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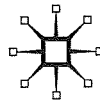
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The Subject of Multiculturalism: Culture, Religion, Language, Ethnicity, Nationality, and Race?

Sarah Song

Contemporary political theory debates about multiculturalism largely take for granted that it is "culture" and "cultural groups" that are to be recognized and accommodated. Yet the discussion tends to draw on a wide range of examples involving religion, language, ethnicity, nationality, and race. Culture is a notoriously overbroad concept, and all of these categories have been subsumed by or taken to be synonymous with the concept of culture. Consider some prominent examples.

Language is central to Charles Taylor's view of culture. Each language is taken to be an expression of the authentic identity of the people who speak it. The culture of Quebec, Taylor says, "means in practice the French language."¹ Beyond language, the "politics of recognition" that Taylor explores in his seminal essay includes claims not only by ethnic and national minorities but also by women and racial minorities for the recognition of the equal worth of their collective identities.²

Like Taylor, Will Kymlicka's theory of multiculturalism is focused on defending self-government rights of indigenous groups and minority nations, such as Quebec. He also defends special accommodations for immigrants, what he calls "polyethnic rights." Yet, all of his "ethnic" examples are cases of religious exemption: Jews and Muslims in Britain who seek exemptions from Sunday closing and humane animal slaughter laws; Sikh men in Canada who seek exemptions from motorcycle helmet laws and official dress codes of police forces; and Muslim girls in France who want to be exempted from school dress codes so they can wear the headscarf.³

More recent contributions to the multiculturalism debate also draw on cases involving religion, language, ethnicity, nationality, and race – including female circumcision, polygamy, cultural defenses in criminal law, public funding for religious schools, religion-based family law, aboriginal membership rules, and affirmative action programs – without much explicit attention to the relationship between culture and these other categories of difference.⁴

This chapter attempts to disaggregate a variety of claims typically associated with multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has been taken to be a key part of struggles for religious, ethnic, and racial justice, and I want to see how the idea of culture figures in arguments for group-differentiated rights in the context of religion, language, ethnicity, nationality, and race. My aim is not to offer a classification of different types of "cultural rights" claims (e.g. exemptions, positive assistance, self-government rights), nor to offer normative assessments of the variety of arguments I consider. My aim is largely explanatory: I want to distinguish some key arguments that have been offered for a range of multiculturalism claims from within liberal theory.⁵ I have organized my discussion by different categories of groups (e.g. religious, linguistic, ethnic, racial) in the hope that this organization will make it easier to discern the similarities and differences between arguments associated with these different categories.

Disaggregating multiculturalism is important for at least two reasons. First, it can help us see what is really at stake in different "claims of culture." The term "culture" has come to signify the myriad customs and practices that constitute a way of life for a group of people: rituals, food, dress, family roles and interactions, musical and other artistic preferences, etc. But if we look closely, we can see distinct sorts of claims. Most of the cases that bear the weight of multicultural theory are claims about religion. In other cases, what is at stake is the preservation of a language. In still other cases, claims have arisen out of a history of exclusion and marginalization, with subordinated groups demanding not only material remedy but also symbolic recognition of the collective identities and traditions that they have developed in resistance to subordination. For some groups, all of these issues are at stake. As I hope to show, the appeal to culture often masks what is at stake, and it also turns out to be redundant in the justification of some religious, linguistic, ethnic, and racial claims.

Disaggregating "claims of culture" can also help us think about how multiculturalism connects to the pursuit of equality more generally. Some have argued that multiculturalism, understood as a symbolic politics of recognition, is a distraction from the pursuit of equality, viewed as the material politics of redistribution.⁶ The suggestion here is that multiculturalism focuses on valuing cultural diversity while ignoring economic inequality. I think the story is more complicated than this. Both redistribution and recognition are important dimensions in the pursuit of equality for racial, ethnic, and religious minorities.⁷ Most egalitarians are focused on redistribution, but recognition is also important not only for the consequences it has on socioeconomic status and political participation but also for fostering the symbolic inclusion of marginalized groups. To explore the role of multiculturalism in the larger struggle for equality, we first need to distinguish among a variety of multicultural claims and consider the sorts of disadvantages they aim to address.

Religion

Much analysis of group rights and multiculturalism revolves around religious examples: religious exemptions from generally applicable laws, the recognition of traditional legal codes of religious communities, and limited self-government rights for territorially concentrated religious minorities. Indeed, the word "culture" tends to be used to encompass such claims, where "culture" is taken to mean the customs and ways of life of a group of people. This tendency to equate culture with religion is understandable. Religious observance is shaped by local and national culture, as suggested by the great differences between the Indonesian, Indian, and Iranian forms of Islam. As Lawrence Sager has observed, "[T]he normative distance between religion and culture may not be so very great" since culture often "sits just behind and – in public perception at least – dominates religious belief."⁸ Influence also runs in the other direction, with religious practice shaping local and national cultures. Amish religion shapes the Amish way of life, just as Native American religious practices inform Native American tribal cultures. As Bhikhu Parekh puts it, "[T]here is hardly a culture in whose creation, constitution and continuation religion has not played an important part, so much so that we have few if any examples of a wholly secular or humanist culture."⁹ This observation applies to the modern cultures of the West, which have been deeply shaped by the values of Christianity.

