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# *Multicultural states and intercultural citizens*

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## abstract

Citizenship refers to membership in a political community, and hence designates a relationship between the individual and the state. One way to explore the idea of 'multicultural citizenship', therefore, is to identify its images of the state and of the individual. First, we can ask about multiculturalism at the level of the state: what would it mean for the constitution, institutions and laws of the state to be multicultural? Second, we can ask about interculturalism at the level of the individual citizen: what sorts of knowledge, beliefs, virtues and dispositions would an intercultural citizen possess? Ideally, these two levels should work together: there should be a fit between our model of the multicultural state and the intercultural citizen. This article identifies three conflicts between promoting desirable forms of multiculturalism within state institutions and promoting desired forms of interculturalism within individual citizens, and discusses the challenges they raise for theories of multicultural education.

keywords *citizenship, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, nationalism, tolerance*

## introduction

The term 'citizenship' typically refers to membership in a political community, and hence designates a relationship between the individual and the state. Any conception of citizenship, therefore, will inevitably make assumptions about both poles of this relationship, i.e. about the individual and the state. Different models of citizenship rest upon different images of the nature of the state, and/or on different images of the nature of the individuals who belong to it.

### *Theory and Research in Education*

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One way to explore the idea of 'multicultural' or 'intercultural' citizenship,<sup>1</sup> therefore, is to try to identify its underlying images of the state and of the individual. On the one hand, we can ask about multiculturalism at the level of the state: what would it mean for the constitution, institutions and laws of the state to be multicultural? I will call this the question of the nature of the 'multicultural state'. On the other hand, we can ask about interculturalism at the level of the individual citizen: what sorts of knowledge, beliefs, virtues, habits and dispositions would an intercultural citizen possess? I will call this the question of the 'intercultural citizen'.

Ideally, these two levels should work together in any conception of citizenship: there should be a 'fit' between our model of the multicultural state and our model of the intercultural citizen. The sort of multicultural reforms we seek at the level of the state should help nurture and reinforce the desired forms of intercultural skills and knowledge at the level of individual citizens. Conversely, the intercultural dispositions we encourage within individual citizens should help support and reinforce the institutions of a multicultural state.

That is the ideal. My aim in this paper, however, is to suggest that there are some unresolved tensions between these two levels of analysis. Existing models of the multicultural state do not always fit neatly with our models of the intercultural citizen. Some multicultural reforms at the level of the state reduce the need or incentive for desired forms of interculturalism at the level of individual citizens. Indeed, some multicultural state reforms are demanded precisely in order to avoid the need for individuals to acquire greater levels of intercultural skills and knowledge. Conversely, some proposals to promote increased intercultural skills and knowledge within individual citizens are intended precisely to stave off calls for greater institutional changes within the state.

Thus, the connection between multicultural states and intercultural citizens is complex. As I will try to illustrate, there can be conflicts between promoting desirable forms of multiculturalism within state institutions and promoting desired forms of interculturalism within individual citizens. I believe that existing theories of intercultural citizenship have not yet fully recognized or explored these potential tensions, or developed principles for telling us how we should respond to them. My aim, in this paper, is not to resolve these difficult issues, but simply to identify some of the conflicts, and to highlight some of the dilemmas they raise for our broader theories of intercultural citizenship.

The paper begins by exploring what I take to be the main characteristics of the new models of a multicultural state, and how it differs from older models of the homogenous nation-state. It will then consider some of the main

characteristics of the new models of interculturalism at the level of individual citizens. Finally, we will consider some of the possible tensions between them.

## multicultural states

What are the defining characteristics of a multicultural state? There are many definitions and models of multicultural states in the literature, often tied to the specifics of individual countries.<sup>2</sup> However, they all reject the earlier models of the unitary, homogenous nation-state. In order to understand the idea of a multicultural state, therefore, we need first to understand the older model of a homogenous nation-state, and why it has been rejected.

Until recently, most states around the world have aspired to be 'nation-states'. In this model, the state was seen as the possession of a dominant national group, which used the state to privilege its identity, language, history, culture, literature, myths, religion and so on, and which defined the state as the expression of its nationhood. (This dominant group was usually the majority group, but sometimes a minority was able to establish dominance – e.g. whites in South Africa under the apartheid regime, or *criollo* elites in some Latin American countries.) Anyone who did not belong to this dominant national group was subject to either assimilation or exclusion.<sup>3</sup>

There is nothing 'natural' about such nation-states. Very few countries around the world are mono-national (Iceland, Portugal and the Koreas are the most frequently cited examples). In most countries, this kind of national homogeneity had to be actively constructed by the state through a range of 'nation-building' policies that encouraged the preferred national identity, while suppressing any alternative identities. Public policies were used to promote and consolidate a common national language, national history and mythology, national heroes, national symbols, a national literature, a national education system, a national media, a national military, in some cases a national religion, and so on. Any groups which resisted these sorts of nationalizing policies were subject not only to political disempowerment, but also typically, to economic discrimination, and to various forms of 'demographic engineering' (e.g. pressuring members of the group to disperse, and/or promoting settlement by members of the dominant group into the homeland of indigenous/minority groups). These and other policies were aimed at constructing the ideal of a nation-state.

Virtually every Western democracy has pursued this ideal at some stage. As discussed later, an increasing number of Western democracies have abandoned this goal in favor of a more 'multicultural' model of the state. But at one point or another, virtually every Western democracy has sought to define itself as a mono-national state. The only exception to this pattern in the West that I am

familiar with, is Switzerland. Switzerland has never attempted to try to construct a single national language on the territory of the state. It has always accepted that the French- and Italian-speaking minorities would exist as distinct linguistic groups into the indefinite future. But every other Western democracy – including some that are very diverse, and that now pride themselves on their diversity, like Canada – has at some point or other had the goal of inculcating a common national language and culture.

