L E A H   B R A D S H A W

Identity Politics and Multiculturalism:
A United States/Canada Comparison

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Résumé

Selon plusieurs sources, le concept de la citoyenneté se trouve en période de crise dans les démocraties libérales occidentales. Cette étude s'inspire du livre récent de Mark Lilla (2017) au sujet des politiques identitaires et du libéralisme 'ancien et futur' dont il fait la chronique. Lilla craint que ce que nous identifions comme les politiques identitaires s'avèrent à compromettre la base de la citoyenneté dont l'objectif est le bien commun. Il constate que les politiques identitaires, basées dans l'auto-compréhension de race, de genre ou de culture, sont le résultat de l'hyper-individualisme. Il observe : « ce qui s'impose à ce moment clé de notre histoire c'est de nous concentrer sur [notre] statut politique partagé et non pas sur nos différences manifestes ». (121)[1] Les observations de Lilla sont néanmoins centrées sur les États-Unis. Depuis longtemps, le Canada est doté d'une fabrique politique qui intègre l'identité d'un sous état ainsi qu'un fort engagement envers la solidarité nationale. La constitution canadienne reconnaît les demandes de plusieurs groupes qui sont parfois historiques (les peuples autochtones, la société distincte québécoise) ou plus récentes (comme l'accommodation multiculturelle). Nous proposons que, grâce à la reconnaissance historique de la différence entre groupes et identités, le libéralisme canadien se distingue de celui des États-Unis de sorte que le pays évite la crise identifiée par Lilla dans sa discussion des États-Unis.

Abstract

Citizenship in Western liberal democracies, many would argue, is in crisis. This paper is prompted by Mark Lilla's recent book on identity politics and the "once and future liberalism" that Lilla chronicles in that book (Lilla 2017). Lilla fears that what we term 'identity politics' has corroded the common basis of citizenship that solidifies a common good. He claims that identity politics, whether those are grounded in self-understandings of race, or gender, or culture, are an outgrowth of hyper-individualism and he asserts: "what is crucial at this juncture in our history is to concentrate on [our] shared political status, not on our other manifest differences." (121) Lilla's concerns, however, are United States centric. Canada has long had a constitutional and political fabric that incorporates sub-state identity within a strong commitment to national solidarity. The Canadian

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1   Translated by Jane Koustas.

constitution recognizes the claims of groups, some historic (the Indigenous peoples, the Quebec distinct society) and some more recent (multicultural accommodation). This paper argues that the historic incorporation of recognition of group difference and identity has produced a liberalism that is distinct from that of the United States, and one that avoids the crisis politics that Lilla identifies in the US.

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1. Identity Politics in the United States

Identity politics is very much at the forefront of contestation in Western liberal democracies. This is a relatively new phenomenon. Identity politics is not just about the more traditional divides among people who share a common political 'space'. Among these more traditional divides I would include ethnic differences, linguistic differences and territorial claims. What is new about identity politics is that it originates in self-identification, and that it locates itself in an individual narrative about how one wants to be seen and recognized in the public space. Iris Marion Young is one of the political theorists to whom we can turn for a formulation and defense of identity politics. Young explicitly contrasts her view of democratic politics with the tradition of *deliberative democrats*. The latter she held, strain for a common public or civic identity that is grounded in a commitment to a shared discourse of reason. They "commonly write about this process of moving from subjective self-regarding preferences to more objective or general opinions about the solution to collective problems as a process of discovering or constructing unity among them." (Young 1996, 125) Her exemplars in this understanding of shared deliberative reason are Michael Walzer and Jürgen Habermas. Contrasting this commitment to shared deliberative reason with her own defense of what Young terms *communicative democracy,* she argues that this alternative picture of democracy requires "a plurality of perspectives, speaking styles, and ways of expressing the particularity of social situations as well as the general applicability of principles." (132) Pointedly, Young writes that this means that we must acknowledge in the political space "unshared meanings."

