

Comparative Perspectives on the Theory and Practice of Multiculturalism

Lessons from the Commonwealth

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In this concluding chapter we explore the implications of this volume for the theory and practice of multiculturalism. We provide clear answers to the central questions raised at the outset: What is “multiculturalism,” and how did it come about? What dilemmas has it posed for liberal-democratic governance? How have these been responded to in theory and practice, and are the different responses adequate? Are there alternative approaches to cultural diversity that have been overlooked? The chapters in this volume demonstrate that multiculturalism has implications that stretch beyond its current formulations in both public and academic discourse, casting doubt on basic assumptions of modern liberal democracy, and even on the viability of the nation-state in its present form.

Decolonization caused a significant increase in internal cultural diversity in many liberal democracies, which gave rise to multiculturalism as a social fact, related set of policy challenges, and normative debates. Yet the legacies of the British Empire also conditioned the various responses to cultural diversity, thereby helping to construct different forms of “multiculturalism.” The dominant understanding of multiculturalism in political practice is in terms of the accommodation and integration of minority immigrants. The political theory of multiculturalism is broader in scope, including national minorities and indigenous peoples as well as immigrants, but nevertheless generally only ascribes self-government rights to the former two, and then only in certain circumstances. Conceptualizations of multiculturalism in current theory and practice have been conditioned by decolonization, which affected countries differently depending on both their domestic history and their position within the Empire. Comparing forms of multiculturalism across the British Commonwealth demonstrates that “multiculturalism”

properly understood has profound ramifications for modern societies. The putative “siloining” of multiculturalism in theory and practice is problematic, and the holistic account of multiculturalism provided by this book points toward a radical approach to cultural diversity, which is to reform governance to make it much more polycentric, i.e. operating through an overlapping set of formal and informal institutions, no single one of which is empowered to trump all the others. Polycentric institutions, and an emphasis on pluralism within them, would better be able to accommodate the fluid, interrelated, and mutually constructing nature of the relevant issues and groups. In so doing, we might unwind unhelpful forms of social construction that occurred during imperialism, decolonization, and the creation of “multiculturalism” itself.

MULTICULTURALISM IN POLITICAL PRACTICE: IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

The dominant political and public understanding of multiculturalism is in terms of postwar immigration and the dilemmas this has posed for traditional forms of liberal-democratic governance. In response to these challenges, many states have granted cultural minorities exemptions from putatively neutral and difference-blind laws, complemented by more positive assistance, such as language rights, education reforms, and funding for minority cultural activities. The explicit or implicit aim of these multicultural “regimes” is to help immigrants integrate into a polity understood as having a dominant cultural majority. These policies and laws are therefore aimed primarily at immigrant groups, rather than national minorities or indigenous peoples, who are usually seen as falling outside of the ambit of debates about “multiculturalism.” Comparison of different countries across the Commonwealth undermines this narrative, however, in several key ways.

For example, the different issues raised by cultural diversity are not cleanly separable from each other, suggesting that neither are the different “types” of multiculturalism. In both Singapore and Malaysia, the forms of multiracial consociationalism adopted around independence have political, economic, and cultural aspects that affect each other, and thereby “multiculturalism,” in various ways. Political tensions followed the ascription of individual citizenship rights within the context of an overarching group politics. In turn, this political competition is itself entangled with cultural practices, as seen in the community processions and parades that helped trigger the Malaysia/Singapore split. Yet economics has demarcated these different ethno-cultural groups even further by way of programs of development seen as necessary for political stability and cultural harmony. The entanglement of politics, economics, and culture can likewise be seen in India, where the adoption of Western liberal secularism has exacerbated political conflict between religious groups. The constitution adopted at independence also recast issues that are ostensibly religious or cultural—such as discrimination against the

Scheduled Castes—in socioeconomic terms, embroiling multiculturalism even further in interest group politics. These cases show that multiculturalism raises cross-cutting issues that affect the way groups relate to each other and to the state. In turn, this suggests that “integration” is not a unitary process, but takes place across a number of different “spheres,” including the political and economic, and through processes that span public and private, individual and group. We therefore should not automatically prioritize *cultural* integration above all other forms, or assume it can/should take place in splendid isolation. Nor can we simply assume that integration in one sphere inevitably aids integration in another, or even that this would be desirable.

Although the cases cited above are from the “New” Commonwealth, the underlying point has traction elsewhere.¹ For example, recent public discourse in the United Kingdom has been dominated by calls for immigrants to integrate into British culture more completely.² Yet this ignores both the historical specificity of articulations of the cultural nation and the long-term degradation of the welfare state that aids integration. The pluralistic nature of integration thus suggests that even in cases such as the British one, which seem to fit the paradigmatic model of immigrant multiculturalism, we need to be aware of the historical nuances of particular “regimes” of integration, and the ways in which modern debates may gloss over underlying factors that are not overtly cultural. In turn, this reinforces the need to ensure that multicultural policy frameworks and the accompanying public rhetoric are open and holistic, rather than rigid and totalizing, in their approach to integration.

The interrelated nature of politics, economics and culture not only affects the way we should approach the integration of immigrants, however. It also embroils multiculturalism in debates over the treatment of national minorities and indigenous peoples, even if this is not always clearly understood in public discourse. For example, one reason behind the Brexit vote was the widespread perception that the welfare state—and the postwar British national identity of which it is a part—is being threatened by immigrant multiculturalism. Yet immigration and “Britishness” are understood and valued differently in different parts of the United Kingdom, which each have their own underlying national identity.³ The dominant public understanding of British multiculturalism in terms of immigration and race therefore masks direct political connections to issues involving national minorities, in particular Brexit and renewed pressure for Scottish independence. In New Zealand “multiculturalism” is also understood primarily in terms of immigrant integration, yet again it is entangled at a deeper level with issues relating to national minorities/indigenous peoples. Its multiculturalism is shaped by debates over civic values and national identity, which take place against the background of official biculturalism. The neoliberal reforms that created immigrant multiculturalism threatened key aspects of New Zealand’s national identity rooted in social justice, provoking a public backlash. Related government attempts to co-opt communal values based in indigenous culture were resisted by the Maori, who distinguished

themselves from immigrant groups by articulating their claims in terms of binationalism. Yet in recent years the Maori have softened their stance on immigration, seeing immigrant groups as potential allies in their struggle to resist racism and maintain a robust biculturalism. Both the British and New Zealand cases therefore illustrate the inevitable entanglement of multiculturalism in contests over national identity, which means immigrant multiculturalism cannot be neatly separated from issues relating to national minorities and indigenous peoples.

It is therefore unsurprising that government attempts to treat immigrants, national minorities and indigenous peoples separately can be ineffective, with the different groups influencing each other even as they try to distinguish their claims. This process occurs in both Britain and New Zealand, but is perhaps clearest in Canada. Canada's reputation as a world leader in multiculturalism is in part built on features of its legal system that have helped to accommodate a variety of groups and claims. Ironically, however, this has had negative consequences. A crucial effect has been the siloing of discourses surrounding Quebec, indigenous peoples, and the integration of nonwhite immigrants, with "multiculturalism" in public discourse construed predominantly in terms of the latter. Not only does this gloss over connections prominent in the philosophical literature, it has also resulted in unhelpful politicization of debates. Multiculturalism is presented as a mechanism by which Anglophone Canada can intrude in Quebec's political and cultural autonomy, and as potentially undercutting the distinctive claims of indigenous peoples. These difficulties are exacerbated by the legal doctrine of "reasonable accommodation," which facilitates opportunistic resistance to liberal egalitarian norms by local majorities, and by the potentially essentializing treatment of indigenous cultures by the courts. Variegated legal arrangements and constitutional protections therefore interact with interest-group politics in Canada, meaning that even as the different groups and issues are perceived as separate in law and policy, they interact at a deeper level.