Liberal theory offers one way of distinguishing the concepts of religion and culture. Religion makes demands on believers; one way of understanding these demands are as matters of conscience, matters experienced as binding ethical commitments.¹⁰ As understood within liberal theory, moral, religious, and philosophical outlooks are explicit sources of normative authority. When a person takes a set of moral or religious beliefs to be true, she accepts those beliefs as providing reasons for action. In the case of many religions, these reasons are viewed by believers as universally true; they are reasons not just for them but for everyone. Cultures are not sources of normative authority in the same sense as religions are; they are not explicitly justificatory structures. We use the expressions "cultural norms" and "cultural values," but these terms tend to be used to describe what members of a group already do rather than to characterize the perceived authority of what they do.

Take the case of someone who identifies as culturally Mexican American. Speaking Spanish, eating certain foods, and associating with other Mexican Americans may be viewed as integral aspects of Mexican American cultural identity; they constitute cultural norms. But these cultural norms describe what it means to be Mexican American; they are not a source of normative authority in the way that Catholic beliefs in the divinity of Jesus Christ and the necessity of sacraments are a source of normative authority for Catholics. Being a religious Catholic means accepting the tenets of Catholicism as

important guides for action. In contrast, being Mexican American does not require accepting the truth and authority of any particular set of values or principles. Insofar as there is such a thing as Mexican American values or principles, they seem to stem largely from religious aspects of Mexican American culture (e.g. Catholicism or indigenous religions). This is not to deny the normativity of some cultural traditions and practices. For example, for many Mexicans and Mexican Americans *El Día de los Muertos* may have secular value even if not religious value. Cultures are not mere behavioral regularities; they also include values. My point here is that when people make and respond to claims for special accommodation in the context of politics, the appeal to culture – the fact that something is part of a culture – does not confer normative authority on the claim. Some account of the importance or value of the cultural practices needs to be provided in such contexts. In some cases, there may be no value at stake, so that the appeal to culture is simply an appeal to tradition (“Others should help us to continue to behave this way because we have always behaved this way”), which by itself has no normative force. Such brute appeals to tradition are what lie beneath the appeal to culture in defense of practices that subordinate women.¹¹

We can see that distinct reasons may be offered for accommodating religion, in contrast to non-normative aspects of culture. Multicultural theorists have defined the value of culture and cultural membership in terms of its role as a “context of choice” that enables individual freedom by providing a rich set of options from which to choose and also its role in supporting self-respect.¹² Religious affiliation, such as cultural affiliation, can serve these purposes. But this is neither the reason that liberal democracies give for accommodating the claims of believers, nor the reason why many believers themselves seek accommodation. One leading reason that liberal democracies accommodate religion is the recognition that religious claims are especially weighty normative claims. Call this the *argument from the special nature of claims of conscience*. The project of liberal democracy presumes that people are ethical agents with the capacity for reflection about their beliefs and actions. Respecting people’s ethical agency requires allowing them to determine for themselves which norms they take to have authority over them. The constitutions of liberal democracies show respect for ethical agency by protecting freedom of religion and freedom of conscience more generally, including protecting conscientious objectors from military service on grounds of secular moral convictions. Respect for ethical agency requires, at the very least, that no particular religious affiliation be required for the enjoyment of basic liberties, and that the state intervene to protect people against discrimination on religious grounds. Constitutional protections for freedom of conscience have helped ensure that liberal democracies are more pluralist than assimilationist in approach when it comes to religion.¹³

Even where a pluralist approach is taken, religion continues to be a major source of controversy in the West. There is ongoing disagreement about the nature and scope of religious freedom, in part, because many religious groups reject the liberal view of privatizing faith, and also because state action has tended to support some religious groups over others. Consider first the point about resistance to privatization. Religious groups have been politically active in all contemporary democracies, and the nature and extent of their political involvement have always been controversial. In response to the classical liberal stance of separation of religion and politics, many religious groups contend that such an approach discriminates against religious individuals. Not only do they seek to bring their beliefs to bear on politics (e.g. evangelical Christians and some Catholics on the issue of abortion), they also seek special accommodations from the state to pursue their religious practices (e.g. Muslims and Jews seeking exemption from generally applicable laws or public funding to pursue their religious practices). Liberal theory seeks to limit appeals to religious beliefs in political argument because they bring in irreconcilable bases for public political debate. How are members of a society to engage in public debate, let alone reach agreement, on educational, economic, or any other type of policy if each member appeals to her own God as the ultimate basis of moral and political authority?¹⁴

In Western Europe, the question of the proper relationship between religion and politics has once again moved to the forefront of political debate, in part, because of the migration and settlement of large numbers of Muslims. Like evangelical Christians in the United States, many Muslims reject the liberal insistence on privatizing faith. They have an additional grievance that grounds a distinct argument for religious accommodation. Many Muslims claim that they receive little public accommodation in their efforts to live according to Islam, in contrast to the assistance already extended to Christians and Jews. This is most apparent in France, where the political doctrine of *laïcité* has made it particularly hard for Muslims to gain public accommodation of their religious practices. Muslim activists in Britain have been more successful in gaining public recognition of their religious activities, including public financing of Muslim schools, the building of mosques, and the provision of social welfare services through Muslim agencies, in part, by emphasizing the unfairness of state establishment of one religion over others.¹⁵ The general conclusion by many Muslims, however, is that support for Islamic institutions in Western Europe is unequal to the support offered to Christian and Jewish institutions.