These "unshared meanings" are typically presented in narrative, rather than in an appeal to a common reason. "Narrative exhibits subjective experience to other subjects." (132) That subjective experience, according to Young is rooted in experiences that are highly particular, socially situated and historically constructed. These narratives do not appeal for an inclusion in a broader, or we might even say, transcending discourse of dialectical inclusion in a common citizenship. They appeal for recognition of their distinctiveness. Young argues that 'communicative' discourse is both more inclusive, because it can lend voice to those who have been disempowered by the political system, and more egalitarian than *deliberative* models of democracy. It does not judge from any 'higher' standard.

> [D]eliberation can privilege the dispassionate, the educated or those who feel they have a right to assert. Because everyone has stories to tell, with different styles and meanings, and because each can tell her story with equal authority, the stories have equal value in the communicative situation. (Young 1996, 132)

This understanding of *communicative democracy* has steadily gained ground in the past decade, although there were earlier critiques. Jean Bethke Elshtain, in her *Democracy on Trial* (originally delivered as the annual Massey Lecture at the University of Toronto in 1993) feared that identity politics, as she understood them, threatened to erode the common discourse of public civility that holds democracy together. In what she calls "the politics of displacement" (and what Young terms *communicative democracy*), Elshtain writes that "private identity becomes who and what one is, in public, and what public life is about is confirming that identity. The citizen gives way before the aggrieved member of a self-defined group … This assault on civility flows from an embrace of what might be called a politicized ontology, that is to say, persons are more and more judged not by what they say or do, but by what they *are*." (Elshtain 1993, 52) Elshtain's judgment of Iris Marion Young's version of democracy could not be harsher. "Difference", she writes,

> becomes more and more exclusivist. If you are black and I am white, by definition I do not and cannot in principle 'get it'. There is no way that we can negotiate the space between our pregiven differences. We are just stuck with them: stuck in what political thinkers used to call 'ascriptive characteristics', things that we cannot change about ourselves. (75)

For Elshtain, the politics of difference and identity does not expand equality. It contracts it. "The action of a free citizen", she writes, "is not just any form of movement or behavior; rather, rooted in hope, such action marks new beginnings, generates possibilities that seemed foreclosed." (127) It is about twenty-five years since Young and Elshtain penned these words, and it seems that the standoff between the identity politics advocates and what I will call the civic unity advocates have just intensified. We are all familiar with the campus wars over 'safe spaces', gender pronouns, and generally, issues of racial and sexual identity. (Interestingly, the confrontations have taken place mostly in the universities, the very places that cultivate the confident, the verbose, and the highly educated.) In 2017, Mark Lilla published a widely reviewed and controversial book titled *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics*. This book follows in many ways the same trajectory as Elshtain's. Lilla laments the atrophy of the common vision of life that he insists is the backbone of the American democracy. "My frustration", he writes, "has its source in an ideology that for decades has prevented liberals from developing an ambitious vision of America and its future that would inspire citizens in every walk of life and in every region of the country."

(Lilla 1996, 6-7) According to Lilla, "we have become a hyper individualistic bourgeois society, materially and in our cultural dogmas … *Personal choice. Individual rights. Self-definition. We speak these words as if a wedding vow.*" (29) Lilla sees identity politics as an extension of this self-absorption. Like Elshtain, he views identity politics as symptomatic of a breakdown of the distinction between the political sphere (a sphere we share as citizens) and the private sphere (in which we are mired in our subjective experience). In the clamor for identity recognition – whether it be grounded in gender or race – Lilla contends that what these individuals wanted was "there to be no space between what they felt inside and what they did out in the world. They wanted to feel at one with political movements that mirrored how they understood and defined themselves as individuals." (76) The result, for Lilla is a panoply of silo identities that seem incapable of any common ground, or any common discourse. His target is specifically the university where he sees the struggles for identity played out in their most radical form. Like Elshtain, he calls for a revitalized *civic identity*. "What's crucial at this juncture in our history is to concentrate on [our] shared political status, not on our other manifest differences." (121)

