Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?

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⏩ Until the past few decades, minority groups—immigrants as well as indigenous peoples—were typically expected to assimilate into majority cultures. This assimilationist expectation is now often considered oppressive, and many Western countries are seeking to devise new policies that are more responsive to persistent cultural differences. The appropriate policies vary with context: Countries such as England with established churches or state supported religious education find it hard to resist demands to extend state support to minority religious schools; countries such as France with traditions of strictly secular public education struggle over whether the clothing required by minority religions may be worn in the public schools. But one issue recurs across all contexts, though it has gone virtually unnoticed in current debate: 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 (however much they continue to violate it in their practice)?

In the late 1980s, for example, a sharp public controversy erupted in France about whether Magrbin girls could attend school wearing the traditional Muslim headscarves regarded as proper attire for postpubescent young women. Staunch defenders of secular education lined up with some feminists and far-right nationalists against the practice; much of the old left supported the multiculturalist demands for flexibility and respect for diversity, accusing opponents of racism or cultural imperialism. At the very same time, however, the public was virtually silent about a problem of vastly greater importance to many French Arab and African immigrant women: polygamy.

During the 1980s, the French government quietly permitted immigrant men to bring multiple wives into the country, to the point where an estimated 200,000 families in Paris are now polygamous. Any suspicion that official concern over

headscarves was motivated by an impulse toward gender equality is belied by the easy adoption of a permissive policy on polygamy, despite the burdens this practice imposes on women and the warnings issued by women from the relevant cultures.[1] On this issue, no politically effective opposition galvanized. But once reporters finally got around to interviewing the wives, they discovered what the government could have learned years earlier: that the women affected by polygamy regarded it as an inescapable and barely tolerable institution in their African countries of origin, and an unbearable imposition in the French context. Overcrowded apartments and the lack of each wife's private space lead to immense hostility, resentment, even violence both among the wives and against each other's children.

In part because of the strain on the welfare state caused by families with 20-30 members, the French government has recently decided to recognize only one wife and consider all the other marriages annulled. But what will happen to all the other wives and children? Having neglected women's view on polygamy for so long, the government now seems to be abdicating its responsibility for the vulnerability that women and children incurred because of its rash policy.

The French accommodation of polygamy illustrates a deep and growing tension between feminism and multiculturalist concerns to protect cultural diversity. I think we—especially those of us who consider ourselves politically progressive and opposed to all forms of oppression—have been too quick to assume that feminism and multiculturalism are both good things which are easily reconciled. I shall argue instead that there is considerable likelihood of tension between them—more precisely, between feminism and a multiculturalist commitment to group rights for minority cultures.

A few words to explain the terms and focus of my argument. By "feminism," I mean the belief that women should not be disadvantaged by their sex, that they should be recognized as having human dignity equally with men, and the opportunity to live as fulfilling and as freely chosen lives as men can. "Multiculturalism" is harder to pin down, but the particular aspect that concerns me here is the claim, made in the context of basically liberal democracies, that minority cultures or ways of life are not sufficiently protected by ensuring the individual rights of their members and as a consequence should also be protected with special *group* rights or privileges. In the French case, for example, the right to contract polygamous marriages clearly constituted a group right, not available to the rest of the population. In other cases, groups claim rights to govern themselves, have guaranteed political representation, or be exempt from generally applicable law.

Demands for such group rights are growing—from indigenous native populations, minority ethnic or religious groups, and formerly colonized peoples (at least, when the latter immigrate to the former colonial state). These groups, it is argued, have

their own "societal cultures" which—as Will Kymlicka, the foremost contemporary defender of cultural group rights, says—provide "members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres."[2] Because societal cultures play so pervasive and fundamental a role in the lives of members, and because such cultures are threatened with extinction, minority cultures should be protected by special rights: That, in essence, is the case for group rights.

Some proponents of group rights argue that even cultures that "flout the rights of [their individual members] in a liberal society"[3] should be accorded group rights or privileges if their minority status endangers the culture's continued existence. Others do not claim that all minority cultural groups should have special rights, but rather that such groups—even illiberal ones, that violate their individual members' rights, requiring them to conform to group beliefs or norms—have the right to be "let alone" in a liberal society.[4] Both claims seem clearly inconsistent with the basic liberal value of individual freedom, which entails that group rights should not trump the individual rights of their members; thus, I will not address the problems they present for feminists here.[5] But some defenders of multiculturalism largely confine their defense of group rights to groups that are internally liberal.[6] Even with these restrictions, feminists—anyone, that is, who endorses the moral equality of men and women—should remain skeptical. So I will argue.