Such inequality of treatment is one key basis that underlies Muslim claims for religious accommodation. Call this the *argument from unfair treatment*. This argument might be seen as part of a larger move toward basing religious accommodation claims on the value of equality. Some prominent legal scholars have argued for interpreting the religion clauses of the First

Amendment not only as norms of liberty but also as antidiscrimination norms that single out religion for special protection – not because religion is uniquely privileged but because religion, especially minority religions, is peculiarly vulnerable to discrimination, hostility, and neglect.¹⁶ Providing special accommodation to the dominant religious group in a society but not other religious groups is seen as a failure of equality.

The two arguments for religious accommodation considered here, conscience and unfair treatment, are not the only ways to this goal, but they are two key arguments made within liberal theory. Neither of these arguments relies on an appeal to culture. As I have stressed, religious disagreements are disagreements about values and convictions, not cultural identities. To be sure, cultural identities can emerge from and support religious convictions, and sometimes religious groups redescribe themselves as cultural groups, as in the case of evangelical Christians who present themselves as victimized identity groups.¹⁷ But if we accept the distinction I'm trying to make, we can say that what evangelical Christians encounter in public political debate is disagreement with their beliefs, not prejudice against their cultural identities. No doubt religious groups can be ethnicized and racialized, but this would give rise to different kinds of claims implicating ethnicity and race, which I discuss below. My point here is that from within liberal theory, what is distinctive about religious claims is that they are about beliefs and convictions, not cultural identities. We lose sight of this distinctiveness when we conflate religion and culture.

Language

On the face of it, one might think that a pluralist approach to language would not be as controversial as a pluralist approach toward religion, since language acquisition is cumulative and not zero-sum. That is, human beings are capable of learning to speak more than one language without losing their native language, whereas accepting one religion as the one right and true religion usually precludes acceptance of other faiths. Yet, along with religion, language is at the center of cultural conflicts in contemporary liberal democracies. This is partly because most immigrant-receiving countries are committed to maintaining the dominance of one national language. As many scholars have emphasized, nation-states can avoid establishing one religion, but there cannot be a linguistic equivalent to separation of church and state. The state must choose a common language in which to conduct its affairs.¹⁸

This difference between religion and language might explain why contemporary immigration countries take a more explicitly assimilationist approach to language, in contrast to religion. In the course of liberalization, Western states relinquished the notion that a common religion was integral to national integration, but the opposite occurred with respect to language,

which moved to the fore as the single most important element in the construction of national identity. A common means of communication was seen as crucial to nation-building. As scholars of nationalism have emphasized, nation-building has been fueled by more malignant motives than the need for a lingua franca (not least racism and xenophobia) such that forging a common language sometimes entailed the domination and suppression of minority languages and identities. Consider the ethnolinguistic conflict in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism in 1989; the debate over official multilingualism in Canada and Spain; and the debate over bilingual education in the United States. Such conflicts have been fueled by a nationalistic desire to enforce a common identity within the nation-state and to demarcate national insiders from outsiders. With a few exceptions, every state that receives large numbers of immigrants has been intent upon maintaining the status quo of the dominant language and has so far succeeded in doing so.¹⁹

Liberal multiculturalists have argued that state action that privileges some languages over others gives rise to a case for special accommodations for speakers of the nonprivileged languages. On this *argument from unfair treatment*, because "[t]he state unavoidably promotes certain cultural identities, and thereby disadvantages others," the state must make it up to the cultural minorities.²⁰ It is important to note that the form of this argument from unfair treatment of linguistic minorities is the same as that of the argument for religious minorities discussed above, but the account of the good at stake differs. In the case of religion, we saw that religious accommodations can be defended without relying on a notion of culture. What about in the case of language?

There are at least two ways of understanding the good of language within liberal theory, both of which are reflected in different versions of the unfair treatment argument. One understanding can be found in what we might call the *argument from dignity and self-respect*. In this view, dignity and self-respect are among the things that people are entitled to. Cultural identity is valuable on account of its connection to people's dignity and self-respect. As Kymlicka puts it, "If a culture is not generally respected, then the dignity and self-respect of its members will also be threatened."²¹ Language is valuable because it is constitutive of cultural identity. Thus, when the state establishes one language as the language of public institutions, the state fails to treat speakers of other languages with equal regard. Such unfair treatment with respect to dignity and self-respect is seen to ground the demand for special linguistic accommodations. This argument underscores the view that I raised at the outset: justice has both material and symbolic dimensions. Justice demands linguistic accommodations not simply in virtue of their effects on the distribution of liberties and opportunities, but also because the symbolic recognition of minority languages is integral to treating linguistic minorities with equal dignity. In contrast to the religious

accommodation arguments considered above, the dignity argument for linguistic accommodation relies on a notion of culture and its value.