However, this nation-state model has increasingly been challenged and contested by all sorts of groups. There are many groups within the territory of the state which have their own language, their own history, their own culture, their own heroes, their own symbols. Such groups face either exclusion or assimilation by this process of nation-building. As a result, various groups, particularly indigenous peoples and other kinds of national groups, have always contested this attempt to construct states through a form of homogeneous nation-building, and advocated instead for a more ‘multicultural’ model of the state.<sup>4</sup>

What would a multicultural state look like? The precise details vary from country to country, for reasons discussed later. The sort of state reforms demanded by African-Americans in the USA differs dramatically from the sort of reforms demanded by indigenous Maori in New Zealand, or by Chinese immigrants in Canada. However, there are some general principles, which I think are common to all of these different struggles for a multicultural state. First and foremost, a multicultural state involves the repudiation of the older idea that the state is a possession of a single national group. Instead, the state must be seen as belonging equally to all citizens. Second, as a consequence, a multicultural state repudiates those nation-building policies that assimilate or exclude members of minority or non-dominant groups. Instead, it accepts that individuals should be able to access state institutions, and to act as full and equal citizens in political life, without having to hide or deny their ethnocultural identity. The state accepts an obligation to accord the history, language and culture of non-dominant groups the same recognition and accommodation that is accorded to the dominant group. Third, a multicultural state acknowledges the historic injustice that was done to minority/non-dominant groups by these older policies of assimilation and exclusion, and manifests a willingness to offer some sort of remedy or rectification for them.

These three inter-connected ideas – repudiating the idea of the state as belonging to the dominant group; replacing assimilationist and exclusionary nation-building policies with policies of recognition and accommodation; acknowledging historic injustice and offering amends for it – seem to me to be common to virtually all real-world struggles for ‘multiculturalism’ at the level of the state.

However, these commonalities are often dwarfed by the differences between various models of a multicultural state. The precise way in which minority groups wish to be recognized and accommodated, or to have their historic injustices amended, varies enormously from country to country, as well as between different minorities within a single country.

The sort of multicultural state desired by various groups depends, in large part, on the capacities and aspirations of each group, which in turn depends on its numbers and territorial concentration, which in turn depends on the forms and levels of mistreatment it has received historically at the hands of the state. At one end of the spectrum, we can think about sizeable groups that are concentrated on a more or less defined historic territory or homeland, that still form a majority within that territory, that have retained their language, and that historically governed themselves. In such cases, it is almost inevitable that the group will seek to establish (or rather re-establish) some form of self-government, typically through some form of federal or quasi-federal territorial autonomy, with public institutions operating in its own language. Examples would include the Québécois in Canada, the Catalans and Basques in Spain, the Flemish in Belgium, the Puerto Ricans in the USA, the French- and Italian-speaking minorities in Switzerland, the German-speaking minority of South Tyrol in Italy, to name a few. In all of these cases, the shift to a more multicultural state takes the form of replacing a unitary state with a federal or consociational state, replacing a unilingual state with a bilingual or multilingual state, and replacing the idea of a nation-state with that of a 'multination' state.<sup>5</sup> These can be said, perhaps, to represent the most extensive sort of multiculturalism at the level of the state, since they involve the most extensive form of sharing power between majority and minority, and they extend the most complete form of official recognition to the language and culture of the historically subordinate group.

At the other end of the spectrum, we can think about small groups of recent immigrants or refugees who have left their country of origin, and have no historic territory or homeland within their new country, and no history of self-government. Given their size and dispersion, territorial autonomy is unlikely to be feasible. Moreover, they may be too small and dispersed to be able to run many of their own public institutions – e.g. there may not be enough members to support their own high schools or hospitals. In these cases, the shift to a more multicultural state is likely to take the form of fighting any stigmas or barriers that prevent members of the group from fully integrating into the dominant society, or from being fully accepted as equal citizens. In many cases, the state historically defined the nation in a racially- or religiously-exclusive way – e.g. as a white/Christian nation. These exclusionary definitions of the nation must be challenged and repudiated if newer immigrant

and refugee groups are to be fully accepted and integrated. These historic biases against certain races or religions are often explicit in laws that define who is eligible for admission, or citizenship, or to hold public office. Replacing such exclusionary laws is the first step towards a multicultural state. But these biases are also likely to be implicit in a much wider range of public institutions and policies: from the school curriculum to Sunday closing legislation to state symbols. The pursuit of a more multicultural state, in this context therefore, is also likely to involve a long-term and systematic attempt to re-examine all areas of public policy and public institutions, to see if they contain hidden biases that continue to stigmatize or disadvantage members of immigrant groups. A 'multicultural' state, in this context, may still be a unitary state – i.e. it may not have any explicit form of territorial or consociational power-sharing between the dominant group and newer immigrant groups – and it may still only have one official language. But it will make efforts to ensure that all public institutions, from the schools to the police and courts to media and the hospitals, fight discrimination, accommodate diversity, promote integration, and present a more open and inclusive image of the nation.

