The Ethics of Membership in Multicultural Societies
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In previous work, I have attempted to provide a liberal egalitarian defense of multicultural citizenship, and since this defense has been formulated for a world of nation-states, it has also in effect been a defense of multicultural nationhood. In my view, liberal egalitarianism (hereafter LE) is compatible with, and perhaps best pursued within, a political community that is characterized by a dialectic of nation-building and minority rights (Kymlicka 2001).

This position has been criticized by my fellow liberals on many grounds. Some liberal nationalists worry that my defense of multiculturalism undercuts the unifying force of nationhood; some liberal multiculturalists think that my defense of nationalism undercuts the pluralizing force of multiculturalism, and many LEs reject both nationalism and multiculturalism on the grounds that LE should distance itself from all particularistic, identitarian, culturalist, collectivistic, or communitarian projects. These debates have raised lots of issues about the definition of culture and identity (and the associated risks of essentialism), about the definition of liberal neutrality, secularism and public reason (and the risks of perfectionism or sectarianism), about the definition of equality of opportunities or resources (and the risks of subsidizing expensive tastes), about the definition of the public and private spheres (and the risks of politicizing what is properly private, or privatizing what is properly public); about the relationship between individual and collective rights (and the risks to individual rights and to ‘minorities within minorities’ when collective identities or categories are recognized), etc.

These are all interesting and important issues, and they have generated fertile, conceptually sophisticated and innovative contributions to the literature. However, I have come to think that these debates may obscure as much as they reveal about the fundamental philosophical and political challenges we face. I now think that disagreements about multicultural nationalism are often, at their heart, disagreements about the nature and role of social membership. Unfortunately, these underlying accounts of social membership are rarely made explicit, and crucial questions about how to articulate the idea of social membership – or indeed whether we even need such a concept – are too often evaded.

So my first aim in this paper is to argue that the question of social membership should play a more central and explicit role in political theory. The assumptions we (implicitly) make about social membership profoundly affect how we do political theory. These assumptions affect the questions we ask, the concepts we use, the possible goals and strategies we consider, and so on. And so we should be more explicit about these assumptions, and be prepared to defend them.

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1 See, e.g., Patten 2016 on how to define culture in relation to debates over multiculturalism.
2 See e.g. Balint 2016 on how to define neutrality in relation to multiculturalism.
3 See e.g. Quong 2006 on multiculturalism and expensive tastes.
4 See, e.g., Kukathas 1998 on multiculturalism and the public/private distinction.
5 See Torbisco 2008 or Newman 2011 on multiculturalism and the individual/collective rights distinction, and Okin 2001; Song 2007 on multiculturalism and the ‘minorities within minorities’ debate.
My second aim is to argue that LE in particular depends on a robust ethics of social membership. Social membership does load-bearing work within LE, both in identifying the content of claims of justice and in motivating compliance with the demands of justice. LE is often described as an account of what we owe each other as free and equal persons, but I will argue it is also an account of what we owe each other as members of a shared society. And if we dig into this second dimension, LE turns out to rest on robust but rarely defended assumptions about the nature of a shared society and the status of membership in it.

And this leads to my third and final aim: I will argue that if LE does indeed rest on a robust ethics of social membership, then it is likely to require something like a multicultural nationalism. We may not use these particular terms – there are endless semantic variations on offer⁶ – but we will need something like the dialectic of nation-building and minority rights I mentioned earlier. This isn’t to dismiss the important questions that critics have raised about the definitions of culture, identity, neutrality, secularism, public culture and so on – these are genuine challenges that must be faced in articulating both liberal nationalism and liberal multiculturalism. But the rationale linking LE and multicultural nationalism is prior and deeper, and flows more directly from LE’s commitment to an ethics of social membership.

I will not attempt a full defense here of multicultural nationalism. In fact, I am less concerned to defend multicultural nationhood as an attractive account of social membership than to explore the prior question: does LE need an ethic of social membership at all, and if so, what are the desiderata that we should use to evaluate alternative accounts of such an ethic? As I said, this seems to me to be the heart of many contemporary disagreements around both nationalism and multiculturalism, yet the terms of this debate remain surprisingly hazy and vague.

The paper is organized in the following way: I begin with a few words about what I mean by an ethics of social membership (section 1); I will then explore the strand of liberal thought which has most explicitly engaged an ethics of social membership – namely, liberal nationalism – and will identify what I see as the kernel of truth in it, and why it provides a useful starting point (section 2). I will then argue that while we can start from a liberal nationalist version of an ethics of social membership, we cannot stop there. The liberal nationalist account is deeply inadequate, given the serious risks it poses for minorities of what we might call “membership deficits” or “membership penalties” (section 3). Finally, I will argue that an adequate account of social membership must acknowledge and mitigate these membership penalties, perhaps through some account of multiculturalism (section 4).