Attempts to treat immigrant groups, national minorities, and indigenous peoples separately are also ineffective in the New Commonwealth. We have already seen that in Malaysia, Singapore, and India, multiculturalism raises political, economic, and cultural issues that cut across each other, and that this has contributed to its politicization. A similar process can be seen in in Trinidad and Tobago, where the recent adoption of "official" multiculturalism draws on policy discourses that construe it primarily in terms of integration. Yet this multiculturalism has disturbed the precarious balance between the organically developed commonality aligned with Afro-Trinidadian interests and the self-conscious cultural diversity favored by Indo-Trinidadians.⁴ Overall, therefore, the cases show that even narrow conceptualizations of multiculturalism are implicated in contests over state resources, national identity, and cultural recognition. "Multiculturalism" thereby helps to construct competing groups as social entities through policy, law, and public discourse, even as they try to keep themselves separate.

Lastly, cases in the New Commonwealth highlight that the association of integration with immigration is contingent. Malaysia, Singapore, India, and Trinidad and Tobago have all struggled to blend different cultural groups together, yet of these states only Malaysia and Singapore have received significant numbers of postwar immigrants, many of whom are treated like guest workers who do not require permanent integration. The Nigerian case provides the clearest illustration, however, that framing multiculturalism in terms of immigrant integration may be unhelpful. Nigerian independence was shaped by political competition between three main groups, none of which formed an overall majority, with no clear way of integrating the groups into a single cohesive polity. The cases thus highlight that integration is a key issue even in the absence of mass immigration or a dominant majority.⁵

Casting multiculturalism in public discourse in terms of immigrant integration appears to be conditioned by historical experiences in Britain and the “Old” Commonwealth. Even in those countries, attempts to separate immigrant multiculturalism cleanly from other groups and issues—in particular those relating to indigenous peoples and other national minorities—are often ineffective, and perhaps counterproductive. Just as multicultural “issues” cut across politics, economics, and culture, the different groups—immigrants, national minorities, indigenous peoples, and other “cultural” groups—mutually construct each other, even in the absence of a dominant cultural majority. Confining “multiculturalism” to policy approaches aimed at immigrant integration is therefore historically conditioned, theoretically unconvincing, and practically impossible.

MULTICULTURALISM IN POLITICAL THEORY: CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND GOVERNANCE

The dominant understanding of multiculturalism in political theory draws on the typology of groups and rights conditioned by historical experiences in the Old Commonwealth and made famous by the Canadian philosopher Will Kymlicka. In political theory “multiculturalism” thus encompasses national minorities and indigenous peoples as well as immigrant groups, and potentially supports rights to special political representation, self-government, and historical reparations. Prominent claims made in support of these multicultural rights are that culture facilitates individual autonomous choice, supports self-respect, and grounds shared identities vital for democratic governance.⁶ Unlike policy discourses, however, political theorists do not simply assume that the polity contains a cultural majority into which minorities must integrate. Rather, prominent advocates—and sometimes even critics—of multicultural rights support altering political structures in order to track the boundaries of individual cultural groups, in particular national minorities or indigenous peoples.⁷ These structural changes are often supplemented with “polyethnic” multicultural rights aimed at integrating—but

not assimilating—immigrant groups into the dominant (usually national) culture. On the face of it, therefore, this means that multicultural political theory supports our claim that casting multiculturalism purely in terms of immigrant integration is unhelpful. Yet even this more expansive understanding of multiculturalism in political theory is too rigid to accommodate the complexity of postwar multiculturalism.

A comparison of different countries across the Commonwealth casts doubt on the central claims in multicultural political theory in ways that build on the critiques from the previous section. Postcolonial polities are often defined by cultural hybridity or pluralism rather than homogeneity or unity, and therefore may lack fixed identities either at the state, substate, or even individual level. For example, while Afro-Creoles have historically dominated postcolonial Trinidadian politics, the hybridity that is definitional of creole culture destabilizes even this identity, preventing consolidation of either African or Indian ancestry as the nation's symbolic center. In India and Nigeria, the sheer scale of diversity within the state has arguably militated against the construction of a clear, stable shared identity, and even in the much smaller Britain there is pluralism at the heart of the cultural nation. Decolonization and multiculturalism have fundamentally—and perhaps irrevocably—destabilized British national identity, and postwar articulations of an inclusive Britishness continue to be pressured by resistance to immigration, economic globalization, and a suspicion of Islamic groups. This instability has been exacerbated by differences between England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Even these underlying nationalisms are too fluid to secure productive shared identities in the way many multicultural theorists presume.⁸ National and cultural identities are dynamic and variegated, which indicates that their hybridity must be taken into consideration by both the theory and practice of multiculturalism, undercutting simple accounts of their role in governance that are common in the literature.⁹

Even where there are relatively clear forms of group identity, the nature of the relevant "culture" or "nation" can change in ways that undercut common assumptions regarding their effects and the neat separation of groups/rights. For example, in resisting the shift to neoliberalism, Pakeha (white/European-descended) and Maori New Zealanders drew on *shared* values that were grounded in *divergent* forms of national identity. Yet even these dual forms of identity are dynamic, with the Maori simultaneously defending domestic binationalism and rejecting the homogenized version of their culture co-opted by the state to "brand" New Zealand internationally. In addition, the elision of state services for the Maori and Pasifika immigrants means that the latter sometimes occupy a liminal status between the two dominant "nations." Similar issues occur in Canada, where Anglophone citizens form a clear cultural majority, albeit one that must co-exist with Francophone Canada and the First Nations. Yet variations between Quebec's "interculturalism," Federal "multiculturalism," and the legal treatment

of indigenous cultural rights, demonstrates that the multiple cultural nations and groups in Canada are not immutable, but are expressed differently depending on context and fora, as is their response to cultural difference. Even in Australia the Anglophone “core” of the nation is not static. An early exclusionary ethno-nationalism was replaced by an assimilative cultural nationalism, which in turn has been tempered by a liberal nationalism that stresses integration. Australian multiculturalism is in part a pragmatic compromise between competing aspects of national identity, predicated on the ever-changing nature of the nation in response to cultural diversity. Comparison of cases across the Commonwealth therefore indicates that multicultural theorists can neither simply assume that “shared” values or identities rooted in culture or nation are identical at a deeper level nor that they will remain constant across time and domestic context. The relevant groups are not fixed and stable entities that play a predictable role in liberal democracy, but rather are dynamic, fluid, and contested.

Even a “political” nation that could potentially bridge underlying diversity may become entangled with thicker cultural nationalisms, as can be seen in India’s post-independence nation-building. India has a distinctive approach to cultural diversity, rejecting overt group consociationalism in favor of more individualized forms of liberal governance, which are then supplemented by a “limited” multicultural regime of group-differentiated rights. Yet this approach came about largely because constitution-making at independence led to a compromise between different forms of liberalism and nationalism. Liberals and secular nationalists valorized difference-blind individual citizenship and a political conception of the nation, whereas conservative nationalists sought greater social unity through a cultural understanding of the polis. The growing power of Hindu nationalism suggests, however, that this convergence of interests was temporary and therefore unstable. Parallel difficulties can be seen in Britain, where public figures frequently suggest that a British national identity construed primarily in terms of shared values and institutions can unite different groups. Yet the “rebalancing” of British multiculturalism by forms of liberal nationalism potentially excludes more conservative cultural minorities, and Brexit has been accompanied by a resurgence in ethno-nationalism. The tendency of British debates over national identity to draw (often reflexively) on thicker aspects of British history and culture suggests that attempts to use a thin version of “Britishness” to unify the polity are misplaced.