There is a second way of making the unfair treatment argument, which relies on an instrumental view of language and not on a view of language's value in terms of constituting and bolstering cultural identity. The argument here is that linguistic accommodations are necessary for vindicating a set of fundamental rights or for the pursuit of democratic inclusion.²² Call this the *argument from democratic inclusion*. For instance, multilingual ballots in languages most widely spoken in a particular area are defended as a means to facilitating the right to vote. Bilingual education programs are defended as necessary for ensuring equal opportunity in education. Public media in the languages most widely used in a society are defended as a way to ensure real rights of political participation. Taking the instrumental view of language as a premise, the unfair treatment argument defends accommodations for linguistic minorities to facilitate their social and political integration. This argument is most relevant to immigrants who do not speak the dominant language of the host country.

Many liberal arguments for linguistic accommodation are unfair treatment arguments that focus on the good that is lost when a language declines. Another way of arguing for linguistic accommodation is to focus on why such decline has come about. There are at least two arguments here. First is the *corrective justice argument*. If language serves as the basis of discrimination and hostility, language rights for linguistic minorities may be defended as a remedy for such negative treatment.²³ The marginalization or outright proscription of certain languages must be seen in the broader context of a racialized and xenophobic policy directed at marginalized groups. This is not to say that all or even most of the languages that are vulnerable today are so because of the oppression of their speakers. The relationship between poverty, powerlessness, and linguistic vulnerability is complicated.²⁴ Where current language vulnerability is the result of injustice, the demand for special accommodations for these vulnerable languages is a demand for addressing the inequality caused by that injustice. The argument becomes more complicated when we confront cases of historical injustice. Normative analyses of language politics tend to begin with the present, asking what is owed to those who do not speak the dominant language, but this overlooks the history of how certain languages were accorded the status of "national" languages whereas others were "minoritized" and stigmatized through the politics of nation-state formation.²⁵ I will say more about arguments from past oppression or historical injustice below.

Another argument that focuses on the cause of language decline is what we might call the *argument from structural inequality*. Here the focus is not on past or present discrimination by state or non-state actors against individual speakers of minority languages, but on the vulnerability of languages themselves as a result of the powers of globalization that are everywhere

implanting English as the lingua franca. A key premise is that language is not merely an instrumental good but an "irreducibly social" and intrinsic good that holds and transmits the history and fabric of a culture.²⁶ *Loi 101*, which defines French as the sole official language of Quebec, responds to fears that an individual choice to learn English, largely based on economic factors ("It would be easier to get a job in the rest of Canada or the U.S."), would undermine the long-term survival of the French language. Viewed globally, it's not only French in Canada but also French in France that suffers structural disadvantage, and special measures by the state to protect the French language against, for example, English-language media are defended as a response to this structural disadvantage. It is important to note that on this argument it is the language that is structurally disadvantaged rather than the speakers of the language; the concern is to protect and preserve the language. Individuals – in particular, children – are being asked to bear the burden of preserving a group's language, be it French, Welsh, or Basque.

Ethnicity and nationality

Many "cultural" claims made by ethnic and national minorities are claims about religion and language, which I discussed above. This is not surprising since religion and language have historically been key markers of ethnicity and nationality. If we put aside claims of religion and language, what other sorts of multiculturalism claims remain? Ethnic minorities raise a broad range of claims for the accommodation of aspects of culture other than language, as well as for integration assistance and affirmative action programs. The key claim made by national minorities is for self-government rights.

Consider first the range of accommodation claims made by ethnic minorities. The term "culture" signifies the different rituals, food, dress, family roles and interactions, musical and other artistic preferences, and other such aspects that constitute a way of life for a group of people. Ethnic minorities have sought exemptions from general rules that penalize or constrain their customs. Many claims for exemption have been about *religious* practices that conflict with mainstream policies in the public sphere or market (e.g. Sikhs and helmet laws, Muslim girls and bans on the headscarf, Amish and school regulations), and these can be defended by the arguments I considered above. Ethnic minorities have also sought positive assistance from the state to pursue and preserve their group traditions (e.g. funding for ethnic associations), as well as symbolic recognition (e.g. national holidays, school curricula).

As in the case of language, these claims of support for ethnic traditions and practices have been defended in three main ways within liberal theories of multiculturalism. First, the *argument from dignity and self-respect* discussed

above holds that cultural identity is valuable on account of its connection to individual dignity and self-respect. Accommodations may have the effect of promoting civic integration of immigrants, but the key concern is not integration so much as the dignity and self-respect of ethnic minorities.

A second way of defending accommodations for ethnic minorities is agnostic on the question of the value of cultures. Instead, on this *argument from democratic inclusion*, accommodations are desirable insofar as they promote the integration of ethnic minorities into the broader society. It is important to note here that there are many integration assistance measures for new immigrants that don't involve efforts to accommodate or preserve their *cultural* practices. Consider public funding that assists newcomers with learning the language of the host country, finding employment, and participating in politics. Such measures can be defended instrumentally as serving important goals of democracy: they promote the economic integration and political participation of immigrants.²⁷

