

Multiculturalism and Nationalism: Models of Belonging to Diverse Political Community

Introduction

Much academic and public debate assumes the incompatibility of cultural diversity and national unity. The latter requires homogeneity and seeks a unified political community, while the former emphasises particularistic attachments and highlights what divides rather than unites a citizenry. Nationalism and multiculturalism as projects of political identity are, at best, in tension and, at worst, mutually exclusive. These tropes highlight the importance of assessing a current discussion in multicultural theory around the “Bristol school of multiculturalism” (BSM). Associated with the work of Bhikhu Parekh, Tariq Modood, Varun Uberoi and Nasar Meer (amongst others), the BSM offers distinctive understandings of the tensions around cultural diversity in contemporary liberal democracies. One of its distinctive features is the ‘central role it assigns to national identity in the multiculturalism project’(Levey, 2018b, p. 11).

In response to both the critique of multiculturalism and contemporary tensions around race, culture and nationalism in Western liberal democracies, members of the BSM call for a symbolic reconstruction of the nation that makes cultural diversity constitutive of and a positive resource for shared national identity.¹ This places diversity at the centre of the national register, constituting a distinctive approach to multiculturalism. However, this approach has received varied criticisms: that the BSM is not an alternative to liberal nationalist multiculturalism either generally or in its views on national identity (Kymlicka, 2019); that it is and that it misunderstands minority integration and majority entitlement (Goodhart, 2019); and that it constitutes a clear alternative theory of multiculturalism and national identity, outside the liberal approach, that requires further clarification (Levey, 2018b). In this way, there are present and real challenges about the BSM’s existence, and understandings of and relations to liberalism, multiculturalism and nationalism.

This paper responds to these calls for a multicultural national identity, and to these initial doubts and criticisms. It provides an account of political community, nationalism and multiculturalism conducive to fuller theorization of multicultural national identity, which is sketched out in broad strokes in the final section.² This is important because recent debate in political theory has focused on the relation between liberal values, national identity and multiculturalism more broadly (Lenard and Miller, 2018; Gustavsson, 2019; Lenard, 2020), and these debates have tended to be solely within circles claiming liberal methods and values.

To do this, this paper conceptualizes nationalism, liberalism, and multiculturalism in terms of the concept of political belonging and community. It argues that, understood as modes of

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belonging, nationalism and multiculturalism are not incompatible (in certain forms), and indeed, the latter can be understood as a reconstruction of the symbolic terms of social unity of the former. Specifically, multiculturalism is a form of national belonging that makes cultural difference a constitutive part of national unity, reconstructing the relation between national and cultural identity, opening possibilities of diverse forms of political community. As a result, multicultural national identity is an overlapping and viable alternative to other forms of national identity, offering both a different set of normative prescriptions, and an alternative understanding of existing national identity in liberal-democratic states.

Section one examines the concept of political community in political theory. It argues that political communities are imagined and how they are imagined affects the mode of belonging to that community. Section two examines nationalism as a mode of political belonging, outlining key tensions in how it handles cultural diversity. It then examines the ethnic and civic ways of constructing belonging amongst diversity, contrasting them with a discussion of David Miller's liberal nationalism. Section 3 reinterprets multiculturalism as a socio-political ideal of diverse belonging. It argues that multiculturalism reconstructs national identity to bring cultural diversity into the nation as a constitutive aspect of political belonging. It illustrates that this claim requires an important distinction between doing this in a general and specific sense. All of this illustrates that progressing contemporary debates around national identity and cultural diversity requires understanding the relations between nationalism, multiculturalism and political belonging in contemporary liberal-democracies.

Political Community, Imagination and Belonging

This argument considers nationalism and multiculturalism as models of belonging to political communities. They are social imaginaries that set the intersubjective terms of political community, constraining and enabling how individuals and groups belong. Understanding nationalism and multiculturalism thus requires some kind of account of what political community is, and what belonging to one means. The definition of community and political community are notoriously controversial in social and political theory. Much of this debate has surrounded the nature of communities in general and at the level of the state, whether political units require communities, and the normative value of various types.

The present discussion focuses only on understanding the level of identity and group-life associated with nation-states. These identities/groups come in many shapes and are often thought to share some characteristics: a way of life, some set of "public" concerns, collective coordinated action, a conception of justice, or a robust conception of the good life. In this account the key feature of political communities is their *imaginative* dimension. Charles Taylor defines social imaginaries as 'the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit

together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations'(Taylor, 2002, p. 106). Imaginaries are not theorizations of these background conditions, but the images, stories, norms, and symbols through which people understand how things occur within the political community. For Taylor, they enable the common practices, institutions and public culture of these groups, and create a broad sense of the value and legitimacy of a political community.

In Bhikhu Parekh's terms, political imaginaries have a *constitutive* function for the identity of political community. For Parekh, social and political theories tend to define the social identity of political communities by one of its potential sources, including: articulations of difference with outsiders; articulations of self-conception; and accounts of key values, goals and commitments. Our political identities involve all these elements, but are also wider normative and practical (i.e. imaginative) phenomenon. They refer to how the identity of our political community is constituted, what makes this community *the kind of community it is*.

It includes the central organising principles of the polity, its structural tendencies, characteristic ways of thinking and living, the ideals that inspire its people, the values they profess and to which its leaders tend to appeal, the kind of character they admire and cherish, their propensities to act in specific ways, their deepest fears, ambitions, anxieties, collective memories, traumatic historical experiences, dominant myths and collective self-understandings (Parekh, 1995b, p. 257).

Given the diversity of its sources and subject matter, the identity of political community is 'a complex structure made up of different elements and tendencies' (Parekh, 1995b, p. 263). This can occur along at least two levels. First, there is *internal* contestation: different views of the core traits, characteristics or essential features of a political community. For example, whether adherence to a religion, ethnic descent or holding civic values is constitutive. This level of contestation surrounds what elements are included within the constitution of a political community. Second, the imaginary of a political community is also *differentially inhabited*. Given the variety of symbolic resources within any community, political identities are never fully separate from other social identities (religious, sexual, economic, etc) which also employ similar sets of resources of meaning and groupness(Parekh, 1995b, pp. 259–61, 2008, pp. 21–5; Angus, 1997). Even when various individuals and sub-groups practice the same political identity, they will often not practice the same parts of that identity equally. Some will deploy certain parts of the symbolic resources (historical, ideational, political, etc.) and others will focus on another set. While there will be connections between these different parts, there will also be tensions. In this way, a single national identity can be civic and ethnic, territorial and hereditary, religious and secular, inclusive and exclusive (Parekh, 1999, pp. 309–10). This level of internal difference concerns the relations between our "political" and other social identities.