In between these two cases of sizeable and powerful national groups governing themselves on their historic territory, and recent immigrant groups seeking fair terms of integration, we can find a range of groups with varying demands for state reform. In some cases, we find historic groups that are quite numerous and who remain primarily concentrated on their historic homeland, but who no longer form a majority on that territory, perhaps as a result of deliberate state attempts to 'swamp' the group with settlers from the dominant group, and the refusal by the state to respect historic land rights. This is the case of many indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. Groups that once controlled large territories, prior to European colonization, have often been reduced to small villages surrounded by European or *mestizo* settlers. These groups have also typically experienced out-migration, as some members of the group move to the cities in search of jobs. The group therefore may be found both within rural villages on their historic homeland, on the one hand, and in an urban diaspora population, on the other, which may have varying levels of ongoing connection back to their home villages.

Here, the quest for a multicultural state is obviously more complex. Different indigenous groups are likely to need and desire different forms of recognition, accommodation and rectification. The needs and aspirations of the urban diaspora in terms of education, political representation, language and land claims will obviously differ from those living in the rural villages. For the rural villages, achieving some level of local self-government is likely to be a major demand. However, local governments have limitations. Village-level governments can control primary schools, but may not have the numbers or

resources to run their own high schools or universities. They can run their own health-care clinics, but not their own hospitals. They can regulate land use locally, but cannot control regional economic development policies and natural resource projects. All of these can only be legislated, funded and administered at levels higher than the local village. Throughout the Americas we therefore see increasing attempts to try to create indigenous governance structures above the level of the local village, often by uniting different indigenous clans/tribes/peoples into a single regional governance structure.<sup>6</sup>

This brief sketch therefore, makes it clear that it is quite misleading to talk about a single model of the 'multicultural state'. There are enormous variations in the sorts of state reforms that are demanded, not only between different countries, but also between different types of groups within a single country (e.g. immigrants versus indigenous peoples), or even within the same type of group, due to differing histories of dispersion/relocation/resettlement (e.g. urban versus rural indigenous populations). Charles Taylor calls this 'deep diversity' (Taylor, 1991), and says that it is a defining characteristic of a multicultural politics of recognition. A genuinely multicultural state recognizes not only that citizens are different in their language and culture, but also that citizens are different in different ways, and so will relate to the state in different ways, with different forms of multicultural membership in the larger state. For some, multiculturalism will involve reducing barriers to integration in the mainstream society, so that they can relate directly to the state; for others it will involve enhancing powers of self-government, so that they relate to the state in a more federal or consociational manner, mediated by their participation in their own group's autonomous government. A 'multicultural state' is one which reforms itself to enable these various forms of multicultural membership in the state.

### intercultural citizens

Let me now shift levels, and focus on the individuals who belong to this multicultural state. I call this the question of the 'intercultural citizen'. What is an intercultural citizen, and how would he/she deal with diversity? What sorts of habits, beliefs and virtues would an intercultural citizen possess and use when dealing with diversity?

As noted earlier, it is important that our conception of the intercultural citizen 'matches' our model of the multicultural state. For example, it is important that intercultural citizens are able and willing to create and sustain these new forms of a multicultural state. A multicultural state will not come into existence unless it has the support of most of its citizens (at least in a democracy, where popular support is required for significant political reforms).



This means, at a minimum, that a sufficient number of citizens must support the three general principles of the multicultural state, outlined earlier: i.e. that the state is not a possession of the dominant national group, but belongs equally to all citizens; that assimilationist and exclusionary nation-building policies should be replaced with policies of recognition and accommodation; and that historic injustice should be acknowledged. If a sufficient number of citizens do not endorse these political principles, multicultural state reforms will not be sustainable.

This is the minimal first step towards developing a conception of the intercultural citizen. This first step is already a difficult one to take. Accepting these three principles often requires fighting against decades or centuries of deeply-rooted prejudices and biases against minority and non-dominant groups. Education has an important role to play here – for example, in teaching children about the reality of historic injustice, and in exploring why earlier ideologies of nationhood were illegitimate.

Much has been written about the sort of education that is needed to inculcate support for these political principles of the multicultural state. However, for the purposes of this paper, I want to focus on what else is required or desired in our conception of the intercultural citizen. After all, it is important to notice that individual citizens can fully accept the political commitment to a multicultural state without possessing a very high level of intercultural skills themselves. They may agree that *the state* should be reformed to accommodate diversity (since it belongs to all citizens, not just the dominant group), without believing that they *as individuals* should learn about how to deal better with diversity in their own lives, or that they should learn more about the culture, traditions and identities of the people with whom they share the state. They may support the idea that the state should reform itself from a unitary, unilingual homogenous nation-state to a more federal or consociational bilingual multination state. Yet they may not accept that they as individuals have any obligation to become more 'intercultural' in their own individual lives.

Indeed, in some cases, the result of multicultural reforms at the level of the state may actually be to reduce the need and incentive for intercultural skills or knowledge at the level of the individual. Consider the status of self-governing minorities in federal multination states like the Flemish in Belgium, Québécois in Canada or Francophones in Switzerland, or in self-governing territories like Puerto Rico or South Tyrol. In these cases, the repudiation of older models of a unitary nation-state has enabled these national minorities to live more completely within their own institutions operating in their own language. In the past, these minorities often faced extensive economic, political and social pressure to participate in institutions run in the dominant language. For example, all of the courts, universities, or legislatures, were only conducted

in the majority language. Yet today, as a result of adopting the ideal of a multicultural state that belongs to all citizens, these minorities have been able to build up an extensive array of public institutions in their own language, so that they can access the full range of educational, economic, legal and political opportunities without having to learn the dominant language, or without having to participate in institutions that are primarily run by members of the dominant group. In effect, these sorts of 'multination federations' allow minorities to create 'parallel societies', co-existing alongside the dominant society, without necessarily having very much interaction between them.