Gender and Culture

Most cultures are suffused with practices and ideologies concerning gender. Suppose, then, that a culture endorses and facilitates the control of men over women in various ways (even if informally, in the private sphere of domestic life). Suppose, too, that there are fairly clear disparities of power between the sexes, such that the more powerful, male members are those who are generally in a position to determine and articulate the group's beliefs, practices, and interests. Under such conditions, group rights are potentially, and in many cases actually, antifeminist. They substantially limit the capacities of women and girls of that culture to live with human dignity equal to that of men and boys, and to live as freely chosen lives as they can.

Advocates of group rights for minorities within liberal states have not adequately addressed this simple critique of group rights, for at least two reasons. First, they tend to treat cultural groups as monoliths—to pay more attention to differences between and among groups than to differences within them. Specifically, they give little or no recognition to the fact that minority cultural groups, like the societies in which they exist (though to a greater or lesser extent), are themselves *gendered*, with substantial differences of power and advantage between men and women. Second, advocates of group rights pay no or

little attention to the private sphere. Some of the best liberal defenses of group rights urge that individuals need "a culture of their own," and that only within such a culture can people develop a sense of self-esteem or self-respect, or the capacity to decide what kind of life is good for them. But such arguments typically neglect both the different roles that cultural groups require of their members and the context in which persons' senses of themselves and their capacities are first formed *and* in which culture is first transmitted—the realm of domestic or family life.

When we correct for these deficiencies by paying attention to internal differences and to the private arena, two particularly important connections between culture and gender come into sharp relief, both of which underscore the force of the simple critique. First, the sphere of personal, sexual, and reproductive life provides a central focus of most cultures, a dominant theme in cultural practices and rules. Religious or cultural groups are often particularly concerned with "personal law"—the laws of marriage, divorce, child custody, division and control of family property, and inheritance.[7] As a rule, then, the defense of "cultural practices" is likely to have much greater impact on the lives of women and girls than those of men and boys, since far more of women's time and energy goes into preserving and maintaining the personal, familial, and reproductive side of life. Obviously culture is not only about domestic arrangements, but they do provide a major focus of most contemporary cultures. Home is, after all, where much of culture is practiced, preserved, and transmitted to the young. In turn, the distribution of responsibilities and power at home has a major impact on who can participate in and influence the more public parts of the cultural life, where rules and regulations about both public and private life are made.

Second, most cultures have as one of their principal aims the control of women by men.[8] Consider, for example, the founding myths of Greek and Roman antiquity, and of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: they are rife with attempts to justify the control and subordination of women. These myths consist of a combination of denials of women's role in reproduction, appropriations by men of the power to reproduce themselves, characterizations of women as overly emotional, untrustworthy, evil, or sexually dangerous, and refusals to acknowledge mothers' rights over the disposition of their children.[9] Think of Athena, sprung from the head of Zeus, and of Romulus and Remus, reared without a human mother. Or Adam, made by a male God, who then (at least according to one of the two biblical versions of the story) made Eve out of part of Adam. Consider Eve, whose weakness led Adam astray. Think of all those endless "begats" in Genesis, where women's primary role in reproduction is completely ignored, or of the textual justifications for polygamy, once practiced in Judaism, still practiced in many parts of the Islamic world and (though illegally) by Mormons in some parts of the United States. Consider, too, the story of Abraham, a pivotal turning point in

the development of monotheism.[10] God commands Abraham to sacrifice "his" greatly loved son. Abraham prepares to do exactly what God asks of him, without even telling, much less asking, Isaac's mother, Sarah. Abraham's absolute obedience to God makes him the central, fundamental model of faith, for all three religions.