Our comparative study of multiculturalism thus indicates that any given “culture” or “nation” is complex, dynamic, and alters across different contexts. The cases also suggest that the “political” nation is not robust enough to resist thicker forms of cultural and even ethno-religious nationalism. Yet the claims of multicultural theorists typically revolve around the function of culture in supporting autonomous choice, self-respect, and useful shared identities. This volume thus supports prominent “cosmopolitan” critiques of liberal multicultural theory alleging that it—and thereby the literature more broadly—implicitly relies on a

simplistic account of culture.¹⁰ The crux of this critique is that individuals simultaneously participate in multiple and overlapping forms of culture and identity. If true, this means that assigning rights to particular cultures on the basis that they play a necessary role in individual or group life is both unwarranted and potentially counterproductive.¹¹

Cultures are socially constructed in two key senses that make rigid and monolithic accounts of it unsustainable. Firstly, since cultural meanings are necessarily abstract generalizations of concrete individual meanings, they are subject to human agency, as demonstrated by cultural change.¹² Secondly, any attempt to identify a culture is itself a form of social construction, and therefore placing an individual in one clearly identifiable culture with a precise boundary would require reducing it to a stipulative list of features. It is therefore unpersuasive to claim that an individual is necessarily located in a single culture that functions as an exclusive context for choice or identity. Since cultures are socially constructed, we have reason to suppose that individuals are located in multiple cultures and have several cultural identities, and therefore that whatever role "culture" plays will vary with how we define it. There may be different levels of overlapping understandings and identities that have important social effects, but there are many different levels of abstraction from individuals, of which any particular culture is only one.

Overall, therefore, the cases discussed in the preceding chapters support the contention that tracking the boundaries of specific cultural groups is empirically and philosophically problematic, undermining attempts to separate groups typologically and ascribe them different rights on this basis. This volume therefore casts doubt on the main reasons given in multicultural theory for wanting to prioritize particular cultures, and on the ability to do so in practice.¹³

MULTICULTURALISM, LIBERALISM, AND EMPIRE

Dominant accounts in philosophy and politics are thus fundamentally flawed in their conceptualization of multiculturalism. Since various "multicultural" issues and groups are interrelated and mutually constructing in *both* theory and practice, attempting to separate them cleanly is bound to fail. Our analysis of multiculturalism only shows us, however, that our response to cultural diversity must be holistic. It does not offer us positive guidance as to what type of rights, for which sort of groups, are justified. Should we treat all minority groups like immigrants or as equivalent to national minorities? Is the correct response to cultural diversity centralization and integration, devolution and local political autonomy, or something else entirely? Is it possible to have an integrated response to multiculturalism that productively spans both theory and practice?

In order to find a way out of this impasse, we must move up a level of analysis and examine multiculturalism in greater historical depth, and in its international as well as domestic contexts. The interaction of liberal and colonial forms of

governance has conditioned the forms taken in each by multiculturalism, which not only challenges liberal-democratic norms and conceptions of the nation, but has remade states at a fundamental level. Modern multiculturalism is itself part of the process of decolonization, which continues to affect relationships both within and between the Commonwealth states. Tracing the roots of current philosophical and political debates foregrounds the depth of the dilemmas it poses to traditional liberal democracy, starting to bring into focus the issues that a fruitful form of multiculturalism must address.

The clearest examples of the entanglement of liberalism, colonialism, and multiculturalism are in the New Commonwealth. In what are now Malaysia and Singapore, the colonial state maintained itself by limiting ethnic groups to different economic roles: "Chinese" capital, "Malay" land, and "Indian" labor. This crude division showed strains under the Empire, and at decolonization the British advocated blending the diverse populations into unified polities through equal citizenship rights. A purely individualized approach was rejected by local elites, however, in favor of multiracial consociationalism that drew on the categories of colonial political economy. The state's capacity to balance the different groups has depended on economic growth, and so fluctuating fortunes have amplified calls for democratization and newer forms of multiculturalism. These efforts at reform have been undercut, however, by highly mobile labor and capital, and by recent financial crises. Nation- and state-building in both countries is thus still conditioned by the consociationalism drawn from racialized colonial governance, and its interactions with globalized liberal economics. Similar factors in Trinidad and Tobago have affected the development of nation and state, and thereby the way cultural diversity has been managed. Plantation slavery resulted in a rigid racial hierarchy, with Europeans as masters, Africans as slaves, and East Indians as indentured laborers. The annihilation of indigenous peoples led to recasting the descendants of enslaved Africans as "native," however, and so as the legitimate inheritors of the postcolonial nation and state. Afro-Creoles have therefore dominated domestic post-independence politics, but recently this has been challenged by Indo-Trinidadians, in part through an official multiculturalism that draws on policy discourses from Europe and the Old Commonwealth. The intertwined effects of colonial and liberal governance therefore contribute directly to the hybridity at the heart of the nation and colors political competition between subnational groups.

Colonialism also caused some polities to reject aspects of liberal governance, or to adopt aspects of it unsuited to local contexts. For example, the form of federalism adopted at Nigerian independence was the result of British influence, yet this tripartite division was inherently unstable, and cut across important religious and linguistic differences. In addition, the way the three main groups understood one another politically and culturally was conditioned by strategies employed by the British, as can be seen in their leaders' private statements and rhetoric in their party-controlled newspapers. British colonial governance therefore contributed

to the distrust between the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa-Fulani, who favored different balances of federalism and nationalism. The entanglement of liberalism with colonialism in Nigeria helped to cast both cultural diversity and decentralization as threats, delaying the institution of a more radical federalism suited to Nigeria's deeper underlying cultural diversity.

Indian elites were also suspicious of British divide-and-rule strategies, and some had a strong commitment to universalist forms of liberal governance, including secularism. A pragmatic compromise between liberals and nationalists at independence reinforced resistance to colonial-era decentralization and group-rights, resulting in a rejection of consociationalism in favor of a “limited” multicultural framework. Subsequent expansion of multicultural policies and rights in India has thus occurred through ad hoc concessions to lobbying rather than the consistent application of political principle. This “normative deficit” plays into the rhetorical strategies of the Hindu Right, which also portrays multiculturalism as a threat to the nation. The interaction of liberalism, colonialism, nationalism, and religion is therefore vital for understanding multiculturalism in India. Although the early liberal state was defined by its relegation of religion to the private sphere, European colonialism was often justified by attempts to spread the Christian religion around the globe, and this dual inheritance altered the trajectory of both religion and politics in India. The Abrahamic faiths understand religion in terms of absolute doctrinal truth, and thereby prioritize the conversion of individuals through missionary work. Yet the religious traditions native to India do not share these commitments, but rather see truth as partial, perspectival and subject to open-ended pursuit from within one's own community. The imposition of Western secularism therefore incentivized the reconstruction of Indian religious traditions and communities in competitive “Semitic” terms, feeding ethno-religious conflict. Cases in the New Commonwealth therefore illustrate the deep historical connection between liberalism and colonialism, which has conditioned not just multiculturalism, but the structure, nature, and development of the postcolonial nation, state, and even religious groups.