The interactions between these parallel societies can be very minimal. The French-speaking and English-speaking societies in Canada have often been described as 'two solitudes', which I believe is an accurate description. Franco-phones and Anglophones in Canada read different newspapers, listen to different radio programs, watch different TV shows, read different literature. Moreover, they are generally quite uninterested in each other's culture. Few English-speaking Canadians have any desire to learn about internal cultural developments within French-speaking Canada, and vice versa. Anglophones are not interested in reading francophone authors (even in translation), or in learning about the hot new media stars or public intellectuals or entertainers within Quebec (and vice versa).

This kind of parallel societies/two solitudes also exists in Belgium between the Flemish- and French-speaking groups and in Switzerland, between the German-, French- and Italian-speaking groups. Indeed, Switzerland has been described as composed of three groups that 'stand with their backs to each other' (Steiner, 2001: 145). The French-Swiss stand facing towards France; the Italian-Swiss facing towards Italy; and the German-Swiss facing towards Germany, each focused on their own internal cultural life and the culture of the neighboring country whose language they share. Most members of all three groups accept the principle that Switzerland must be a multilingual state that recognizes and shares power among its constituent groups. But few people have much interest in learning about or interacting with the other groups.

This sort of parallel co-existence creates an interesting paradox. In effect, we have multicultural states populated by citizens who have only minimal levels of intercultural interaction or knowledge. This raises an interesting question about how we should evaluate these models of multinational federations. From one point of view, they are clearly a great success. They are among the most peaceful, democratic and prosperous countries in the world. They have learned how to resolve their conflicts between different linguistic and national groups in a completely peaceful and democratic way. The absence of political violence is quite extraordinary when one remembers that nationalist conflicts have broken up colonial empires, torn apart communist systems in

Eastern Europe, and been a source of violence throughout the world. By contrast, these democratic multi-nation states are resolving their conflicts not only in a peaceful and democratic way, but also in a way that fully respects human rights, including individual civil and political rights. In short, in terms of peace, democracy, human rights, individual freedom and economic prosperity, I would argue that these multination federations have been very successful. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that they provide the most feasible model for accommodating strong forms of minority nationalism in other parts of the world, such as Eastern Europe (Kymlicka and Opalski, 2001).

From another point of view however, it must be acknowledged that these countries can also be seen as failures, or at least as disappointments. In particular, the lived experience of inter-group relations is hardly a model of robust or constructive intercultural exchange. At best, most citizens are ignorant of, and indifferent to, the internal life of other groups. At worst, the relations between different groups are tinged with feelings of resentment and annoyance, which are exacerbated by the seemingly unending process of reforming public institutions. Despite the significant reforms of state institutions, minorities still typically feel that the older ideology of the homogenous nation-state has not been fully renounced, and that members of the dominant group have not fully accepted the principle of a multicultural state (or at least have not fully accepted all of its implications). By contrast, the members of the dominant group typically feel that members of minority groups are ungrateful for the changes that have been made, unreasonable in their expectations and are impossible to satisfy. As a result, inter-group relations are often highly politicized, as members of both sides are (over-?)sensitive to perceived slights, indignities and misunderstandings. As a result, many people avoid inter-group contact where possible, or at least do not go out of their way to increase their contact with members of the other group. When contact does take place, it tends to reduce quickly to rather crude forms of bargaining and negotiation, rather than any deeper level of cultural sharing or common deliberation. This in turn, reinforces the underlying sense of 'solitude' between the groups.

In short, progress at the level of state institutions has not been matched by progress at the level of the lived experience of inter-group relations. The *state* has made itself accessible to all citizens, and affirms the important contribution that each group makes to the larger society. But from the point of view of individuals, the presence of other groups is rarely experienced as enriching. On the contrary, the level of mutual indifference in these countries (and hence the reduction of inter-ethnic relations to mere bargaining) has been described as 'nauseous' by one critic of multiculturalism.<sup>7</sup> The state has become more just, inclusive and accommodating, but inter-group relations remain divided and strained.<sup>8</sup>

This suggests that one can have a robustly multicultural state – one that truly repudiates the old model of a homogenous nation-state – with only minimally intercultural citizens. Of course, as noted earlier, a robustly multicultural state can only survive if citizens accept the three basic principles of multicultural fairness – i.e. that the state belongs equally to all groups; that policies of assimilation and exclusion must be replaced by recognition and accommodation; and that historic injustice must be acknowledged. But individuals can fully accept these principles and support a state that embodies them, without having a high level of intercultural skills or knowledge themselves. Living in such a multinational federation may in fact require fewer intercultural contacts than before, as groups become more self-sufficient and ‘institutionally complete’.<sup>9</sup>

Many people find this picture of self-contained parallel societies unsatisfactory as an account of intercultural citizenship. It may eliminate inter-group oppression, and create fairness between groups, but it lacks the sort of intercultural interaction and mutual sharing and learning that many of us desire.<sup>10</sup>

As a result, many theorists have attempted to formulate a more robust picture of what an intercultural individual is. On this view, an intercultural citizen is someone who not only supports the principles of a multicultural state, but also exhibits a range of more positive personal attitudes towards diversity. In particular, it is someone who is curious rather than fearful about other peoples and cultures; someone who is open to learning about other ways of life, and willing to consider how issues look from other people’s point of view, rather than assuming that their inherited way of life or perspective is superior; someone who feels comfortable interacting with people from other backgrounds, and so on.

