

Expanding on the Politics of Difference

How can the conflicts resulting from a *politics of difference* be alleviated?

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Summary

My proposal is to expand on the *politics of difference* advanced by Charles Taylor. This is necessary for two reasons. First of all, there is a conflict between acquiring intimate and social recognition. This is problematic because according to Taylor they are both necessary for forming an identity. The second conflict is between the ideal of authenticity and the demand for social recognition. The more defined the norm becomes of what it means to be a member of a certain cultural group, the less freedom the members of that cultural group will have to deviate from that norm. Therefore, an expansion is needed to alleviate some of the tension within the *politics of difference*. The first of these expansions would be to regard cultural membership as less exclusionary. This means that someone can be a member of multiple cultures. If an individual can be the member of more than one cultural group he or she can move away or towards them. Such a movement does not have to be absolute. This means that an individual can gain access to one cultural group, without having to abandon the other cultural group. A second expansion is to formulate an obligation that will alleviate some of the conflict within the *politics of difference*. This obligation is based on the importance of securing cultural survival. Such an obligation would prescribe a move towards the most liberal culture, when a conflict between the membership of two cultural groups occurs. Since this move is not necessarily absolute both cultures can be a source for forming an identity. This will alleviate some of the conflicts between acquiring social and intimate recognition. A third expansion would be to bolster different sub-groups within cultural groups. This would alleviate the tension between the politics of difference and the ideal of authenticity. By providing more options of what it means to be a member of a certain cultural group, the members of that group will have more freedom to find an interpretation that better suits them. Furthermore, when such a notion is less defined there is more room for deviation, and thus more room to move within a culture. This opens up the possibility to, besides moving between cultural groups, to move within his or own culture towards the more liberal option. This will both secure cultural survival and decrease the risk that cultural practices that are detrimental to women will be perpetuated. Such movement will not be effortless or without loss. However, they will allow members of minority groups within liberal societies access to the membership of the dominant culture, while still preserving access to the earlier sources for identity. In this way it can be seen as a gain, and not just as a loss.

Contents

Summary

Contents

Introduction

1. Why a politics of difference is needed

1.1 Two spheres of recognition and how they are necessary for forming an identity

1.2 Why a demand for assimilation is not feasible

1.3 Politics of difference

Conclusion chapter one

2. Critique on the politics of difference

2.1 Cultural practices and how they can be harmful to women

2.2 How acquiring social recognition can undermine acquiring intimate recognition

2.3 Why social recognition is at odds with the ideal of authenticity

Conclusion chapter two

3. Expanding on the politics of difference

3.1 Membership of multiple cultures

3.2 Movement towards and from cultures

3.3 How the expanded politics of difference can alleviate conflicts

Conclusion

Bibliography

Introduction

How can the conflicts resulting from a politics of difference be alleviated?

According to Charles Taylor our identity is important because it is needed to give meaning to the events in our life.¹ In *the Politics of Recognition* Charles Taylor discusses two sources that are both necessary for the forming of our identity. The first of these sources is recognition within intimate relationships.² This is the kind of recognition a child receives when the parents respond to his or her needs. When intimate recognition is not successfully acquired this can severely damage the self-esteem of individuals.³ Furthermore, someone will lack the confidence necessary to make demands later on, when in previous intimate relationships these demands were ignored. The second source that is necessary for forming an identity is social recognition.⁴ Social recognition is recognition from one cultural group to another. According to Taylor being a member of a cultural group is vital for defining our identities. This cultural membership provides us with the language we express ourselves in, cultural practices, and a broader sense of belonging. Therefore, it is crucial that the culture we identify ourselves with is regarded as being worthy of equal recognition.⁵ Furthermore, it is important that cultures are kept alive. For if a culture would cease to exist the members of the corresponding cultural group would lose a necessary source for forming an identity.

The link between social recognition and the forming of an identity is why cultural survival is important according to Taylor.⁶ Cultural survival means to aid a cultural group in maintaining their specific culture. Without their culture the members of that cultural group would be deprived of a vital source for defining their identity. Therefore, I will focus on how the conflicts resulting from a politics of difference might be alleviated. The *politics of difference* is a theory that combines liberal values with unequal treatment based on cultural context and the pursuit of collective goals. The most relevant of these collective goals is cultural survival. This means that within a liberal society there will be minority cultural groups that must be accommodated in maintaining their culture. Taylor places an emphasis on the feeling of marginalization felt by minority cultural groups, and how to preserve liberal values.⁷ Liberal values such as personal freedom.⁸ Clearly Taylor has a point that liberal values need to be preserved within a liberal society. However, I will place a stronger emphasis on how practices might be harmful⁹, by causing misrecognition. Misrecognition happens when a person, or

¹ Charles Taylor, "The politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism* ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1994), 33.

² Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 36.

³ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 26.

⁴ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 36.

⁵ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 66.

⁶ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 25.

⁷ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 63

⁸ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 59.