1. **What is a (Robust) Ethics of Social Membership?**

What then is an ethic of social membership? Minimally, we can say that a theory of justice invokes an ethic of membership whenever it distinguishes universal rights owed to all persons from membership rights owed to members of a bounded community. Virtually all political theories do indeed distinguish these two levels. On the one hand, there are claims we have on

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⁶ In places of “multiculturalism”, some prefer terms like interculturalism, pluralism, diversity, differentiated citizenship, etc; in place of “nationhood”, some prefer peoplehood.
each other as human beings – what we might call the obligations of universal humanitarianism, typically rooted in ideas of respect for human personhood or human dignity, and often articulated in the language of universal human rights. On the other hand, there are claims we have on each other as members of a shared society, rooted in ideas of belonging and attachment to a particular society and territory, often articulated in the language of citizenship rights.

This is a familiar distinction, but it might help to give a simple illustration. Imagine that we come across a crowd of people getting off a plane at an airport somewhere in our country. Without knowing anything about our more specific relationships with particular individuals in the crowd, we already know that we have certain universal obligations to all of them, simply because they are human beings with a subjective good. These are the universal rights we owe to all persons as such. (For example, we cannot torture or enslave them or experiment on them).

But as the crowd proceeds to passport control, it quickly becomes apparent that these individuals have different legal and political rights. Some of them are our co-citizens, and as such, they have the unqualified right to enter and reside in the country, and once inside, they have the right to work, and to vote, and more generally, to be considered full and equal members of the political community. They are members of “the people” in whose name the government acts, they have the right to share in the exercise of popular sovereignty.

By contrast, other passengers on the plane are tourists, foreign students, refugee claimants, business visitors or temporary workers, who are not citizens. As such, they do not have an unqualified right to enter the country – they may need to have secured permission beforehand (e.g., through a visa). And even if they have permission to enter, they may not have the right to settle permanently, or to work, or to vote, or to access welfare benefits, in the country. Perhaps their visa only allows them to stay for a short period of time before having to leave. To repeat, these non-citizens are still human beings, and as such have certain universal inviolable human rights. It would be impermissible to kill or enslave them, or to engage in other acts that deny their essential personhood or dignity. But the fact that they have personhood rights does not entail that they have membership rights in this particular society.

As I said, virtually all contemporary political theorists operate with some version of this two-level conception of justice, and in that sense, presuppose what I am calling an ethic of membership. There are enormous disagreements about how to define these two levels. For example, theorists disagree about which claims should be tied to universal personhood and which claims should be tied to membership. Some would like to expand the set of rights tied to personhood and shrink the set of rights tied to membership (Soysal 1994), while others worry that the expansion of personhood rights at the expense of membership rights has undermined the value and meaning of citizenship (Jacobson 1988). Theorists also disagree about how easy or

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7 The example is adapted from Donaldson and Kymlicka 2001.
8 For example, controversies about whether (publicly-funded) health care should be accorded to refugees are, in part, debates about when health care is a human right and when it is a membership right.
difficult it should be for people to gain (or to lose) membership rights, about how people enter or exit the category of “member”.  

But whatever these debates, few people would deny that we need both universal personhood rights and bounded membership rights. Only the most radical open-border cosmopolitans reject the very idea of membership rights.  

In their utopia, everyone exiting the plane would have the same rights to settle, work and vote everywhere on the planet, because these are all seen as personhood rights not membership rights. These rights are attached solely to our status as human beings, which we therefore carry with us as we move around the world. In this radical cosmopolitan world, there would be no need for – and no justification for – distinguishing members from non-members, or insiders from outsiders, or “us” from “them”.

I will return to this cosmopolitan position in section 4, and why I think it is neither politically feasible nor normatively attractive. But for now, I will just note that it is a radical departure, not only from existing political realities, but also from most contemporary theorizing about justice. The basic idea that we need a two-level theory of justice is widely accepted on both the right and the left, amongst liberals and conservatives, democrats and authoritarians. Both shared humanity and social membership are seen as morally salient, each giving rise to distinct claims of justice.

So the idea of an ethic of social membership (hereafter ESM) is present across a wide range of normative political theories. And each of these theories therefore faces a set of questions about the justification of this ESM. If there are such things as membership rights, we need to know (a) who is entitled to these membership rights? (b) which rights should be tied to membership rather than to personhood?; and (c) what motivates people to comply with the distinctive obligations of membership? It would be an interesting project to try to catalogue the different answers to these questions provided within the different traditions of contemporary political theory.

My main concern in this paper, however, is with liberal egalitarianism, and with identifying what sort of ESM it requires. There is a tendency to assume that insofar as LE entails an ESM, it is likely to be relatively “thin”, at least as compared to its various conservative, communitarian, communist, perfectionist or republican competitors. My own view, however, is that while LE’s ESM may be relatively thin along certain dimensions – for example, in not expecting or requiring a consensus on conceptions of the good life - it is actually quite robust along other dimensions. In particular, I want to explore three ways in which an ESM can be more robust:

- A thin ESM is compatible with the idea that the members of a society simply find ourselves thrown together in some bounded subunit of humanity, but a more

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9 Consider debates about the appropriate terms of naturalization, or recent debates about the permissibility of denaturalization for dual citizens convicted of terrorism.