This sort of personal interculturalism is often said to be increasingly necessary due to forces of globalization. There is a much higher level of interdependence today between members of different groups. No group is truly ‘self-sufficient’ any more. No group is truly ‘institutionally complete’. Even the most sizeable group, with the most extensive rights of self-government, is not self-contained, but is integrated into larger transnational economic and political structures, and subject to international forces relating to the economy, or the environment, or security. As a result, everyone today needs to be able to deal with people from outside their own group, and hence must learn how to deal with diversity.

Moreover, we also see high levels of mobility and migration around the world today, so that people are increasingly geographically inter-mixed. Groups which possess significant powers of territorial autonomy are likely to confront immigrants from another country, or migrants from another part of the same country, whose diverse backgrounds must be accommodated within the institutions of the self-governing territory. For reasons of both global

interdependence and migration, therefore, it is increasingly impossible to interact solely with members of one's own group. Intercultural skills are needed even for the members of 'institutionally complete' parallel societies within multination federations.

Moreover, these intercultural skills should be seen not just as pragmatic necessities given the reality of global interdependence and inter-ethnic mixing, but also as intrinsically valuable. It enriches our lives to be able to have positive interactions with the members of other cultures: it expands our horizons, provides new perspectives, and teaches us to reflect more critically on our own inherited traditions. It is, in short, an important part of self-development. Someone who only feels comfortable with members of his own group, and who is not able or willing to deal with 'others', is leading a stultified life.

An important part of any theory of intercultural citizenship is to instill high levels of intercultural skills and knowledge. We should encourage individuals to have the ability and desire to seek out interactions with the members of other groups, to have curiosity about the larger world, and to learn about the habits and beliefs of other peoples. Indeed, in some accounts of education for intercultural citizenship, this seems to be the main goal: the focus is less on inculcating the political principles which support the multicultural state, and more on inculcating the personal skills that support positive intercultural exchanges.

### possible tensions

So far, two ideals have been described: (1) the ideal of a multicultural state that fairly accommodates diversity in its laws and public institutions and (2) the ideal of an intercultural citizen who feels comfortable dealing with diversity in his or her individual interactions. Personally, I find both of these ideas very attractive, and would like to think that they reinforce each other and fit together in a seamless whole. We might hope, for example, that emphasizing the necessity/desirability of individual intercultural skills will help to reduce the strained quality of inter-group relations within many existing multination states. Encouraging greater intercultural skills might reduce the feeling of 'solitudes' between different groups, by encouraging greater interaction, and reducing the danger that this interaction will lead to feelings of resentment or misunderstanding. If so, promoting a more robust conception of intercultural skills would be a 'win-win' proposition: it not only promotes individual self-development, but also helps to reduce inter-group strains in multicultural states, and thereby helps to sustain the sorts of state reforms needed to ensure justice.

However, this may be over-optimistic. I believe that there are some possible tensions between promoting greater multiculturalism at the level of the state and promoting greater interculturalism at the level of individual citizens. A few of them are briefly discussed below.

*Local interculturalism versus cosmopolitan interculturalism*

The first problem is that the standard arguments for enhancing the intercultural skills and knowledge of individuals do not tell us much about *which* groups we should learn more about. In particular, they do not give us any reason to learn more about local groups living next to us within our own country, than about distant groups living in other countries or even other continents. Both can be sources of enrichment, learning and expanded opportunities. Indeed, if the primary goal of developing intercultural skills is personal self-development, and/or being able to succeed within a globalized economy and transnational political institutions, then perhaps it is more useful to learn about a large distant culture than about a small neighboring culture. For example, learning a world language like English is likely to open up more economic opportunities, and enable access to a wider range of cultural products (e.g. novels, movies, plays), than learning a neighboring language spoken only by a few hundred thousand people. In fact, people may believe deeply in the value of learning about other peoples and cultures, and hence may seek to develop and exercise their intercultural skills, yet nonetheless remain quite ignorant and indifferent to their local/neighboring cultures. They may be genuinely intercultural, and may be genuinely open and curious about others, but they may choose to train their curiosity on more distant or more powerful languages and cultures than on the languages and cultures of their local co-citizens.

This is precisely what we see in many multination states. As mentioned previously, the members of the 'parallel societies' in countries like Canada, Belgium and Switzerland have little interest in each other. But they are not inward-looking. On the contrary, members of all these societies are very interested in the larger world, and are eager to participate in free trade, transnational educational and cultural exchanges and the learning of foreign languages. In many respects, they are truly 'citizens of the world', with cosmopolitan tastes in food, literature, music, religion, art and travel. They are simply not interested in the language and culture of their neighbors.<sup>11</sup>

For example, although Belgium is officially bilingual, with French and Flemish as the official languages, the Francophones would prefer to learn English than Flemish, since they would rather tap into the global culture made available through English than learn more about the internal life of their

Flemish co-citizens. As a result, while French-speaking Belgians have become more cosmopolitan and intercultural, fewer and fewer of them know or care about the internal life of the Flemish society in Belgium (and vice versa).

The same situation exists in Estonia. The ethnic Estonian majority would rather learn English than Russian, which is the language of over 40 percent of the population. Conversely, the Russian minority would prefer to learn English than Estonian. Each group is trying to reach out and connect to the larger world, but are indifferent to the language and culture of their co-citizens.