⁹ Brian Barry, "The Politics of Multiculturalism." In *Culture & Equality*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001), 327.

cultural group, fails in acquiring recognition.¹⁰ A difference is that I will not place an emphasis on the feelings of marginalization. My point will be that in some cases the two kinds of recognition described by Taylor might be in conflict. A prime example of how intimate and social recognition might be in conflict is how cultural practices tend to be to the detriment of women.¹¹ According to Susan Okin many cultural practices are harmful to women. If certain cultural practices hinder women in acquiring intimate recognition there is a conflict with social recognition. Successfully gaining social recognition means cultural survival. This cultural survival means the cultural practices are likely to survive as well. These cultural practices are an obstacle for individuals within cultural groups to acquire intimate recognition. This is problematic for Taylor because both kinds of recognition are necessary for forming an identity.¹²

Therefore, I will propose to expand on the *politics of difference*.¹³ This expansion will be able to alleviate some of the conflicts within a *politics of difference*. My starting point will be that individuals can define their identity on the basis of the membership of multiple cultures. Rob Gleich states that: “*Just as societies may be multicultural, so too may individuals*”¹⁴. Therefore, a member of a minority culture can also regard him or herself to be a member of the dominant culture. However, this opens up the possibility for conflict between the membership of the dominant and minority culture. I will argue that this should not be understood as an absolute choice. An absolute choice means that it will require someone to give up on the membership of one cultural group entirely in the favor of another. I will argue it is possible to move towards one culture in so far that such a conflict might be resolved. Another argument I will make is based on Okin's point that cultures are not monolithic.¹⁵ This means that cultural groups have within themselves different sub-groups and different views and beliefs. Therefore, it can be possible for an individual to move within a culture towards a position that does not lead to conflict. I will give several criteria for such a movement. These criteria are designed to avoid the tension between social and intimate recognition and secure liberal values. Therefore, I will argue one should move towards the most liberal, a-patriarchal, and harmonious option when there is a conflict between the membership of two different cultural groups.

There is no denying that such movement will lead to individuals having to make tragic and far reaching decisions. It will sometimes be necessary to move away from aspects of a culture that are considered highly valuable. However, these decisions do not have to be absolute. It is possible to bolster the membership of one culture without having to abandon the membership of the other cultural group. The basis for cultural membership and cultural survival can be achieved without giving up on fundamental liberal principles or the capability for women to acquire intimate recognition.¹⁶ This point is particularly relevant for a discussion on how a liberal society should approach members of a minority cultural group. By expanding on Taylor and formulating a less exclusive notion of cultural membership a dilemma can be

¹⁰ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 25.

¹¹ Susan Moller Okin, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?” in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* ed. Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard, Martha Nussbaum (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999), 10.

¹² Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 36.

¹³ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 38.

¹⁴ Rob Gleich, “Minorities within Minorities: Problem for Liberal Multiculturalists.” In *Minorities within Minorities: Equality, Rights and Diversity*, ed. Avigail Eisenberg, Jeff Spinner-Halev, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 217.

¹⁵ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 12.

¹⁶ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 59.

avoided. It is not just about a choice between assimilation or cultural survival. Nor is it about a choice between accepting cultural practices and women's rights. It is about the question how to best achieve that everyone has access to the sources needed for forming an identity, without these undermining each other.

In the first chapter I will discuss the two spheres of recognition proposed by Taylor. Furthermore, I will argue why a demand for assimilation should be disregarded. A demand for assimilation is a demand from one cultural group towards another to give up their culture. I will argue this is unfeasible because it is unjust. I will also give a brief description of the *politics of difference* proposed by Taylor. He proposes a kind of liberalism wherein it is possible to realize collective goals, and differentiate based on cultural context. One of these collective goals is cultural survival.

In the second chapter I will discuss a critique on the *politics of difference*. Firstly, I will discuss the arguments Okin makes against proponents of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is the goal to aid cultural groups in perpetuating their culture. Okin states that proponents of multiculturalism severely underestimate how harmful certain cultural practices are for women.¹⁷ This is problematic for Taylor because it is an example of how social recognition can undermine intimate recognition. It is precisely the survival of a culture that makes it possible for the cultural practices to be perpetuated. If these cultural practices hinder certain individuals within a cultural group to acquire intimate recognition then the two sources for forming an identity are in conflict. This conflict is deeply problematic for Taylor. Secondly, I will argue that a *politics of difference* is at odds with an ideal of authenticity.¹⁸ I will base this on the arguments made by Brenda Lyshaug and Kwame Appiah. Firstly, Lyshaug states that by defining the culture that needs to be recognized, the notion of what it means to be a member of that cultural group becomes more rigid.¹⁹ Secondly, Appiah makes the remark that the goal of cultural survival is not neutral towards those who should carry on these cultural traditions. A *politics of difference* accepts that there is a burden on the shoulders of future generations, specifically the children within the minority group, to ensure that the culture survives.²⁰ However, this in many cases will conflict with an ideal that people have to find their "own original way of being."²¹

In the third chapter I will propose to expand on the *politics of difference*. This is both necessary and relevant due to the conflicts described in the second chapter and the importance of cultural survival. My proposal will be to describe cultural membership as not strictly exclusive, and thus movement from and to a culture not as absolute. If it is possible to move from one culture to the other, without having to entirely give up on either, it is possible for a minority culture to survive while minimizing the conflict with liberal values.

¹⁷ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 21, 23.

¹⁸ Brenda Lyshaug, "Authenticity and the Politics of Identity: A Critique of Charles Taylor's Politics of Recognition." *Contemporary Political Theory* 3.3 (2004), 310.

¹⁹ Lyshaug, *Authenticity and the Politics of Identity*, 311, 318.

²⁰ Appiah, *Identity, Authenticity, Survival*, 158. (Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival."

In *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.), 157, 158.

²¹ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 32-33.