10 Many self-identified cosmopolitans accept a role for membership rights, and simply want to strengthen the category of personhood rights, and/or lower the barriers for people to gain membership rights. These are often called “rooted cosmopolitans”, to indicate that they wish to reconcile cosmopolitanism with membership rights (Kymlicka and Walker 2012). They can be distinguished from what Kolers (2013) calls “terrestrial cosmopolitans”, who view the right to settle, work and vote anywhere on the planet as personhood rights not membership rights.
robust ESM would say that we belong together in that subunit – that it is right and proper that we form such a subunit, and that we want to live together as a shared society.

- A thin ESM treats membership rights as rights of membership – i.e., membership status is a legitimate basis for accessing certain valued rights or resources – but a more robust ESM would say that membership rights are rights to membership: that is, the goal of membership rights is to enable people to access and enjoy a shared society. Membership rights, we might say, are not asocial resources or universal personhood rights, but are more like membership stakes, giving people what they need to belong to and participate in this particular society. Membership is not just the criterion for claiming rights, but rather is the goal of these rights: to enable people to enact social membership;

- A thin ESM would say that compliance with the obligations of membership can be grounded in either enlightened self-interest or universal humanitarianism, whereas a more robust ESM would say that the willingness to comply depends on a sense of bounded solidarity, a generalized sense amongst members that they each value their “we”-ness.

The question I want to explore is whether LE requires an ESM that is robust in one or more of these three ways. In each case, we are dealing with questions of scale or degree: an ESM can be more or less robust along each of these dimensions, rather than all or nothing. So we can rephrase the question: how robust is the LE’s ESM along these three dimensions? To what extent does LE require belonging together, and not just finding ourselves together? To what extent does LE involve rights to membership, and not just rights of membership? To what extent does LE require bounded solidarity, and not just self-interest or universal humanitarianism?

In my view, these are crucial questions, and the answers are not obvious. Many commentators recoil from the suggestion that LE might require a more robust ESM, in part because they think that this will encourage exclusionary tendencies. Of course, any ESM – even the most thin – requires distinguishing members from non-members, and in that sense entails some process of distinguishing “us” from “them”, or “insiders” from “outsiders”. But we might think that the more robust an ESM – the more it appeals to ideas of belonging together and we-ness – the more likely it is to encourage members of the dominant group to question whether ethnic, racial or religious minorities really belong, whether they are really one of us. For this reason, some

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11 The language of “stakes” often goes hand-in-hand with the idea that we want people to feel more “invested” in society, both of which might suggest an unduly instrumental conception of one’s relationship to society. As I discuss below, the goal is rather something like “commitment” and “belonging”, which have non-instrumental dimensions to them. In the absence of a better term, I will continue to use “membership stakes”, but I intend this term to cover a range of goods, capacities, and opportunities that enable people to enact or perform social membership.

12 As Laitinen and Pessi put it, not all pro-social feelings qualify as solidarity: “as solidarity is often based on we-thinking, it can be separated not only from anti-social egocentrism, but also from one-sided ‘thou-centrism’, such as altruism, sympathy, caring, or Christian charity. While these concentrate on the wellbeing of the other or you, the target of concern in solidarity can be us together” (Laitinen and Pessi 2014: 2).
commentators seem reluctant to even contemplate the possibility that LE rests on a more robust form of ESM, and simply stipulate that their vision of LE renounces such ideas.

I think this is an issue that requires investigation, not stipulation. We need to contemplate the possibility that the theory and practice of LE call upon and evoke a robust ESM. To be sure, a robust ESM carries with it predictable risks, but just for that reason we need to think carefully and honestly about how the pursuit of LE might be implicated in these risks, and about how we can design possible safeguards against them. In the rest of the paper, therefore, I want to explore various reasons for thinking that LE may require a more robust ESM, and why this matters for debates about liberal nationalism and multiculturalism.

2. The Liberal Nationalist Account

Within contemporary liberal political theory, the idea that we need a robust ESM has been defended most strongly by the school of thought known as “liberal nationalism” (Miller 1995, Tamir 1993, 2019, Moore 2001, Gans 2003, Mounk 2018). Liberal nationalists argue that there is an ‘elective affinity’ between liberal-democracy and nationhood (Canovan 1996): liberal-democracy works best, and perhaps can only work, within political communities structured by norms and practices of nationhood. And a crucial reason for this elective affinity, they argue, is that liberal democracy requires a robust ESM, and a robust ESM in turn rests on ideas of shared nationhood. Nationhood underpins the sense of belonging together, membership stakes, and bounded solidarity that are called for in a robust ESM.13

We can think of liberal nationalists as making both a positive and negative claim: positively, they argue that actually-existing liberal democracies do in fact exhibit a robust ESM grounded in ideas of nationhood; negatively, they argue that there is no alternative to nationhood as a way of structuring liberal-democracy, at least for the foreseeable future. I want to focus, for the moment, on the positive claim: is it true that actually-existing liberal democracies rely on a nation-based form of ESM? We need to get clear on how nationhood actually operates in our current societies before we can think about possible alternatives.