There is an important emphasis in Lilla's argument though, that is not in Elshtain's, and that is the connection that he makes between identity politics and hyper-individualism. In the early chapters of the book, Lilla goes back to the Reagan years to target what he believes was a seismic shift in Americans' understanding of themselves. He summarizes a 'catechism' with four articles of faith that he traces back to this shift: "that the good life is that of self-reliant individuals", "that priority must be given to building rather than distributing wealth", that "the freer markets are, the more they will grow and enrich everyone", and that (to quote Reagan) "government is the problem." (31) This is a doctrine, he asserts, that "treats as axiomatic the primacy of self-determination over traditional ties of dependency and obligation." (31) Lilla sees identity politics as emerging out of the Reagan era and its attendant loss of an American democratic sensibility. Lilla's thesis is interesting, and perhaps even counter-intuitive, since many would view the new identity politics, intersectionality, etc. as oppositional to the libertarian, neoliberal basis of Reaganism. But when we put the emphasis on individual self-determination, as Lilla does, the argument seems to bear up. Identity politics is not about what Elshtain termed "ascriptive designations": it is about the stories we tell about ourselves and our declared right to have them heard. In short, Lilla says: "the self is whatever we damn well say it is." Further, "[a] whole scholastic vocabulary has been developed to express these notions: fluidity, hybridity, intersectionality, performativity, transgressivity, and more." (87)[2] We get to

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2   Lilla tells the story that he thinks illustrates the point: "I can even self-identify with a group I don't objectively seem to belong to. In 2015, a troubled woman who was then serving as president of a local chapter of the NAACP, and who had claimed to be the victim of several anti-black hate crimes, was revealed by her parents to be in fact white. Her critics were outraged and the right-wing media used the episode as one more example of the loony left. But if the Facebook model of identity is right, her supporters, and there were some, were right to defend her. If all

choose how we want to present ourselves in the public sphere, and we expect others to affirm our choices. All stories (to go back to Young's affirmation) have equal merit, and who are we to judge?

2.   The Canadian Experience

I find Lilla's argument quite persuasive, that is, the argument that identity politics as it manifests itself in the United States is an adjunct of the radical individualism that he identifies with the Reagan years. Identity politics seems firmly attached to the self-understanding that I am what I choose to be. I can choose a racial designation or cast it off; I can choose to identify with my biological sex or cast it off. The identity politics wars are not nearly as intense in Canada as they are in the United States. On the surface of it, this seems peculiar since we are probably the most multicultural country in the world, and we have long been a nation that deals with difference. Briefly, I want to sketch out a number of reasons why Canada has for the most part been inured to the identity politics wars. These reasons have to do with our constitutional structure (or lack of it, for most of our history), the long standing bi-cultural bi-linguistic status of the two original settler peoples, and the communities of Indigenous peoples, the federal structure of the state, our national commitment to public health care and public education, and the overlay of a commitment in theory and in practice, to a certain kind of diversity. Canada never had and still does not have an aspiration to the kind of abstract liberal individualism that in the United States harkens back to the *Declaration of Independence*, and perhaps as Lilla suggests, took a particularly insidious turn during the Reagan years. 'Identity' as a Canadian phenomenon bears much more the *ascriptive* designation that Jean Elshtain gave it, than it does the 'I choose what I damn well please' character that Lilla ascribes to it.

Peter Russell, one of the leading experts on Canadian constitutionalism, recently published a book titled *Canada's Odyssey: A Country Based on Incomplete Conquests* (2017). After a lifetime of wrangling with the issues of Canadian sovereignty and identity, Russell begins this book by proclaiming that "Canadians, all thirty-five million of them, have not agreed that they belong to a single 'people', whose majority expresses the sovereign will of their nation." (3) There are many factors that contribute to this odyssey, some of them dating back way before Confederation and the recognition of Canada as a country independent of Britain. The French Canadians and the Indigenous peoples of Canada sustain loyalties to forms of association that predate Canadian Confederation in 1867. 'New France', now the province of Quebec, was ceded to Britain in 1763 and right from the beginning, this French former colony was granted some autonomy in the Quebec Act of 1774. "Britain's acquiescence in the continuation of a French-speaking, Roman Catholic community with its own distinct laws" (3) was, according to Russell, one of the formative events of the country. The

