and social

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[21] Sleeper, "American National Identity in a Postnational Age," 310.

justice through equity. This demonstrates the implications of promoting ethnocentric

identity above a common national identity.

CHAPTER THREE

The Ethical and Social Benefits of Diversity

As the new language of diversity and identity grows more complex, it also

becomes adopted increasingly by the mainstream. Many critics have begun pushing back

against the modern conception of ethnocentric identity and the implications for the

individual and the larger community, although advocates of diversity have framed the

debate using terms that appeal to both ethical and social goods that appear to outweigh

the social costs. I will attempt to demonstrate how ethnocentric diversity initiatives can

actually undermine human dignity and justice later in Chapter Five. However, in this

chapter I outline three different types of arguments for ethnic diversity in the public

sphere: the promotion of human dignity, the cultivation of a more innovative and

empathetic community, and the restoration of justice through equality.

Human Dignity

The first argument for diversity involves the assertion that it promotes self-

expression and human dignity by recognizing the inherent worth of the individual and

one's unique identity and experience. As discussed in Chapter 2, the need for self-

expression and social recognition are essential for the modern conception of identity. As

Fukuyama points out, in order to fully actualize human dignity and value as an

individual, one's identity must be recognized and accepted by society.[1] Identity is not a product of self-expression nor is it inherent and independent of societal recognition; rather, it is the combination of inner and outer dialogue. Group membership is an essential element that is incorporated into one's self-identity, and society should therefore recognize and preserve distinctions including group membership. The lack of recognition or misrecognition of self-identity diminishes human dignity and can inflict harm on an individual just the same as any other injustice.[2]

This logic holds that ethnocultural groups have different lived experiences due to their ethnicity or culture which should also be socially recognized. Academic institutions readily affirm that "students from different parts of the nation, from different states and regions, possessed a variety of cultural, political, and social attitudes born of their own experiences."[3] This observation about different experiences incorporates the newly developed conception of identity, but it has been extended to include racial and ethnic groups who also have different experiences than those of other identities. These experiences are exclusive to members of an identity group and offer a unique contribution to the community that other groups cannot provide, and they are therefore worthy of recognition.

Critics of multiculturalism argue that diversity initiatives like affirmative action harm individuals by neglecting merit in favor of racial or ethnic identity. Yet, while

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[1] Fukuyama, "Why National Identity Matters," 6.

[2] Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 64.

[3] Rudenstine, "Why a Diverse Student Body Is So Important."

salient characteristics like race and gender are not "determinative of individual worth,"

Woo argues that they may still be "a starting point to assess a person's history and

development, which must be taken into account in any measurement of individual

merit."[4] Individual merit should be recognized more broadly to "include race as a part of

a person's social and cultural history."[5] According to this view, the individual deserves a

wholistic evaluation, including his or her cultural background and the experiences that

come with it.

Utility

The second justification for multicultural initiatives is the utilitarian argument that

diversity allows for exposure to new and different perspectives and experiences which

not only stimulates innovation and creativity but creates a culture of empathy and builds

resilience within the community. Multiculturalists will argue that "people with different

experiences and perspectives can all learn from each other,"[6] improving collaborative

efforts and breaking down barriers that prevent some voices from engaging in dialogue or

being valued equally.

The first benefit of exposure to diverse points of view is that it raises the quality

of deliberation and results in more creative solutions. Diversity of viewpoints and

experiences provides the group with a more complex understanding of the problem. As

former Harvard President Neil Rudenstine notes, diverse environments challenge students

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[4] Woo, "Reaffirming Merit in Affirmative Action," 519.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 516.

"to explore ideas and arguments at a deeper level--to see issues from various sides, to rethink their own premises, to achieve the kind of understanding that comes only from testing their own hypotheses against those of people with other views."[7] Diversity challenges assumptions and hidden biases that are only revealed in the presence of alternative perspectives. Diversity, according to this perspective, not only benefits the participants who engage with one another but also those who enjoy the higher quality of solutions that result from their interaction. Public deliberation needs to become more dynamic and plural if all participants are going to be satisfied.

Multiculturalists also argue that exposure to diverse perspectives cultivates tolerance, compassion, and empathy based in mutual understanding. Multicultural inclusion recognizes something that is common to all humans: a view of the world that is shaped by their identity and influenced by their culture. Because "members of many racial, sexual, and ethnic groups identify strongly with the fortunes and accomplishments of other group members,... working closely with members of unfamiliar groups breaks down barriers and disrupts stereotypes" while also increasing "overall well-being by fostering understanding and harmony."[8] Engaging with other cultures allows one to recognize what is common and what is unique in the other person, and it creates "opportunities for people from different backgrounds, with different life experiences, to come to know one another as more than passing acquaintances, and to develop forms of

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[7] Rudenstine, "Why a Diverse Student Body Is So Important."

[8] Sher, "Diversity," 97-98.

tolerance and mutual respect on which the health of our civic life depends."[9] Diversity

builds coalitions and a sense of solidarity among differing groups by encouraging the

"recognition that we share our fate and that coalitions bringing together groups require

lasting commitment."[10] Diversity therefore bonds the community together and enables

healthy and compassionate dialogue when all members feel valued as a unique individual

and have a shared sense of humanity.

Lastly, multiculturalists argue that exposure to different experiences builds

resilience in the community. Just as genetic diversity and exposure to foreign bodies

builds immunity to disease, so the diverse community is better equipped to evolve and

adapt when challenges arise.[11] It should follow, then, that variation or diversity does not

have to be seen as a threat but can be a great benefit that allows for greater success and

growth in the community long-term.

Social Justice

The third justification for diversity looks beyond the utilitarian benefits of ethnic

diversity but satisfies the moral requirements of a just society. Diversity restores equality,

specifically the equality of ethnocultural minorities to all other social groups, a

prerequisite for this conception of justice or fairness. The defense for diversity is thus

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[9] Rudenstine, "Why a Diverse Student Body Is So Important."

[10] Wu, "A New Thinking about Affirmative Action," 20.

[11] Fukuyama, "Why National Identity Matters," 8.

rooted in collective or social justice, the end goal being proportional representation of all racial and ethnic groups in every aspect of society.[12]

Sher argues that all arguments for diversity, including those based on utility or the inherent value of equality, are rooted in a common assumption of historical discrimination and injustice towards certain identity groups that can only be resolved through multicultural means. Without historical injustice against identity groups, there would not be as great a need to reaffirm human dignity or restore diversity in the community. For instance, multiculturalists assert that the historical experiences of discrimination by minority groups informs how they view the world: "the perspective of the oppressed is often said to include a keen awareness of the motives, prejudices, and hidden agendas of others, a heightened sense of the oppressive effects of even seemingly benign social structures, and a strong commitment to social change."[13]

Multiculturalists point to disparities in outcome as evidence that an injustice has been committed, which is considered "compelling evidence that the members of these groups have lacked, and continue to lack, equal opportunity."[14] This evidence is present throughout society. "Whether it is infant mortality, life expectancy, housing segregation, educational outcomes, employment opportunities, or the glass ceiling, virtually every study continues to confirm that there are differences that correlate to race to greater or

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[12] Sher, "Diversity," 94-95.

[13] Ibid., 100.