This contestation indicates that the identities of political communities serve both descriptive and aspirational-normative purposes. They attempt to reflect social reality to some degree, but they also emphasise certain trends over others (Parekh, 2019, p. 199). Xavier Marquez explains this balance well when he claims that conceptions of political community are articulated through various *models of political community*. ‘Such models serve as *paradigms* of political form or as points of reference for comparison with social reality, mediating “dialectically” between empirical description and normative prescription: the normative content of the model is both informed by the description of a specific social formation and yet transcends it in providing a standard for its evaluation’ (Márquez, 2011, p. 1). In this, models of political community are imaginative frameworks within and through which claims (and their background assumptions) about the nature of contemporary political experience can be accessed and reflected upon; however, they also serve as the main normative resource to justify particular models over-against each other.

For Marquez, these models variously focus on defining three aspects of the political community. First, models of political community set out their spheres of concern; that is, all political communities have an understanding of what realms and areas of human life are relevant to the norms and practices of the community, and what are broadly beyond them. In this sense, models of political community set out the scope of the political.³ Second, models of political community contain an account of the goods provided by that community; the purpose that this community is put to. While some goods will be common to many models (e.g. democratic participation), some (e.g. religious salvation) will be contentious between models. Third, political communities set out the terms of membership of a community in cultural, formal and social dimensions. Culturally, they provide a set of symbolic resources (an imaginary) for the identity of the community. Formally, they provide a scheme of rights and duties with which to structure their association. Socially, they include criteria for everyday social interactions between members. In reality, the cultural, formal and social dimensions are interdependent aspects of our membership in political communities; they are different ways in which we belong to these communities.

This clarifies that these models of political community are models of *political belonging*. Indeed, the imaginative, constitutive, contested and descriptive/normative nature of political community highlights the importance of the concept of belonging to understanding political community. Belonging is an increasingly important concept across a series of debates in the social sciences that are grappling with the nature of group life and the complex dynamics of inclusion and exclusion (Antonsich, 2010; Knott, 2017; Chin, 2019). The concept concerns the cognitive and affective attachments to others that cement our various forms of “groupness”. This means it is about what process and resources facilitate unity or collectively beyond a mere aggregation of individuals. Why and how we belong to any group is about what enables our inclusion and relations. As Andrew Mason notes, belonging involves some kind of shared idea

and attachment among a people that something links them beyond the contingency of living within the same state (Mason, 1999, p. 263). The linking here is important. Belonging is an emotion but it is one that imbues a cognitive claim of identity between an individual/group and a larger group. As Varun Uberoi notes, it is the sense that the polity is a reflection of at least part of what they are and hence it is not only a place in which they are welcome, but it is also a place that they want to live in and call their home' (Uberoi, 2007, p. 144). As such, the question of political community concerns the nature of the belonging that binds political community. In this sense, belonging is about how a political community imagines the internal relationship of members; what binds them and makes them at home in this community.

Some critics will object to the notion that belonging is primarily concerned with internal, constitutive questions. They argue that community is primarily constituted by the relation between insiders and outsiders; that political identities are more determined by processes of external differentiation than internal self-definition (Triandafyllidou, 1998, p. 594). However, Parekh cautions against establishing a relationship of necessary priority between internal sameness and external difference. For him, 'identity and difference are logically interrelated concepts ... However, the two are neither identical nor of equal ontological importance... difference cannot be the basis of identity, and is important only insofar as it grows naturally out of the kind of person [or community] one is' (Parekh, 1995b, p. 256). Understandings of the difference between insiders and outsiders will play key imaginative roles in the constitution of a political community. This is of course true in any community aware of other communities and their features, though the extent to which those differences play symbolic roles within the imaginary of the given community will differ. However, this is quite different from the essentialist claim that the content of an identity is determined by its differences with others. For Parekh, the latter misunderstands the complex dynamics of unity and diversity within any identity. I would add that ontologically privileging difference over identity obscures the important question addressed here: what happens to models of political community when they attempt to symbolically integrate significant differences within themselves?

In this way, belonging concerns the model of inclusion within political community: on what terms and through what symbolic resources a political community constructs inclusion for its members (groups and individuals). It highlights the dimension of communal life that involves two interrelated aspects of that inclusion: the *status of* and *relationship between* those inside the community. On the one hand, belonging concerns the beliefs, values and identities we expect citizens to have. This is a question of the normative terms of membership; the cognitive and affective demands we place on citizens to think and feel in certain ways as part of membership. As a result, this dimension of belonging is about the status of those who belong. On the other hand, belonging also has a dimension focused on the material, symbolic practices of demonstrating and recognizing that membership through behaviour. Some of these claims are deployed through attempts to differentiate external, non-members. Most will be concerned with

establishing the narratives, expectations and ideas that characterize the internal life of the political community, especially as they relate to Marquez's three dimensions.⁴ These status and relational elements are interrelated. The way the terms of membership are framed affect how belonging is practiced, and the practical symbolic activities of belonging across many contexts impacts on how the terms are understood and felt.

Focused on constitutive questions about the status and relations of insiders, political belonging highlights the complexity of inclusion and exclusion. Liberal theory has usually approached the question of political community as about the appropriate relation between individuals and community; about what the latter can demand of the former to belong (Kukuthas, 2003, p. 167). The identity of a political community, on this understanding, can only contain what each member is obliged to share: the terms of membership formalized through the institution of the state. Within this assumption multiculturalism and nationalism's impact on political community is in the terms of membership states formalize, and the demands these make on individuals. Thus, both liberal multiculturalists and liberal nationalists approach belonging as a question of 'the ideal model of political membership; how political community should be constructed in light of contemporary diversity, the stress that diversity places on citizenship and the forms of rights and accommodation sought' (Chin, 2019, p. 716). This is right but incomplete, as political community is shared in a sense that goes beyond this. The values, identity, and feelings a community shares are not only things each member must hold, they are something they share as a public institution, in the way that a culture is shared (Parekh, 1994, pp. 501–2). To belong is to participate in this culture and life; to navigate and live it. To belong is to understand and be understandable to other members of that group; to be able to recognize and be recognized. In this way, belonging has both individual *and* relational, reciprocal dimensions. It is not something that depends only on individual belief. Merely holding an identity does not entail belonging to it as the informal and formal aspects of belonging determine how those claims are received (Brubaker, 2015, p. 35). Further, belonging is not only dependent on some kind of action of acceptance by others (i.e. communal belief); to belong is something that has to be claimed and held by an individual or group and is not simply handed down. Multiculturalism and nationalism as models of political community do not only affect the terms of memberships within those communities, they also affect intersubjective relations and shape of the horizontal relationships between members: that is the nature of the group life and how it is symbolically represented to itself.