The entwined legacies of liberalism and colonialism are also at work in the Old Commonwealth. In New Zealand, the Maori resisted the commodification of their culture for purposes of both domestic politics and international trade, and in so doing asserted their status as a distinct and equal founding group. Yet in responding to the neoliberalism that sought to open New Zealand more widely to global economic forces, they articulated their claims to internal political autonomy through emerging norms relating to indigenous peoples, which in turn drew on the international human rights law created by the postwar crisis in liberal governance. The influence of these international discourses led to significant domestic legal changes, such as the renewal of treaty claims and human rights legislation, which in turn have interacted with debates over immigrant multiculturalism and national identity. A parallel process has occurred in Australia, where

multiculturalism—although it ostensibly also applies to indigenous peoples—is understood primarily in terms of nondiscrimination and equality of opportunity. These universalist liberal principles, and the political institutions and forms of citizenship through which they are expressed, are a key part of the British legacy in Australia. Unlike in Nigeria and India, however, where the experiences under colonial governance tainted liberal principles and practices, these aspects of the imperial inheritance have been readily accepted as central parts of Australian national identity and state governance. Australian multiculturalism also draws on inter- and transnational discourses, however, including a mix of norms and practices from other Commonwealth countries.¹⁴ Yet Australia is unique in the way it has blended these international and domestic elements, maintaining a balance between cultural nationalism, liberal democratic principle, and the forces of globalization released by decolonization. In the Old Commonwealth, liberalism and colonialism have thus conditioned multiculturalism in both its domestic and international aspects—which are themselves not cleanly separable—and thereby altered the basic structure of both state and nation.

The United Kingdom lacks a written constitution or formal federalism, and so has addressed cultural diversity through policy and legislation rather than an overt restructuring of the state. Nevertheless, multiculturalism has reconstituted Britain at a fundamental level, and there has been a failure fully to acknowledge the deep connection to empire. Colonization provided a common project for the different nations of the United Kingdom, helping to form both the modern British state and a new “national” identity. The end of empire therefore not only challenged Britain’s status as a world power but destabilized “Britishness” itself. The overall result was a postwar transformation of UK nationality, citizenship, and immigration law, which in turn has meant that multiculturalism focuses on integrating immigrants into the British nation. Yet there is no consensus regarding what that nation is, or should be. Thinner political identities compete with thicker forms of “muscular liberalism” and cultural nationalism, which in turn often slide into ethnocentrism. These different forms of British national identity cut across underlying nationalisms, which have different relationships with multiculturalism, immigration, and a welfare state under pressure from domestic neoliberalism and economic globalization. These cleavages and their historical roots are rarely foregrounded in debates over British multiculturalism. The resulting public discourse therefore also suffers from a “normative deficit,” which stems from a failure to address directly the ways in which liberalism and colonialism have conditioned Britain’s self-understanding. British national identity continues to be expressed through a Whiggish exceptionalism that alternates between sanitizing and celebrating British imperial history, ignoring the effects of the end of empire on the plural identities it held together. The refusal to face the intertwined nature of Britain’s colonial past and multicultural present thus masks the depth of the challenge cultural diversity poses to the British nation

and state, suggesting that efforts to limit its scope to immigrant integration will be counterproductive.

Domestic cultural diversity thus cannot be understood without reference to international discourses, and forms of modern multiculturalism are conditioned by the historical legacy of liberalism and colonialism. Postwar multiculturalism challenges traditional liberal-democratic norms and practices that are themselves entangled with the history of colonial governance. Multiculturalism, and the decolonization of which it is a part, have also altered the basic form of the nation and structure of the state, albeit that these processes have varied in their mechanisms, effects, and how they are understood. Comparison of different cases across the Commonwealth indicates that a productive response to postwar cultural diversity must address its multiple contexts, but still acknowledge the depth of its challenges to nation and state. In particular, any fruitful form of multiculturalism must remain cognizant of the ongoing effects of colonialism on its own theory and practice, and on liberal-democratic governance more broadly.

MULTICULTURALISM IN THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH: NEW, OLD, AND ORIGINARY

The dilemmas posed by the end of Empire looked very different from the center than at its periphery, and therefore the categories of colonizer, settler-colony and colonized which structure this volume help to explain important features of the different cases. For example, polities in the New Commonwealth, which had to balance multiple competing groups after decolonization, all encompass a degree of cultural diversity that cannot readily be encapsulated by the Westernized conceptualizations of multiculturalism that arose in the 1970s.¹⁵ Racialized colonial governance has conditioned Trinidadian national identity, fixing Afro-Creole, East Indian and White Settlers as the organizing groups, even as these categories are constantly pressured by hybridity within and across the correlated identities. Multiculturalism in Malaysia and Singapore has been determined by economic development rather than political institutions, but both of these are beholden to racialized categories inscribed by the British. And in India, the legacy of colonial missionary work and Western liberalism has masked the underlying normative or cultural issues and exacerbated ethno-religious conflict.¹⁶ Meanwhile, in Nigeria, resistance to decentralization in reaction to the colonial divide-and-rule strategy had disastrous consequences. Multiculturalism in the contemporary New Commonwealth therefore cannot be understood without reference to the ongoing effects of governance rooted in the intersection of liberalism and colonialism.

The legacy of colonial governance is significantly different in the nations of the Old Commonwealth. As “Greater Britain” these colonies all had longer experiences of self-rule, preferential treatment by the United Kingdom, greater initial homogeneity, and more controlled transitions to independence. The privileged status of these countries bolstered the stability of their political institutions

and economic development, which aided the creation of a robust welfare state. These political, economic, and cultural factors supported the integration of new arrivals following immigration reforms, which in turn drew out policies that self-consciously addressed cultural diversity. The unique position of the Old Commonwealth within the Empire thus facilitated the development of forms of official bi- and multiculturalism that were able to blend traditional liberalism, domestic reformulations of it, and newer international discourses. The nature of the nation in the Old Commonwealth, and its relation to Britishness, is also very different. Stuart Ward has demonstrated that the collapse of the imagined community of “Greater Britain” after World War II forced the countries of the Old Commonwealth to develop forms of nationalism to fill the void.¹⁷ Even as these settler-colonies shifted away from the imperial metropole, however, the articulation of their “new nationalisms” drew on aspects of their British inheritance. The dominant *cultural* nation was still presumed to be anglophone, albeit that it was self-consciously reconstructed in relation to national minorities, indigenous peoples, and immigrant groups.¹⁸ In addition, the “Anglo-Saxon” cultural inheritance could be construed in broadly homogenous terms, without looking through the anglophone “core” to potential tensions within it among the English, Scots, Welsh, and Irish elements.¹⁹ This stable cultural core has helped the Old Commonwealth countries evolve gradually in the face of cultural diversity, facilitating the adoption of “multiculturalism” as part of their national identity. All of the above factors are plausibly the result of their position within the Empire, and seem to have helped these states tailor their responses to local conditions, aiding their ability to meet the challenges of postwar cultural diversity.

Such opacity has not been a long-term option within the United Kingdom itself, however. Before World War II, Britain had never existed without empire, and the attempt to manage post-imperial foreign relations—including issues related to race—via nationality reforms caused mass nonwhite immigration. Britain developed a bifurcated form of multiculturalism in response, which conditioned the public understanding of it in terms of immigrant integration. Modern British multiculturalism is therefore also a direct legacy of colonial governance and the way it interacted with liberal norms (such as anti-racism) both domestically and internationally. Ironically, however, this hides its connection to basic issues regarding the nation and state. “Britishness” is a distinctive identity, but is constructed out of underlying nations that have all reacted differently to multiculturalism, as Brexit and renewed calls for Scottish independence have shown. The British nation is inherently unstable in a postcolonial setting, which casts doubt on the postwar attempt to integrate migrants into a single national identity. It may well be, therefore, that Britain requires more a fundamental and deliberate legal restructuring in response to multiculturalism than the nations and states in the Old and New Commonwealth, who have addressed its challenges more self-consciously and more systematically.