[14] Ibid., 94.

lesser degrees."[15] While explicit or conscious discrimination is no longer legal, they argue that society still contends with problems of implicit biases and institutionalized discrimination consisting of "unconscious decisions that have unconscionable consequences."[16]

As Bleimaier states, social justice is not retribution against the individuals responsible for discrimination but is a "*societal* remedy for a *societal* problem [italics added]."[17] The collectivist understanding of justice asserts that society as a whole must rectify "the harm society has done to individuals, particularly in the form of group-based discrimination."[18] The assertion is that oppression has structural roots and imposes systemic constraints on social groups within even well-intentioned liberal institutions. This systemic oppression can take the form of exploitation, the transfer of energies from one social group to benefit another; marginalization, the deprivation of freedoms (such as privacy, respect, and choice) and unjust redistribution of available opportunities; powerlessness, the lack of participation in policy decisions, of autonomy, of opportunities to develop skills, and of the privileges of respectable treatment in the professional sphere; cultural imperialism, the "universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture"[19] and the exclusion of other cultures' perspectives; and violence through

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[15] Wu, "A New Thinking about Affirmative Action," 19.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Bleimaier, "Affirmative Action," 18.

[18] Woo, "Reaffirming Merit in Affirmative Action," 519.

[19] Asumah and Nagel, *Diversity, Social Justice, and Inclusive Excellence*, 24.

physical attacks, harassment, intimidation, or ridicule "directed at members of a group simply because they are members of that group."[20] Because discrimination has so uniquely pervaded society, they argue, it requires stronger means to rectify its consequences, like group-based equality in the form of affirmative action and other diversity initiatives. Efforts like affirmative action have been used as "extra effort on behalf of groups within the society who have been in the past the objects of active discrimination."[21] Social justice is thus remedial in the sense that it seeks to correct historical injustices committed against minorities by redistributing social benefits. It is a positive effort, adding benefits which were previously lacking due to injustice.

In conclusion, there are many different types of arguments to justify the need for multicultural diversity in society. The ethical support for diversity as an inherent good is rooted in innate human dignity and self-expression. Many also argue for its utilitarian benefits, such as the ability to provide more creative and innovative solutions, to create a more tolerant and empathetic community, and to build resilience and strength. By framing the argument in terms of justice, individual identity must be balanced against the expectations and privileges of society, thus requiring the restoration of equality for ethnic minorities and retribution for historical injustices evidenced by disparities in outcome. In the next chapter, I will move on to some of the political benefits that multiculturalists have presented in defense of diversity.

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[20] Ibid., 26-27.

[21] Bleimaier, "Affirmative Action," 17.

CHAPTER FOUR

Political Benefits of Diversity

As discussed in the previous chapter on the ethical benefits of diversity, multiculturalism has been traditionally framed in terms of justice and tasked with overcoming prejudice and privilege within the framework created by the liberal conception of justice. As the debate has progressed, the public has begun accepting the underlying assumptions and assertions put forth by multiculturalists, making it the dominant position in the debate. Proponents have thus successfully shifted the burden of proof to those who hold to the liberal theory of justice to demonstrate its fairness towards minority groups and their identities and cultures without diminishing the self-respect or agency of citizens. While I am hesitant to accept arguments for multiculturalism because they appear to undermine liberal principles of individuality and freedom without substantial evidence to support their claims, I want to present the arguments for the other side.

Recent attention to civic virtue and participation proceeds from a concern about the integration of minority groups into the larger society and to what extent democratic qualities can be promoted without sacrificing cultural identities. Multiculturalism is said to recognize the legitimacy of civic virtue, and it also admits that multiethnic societies may require civic virtues like respect and reasonableness even more so than other more homogeneous democratic societies. However, modern multiculturalists argue that

democratic stability and functionality does not depend solely on the justice of institutions but on the attitudes of citizens towards competing forms of identity and qualities such as toleration, political participation, and commitment to fairness.[1] In this chapter, I will assess the compatibility of multiculturalism with traditional liberalism and its defensibility at the expense of citizenship with regards to the three most convincing areas of contention: individual freedom, equality or equal recognition, and the principles of democracy.

Individual Freedom

Multiculturalists recognize citizenship as one of the many identities an individual possesses, all varying in relative importance, and this creates an inevitable conflict within the context of a diverse democracy. While liberal nationalism insists citizenship identity should be an individual's sole, or at least highest, identity when participating in politics, multiculturalists challenge the expectation that people should lay aside all other interests formed in relation to other identities. The preferred model for a stable democratic society should be one where "people agree to function in ways that support and maintain the civic culture while maintaining personal and group allegiances that reflect diverse perspectives and interests."[2] Citizens can thus exercise their freedom by choosing which identities and interests they believe are most important when engaging in the public

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[1] Kymlicka and Norman, "Citizenship in Culturally Diverse Societies."

[2] Gloria Ladson-Billings, "The Multicultural Mission: Unity and Diversity," *Social education* 56, no. 5 (1992): 310, accessed September 5, 2020, https://baylor.primo.exlibrisgroup.com.

discourse, thereby reconciling citizenship with the accommodation of diverse identities in politics.

Multiculturalism holds that true individual freedom is realized through the accommodation of one's own culture or salient identity within the political community. With public recognition of minority groups, fluid cultural identities will develop to inform the citizenship identity, providing the means for groups to identify with the political community without which they would "be more defensive about their culture, and more fearful about the consequences of cultural interchange," more alienated and more hostile to the majority culture.[3] This does not mean that minorities have to reject common citizenship in favor of an exclusive group identity, rather their unique identities can be incorporated into the political community through multicultural policies and public consciousness.

There are many different views of how diverse identities and cultures in a political community are to be incorporated into the larger political culture. Will Kymlicka argues for the importance of identity in liberal societies in what he terms "societal culture." According to Kymlicka, liberalism requires group-differentiated rights, powers, status, or immunity be accepted beyond the common rights of citizenship to fully incorporate all members of society into a multicultural republic. This public recognition of different cultures provides "contexts of choice" in political activity, thus promoting individual freedom. His defense of minority rights rests on the inherent value of "societal culture" to provide access and meaning to contexts of individual choice. Individuals need

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[3] Kymlicka and Norman, "Citizenship in Culturally Diverse Societies," 37.

contexts of choice to make autonomous decisions, and access to one's *own* societal culture "provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including the social, education, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres."[4] This adopts an essentialist conception of identity and culture, since members must have access to their own culture to fully exercise their freedom of expression. Societal culture not only provides options, but it makes those options meaningful. The individual finds meaning in relation to his or her common culture, which in turn shapes his or her individual goals.

Ladson-Billings offers an alternative definition of the national culture, which aims to challenge the prevailing perspective by expanding history beyond the dominant culture. She argues that citizenship has been historically misused to justify the oppression of minorities, causing groups to minimize or even reject common citizenship. She believes an "inclusive curriculum content recognizes the sources of Western traditions and institutions along with the significance of other traditions, focuses on the sins against all humanity, recognizes and values difference, helps students become responsive and socially responsible, and makes the cultural politics of the curriculum visible."[5] By reconstructing the national culture, cultural minorities can become fully recognized and free to participate without sacrificing their own identities, traditions, and values.

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[4] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship,* 76.

[5] Ladson-Billings, "The Multicultural Mission," 309.