A focus on belonging highlights the multifaceted and dynamic nature of inclusion/exclusion; the fact that our links to any group are determined by a variety of cognitive and affective states, claims, relationships, and practices across socio-political life. This complicates the usual question of political community. Models of political community are political imaginaries that draw on the wider social imaginaries of their context to set out the scope of the political, the purpose of political community and the terms of membership. While

all these aspects will be framed in formal political institutions, the imaginative dimension of political life will be a complex symbolic, cognitive and affective mix. As a result, there will be competing models in any context, *as well as* significant internal contestation of any model. In this sense, nationalism and multiculturalism, as we see below, are both models of political community, setting out how to belong to the political community.

National Political Community: Ethnic, Civic and Liberal Belonging

This section argues that nationalism is a model of belonging with significant internal contestation over the relation between political and other forms of social belonging. Within the imaginary of political community, nationalism is a dominant model of belonging insofar as it provides the main conceptual and symbolic imaginary through which the scope of the political, the purpose of political community and the terms of membership are articulated. The final section of this paper argues that multiculturalism is a reconstruction of nationalism's model of political belonging, in the way that it inserts cultural diversity into political belonging. As such, the question of nationalism is a question of the constraints/opportunities it provides for diverse belonging within political community, as well as the tensions that it engenders. These tensions emerge across discussions of the ethnic-civic divide and liberal nationalism in political theory. The account of the latter focuses on David Miller's work. The point is not to offer a comprehensive view of liberal nationalism, which is not possible here, but only to illustrate how these tensions are not entirely addressed in at least one prominent liberal nationalist theory.

National Identity and Imaginary

Nationalism is a protean political phenomenon that can be both liberating and regressive, inclusive and exclusive, dynamic and static. Like any concept covering a phenomenon manifesting in every modern state, it has many meanings. Nationalism can refer to 1) the empirical process of forming nations; 2) an ideology of the political entitlements of nations; 3) a movement for nationalist ends; 4) a sense of belonging to a national community; 5) and the language and symbolic activity of nations (Smith, 1991, p. 72). 1-3 concern the normative argument and empirical manifestations of "the nationality principle": the ethical and sociological claim that nations constitute significant ethical communities, that national boundaries affect what we owe to others, *and* that nations have 'a good claim to political self-determination' (Tamir, 1993; Miller, 1995, p. 11). In contrast, 4-5 focus on nationalism as political identity and community. This is nationalism as national identity: 'the maintenance and continuous reproduction of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations and the identification of individuals with that heritage' (Smith, 2000, p. 796).

This dimension of nationalism is, like political community, imaginative. National identity is the constitutive dimension of nationalism that seeks to define a political community through the

nationalist imaginary; 'nationalism is basically a theory about the proper mode of constituting the state. As such it is concerned to offer not just a theory of legitimacy as Kedourie and others argue... but also a theory of the nature, boundary, functions, rationale and the proper basis of the authority and the unity of the state' (Parekh, 1995a, p. 42). Nationalism is not only a theory of legitimacy (important as this is) but a model of belonging to political community. Whatever else it is, it is an imaginary of the existence and features of a political community through which belonging is understood and performed. It is a constitutive framework in Parekh's sense which affects *how* and *with whom* one identifies. It is a model of *common belonging*, that significantly affects the nature of political community. More specifically, it is a theory and public discourse of how to constitute a political community and state (Parekh, 1995a, pp. 39, 45, 1999, p. 307). Approaching nationalism in this way means there is no essence linking the national model of belonging. Rather, there is a common, contested imaginary that varies significantly across national contexts and through history. The way some of these contestations have developed into a typology of nationalism is addressed in the next sub-section. Presently, I want to outline some of the major constitutive tensions of national identity.

The first tension relates to the nature of national identity. As many scholars have observed, theories of nationalism have traditionally been divided between objective accounts, that locate the foundation of nations in some feature(s) of a group, and subjective accounts that locate it in collective belief. There is a broad spectrum of possible positions between these characterizations of national identity; from historically determined all the way through to collective choice, subject to rational arbitration and political will (Canovan, 1996, pp. 67–8). All understandings of nationalism must navigate the connection between national identity, objective features of national groups, and the role of subjective identification therein. Parekh claims that national identity is best described as an imaginative structure with a cluster of interrelated and relatively open-ended symbolic and discursive tendencies and possibilities. These can pull in different directions and have different possible futures (Parekh, 1994, pp. 503–4, 2008, p. 60). This gives sense to the truism that nations are socially constructed without reifying their mutability. Seeing the nation as a collective identity that is continually reconstructed over time clarifies their dynamic nature, while also highlighting the 'mechanisms and cultural patterns' that condition this process. Nations are contingent but not absolutely. Rather, 'National ideologues face both cultural and political constraints. While ideological innovation is by no means impossible, such innovation tends to take the form of novel combinations rather than pure invention' (Zimmer, 2003, p. 174).

The second tension relates to the level of national identity. Varun Uberoi has rightly highlighted the importance of distinguishing between the individual and collective senses of national identity (Uberoi, 2015, p. 78, 2018).⁵ As David Miller also notes, nationhood relies on a set of broadly reciprocal beliefs amongst a community. It depends on a significant degree of identity between individual members (and sub-groups) and the national community *and* an

ongoing public discourse about the identity/character of that community (Miller, 1995, p. 25). These two levels of individual and communal identification are important. National identity is both a set of beliefs individuals have about a personal social identity they inhabit (i.e. about themselves as an Australian person) and a lived imaginary of what is shared and links a community (i.e. the image of Australianness). The former emphasises personal characteristics (temperament, character, habits, customs, practices, etc) supposedly common to all members. Such personal characteristics are always contentious and rarely can be accurately said to extend to all members. The latter sense, as we noted in the case of political community, is about the identity of the community itself, what it shares as a collective (Parekh, 2000, chap. 7, 2008, p. 56). Margaret Canovan usefully argues that what links co-nationals is not some set of personal characteristics but a shared national *inheritance*. These inheritances can be composed of a variety of symbolic, material, and political institutions. What is important is that national identity is not about what as individuals we are but what as a group we have carriage over (Canovan, 1996, p. 72).