While the powerful drive to control women—and to blame and punish them for men's difficulty controlling their own sexual impulses—has been softened considerably in the more progressive, reformed versions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, it remains strong in their more orthodox or fundamentalist versions. Moreover, it is by no means confined to Western or monotheistic cultures. Many of the world's traditions and cultures, including those practiced within formerly conquered or colonized nation states—certainly including most of the peoples of Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia—are quite distinctly patriarchal. They too have elaborate patterns of socialization, rituals, matrimonial customs, and other cultural practices (including systems of property ownership and control of resources) aimed at bringing women's sexuality and reproductive capabilities under men's control. Many such practices make it virtually impossible for women to choose to live independently of men, to be celibate or lesbian, or not to have children.

Those who practice some of the most controversial such customs —clitoridectomy, the marriage of children or marriages that are otherwise coerced, or polygamy—sometimes explicitly defend them as necessary for controlling women, and openly acknowledge that the customs persist at men's insistence. In an interview with *New York Times* reporter Celia Dugger, practitioners of clitoridectomy in CÙte d'Ivoire and Togo explained that the practice "helps insure a girl's virginity before marriage and fidelity afterward by reducing sex to a marital obligation." As a female exciser said, "[a] woman's role in life is to care for her children, keep house and cook. If she has not been cut, [she] might think about her own sexual pleasure."[11] In Egypt, where a law banning female genital cutting was recently overturned by a court, supporters of the practice say it "curbs a girl's sexual appetite and makes her more marriageable."[12] Moreover, in such contexts, many women have no economically viable alternative to marriage. Men in polygamous cultures, too, readily acknowledge that the practice accords with their self-interest and is a means of controlling women. As a French immigrant from Mali said in a recent interview: "When my wife is sick and I don't have another, who will care for me? . . . [O]ne wife on her own is trouble. When there are several, they are forced to be polite and well behaved. If they misbehave, you threaten that you'll take another wife." Women apparently see polygamy very differently. French African immigrant women deny that they like polygamy, and say not only that they are given "no choice" in the matter, but that their female forebears in Africa did not like it either.[13] As for child or otherwise coerced marriage: this practice is clearly a way not only of

controlling whom the girls or young women marry, but also of ensuring that they are virgins at the time of marriage and, often, enhancing the husband's power by creating a significant age difference between husbands and wives.

Consider, too, the practice—common in much of Latin America, rural South East Asia and parts of West Africa—of encouraging or even requiring a rape victim to marry the rapist. In many such cultures—including fourteen countries of Latin America—rapists are legally exonerated if they marry or (in some cases) even offer to marry their victims. Clearly, rape is not seen in these cultures primarily as a violent assault on the girl or woman herself, but rather as a serious injury to her family and its honor. By marrying his victim, the rapist can help restore the family's honor and relieve it of a daughter who, as "damaged goods," has become unmarriageable. In Peru, this barbaric law was amended for the worse in 1991: the co-defendants in a gang rape are now all exonerated if one of them offers to marry the victim (feminists are fighting to get the law repealed). As a Peruvian taxi driver explained: "Marriage is the right and proper thing to do after a rape. A raped woman is a used item. No one wants her. At least with this law the woman will get a husband."[14] It is hard to imagine a worse fate for a woman than being pressured into marrying the man who has raped her. But worse fates do exist in some cultures—notably in Pakistan and parts of the Arab Middle East, where women who bring rape charges are quite frequently charged with the serious Muslim offense of *zina*, or sex outside of marriage. Law allows for the whipping or imprisonment of such a woman, and culture condones the killing or pressuring into suicide of a raped woman by relatives concerned to restore the family's honor.[15]

Thus, many culturally-based customs aim to control women and render them, especially sexually and reproductively, servile to men's desires and interests. Sometimes, moreover, "culture" or "traditions" are so closely linked with the control of women that they are virtually equated. In a recent news report about a small community of Orthodox Jews living in the mountains of Yemen —ironically, from a feminist point of view, the story was entitled "Yemen's small Jewish community thrives on mixed traditions"—the elderly leader of this small polygamous sect is quoted as saying: "We are Orthodox Jews, very keen on our traditions. If we go to Israel, we will lose hold over our daughters, our wives and our sisters." One of his sons added: "We are like Muslims, we do not allow our women to uncover their faces."[16] Thus the servitude of women is presented as virtually synonymous with "our traditions." (Only blindness to sexual servitude can explain the title; it is inconceivable that the article would have carried such a title if it were about a community that practiced any kind of slavery but sexual slavery.)