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identification is legitimately self-identification, there is no reason why this woman could not claim to be anything she imagined herself to be." (88)

accommodation of Quebec within the Canadian federation has been an ongoing negotiation, and not without periods of fractious conflict. The 1960s and 1970s in particular were tumultuous times in Quebec as the state shifted to a more secular basis, the Roman Catholic faith waned in the majority of the population, and the case for an independent Quebec state was strong. Canadians are reminded that 2020 is the fiftieth anniversary of the implementation of the War Measures Act by then Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. A radical cell, the *Front de Libération du Québec,* kidnapped two prominent political figures, James Cross (British diplomat) and Pierre Laporte (Quebec's Minister of Labour and Immigration). Laporte's body was discovered in the trunk of a car in the Montreal airport, resulting in Trudeau's invocation of the draconian measures, effectively suspending civil liberties and affording sweeping powers to the police and putting Quebec under military occupation. There is still a great deal of debate in Canada and Quebec about whether such measures were warranted. The radical voice of Quebec separation subsided, but political momentum for an independent Quebec persisted throughout the following decades, marked by a very close referendum on separation in the 1990s. The popular support for an independent Quebec nation seems to have waned in recent decades, although the Quebec separatist party, the *Bloc Québécois,* survives.

With respect to Indigenous peoples, Russell chronicles how, in the Niagara region (where I live) in 1764, representatives of twenty-four Indigenous nations accepted the terms of peace extended to them by the British monarch's envoy, Sir William Johnson. Those terms included recognition of the Indian nations' ownership of their land, and a restriction upon further encroachment of settler land claims conferred by the Crown. The 1764 Niagara treaty set out terms for a measure of political independence and ownership of land and waters for Indigenous peoples.

The 'third pillar' of Canada's foundation was in effect created by the American Revolution. Although there was already a substantial English-speaking population in Atlantic Canada in the 1700s, the American Revolution led to a migration of Loyalists from the United States to Canada. According to Russell, these English-speaking Canadians were the ones that introduced a "civic culture" that contained the embryo of parliamentary government, the monarchy and constitutionalism (Russell 2017, 6).

The federal structure of government in Canada in some sense protects and advances the interests of these separate constituencies. Quebec is largely a French-speaking territory and has often defined itself as a nation-within-a-state. The province has a separate legal system. In the 1990s, following upon the recommendations of a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the federal government recognized that land claims on the part of Indigenous peoples are necessarily tied to self-government. A landmark agreement was reached by a referendum in Canada's Northwest Territories in 1992, that created the new territory of Nunavut, a self-governing territory that is composed of eighty five percent Inuit. Inuktitut is the working language of that Parliament. First Nations communities throughout Canada have tried to emulate this pattern, but without success in all quarters. There are grave

issues of historic injustice and inequality that hamper the efforts of Indigenous peoples. The measures taken by established Christian churches to take away young Indigenous children from their families and their communities and assimilate them into residential schools is one of the great stains on Canada's history. Still, there *is* constitutional affirmation of the entitlements of Indigenous peoples, and the struggles of Indigenous peoples are very much at the forefront of Canadian politics and the Canadian imagination. Commissions have been established to try to effect reconciliation, and there is an ongoing inquiry into the disproportionate numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

It was not until 1982 that Canada really had its own constitution, independent of British oversight, and acquired a *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Canadian Charter is an original document, much different from the constitution of the United States. While it affirms fundamental individual freedoms, it also explicitly acknowledges language rights for the two settler peoples (the English and the French), and the ongoing protection of Aboriginal treaty rights (Sections 32 and 35). It includes a 'notwithstanding clause' that allows for the possibility of a legislature to suspend elements of the *Charter* for a period of five years, in order to advance some other collective good. This clause has been utilized continuously by the legislature of Quebec to enact unilingual policies, and it also has been used a handful of times by other provincial legislatures on other matters.

Canada is a country that from its inception, was built upon compromise (sometimes conquest) among disparate groups of people who had deeply entrenched identities and loyalties. These identities were not superseded by a singular understanding of individual, or abstract, right, and they still are not. The triad of founding and settler peoples is further complicated by a federal structure that acknowledges deep regional differences in territory and regional culture. The east and west coasts have depended for much of their history on fisheries export. Central Canada was for a long time the industrial and manufacturing heartland of the country. Western prairies are some of the biggest producers in the world of wheat. Oil brought explosive wealth to Alberta, and logging much controversy and contest in British Columbia. The union is messy, complex and sometimes incoherent, but so far it has bended and accommodated to shifting demands.