Many people seem to prefer a form of global interculturalism, focused on learning about distant/world cultures, to local interculturalism, focused on learning about neighboring groups. This preference for global over local forms of interculturalism is quite explicit in many countries. In Germany, for example, educational programs to promote interculturalism are explicitly aimed at enabling Germans to interact with the citizens of other European countries, as part of building the European Union, rather than on enabling Germans to deal with their (sizeable) local minorities, such as the Turkish 'guest-workers' (Luchtenberg, 2003). Similarly, intercultural education in Russia is focused on teaching Russians about larger world cultures, not on learning about the languages and cultures of the many national minorities within Russia itself, such as their Muslim minorities (Froumin, 2003).

This is not really surprising however, as not only are world languages/cultures attractive in the resources and opportunities they provide, but there is also typically less tension involved in learning about them or interacting with them. For most people, learning about a distant culture carries no historical or political baggage: one can simply enjoy and cherish the intercultural interaction. By contrast, interacting with neighboring groups is typically wrapped up with unresolved political demands and long-standing fears and resentments. Local interculturalism almost always creates more anxiety and tension than global interculturalism, particularly in contexts where there is a long history of mistreatment and mistrust between the groups. In such contexts, even well-meaning attempts by members of the dominant group to interact with members of a historically oppressed group are likely to be viewed with suspicion. It is not surprising therefore that many people who are genuinely open and curious about other cultures, and who cherish opportunities for intercultural exchange, nonetheless prefer global interculturalism to local interculturalism.

This suggests that there is a potential divergence between the goals of inculcating intercultural skills in citizens and of supporting the multicultural state. The standard arguments in favor of intercultural skills, based on self-development and the dynamics of globalization, apply equally to learning about local

and distant cultures. Indeed, according to some commentators, the natural or logical outcome of pursuing the ideal of an intercultural citizen is in fact some form of cosmopolitanism that explicitly views the world as a whole, rather than just local groups, as the appropriate focus of intercultural learning and exchange (e.g. Fullinwider, 2001). Standard conceptions of the intercultural citizen, in short, seem to privilege global interculturalism over local interculturalism.

By contrast, the goal of building and sustaining a multicultural state requires citizens to privilege local interculturalism over global interculturalism. The real challenge of intercultural citizenship is learning how to interact in a constructive manner with one's neighboring groups and to try to overcome the legacies of mistrust and oppression that often strain local inter-group relations. The motive for this, I believe, cannot primarily be self-development and personal enrichment. Those motives, by themselves, are likely to push in the direction of global interculturalism. The willingness of citizens to engage in forms of local interculturalism must instead be grounded, at least in part, on considerations of justice. If we want to promote local interculturalism, we need to tie it to arguments of justice. We need to show how local interculturalism plays an important role in sustaining the just institutions of a multicultural state, and hence is something we have a duty to attempt, even if we do not find it personally enriching (and may instead find it painful and tiring). The sort of intercultural exchange that leads to personal enrichment is not necessarily the same sort as leads to support for just institutions. I do not think we have fully thought through this potential tension.

### *Interculturalism versus isolationism*

Thus far, I have assumed that we all agree with the claim that openness to other peoples and cultures is a virtue that citizens should possess, even if we disagree about whether this openness should primarily be directed locally or globally. But, there is a second problem with the idea that citizens should possess robust intercultural skills and knowledge: namely, there are some groups that reject the underlying claim that intercultural exchange leads to personal growth and enrichment. In particular, some conservative religious groups view intercultural interaction (local or global) as a threat to their way of life, which may depend on a degree of self-isolation. They may view the larger society as a corrupting influence that is likely to lead their members astray. This is of particular concern regarding their children, and many such groups strenuously object to the idea that their children should have to interact with children from the larger society. As a result, they seek to establish separate religious schools, and often seek public funding to do so. Where such separate schools are not



feasible (e.g. because the group's members are too few or too dispersed), they may instead seek permission to teach their children at home ('home schooling'), or to withdraw their children before the usual age for mandatory schooling.

These groups reject the ideal of an intercultural citizen. Yet it is interesting to note that they may not reject the idea of a multicultural state. On the contrary, many of them demand separate religious schools precisely by appealing to the principles of the multicultural state. In the Canadian context, for example, the public schools in the 19th century were historically defined as Protestant. To accommodate Catholic immigrants, particularly from Ireland, a separate publicly-funded Catholic school system was set up in many provinces. Today, the public schools are fully secular, and so many Canadians see no reason to provide public funding for religious schools for newer immigrant groups (e.g. for Muslims and Hindus from South Asia). Unlike Catholics in the 19th century, religious minorities today are not excluded or stigmatized within the (secularized) public school system. However, Muslim community leaders argue, not unreasonably, that if Catholics have publicly-funded separate schools, so should they. Indeed, they argue that the principle of multicultural fairness in state institutions requires that they too be given public funds for separate religious schools.

Here again, we have a potential conflict between the ideals of the multicultural state and the intercultural citizen. These conservative religious groups shun intercultural interaction, yet endorse the principles of a multicultural state. They do not seek to impose their religion or culture on outsiders, and do not claim that the state belongs to them. They ask only that the state extend to them the same accommodation that it has historically provided to other groups, including other religious or ethnic minorities. From the perspective of multicultural state fairness, it is difficult to contest their claim. Yet from the point of view of promoting greater intercultural skills amongst citizens, the proliferation of separate religious schools is regrettable, particularly when they will be controlled by conservative religious leaders who preach that their group is the chosen people, that people outside the church are evil and damned, that inter-marriage is a sin, etc. These schools may in fact generate precisely the sort of fear of 'otherness' that our conceptions of intercultural citizenship were intended to overcome. Many of us may worry that they will seriously constrain the opportunities and self-development of the children.