A third argument marshaled to defend accommodations for ethnic minorities is the *corrective justice argument*. This argument is not used to defend exemptions or financial assistance for ethnic associations, but rather group-differentiated measures aimed at fighting current discrimination or remedying past discrimination, such as affirmative action programs. Such programs may take the form of consideration of one's ethnic or racial background in university admissions or employment decisions, as well as special rights of political representation (e.g. redistributing to create black-majority districts in the United States, reserved seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India). The main types of affirmative action programs are not really multiculturalism policies at all, if by "multiculturalism" we mean symbolic recognition or affirmation of cultural differences. On the corrective justice argument, the aim of affirmative action is to remedy inequalities based on past or ongoing discrimination. Yet, the symbolic recognition may be part of the remedies aimed at countering demeaning cultural representations of a group in society. Therefore, it is not only because affirmative action policies tend to be a part of institutional reforms aimed at accommodating ethnic and racial minority groups that it is often thought of as part of multiculturalism; some affirmative remedies may actually entail cultural recognition.²⁸

Special accommodations for immigrants and ethnic minorities actually comprise a small part of leading theories of multiculturalism. The main focus has been on defending self-government rights for minority nations and aboriginal groups. It is no accident that the leading theorists of multiculturalism (Taylor, Tully, and Kymlicka) are writing in the context of Canada where the group accommodations that loom large are those for Quebec and First Nations, not ethnic minorities. In contrast to ethnic and racial minorities, minority nations have sought some measure of political autonomy through secession (e.g. Slovenia) and federal arrangements (e.g. Quebec, Catalonia,

Native tribes). Arguments for self-government rights for minority nations and aboriginal peoples rely on premises about the value of cultural membership for freedom and for dignity and self-respect of the sort made in defense of ethnic accommodation claims. What justifies self-government rights for national minorities but not for ethnic minorities? First, as Kymlicka has argued, national minorities have a *prima facie* right to self-government because they have maintained distinct "societal cultures" over time. On this *institutional capacity argument*, the fact that national minorities already possess institutional capacities to sustain "societal cultures" supports their case for self-government rights.²⁹ Another argument that Kymlicka offers to justify limiting self-government rights to national minorities is an *argument from choice*: ethnic minorities have for the most part chosen to migrate and want to integrate, and such choice cancels the option of self-government rights. The difficulty here, as Kymlicka himself recognizes, is how to draw the line between voluntary and involuntary migrants in a world with massive economic inequalities and different levels of respect for human rights? A great many ethnic minorities, not just political refugees but also economic migrants, may be entitled to special accommodations if they are based on the extent to which migration is voluntary. In addition, if "ethnic minorities" are taken to include the children of immigrants, as Kymlicka suggests, then they may be entitled to accommodations on the choice argument, since they have not chosen to migrate.

Another way of defending self-government rights for national minorities and aboriginal groups is the *corrective justice argument*: the fact of oppression is what grounds a *prima facie* right of self-government. A key premise of this argument is that historical injustice is causally responsible for at least some of the systemic disadvantages that certain minority groups suffer today. For instance, proponents of indigenous sovereignty have emphasized the importance of viewing indigenous claims against the historical background of the denial of equal sovereign status of indigenous groups, the dispossession of their lands, and the destruction of their cultural practices.³⁰ This background of injustice calls into question the legitimacy of state authority over indigenous groups and serves as the basis of the claim that such injustice should be remedied through the restoration of some form of political self-rule.³¹ It is important to note that groups demanding redress for historical injustice are not always the groups at the center of present-day concerns of distributive justice. Japanese Americans had a compelling and ultimately successful claim for remedy of the gross injustice of mass internment during World War II, but they did not suffer systemic socioeconomic disadvantages as a group. Not only can the concern about historical injustice and contemporary inequality come apart, they may be in tension. For instance, there may be a trade-off between rights for linguistic minorities and socioeconomic mobility, where measures to protect vulnerable languages as redress for historical injustice may inhibit linguistic assimilation of the speakers of

those languages, thereby limiting their access to economic opportunities in the wider society.

Race

The leading theorists of multiculturalism have provided little guidance for thinking about the relationship between race and culture. For instance, Kymlicka has written that his theory of multiculturalism is not intended to address the concerns of racial minorities, emphasizing that a *sui generis* approach is needed to address the structures of disadvantage that African Americans face. He leaves unclear the connections, if any, between the sorts of recognition claims made by ethnic and national minorities and such claims by racial minorities. In contrast, Charles Taylor includes African Americans in his discussion of multiculturalism when he focuses on the university "canon" wars and the issue of self-respect and the self-depreciation caused by demeaning images projected in the wider society.³² More needs to be said about the relationship between antiracism and multiculturalism – in particular, what, if anything, race has to do with culture and how race-based claims are different from claims based on ethnicity and nationality.

Racial groups exist on a blurred continuum with ethnic groups, and because of this blurring, some scholars have adopted the term "ethnoracial" blocs.³³ One reason why race and ethnicity are grouped together in this way may be to underscore that both are historical and social constructs. Both race and ethnicity are associated with the body and physical markers (skin color, hair type, eye shape, and so on) presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region.³⁴ However, grouping these terms together can mask important distinctions in their meaning. Philosophers of race have offered one analytic distinction of these concepts: ethnicity has been used to group individuals on the basis of their presumed origins, whereas race has been used to group individuals *hierarchically* on the basis of their presumed origins. Hierarchy is a constitutive element of the category of race, but not of ethnicity.³⁵ Historical and contemporary social meanings of these terms in the United States offer some support for this distinction. The degree of systematic subordination or privilege on the basis of race in the United States has tended to exceed such treatment on the basis of ethnicity. Although both races and ethnicities are demarcated by geographical associations that are linked to perceived body type, these associations have taken on far greater evaluative significance in how members of racial groups have been viewed and treated. The degree to which ethnic groups in the United States have been victimized seems to have more to do with their racialization than with their ethnicity.³⁶