Equal Recognition

Multiculturalism asserts itself into discussions of democratic equality, the second area of the citizenship debate, through what are known as minority group rights, or the accommodation of cultural group differences through public policy. Equality can be achieved through multiculturalist policies by ensuring all groups have equal rights when interacting in the political realm. Kymlicka and Norman distinguish eight existing theories of ethnocultural minority rights and how they relate to citizenship or civic virtue within multiethnic societies: exemptions from laws that penalize or burden cultural practices (negative liberties); assistance to do things the majority can do unassisted (i.e. affirmative action); self-government for national minorities and indigenous communities; external rules restricting non-members' liberty in order to protect minority culture; internal rules for members' conduct enforced by ostracism and excommunication; the incorporation and enforcement of traditional legal codes within the dominant legal system; the special representation of groups and their members within government institutions; and the symbolic recognition of worth, status, or existence of various groups within the larger state or community.

The question then arises as to whether differentiated status on the basis of group rights necessarily results in the loss of equal citizenship status, including civil, political, and social rights. Here it is important to note that group-differentiated citizenship is already present in democratic societies, seen especially in the privileges and exemptions afforded to religious communities. Denying differentiated rights to minority groups

would be a greater threat to equality because it perpetuates the current stigmatization and systemic disadvantages those groups face in society.[6]

The liberal state has historically taken on a position of neutrality or indifference to cultural differences by not promoting aspects of a single culture above the others. This approach is now under scrutiny for being unequal in practice although appearing equal in principle. Kymlicka defines liberal neutrality as the approach of liberal states to promote a particular culture or language for the sake of efficiency or commonality without ranking the intrinsic merits of one culture over another. However, he critiques liberal neutrality as a means of undermining minority rights as "government decisions on languages, internal boundaries, public holidays, and state symbols unavoidably involve recognizing, accommodating, and supporting the needs and identities of particular ethnic and national groups. The state unavoidably promotes certain cultural identities, and thereby disadvantages others."[7] While it may seem neutral in intent, a law may be discriminatory through its impact on societal culture, by intentionally or unintentionally excluding cultural values of minority groups. Kymlicka offers an alternative approach— nation-building— in which states must take a proactive stance with respect to cultural membership by incorporating minority groups and strengthening societal cultures. He argues differential treatment to groups can recognize and rectify systematic disadvantages by granting special rights, thereby justifying minority rights as the means of achieving equality among groups. Since the state is incapable of being truly neutral or indifferent to

[6] Kymlicka and Norman, "Citizenship in Culturally Diverse Societies," 31-33.

[7] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 108.

competing cultures, national minority groups should be involved in the nation-building process.

Patten presents an alternative definition of "liberal neutrality" as the equal recognition and treatment of all cultural claims, often in the form of customized assistance and expanding cultural rights. He argues that the liberal state owes minorities equal recognition and accommodation within the social institutions that have been and continue to be dominated by the cultural majority. Cultural loss leads to fewer opportunities and more disadvantages in political and social spheres. For example, he points to the inadequacy of meaningful options within the majority culture for members of a minority group, such as practicing their ancestral language when engaging in the public sphere or observing their own religious practices.[8]

Ladson-Billings argues why the prioritization of some cultural values over others, particularly the majority culture, is inherently unequal and offers an alternative direction for the multicultural debate regarding equality. In her view, the core values developed within western civilization— "achievement and success, activity and work, efficiency and productivity, equality, freedom, individualism, democracy, nationalism, progress, and morality and humanitarianism"— vary in priority among individuals and conflict with the cultural values of other minority groups.[9] Multiculturalism allows for the coexistence of conflicting cultural values, which do not have to conflict with core civic

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[8] Alan Patten, *Equal Recognition: The Moral Foundations of Minority Rights* (Princeton: University Press, 2014).

[9] Ladson-Billings, "The Multicultural Mission," 309.

values, like participation, freedom, justice, and equality. These values do not have to

compete for prominence in society but can develop a more robust democracy. Rather than

justifying multiculturalism against its perceived threats to citizenship, Ladson-Billings

argues that the attention within the multicultural debate should instead shift to bigger

issues of inequality, from developing a consensus around a shared set of values to

rectifying the economic and educational disparity among ethnocultural groups.[10]

Therefore, she proposes a renewed dedication to multicultural and reconstructionist

education supplemented with an institutional responsibility to address systemic

discrimination as a solution to economic and educational inequality, dismissing concerns

about a unified citizenship identity.

<center>*Democratic Principles*</center>

Multiculturalists argue that diversity not only provides the means for achieving

individual freedom and equality among groups, but it also strengthens democracy,

specifically by creating a truly pluralistic society and increasing civic participation.

Democratic pluralism is the coexistence of many different cultures all given the

opportunity to express their interests through political institutions, and it is essential for a

flourishing democracy. Without pluralism, the democratic state would be unable to

account for diverse interests and would only accommodate those of the majority. As

discussed by Ladson-Billings, the problem with dichotomous thinking is that it presumes

unity and diversity are essentially incompatible, yet multiculturalism is the reconciliation

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[10] Ibid.

of unity and diversity not as oppositional but complementary to each other: heterogeneity does not have to result in the lack of unity. Allowing minority groups to influence the political sphere will not necessarily result in a divided polity but can further unify the community because all interests will be expressed.[11] According to Smooha, liberal democracies have failed to create a truly pluralistic society. Instead, they have tried to create homogeneity through assimilation or other means of suppressing diverse identities. By denying collective rights, western democracies are limited from going beyond mere inclusion or non-discrimination of subcultures to offering official recognition and collective rights to minority groups.[12]

Democratic citizenship also includes civic participation, including the motivation, capacity, or opportunity for individuals to engage as citizens within public institutions. One concern of multiculturalism is that minorities will lack motivation to participate if they are excluded, especially if they lack the means of shared political forums and social institutions through which to express their interests.

Scholzman, Verba, and Brady analyze what groups are more politically active and the factors that contribute to higher participation in America. The authors begin by explaining that civic engagement is important because it contributes to the "development of the capacities of the individual, the creation of community and the cultivation of

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Sammy Smooha, "How Do Western Democracies Cope with the Challenge of Societal Diversity?," *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 2 (2018): 215–236, accessed March 22, 2021, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/nana.12402.

democratic virtues, and the equal protection of interests in public life."[13] The third reason is unique in that it shifts from a communal interest to conflicting interests between groups and among individuals, and it recognizes that democratic participation provides a collective benefit to all members of society. The authors discover an unequal distribution of political participation along social class, especially among monetary contributions. This can be attributed to a lack of resources; the absence of interest, knowledge, or efficacy; or insufficient recruitment. Because active participants do not represent the interests of those who are not as involved, this skews how diverse interests are represented and accommodated.

Advocates for democratic reform argue that multiculturalism provides the means through which minorities can best promote their own interests and fully participate in politics, fostering greater political participation among minority groups. Traditional measures of democratic representation include descriptive representation, or the number of representatives belonging to a minority group, and substantive representation, or the amount of policy outcomes aligning with the interests of a minority group. Many political scientists believe descriptive representation demonstrates democracy's receptiveness of the interests of minorities. However, it also assumes members of a minority group all have the same interests, that a minority candidate will adequately represent those

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[13] Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E Brady, "Civic Participation and the Equality Problem," in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Morris P Fiorina (Washington, D.C. : New York: Brookings Institution Press ; Russell Sage Foundation, 1999), 427, http://ezproxy.baylor.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=91897&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_427.

interests, and that a majority candidate cannot represent minority interests.[14] In other words, descriptive representation assumes that the interests of a minority group can be properly served only when represented by one the members of that group due to their shared interest or lived experience.