While virtually all of the world's cultures have distinctly patriarchal pasts, some—mostly, though by no means exclusively, Western liberal cultures—have departed far further

from them than others. Western cultures, of course, still practice many forms of sex discrimination. They place far more stress on beauty, thinness, and youth in females and on intellectual accomplishment, skill, and strength in males; they expect women to perform for no economic reward far more than half of the unpaid work of their families, whether or not they also work for wages; partly as a consequence of this and partly because of workplace discrimination, women are far more likely than men to become poor; girls and women are also subjected by men to a great deal of (illegal) violence, including sexual violence. But women in more liberal cultures are, at the same time, legally guaranteed many of the same freedoms and opportunities as men. In addition, most families in such cultures, with the exception of some religious fundamentalists, do not communicate to their daughters that they are of less value than boys, that their lives are to be confined to domesticity and service to men and children, and that the only positive value of their sexuality is that it be strictly confined to marriage, the service of men, and reproductive ends. This, as we have seen, is quite different from women's situation in many of the world's other cultures, including many of those from which immigrants to Europe and Northern America come.

Group Rights?

Most cultures are patriarchal, then, and many (though not all) of the cultural minorities that claim group rights are more patriarchal than the surrounding cultures. So it is no surprise that the cultural importance of maintaining control over women shouts out to us in the examples given in the literature on cultural diversity and group rights within liberal states. Yet, though it shouts out, it is seldom explicitly addressed.[17]

A 1986 paper about the legal rights and culture-based claims of various immigrant groups and gypsies in contemporary Britain mentions the roles and status of women as "one very clear example" of the "clash of cultures."[18] In it, Sebastian Poulter discusses claims put forward by members of such groups for special legal treatment on account of their cultural differences. A few are non-gender-related claims: about a Muslim schoolteacher's being allowed to be absent part of Friday afternoons in order to pray, and gypsy children having less stringent schooling requirements than others on account of their itinerant lifestyle. But the vast majority of the examples concern gender inequalities: child marriages, forced marriages, divorce systems biased against women, polygamy, and clitoridectomy. Almost all of the legal cases discussed stemmed from women's or girls' claims that their individual rights were being truncated or violated by the practices of their cultural groups. In a recent article by political philosopher Amy Gutmann, "The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics," fully half the examples have do with gender issues—polygamy, abortion, sexual harassment, clitoridectomy, and purdah.[19] This is quite typical in the literature on subnational multicultural issues. Moreover,

the same phenomenon occurs in practice in the international arena, where women's human rights are often rejected by the leaders of countries or groups of countries as incompatible with their various cultures.[20]

Similarly, the overwhelming majority of "cultural defenses" that are increasingly being invoked in US criminal cases concerning members of cultural minorities are connected with gender—in particular with male control over women and children.[21] Occasionally, cultural defenses come into play in explaining expectable violence among men, or the ritual sacrifice of animals. Much more common, however, is the argument that, in the defendant's cultural group, women are not human beings of equal worth but subordinates whose primary (if not only) functions are to serve men sexually and domestically. Thus, the four types of case in which cultural defenses have been used most successfully are: kidnap and rape by Hmong men who claim that their actions are part of their cultural practice of *zij poj niam* or "marriage by capture"; wife-murder by immigrants from Asian and Middle Eastern countries whose wives have either committed adultery or treated their husbands in a servile way; mothers who have killed their children but failed to kill themselves, and claim that because of their Japanese or Chinese backgrounds the shame of their husbands' infidelity drove them to the culturally condoned practice of mother-child suicide; and —in France, though not yet in the United States, in part because the practice was criminalized only in 1996—clitoridectomy. In a number of such cases, expert testimony about the accused's or defendant's cultural background has resulted in dropped or reduced charges, culturally-based assessments of *mens rea*, or significantly reduced sentences. In a well-known recent case, an immigrant from rural Iraq married his two daughters, aged 13 and 14, to two of his friends, aged 28 and 34. Subsequently, when the older daughter ran away with her 20-year-old boyfriend, the father sought the help of the police in finding her. When they located her, they charged the father with child abuse, and the two husbands and boyfriend with statutory rape. The Iraqis' defense is based in part, at least, on their cultural marriage practices.[22]