Peter Russell believes that the incomplete conquests that characterize Canada's founding, and the ensuing accommodation of plurality within the federal structure, have made Canadians generally more open to diversity and to immigration than many other Westerm democracies. This is a difficult proposition to prove, he acknowledges, but he asks: why is it that large waves of immigration have not caused the same levels of dissent that we see in other liberal democracies?[3] Another axis of

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3   This is not to take a Pollyannish stance toward the very real problems that arise from integration in Canada. For example, in a policy paper by Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos and Inder Marwah the authors note that "the failure to properly recognize the credentials and skills of immigrants has increased the disparity in income levels between native-born and immigrant populations." They

Canadian identity is multiculturalism. This was a policy explicitly adopted by Pierre Elliott Trudeau at the same time in the 1980s that the constitution was patriated, and the Charter instituted. Multiculturalism is acknowledged as a fundamental facet of Canada in Section 27 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Multiculturalism is a rubric attached most meaningfully in Canada to the recently arrived, not to the founding communities of English, French and Indigenous Canadians. It is interesting, though, that multiculturalism as a constitutionally recognized objective of the state, has been adopted relatively easily into the fabric of Canadian politics.

The most important theorists on multiculturalism have been Canadian. These include Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor. Kymlicka in his book *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995) makes a distinction between different kinds of cultural minorities within the liberal democratic state, and it is clear that Canada is at the heart of his considerations. 'National' cultures include those that have been incorporated into the federation through conquest or colonization, and examples are the Quebecois and Canadas' Indigenous peoples. 'Ethnic' cultures, on the other hand, are immigrant groups whose members have elected to become members of the union. In Canada, immigrants "are encouraged to maintain some aspects of their ethnic particularity. But this commitment to 'multiculturalism' or 'polyethnicity' is a shift in how immigrants integrate into the dominant culture, not whether they integrate." (Kymlicka 1995, 78) In other words, we do not expect to countenance the same demands for accommodation from the newly arrived as we do from the founding communities, although we *do* acknowledge the need for some accommodation. (Kymlicka draws the line at accommodation for ethnic difference, on grounds where this may conflict fundamentally with individual rights.) As one commentator on Kymlicka puts it, Kymlicka's multiculturalism rejects assimilation as a model for absorbing new Canadians, but he advocates for a moderate *integration*. "The acceptability of integration contrasts strongly with the entitlement of national minorities to lead, in some substantial sense, an independent existence." (Crowder 2013, 50) So, even while Kymlicka may be trying to juggle three dimensions of Canadian experience and constitutional protection – individual rights, rights of founding peoples, and rights of multicultural groups – and while there might seem to be some irreconcilable tensions among these three goals, I think that Peter Russell is right in claiming that Canada's origins have lent a certain hospitality and openness to *difference* that manifests itself in Canadians' acceptance of multiculturalism as a fact of life.

Charles Taylor, another of Canada's leading theorists on multiculturalism, has focused more on the politics of recognition, than on the politics of right, but like Kymlicka, Taylor has seemed to consider the many axes of the Canadian political fabric when he describes the demand for recognition as coming from minority or

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note that "while some progress has been made in meeting this challenge, more needs to be done to develop means of recognizing and rewarding immigrants' talents." (Triadafilopoulos/Marwah 2009, n.p.)

'subaltern' groups, "some forms of feminism" and the politics of multiculturalism (Taylor 1993, 25). What do these things have in common? For Taylor: "The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or a group of persons 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." (25) Taylor argues against the homogenizing effects of a universal abstract right that he believes precludes the recognition of deep difference. This defense of abstract right, he argues,

> understands human dignity to consist largely in autonomy, that is, in the ability of each person to determine for himself or herself a view of the good life. Dignity is associated less with any particular understanding of the good life, such that someone's departure from this would detract from his or her own dignity, than with the power to consider and espouse for oneself some view or another. (57)

This definition of abstract right comes very close to Lilla's account of the basis of identity politics in the United States.