1. Why a politics of difference is needed

1.1 Two spheres of recognition and how they are necessary for forming an identity

Taylor distinguishes two kinds of recognition.²² The first kind is recognition within the intimate sphere. The primary example of intimate recognition would be the recognition from a parent towards a child. Other examples would be the recognition that can be found within friendship, or in romantic relationships.²³ The second kind of recognition Taylor mentions is social recognition.²⁴ This kind of recognition is from one social group towards another. Social recognition therefore takes place within the public sphere. The latter kind of recognition is especially relevant for Taylor's politics of recognition, and the protection of cultural groups.

Recognition is important according to Taylor due to its link with the forming of an identity.²⁵ Taylor states that identity is "*the background against which our tastes and desires and opinions and aspirations make sense*"²⁶. Therefore, the forming of an identity is necessary to find meaning in life. The link between recognition and identity, combined with the importance of identity in finding meaning in life, make it crucial to acquire recognition. On the intimate level this entails a parent responding to the needs of their child. On the social level acquiring recognition entails being regarded and treated as an equal. The connection between recognition and identity is precisely what makes misrecognition so harmful. Taylor defines misrecognition as the absence of recognition.²⁷ The absence of recognition can be harmful for it means that "*a person or a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves.*"²⁸ If this distorted picture is part of what defines our identity this will also have a strong influence on our expectations and beliefs about what we are capable of. Taylor states that having such a distorted image mirrored back will influence our idea of self-worth.²⁹ Furthermore, if this distorted picture instills a notion of inferiority in a person these could lower the demands someone thinks he or she is entitled to make. It is not just a matter of not daring to ask for equal treatment, it is a matter of having such a distorted image of self-worth that there is not even an expectation of equal treatment. On a grander scale this could lead to an entire group settling for less, because they lack the self-worth to expect more.³⁰ Considering how important our identity is in our understanding of life, and our capability to acquire self-esteem, it is relevant not to neglect the sources for forming our identity. Taylor argues that being part of a cultural group is important for forming our identity. Therefore, if the existence of a culture is threatened it should be given some protection.³¹

²² Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 36.

²³ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 33, 34.

²⁴ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 36.

²⁵ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 25, 66.

²⁶ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 33.

²⁷ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 25.

²⁸ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 25.

²⁹ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 26.

³⁰ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 25.

³¹ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 58.

1.2 Why a demand for assimilation is not feasible

It is in several ways unjust to force members of a minority cultural group within society to assimilate. Assimilation would necessarily mean that the members of a minority group would give up their own culture, and become member of the dominant cultural group. The result would be that the members of a cultural group would lose their distinct cultural identity, and be absorbed in the dominant cultural group. The demand for assimilation is clearly unjustified for two reasons. Firstly, if it is important to be a member of a cultural group it would be harmful to lose access to this membership. For example, the importance of being a member of a cultural group for forming of an identity. This is the point made by Taylor.³² Secondly, if the membership of a cultural group is to have any significance it must be a strong commitment. This means that cultural membership should be regarded as durable by the members of that cultural group. This follows from the point that membership of a cultural group is necessary for forming an identity. If the membership of a cultural group can be changed without much consequence or consideration it would undermine the function this membership has. The reason is that if abandoning cultures would be such a loose commitment it would hardly be able to be a reliable source for the forming of an identity. Our identity at least needs to tell somewhat of a consistent and coherent story to be any source of meaning. If the sources of our identity are too haphazardly scavenged together, and capable to change on the fly, cultural membership will not be able to be a stable source for identity. The demand for assimilation assumes that cultural identity is far more flexible than it could possibly be. On the basis of these objections the demand for absolute assimilation is to be disregarded.

1.3 Politics of difference

If the demand for absolute assimilation is not feasible a society must come up with a just way to answer claims for recognition from cultural groups. In the case of a society where the dominant cultural group is liberal Taylor states that the culture of minority groups should be protected and the members of minority cultures should be given privileges. Such a protection could take the form of the Quebec language laws.³³ These laws were severely restricting the amount of choice parents had regarding what school their child could go to. Culturally based privileges would be to give Quakers an exemption with regards to military service due to their religious beliefs. Taylor argues that a *politics of difference*³⁴ is best suited to both uphold liberal principles and aid in the survival of cultural groups. The solution Taylor proposes is a form of liberalism that is capable of formulating collective goals, namely survival of cultures, and creating policy that is not applied equally.

³² Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 66.

³³ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 52.

³⁴ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 59.

Conclusion chapter one

In the first paragraph, I discussed two spheres of recognition. This is relevant for two reasons. Firstly, social recognition plays a vital role in Taylor's argument for cultural survival. It is because social recognition is necessary for the forming of an identity that cultural membership is crucial.³⁵ Secondly, the distinction is relevant for the next chapter. I will argue that acquiring social recognition can undermine acquiring intimate recognition. Furthermore, I will show why this possibility is problematic for Taylor. The argument against assimilation is relevant because it shows why a theory that values cultural survival is necessary. If it was feasible to demand minority groups to assimilate, without this being harmful in any way, a *politics of difference* would not be so sorely needed. In the next chapter I will discuss the tension between social recognition with both intimate recognition and the ideal of authenticity within the *politics of difference*.

