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# MULTICULTURALISM

MULTICULTURALISM AND INTERCULTURALISM: Understanding Diverging Concepts

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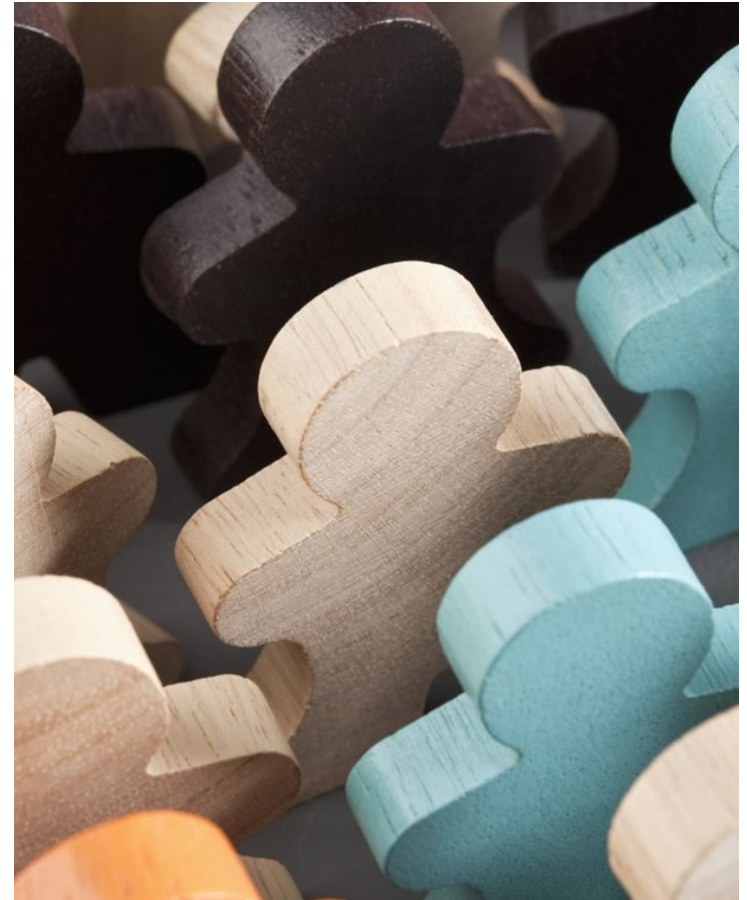
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# Multiculturalism

- the **political mobilisation and accommodation** of minority groups formed by immigration into Western countries
- a **politics of identity**, “being true to one’s nature or heritage and **seeking with others**” public recognition for one’s collectivity
- a **political perspective**, not a system of truths, an epistemology, a form of morality



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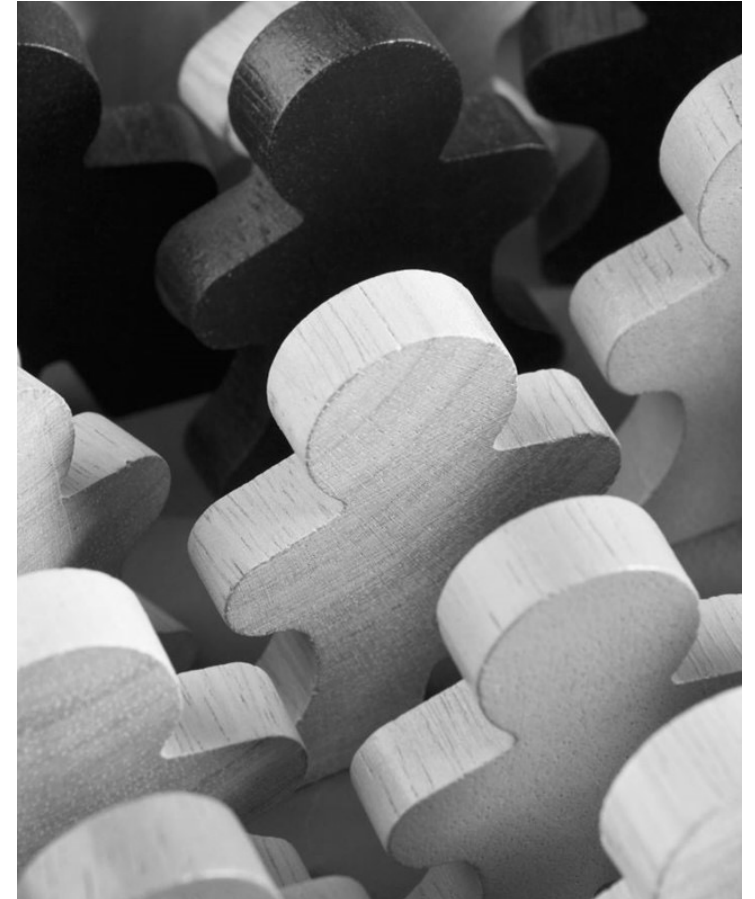
# Interculturalism

- emphasis on **interaction**, participation of people in a common society rather than emphasis on cultural differences and coexistence of different cultures
- a mutual integration