Exploring the ways in which experiences of multiculturalism have been conditioned by both local factors and countries’ positions within the Empire therefore

reinforces and deepens our analysis. The different conceptualizations of multiculturalism are functions not just of geography and history but also of different forms of power, and of how these were instantiated both during and after empire. Colonial governance at least partly constructed the issues and groups in each locale, and its legacy affected attitudes to, and interpretations of, liberal democracy. In turn, this altered the trajectory of nation- and state-building in each case, and conditioned understandings of multiculturalism in theory and practice. Our narrative demonstrates that not only does “multiculturalism” cut across the borders of policy and theory, it also straddles the boundaries of nations and states, and undercuts traditional accounts of their origin. Prominent narratives in the social sciences, humanities, and law see the formation of modern nations, states, and liberal democracy as taking place within Europe, and only then exported to other parts of the world. Yet this volume strengthens claims that this story is a myth, and an unhelpful one at that.²⁰ The countries of the British Commonwealth have never existed in complete independence from one another, and the legacy of the Empire continues to affect their development. The multiple layers of identity and governance engaged by multiculturalism stretch across individual countries, none of which exist in splendid isolation from each other. Modern polities are not closed political, economic, or even moral communities, but rather are related parts of an interdependent global system. It is not just the different “multicultural” groups and issues that are interrelated and mutually constructing, but the Commonwealth nations and states themselves.

This volume therefore leads us back to venerable struggles over the proper nature and scope of liberal democracy, helping to clarify what form our response to multiculturalism should take, and at what level it should be applied. Multiculturalism must be understood holistically, as a process by which different groups—including nations and states—construct each other, and “multiculturalism” itself, through a series of overlapping debates regarding politics, economics, and culture. Our responses must be similarly flexible, yet nevertheless engage the deep-rooted issues of identity and governance raised by cultural diversity and the end of imperialism. Our form of multiculturalism must therefore be wide-ranging, traversing politics, economics, and culture, and all manner of different groups and rights. It must be radical in its scope, questioning long-standing presumptions regarding the history, nature, and function of both nation and state. And it must address the depth of the challenge posed by multiculturalism to traditional liberal-democratic governance, suggesting that we must reform not just principles and practices, but also the basic structure of the polity.

MULTICULTURALISM AS THEORY AND PRACTICE: POLYCENTRIC AND PLURAL GOVERNANCE

In this final section, we bring together the different strands of our analysis, and this volume more broadly, sketching the central lessons of our comparative

study for the theory and practice of multiculturalism.²¹ We have seen that across the postwar Commonwealth cultural diversity has called into question not just whether the nation-state in fact facilitates liberal democracy, but whether it is even viable in its traditional form. Multiculturalism presses directly on potential cleavages in the modern world, revealing the contingency of cherished national narratives and fundamental forms of governance, and engaging identities grounded in the former as well as norms relating to the latter. The interrelationships between culture, meaning, and identity, and their normative ramifications for governance, are crucial issues for any form of multiculturalism. Yet current understandings of multiculturalism in theory and practice are unhelpful in the way they generally attempt to separate out different “multicultural” groups, rights, and issues. Instead, we need to reconstitute our basic forms of our governance to be radically polycentric and pluralist.²²

The dominant understanding of multiculturalism in contemporary politics is in terms of immigration, but this is unduly narrow. It underplays historical interactions between different groups and the way these have influenced the policy and legal frameworks applying to each. The politicization of public discourse surrounding multiculturalism and national identity also discourages some groups from framing their claims in multicultural terms, glossing over important philosophical problems and deeper connections between different issues. In public debates over national identity, the overarching goal is to articulate an inclusive form of it that can integrate a multicultural citizenry. Yet current popular discourse fails to address the pressing question as to whether nonexclusionary forms of identity can have the desired effects, not just on immigrants but on the wider populace. Integration is not a unitary process but rather takes place in different ways, across many locales, and into multiple groups. This suggests we should not focus on the participation of immigrants in specific spheres of public life, such as the majority culture or national identity, or through narrow mechanisms such as policy and law. Cultural meanings and identities are fluid, dynamic, and overlapping, which means that generalized calls for “integration,” “assimilation,” or even “cohesion” may be misplaced.

Current practices of multiculturalism may therefore have something to learn from the philosophical issues addressed in multicultural political theory, and its wider scope. It is clear that multiculturalism stretches far beyond the challenges posed by postwar immigrant integration, potentially justifying a radical remaking of the state, including grants of political autonomy to national minorities. Yet political theory may also have something to learn from our historical study of multiculturalism. For example, many postwar immigrants to the United Kingdom already possessed the equivalent citizenship status to natural-born British citizens by the time they arrived, and so do not fit the standard typology in multicultural political theory. Nor do the many of the various substate groups reconstructed by colonial and liberal governance in the New Commonwealth, many of which straddle the boundaries between politics/economics/culture, nation/national

minority, and even indigenous/alien.²³ This volume therefore suggests that claims to self-government on the basis of culture are not necessarily limited to peoples subject to colonization, or to minority national groups such the Québécois who were co-colonizers. Rather, immigrants from former colonies, and a wide variety of autochthonous groups within them, may have a plausible claim to more substantive rights, including political autonomy.²⁴ A blanket asymmetry of rights is therefore unpersuasive.

The division between groups and rights employed at the level of theory thus potentially ignores important aspects of history. The standard typology is also philosophically unconvincing, arbitrarily valorizing the role and nature of culture in some groups at the expense of others. What sort of rights can be justified on the basis of cultural difference has been a recurring issue in the philosophical literature, as have connected concerns about the reification and essentialization of cultures.²⁵ We have suggested above that liberal multiculturalists—and perhaps some of their critics—are committed to the claim that particular cultures play a necessary role in individual choice, ground self-respect, and facilitate useful shared meanings and identities. Yet philosophical holism rules out a rigid view of culture, indicating instead that it is plural, fluid, overlapping, and contested.²⁶ Our historical study of the Commonwealth supports these philosophical claims, demonstrating that multiculturalism straddles multiple and interconnected historical, geographical, temporal, and discursive contexts. The intersection of multiculturalism and liberal democracy, and—through imperialism—the intertwining of the nations and states of the postwar Commonwealth themselves, means that any attempt to separate groups and issues in policy and theoretical discourse is unconvincing. It is therefore presumptively problematic to assign rights on the basis of culture to particular groups of individuals but not to others. Identification of individuals as members a group to which we might ascribe multicultural rights—such as a culture, national group, or perhaps even a state—is itself an act of social construction, which means that the difference between those inside and those outside the group may be unclear and contested. In fact, an anti-essentialist account of culture seems to rule out any fixed cultural identities, and thereby undercut claims for their protection based directly in culture itself.

The issues multiculturalism raises cannot simply be ignored or dismissed, however. The forms of identity and governance that multiculturalism challenges are deep-rooted, and our case studies also show that sensitivity to local history and conditions is important. Superficially similar groups may therefore have distinctive claims in different contexts, and require tailored forms of “multiculturalism.”²⁷ This means we should be suspicious of one-size-fits-all and one-time-only solutions, whether it be in terms of moral values, political practice or the composition of the polity itself. Yet, although we have good reason to believe that cultural identities and groups are fluid, some people will believe—and act as if—they are not. Any “multicultural” regime must therefore be flexible enough to account for

those that experience culture as singular and natural and those that see it as plural and constructed. Our holistic understanding of multiculturalism thus points toward the value of radically restructuring polities to be more polycentric, and thereby better suited to the plural patterns that constitute our social world. In order to move beyond the impasse between current forms of multicultural theory and practice, therefore, we should treat all “cultural” groups akin to national minorities or indigenous peoples rather than immigrants. Such reforms would address the fundamental issues raised by multiculturalism, be sensitive to historical context, but also philosophically and normatively robust. All of the chapters in this volume speak to this claim, although not all of our authors would necessarily make it as forcefully as the editors, or even at all.