Hajnal introduces a new measure of democratic representation: the frequency in which members of a minority group vote for the losing candidate demonstrates that their interests are not being adequately promoted. The data show "blacks are the least successful racial, demographic, or political group in American elections" at voting for the winning candidate.[15] He goes on to say: "...losing consistently across a wide range of elections— as blacks have done in recent years— is surely going to diminish one's voice in democracy and could, if not addressed, lead to disillusionment with the democratic process."[16] This decline in voter efficacy and disillusionment with democracy, particularly among African Americans but among other minority groups as well, has led many multiculturalists to advocate institutional change, including alternative elections systems like proportional representation adopted by other western democracies. The hope is that by improving the representation of minorities, minority interests will be promoted

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[14] Zoltan L. Hajnal, "Who Loses in American Democracy? A Count of Votes Demonstrates the Limited Representation of African Americans," *American Political Science Review* 103, no. 1 (February 2009): 37–57, accessed March 22, 2021, http://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/who-loses-in-american-democracy-a-count-of-votes-demonstrates-the-limited-representation-of-african-americans/4710345D514E2F4081BAC7FB67507DC3.

[15] Ibid, 44

[16] Ibid, 55

which in turn would raise feelings of voter efficacy and further motivate civic

participation.

Conclusion

The debate about diversity in relation to citizenship and the principle of liberalism

is ripe with salient concerns in modern democracies, but as the conversation progresses,

proponents of diversity have grounded their arguments within the principles of liberalism,

namely individual freedom, equality, and democratic pluralism and civic participation.

Multiculturalism asserts that citizens have the individual freedom to choose which

identity should be primary when engaging in the public sphere. Freedom within liberal

democracies, they argue, requires the recognition of one's chosen identity and culture by

the political community, but there are different interpretations of what "recognition"

looks like in practice. Ideally, national identity should accommodate diverse minority

identities and values, and these fluid cultural identities will in turn shape the national

identity like one symbiotic relationship. Freedom is therefore redefined as access to one's

own culture or the reconstructing of culture so that one is not required to sacrifice his or

her traditions or values. Democratic equality is achieved by granting group rights to

minorities who have been historically oppressed or who's interests have been overlooked

or ignored by the majority in politics. Minority group rights accommodate different

cultural identities and values by providing equal recognition in the political sphere for the

collective benefit of the whole political community; without differentiated group rights,

minorities are denied full political participation. This closely aligns with the idea of

pluralism which includes the coexistence of multiple different cultures all given equal

access to political and social institutions. These shared institutions provide the motivation

for civic participation, the means to express the diverse interests of minority groups.

Multicultural policies allow minorities to feel like their interests are promoted and are

therefore more likely to participate.

Multiculturalists have made their case for why concerns over citizenship are

overstated and why diversity is beneficial in liberal democracies. However, some

arguments against multiculturalism have yet to be adequately addressed. The next chapter

will outline some of the ethical concerns about multiculturalism and the harms it commits

against the individual as well as the larger community.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Ethics of Ethnocentrism

Proponents of multiculturalism defend it on both ethical and political grounds, but

its focus on ethnic identity raises several concerns. Multiculturalism challenges the

traditional emphasis on individual equality and commonality in favor of ethnocentric

identitarianism. In this chapter, I will attempt to outline some of the negative

consequences of multiculturalism on individuals and groups alike, including the problems

caused by ethnic essentialism, social collectivism, social justice and inequality, and

cultural relativism.

Ethnic Essentialism

When identity is defined in terms of ethnicity or other immutable characteristics,

it diminishes individual character and innate dignity. Citrin argues that multiculturalism

elevates ethnic identity as an essential element of self-realization, which undermines the

very principle of human dignity as common to all men regardless of their subsidiary

attributes.[1] Ethnocentrism also inhibits self-realization by forcing one to recognize and

elevate their ethnic identity above their own abilities or potential that make one unique;

individuals are merely reduced to their ethnic identity. Identifying individuals based on

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[1] Jack Citrin, "The End of American Identity," in *One America?: Political Leadership, National Identity, and the Dilemmas of Diversity*, ed. Stanley Allen Renshon (Georgetown University Press, 2001), 288.

these ethnic distinctions is not only reductionist but can harm self-esteem and stunt

motivation to achieve. Gonzalez points out the severity of reductionism based on physical

characteristics and how this affects the psychological state of individuals:

> Self-image and self-esteem are powerful motivators, affecting our chances of success or failure. To be told that someone who 'looks like you' has built-in structural advantages can have the unintended consequence of inducing the type of self-confidence that builds on itself; to be told that someone who 'looks like you' faces structural disadvantages can instill self-doubt and encourage you to nourish grievances.[2]

The result is that victimization becomes the most salient feature of the individual and

begins the self-perpetuating cycle of underachievement.

Cobb et al. raises concerns that the salience of ethnicity not only affects individual

psychology but has sociological implications. Society's fixation on group differences

"can result in race essentialism, the belief that racial differences are biologically based,

inherent, stable, and immutable."[3] Multiculturalism is built on the premise that immutable

characteristics are valid and meaningful social distinctions.[4] Aesthetic difference

becomes the means of classifying individuals without regards to their inherent value as

human beings.

Categorizing groups of people based on ethnic identity is one thing, but then using

those categories to attribute discrimination or guilt to an entire group is a step further in

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[2] Mike Gonzalez, *The Plot to Change America: How Identity Politics Is Dividing the Land of the Free*, First American edition. (New York, New York: Encounter Books, 2019), 7.

[3] Cory L. Cobb et al., "Rethinking Multiculturalism: Toward a Balanced Approach," *The American Journal of Psychology* 133, no. 3 (Fall 2020): 278, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/amerjpsyc.133.3.0275.

[4] Ibid. 278-79.

the wrong direction. Even if ethnicity is the most important element of individual identity, "the mere fact that a trait is salient does not endow it with any special moral status."[5] As discussed more in the next chapter, ethnic groups are recognized according to where they fall on the dichotomous successful-or-oppressed scale; collapsing white Europeans and Asian Americans into one ethnic category is more politically salient since both groups are more successful on average than African Americans and Latinos.[6] Whether or not individuals are responsible for discrimination, ethnic categories become moral labels that perpetuate the oppression narrative.

Additionally, a hyper-focus on race and ethnicity can divert attention away from the actual causes of disparity or injustice. Nothing about ethnic categories in particular would provide more interpretive strategies or answers than a people grouped by any other characteristic like religious affiliation, political ideology, or even food preferences.[7] Yet, as Michaels brings up, society's preoccupation with race and ethnicity has detracted from other underlying issues that are not properly addressed, like growing economic disparity: society has "responded to the increase in economic inequality by insisting on the importance of cultural identity."[8] He argues we should concentrate "on reducing the

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[5] Sher, "Diversity," 92.