As these examples show, the defendants are not always male, nor the victims always female. Both a Chinese immigrant man in New York who battered his wife to death for committing adultery and a Japanese immigrant woman in California who drowned her children and tried to drown herself because her husband's adultery had shamed the family, relied on cultural defenses to win reduced charges (from murder to second degree or involuntary manslaughter). It might seem, then, that cultural defense was biased toward the male in the first case, and the female in the second. But no such asymmetry exists. In both cases, the cultural message is similarly gender-biased: women (and children, in the second case) are ancillary to men, and should bear the blame and the shame for any departure from monogamy. Whoever is guilty of the infidelity, the wife suffers: in the first case, by being brutally killed on account of her

husband's rage at her shameful infidelity; in the second, by being so shamed and branded a failure by his infidelity that she is driven to kill herself and her children. Again, the idea that girls and women are first and foremost sexual servants of men whose virginity before marriage and fidelity within it are their preeminent virtues emerges in many of the statements made in defense of cultural practices.

Western majority cultures, largely at the urging of feminists, have recently made substantial efforts to avoid or limit excuses for brutalizing women. Well within living memory, American men were routinely held less accountable for killing their wives if they explained their conduct as a crime of passion, driven by jealousy on account of the wife's infidelity. Also not long ago, women who did not have completely celibate pasts or who did not struggle—even so as to endanger themselves—were routinely blamed when raped. Things have now changed to some extent, and doubts about the turn toward cultural defenses undoubtedly come in part from a concern to preserve recent advances. Another concern is that such defenses can distort perceptions of minority cultures by drawing excessive attention to negative aspects of them. But perhaps the primary concern is that, by failing to protect women and sometimes children of minority cultures from male and sometimes maternal violence, cultural defenses violate their rights to the equal protection of the laws.[23] When a woman from a more patriarchal culture comes to the United States (or some other Western, basically liberal, state), why should she be less protected from male violence than other women are? Many women from minority cultures have protested the double standard that is being applied to their aggressors.[24]

Liberal Defense

Despite all this evidence of cultural practices that control and subordinate women, none of the prominent defenders of multicultural group rights has adequately or even directly addressed the troubling connections between gender and culture, or the conflicts that arise so commonly between multiculturalism and feminism. Will Kymlicka's discussion is, in this respect, representative.

Kymlicka's arguments for group rights are based on the rights of individuals, and confine such privileges and protection to cultural groups that are internally liberal. Following John Rawls, Kymlicka emphasizes the fundamental importance of self-respect in a person's life. He argues that membership in a "rich and secure cultural structure,"[25] with its language and history, is essential both for the development of self-respect and for giving persons a context in which they can develop the capacity to make choices about how to lead their lives. Cultural minorities need special rights, then, because their culture may otherwise be threatened with extinction, and cultural extinction would likely undermine the self-respect and freedom of group

members. Special rights, in short, put minorities on a footing of equality with the majority.

The value of freedom plays an important role in Kymlicka's argument. As a result, except in rare circumstances of cultural vulnerability, a group that claims special rights must govern itself by recognizably liberal principles, neither infringing on the basic liberties of its own members by placing internal restrictions on them, nor discriminating among them on grounds of sex, race, or sexual preference.[26] This requirement is of great importance to a consistently liberal justification for group rights, since a "closed" or discriminatory culture cannot provide the context for individual development that liberalism requires and because collective rights might otherwise result in subcultures of oppression within and aided by liberal societies. As Kymlicka says: "To inhibit people from questioning their inherited social roles can condemn them to unsatisfying, even oppressive lives."[27]

As Kymlicka acknowledges, this requirement of internal liberalism rules out the justification of group rights for the "many fundamentalists of all political and religious stripes who think that the best community is one in which all but their preferred religious, sexual, or aesthetic practices are outlawed." For the promotion and support of *these* cultures "undermines the very reason we had for being concerned with cultural membership—that it allows for meaningful individual choice."[28] But the examples I cited earlier suggest that far fewer minority cultures than Kymlicka seems to think will be able to claim group rights under his liberal justification. Though they may not impose their beliefs or practices on others, and though they may appear to respect the basic civil and political liberties of women and girls, many cultures do not, especially in the private sphere, treat them with anything like the same concern and respect as men and boys, or allow them to enjoy the same freedoms. Discrimination against and control of the freedom of females is practiced, to a greater or lesser extent, by virtually all cultures, past and present, but especially religious ones and those that look to the past—to ancient texts or revered traditions—for guidelines or rules about how to live in the contemporary world. Sometimes more patriarchal minority cultures exist in the context of less patriarchal majority cultures; sometimes the reverse is true. In either case, the degree to which each culture is patriarchal and its willingness to become less so should be crucial factors in considering justifications for group rights—once we take women's equality seriously.