More open-ended forms of social organization would better reflect the fluid and interrelated nature of the various issues and identities that multiculturalism engages, allowing different groups to determine their boundaries, practices, and norms for themselves. It would enable individuals to express different aspects of their identity according to their own priorities, and thereby accommodate those who wish to embrace cosmopolitan forms of identity, yet would also open spaces for others to focus on more traditional practices. Multiple and overlapping forms of governance may also help to foster partial—and context-sensitive—forms of integration that serve purposes of justice or social cohesion.²⁸ Polycentric institutions would thus accommodate deep diversity and help to secure social stability. Yet they would also facilitate social change. Since our theories and practices are mutually constructing, our reasoning is best instantiated in lived practices, which will inevitably take many experimental forms whereby our plural forms of life are constantly remade in different ways. Allowing genuine self-governance for those who reject dominant norms could productively utilize the different ways in which the understandings and identities of individuals overlap and interact. We hope greater polycentricity and pluralism in governance would encourage political experimentation, economic innovation, and cultural renewal.²⁹

Yet any systematic response to deep diversity, whether by direct state action or otherwise, risks constructing groups in precisely the way that philosophical critiques of multiculturalism allege.³⁰ We suggest that reorganizing our institutions to be more polycentric minimizes these risks, however, even if it cannot eliminate them entirely. Structural changes will inevitably have effects on groups—in the main by increasing exit and thus experimentation—but these more flexible forms of self-governance will allow the evolution of a group in any direction, including multiple variations of it. Such effects are materially different from the state imposing fixed rights from outside the group, which necessarily affect the rate of change (or condition its form) by privileging some interpretations of the group over others.³¹ We do not claim that structural reforms and pluralist public discourse will automatically produce beneficial practices, rather that it is plausible that they will. Harmful forms of social construction are inevitable, but the sheer complexity

of identities and issues at play suggests that they cannot be prevented by top-down control. Rather, they must be reformed through countervailing practices led from below, which will be facilitated by polycentric institutions and pluralistic practices. Nor do we suggest that it is impossible or unjustified to draw boundaries between different groups in order to ascribe rights. Legal rights are an important tool for correcting historical injustices against a particular group, and the bounds of the group and scope of the right can be identified by tracing the negative effects of previous practices of social construction on its members. For example, race is a social construction, but one that has clearly benefited those identified as “white” rather than those who are not, and rights for the latter may therefore be justified as a corrective. Yet the nature of the difficulty addressed implies that these rights should be temporary rather than permanent, more akin to affirmative action than constitutional principle.

We also suggest that structural changes, if instituted correctly, will encourage pluralist discourses, which can make our inevitable practices of social construction more transparent, and thereby potentially more productive. Political practice and theory evolve in tandem, but this is often through messy historical processes that obfuscate the empirical effects and normative issues, as this volume demonstrates. Part of the process of instituting polycentric reforms could be public discussion of why and how they address multiculturalism as we have conceptualized it here. Emphasizing in public discourse and education the history behind our current cultural pluralism would help to foreground the realities of empire and its afterlife, in particular those that relate to race and national identity. Polycentric structures, and an emphasis on pluralism within them, may thereby make us more self-conscious of previous instances of social construction and assist attempts to unwind them. We must also be cognizant of the new social realities we create, some of which may even flow from attempts to deconstruct older ones. For example, valorizing *any* identity, even a cosmopolitan one, will exclude those who do not meet its criteria, and thus is potentially divisive. And while listening to the voices of people who have traditionally been silenced is a vital part of overcoming injustice and exclusion, we must be cautious in our embrace of those who claim to speak with authority for fellow members of marginalized groups, lest we turn the historical experiences of some into reified identities that silence others.

Holism means that individual judgments and identities are always provisional, and must be understood as such. As societies we therefore should not attempt to instantiate ahistorical principles, protect fixed identities, or track “objective” boundaries between groups. No matter how important we feel any of these to be, they cannot form completely fixed, foundational points in social life. In turn, this suggests that we should not attempt to impose specific values—including the robust forms of autonomy or equality that inform many theoretical accounts of liberalism and cosmopolitanism—but rather focus on persuasion. We therefore sympathize with accounts of multiculturalism such as those offered by Seyla

Benhabib and Sarah Song, who both emphasize the socially constructed nature of cultures and foreground the importance of deliberation in negotiating changes within and across them.³² Nevertheless, we must guard against focusing too narrowly on disputed liberal values or formal democratic processes, which we have seen are often historically implicated in the forms of social construction we are trying to address.³³ Rather than valorizing moral rules or particular political procedures, it may be more productive to cultivate a pluralist ethic of openness to difference, and to encourage free exchanges between and within groups. In any event, uncertainty as to the relative importance in their members' lives of the multiple groups/identities present indicates that the precise structures of governance adopted cannot be fixed in advance. Reforms must be tailored to local conditions, subject to negotiation and deliberation, and take diverse forms. We should therefore be wary of theoretical arguments that prioritize governance at one level over another, whether it be the claims of postnationalist cosmopolitans such as Arash Abizadeh regarding the global demos, liberals such as David Miller regarding the nation, or the communitarians and civic republicans who gravitate toward smaller-scale communities.³⁴

The challenges presented by multiculturalism, and our advocacy of polycentric institutions in response, connects current debates to long-standing tensions between the central and local. The juxtaposition of centralization and localism occurs in all contexts, either directly in debates over liberal-democratic governance, or indirectly through contests over national identity. Our preference—particularly within Britain, the case the we know best—is for radical devolution to a wide range of groups and associations. In part, this is because we would like to re-empower the local, which we feel has been systematically devalued, even as we continue to look upward towards international organizations. The pull toward the local is itself contingent, however, and is not tied to a particular physical space. Rather polycentric governance may furnish a variety of overlapping 'local' contexts, between which individuals could move both literally and figuratively. Radical polycentricity maximizes the ability of individuals to self-sort into the associations that are the most beneficial to them, and to learn from forms of life that are not. We therefore suggest that the state must facilitate the movement of people through guaranteeing both a potent form of the right of exit, and substantive freedom of information within and across the different levels of organization.

Drawing on postanalytic philosophy, and nonstatist aspects of the socialist tradition such as the guild socialism of G. D. H. Cole, Ashcroft will argue elsewhere that as well as guaranteeing the right of exit, the polycentric multicultural state must provide the economic and cultural capital to utilize it, including shelter, sustenance, and education. The state must provide a physical and social space for those moving around within it to exit into, where they may engage in reflection, enquiry, and reassociation. Perhaps this version of the "welfare" state would function more like Michael Walzer's "hotel" than a permanent home, but would be

more than this, containing information about other associations and ways of life.³⁵ The state would thus also be a library, a rail network, and a marketplace of ideas. We are therefore committed to a much more robust state than other theorists who advocate polycentricity, such as Chandran Kukathas, in part because we offer a thicker (albeit nonessentialist) account of cultural identity and meaning, and in part because of our own political and philosophical commitments.³⁶

Our overall position therefore bears a passing resemblance to John Stuart Mill’s “experiments in living.” Yet our postfoundationalism severs our account from the individualism, romanticized cultural essentialism, and substantive autonomy central to Mill, but which also can be seen in much contemporary liberal, multicultural, and cosmopolitan theorizing. Our form of pluralism is thus distinctive, drawing on a variety of intellectual traditions, yet is still multicultural in a meaningful sense. And our polycentricity forms a generally applicable—but not homogenizing—approach to cultural difference that is normatively justifiable, yet still allows for a degree of historical nuance. By providing a holistic response to multiculturalism that bridges both theory and practice, polycentric and pluralist governance may therefore help to mitigate the tension between historical specificity and normative principle that is particularly acute within multiculturalism, and which runs throughout post-Enlightenment philosophy and politics.