The final tension, which develops out of the other two, relates to the relation of national identity to other social identities. Usually, this manifests in a discussion of the relation between culture and politics in national identity, and the issue of whether national identities are solely political or inherently cultural. I return to this tension below in the discussion of liberal nationalisms, so will restrict this discussion to the following. Perspectives interested, either for explanatory or normative reasons, in highlighting the flexibility of national identity tend to resort to giving autonomy to the category of politics, and seeing national identity as a political, rather than cultural, identity. This allows a national identity to accommodate both present diversity and future change by disconnecting it from wider social identities. However, it also requires new symbolic forms as issues of membership and belonging cannot be merely assumed by reference to cultural symbols and practices. In contrast, perspectives that emphasise the rigidity of national identity tend to highlight its cultural sources. Such cultural sources tie a national identity to wider social forms of life, usually by arguing that political institutions and identities are embedded in wider ethnic and cultural identities. However, this risks defining the national identity by the dominant culture, narrowing belonging (Parekh, 1995b, p. 263).

This illustrates an important feature of belonging. The nature of any social identity is to give agency and activity to a particular group and a particular dimension of each individual who is part of that group. A religious identity highlights a set of religious beliefs/practices to an individual and community through which to claim and perform membership. A gender identity points to a wide set of behavioural, sexual, and interpersonal ideas and practices through which to navigate interpersonal interactions. National identity is connected to an imaginary within which citizens can claim, practice and discuss the political community, and the institutions, ideas, and spaces associated with it. Inevitably, these various identities have areas of overlap, even while they may have areas of relative autonomy; and these lines themselves will be subject to

disagreement and change. So in many ways, a gender, religious or ethnic identity are relevant to (or even ownership over) another identity. None is absolutely homogeneous or exclusive.

This complex relationship between identities is particularly true of national identity. National identities are both embedded in and shaped by wider cultural identities, often drawing on them for various symbolic resources, and adding their own distinctive elements which impact back onto those cultural identities (Parekh, 1995b, pp. 259–60). However, as Canovan claims national identities have a distinctive mediating role between social identities. While nationhood looks simple, it is a complex symbolic imaginary that attempts to mediate all social identities by subsuming them into the widest group in a modern state, all citizens, mobilizing them for the purposes of collective political identity and action. To do this, it constitutes all individuals as primarily members of the national political community, and links them, not as bearers of some set of individual characteristics (associated with any specific social identity necessarily), but as co-inheritors of the political community. In this way it constitutes a collective political subject to be deployed (Canovan, 1996, pp. 68–75).

These three tensions between the nature, level, and relations of national identity, illustrate the complex imaginary of national belonging within modern political community. These tensions are interrelated and operate differently in different contexts. However, in all national identity depends on 1) clarifying what features are included within it, 2) constituting them as shared features of the community and 3) demarcating political identity from other internal social identities. In this way, it faces the challenging task of sameness: identifying where and to what extent citizens must overlap (i.e. be the same) and where they can diverge from each other (Calhoun, 2007, p. 105). It is this problematic that ethnic, civic and liberal nationalisms confront.

Models of Nationalist Belonging: Ethnic, Civic and Liberal

These complex dynamics of unity and diversity have often led scholars of nationalism to rely on simplistic distinctions to understand and normatively reconstruct political nationalism. Amongst the various options, the ethnic-civic distinction is the most common generally, especially in relation to the issue of diversity. This section examines this distinction, and how it has been dealt with in contemporary political theory by liberal nationalism. There is significant current debate over just what a liberal national identity is, and how it accomplishes inclusion. Much of this surrounds the way it “splits the difference” between ethnic and civic through an understanding of *political culture* as a basis for common political identity and community. This discussion argues that liberal nationalism leaves unanswered how common diverse political belonging can be achieved within a political community and through a national identity.

The ethnic-civic distinction purports to explain the differences between national identities and the changes within the development of national identities, by distinguishing two types of national belonging. Ethnic and civic offer different models of membership both structurally and substantively; they offer different *models of belonging* to the nation both in the form of the national identity and the substantive content therein. These relate to how national identity accomplishes the task of common belonging: constituting a common political imaginary amongst the tensions of national identity. How national belonging frames political community affects how and to what extent a state includes various sorts groups and how those groups practice national belonging. They affect the capacity of a national identity to be inclusive of cultural difference.

On the usual definition, ethnic national identities define membership in terms of inherited, unchosen traits (e.g. ethnicity, religion, race, etc.). These unchosen traits are thought to manifest in relatively homogeneous and exclusive cultures. As a result, the emphasis is on the maintenance of the ethno-cultural institutions of the nation which flow from deep pre-modern sources of solidarity. In this, ethnic national identities are defined by a self-perception of naturalness, objectivity and immutability. They purport to identify distinct and immutable group differences. Civic national identities, in contrast, define membership in terms of chosen, non-necessary traits. This is usually described in one of two ways. Membership can be construed in formal terms as derived from the legal status of being a citizen, of having acquired citizenship and its rights and obligations; or it can be construed in ideational terms as derived from adherence to a set of basic values, either in general or their particular manifestation in the constitutional and institutional life of the state (Brown, 2005, pp. 123–4; Norman, 2005, pp. 86–8). The point is the inherently voluntary and considered nature of the attachments that are based on weaker and thinner sources of unity: citizenship, shared liberal-democratic values, institutional loyalty, and common democratic practices. The purpose of the distinction concerns diversity and inclusion within national identity. Civic theories claim they provide a weaker and thinner belonging more affable to the diverse nature of contemporary states. It is only with civic forms that ‘national belonging can be a form of rational attachment’ (Ignatieff, 1993, p. 7). By shifting the form of national identity from immutable to chosen traits, civic identities thin national identity to focus only on state institutions and values, which can be reasoned and agreed on, and away from contentious sources, which cannot. It is thus *a more inclusive form of belonging*.