2. Critique on the politics of difference

2.1 Cultural practices and how they can be harmful to women

*“What should be done when the claims of minority cultures or religions clash with the norm of gender equality that is at least formally endorsed by liberal states?”*³⁶

Okin identifies a tension between liberalism and multiculturalism.³⁷ Most liberal cultures seem to regard women and men as equal. If the cultural groups that ask for recognition do not share in the notion of gender equality then there appears to be a dilemma between holding on to gender equality or furthering cultural survival. It is especially problematic that cultural practices tend to be enacted within the private sphere. This makes it far more difficult to notice when these practices are harmful.³⁸ Therefore, women are affected most by cultural practices, and thus are harmed the most when harmful cultural practices manage to survive.³⁹

For a large part the critique of Okin comes down to the reproach that proponents of multiculturalism seem to regard cultures, and cultural groups, as far more monolithic than they in fact are.⁴⁰ Within western liberal societies there are many different subcultures and minority cultural groups. The same is true for cultural groups themselves. Within any given cultural group there is not only a rich diversity of opinions and concepts of the good life. There are also minorities within cultural minority groups.⁴¹ Furthermore, when a demand for

³⁵ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 25.

³⁶ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 9.

³⁷ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 10.

³⁸ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 12, 21, 23.

³⁹ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 13.

⁴⁰ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 12.

⁴¹ Rob Gleich, *Minorities within Minorities*, 217.

recognition is made from a cultural group towards a dominant group this is often with the illusion that the people, generally the cultural leaders, formulating the demand for recognition speak on behalf of the entire cultural group. Okin points out this is not necessarily the case.⁴² In many cases there are conflicting opinions about certain cultural practices. The point is that these cultural leaders might ask recognition for a specific part of their culture.

Okin mentions as an example the cultural practice of polygamy and how this is both harmful to women and strongly disliked by many of them. Any defense of this cultural practice stating simply that it is part of a culture or tradition glosses over the fact that many women in the home countries would rather get rid of this custom they experience as being harmful.⁴³ She argues that cultures are all, to a varying degree, patriarchal and anti-feminist.⁴⁴ If cultures tend to be anti-feminist, the corresponding cultural practices are very likely to be anti-feminist as well. These cultural practices will then tend to be severely limiting the personal freedom of women.⁴⁵ This now leads to a tension between multiculturalism and feminism. A possible solution to this tension might be to propose to only recognize cultural groups that are not, or at least not overly, patriarchal. The problem with this solution is pointed out both by Brian Barry and Okin. They make the point that proponents of multiculturalism strongly overestimate how many cultural groups would actually acquire recognition⁴⁶ with the implementation of a more critical approach with regards to anti-feminist cultural practices.⁴⁷

If only very few cultural groups would be able to acquire social recognition this would defeat the purpose of the multiculturalist project proposed by Taylor. The *politics of difference* is both a liberal theory and a multiculturalist theory. The tension between liberalism and multiculturalism is that with the survival of a culture, the corresponding cultural practices will be perpetuated as well. If these cultural practices tend to limit the personal freedom of women⁴⁸ there is a conflict with liberal principles. Furthermore, the effects of cultural practices are hard to track if they take place within the private sphere.⁴⁹ Considering these points it would be inconsistent to propose a multiculturalist model within a liberal society without providing a safeguard against the encroachment on women rights caused by cultural practices.

⁴² Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 24.

⁴³ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 10, 15.

⁴⁴ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 14.

⁴⁵ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 12, 17, 19, 20.

⁴⁶ Barry, *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, 319.

⁴⁷ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 21.

⁴⁸ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 12, 17, 19, 20.

⁴⁹ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 21, 23.

2.2 How acquiring social recognition can undermine acquiring intimate recognition

The concept of misrecognition makes it especially problematic for Taylor if social recognition is in conflict with intimate recognition. Taylor shows how there are multiple sources that are needed to form an identity. The problem is that these sources might conflict with each other. This would mean that one constitutive part of forming an identity is undermining the other.

*“We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us.”*⁵⁰

Two problematic features are made clear from this quotation. Firstly, the emphasis on the significant other. Taylor mentions the increased importance of romantic relationships.⁵¹ The more the emphasis is placed on romantic relationships for forming an identity the more problematic it becomes if this dialogue is somehow distorted. Since cultural practices tend to be about the private sphere⁵², there is a strong possibility that these cultural practices will have an influence on the dialogue⁵³ between spouses. If these cultural practices tend to be patriarchal as well they will distort the dialogue to the detriment of women. The point is that if our identities are defined in an unequal struggle one side will find it much harder not to end up with a distorted image of themselves.⁵⁴ The struggle might very well be unequal in several ways. For example, if within a cultural group women are taught certain virtues, such as obedience, and men different virtues, such as being resolute, it will be much harder for a woman to voice her discontentment without already breaking away from cultural expectations. Many cultural practices go much further. If women have less access to education, and are expected to be devoted mothers, this will limit the possibility to find employment and thus create a financial dependence towards her husband. Such a dependence alone would severely affect the starting position in any struggle. If the cultural practices that are perpetuated within the *politics of difference* undermine the ability for minorities within minorities to acquire recognition on the intimate level the gains made on the social level might very well be offset

Secondly, by refuting the monological ideal Taylor leaves no escape from the need for intimate recognition.⁵⁵ The monological ideal is the notion that an identity can be formed without the dependence on the dialogue with others.⁵⁶ The consequence is that minorities within minorities are trapped in a dialogue that is likely to be harmful.⁵⁷ It is harmful to have a distorted image mirrored back. This is no less the case in interaction with significant others. This is similar to the argument Taylor made for cultural survival.⁵⁸ The point is that damaging relationships within the private sphere are equally harmful compared to damaging relationships within the social sphere.

⁵⁰ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 33.

⁵¹ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 36.

⁵² Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 23.

⁵³ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 32.

⁵⁴ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 26.