Ultimately, however, the way forward lies not in following the plaintive cries of political theorists, but rather in harnessing the extraordinary variety that originates in everyday lives. By opening ourselves to the radical diversity of human beliefs and practices through which individuals and communities remake themselves, we can move forward without becoming disconnected from the past, and look to the global without abandoning the local. If we do, we may start to address the underlying tensions in our thought and practice that are both old and new, and central to the many worlds we share.

NOTES

1. We use “Old” and “New” Commonwealth to distinguish Canada, Australia, and New Zealand from other colonies in the Empire, which were never intended to be permanently settled by the British, and whose relationship to Great Britain was marked by more nakedly extractive practices. We do not include South Africa and Zimbabwe within the former, for reasons we discuss in the introductory chapter, as part of a detailed discussion of these terms and our other vocabulary choices.

2. We use the terms “United Kingdom” and “Britain” interchangeably, i.e., including Northern Ireland in both.

3. Richard Ashcroft and Mark Bevir, “Pluralism, National Identity and Citizenship: Britain after Brexit,” *Political Quarterly* 87 (2016): 355–59.

4. The island of Tobago is much less ethnically diverse than Trinidad, since it is almost entirely populated by people of African descent. Its population is around 60,000, compared with 1.3 million in Trinidad. The overwhelming weight of political and economic power therefore resides in Trinidad, as do the dominant narratives of nationhood. We therefore follow Viranjini Munasinghe in frequently using “Trinidad,” “Indo-Trinidadian,” and “Afro-Trinidadian” as shorthand.

5. We argue elsewhere that Kymlicka's theory of multiculturalism is part of a broader family of liberal positions—along with, e.g., David Miller's *On Nationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)—that see the cultural nation as vital for the functioning of modern democracy (Richard T. Ashcroft and Mark Bevir, "Liberal Democracy, Nationalism and Culture: Multiculturalism and Scottish Independence," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 21, no. 1 [2018]: 65–86). The influence of Kymlicka's early work means these presumptions have shaped much of the political theory literature, particularly work by liberal supporters of multiculturalism. Even those theorists who do not fall squarely within that camp came to share key assumptions regarding culture and governance. For example, the "politics of recognition" made famous by Charles Taylor overlaps with liberal multiculturalism as it relates to identity and self-respect, and shares a similar commitment to the cultural group as the primary locus of governance, especially when it coincides with the nation. See *Report of the Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Difference* (Quebec: Government of Quebec, 2008), which Taylor co-authored with Gérard Bouchard; Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); and for an excellent discussion of the "Herderian" aspects of Kymlicka's argument that push him closer to Taylor, see Helder de Schutter, "The Liberal Linguistic Turn: Kymlicka's Freedom Account Revisited," *Dve domovini/Two Homelands*, no. 44 (2016): 51–65. For an overview of "cultural nationalism" broadly compatible with ours, see Arash Abizadeh, "Does Liberal Democracy Presuppose a Cultural Nation? Four Arguments," *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 3 (2002): 495–509.

6. This is clearly true of Kymlicka and Taylor and thus forms the dominant view in the theoretical literature, albeit subject to caveats and critiques. Multicultural political theory therefore tends to emphasize the relationship between culture and governance, but unlike some liberal nationalists, such as David Miller, both Kymlicka and Taylor disconnect the "cultural" nation or group from the state. Postcolonial theorists tend to share the presumption that some minority cultural groups, particularly indigenous peoples, should be self-governing: see James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in the Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). Likewise, Iris Marion Young endorses claims to self-government by indigenous peoples, albeit "more as a means to the achievement of structural equality . . . than an end in itself" (Young, "Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference," in Anthony Simon Laden and David Owen, eds., *Multiculturalism and Political Theory* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 60–88, at 61). Even Chandran Kukathas, who does not think culture grounds specific rights, grants self-rule to any group or association that desires it, and thus allows for the possibility of self-governing cultures (Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003]). We therefore think it is uncontroversial to state that the norm in theoretical accounts of multiculturalism is to focus on immigrants, national minorities, and indigenous peoples as separate groups, and only seriously to contemplate substantive self-rule for the latter two. Our critique will proceed on that basis, although we must admit it has greater traction on Kymlicka and Taylor than some other political theorists in this area.

7. Ashcroft and Bevir, "Pluralism, National Identity and Citizenship," and "Liberal Democracy, Nationalism and Culture."

8. Ashcroft and Bevir "Liberal Democracy, Nationalism and Culture," and Abizadeh "Does Liberal Democracy Presuppose a Cultural Nation?"

9. Ashcroft and Bevir, "Pluralism, National Identity and Citizenship" and "Liberal Democracy, Nationalism and Culture."

10. This accusation is most often leveled at Kymlicka's theory and liberal variants thereof, but also has traction on Taylor and possibly also theories that foreground indigenous claims. Kymlicka's central claim is that that culture forms the context of meaningful choice within which individuals choose how to live their lives, and thus must be protected by the liberal state. Ashcroft will argue elsewhere that

Kymlicka's theory makes unsustainable assumptions regarding the effects of culture on meaning and identity, and thereby also cannot avoid essentialism and reification, and that these weaknesses can be traced to his overarching luck-egalitarian framework, which requires that any given individual is located within a single culture to act as an unchosen context of meaningful choice.

11. See Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chap. 2, for our underlying account of meaning and for a detailed examination of the issue of cultural limits.

12. In *Multicultural Citizenship*, Kymlicka suggests that some groups may have claims to self-rule based directly in historical agreements with the state, and also that some multicultural rights may be grounded in the value of cultural diversity. Nevertheless, if the claim that we are located in a single societal culture as our context of meaningful choice is not tenable on the terms in which it is stated, Kymlicka has lost the central plank of his core "equality" argument based in individual autonomy and self-respect. Although his distinction between immigrants and national minorities turns largely on the decision of the former to immigrate rather than the role of culture per se, any attempt to keep groups cultural groups separate is fraught with empirical and philosophical problems. Kymlicka's modification of his original typology in his later work, such as *Multicultural Odysseys*, might appear to mitigate this problem, and thereby side-step our critique of multicultural political theory. The central thesis of *Multicultural Odysseys* is that the spread of multiculturalism across the globe requires tailoring multiculturalism to local conditions more carefully. Kymlicka's primary recommendation is to increase policies and laws that "target" specific types of group, thereby refining the Western-centric typology by adding new categories of rights and groups (pp. 8–9, and 24–25). Yet multiplying the number of groups and rights makes marking the boundaries between them harder, not easier. There are still no natural kinds to identify, and no stable criteria for choosing one boundary over another, or a particular version of the typology over an even more detailed one. Kymlicka's gloss on the typology in *Multicultural Odysseys* thus seems more like a concession to the "cosmopolitan critique" than a defense against it, and Ashcroft argues elsewhere that it fails to mitigate the theoretical and empirical problems with the typology, and his theory more broadly.

13. Australian policy-makers imported the idea of "multiculturalism" as a framework for managing cultural diversity from Canada, although—as in the UK and New Zealand—it is expressed primarily through policy rather than constitutional law. Unlike both Canada and New Zealand, however, Australian multiculturalism ostensibly applies to indigenous peoples and thereby also draws on international law, even as indigenous leaders reject their inclusion within "multiculturalism," and the dominant *public* understanding continues to be in terms of nonwhite immigration.