[6] Citrin, "The End of American Identity."

[7] Sher, "Diversity," 102.

[8] Walter Benn Michaels, "The Trouble With Diversity," *The American Prospect*, last modified August 13, 2006, accessed October 27, 2021, https://prospect.org/api/content/327d93e2-e911-57b4-85df-c812d32e9082/.

reality of economic difference" rather than "on respecting the illusions of cultural difference" that only reinforce racial and ethnic essentialism.[9]

By hyperfocusing on ethnicity, multiculturalism ends up reproducing the same underlying assumptions of ethnic essentialism and historic injustices it tries to overcome. Researchers have found that "participants exposed to multiculturalism… expressed greater race essentialist beliefs."[10] If we want individuals to see themselves as more than their ethnic or racial identity, the solution is not to reinforce ethnicity through multicultural policies but to reemphasize the inherent dignity and worth of unique individuals with ethnicity only making up a part of what makes one unique.

Collectivism

This leads into the second problem with ethnocentric diversity: it perpetuates a social collectivism that ultimately diminishes autonomy and further divides society into competing subgroups. Ironically, by focusing on difference as an element of individual value, multiculturalism has served to group people together into "collective identities that promote ethnocentrism and other forms of ingroup bias."[11] It is a self-perpetuating cycle of ethnocentrism and group exclusivity: the more salient ethnicity becomes to personal identity, the more individuals come to be defined by their membership in the group which consequently becomes more rigid and ethnocentric.

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[9] Walter Benn Michaels, *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality* (Macmillan, 2016), 203.

[10] Cobb et al., "Rethinking Multiculturalism," 278.

[11] Ibid.

By overemphasizing ethnic identity as the most salient quality of an individual, all members of an ethnic group are treated as a monolith. As a result of multiculturalism, Gonzalez observes that "America is divided into semi autonomous, formal, and cohesive subgroups that have distinct outlooks, aspirations, privileges, and rights."[12] These subgroups are assumed to have the same experiences or interests as all others who share that ethnic identity. Reductionary racial lines can miss important distinctions, such as the cultural differences among Spanish-speaking Americans, though all would be considered as one racial group ("Hispanic").[13] These heterogeneous groups operate as distinct entities that override the voices or experiences of individual members. Additionally, multiculturalism discourages intergroup communication and a sense of community or association with nonmembers. It interprets history "as a personal or group narrative used to nurture group pride and communal solidarity."[14] This implies that true empathy only exists among those within the group, those who presumably have had the same experience as other members.

The symbolic recognition of ethnocultural subgroups also uses dualistic framing to create majority and minority groups, weakening social trust and solidarity by holding these two groups in opposition. There is a perceived exclusiveness when "multiculturalism represents a subjugation of majority groups in exchange for acceptance

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[12] Gonzalez, *The Plot to Change America,* 5.

[13] Ibid., "Hispanics are Birthed."

[14] Joseph Wagner, "The Trouble with Multiculturalism," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 77, no. 3/4 (1994): 410, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41178899.

and inclusion of minority groups,"[15] which fosters mistrust and resentment. Whereas

ethnic and racial inclusivity is seen as an intrinsic good, the pursuit of an inclusive ideal

has excluded members of majority groups. It should be no surprise that studies have

shown "racism and ethnocentricity are present to some degree in all groups and are a

general rather than group-specific problem."[16] And yet, the individual approach to racial

and ethnic biases is overshadowed by multiculturalism's predominant focus "on what

Whites must do to overcome their biases, in contrast to what minorities must also do to

overcome theirs."[17] These two groups are held in competition with one another, in part

derived from and abetted by the Marxist notion of group competition: the oppressed

versus their oppressor. "The victimhood paradigm is predicated on a collectivist

understanding of society, rather than the individualist striving and voluntary civil

associations"[18] that have defined American identity since the beginning. Ethnocentrism,

and particularly the majority-minority framing of ethnic identity does not produce a more

cohesive society but one fraught with division, hostility, and a sense of moral superiority.

Multiculturalism has perpetuated a kind of ethnic determinism, the belief that

outcome is determined in some way by ethnic identity rather than individual decision-

making, which diminishes individual autonomy. Rather than being characterized

collectively, "majority group members should be evaluated on their merits, or lack

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[15] Cobb et al., "Rethinking Multiculturalism," 281.

[16] Ibid., 283

[17] Ibid., 282

[18] Gonzalez, *The Plot to Change America*, 19.

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thereof."[19] By elevating ethnic identity and considering individuals primarily in terms of their group membership, multiculturalism deprives individuals of their independence and autonomy.

<center>*Social Justice*</center>

Multiculturalism assumes that disparity in outcome is evidence of racial injustice. The problem, multiculturalists argue, is that cultural standards and expectations are incompatible with individual identity. Thus, reordering societal expectations will level out societal privileges. Social justice is the attempt to eradicate disparities and provide equal access to opportunities for minorities. Multiculturalists define success as the proportional representation of all social groups in every aspect of civic life. Every institution "must reflect the proportion of certain groups--racial, ethnic, sexual--in the nation as a whole, and if that does not happen organically, then the people in charge must take positive, that is, compulsory, action to ensure that it does."[20] This is without first expressly defining justice or demonstrating why proportionality among groups meets the requirements for justice. This often takes the form of affirmative, or positive, action to elevate minorities to the same level of success as the majority group. However, social justice is not just a "leveling-out" of expectations and privileges but a policy of special treatment for particular groups. Sher argues that the results of social justice policies do not reflect its goals: "When preferential treatment is used to promote the proportional

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[19] Cobb et al., "Rethinking Multiculturalism," 283.

[20] Gonzalez, *The Plot to Change America*, 5.

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representation of all racial, sexual, and ethnic groups, its immediate effect is therefore not to make opportunities more equal, but only to compound any earlier inequalities that may have existed."[21] If equal representation is to be achieved in the short-term, it would require a denial of equal opportunity to non-minority members to offset the disproportionality. Therefore, preferential treatment using the means of social justice has the opposite effect as that which it claims, namely, to ensure equal opportunity.

Sher also identifies two ways multiculturalists have advocated proactive social justice initiatives: the "backward-looking" defense that addresses historical discrimination and injustice towards certain identity groups or the "forward-looking" approach in which preferential treatment is the "means to some desirable future goal."[22] The forward-looking approach does not have to answer specific questions like how much injustice was committed or what would be required to rectify it. Rather, diversity becomes the ideal and multiculturalism the means to achieve it. While he distinguishes between the two types of arguments, he concludes that the forward-looking defense of social justice relies upon the backward-looking assumptions of historical injustice.

Social justice uses historical framing as the primary or sole analytical lens when examining the disparity problem. As a result, it assumes that if disparities resulting from historical injustice are corrected and all groups are proportionately represented in all spheres of life, society will remain equal. It does not consider personal choices or individual interests and skills to explain the present distribution of positions, though it

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[21] Sher, "Diversity," 94.

[22] Ibid., 86.