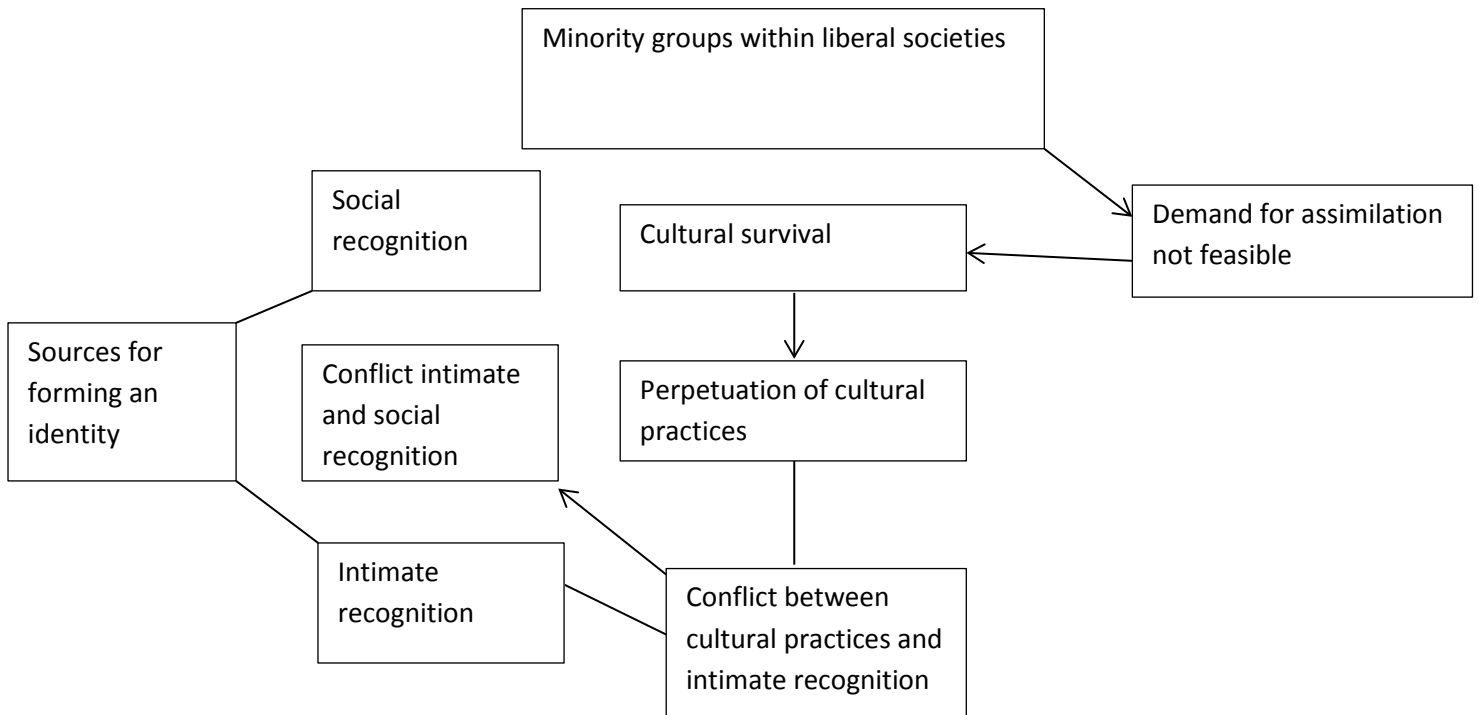
⁵⁵ Appiah, *Identity, Authenticity, Survival*, 158.

⁵⁶ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 32.

⁵⁷ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 26.

⁵⁸ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 25, 26.

Conflict between two sources that are needed for forming an identity



2.3 Why social recognition is at odds with the ideal of authenticity

In the *Ethics of Authenticity* Taylor states that: “*I think that authenticity should be taken seriously as a moral ideal.*”⁵⁹. Taylor describes the ideal of authenticity as: “*as this [the ideal of authenticity] emerges, for instance, with Herder, it calls on me to discover my own original way of being. By definition this cannot be socially derived, but must be inwardly generated*”⁶⁰. There is a specific feature within the *politics of difference* that is at odds with this ideal. It is pointed out by Lyshaug how the claim for recognition makes the content of what needs to be recognized rigid.⁶¹ Firstly, this enhances the issue stated by Okin with who formulates the claim for recognition, and whether or not they speak on behalf of the entire cultural group.⁶² Assuming that cultures are indeed not monolithic⁶³, and the leaders formulating the claim do not necessarily speak for the entire group, it will be harmful to

⁵⁹ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 139.

⁶⁰ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 32-33.

⁶¹ Lyshaug, *Authenticity and the Politics of Identity*, 318.

⁶² Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 24.

⁶³ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 12.

certain sub-groups if the concept of what it means to be a member of that cultural group becomes more rigid.⁶⁴ Secondly, a more rigid notion makes gaining access to the membership of other cultural groups more difficult. This is especially apparent in the cases when there is a conflict between the membership of two cultural groups. Therefore, a more rigid notion of a culture, leads to a more exclusive notion of cultural membership. Thirdly, the emphasis on cultural survival breeds intolerance towards group members that deviate from the standard.⁶⁵ The more rigid this notion of culture becomes, the less space an individual has to find his or “*own original way of being*”⁶⁶ before this leads to conflict with other members of their cultural group. For a culture to survive it is not only imperative that the current members are kept within the culture, there is also a burden on future generations.⁶⁷ A child has little say about the culture he or she is raised in. This becomes problematic once other members can press that child later on to remain faithful to cultural norms and expectations on the basis that it is important to have the culture survive.