14. Here we refer to both standard policy approaches to multiculturalism and the more wide-ranging scope of political theory. Both of these seem to assume the existence of a cultural or national "core" that must subsequently learn to accommodate cultural diversity through integration and/or substate political autonomy. This assumption has little traction in the New Commonwealth, save in Malaysia, where the Malay are given preferential treatment in some respects, forming something like a "core" to the nation, albeit within an overall consociational model. As discussed at note 12 above, although the later Kymlicka acknowledges the problems with the typology and the need for more contextualized forms of multiculturalism, the underlying difficulties with separating groups/rights in both theory and practice seem more profound and pervasive than he realizes, and the traction of the cosmopolitan critique more enduring than he acknowledges (see Kymlicka, "Essentialist Critique" note 22 for more detail).

15. This is arguably also at work in Nigeria, Singapore, and Malaysia.

16. Stuart James Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001); Ward, "The 'New Nationalism' in Australia, Canada and New Zealand: Civic Culture in the Wake of the British World," in Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, and Stuart Macintyre, eds., *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Culture* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press 2007), 231–63; and Ward, "Imperial Identities Abroad" in Sarah Stockwell, ed., *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell 2007) 219–43. See

also the work of Jatinder Mann, such as *The Search for a New National Identity: The Rise of Multiculturalism in Canada and Australia, 1890s–1970s* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016).

17. Here we are distinguishing between the demise of British “race patriotism” in favor of more local attachments and the broader British cultural currents out of which the new nationalisms were built.

18. For primary source material on different articulations of the relevant nations, see Jatinder Mann, “The Introduction of Multiculturalism in Canada and Australia, 1960s–1970s,” in *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 3 (2012): 483–503, in particular 493–94 re Australia. This claim has less traction on Canada, but a prominent claim was that Canada was a compact between two nations (French and British) not five (English/Scots/Welsh/Irish/French), albeit that discourses of multiculturalism may have arisen in part to destabilize the dual compact account, e.g., by foregrounding the role of Ukrainians in settling the prairie provinces.

19. See, e.g., the work of Gurminder K. Bhambra, in particular *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), Ward cited in n. 16 above, and Catherine Hall, “British Cultural Identities and the Legacy of Empire” in David Morley and Kevin Robins, eds., *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 27–39.

20. In what follows, we generally use the term “polycentric” to refer to structures/institutions, and “pluralist” to refer to both practices of governance and orientations that embrace diversity and social experimentation more broadly.

21. E.g., religious groups and the Scheduled Castes in India, the three dominant groups in independence-era Nigeria, and the ethno-cultural groupings in Malaysia, Singapore, and Trinidad and Tobago.

22. Charges of essentialism are often leveled at Kymlicka’s dominant theory of multiculturalism, although he rejects these, arguing they misdiagnose the issues and conflate theoretical and practical argument; see Will Kymlicka, “The Essentialist Critique of Multiculturalism: Theories, Policies, Ethos,” in Varun Uberoi and Tariq Modood, eds., *Multiculturalism Rethought: Interpretations, Dilemmas, New Directions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 209–49, at 212. Kymlicka’s organizing vocabulary is different from ours, revolving around the distinction between philosophical approaches, actual policies, and real-world outcomes, and utilizing his typology of indigenous peoples, national minorities, and immigrants (see the notes to chapter 1 for a fuller discussion). Our position would qualify as “post-multiculturalist” in Kymlicka’s sense. Ashcroft will analyze the essentialist critique of liberal multiculturalism at greater length elsewhere, responding directly to Kymlicka’s arguments, and so here we simply note the key differences between our position and “post-multiculturalism” as Kymlicka articulates it. Firstly, our critique of liberal multiculturalism does not turn purely on a rejection of “culturalist aspirations,” which we accept as a social reality—albeit one we think has problematic effects, particularly at the level of the cultural nation—and try to accommodate through polycentricity. Secondly, our critique does not leave “all real-world practices of [liberal multiculturalism] untouched,” but rather engages with the effects of “siloining” multicultural issues/groups in both theory and practice, and points toward a radical remaking of the state and liberal-democratic norms/practices far beyond that typically envisaged by liberal multiculturalists. Thirdly, we identify interconnected forms of essentialism in political theory, policy/law, and public discourse. We trace these back to the real-world entanglement of liberal and colonial governance, overly narrow policy approaches and resulting public discourse, and philosophical flaws in dominant forms of multicultural theory. Our holistic diagnosis of the problem, and our radical solution to it, addresses all three of Kymlicka’s “levels” simultaneously, unlike the post-multiculturalists (*ibid.*, 221–33). And lastly, our approach addresses the shortcomings Kymlicka identifies relating to temporary migrants, nationalism, and non-geographically concentrated religious groups (*ibid.*, 239–44). For the broader political theory debates regarding essentialism, see Andrew Mason, “Multiculturalism and the Critique of Essentialism,” in Anthony Simon Laden and David Owen, eds., *Multiculturalism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 221–43, and Sarah Song, “Multiculturalism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed.

Edward N. Zalta, accessed November 19, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/multiculturalism>.

23. See, e.g., Jeremy Waldron, “Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative,” *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform* 25 (1991): 751–94.

24. Andrew Mason, “The Critique of Multiculturalism in Britain: Integration, Separation and Shared Identification,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (2018): 22–45.

25. Ashcroft and Bevir, “Pluralism, Nationality and Citizenship.”

26. Supporting particular minority cultures via legal rights may require ascribing essential features to them, which might imbue them with a false naturalness that hampers reform. Public discourse or social practice might also embody underlying presumptions about the nature and worth of other cultures and thereby construct both minority and majority groups as social realities. For a discussion of effects that flow from interactions between and within minority and majority cultures, see Sarah Song, *Justice, Gender and the Politics of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

27. Focusing on structures that can accommodate a wide variety of overlapping and constantly changing identities, rather than legislating on the basis of the nature of individual groups at a specific point in time, reduces the risk of “freezing” cultures in place. Kymlicka rejects this accusation in “The Essentialist Critique,” but Ashcroft will argue in detail elsewhere that essentialism and reification are inevitable in Kymlicka’s theory if he is to maintain its basic luck-egalitarian premises. Likewise, we reject Kymlicka’s defense of minority rights as a response to majority nation-building on the basis that he only grants political autonomy to certain groups, a limit we see as unwarranted.

28. Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), and Song, *Justice, Gender and the Politics of Multiculturalism*.

29. There is therefore substantial overlap between our “constructivist” account of culture and that set out by Song, *Justice, Gender and the Politics of Multiculturalism*, particularly in relation to the importance of understanding local historical factors, the mutually conditioning nature of majority and minority cultures, and a bias toward deliberation as a way of resolving particular issues. Her commitment to substantive equality is stronger than ours, however, in part because she focuses on multiculturalism within individual liberal democracies, in particular, the United States. Also, our arguments suggest that the intertwined legacy of colonialism and liberalism calls undermines basic presumptions regarding liberal democracy and nation-state that Song perhaps takes for granted, or at least does not address directly. Finally, our focus on the mutually constructing nature of theory and practice foregrounds the importance of expressing different forms of life in practice, not just through deliberation and negotiation.

30. Arash Abizadeh, “Does Collective Identity Presuppose an Other? On the Alleged Incoherence of Global Solidarity,” *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 1 (2005): 45–60, and Miller, *On Nationality*. See also Mark Bevir, “Postfoundationalism and Social Democracy,” *Danish Yearbook of Philosophy* 35 (2001): 7–26, and Song, “Multiculturalism.”

31. Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 14–15, and Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

32. See Kukathas, *Liberal Archipelago*. Ashcroft develops elsewhere a postfoundational critique of Kukathas’s theory based on his account of conscience.