Although there is some truth to this distinction between race and ethnicity, it rests on an idealized conception of ethnicity. Ethnicity also has implications for power and status. The relationship between race, ethnicity, and

inequality is complicated and varies depending on context. September 11 helped consolidate a new identity category in the West, merging religion, ethnicity, and race such that people who appear Middle Eastern, Arab, South Asian, or Muslim have been subject to violence and harassment. To what extent is contemporary Islamophobia religious and ethnic and to what extent is it racial?³⁷ These considerations suggest we cannot accept the simple formulation that ethnicity is about culture, whereas race is about status and power. As I discussed above, the pursuit of ethnic justice may well involve not only countering ethnic prejudice and remedying ethnic inequality but also extending recognition toward devalued group identities. What about race? Is there a role for recognition in the pursuit of racial justice, or is culture talk a distraction from a project of antiracism?

The *diversity argument*, developed by the U.S. Supreme Court in its affirmative action cases, offers one way of linking race and culture.³⁸ The basic idea is that racial and ethnic diversity is a value in higher education, as well as in the wider society. This argument relies on two premises. First, it relies on a premise about the instrumental value of different "experiences, outlooks, and ideas" in the pursuit of knowledge: the diversity [of] experiences and outlooks is envisioned as providing an "atmosphere [of] speculation, experiment and creation" that fuels the production and diffusion of knowledge, the primary aim of universities.³⁹ The benefits of such diversity are seen to extend beyond the university to the wider society, by training students to become future leaders of a diverse nation. A second premise of the diversity argument is that the diversity of "experiences, outlooks, and ideas" maps onto racial and ethnic diversity such that racial and ethnic minorities are seen as possessing distinct cultures and values. The diversity argument could be extended beyond institutions of higher education to apply to all educational settings, the workplace, the military, and other institutions. Because the diversity of "experiences, outlooks, and ideas" serves the goals of these institutions and because such diversity coincides with racial and ethnic diversity, racial and ethnic diversity ought to be promoted. As critics have emphasized, one major problem with the diversity rationale is that it views race primarily as a matter of culture, and this risks stereotyping and essentializing racial identities and even worse, masking the history of institutional discrimination that distinguishes racially subordinated groups from nonsubordinated groups.⁴⁰ The disadvantages suffered by other racial and ethnic groups pale in comparison to the racial subordination of African Americans under slavery and Jim Crow. We can agree with this important criticism without accepting the tendency of these critics to define race and ethnicity in dichotomous terms – race as a matter of power and hierarchy, ethnicity as a matter of culture. As I have argued, ethnicity also has implications for status and power.

A second way of justifying affirmative action is the *corrective justice* argument, which keeps the history of institutional discrimination front and

center. Group-conscious measures in higher education, employment, and political representation are defended as compensation for historical and ongoing injustices. As Randall Robinson has argued, it is hard to deny that the socioeconomic gap between black and white Americans is partly a consequence of slavery and Jim Crow. The aim of reparations is to undo the legacy of past discrimination.⁴¹

Scholars writing about race in the context of education have offered another way of linking race and culture that also keeps the history of institutional discrimination front and center. Here the *corrective justice argument*, the *argument from dignity and self-respect*, and the *argument from democratic inclusion* appear in combined form. A key premise is that racial oppression takes not only material but also symbolic form. Racial injustice can occur through economic processes by which some groups are defined as low-paid menial laborers or as an "underclass" excluded from the workforce. Injustice can also occur through patterns of communication and representation by which the identities of some groups are devalued and marginalized.⁴² If redress for discrimination proceeds only along distributive lines, we ignore an important component of discrimination: misrecognition or nonrecognition of group identities that are tied to the dignity and self-respect of group members. The ultimate aim is the full inclusion and self-respect of groups. Many have argued that remedying failures of recognition requires more than antiracist struggles aimed at dismantling institutional structures of racial injustice and countering racial prejudice; it also requires recognition and positive valuation of the collective identities of marginalized groups.

This is where multiculturalism enters. As Lawrence Blum puts it, "[A]ntiracism highlights victimization and resistance, whereas multiculturalism highlights cultural life, cultural expression, achievements, and the like."⁴³ The demand for recognition in the context of multicultural education is a demand for the recognition not only of aspects of a group's actual culture (e.g. African American art and literature, Mexican music and dance), but also of the history of group subordination and its concomitant experience. Indeed, as Robert Gooding-Williams emphasizes, "any cross-cultural inquiry into African-American cultures will have to address the largely racialized character of African-Americans' self-understandings; that is, it will have to investigate the ways in which African-Americans, in describing themselves as black, have coped with racial classification and racial oppression, thereby modifying the character of African-American life, art, and politics."⁴⁴

The meaning and role of the idea of culture in discussions of antiracism still need to be clarified. Claims for recognition in the context of antiracist pedagogy are not aimed at the preservation of cultural differences, and this distinguishes this last set of arguments from the diversity rationale. Racial identities are associated with cultural traditions and practices, but they do not map neatly onto distinct cultures in part because they are complex, hybrid products of "perpetual dialogue and violent engagement with the

larger society to which they belong."⁴⁵ The implication here for an antiracist pedagogy is that what should be recognized is not distinct cultures at all but rather histories of racial subordination and resistance.