The ethnic-civic distinction has been subject to exhaustive critique in political theory, most of which focus on the possibility of distinguishing these two types.⁶ This is true of the liberal nationalist who offers the most developed theory of national identity and diversity in the literature. David Miller argued that the distinction between civic and ethnic was not useful except to denote two ends of a spectrum that could ‘bring out the qualitative differences between different kinds of nationalism’ (Miller, 1995, p. 131). National identities are a complex blend of ethnic and civic elements. Both empirical and normative studies of nationalism need a way of mapping where any national identity might sit on such a spectrum and the possibilities and limits

for inclusive political identity and community therein. As I discuss below, Miller rightly turns to the category of culture to consider this issue. However, with others I agree that the metaphors of thickness he relies on to identify how much common culture is necessary for an inclusive form of political belonging requires additional thinking (Gustavsson, 2019).

Miller situates his liberal nationalism between the ethnic and civic conceptions by emphasising the role a political culture plays in national identity, especially in contemporary states with significant ethno-cultural pluralism. His argument is that a political conception of culture is an intermediary position between ethnic and civic national identities (Lenard, 2020, p. 1). For Miller, political culture is broadly construed to include not only the values and symbols of national life but the ‘national character’ or ‘common public culture’ of a community. This is some set of characteristics that support the idea of interior unity and exterior difference (Miller, 1995, pp. 25–7, 2000, p. 33; Norman, 2005, p. 89).⁷ Miller argues that every national identity, no matter how civic, depends on a range of implicit and explicit cultural meanings to give content to the character of identity and community. A liberal national identity, one that conforms national identity to liberal political values, permits various ideational, affective and symbolic elements, what Patti Lenard and Miller have recently called “cultural markers” (Lenard and Miller, 2018; Lenard, 2020), as the content of this shared national identity. Calling this a “cultural” understanding of national identity, they argue that culturally inflected values, cultural modes of public interaction, cultural norms of practices, and significant historical episodes (amongst others) are all legitimate components of political belonging if they are sufficiently inclusive to newcomers. In fact, cultural content is necessary to political belonging. Liberal nationalists argue that while pre-political sources of nationhood have illiberal results, political belonging requires some kind of pre-political base to facilitate belonging to liberal states. Thus, rather than blood or religion, they ground belonging on an historically evolving political culture (Miller, 1995, pp. 141–2).

Miller deals with the ethnic-civic distinction, and the associated tension between political and cultural, by placing certain types of culture within the national identity. Thus, like an ethnic nationalism, he sees culture as a legitimate source of political belonging and community. However, like civic nationalism, his goal is to demarcate public from private: the area of shared commonality from what can be differentiated. Miller argues that the assumption that national identities are necessarily exclusivist mistakes it for an all-embracing identity. The complex and symbolic nature of national identity, what he calls its “mythical” aspects, is exactly what allows the space of national identity to be shaped to circumstances like cultural diversity (Miller, 2000, p. 31). National identities are not necessarily exclusivist when appropriately constrained. Lenard agrees suggesting ‘a (supposedly) shared identity is accessible to minorities if it can be adopted by a member of a minority without requiring her to sacrifice aspects of the values, norms and practices that define her own (minority) identity’ (Lenard, 2020, p. 8). Practically, this will lead to several conditions on majority and minority groups to facilitate inclusive national culture and

belonging. First, majorities must renounce forms of nationhood that necessarily exclude others (e.g. based on race, ethnicity, or religion). This involves eliminating or re-coding symbols of national identity that might prove onerous or impossible for newcomers to take on *and* understanding the political community in a way that accepts them within the shared identity and community. Second, majorities must come to see minorities as part of shared national community, that is as part of the ongoing membership and practices of nationhood through which the national “we” is articulated. Third, minorities must also move towards this thinned-down shared national culture by purging aspects of their culture that ‘starkly conflict’ with the inclusive national culture and actively tying themselves and their culture to the national community. (Miller, 1995, p. 142, 2000, pp. 35–6, 2016, p. 133). The argument is that inclusive national belonging depends on a thinning process that, on the majority side, selects national symbols and values that are both in principle capable of inclusion and, on the minority side, purges incompatible beliefs and culture (Miller, 1995, p. 142).

While these are important insights into inclusive national identity, identifying constraints on reconstructing identity and the duties of majorities and minorities, much remains unclear in Miller’s model. Miller does not examine the types of mechanisms and symbolic resources that would allow the positive reconstruction of an inclusive national identity.⁸ His focus is only on the symbolic and discursive constraints on majorities and minorities required for inclusion and not positive attachment to an inclusive “we”.⁹ Gina Gustavsson argues that liberal nationalists like Miller fail to answer ‘what kind of national identity liberals should... promote’ (Gustavsson, 2019, p. 700). Since they argue that a national identity is required to realizing liberal ends, liberal nationalists have focused only on asking what kind of national identity is compatible with liberal states and values? For her, this ignores theorising just what it is that makes a liberal national identity liberal. Such a theory would answer: if liberal nationalism offers a thinner form of national identity than ethnic nationalism and a thicker form than civic nationalism (as many argue), in terms of what is it exactly thinner and thicker?¹⁰

The complex, dynamic, and symbolic nature of national identity conditions any attempt at inclusion. However, discussions of national identity often suppose the logic of the ethnic-civic distinction that assumes that political belonging amidst diversity requires a form of national identity at just the right thickness between substantive ethnic and political civic sources. Miller’s liberal nationalism rightly argues that this space must include a cultural element, and that this political culture will have to be constrained to be accessible to majority and minority groups. However, in its continued focus on thick-thinness, it does not clarify the types of mechanisms and symbolic resources that would enable the positive reconstruction of an inclusive national identity. In its account of the scope of the political, the purpose of political community and the terms of membership, it stops short of offering any sense of what types of positive forms of inclusive belonging might facilitate political community in the context of ongoing cultural diversity. This means that Miller leaves unaddressed the key tensions of national belonging (the

nature of national identity, the level of national identity, and its relation to other social identities) in a way that fails to answer how political belonging might be reconstructed to enable diversity. The next section argues that multiculturalism as a theory offers positive resources to begin reconstructing national identity and meet the challenge of building inclusive national identities.