Taylor's thesis really holds that we are *not* atomized individuals, that in all cases we are part of an embedded identity that predates our choices. There are limits, according to Taylor, on how far we can extend ourselves on recognizing the identities of others.

> There must be something midway between the inauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards, on the other. There are other cultures, and we have to live together more and more, both on a world scale and commingled in each individual society. (72)

Even though Taylor started out defending the authentic need for recognition and validation, he clearly does not think that all claims are worthy of validation. He closes his classic essay on multiculturalism by suggesting that

> it is reasonable to suppose that cultures that have provided the horizon of meaning for large numbers of human beings of diverse characters and temperaments, over a long period of time – that have, in other words, articulated their sense of the good, the holy, the admirable – are almost certain to have something that deserves our attention and respect. (72)

This is, to my mind, a very Canadian take on multiculturalism and identity. Taylor's examples in his essay are almost exclusively drawn from the Quebec experience. We

recognize deep difference when it is embedded, when it has a history and when it has a *nobility* of cause.

Multiculturalism has been a much-celebrated element of the Canadian polity, but we have to be cautious in our embrace of this grand narrative about Canada. The union is not easy to maintain, and there are, as has been suggested, ongoing tensions in the recognition of the special status of Quebec and of Indigenous peoples. In Quebec, many people insist that that province endorses a policy of interculturalism, not multiculturalism. Interculturalism generally calls for the respect and accommodation of immigrants within a strong centrist identity, and so it affirms the priority in Quebec of the distinctive founding culture. Gérard Bouchard identifies the central components of Quebec interculturalism as "integrative pluralism", and he states: "generally, interculturalism is characterized by a search for balance in the arbitration of sometimes competing beliefs, traditions, customs and ideals, while respecting the fundamental values of Quebec." (Bouchard 2012, 33) Interculturalism differs from multiculturalism in that it seeks to define the fundamental values of Quebec, within which the accommodation of cultural difference can fit. These values go beyond the defense of individual rights articulated in the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and are embedded in the distinct history and culture of French Quebec. Canadian philosopher George Grant may have put it best when he wrote: "The French Canadians had entered Confederation not to protect the rights of the individual but the rights of a nation." (Grant 2005, 22) Interculturalism in Quebec may still be understood in the context of this mandate.

With respect to Indigenous peoples, we are seeing now increasing claims for self-determination. Bob Joseph's book *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act* chronicles the long history of the colonization, marginalization and oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada, many of these things carried out under the rubric of The Indian Act, a federal document dated 1876, in which it was clearly stated that "the aborigines are to be kept in a condition of tutelage and treated as wards or children of the State." (Annual Report 1877) Joseph argues that "Canada is changing … the focus now should be on dismantling the *Indian Act,* moving towards self-government in an orderly and timely fashion, and creating a self-governing future for Indigenous peoples." (2018, 103) Part of that future, too, according to Joseph, has to be "a return to self-determination and self-reliance," and self-determination means "the right to decide who your people are." (103)

When we look at the alternative model (to multiculturalism) of *interculturalism* in Quebec, and the strong claims on the part of Indigenous peoples for self-government within the Canadian federation, we can see plainly that these movements within Canada go far beyond a deference to liberal multiculturalism. There is a recognition in these historic communities of what Charles Taylor acknowledged as a distinct understanding of "the good, the admirable and the holy" that has persisted through time. Edward Andrew captures this:

> Kymlicka's liberal nationalism does not fully capture … the rights of nations, which is more than the sum total of individual rights, or what Taylor called the 'deep diversity' of multinational, as distinct from multicultural, societies. The deep diversity separating First Nations and white settlers, and separating French from English-speaking Canadians, must be acknowledged as fundamental facts of Canada's political nationality. (Andrew 2017, 83)

Whether Canada can hold together when there are these strong claims from Quebec and from Indigenous peoples for a distinct identity and status within the federation is a matter of speculation, but Peter Russell is hopeful that it can, as long as Canadians are open to this plurality.