The position of children is especially relevant for the tension between social recognition and the ideal of authenticity. Appiah notes that with cultural survival there is also an expectation who maintains these practices and traditions. This expectation places a burden on the offspring of the members of the cultural group.⁶⁸ This is in clear contrast with the ideal of authenticity. The notion of cultural survival bears with it a strong expectation towards future generations. This expectation is clearly not inwardly generated, yet it has a strong effect on the lives of future generations. Appiah remarks that “*We have it in our power to some extent to make our children into the kind of people who will want to maintain our culture*”⁶⁹. The point is that these cultural practices will often be taught to children during the period their parents have a great deal of power and influence over them. Children will be taught what is expected of them and what it means to be a member of their cultural group during a period they will not reasonably be able to resist.⁷⁰ The emphasis seems now to have shifted from an inward “*quest for authenticity*”⁷¹ to a set of expectations and practices that are passed down “*from one generation to the next*”⁷² that an individual is brought into at a particularly uncritical moment.

Taylor mentions the importance of education for the survival of cultures.⁷³ This is relevant because cultural membership is vital for forming an identity, and the demand for assimilation is not feasible. Therefore, cultural groups need to be provided with the means to secure cultural survival. The education of future generations clearly has as a strong effect on how successful a cultural group will be in their goal of survival. Schools are places where language can be taught, and where children learn to appreciate works of art. Education can in this way supplement the private sphere in maintaining a shared language and cultural practices. The point is that by allowing cultural groups to adjust parts of the curriculum, in their own schools for example, they will be assisted in preserving important parts of their culture. Preserving these parts of their culture will increase the chance for their culture to survive. A major caveat is of course that this emphasis on cultural survival does not take away from children receiving

⁶⁴ Lyshaug, *Authenticity and the Politics of Identity*, 311.

⁶⁵ Lyshaug, *Authenticity and the Politics of Identity*, 305.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 32-33.

⁶⁷ Appiah, *Identity, Authenticity, Survival*, 157, 158.

⁶⁸ Appiah, *Identity, Authenticity, Survival*, 157.

⁶⁹ Appiah, *Identity, Authenticity, Survival*, 158.

⁷⁰ Appiah, *Identity, Authenticity, Survival*, 158.

⁷¹ Lyshaug, *Authenticity and the Politics of Identity*, 310.

⁷² Appiah, *Identity, Authenticity, Survival*, 157.

⁷³ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 65.

a full education. This is similar to the point the Brian Barry makes.⁷⁴ If cultural survival comes at the cost of not having access to a full education the members of the minority group will find it hard to gain employment. This weakened position makes the members of the minority group vulnerable to economic exploitation. For instance, not having the required language skills for decent employment might force someone to accept lower wages and worse conditions. The point is that other modes of inflicting harm should not be ignored.⁷⁵ Furthermore, enough freedom needs to be provided to avoid a tension with the ideal of authenticity.

Conclusion chapter two

Okins critique shows how cultural survival can be harmful to women. With the survival of cultures certain cultural practices will be perpetuated. If these cultural practices are harmful to women there is a conflict between gender equality and cultural survival. Taylor does admit the possibility of tension between cultural survival and liberal values.⁷⁶ A more fundamental problem is the possible tension between acquiring intimate and social recognition. Both forms of recognition are vital to forming an identity. However, if cultural practices are an obstacle for women to acquire intimate recognition then social recognition can undermine individuals in acquiring intimate recognition. This is a possibility because the perpetuation of these cultural practices is linked to cultural survival, which is in turn linked to social recognition.

Furthermore, by defining a demand for social recognition the notion of that culture becomes more rigid. This leads to more intolerance from members of a cultural group towards other members that deviate from the norm. This is relevant because in the third chapter I will argue that diversity within a culture is necessary to move within a culture towards a less antagonistic position. Finally, the goal of cultural survival can be at odds with the ideal of authenticity. Cultural survival places a burden on future generations to become members of the cultural group of their ancestors. This directly clashes with the notion of a “*original way of being*”⁷⁷ that is “*inwardly generated*”⁷⁸.

⁷⁴ Barry, *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, 324.

⁷⁵ Barry, *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, 305, 308.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 59.

⁷⁷ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 32-33.

⁷⁸ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 32-33.

3. Expanding on the politics of difference

3.1 Membership of multiple cultures

The argument that there is a link between the forming of an identity and membership of a cultural group can be expanded. This expansion would entail that a person can be a member of different cultural groups at the same time.⁷⁹ This is clearly the case in many liberal societies. An individual with a Dutch-Turkish nationality will consider him or herself to a member of both cultural groups. Moreover, he or she will very likely be treated as having this dual-membership by both Dutch compatriots, and by Turkish citizens. Any kind of cultural membership still has to be based on a strong commitment to be able to provide meaning. This would expand on Taylor in the sense that if someone can be a member of multiple cultural groups, that person can define their identity from multiple sources. Giving up part of a culture is thus not necessarily a loss. Since it is possible to compensate with the membership of a new culture. This is relevant for the demand of assimilation since it can be formulated in a way that it is no longer based on an damaging demand. The crucial point is that a person can make some form of movement from the minority culture towards the dominant culture. This movement has to be seen as more than just someone giving up something of significance. The access to a new culture can open up new sources for identity and meaning. Lyshaug claims that a state has to choose an official language⁸⁰, so learning that language will be necessary to function in that society. However, this does not mean that the member of a minority cultural group has to give up the language of the minority culture. Language is a good example for someone can be multi-lingual and find unique ways in expressing themselves in the newly acquired languages. Learning a language of course does not require giving up the mastery of any other language. Being a member of multiple cultures can function in an analogous way. The point is that a movement from one culture towards another does not have to be necessarily seen as a loss.