Multiculturalism as a Socio-political Ideal: Identity and Belonging

The claim that multiculturalism is incompatible with national political community is commonplace across several perspectives.¹¹ Such arguments can range from calls to re-vivify traditional nationalism to arguments for decentring it entirely in favour of postnational political community. In opposition, this section argues multiculturalism entails a significant reconstruction of national identity and its relation to cultural difference, a “multiculturalising of national identity”. It highlights multiculturalism’s socio-political ideal focused on diversity as a source of common identity. It argues that multiculturalism transforms key aspects of national identity outlined above, and entails a distinctive approach to diverse belonging in political community worthy of future enquiry. However, while such a transformation has long been called for within multicultural theory, it has only been theorised to any extent in Varun’s Uberoi’s work. This section builds on that theorisation, introducing a distinction between *general and specific* symbols of multiculturalism, develops the analysis of the possibilities multiculturalism has to transform national identity and political community.

Multiculturalism’s significance for political identity and community has often been ignored in favour of an emphasis on rights and policy/legislative/constitutional commitments which, especially in the first instance, focus more on minority accommodation/protection than inclusion.¹² However, in its major policy manifestations¹³ and most worked out theoretical statements, multiculturalism is not confined to issues of differentiated rights and social justice. Rather, it is a socio-political ideal of inclusion focused on common political community within a context of ethno-cultural pluralism.¹⁴ This includes the task of designing a concept of national identity that is inclusive and reflective of this diversity. This account of multiculturalism thus focuses on its project to create diverse belonging to national community. The mistake is to think this unrelated with issues of differentiated rights, reasonable accommodation, and protection of cultural difference. As Tariq Modood notes, ‘Grounded in a concept of national citizenship and therefore a concept of equality, multiculturalism extends this concept of equal citizenship from uniformity of rights to recognition of difference; from anti-discrimination, challenging stereotypes to turning the negative into a positive identity rather than into an undifferentiated citizenship’ (Modood, 2017, p. 184). How exactly cultural difference can become a positive resource for national identity is the key question.

The socio-political ideal of multiculturalism offers an image of the dynamics of unity and difference that goes beyond both sociological reality (i.e. what groups are actually present) and government policy/institutions (i.e. the way of managing ethno-cultural plurality). Rather, multiculturalism is an ideal of 'how to conduct oneself in a society constituted by a pluri-cultural context and how to design a concept of national identity that is inclusive of the plurality of traditions' (Angus, 1997, p. 140). This belies the usual way of distinguishing multiculturalism and the politics of the national state. For example, Miller glosses this divide as between a politics of inclusive citizenship, which creates one body of equal citizens, and the politics of recognition focused on group difference (Miller, 2000, chap. 4). However, multiculturalism is an ideal of inclusion, not separateness, that is not only focused on the inclusion of individual members of ethno-cultural minorities within the dominant social, economic and political institutions, but *the fact of plurality itself*. That is, it is a mode of belonging that integrates the presence of cultural diversity into the constitution of the political community.

This emphasis places multiculturalism in opposition to the dominant models of political belonging within contemporary liberal-democratic states. Defining membership in nonvoluntary, organic and inherited ways, ethnic nationalism offers an assimilationist model of belonging that requires wholesale change by the newcomer. The scope and goods of political community are construed in total ways, and membership is rigid and "thick" as result. In contrast, defining membership in voluntary and political terms, civic nationalism requires only limited (i.e. political) ideational and institutional commitments to some broad set of civic values and constitutional bodies (Parekh, 2000, chap. 7; Brown, 2005, chap. 7; Modood, 2013, chap. 7). This constricts political community to a narrow scope and set of goods, and targets membership at a partial part of any citizen. Miller's liberal nationalist belonging cuts a middle path, arguing for a more robust political culture, extending the scope of political life and offering a form of membership that can require changes in a citizen's other social identities. Interestingly, all three require homogeneity in belonging, simply understanding its scope in different ways. Ethnic nationalism assumes an entirely homogeneous nation-state, excluding all cultural differences from the political community and beyond. Civic nationalism excludes culture and cultural difference from public life, and places a uniform set of civic values and political commitment at the centre of political community. Miller extends political life to a shared culture while requiring majorities and minorities to adapt themselves to inclusion.

Multiculturalism's mode of belonging incorporates the meaning of the plurality of ethno-cultural groups into the political ideal and community (Angus, 1997, p. 141). This highlights not only the situation of each ethno-cultural group's experience of being a singular minority in relation to a majority culture that largely controls the political community, which is more akin to the situation of multinational states. It highlights the experience of being *one of many minorities* amongst a majority and a state (that is institutionally, symbolically, and physically predisposed to the majority). It is in this sense that multiculturalism offers a dramatic challenge to our usual

models of belonging. It requires that the mechanisms and symbolic resources of political belonging shift to accommodate the experience of cultural plurality within our shared political identity and community (Brown, 2005, p. 129).

Integrating cultural diversity into political belonging thus entails many changes to our usual ways of thinking about majorities, minorities and political culture. First, it requires changing our perception of the relation between “political” and “cultural” identities. As discussed above, the relation between national and other social identities is a key tension within nationalist theory. Nationalists of various sorts argue that national identity does and should take precedence over other cultural identities (either by making the political autonomous from the cultural or by making them concurrent), and the loyalty of immigrants is often a central issue in contemporary politics. In this way, they determine the political community (the scope of the political, the purpose of political community and the terms of membership) in a way exclusive of social identities that do not participate in the nationally dominant imaginary. However, this assumes that these two identities are in strict competition; that they occupy ‘*the same domain of relevance*’ as ‘multicultural affiliations’ are necessarily ‘*competing with* national ones’ (Angus, 1997, p. 143). The complexity of national identity discussed above is reflected in equally complex relations with other identities, cultural and otherwise. While clear cases of cultural identity conflicting with political identity are ready at most people’s fingertips, this is not in principle necessary and there may be ways of relating national and cultural identities that are symbiotic rather than competitive.