## BUT

- positive differences, mutual visions;
- civic unity always retains majoritarian bias with burden of adaptation placed on minority

— DEFINITION



Nasar Meer & Tariq Modood, 2012

# Why is multiculturalism important?

- **political acknowledgment** of problems of inequality of wealth and distributive justice
- **secular focus** on how persons of diverse beliefs may live together **without** imposing their values on each other



# Democratic multiculturalism



multiculturalism is a **development of democratic politics**, and symptomatic of politics of liberal democracies



its advocacy and critique have to relate to existing, functioning liberal democracies **in all their imperfections**



it is heavily **dependent on** the matrix of principles, institutions and political norms central to liberal democracies but **challenges and modifies** some of these norms, institutions and principles

# The rise of multiculturalism



- an offshoot of values of **humanism**, **human rights** and **equal citizenship** post empires and colonies p.2
- rise of **claims of group difference** in the 20th century: ethnicity, feminism, gay rights p.2
- a high degree of **racial, ethnic and religious mix**, demographic reality p.4

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# Democratic multiculturalism

- introduces into western nation-states **an ethno-religious mix** that is relatively unusual for these places
- co-presence of ethnic and religious communities to notions of **democratic citizenship and individual rights**

# Different understandings of the term “multiculturalism” across the world

**US** — multiculturalism as **political movement**, the recognition of ethnocultural group difference within the public sphere of: laws, policies, democratic discourses, citizenship and shared identity

**US** — multiculturalism as the **political acceptance of difference**: migrants retain distinct cultures whilst integrating in their new country’s daily life and work

**Europe & the UK** — multiculturalism as a **movement of peoples**, what a society looks like post-immigration from outside of Europe, the movement of “non-white peoples into predominantly white countries” p. 2



# What have the critics said?

- not a political movement but the **fetishisation of difference**
- a distraction from **class struggle**
- a tool of **segregation**, to facilitate difference is to beget difference, fragmentation over integration
- **religious representation** over loyalty, tolerance, justice, democracy

# So why is multiculturalism needed?

—WHY MULTICULTURALISM?

- immigration does not go away and people perceived to be “different” do not simply **disappear** in the populations
- multicultural, multiethnic, multifaith dynamics are **not short-term realities** but there are limited political frameworks to reflect this
- our societies are diverse but there is **limited diversity in politics**
- reality is such that our societies are made of ethnocultural and religious groups and their **lack of recognition is unjust**

- multiculturalism is not the work of converting society into an ideal, but of informing policy in a way that responds to perceived difference
- the idea of a completely characterless and value-neutral public space is incoherent with the realities we face
- less about dogma and truths, more about institutionalising respect for different faith communities
- recognising that civic peace and civic relations require organised religions to be government interlocutors and partners in a structured manner

- forging positive state relations with marginalised religious communities instead of promoting one religious community over another, privatising religion or fully separating church and state
- when a faction of a society is targeted, is seen as negatively different and comes to see itself negatively different, collective response is a need p.37
- no longer simply an individual but negatively different
- not a nurse, construction worker, teacher, doctor, colleague, fellow citizen but labelled in terms of race, ethnicity

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# Key aspects of multiculturalism

**DIFFERENCE**

**MULTI**

**DOUBLE  
EQUALITY**

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The main objective of multicultural politics



moving from negative to positive difference

— DIFFERENCE

# What is negative difference?

- where difference is not politically or societally visible
- where difference is alienness, inferiorization, stigmatisation, stereotyping, exclusion, discrimination, racism p.34
- I am your “negative other” and I am my own “negative other” - you target me, I target myself

# What is positive difference?

from difference as stigma to **difference as source of recognition** (but always simultaneously present)

- political mobilization
- group assertiveness
- group claims
- policy outcomes
- reforms
- institutional outcomes



# The multi in multicultural

**multi-backgrounds** — awareness of the vast array of backgrounds, groups may have different socio-economic positions, (dis)advantages, trajectories, not all are worse-off

**multi-racisms** — no singular racism but a plurality of racisms, awareness of distinctive needs and vulnerabilities of different groups to tackle racial and religious discrimination

**multi-models** — no minority can be a model for all others, we may learn from the experiences and achievements of any one group for the benefit of other groups BUT no single sociological model is enough

# The multi in multicultural

**multi-policies** — a complex of policies and multicultural institutional arrangements fit to meet **diverse and common** vulnerabilities, needs and priorities

**multi-identities** — new forms of belonging to citizenship and country whilst sustaining origins and diaspora, hyphenated identities as legitimate basis for politics not targeted as divisive and disloyal (Jewish America, British-Muslim, Maltese-Muslim?)

**multi-educations** — oppositional and political but not only, activists, spokespersons, leaders modify perceptions, practices and institutions, they legitimise their public status and presence BUT also influence attitudes, mores and practices of society

# Double equality



## EQUAL DIGNITY

**equal treatment** — a focus on what people have in common, gender-blind, colour-blind



## EQUAL RESPECT

**difference** in the service of equal dignity — acknowledging specificity in the service of equality, difference is important in conceptualising and institutionalising equal relations between individuals, oppression at this level threatens equal dignity

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