An objection might be that being a member of one culture excludes the membership of another culture. However, this is not necessarily the case. In many ways, our identities are layered in such a sense that we define ourselves as more than in just one particular role. Someone can define himself as a soldier, father or husband at the same time. These roles might even enhance each other. The same can be said for different language groups. Someone who is raised bilingual would certainly not say he or she is less of a French speaker merely because he or she was raised in English as well. So why would membership of a cultural group be any different? Amelie Rorty has shown how difficult it is to show why we should grant special status to cultural groups.⁸¹ Some cultures might be particularly hostile towards other cultures. However, this does not necessarily mean that we ought to regard the membership of different cultural groups as impossible, or even conflicting. Rather we could draw a conclusion that certain cultural groups will have a harder time adjusting to a new culture than others. The crux of the matter is that allowing a member of a minority cultural group to move towards the dominant culture will open up new possibilities to define their identity. By adjusting to a majority culture a member of a minority cultural group will find it

⁷⁹ Rob Gleich, *Minorities within Minorities*, 217

⁸⁰ Lyshaug, *Authenticity and the Politics of Identity*, 309.

⁸¹ Amelie Rorty, "The Hidden Politics of Cultural Identification." *Political Theory* 22.1 (1994), 155-158

easier to engage in meaningful interaction with members of the dominant western liberal group. This can present itself in active membership of a sports club or interaction with neighbors, storeowners and other parents at the school of their children. These can be meaningful on the basis that they make someone feel part of a community. Especially relevant with regards to Taylor is that it alleviates the sense of marginalization if the interaction is not that of a member of a minority group versus the member of a dominant cultural group. Rather it is the interaction between fellow neighbors, or fellow parents. All of this does not require someone to entirely give up on the minority culture. It means moving towards the dominant culture. Such a move might be at a cost, for instance giving up illiberal cultural practices. However, such a move away from one culture should not be regarded as purely a loss. It should also be regarded as gaining access to the membership of new cultural group, and the sources for defining an identity that come with it.

3.2 Movement towards and from cultures

Considering someone can be a member of multiple cultures, there might be some tension between the two. By introducing an expansion to the notion of cultural membership something ought to be said about how to resolve the conflict an individual can be faced with when he or she has to make a choice between two cultures. Such a conflict does not necessarily have to result in an absolute choice. The conflict might also be remedied by making a movement from one cultural group towards the other. Merely proposing this possibility is however not enough. Something also must be said about what a person should do when faced with the decision to make a movement from one culture to another.

A list of criteria can be given to support an obligation to move towards the most liberal cultural group in the case of a conflict within a liberal society. The obligation is based on the importance of cultural membership for the forming of an identity. Since a *politics of difference* is needed to ensure cultural survival within a liberal society, an obligation can be founded on doing what is needed to alleviate tensions within this *politics of difference*. The obligation would prescribe a move towards the most liberal, a-patriarchal and harmonious cultural group. Liberal in the sense of accommodating and safeguarding the personal freedom and ability to acquire intimate recognition of all individuals. A-patriarchal is a consideration on the basis that if Okin is right that all cultures are to a varying degree anti-feminist than one should move towards the option that is most friendly towards women. This will also alleviate the tension between social and intimate recognition. An individual can now move towards the option that does not undermine the capability of women to acquire intimate recognition. A third criteria is choosing the most harmonious option. Harmonious in this case means the culture that is the least hostile towards the membership and existence of other cultures. The more harmonious a culture is the more it would allow for the existence of other cultures, so it would be in line with Taylors point that there is value to aid in the survival of cultures.

3.3 How the expanded politics of difference can alleviate some conflicts

If there is an obligation to move towards the most liberal culture when there is a conflict between the two cultural groups this can make the members of certain groups more vulnerable. Firstly, this would have stronger effect on the more illiberal, patriarchal, and hostile cultural groups. Some cultures would be more in danger to be dissolved than others. This movement would have to entail that, to aid these cultures in their survival, stronger privileges and protection need to be given. Secondly on the individual level a person might be more vulnerable to the effects of misrecognition. In order to gain access to the more liberal culture it is necessary to give up some parts of the less liberal culture. Someone is especially vulnerable during this process. Giving up parts of a familiar culture, that is a rich source of meaning, might very well make a person insecure and on uneasy footing in the society and within intimate relations. Therefore, the movement between cultural groups should not be regarded as painless. Moreover, because cultural membership ought to be seen as a strong commitment, individuals have to be protected during this movement. One way to do this is to strengthen the parts of the culture that are not sources for conflict. This would lead again to a solution similar to that of Taylor. Namely to grant privileges and protection to cultural groups to ensure their survival, albeit within a more liberal and a-patriarchal framework.

There is however a clear problem with this obligation to adjust. Members of the more illiberal and patriarchal cultural groups will, with each conflict, have to give up more of their original culture. Not only can this cause real harm, there is also a danger that in the end not much will be left of the original culture to identify with. In this sense, a demand to adjust would be no different from a demand to assimilate. This is why the obligation needs to be amended. Since cultures are not monolithic, an individual can also opt to move towards a part of his or own culture that is less likely to be in conflict with liberal values. In this sense, it is only a matter of moving away from a specific notion of that culture. Such a choice should still not be regarded as without cost, however it is significantly different from the demand for assimilation. To allow for such amendment it is therefore crucial that enough of the culture survives to make such a movement possible. This way granting privileges and protection to cultural groups can make it possible to make a movement towards a culture that is less in conflict with liberal values.