Clearly, Kymlicka regards cultures that discriminate overtly and formally against women—by denying them education, or the right to vote or to hold office—as not deserving special rights.[29] But sex discrimination is often far less overt. In many cultures, strict control of women is enforced in the private sphere by the authority of either actual or symbolic fathers, often acting through, or with the complicity of, the older women of the culture. In many cultures in which women's basic civil rights and

liberties are formally assured, discrimination practiced against women and girls within the household not only severely constrains their choices, but seriously threatens their well-being and even their lives.[30] And such sex discrimination—whether severe or more mild—often has very powerful *cultural* roots.

Although Kymlicka rightly objects to the granting of group rights to minority cultures that practice overt sex discrimination, then, his arguments for multiculturalism fail to register what he acknowledges elsewhere: that the subordination of women is often informal and private, and that virtually no culture in the world today, minority or majority, could pass his "no sex discrimination" test if it were applied in the private sphere.[31] Those who defend group rights on liberal grounds need to address these very private, culturally reinforced kinds of discrimination. For surely self-respect and self-esteem require more than simple membership in a viable culture. Surely it is *not* enough, for one to be able to "question one's inherited social roles" and to have the capacity to make choices about the life one wants to lead, that one's culture be protected. At least as important to the development of self-respect and self-esteem is *our place within our culture*. And at least as important to our capacity to question our social roles is *whether our culture instills in and enforces particular social roles on us*. To the extent that their culture is patriarchal, in both these respects the healthy development of girls is endangered.

Part of the Solution?

It is by no means clear, then, from a feminist point of view, that minority group rights are "part of the solution." They may well exacerbate the problem. In the case of a more patriarchal minority culture in the context of a less patriarchal majority culture, no argument can be made on the basis of self-respect or freedom that the female members of the culture have a clear interest in its preservation. Indeed, they *may* be much better off if the culture into which they were born were either to become extinct (so that its members would become integrated into the less sexist surrounding culture) or, preferably, to be encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women—at least to the degree to which this is upheld in the majority culture. Other considerations would, of course, need to be taken into account, such as whether the minority group speaks a different language that requires protection, and whether the group suffers from prejudices such as racial discrimination. But it would take significant factors weighing in the other direction to counterbalance evidence that a culture severely constrained women's choices or otherwise undermined their well-being.

What some of the examples discussed above show us is how culturally endorsed practices that are oppressive to women can often remain hidden in the private or domestic sphere. In the Iraqi child marriage case mentioned above, if the father himself had not called in agents of the state, his daughters' plight might

well not have become public. And when Congress in 1996 passed a law criminalizing clitoridectomy, a number of US doctors objected to the law as unjustified, since it concerned a private matter which, as one said, "should be decided by a physician, the family, and the child."[32] It can take more or less extraordinary circumstances for such abuses of girls or women to become public or for the state to be able to intervene protectively.

Thus it is clear that many instances of private sphere discrimination against women on cultural grounds are never likely to emerge in public, where courts can enforce their rights and political theorists can label such practices as illiberal and therefore unjustified violations of women's physical or mental integrity. Establishing group rights to enable some minority cultures to preserve themselves may not be in the best interests of the girls and women of the culture, even if it benefits the men.

When liberal arguments are made for the rights of groups, then, special care must be taken to look at within-group inequalities. It is especially important to consider inequalities between the sexes, since they are likely to be less public, and less easily discernible. Moreover, policies aiming to respond to the needs and claims of cultural minority groups must take seriously the need for adequate representation of less powerful members of such groups. Since attention to the rights of minority cultural groups, if it is to be consistent with the fundamentals of liberalism, must be ultimately aimed at furthering the well-being of the members of these groups, there can be no justification for assuming that the groups' self-proclaimed leaders—invariably mainly composed of their older and their male members—represent the interests of all of the groups' members. Unless women—and, more specifically, young women, since older women often become co-opted into reinforcing gender inequality—are fully represented in negotiations about group rights, their interests may be harmed rather than promoted by the granting of such rights.