Communities are organic things, and they represent deep ways of being together that may include historic memory, territory, language, religion, and intergenerational belonging. A book very recently published in Canada, titled *Hegel and Canada,* is a collection of essays that tracks the influence that Hegel had on some formative Canadian political theorists, including Charles Taylor (Dodd/Robertson 2018). The editors comment that they aim to explore a "politics that, being grounded in communities, opposes the homogenizing forces of global liberal capitalism, while affirming modern aspirations to rational freedom." (Dodd/Robertson 2018, 4) There is in fact a legacy in Canada of neo-Hegelians in philosophy and political science departments, employing Hegelian categories of ethical life to make sense of the Canadian 'odyssey.'

This may be a good juncture to return to my opening comments on the politics of identity and specifically to the political theory of Iris Marion Young. I made the claim there that identity politics is rooted in *subjective* experience and individual choice. Mark Lilla specifically traces the recent developments in identity politics to an exacerbation of individual will and individual freedom that he understands as rooted in the Reagan years in the United States. Toward the end of his polemic, Lilla writes:

> of all the developments I have discussed in this book, the most self-defeating from a liberal standpoint is identity-based education … The liberal pedagogy of our time, focused as it is on identity, is actually a depoliticizing force. It has made our children more tolerant of others than certainly my generation was, which is a very good thing. But by undermining the universal democratic *we* on which solidarity can be built, duty instilled, and action inspired, it is unmaking rather than making citizens. In the end, this approach just strengthens all the atomizing forces that dominate our age. (Lilla 1996, 137)

The 'catechism' that Lilla ascribed to the Reagan years includes a promotion of "self-reliant individuals", a preoccupation with building private wealth, and a strong sense that "government is the problem."

One might want to argue that Lilla's picture of the United States is over-written. After all, the United States is a diverse polity too, that includes its own Indigenous populations, a substantial part of the population that identifies with its Hispanic roots, and as we are witnessing, a major backlash against hegemonic white liberalism in the Black Lives Matter movement. However, there is no constitutional protection in the United States that accords recognition to communities in their specificity. In a recent article in *The Atlantic,* author Syreeta McFadden writes that the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States is the logical extension of the civil rights movement: "Today, the Black Lives Matter Movement is a decentralized, leaderful, interdependent network of organizations and individuals, channeling its resources toward building a society where black people can flourish." (McFadden 2020) There is no claim on the part of black Americans for a separate territorial and cultural sovereignty. The cry appears to be for more meaningful inclusion in the dominant political culture of individual rights and opportunity. In this respect, the Black Lives Matter movement has much more in common with the claims of groups demanding inclusion for intersectionality, than it does with the territorial and cultural claims of historic Canadian groups like the French Canadians and Canada's Indigenous peoples.[4]

This paper has argued that Canada never had a uniform democratic *we* upon which solidarity was built. On the contrary, Canada is made up of plural *wes,* and from the country's inception, we have understood that these *wes* have to work together. The cooperation has not been easy, and Canada has had its share of historic injustices and grievances, but the recognition of deep difference in communities has arguably made us more receptive to collective understandings of recognition, perhaps less celebratory of 'performative identities' that are highly individualistic. The institution of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in the 1980s enshrines Canada's commitment to a strong protection of individual rights, but the Canadian Constitution innovatively protects the French language and culture, the collective claims of Indigenous peoples, and the incorporation of multiculturalism. As a Canadian, one might respond to Mark Lilla's concerns about the atrophy of cooperation in any vision of a common good, or citizen solidarity, by pointing out that in Canada, we perhaps have in place of an overarching common good, a plurality of common goods, rooted in the

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4   This is not to suggest that there are *no* claims in Canada for identity grounded in race, or gender. In the summer of 2020, there were many marches and demonstrations in Canada in sympathy with the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States, but the issue of racialized identity is less urgent in Canada than in the United States. This may have to do with a number of things, including the fact that the United States has a much more substantial population of African Americans descended from slaves, and the fact that racialized identities are much more diverse in Canada.

protection of historic communities and protected by the constitution. This is a far different scenario from the formative principles of the United States, and one might conjecture that the propensity for Canadians to sustain and protect collective identities rooted in heritage, culture and language has made us less likely to politicize the individual identities of subjective choice.

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