So I will explore how liberal nationalists understand the role of nationhood in sustaining a robust ESM along the three dimensions I’ve outlined: belonging together, membership stakes, and bounded solidarities.

Belonging Together as the Basis for the Demos

Are actually-existing Western democracies structured around a logic of nationhood, as liberal nationalists claim? The extent to which contemporary Western states are appropriately described as “national” states is controversial. Some people think that since liberal-democracy requires states to treat all its members as equal citizens, regardless of their race or religion, they no longer

13 Social scientists have argued that this combination of liberal-democracy and nationhood has become dominant in the West for a variety of reasons, including economic efficiency and military power. But for liberal nationalists, the normative justification for nationhood lies not in its economic performance or military success, but in its role in nurturing a robust ESM.
can be said to be based on nationhood. According to Joppke, for example, when states today attempt to describe what it means to be British or German or French, they end up just restating “nationally anonymous” values of freedom, equality and democracy (Joppke 2004: 253).

That is misleading. It’s true that Western democracies have embraced norms of non-discrimination and have rejected certain kinds of racial exclusions and religious hierarchies, but they nonetheless remain committed to ideologies of nationhood. One way to make this clear is to ask about the units of liberal democracy. Being British, German or French is not just about having a commitment to liberal democracy, but also about having a moral commitment to enacting liberal democracy within a particular unit – that is, amongst a particular group of people on a particular territory.

This is not a trivial point: it’s important that people agree, not just on principles of liberal-democracy, but on the unit of liberal-democracy. Think about cases where there is no such agreement. Consider Northern Ireland. Both Irish-Catholic republicans and British-Protestant unionists accept liberal-democratic principles, but republicans think that the relevant unit of liberal democracy is Ireland, that the territory and people of Northern Ireland belong with the rest of Ireland as part of a self-governing Irish people. Conversely, unionists think that the relevant unit of liberal democracy is Britain, that the territory and people of Northern Ireland belong with the rest of Britain as part of a self-governing British people. This disagreement has led to political paralysis, and even to violence, not because of a disagreement on the principles of liberal democracy, but because of disagreement on the unit of liberal democracy.

You might think that N. Ireland is an exception. But nothing in liberal-democratic theory justifies the assumption or expectation that people will have converging preferences on the unit. On the contrary, all else being equal, liberal-democratic theory would expect us to predict diverging preferences. After all, the core premise of liberal-democratic theory is that people have diverging political preferences – that’s why we need democracy - and there’s no reason why that wouldn’t equally apply to preferences about units as to preferences about policies. In order to be stable, liberal-democracies require citizens to exhibit this paradoxical combination of divergent preferences about policies and convergent preferences about the units within which policies are decided. Yet nothing in liberal-democratic theory entitles us to that assumption.

So why aren’t there more cases like Northern Ireland, where people disagree over the unit? The answer is nationhood: most Western democracies have been very successful in inculcating ideas of nationhood amongst their citizens. 14 The vast majority of citizens, in the vast majority of Western democracies, embrace the belief that they form “a people” (amongst other peoples), and that as a people, they belong together in a single polity, and that they have territorial rights over the territory of that polity, and that it is right and proper that they govern themselves and their

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14 For example, polls show that the policy preferences of Americans in New England are closer to those of eastern/central Canadians than they are to those of southern Americans (Grabb and Curtis 2005). Joining Canada would, therefore, make it more likely that their policy preferences would be adopted, while still upholding liberal-democratic principles. So why does no one in New England propose seceding and joining Canada? Because they are not just nationally-anonymous liberal-democrats, but think of themselves as belonging with other Americans.
territory. In Rogers Smith’s terms, people embrace a “story of peoplehood” that singles out a particular group and a particular territory as the rightful unit of liberal-democracy (Smith 2003). Moreover, this is not a momentary or provisional commitment: rather, the commitment to nationhood is understood as an intergenerational commitment, reaching into the past and extending into the indefinite future. We have historically formed a people with rights to govern ourselves and our territory, and we will continue to form a people with those rights. As the American pledge of allegiance and French constitution both emphasize, to be French or American is not just to endorse liberal-democracy, it is also to think of the French and American people as “indivisible” – as belonging together and forming an enduring “we”. Western states have been very successful in inculcating these stories of peoplehood, and of marginalizing or suppressing any competing claims about which peoples and which territories belong together.\footnote{Northern Ireland is the exception that proves the rule. British efforts to suppress competing Irish republican views have failed, and the result is political instability.}