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assumes that will be the case in the future if disparities resulting from historical injustice are corrected. If it is argued that "the future distribution of desirable positions among different groups will be affected by the motivation as well as the skills of their members," then that would suggest "the current distribution of desirable positions is likely to have been similarly affected."[23] For the argument to be logically consistent, if social equality in the future is derived from giving individuals special access to opportunities now, the current inequalities in society are also the result of individual choices. Social justice rarely examines extraneous factors for disparities, like economic background, culture, individual skills or talents, etc. Focusing too much on ethnic identity leads to collective remedies that "might actually obscure from public attention the fact that poverty may have become less race-related, and more class-related."[24]

Collective remedies also ignore intragroup differences that contribute to disparities. For instance, "research indicates that group differences in psychopathology between minorities and Whites are smaller in magnitude than differences both between and within minority groups."[25] For solutions to actually address the problem, they "must attempt to confront it outside the framework of ... immutable differences that make it difficult or impossible for citizens to trust and talk to each other."[26] Group remedies for

[23] Ibid., 95.

[24] Cynthia V. Ward, "The Limits of 'Liberal Republicanism': Why Group-Based Remedies and Republican Citizenship Don't Mix," *Columbia Law Review* 91, no. 3 (1991): 606, accessed December 14, 2020, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1122799.

[25] Cobb et al., "Rethinking Multiculturalism," 280.

[26] Ward, "The Limits of 'Liberal Republicanism,'" 606.

modern disparities will never sufficiently address the issue because they have not correctly identified the issue. The fact that ethnic groups "are not organized entities, and so are incapable either of having experiences or of pursuing goals, their well-being cannot reside either in the quality of their subjective states or in their success in achieving their goals. Instead, each group's well-being must be a function of the well-being of its individual members."[27] An individualized assessment is the only way of properly identifying and addressing the disparities we see today.

Historic and systemic oppression justifies special "group rights," which endanger individual rights. Despite the lack of evidence that historical injustice is the sole cause of modern disparities, social justice activists have jumped at the opportunity to institute redistributive policies. Efforts like affirmative action produce the "reverse-racism" problem, or discrimination against those who are perceived to belong to an oppressive or systemically advantaged ethnic or racial group. The "cultural defense strategy" in modern jurisprudence looks to "mitigating circumstances and the individual character and propensities of the offender in the assessment of guilt and punishment."[28] Taking into account the offender's cultural membership results in an inconsistent application of justice. This undermines the rule of law by bifurcating the legal code, creating a dual system of laws according to ethnic identity.

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[27] Sher, "Diversity," 90.

[28] Christian Joppke, "Multicultural Citizenship: A Critique," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie* 42, no. 2 (2001): 442, accessed March 1, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23999557.

In keeping with the utilitarian argument for multicultural initiatives, questions

must be raised about the net benefits of preferential treatment against its social costs, the

loss of efficiency from unqualified candidates, the balkanization of ethnic groups, and the

promulgation of ethnic hostility and conflict. Is utility really a valid justification for

discrimination? As for its more idealistic aims, does preferential treatment and unequal

means achieve equality? How long will it take to fully rectify the supposed historical

injustices? Multiculturalism trusts in a false assumption that societal celebration of

identity through diversity will somehow unlock the key to a truly equal society.

Cultural Relativism

To truly appreciate all cultures and incorporate new and different perspectives

into the public conversation, there can be no standard of evaluation or criticism. This

results in cultural and epistemic relativism, which upholds moral sensitivity at the

expense of transcendent and universal standards. The theory of cultural relativism

"asserts that there is no absolute truth, be it ethical, moral, or cultural, and that there is no

meaningful way to judge different cultures."[29] By eliminating standards of comparison,

"multiculturalists insist that each culture's version of reality must be judged as

compelling and coherent as any other."[30] Thus, it asserts there can be multiple *realities*

that have equal legitimacy, and all must be recognized and accepted as valid. However,

"the fact that initially there is an array of voices does not mean that no convergence of

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[29] Elizabeth M. Zechenter, "In the Name of Culture: Cultural Relativism and the Abuse of the Individual," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 53, no. 3 (1997): 323, accessed October 31, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3630957.

[30] Wagner, "The Trouble with Multiculturalism," 410.

moral claims is possible."[31] Societies are built on shared values and acceptance of a transcendent moral code.

Pluralism involves making rational and moral judgments about the merits of other cultures, which "appeal to shared global values, in the sense that these values lay a claim on all and are not particular to any one society."[32] Cultural relativism demands "unqualified tolerance of all cultures," and because of the group-centered approach to social recognition, it "has left little room for rational discussion about the rights of individuals."[33] Universal human rights are "a set of worldwide, overarching values to be respected in their own right and to serve as a basis for making cross-cultural normative judgments."[34] It builds upon the notion of a common humanity which entitles all individuals to minimal rights regardless of their cultural identity.

Cultural relativism has an implicit contradiction: "On the one hand, relativists subscribe to the proposition that there are no universal laws or principles, yet on the other hand they also insist that one must be tolerant of the cultural practices of others, thus making tolerance a *de facto* universal principle."[35] Tolerance becomes the guiding moral principle, even while other cultures are not so tolerant, leading to ethical and moral laxity and a host of human rights abuses. Despite popular concerns, universalism does not

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[31] Amitai Etzioni, "The End of Cross-Cultural Relativism," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 22, no. 2 (1997): 185, accessed October 31, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40644886.

[32] Ibid., 186.

[33] Zechenter, "In the Name of Culture," 326.

[34] Etzioni, "The End of Cross-Cultural Relativism," 182.

[35] Zechenter, "In the Name of Culture," 332.

diminish cultural autonomy, "nor does it have demoralizing and homogenizing effects."[36]

Acknowledging universal rights provides cultures with the ability to express their values

within a set of moral standards that uphold the rights of individuals. Though it is not

perfect, "human rights universalism still offers the best hope of dignified life to the

world's population."[37]

Conclusion

Thus, the implications of multiculturalism are severe, especially when examined

through the lens of individual and social ethics. The ethnic essentialism promulgated by

multiculturalist framing diminishes the equal dignity of all humans. It also establishes a

collectivist framework that challenges individual autonomy. Social justice distorts true

justice by using unequal means to address inequalities attributed to historical injustice

and to achieve an unrealistic ideal of equality. Lastly, cultural relativism challenges

objective truth and overrides the rights of individuals. However, multiculturalism poses

more than just ethical injuries. In the next chapter, I will discuss how it threatens the

political community by institutionalizing group competition for recognition and

resources, incentivizing ethnic separation and isolation, and breaking down the

relationship between citizens and their leaders.

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[36] Ibid., 341

[37] Ibid., 342

CHAPTER SIX

The Politicization of Identity

The previous chapter discussed the ethical issues associated with ethnocentric multiculturalism, namely the ethnic determinism and collectivism at the heart of multicultural philosophy. The diversity problem is exacerbated by the politicization of ethnic identity at the expense of a common republican or citizenship identity. In this chapter, I will compare the political effects of ethnocentric multiculturalism with the republican ideal. As political interests are viewed only through the collective and narrow lens of ethnic group membership, ethnicity is politicized to mobilize members for political action. "Identity politics," the conflation of political interest with ethnic group identity, is not just the manifestation of diversity in contrast with homogeneity; it actively erodes common citizenship and community.[1] By distinguishing between and primarily focusing on the internal rights aspect of citizenship, multicultural citizenship ignores "the external state-membership dimension of citizenship."[2] Interest-group politics therefore demands the pursuit of group interest at the expense of the communal good by fostering intergroup competition, incentivizing ethnic group separation and isolation, and diminishing the responsiveness of the state and group leaders.