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1 *International Herald Tribune,* 2 February 1996, News section.

2 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 89, 76. See also Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1989). It should be noted that Kymlicka himself does not argue for extensive or permanent group rights for those who have voluntarily immigrated.

3 Avishai Margalit and Moshe Halbertal, "Liberalism and the Right to Culture," *Social Research* 61, 3 (Fall, 1994): 491.

4 For example, Chandran Kukathas, "Are There any Cultural Rights?" *Political Theory* 20, 1 (1992): 105-39.

5 Okin, "Feminism and Multiculturalism: Some Tensions," *Ethics* (forthcoming 1998).

6 For example, Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture and Multicultural Citizenship*, especially chap. 8. Kymlicka does not apply his requirement that groups be internally liberal to those he terms "national minorities," but I will not address this aspect of his theory here.

7 See for example Krit Singh, "Obstacles to Women's Rights in India," in *Human Rights of Women: National and International Perspectives,* ed. Rebecca J. Cook (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp. 375-096, especially 378-89.

8I cannot discuss here the roots of this male preoccupation, except to say (following feminist theorists Dorothy Dinnerstein, Nancy Chodorow, Jessica Benjamin and, before them, Jesuit anthropologist Walter Ong) that it seems to have a lot to do with female primary parenting. It is also clearly related to the uncertainty of paternity, which technology has now changed. If these issues are at the root of it, then the cultural preoccupation with controlling women is not an inevitable fact of human life, but a contingent factor that feminists have a considerable interest in changing.

10 See Carol Delaney, *Abraham on Trial: Paternal Power and the Sacrifice of Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming 1997). Note that in the Qur'anic version, it is not Isaac but Ishmael whom Abraham prepares to sacrifice.

11 *New York Times*, 5 October 1996, A4. The role that older women in such cultures play in perpetuating them is important but complex, and cannot be addressed here.

12 *New York Times,* 26 June 1997, A9.

13 *International Herald Tribune,* 2 February 1997, News section.

14 *New York Times,* 12 March 1997, A8.

15 This practice is discussed in *Henry S. Richardson, Practical Reasoning About Final Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), especially pp. 240-43, 262-63, 282-84.

16 *Agence France Presse,* 18 May 1997, International News section.

17 See, however, Bhikhu Parekh's "Minority Practices and Principles of Toleration," *International Migration Review* (April 1996): 251-84, in which he directly addresses and critiques a number of cultural practices that devalue the status of women.

18 Sebastian Poulter, "Ethnic Minority Customs, English Law, and Human Rights," *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 36, 3 (1987): 589-615.

19 Amy Gutmann, "The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22, 3 (Summer 1993): 171-204.

20 Mahnaz Afkhami, ed., *Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995); Valentine M. Moghadam, ed., *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994); Susan Moller Okin, "Culture, Religion, and Female Identity Formation" (unpublished manuscript, 1997).

21 For one of the best and most recent accounts of this, and for legal citations for the cases mentioned below, see Doriane Lambelet Coleman, "Individualizing Justice Through Multiculturalism: The Liberals' Dilemma," *Columbia Law Review* 96, 5 (1996): 1093-1167.

22 *New York Times,* 2 December 1996, A6.

23 See Coleman, "Individualizing Justice Through Multiculturalism."

24 See for example Nilda Rimonte, "A Question of Culture: Cultural Approval of Violence Against Women in the Asian-Pacific Community and the Cultural Defense," *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1311-26.

25 Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture,* p. 165.

26 Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture,* pp. 168-72, 195-98.

27 Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship,* p. 92.

28 Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture,* pp. 171-72.

29 Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship,* pp. 153, 165.

30 See, for example, Amartya Sen, "More than One Hundred Million Women Are Missing," *New York Review of Books,* 20 December 1990.

31 Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 239-62.

32 *New York Times,* 12 October 1996, A6. Similar views were expressed on public radio.

Thanks to Elizabeth Beaumont for helpful research assistance and comments on an earlier draft.

Originally published in the October/ November 1997 issue of Boston Review