Can we imagine an alternative to this reliance on nationhood as a way of defining the demos? As I discuss in section 3, building the demos around stories of peoplehood has come at a high price for many groups, and we might wonder whether there are viable alternatives. The literature is in fact full of accounts of political order that purport to avoid reliance on nationhood, including post-national cosmopolitan, agonistic, or ecological theories of democracy and citizenship.\footnote{Others attempt to avoid the boundary problem entirely by appealing to the “all-affected interests” principle, abandoning the idea of stable self-governing political units and replacing it with an endlessly changing configuration of temporary demoi depending on who is affected by a specific topic or proposal (e.g., Goodin 2007). For the many reasons this is neither feasible nor attractive, see Song 2012; Saunders 2011.} I will return to some of these at the end of the paper. However, for now, I will just note that one test of the adequacy of any such alternative is that it gives some account of what generates converging preferences about the unit of decision-making in the absence of nationhood. And in my view, the existing alternatives available in the literature fail this test. Theorists clearly assume such converging preferences, but offer no explanation for them. And if we scratch the surface, it becomes clear that they typically smuggle back in the very assumptions of nationhood that they purport to reject. I think this is true, for example, of Habermas’s (2001) and Benhabib’s (2006) accounts of postnational democracy, or Connolly’s (2000) account of rhizomatic democracy.\footnote{See also Ferguson 2012, who criticizes a wide range of political theorists for their assumptions about the importance of national belonging, but who then reproduces precisely the sort of “deixis” that is the carrier of banal nationalism. (Billig defines deixis as the “little words”—we, us, ours, here—that are “continually pointing to the national homeland as the home of the readers”, and that operate to “unmindfully remind” people that they belong together (1995: 11).}

So we need to take seriously the liberal nationalist hypothesis that nationhood plays a vital role in developing a sense of belonging together, which in turn is needed to create this (otherwise puzzling) combination of diverging preferences on policy but converging preferences on units.

\textit{Membership as the Moral Purpose of the Welfare State}

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Liberal nationalists argue that a national ESM is also at the core of the moral logic of actually-existing welfare states. As we’ve seen, LE – like virtually all contemporary political theories – operates with a two-track conception of justice: universal humanitarianism, crystallized in the idiom of universal human rights, and membership rights, crystallized in the idea of citizenship rights and the national welfare state. In the case of universal humanitarianism, the moral logic is relatively clear: namely, respect for human personhood or for human dignity. This link between universal human rights and ideas of respect for human personhood and human dignity has now been extensively explored in the literature.

But what is the moral logic of membership rights and the welfare state? For some commentators, the moral purpose is the same as universal human rights - namely, respect for personhood or human dignity – just more so. Universal human rights, we might say, are about the minimal requirements of respect for personhood, whereas the welfare state is about maximal personhood. This is sometimes encouraged by the idea that the fundamental moral issue raised by the welfare state is one of co-national partiality: to what extent are we permitted to give extra weight to the interest of co-nationals over other persons (Goodin 1998). On this view, there is no difference in the content of the interests underlying universal humanitarianism and the welfare state – the only difference is in how those interests are weighed or prioritized.

In my view, this is an inadequate account, philosophically and sociologically. The welfare state does not simply weigh the interests of members differently, but it also targets different interests – namely, interests in membership itself. To be sure, the welfare state is a complex package of different institutions and policies with different justifications. Some aspects of the welfare state are based on universal humanitarianism (e.g., duties of rescue); other parts of the welfare state are based on prudential self-interest (pooling of risks) – and neither of these require any sense of belonging together or sharing a society.

But other parts of the welfare state have as their goal to recognize and enable of social membership. Many of the public goods dimensions of the welfare state (parks, museums, libraries), as well as its more redistributive aspects, are rooted in an ideal of “social justice”, and the term here is instructive. Social justice suggests the idea that we share a society, a society which belongs equally to all its members, and the task of the welfare state is to shape social relationships in accordance with the idea of equal membership. In the famous words of T.H. Marshall, the welfare state rests on “a direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilisation that is a common possession” (Marshall 1950: 96). The task of the welfare state is

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18 The welfare state has other logics related to state imperatives, including warfare, economic competitiveness, and administrative efficiency. My focus here is on LE’s account of its normative goals.

19 E.g., Dupre 2015. It is another question how we define and defend these ideas of personhood and dignity. All too often, LEs have defended this commitment to human personhood/dignity through species hierarchy – i.e., they have said that our personhood/dignity consists in our radical difference and superiority to animals. In my view, this approach is both philosophically indefensible and politically counterproductive. We need to divorce the defense of human dignity from human supremacism. But that is the topic for another paper (Kymlicka 2018).
to provide the kinds of public goods and redistributive/predistributive policies that help to create
a good or decent or just society that will be seen as a “common possession” of all its members.