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[1] Cynthia V. Ward, "The Limits of 'Liberal Republicanism': Why Group-Based Remedies and Republican Citizenship Don't Mix," *Columbia Law Review* 91, no. 3 (1991): 581–607, accessed December 14, 2020, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1122799.

[2] Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 432.

Competition

The republican ideal is built upon the ability to reach a consensus on the common good, yet identity politics overemphasizes group competition. In a republican system, the polity reaches consensus on issues through deliberation and participation, which both requires and fosters a sense of community and charity in debate. Empathy, the ability to "imagine oneself in the position of a person whose starting point is radically different from one's own," is a key virtue.[3] Essential for a healthy republic, "the fundamental connection between citizens is not identical conceptions of the good, but the belief that agreement can result from free and open interaction."[4] Citizens are expected to aim toward the same end, not to agree on everything or to reach moral perfection. With an emphasis on common citizenship and deliberation, republicanism must "promote the interconnectedness of all citizens and their ability to arrive at a collective definition of the common good, which the state then implements."[5] To preserve this interconnectedness, coalitions are fluid, forming and reforming around particular issues. Rather than participating as a member of a group, citizens participate in accordance with their individual values as they strive for the good of the whole community.

However, in a sectarian system, a republic is defined in terms of access to the political process; it assumes democracy is the interaction between diverse groups struggling for power. Essentially, civil responsibility is shifted from the individual to an

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[3] Ward, "The Limits of 'Liberal Republicanism,'" 586.

[4] Ibid., 585.

[5] Ibid., 583.

organized group which participates on the individual's behalf. Politics is seen as a competition to reach a majority and force one viewpoint upon the minority, and success is achieved by dominating and suppressing other points of view. Political appeals to ethnicity foster resentment and mobilize ethnic conflict by intensifying competition with one another for scarce resources. Framing political conflict in terms of ethnic power structures only raises the stakes of survival.

Instead of welcoming perpetual change and gradual transformation, resulting in greater equality within the community, sectarianism resists any disruption of existing relationships between groups and the state. Ethnocentrism hardens the lines separating minority groups, replacing the ideal flexibility of groups around evolving issues. This rigid system demands the self-interested pursuit of predetermined interests with no room for adaptation. Both groups and the state suppress group realignment out of fear of losing benefits or altering relationships with other groups. As Ward points out, "when older groups are able to win access to the coercive power of the state, the fear of losing benefits turns into the desire to suppress change within the group's sphere of interest."[6] Minorities will not abandon their access to the bargaining table without assurance that nongroup citizenry will empathize with their interests and further diminish inequality. Without flexibility and empathy towards other interests, attempts to form a connected republican citizenship will dissolve.

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[6] Ibid., 595-96.

Division

Secondly, ethnic groups are politically incentivized to divide as the means of receiving recognition and benefits from the state. Built upon the assumption that universal rights are not sufficient for all groups, sectarian politics relies on alienating group members by using methods of "otherism" to strengthen members' group identity and solidarity, foster distrust of outsiders, and weaken feelings of general citizenship and perception of a common interest. Multiculturalism thus "seeks to (re)particularize a form of membership that is inherently universalistic."[7] The short-term, particularized benefits provided to members of the ethnic group are prioritized above (and are evidently more visible than) long-term universal benefits to the whole political community.

Identity politics creates ethnic categories in which to divide society for political means and dissolves identities that do not serve those purposes. The whole system of identity politics "relies on the creation of groups, and then on giving people incentives to adhere to them."[8] Power dynamics play a crucial role in deciding how to create subgroups. Identity politics enforces a racial hierarchy by ascribing victimhood to identities which are seen as historically oppressed. For instance, Americans of white European heritage and Asians are often grouped together to serve the interests of "oppressed" minorities such as African Americans and Latinos.[9] This in effect reduces members' identity to the group's grievance or perceived injury, emphasizing oppression

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[7] Joppke, "Multicultural Citizenship: A Critique," 431.

[8] Gonzalez, *The Plot to Change America,* 10.

[9] Citrin, "The End of American Identity."

and creating a siege mentality. As Sleeper points out, when racial narratives are the central organizing principle of the political community, then "emphasizing ascriptive identities to expose abuses can end up reinforcing the abuses as well as the identities."[10] The oppression label becomes the identity itself and produces a self-perpetuating culture of victimization. By perpetuating a victimhood mentality, individual identity becomes grounded in group membership instead of common citizenship as the "group focus turns inward as it attempts to draw more and more of its members' sense of identity away from general citizenship and toward total immersion in the group."[11] The momentum towards separation diminishes the possibility of reaching agreement on political issues outside of the group, through political deliberation among individuals in the public sphere. In the end, success is measured by whether the group's viewpoint is adopted by society at large or the group gains political influence in the bargaining process, not necessarily by achieving its proposed goal (like eliminating oppression).

This ethnic balkanization results in an ideological sorting of those who embrace identity politics for its goals and perceived benefits and those who oppose it because of its consequences. Identity politics is not "inclusive of different perspectives" but only tolerates those who ascribe to the prevailing narrative that conflates political interest and ethnic identity. "When diversity of race becomes the lodestar by which we must all navigate our lives, diversity of views ceases to exist: if we must all pay homage to the

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[10] Sleeper, "American National Identity in a Postnational Age," 324.

[11] Ward, "The Limits of 'Liberal Republicanism,'" 594.

diversity of identity politics, then dissent disappears."[12] While political participation is essential for democratic survival, so is the free exchange of ideas, even if those ideas do not conform to the prevailing narrative.

Including more "diverse" voices in the political process through descriptive representation would not improve the quality of debate but further institutionalize group separation and competition for influence and resources.[13] Proposals for racial gerrymandering and proportional representation, which are essentially the continuation of the philosophy behind the "separate but equal" doctrine established in *Plessy vs. Ferguson*,[14] would increase the incentive to identify along ethnic terms. These measures assume the interests of minorities are different from the white majority and that only group members can adequately represent those interests, essentially denying that diverse citizens can ever understand each other or fulfill each other's needs.[15] Despite the efforts for more equitable representation, the state continues to be the mediator of conflict and distributor of resources rather than the people who are supposedly more represented. Thus, the focus shifts from resolving issues through democratic institutions to a pluralistic battle for recognition and benefits from the government. Rather than providing a space for creative and innovative solutions, it only accepts solutions which provide the desired outcome, that is, power.

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[12] Gonzalez, *The Plot to Change America,* 6.

[13] Ward, "The Limits of 'Liberal Republicanism."

[14] Citrin, "The End of American Identity."

[15] Ward, "The Limits of 'Liberal Republicanism.'"