It is possible to argue that expanding the notion of cultural membership is a fix to a non-existent problem. Taylor describes how possible conflicts could be solved by weighing the importance of uniform treatment versus cultural survival, and in some cases choosing the latter.⁸² Any tension with liberal values he tries to resolve by maintaining that this should not be at the cost of fundamental rights. Such a solution however leaves the possibility to severely overestimate how many cultures can be recognized.⁸³ It also does not do justice to how difficult it is to see the harm done to women because it happens in the private sphere.⁸⁴ It is in many cases exactly the fundamental rights that are at stake. The example of allowing a Quaker to become a medic instead of a rifleman is relatively unproblematic. Rorty states the same goes for the Quebec example.⁸⁵ They are also the exception because, as Okin claims, a

⁸² Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 61.

⁸³ Barry, *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, 319.

⁸⁴ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 23.

⁸⁵ Rorty, *The Hidden Politics of Cultural Identification*, 156.

large part of culture is about controlling women and children.⁸⁶ It is unsurprising that cultural practices would focus on these aspects because cultural survival is about future generations.⁸⁷ In many cases it will not be just about limiting the choice a parent has to which school their children will be able to go to, it will be about whether or not to accept potentially harmful cultural practices.

Expanding on the politics of difference would alleviate the internal tensions within Taylor's own theory. Most notably, that individuals might be hampered in gaining recognition within the intimate sphere as a result of recognition of their cultural group. Furthermore, having access to multiple cultures grants more freedom from overly rigid expectations. Thus, mitigating the tension between social recognition and the ideal of authenticity. The expanded model of cultural membership would therefore be more effective in securing the means necessary to form an identity. Such an expanded model also provides a basis for privileges and cultural protection, so cultures will be able to find the means to survive.

Conclusion

Taylor surely has a point that cultural membership is crucial for defining our identity. This makes it especially important that the culture we consider ours gets fully recognized.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the absence of social recognition will have a strong negative effect on the self-esteem of the members of that cultural group.⁸⁹ Moreover, the demand for assimilation is unfeasible, because it ignores how the link between cultural membership and the forming of an identity needs to be based on a strong commitment from the individual towards their culture. Taylor admits that the means of achieving cultural survival might be at odds with liberal values.⁹⁰ However, far more problematic is the conflict between social recognition and intimate recognition. These are according to Taylor both necessary for forming an identity. Therefore, it is relevant to discuss how to alleviate the tensions that come with pursuing the goal of cultural survival.

In the second chapter I have given the example of how women might be harmed by cultural practices.⁹¹ These cultural practices are being perpetuated because of cultural survival. Therefore, the collective goal of cultural survival can be harmful to women. Even more problematic for Taylor is how these cultural practices influence intimate relations. If we define our identities in dialogue with significant others, and if this dialogue becomes lop-sided due to cultural practices, the ability to acquire intimate recognition might be stifled. The survival of these cultural practices is linked to cultural survival, therefore there is a tension between social and intimate recognition. Furthermore, social recognition is also at odds with

⁸⁶ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 16.

⁸⁷ Appiah, *Identity, Authenticity, Survival*, 158.

⁸⁸ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 25, 66.

⁸⁹ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 25.

⁹⁰ Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 59.

⁹¹ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 17.

the ideal of authenticity. Social recognition and the ideal of authenticity are in conflict in two ways. Firstly, due to the burden that cultural survival places on future generations.⁹² As Appiah states cultural survival is not neutral towards who carries on the cultural practices. Secondly, a demand for recognition makes the notion of what it means to be a member of a cultural group more rigid.⁹³ Lyshaug argued the more strictly defined such a notion becomes, the more it limits the freedom of the members of the cultural group to deviate and find their own way.⁹⁴ These problems can be alleviated by expanding on the *politics of difference*.

In the third chapter I proposed an expansion on the *politics of difference*. An expansion allows for the membership of multiple cultural groups. This creates a less exclusive, and less monolithic, stance towards cultures. Such an expansion also allows for, when an individual perceives a conflict between the membership of two cultural groups, the movement between and within cultures. This alleviates the tension between liberal values and cultural survival. By assuming that a choice does not have to be absolute, one can move towards the liberal option as far as is needed to resolve the conflict. A similar obligation can be formulated towards cultural practices that harm women. An individual can now move towards the less patriarchal option to lessen the risk that harmful cultural practices are being perpetuated. This also alleviates the tension between intimate and social recognition. For it is now possible to move away from the option that leads to misrecognition of women in the intimate sphere.

A *politics of difference* is needed to secure cultural survival. This is relevant because cultural membership is a crucial source for forming an identity. However, the *politics of difference* proposed by Taylor is at odds with the ideal of authenticity. Furthermore, there is a possible conflict between acquiring social and intimate recognition. Expanding on the politics of difference with a less exclusive notion of cultural membership, paired with a less monolithic idea of cultural groups, can alleviate some of these conflicts.

⁹² Appiah, *Identity, Authenticity, Survival*, 157.

⁹³ Lyshaug, *Authenticity and the Politics of Identity*, 311.

⁹⁴ Appiah, *Identity, Authenticity, Survival*, 163.

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