Note how different this is from the moral logic of humanitarianism. It is not a response to
suffering or to the denial of human dignity, but rather seeks to enable members to see society as
a “common possession”. The assumption is that we form a community, and that the function of
the welfare state is to ensure that everyone feels equally at home in the community, that
everyone can equally partake in the social and cultural life of the community and enjoy its
civilization, and that everyone can feel that they belong to the community and that the
community belongs to them. In this sense, we can say that one key function of the welfare state
is to distribute membership goods or membership stakes: the welfare state secures what people
need to flourish as members of a shared society. Whereas universal human rights recognize and
respect us as human beings with inherent dignity, the welfare state empowers us as members of a
particular society to enjoy our shared society as a common possession.

This “social” dimension of the welfare state has been flagged in the recent debate about
“distributive equality” versus “social equality” or “relational equality”. According to some
commentators, the canonical formulations of LE in Rawls or Dworkin were premised on the idea
of “distributive equality”, according to which the goal is to ensure that everyone possesses equal
amounts of some set of material goods or opportunities. Critics argue that justice should instead
be understood in terms of the nature of our social relationships: the aim is not to equalize private
stocks of stuff, but to equalize people’s ability to engage each other as peers in society.

This argument for thinking about the welfare state in terms of “social equality” seems broadly
correct, but the social equality literature to date is vague on the conception of “society” that

20 For canonical discussions of this contrast between a “social” and “distributive” conception of
equality, see Anderson 1999, Miller 1997, Scheffler 2003. For an overview, see Fourie,
Schuppert and Walliman-Helmer 2015.

21 A similar analysis could be made regarding LE theories of democracy. Some LEs endorse an
essentially distributive conception of democracy, as allocating rights to individuals to have their
interests taken into account in decisions that affect them. A more “social” conception of
democracy would start from the premise that democracy is about how the members of a shared
society govern themselves and their shared social world. Thinking of democracy in these more
social terms affects both who is enfranchised, and what sorts of interests are elicited. On this
social view, a LE theory of democracy, like a LE theory of the welfare state, becomes a matter of
membership stakes.

22 While social justice arguably does rest on a distinctly “social” conception of equality, I do not
think this requires abandoning ideas of distributive equality, since distributive shares are (or
should be) central to any plausible account of membership stakes. However, it is true that earlier
LE accounts of distributive justice failed to make clear how these distributive shares operated as
membership stakes – that is, they failed to make clear how particular distributions of particular
goods connect to the idea of “a direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a
civilisation that is a common possession”. In a sense, this is also true of many accounts of “social
equality”: they too would be improved if they made more explicit their underlying assumptions
about social membership in a shared society. I think the same could be said about Honig’s work
underpins it. In my view, the social equality conception of justice only makes sense if people do indeed think of themselves as forming a shared society, and moreover, think that it is it right and proper that they will continue to form a shared society into the future. If they do not see themselves as forming a shared society, or do not wish to continue to do so, then the justification for the distinctive obligations of social justice diminishes, leaving us with just the moral logics of universal humanitarianism and prudential self-interest as grounds for the welfare state.\textsuperscript{23}

So here again, the key question is how do people imagine the boundaries of this shared society? The answer cannot just be physical proximity, or actual interpersonal interaction. (I am physically much closer to Americans who live 5 miles across the St. Lawrence river than I am to Canadians who live in Newfoundland thousands of miles away. I am also much more likely to meet foreign professional colleagues than I am to meet, say, Canadian loggers). The answer, according to liberal nationalists, is a story of peoplehood, which nurtures a belief that we belong together in a shared society that is a common possession. In Benedict Anderson’s famous words, nationhood encourages us to imagine that we form the kind of society that generates a “deep horizontal comradeship” with our co-nationals (Anderson 1983: 7).

So here is a second way that liberal nationalists see nationhood as playing a central role in actually-existing liberal democracies. The moral purpose of the welfare state is not just to respect universal interests in personhood or dignity, but to give people membership stakes in a particular society, and this in turn presupposes that people identify with and orient themselves towards a shared society. Nationhood underpins that identification and orientation. The same sense of belonging together that underpins a consensus on the units of liberal democratic governance also helps render intelligible the idea of membership stakes in a shared society.

Here again, we might ask whether there are alternatives to nationhood as the basis for the “social” in “social equality”. It is a long-standing criticism of both normative political theory and social science that they are guilty of “methodological nationalism”, automatically assuming that “society” and “nation” are somehow interchangeable, and/or defining society to fit the image of the nation.\textsuperscript{24} We should indeed avoid assuming that a shared society must be a national society. However, we should also avoid the opposite assumption that we have non-national conceptions of society readily available to us that are fit-for-purpose, and that can do the load-bearing work on the importance of “public things” as triangulation (Honig 2017). According to Honig, we engage with others through our shared concern for “public things”. That seems right to me – and public things are central to Marshall’s conception of the welfare state as building a society that is a “common possession” - but again, we need to ask what conception of society and of social membership is presupposed by any account of “public things”.