Unresponsive Leadership

Thirdly, identity politics has also diminished leadership's responsiveness to the concerns of citizens. In a republican system, the state is responsive to the citizens, reacting to and implementing the will of the people. Citizens are required to participate in public deliberation by electing representatives or through direct democracy to prevent state coercion through an established elitist hierarchy. However, ethnic group pluralism maintains a symbiotic relationship with an activist state, simultaneously fueling its activism and feeding off it: "We have identity politics today because our government has created ethnic... categories whose members have been... given real financial benefits for nursing their grievances. Insisting on group grievances thereby perpetuates the identity groups."[16] The state currently has a primary role in deciding the interests and values of citizens, and it incentivizes groups to organize around those interests in order to compete for government benefits and policy enactment. The state originates or promotes public values, and the group's role is to "create access for its members to the state and to persuade government actors to respond to the group's perceived interests" and siphon government benefits.[17] Managing ethnic conflict is made more difficult as minority groups have come to accept a more absolutist conception of identity, refusing to compromise their interests as well as their identity. The state is forced to grant more and more claims as an increasing number of subgroups demand public recognition and

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[16] Gonzalez, *The Plot to Change America,* 3.

[17] Ward, "The Limits of 'Liberal Republicanism,'" 597.

accommodation. The state no longer responds to citizens' interests but to group demands, groups that the state itself created.

The ethnic groups themselves become less responsive to their members than to the state. Group leaders distance themselves from members to perpetuate power within the organization and in society. The hierarchical system effectively excludes new groups from politics and alienates individuals from contact with representatives and group leaders. The result is no alternative means of civil participation and a weakened sense of citizenship status, effectively disenfranchising those who do not have strong ties to an ethnic group or who are not in positions of leadership. The gap between multiculturalist elites and the public consensus further demonstrates the polarizing effects of ethnocentrism.[18] As seen in our own political history, constitutional and social change has often been driven by elites and interest groups and impressed upon the public through judicial appointments or legislation. Immigrants who seek to assimilate into American culture are told to identify within their own ethnic group and are excluded from public debate unless they adopt the social framing of cultural elites.[19] Rather than allowing public debate and consent to direct political issues, interest groups continue "throwing the weight of government behind one conception of the good and intensifying and rigidifying the battle lines."[20] However, public deliberation is an appropriate means for resolving social equality issues; opening the conversation to the public provides more effective

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[18] Citrin, "The End of American Identity."

[19] Gonzalez, *The Plot to Change America,* 12.

[20] Ward, "The Limits of 'Liberal Republicanism,'" 603.

means of combating the root of unconscious biases instead of merely remedying its effects, and by providing equal access to the public debate, it acknowledges differences while emphasizing commonality.[21]

Conclusion

In conclusion, ethnocentric multiculturalism poses many threats to republican citizenship and the means of resolving differences. The politicization of identity creates a culture of group competition, incentivizes ethnic division and polarizes the political community, and diminishes leadership's responsiveness and civic efficacy. By fracturing the political community into distinct ethnic groups, multiculturalism diminishes the institutions that allow individual interests to come together and participate in the public sphere to reach a consensus for the common good of the community.

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[21] Ibid.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

There is no doubt that our current political climate is fraught with conflict and controversy over national identity. Multiculturalism has integrated itself into every facet of society, and its ethnocentric framing poses particularly grave challenges for the social and political community. Although multiculturalism manifests itself in various ways, all views emphasize group differences and the intrinsic value of diversity.

Multiculturalists propose several benefits on both moral and political grounds. They point to the ethics of human dignity, which they claim can only be fully actualized through self-expression. As part of an individual's identity, ethnicity and culture must be recognized by others and incorporated into the public dialogue. By allowing for such diverse identities, the community gets exposed to different perspectives and experiences that spur innovative solutions to complex problems and check blind spots. It cultivates an attitude of tolerance and respect—or so they argue—for those who are different from oneself or who offer a unique contribution to the whole. It builds resilience and adaptability. It also satisfies the moral requirements of justice by rectifying past discrimination and injustice and redistributing benefits to those who had been denied them.

On political grounds, multiculturalists argue that it is the true embodiment of modern liberalism. It promotes individual freedom by allowing individuals to choose how

they are to participate or which interests they choose to represent in the political sphere; individuals are welcome to participate on their own terms and are not subject to the expectations imposed by the majority. The state recognizes ethnic cultures equally by granting differentiated rights to minority groups, thus upholding the standard of democratic equality. Thirdly, it activates civic engagement through a truly pluralistic society.

However, there are numerous ethical, social, and political consequences of ethnocentric diversity and the politicization of identity. Due to multiculturalism's collectivist framework, it undermines human dignity and individual autonomy. Ethnic essentialism reduces the individual down to his or her ethnic identity and assigns moral labels that perpetuate feelings of discrimination and victimization. Collectivism also divides society into competing ethnic subgroups in which the individual is treated only in relation to his or her group membership. Stripped of autonomy, individuals fall into the trap of ethnic determinism. Social justice also provides collectivist means to achieve an ideal of equality among all positions and benefits in society, equally distributed among all ethnic groups. Lastly, cultural relativism elevates tolerance as the supreme moral virtue, the only transcendent standard in a world without universal values.

As for the negative political consequences, ethnocentric interest-group politics demands the interests of the ethnic group be supreme over the common good. Multicultural diversity thus solidifies the lines between groups and incentivizes division and competition for state recognition and benefits. Leadership, both from the state level and within the group, becomes unresponsive to the interests of group members as they focus on maintaining their relationship with each other. The institutions that allow for

public deliberation disintegrate as ethnic identity comes to be the controlling factor of political life.

The paradox of multiculturalism is evident: Unity and diversity cannot both be goals because they are opposed to one another. Uttering the platitude, "unity in diversity," may seem helpful but it has lost its meaning and significance given the conflicting means and ends between unity and diversity. Pushing for greater diversity undermines civic unity, especially when there is a heavily ethnocentric focus.

So how do we achieve the benefits of diversity without the ethical and political costs? If we need a common identity to unite us, what does that identity look like? One of the benefits of America's unique national identity is that minority groups do not need to surrender their cultural heritage to become "American," like they would if they were to assimilate in European countries where national identity is rooted in a common ethnic heritage. While Americans must still grapple with a dominant ethnic majority and distinct minority identities, our national identity is defined in terms of diversity, itself a nation of immigrants. It is part of our origin as a democratic republic that we embrace different interests and learn to live together in pursuit of the common good. It is a fallacy to choose between the false dilemma of embracing only differences or only similarities.

In order to combat racial essentialism, many suggest a common adherence to traditional American principles of liberty and democracy, regardless of ethnicity. A fragile society needs a shared historical experience to bind it together.[1] Others want to

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[1] Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*, Rev. and enlarged ed. (New York: Norton, 1998).

redeem multiculturalism from its present implementation, which inadvertently reduces social cohesion and intergroup relations. They attempt to strengthen the ineffective areas of multiculturalism rather than dismiss the entire philosophy. For instance, it might help to balance the emphasis on intergroup differences and similarities, include both minority and majority groups, recognize intra-majority group diversity rather than collective categorization as prejudiced, target intrinsic over extrinsic motivations, and avoid overemphasizing the "how" and not "why" when implementing multicultural initiatives.[2]

One thing is clear: our society is headed in a dangerous direction. As polarization and hostility is heightened, civil discourse is breaking down, and we are losing the ability to communicate with each other. Something must be done to reconcile citizens under a common adherence to universal values. If we cannot see our common humanity, we may never truly find unity in diversity.

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[2] Cobb et al., "Rethinking Multiculturalism: Toward a Balanced Approach," 280.

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