This is a tension I do not believe has been properly addressed. The sort of schooling required by norms of intercultural self-development may not be the same sort of schooling required by norms of multicultural fairness.<sup>12</sup>

*Interculturalism versus tokenism*

Finally, I will raise one more possible tension. Let us assume that we have solved the first two problems, that everyone agrees on the importance of promoting intercultural skills/knowledge, and that this should include knowledge about and interaction with local groups, not just distant ones. We face one further problem: namely, what sort of knowledge should we be seeking about other peoples and cultures?

When the idea of multicultural education was first articulated in the Anglo-American world in the late 1970s and 1980s, the focus tended to be on teaching the more exotic and colorful aspects of other cultures, particularly their traditional holidays, costumes, dances and food. This was known in Britain as the 'saris, samosas and steelbands' model of multiculturalism (Alibhai-Brown, 2000: 17). It taught children that immigrants to Britain wear different clothes (saris), eat different foods (samosas) and enjoy different music (steelbands). Needless to say, this was quickly criticized as trivializing and de-politicizing immigrant cultures and identities. Others have called it the 'commodification' or 'Disneyfication' of culture: the reduction of a complex culture to a few 'safe' items that can easily be understood and 'consumed' by non-members, without really understanding the depths of a culture's beliefs, hopes, loyalties, fears, and identities.<sup>13</sup> It avoids the need to confront the reality that the members of different groups may not only eat and dress differently, but also may have fundamentally different and competing visions of God, family, the state, land, society, and of our basic moral and political obligations. Yet it is precisely these more fundamental cultural differences that need to be negotiated in a multicultural society.

Proponents of intercultural education today are quite aware of this danger, and so emphasize the need for a deeper understanding, dialogue and appreciation between the members of different groups. But then we quickly encounter the opposite problem. If earlier models of intercultural understanding were tokenist and undemanding, more recent models are utopian and too demanding. To take one example, in the name of promoting multiculturalism in Bosnia, the international community has sponsored many inter-faith seminars that are intended to teach Serbs about the Muslim religion, and teach Bosniacs about the Orthodox religion. The hope was that with greater knowledge about their deepest religious beliefs, each group would respect and appreciate each other more.

Preliminary reports suggest that this exercise is not having the desired effect, and this is unsurprising. A few seminars are not enough to provide any real 'understanding' of something as complex as Islam or Christianity. Moreover, 'understanding' is no guarantee of 'appreciation' or 'respect'. On the contrary,

where people have deeply-held beliefs about true faith, discovering that other people have quite different views may simply reinforce the belief that they are misguided and/or corrupt.

It seems to me that such models of intercultural education often miss the target. What matters is not that we understand or appreciate *the content* of other people's deeply-held beliefs, but rather that we understand and appreciate the fact that they *have* deeply-held views that differ from ours. Where there are such differences, the state cannot be seen as 'belonging' to one particular group, but rather must try to be even-handed among all groups.

This is how I would explain the basis of religious tolerance in the Western democracies. The historic basis for toleration is not any sort of deep understanding or appreciation of the nature of other religions. Protestants do not have a deep understanding of the tenets of Catholicism, let alone Islam or Hinduism (and vice versa). If Protestants did somehow acquire a deeper understanding of the tenets of other religions, I doubt this would increase their appreciation of them. The basis of religious tolerance, I think, is quite different. Protestants recognize that Catholics and Muslims have deeply-held religious beliefs that matter as much to them as Protestant beliefs matter to Protestants. The precise nature of these different beliefs is not well-understood, but what matters is that we recognize we have different deeply-held beliefs, and we agree that the state does not belong to any one religious group. As a result, we need to find ways of living and governing together that do not depend upon everyone accepting the same religious beliefs. In other words, we need a common understanding of the nature of the state as a secular institution that is not the possession of any one religious group. We do not need a common understanding of each other's religious faith.

I think the same applies to the different views about the nature of land between indigenous peoples and European settlers in the Americas. It is unrealistic, I think, to expect that European settlers will come to have a deep understanding of the significance of land within indigenous cultures, any more than indigenous people are likely to understand European views about the natural world. Even when it seems that we have moments of mutual understanding, these often disappear quickly, as apparent points of contact dissolve beneath the weight of deeper cultural differences. For example, many environmentalists in Canada thought that they understood and shared many of the beliefs about the land that Aboriginals have in Canada, and for this reason the two groups worked effectively to block certain hydro-electric developments. Yet this coalition quickly (and bitterly) broke down when Aboriginals subsequently used their self-government powers to promote similar hydro-electric projects. The apparent similarities in views in fact obscured deep differences about ends and means (Feit, 1980). Here again, what matters is not that we

fully understand each other's deeply-held views about the land, but simply that we acknowledge that groups have differing deeply-held views, and that no one group can ask or expect the state to act solely on its views.

The idea that culturally distinct groups can become transparent to each other is a myth, and a dangerous one, insofar as it encourages members of the dominant group to think that they have understood non-dominant groups, and so can speak for them. We should accept instead that cultures (and individuals) are always at least partially opaque to each other. This indeed is one of the arguments in favor of self-government or other forms of power-sharing. Self-government is needed in part because it is very difficult to gain a full understanding or appreciation of other cultures.

I believe it is a mistake to suppose that mutual understanding is a prerequisite for citizens to support the principles of a multicultural state. It may in fact be the other way around. I think that acknowledgment of the impossibility of achieving full mutual understanding helps to generate support for the principles of the multicultural state, whose institutions operate to reduce the need for such mutual understanding (since they empower indigenous peoples to speak for, and govern, themselves).