\textsuperscript{23} According to some commentators, this is precisely what neoliberalism has done in the sphere of education. Whereas education used to orient students to identify with the national society, and to claim membership stakes in it, neoliberal education encourages students to think of themselves as actors in global markets, downplaying any idea of membership stakes, and prioritizing instead universal personhood and strategic self-interest (Mitchell 2003).

\textsuperscript{24} As Billig puts it, “the `society’ which lies at the heart of sociology’s self-definition is created in the image of the nation-state” (1995: 53; cf. Urry 2000:6). Sager makes the same claim about the conception of society at the heart of political theory’s self-definition (2016).
that is required. In this context, that means we need a conception of “society” that can support the moral logic of the welfare state (i.e., a conception of shared society that entails claims to redistribution across classes to ensure membership stakes in society as a common possession). That there are transnational forms of “society” is undeniable; whether these are the kinds of society that can support the moral purposes of the welfare state is less clear. I will return to some possible alternatives in section 4, but let me just say for now that, as with defining the demos, it seems to me that non-national or post-national views of what constitutes membership stakes or membership goods are underdeveloped.

**Bounded Solidarity as Motivation**

This leads to the third function that liberal nationalists accord to nationhood within actually-existing liberal-democracies: namely, to motivate compliance with the obligations of social justice. To be clear, liberal nationalists do not claim that a sense of shared nationhood is required for us to show a humanitarian concern for the suffering of others. Humans as a species are not psychopaths, indifferent to the suffering of others. We can be moved to provide aid in response to famines in distant societies, or to provide emergency health care for tourists who fall ill, without requiring that the recipients be “one of us”. We can recognize duties of rescue to those in need, or duties of hospitality to the stranger. Some of us are moved to protect members of other species who are suffering or who need protection from harm. These are humanitarian responses to needs that do not depend on any sense of nationally-bounded solidarity.

But as we’ve just seen, the welfare state is not exclusively or primarily about a humanitarian impulse to relieve suffering, offer hospitality, or rescue from distress. The welfare state, at least in the robust form endorsed by LEs, is about enabling social membership – that is, about creating a society that is a common possession of all of its members. And the question then is what motivates compliance with the obligations of membership? In particular, what motivates the well-off to care about the social membership of the less well-off? The legacies of historic injustices, combined with the operation of what Rawls calls the natural and social lotteries, will inevitably generate deep inequalities within society that contradict the goal of equal social membership. In many cases, it will be in the material self-interest of the well-off to maintain these underserved advantages, and to exploit them for further gain. So it is doubtful that we can motivate compliance with a redistributive welfare state through appeal to self-interest. Nor can

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25 For a thoughtful discussion of the need for a multi-level conception of political order - including cities, regions, nations and supranational – each with its own conception of membership, see Baubock 2017. However, while a firm defender of multi-level citizenship against the unquestioned supremacy of the nation-state, Baubock himself acknowledges that the nation-state remains the right level for the redistributive obligations of the welfare state.

26 An ESM is not just about such redistributive obligations. It includes a range of other pro-social or citizenship behaviours, including willingness to participate in projects that promote the public good, to take an interest in the future of the society, to share public space, to solicit the views of others, and so on. I return to this fuller set of membership responsibilities below. My focus in this section is on the welfare state as one dimension of the LE conception of social justice, with its redistributive obligations.
we motivate it by appeal to universal humanitarianism, since these are claims about what it is
treat someone as a member, not about what it is to treat someone as a person.

According to liberal nationalists, the answer must be national solidarity. Citizens are willing to
forego advantages in order to support the membership claims of others because of a shared sense
of “we”-ness, a joint desire to live together and belong together in a shared society. When
feelings of we-ness are shared by the advantaged and disadvantaged, this solidarity can serve as a
necessary supplement to both universal humanitarianism and prudential self-interest as a grounds
for compliance with the requirements of social justice.\(^{27}\)

Interestingly, the political left has had ambivalent views historically about this appeal to national
solidarity. The left initially disavowed appeals to national solidarity in their political struggles for
political and social rights. Socialist parties understood themselves as class parties engaged in
class struggle, drawing upon class solidarity to defeat their class enemies. On this agonistic view
of welfare state politics, the size and shape of the welfare state is determined by the balance of
power between those who have a class self-interest in expanding the welfare state and those who
have a class self-interest in reducing it. The outcome of this bargaining game may be a stronger
welfare state if trade unions and social democratic parties are particularly powerful and/or able to
form strategic coalitions with other popular forces. But this need not require or expect that
anyone acts out of national solidarity.

However, the breakthrough for social democracy arguably occurred when left parties abandoned
this self-conception, and redescribed themselves as a “people’s party” representing the nation as
a whole and appealing to solidarity amongst co-nationals as a basis for social justice. As Sheri
Berman notes, this transition from class solidarity to national solidarity was bitterly contested on
the left in many European countries (Berman 2006). But the idea of the welfare state as an
expression of an ethic of nationhood – captured so evocatively in Per Albin Hansson’s idea of a
“people’s home” (folkhemmet), or in T.H. Marshall’s “a direct sense of community membership”
- proved to be politically more effective.