Conclusion

I have tried to distinguish among different claims of multiculturalism associated with religion, language, ethnicity, nationality, and race with a focus on outlining key arguments made within liberal theory for the different claims.

Religion and language comprise much of the political theory discourse on multiculturalism. We saw that the case for religious accommodation has drawn either on an argument about the special nature of religious and moral beliefs or on an egalitarian argument arising out of the fact of preferential treatment of certain religions over others. Arguments for linguistic accommodations take a similar form (linguistic minorities are owed some remedy in light of state establishment of one language), but in contrast to religion, they need not rely on controversial premises about the significance of culture to individuals. Linguistic accommodations can be defended as a means to ensure equal opportunities in education and to promote the economic and political inclusion of immigrants.

Another key issue in the debate on multiculturalism is self-government rights for national minorities and aboriginal groups, but these arguments need not rely on controversial premises about distinct societal cultures and individuals' membership in one and only one culture. Such rights can be defended as a remedy for historical injustice or present discrimination and disadvantage experienced by a particular group. Race-conscious remedies are defended on both grounds, as measures to address the systemic disadvantage caused by a history of institutionalized discrimination and ongoing discrimination. The idea of "culture" is used in justifications for race-conscious remedies, partly to emphasize the ways in which antidiscrimination claims are connected to recognition claims, but bringing culture into justifications for affirmative action, as the diversity rationale does, runs the risk of both essentializing group identities and diverting attention from the systemic material inequalities that are the product of racial subordination.

One important normative implication of my primarily explanatory discussion is that the appeal to "culture" by itself does not get us very far. Something further and more specific needs to be said about the importance of the good at stake in the justification of political claims for recognition and accommodation. We have seen that "claims of culture" are about remedying serious disadvantages – not just material but also symbolic disadvantages – that people face along religious, linguistic, ethnic, and racial lines. But grouping the variety of claims considered in this chapter under terms such as "multiculturalism," "cultural rights," and "claims of

culture" masks important distinctions. If what is at issue is constraints on religious observance, linguistic barriers to equal opportunity, or the legacy of racial and ethnic discrimination, then we should say that that is what is at issue, not announce another "culture war" or "culture conflict."

Notes

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1. Taylor 1994, pp. 31, 42; 1995, p. 140.
2. Taylor 1994, pp. 3, 65.
3. Kymlicka 1995, pp. 31, 114–15.
4. See Okin 1999; Carens 2000; Parekh 2000; Barry 2001; Benhabib 2002; Shachar 2002; Gutmann 2003.
5. For one classification scheme, see Levy 1997. My aim here differs from his in trying to disaggregate claims about "culture" and in its consideration of arguments for, not just a typology, of claims.
6. See, for example, Barry 2001 and Michaels 2006.
7. See Fraser and Honneth 2003. While some collective identities tilt more toward one dimension or the other (e.g. class tilts towards distribution, whereas sexuality tilts toward recognition), Fraser recognizes gender and race as genuinely "bivalent collectivities" that suffer from both economic and valuational injustices. Omitted from Fraser's core analysis of identity groups are ethnicity and nationality, which I believe are also bivalent. In this chapter, I focus on claims based on religion, ethnicity, nationality, and race as they have been the focus of recent debates about multiculturalism.
8. He points to *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1971) and *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 870 (1990) as examples. See Sager 2000, pp. 195–96.
9. Parekh 2000, pp. 146–7.
10. My thinking here has been helped by Cohen 1998, Murray 1993, Scheffler 2007.
11. See Song 2007 for examples. My discussion of the claims of conscience is not meant to be an exhaustive account of the sorts of religious claims that have been or could be made in politics. Native American religions, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, among others, may be centrally concerned with shared rituals and practices rather than conscience. Yet some account of the importance of shared rituals or practices still needs to be offered when making political claims and demands on others outside one's circle of faith for special accommodations. The simple appeal to culture does not make clear the particular values or sacred significance of the rituals or practices in question.
12. Kymlicka 1995, pp. 82–93.
13. How pluralist a polity's approach is depends in part on the institutional approach toward governing religion, as well as on the significance of religion in the wider society. There are two distinct institutional paradigms governing religion in liberal democratic states. Some states establish a particular Christian church as the state religion, coupled with limited support for non-established religious minorities (e.g. Britain, Norway); in some cases, the state may provide more or less equal support for a number of historically established religious groups (e.g. Netherlands,

Belgium, Germany). The alternative institutional paradigm is the privatization of religion by way of strict separation of church and state (e.g. the United States, France), but in practice, some privileges are extended to religious associations, such as tax exemptions on religious property. See Zolberg and Woon 1999, pp. 14–15 and Gutmann 2003, pp. 178–91.