Second, this more nuanced view changes the way we conceive inclusion, both institutional and symbolic. The former relates to the types of rights and policies associated with multiculturalism. Multicultural policies shift the dynamics of belonging, transforming what a political community can claim to share. For example, anti-discrimination legislation removes the capacity of a particular ethno-racial group from claiming sole belonging, affecting the articulation of national identity and political community (Uberoi, 2008, p. 409). Polyethnic rights illustrate how fair inclusion is constitutive of the community (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 178–80). Beyond this, states and majorities articulate the nature of the relationship to which all members belong. Modood calls this the “macro-symbolic” level of integration, where a society debates what their society is and what it is to be a member (Modood, 2013, p. 147). For multiculturalism as a socio-political ideal, the goal of common belonging within a political community requires this level of symbolic integration.

Multicultural symbolic integration is not one-way. It is not a process of minorities integrating into a majority culture. Rather, with Miller, it requires a *reciprocal* form of inclusion between minorities and majority groups: where majorities shift to symbols and modes of citizenship that can be taken up by minorities and minorities leave behind values and practices that severely conflict with the existing political culture. However, multicultural belonging goes

further with this reciprocity. Reciprocal integration requires symbols that recognize and positively value the existence of plurality itself within the state. Multicultural belonging requires a framing national culture in which the recognition and accommodation of diversity becomes a contribution, rather than a threat, to this relationship (Kymlicka and Banting, 2017, p. 23). 'Multiculturalism as a social ideal requires that the plurality of ethno-cultures be seen as a *key content of a shared national identity*' (Angus, 1997, p. 144).

Answering exactly how diversity can provide this content to a national identity is thus the key task of multicultural theory. Further, this question remains the currently emergent part of those scholars embracing multiculturalising national identity as an alternative to ethnic, civic or liberal nationalisms. For example, Will Kymlicka's liberal national multiculturalism, has long called for recognizing that multicultural states are not only characterized by the presence of diversity but the presence of 'diverse images of the country as a whole. People not only belong to separate political communities, but also belong in different ways. This means that the members of a polyethnic and multination state must not only respect diversity, but also respect a diversity of approaches to diversity' (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 190). For Kymlicka, this recognition involves valuing diversity itself, and 'diverse forms of cultural and political membership', and weaving this into the public culture of a state (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 191, 1996, p. 134). However, while Kymlicka has called for this in several works, he has not explained the symbolic and ideation content this would actually involve and what this might amount to in actually transforming a national identity. His focus, in contrast has been on how institutional structures like cultural rights transform these larger symbolic imaginaries. This bears out Levey's claim that what divides the BSM from liberal national multiculturalists (like himself and Kymlicka) is more a question of means than the end of transforming national belonging (Levey, 2018b). It is also worth noting that in his more recent work, Kymlicka seems to have become much more sceptical about the use of national identity (See (Kymlicka *et al.*, 2020).

In contrast, the BSM has focused explicitly on the macro-symbolic. Modood argues this point, 'going beyond liberal nationalism towards what we might call "multicultural nationalism," the accommodation of minorities should not be seen as a drag on the national identity but as a positive resource; not as diluting the national culture but vivifying and enrichening it' (Modood, 2018b). However, it is Varun Uberoi that has perhaps done the most to examine the possibility of a multicultural national identity. He follows Parekh's account of the dynamic nature of national and political identity and call for a "multiculturally constituted community" (Parekh, 2000, p. 219) and the latter's argument for a more nuanced view of identities and integration. For Uberoi, a national identity can contribute to such a culture by being reconstructed to include multiculturalism, as both fact and policy, within its symbolic imaginary. For him, 'A multicultural national identity can be defined as *the definition and redefinition of the nation as multicultural, such that one of the nation's values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions is multiculturalism and all the rest are consistent with valuing the cultural diversity of the nation positively*' (Uberoi, 2007, p. 152). This makes

diversity itself, as well as the goals of protecting and cultivating it, central to the national identity. For Uberoi, this achieves one of the key preconditions of social unity: securing belonging: it encourages minority citizens to feel respected, welcome and that the political community reflects at least part of what they are and contribute as members of a cultural minority.

However, making diversity a valued and recognized aspect of a multicultural national identity can mean at least two things that need to be distinguished. A national identity can value diversity in both *general* and *specific* senses. In a general sense, symbols of plurality in general need to be woven into the national story and image. This is the sense Uberoi argues for, and Kymlicka and Modood call for. Its symbols and national narratives need to reflect this commitment. This means that a valuation of cultural difference would be represented as a national value linking the political community. To be Canadian or Australian, is to value cultural diversity as one of the constitutive values and facts of the national identity. Such general commitments can be manifested in different ways. Symbolically, metaphors of mosaics, melting pots and kaleidoscopes can justify new images of society. Discursively, commitments to immigration, multiculturalism as a project, inclusion and tolerance, can all be important representations of this valuing. Constitutional, legislative and policy commitments go further. What this results in is a recognition of the constitutive role of diversity in the national unit that provides an important set of symbolic resources to majorities and states to present national identity in inclusive ways.

In a specific sense, the cultural symbols of particular ethno-cultural minority groups are integrated to some degree into the macro-symbolic level. Here, the positive valuing of diversity requires not only recognition of diversity in general but recognition of *the particular constellation of diversity* that exists within that state and the relationships of understanding and difference there (Kymlicka, 1996, pp. 134–5). In this sense, particular communities; their cultures; and their histories of arrival, contribution and exclusion would become part of the national story. Devices like official apologies, recognition of cultural events, and histories of immigration can be important state-led forms of this way of recognizing diverse national identity. Perhaps more important is the bottom-up behaviour this facilitates. Specific valuations of diversity facilitate minorities describing their particular cultural identities in ways that are not only compatible, but which tie them to the reformed national story. This means that while majorities are encouraged to weave symbols and values of ethno-cultural diversity into the national story, recent migrants must rearticulate their cultural identities so that not only do they not compete with national commitments, but that their cultural belongings become positive resources for national identity. This can involve opening religious and cultural spaces/events to the wider public (where appropriate), narrating the arrival and role of their communities within the larger national context, and encouraging participation in national political institutions. Such behaviour from both minority and majority groups recognizes that there are multiple ways of expressing Canadian-ness or Australian-ness, through the particular resources of the diverse identity being wedded to the national. There is also an added benefit. Specific forms of recognition serve the

liberal nationalist end of making the respective duties, entitlements and responsibilities of minorities and majorities in this reciprocal relationship a key object of reflection and a key mechanism of traversing and re-creating national boundaries.