Even with self-government rights, indigenous peoples and the larger society must still talk to one another, cooperate in various institutions, and negotiate various forms of collective action. But under conditions of deep diversity, these discussions may often be more a matter of bargaining and negotiation than of genuinely shared deliberation or mutual understanding. This is indeed what we see emerging in various multinational states, like Belgium, where relations between the Flemish and Walloons are described as little more than crude forms of bargaining. I would suggest that relations between Aboriginals and the larger society in Canada are similar.

The limited levels of intercultural exchange and understanding that we see in some multi-nation states are perhaps to be expected. If we accept that mutual understanding is difficult to achieve, particularly in a context of deep cultural differences and histories of mistrust, then the aim of intercultural education should not primarily be deep mutual understanding, but rather acknowledgment of the (partial) opaqueness of cultural differences, and hence the necessity for groups to speak for and govern themselves, and the necessity of finding ways of co-existing that can be accepted by all. This, I would suggest, is a more realistic goal, which lies in between the tokenist teaching of superficial cultural differences, and the utopian quest to understand deep cultural differences. Here again, the quest for a particular form of (deep) intercultural knowledge, rooted in a model of the ideal intercultural citizen, may go beyond, and perhaps even conflict with, the sort of intercultural relations required by a just multicultural state.

## conclusion

In this article, I have tried to suggest that our ideal of an intercultural citizen, with robust levels of intercultural skills/knowledge, does not fit neatly or simply into our ideal of a multicultural state that deals justly with ethnocultural diversity. The ideal of personal self-development underlying the former does not always match up well with the principles of political justice underlying the latter.

In particular, three possible areas of tension have been raised between the two: (1) that the intercultural citizen may prefer global interculturalism, while multicultural justice requires focusing on local interculturalism, (2) that the model of the intercultural citizen requires a level of intercultural exchange which may unfairly burden some isolationist groups and (3) that the model of the intercultural citizen requires a level of mutual understanding that is either tokenistic (if focused on superficial cultural differences) or utopian (if focused on deep cultural differences), while justice requires acknowledging the limits of mutual understanding and accepting the partial opaqueness of our differences.

All three of these conflicts raise difficult issues for the theory and practice of intercultural citizenship. This article does not try to provide a definitive answer to any of these three conflicts, but simply tries to clarify the source of the tension. However, my own inclination is to agree with Rawls that 'justice is the first virtue of social institutions'. However valuable it is for individuals to acquire various forms of intercultural skills and knowledge, we should ensure that the promotion of individual interculturalism does not undermine the justice of multicultural state institutions. At least in some cases, this may require tempering our promotion of individual interculturalism with the recognition of our special obligations to local (rather than distant) groups, with the accommodation of the claims of isolationist groups, and with the acknowledgment of the partial opaqueness of deep cultural differences.

## notes

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1. Some authors draw a sharp distinction between 'multiculturalism' and 'interculturalism', others treat them as synonyms. In the Anglo-American literature, the former term is more common; in the Latin American literature, the latter seems preferred. In this paper, the term 'multicultural' is used in reference to states, and 'intercultural' in reference to individuals, for the reasons explained.
2. See, for example, the interesting discussion on the different national models of multiculturalism in Britain and France in Favell (2001).

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3. This exclusion could take the form of exclusion from the halls of power within the state (e.g. through denial of the vote, or other forms of political disempowerment), or it could literally involve exclusion from the territory of the state, through racial restrictions on immigration, or through ethnic cleansing.
4. This struggle has not always been conducted in the name of 'multiculturalism', and some groups may indeed reject the term. For the reasons to be discussed, the struggle has often instead been conducted in the name of a 'multinational state', or various ideals of 'partnership', 'federalism', 'historic rights', or simply 'democracy'.
5. For a fuller discussion of the nature and structure of such a multinational state (see Gagnon and Tully, 2001; Kymlicka 2001: ch. 5; Requejo, 2002). The Flemish now form a majority in Belgium, but were historically subordinate to the French, and so have faced many of the same struggles for recognition and self-government as national groups that are numerically a minority, such as the Québécois or Catalans.
6. See the debate in Mexico between those who conceive of indigenous self-government solely in terms of local self-government, and those who seek some form of regional autonomy (e.g. the Zapatistas). For a similar debate in Canada, see the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which recommended consolidating the 700 or so Aboriginal 'bands' (primarily local villages) into 60 or so 'peoples' that would have greater capacities for self-government.
7. 'The endless process of haggling that is Belgian politics is so nauseating to all concerned . . .' (Barry, 2001: 312).
8. I would not say that inter-group relations have become worse in these countries. Rather, the strains have simply become more visible, and more vocal, now that minorities have the power and voice to make their feelings heard.
9. For the importance of 'institutional completeness' see Breton, 1964.
10. It may also seem unsustainable in the long term: what holds such parallel societies together in a single state? If the members of each group are uninterested in learning about or interacting with other groups, why not just split up into two or more states? For some speculation on this question see Kymlicka, 2003.
11. For a similar observation, see Miscovic (1999), who notes that while nationalists are often interested in interacting with distant strangers (and hence are 'cosmopolitan' in that sense), they are generally hostile to interacting with proximate strangers: i.e. with the members of the neighboring national group, with whom they often have a history of conflict, competition and invidious comparison.
12. For various attempts to untie this Gordian knot, see Levinson (1999), Callan (1997), Spinner-Halev (2000), Macedo (2000) and Reich (2002).
13. This charge has been leveled at Canadian multicultural policies by Gwyn (1995), Bissoondath (1994) and more generally by Waldron (1995).

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