14. See Rawls 1993 and 1999.
15. Fetzer and Soper 2005, pp. 18–19; Modood 2005, pp. 163–4. The Archbishop of Canterbury's suggestion on February 7, 2008, that British law ought to recognize aspects of Islamic law was, in part, based on this concern about fairness to Muslim minorities, especially in light of Anglicans enjoying the status of England's established church.
16. See Eisgruber and Sager 2007.
17. As Thomas Frank discusses, a *Kansas City Star* columnist compared newspaper attacks on evangelicals to "the lynch mobs we used to see back when black folks were accused of being too uppity" (Frank 2004, pp. 158–9). This sentiment is more widely expressed in less hyperbolic terms by mainstream conservatives.
18. Kymlicka 1995, p. 111; Carens 2000, pp. 77–8; Patten 2001, p. 693. As I discussed above, states are not neutral toward religious groups either. For instance, many Western states effectively support the Christian religion in determining days of rest and public holidays, as well as in the allocation of financial support to religious schools. But the key point made by multicultural theorists here seems right. The pervasiveness of de facto linguistic establishment is much greater than de facto religious establishment in most liberal democracies: speakers of the majority language are favored not only in terms of the language that public officials and employees use with one another, but also the language in which public education and the vast array of public services are provided. And such establishment in the spheres of government and education influences the language skills required for the labor market.
19. Zolberg and Woon 1999, pp. 22–3. A few states have instituted more than one official language (e.g. Canada, Belgium, Switzerland), but the vast majority have one de jure or de facto dominant language. In the Canadian case, even though English and French are both recognized as official languages at the federal level, French is the sole official language of Quebec.
20. Kymlicka 1995, p. 108. Some governments have made moves toward de jure linguistic establishment. By 1999, twenty-two states of the United States had passed "official English" declarations (Schmidt 2000, p. 29). Many of these are purely symbolic (mainly in expressing xenophobia) in that they do not prevent the provision of public services in other languages, but such explicit public recognition of English strengthens the egalitarian case for accommodations for minority languages.
21. Kymlicka 1995, p. 89, citing Margalit and Raz 1990, pp. 447–9 and Taylor 1994.
22. Rubio Marin (2003) explores such a view.
23. Any corrective justice argument requires further discussion about what counts as oppression or discrimination. Even if the state is not the agent of discrimination, social structures, such as caste systems, can deny basic freedoms to particular individuals. In addition, we cannot simply rely on the subjective perception of injustice and victimization (e.g. Anglophones in California and *Front National* supporters in France express concerns about being attacked or victimized by the immigrants in their midst), but rather we would need some intersubjective judgment about what counts as discrimination.

24. See Levy (2003, p. 237), for the argument that many languages are vulnerable because they are unwritten or have taken written forms only recently.
25. May 2003 and Tully 1995.
26. Taylor 1995.
27. See Bloemraad 2006 for empirical support, based on a comparative study of the United States and Canada, of the claim that official multiculturalism policies promote rather than hinder the civic and political integration of immigrants.
28. On the relationship between affirmative action and multiculturalism, see Banting et al. (2006, p. 57). A second argument for affirmative action, the *diversity argument*, views affirmative action programs primarily as measures for the affirmation of cultural differences. I will say more about both of these arguments for affirmative action below.
29. Choudhry (2002) criticizes Kymlicka for taking institutional capacities as factual givens when these capacities are actually highly contingent and also for assuming that sovereignty requires a defined territory, overlooking institutions of deterritorialized sovereignty.
30. Buchanan 2003, ch. 9; Iverson et al. 2000; Moore 2005.
31. Much of the literature on historical injustice focuses on the difficulty of counterfactual analyses and establishing causal links between past injustice and present disadvantage. The least difficult cases are those in which perpetrators and victims are still alive, but making the link becomes complicated when perpetrators and victims are long gone and it is the descendants of the victims making the claims. See Elster 1978; Lyons 1977; Sher 1979 and 1980; Waldron 1992.
32. Kymlicka 2001, p. 198 and Taylor 1994, pp. 26, 65.
33. See, for example, Hollinger 1995.
34. The race-ethnicity distinction has varied according to the discourses of racialization at work (see Omi and Winant 1986). In nineteenth-century America, the terms race and ethnicity were used interchangeably when the Lamarckian belief in the heritability of acquired characteristics made culture and biology a continuum. In the early twentieth century, the dominant discourse was of race as biology and ethnicity as culture. Ethnicity proved a useful category for those who wanted to preserve the idea of cultural differences between groups while distancing themselves from racial hierarchies. For analysis of the race-ethnicity distinction in the context of discourses of Jewish, Latino, and black immigrant identity, see Hattam 2007.
35. See Haslanger 2000.
36. Hollinger (1995, p. 37) suggests it was the racialization of Japanese Americans, not their ethnicity, that led to their internment in contrast to German and Italian Americans during World War II.
37. For discussion, see Modood 2005 and Volpp 2002.
38. *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265 (1978) and *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. (2003).
39. *Bakke*, 438 U.S. at 314, 312. On the diversity rationale, see Kronman 2000 and Sabbagh 2007, ch. 2.
40. See Ford 2005 and Haney López 2007.
41. Robinson 2001. On the difficulties that arguments from historical injustice face, see note 31.
42. Fraser and Honneth 2003.
43. Blum 1992, p. 14. See also Blum 1998.
44. Gooding-Williams 1998, p. 32.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 28. See also Waldron 1992 emphasizing the hybridity of all cultures.

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