In fact, national identity provides a key structure in which majorities and minorities can make new belonging claims because it is a form of social membership they can assert as citizens (even if others disagree) (Kymlicka, 2015, p. 12). A national identity wedded to the idea of general and/or specific diversity makes space for such claims by acting as a kind of legitimacy condition. It allows the construction of combinations of a particular minority culture with the existing national identity that not only gives minorities a way into expressing and asserting membership, but a way for other citizens to understand and accept their claims to belong. This gives a bit more detail to Kymlicka and Bantings claim that:

A solidarity-promoting form of multiculturalism would connect it to social membership, enabling immigrants to express their culture and identity as modes of participating and contributing to the national society... [It] would start from the premise that one way to be a proud and loyal Canadian is to be a proud Greek–Canadian or Vietnamese–Canadian, and that the activities of one's group... are understood as forms of belonging, and of investing in society... even as a form of nation-building (Kymlicka and Banting, 2017, p. 31)

A positive valuation of general and specific diversity that gives *agency* to groups across a national community to construct common belonging is what defines a multicultural form of national identity: 'the distinctive goal of multicultural nationalism is to allow people to hold, adapt, hyphenate, fuse and create identities important to them in the context of their being national co-citizens and members of socio-cultural, ethno-racial and ethno-religious groups' (Modood 2018b; see also Levey 2008, 273). In this way, multiculturalism is an important source of agency across a diverse society to assert distinctive forms of national belonging.

Conclusion:

The multicultural reconstruction of national identity represents one way in which political belonging can be reimagined in light of socio-cultural diversity. Such a transformation of national identity and the symbolic imaginary of diverse political communities, as the BSM call for, offers a nationalism that is neither ethnic nor civic, nor reducible to a theory of liberal nationalism. Rather, it meets liberal nationalists like Miller demand to provide pathways for minorities to take on full citizenship and membership in the political community, but it does so by bringing ethno-cultural differences and multicultural symbols into public political culture. It offers a transformative image of how multiculturalism can reconstruct national identity beyond the limited civic-ethnic distinction, extending some of the key insights of liberal nationalism.

Beyond the question of diversity and social cohesion in contemporary liberal democracies, this reforms our understanding of nationalism, multiculturalism and their respective relation to

political belonging. National identity is characterized by fundamental tensions around political community and diversity. Ethnic and civic, and to a certain extent liberal, nationalisms deal with this by excluding cultural difference from national identity. In particular, Miller attempts to provide inclusive national identity only by reference to constraints on majorities and minorities, rather than positive symbolic resources. An account of multiculturalism as a socio-political ideal reveals a different political belonging. While it is fundamentally focused on minority difference, it is also directed toward inclusion, belonging and membership in nation-building. Its unique strategy is also its key tension: to highlight the experience of cultural plurality as a means to reconstruct national community. All of this refocuses multiculturalism to an exercise 'in conceptualizing post-immigration difference' (Modood, 2013, p. 165, 2018a). Multiculturalism disrupts our usual assumptions of the difference between national and other identities and the political priority of the former over the latter. The point here is that diversity, *both in a general and specific sense*, is not separate but key to national belonging to political community. This suggests, and calls for further enquiry into, the full possibilities multiculturalism has for national identity.

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Notes:

¹ It is important to note the diversity within the BSM on what such a reconstruction might amount to. Modood calls for a form of "multicultural nationalism", while Uberoi and Parekh focus on "multiculturalising" national identity. The purpose of this discussion is not to examine what divides these claims but what unites them: an attempt to reconstruct national identity along multicultural lines.

² This paper does not provide an exhaustive account of the BSM or its positions, leaving that presently to those figures themselves and the nascent literature on them. Rather, the aim is to offer understandings of political community and belonging, nationalism, and multiculturalism sympathetic to that framework.

³ In a more liberal language, all models of political community are premised on public/private divide that establishes what is of public, collective concern and what is of private, individual concern (Kukuthas, 2003, p. 167).

⁴ For example, public discussions of national belonging often cite particular values (e.g. democratic or liberal) required to belong. At the same time, the common perception of a group's relation to such beliefs will affect how others interpret and react to their belonging claims.

⁵ Uberoi gets this distinction from Parekh who makes it in several contexts, though without the same emphasis.

⁶ Bernard Yack criticized the 'myth of the civic nation'. For him and others, civic mechanisms of attachment are neither sufficiently motivating nor can they be firmly distinguished from ethnic forms as they inevitably involve emotive appeal to shared traits. Similarly, if purely ethnic conceptions of nation ever existed, they are increasingly rare as most ethnic groups have incorporated political values and institutions into their national narratives (Kymlicka, 1999; Yack, 1999, p. 106; Norman, 2005).

⁷ This element can be glossed in several ways. Anthony Smith calls it national 'genius': a nation's way of 'thinking, acting and communicating' (Smith, 1991, p. 75). Bhikhu Parekh describes it as 'cultural meanings': the 'informal aspects of cultural life that are taken for granted: customs, habits, daily rituals, unwritten social codes... and collective memories of national glories' (TheRunnymedeTrust, 2000, p. 19). Geoff Levey describes it as 'people's habits, inclinations, mores, outlook, and emotional and instinctive responses' (Levey, 2008, pp. 262–4, 2018a).

⁸ In fact, I am not aware of any liberal nationalist that does consider this question with much focus. Often, authors like Kymlicka make small claims that symbols and narratives must change, but there is no substantial theorization of this point.

⁹ Miller is hostile to a "politics of recognition" that involves positive recognition of minorities built into the national consciousness (Miller, 1995, p. 120, 2000, pp. 70–5)

¹⁰ Gustavsson is increasingly critical of the thick-thin metaphor for distinguishing types of national identity. See also (Chin, 2019; Modood, 2019).

¹¹ This argument takes several forms. For an overview (Kymlicka, 2017; Modood, 2017). For a defence of multiculturalism, (Uberoi, 2008).

¹² This is a false opposition. While protecting and accommodating minorities, multicultural policies also change national identities (Uberoi, 2008).

¹³ I mean here states that have made explicit commitments in constitutional, legislative and/or policy forms. For an analysis and ranking, see the (*Multiculturalism Policy Index*, Queen's University, 2016).

¹⁴ The focus is on forms of diversity that are the result of immigration and subsequent cultural diversity. This argument does not currently extend to the situation of sub-national groups or indigenous peoples.