It is this vision of the welfare state as an expression of national solidarity – and not just of class
struggle or universal humanitarianism – that powerfully inspired social democratic politics
throughout most of the twentieth-century. It remained true of course that the shape and size of
the welfare state depended in part on the balance of class forces. But the mobilization of national
solidarity, alongside class bargaining, also mattered. Successful efforts to create more
redistributive welfare states are always contested, not the spontaneous result of pre-existing
feelings of enhanced solidarity, and so depend on the contingent balance of power. But one of

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\(^{27}\) Attempts to test this liberal nationalist hypothesis often rely on survey data, first asking people
how strongly they identify with the nation, and then seeing if this is correlated with support for
redistribution. The results have been mixed at best (Shayo 2009; Johnston et al 2010; Miller and
Ali 2014). This may not be the right question to ask. What matters is not how strongly the
respondent identifies with the nation, but rather how confident she is that the person she is being
asked to make sacrifices for shares this national identification. The crux of national solidarity is a
belief that this sense of “we”-ness is shared between advantaged and disadvantaged. As we will
see below, this is indeed what the empirical evidence suggests.
the resources wielded by progressive actors in that contest is the appeal to national solidarity. Moreover, these reforms can over time reinforce feelings of national solidarity, which help to secure the reforms against the vagaries of power politics: they become seen as Marshallian “common possessions” or achievements of the nation, and not just the spoils of partisan battles. After all, the power of trade unions and social democratic parties has weakened at various times and places, yet welfare states have largely endured, arguably because they helped to build the very feelings of national solidarity needed to sustain them.\(^{(28)}\)

So it was a historic evolution for the left to endorse the role of national solidarity as a motivation to comply with the requirements of justice. Over the past thirty years, however, we’ve arguably seen a reversal of that trajectory. Contemporary progressive theorists have shown little interest in exploring what conception of “we”-ness can motivate the advantaged to comply with the demands of justice. This is true not just of LE theorists, but also of most other progressive political theorists, whether it is agonistic/contestatory theorists, or critical race/postcolonial theorists, or biopolitical theorists. They have all systematically denied or downplayed the extent to which their theories appeal to any sense of societal we-ness that motivates the advantaged to make sacrifices for the disadvantaged.

Indeed, this seems to be true, not just of normative theories of justice, but also of left/progressive social science research, where the focus tends to be on contentious politics from below, not on the moral commitments of the advantaged. In recent years, both the normative and the empirical work on the left has largely avoided appeal to solidaristic motivations amongst the advantaged.

It is worth pausing to reflect on this trend, and to consider what underpins it. Part of the answer is that it seems naïve to appeal to the moral nature of the advantaged. Both traditional rational choice/power resource theories in political science as well as more recent accounts of contentious politics all operate on the assumption that the advantaged will not voluntarily forgo opportunities out of a sense of solidarity. Following Tilly (1998), we have been taught to think of “opportunity hoarding” as a defining feature of durable structures of inequality. And even if the advantaged do engage in moral reasoning, we have been taught, following Anderson (2015), that the advantaged are subject to cognitive biases that inevitably lead them to see their advantages as earned (and to see others’ disadvantages as natural or deserved). So even if the advantaged were motivated to act on their moral evaluations of right and wrong, and not just their prudential calculations of self-interest, the result is the same, since the latter predictably distorts the former.

But there may be another deeper reason for not appealing to the solidaristic motivations of the advantaged: namely, the perception that ‘true’ justice (or ‘real’ freedom/emancipation) is something one needs to struggle for. To think that justice is simply bestowed by the good graces of the powerful is infantilizing: it treats the disadvantaged as passive beneficiaries, not active agents. One important form that injustice takes is treating subaltern groups as incapable of responsible and effective political agency. That particular injustice can only be remedied if they initiate and lead their own struggles. Moreover, it is through struggle and contestation that

\(^{(28)}\) This is a central theme in Brooks and Manza (2007), who argue that welfare state regimes endure, despite declining working class power, in part because they have become embedded in public discourse and collective memories, albeit to different degrees in different countries.
political subjectivities and political capacities are built. In short, true justice is something one must *wrest* from the powerful, and the process of wresting is as important as the rights or resources one is seeking to wrest. Far from appealing to the solidarity of the advantaged, the best sort of justice is one that is achieved in the face of opposition from the powerful and the state. 

In effect, contemporary progressives start from a realpolitik view of the advantaged as implacable defenders of their privileges (as opportunity hoarders), but then say that this is okay, since the only sort of justice that is really worth pursuing is the sort of justice that is wrested from, not bestowed by, the powerful. Justice granted too quickly or easily from above is somehow a cheapened or contaminated form of justice.

This set of views, while obviously not universally shared, seems to characterize a broad swathe of both the normative political theory and empirical social science on the progressive left. There are important truths in both the empirical assumption (that the powerful hoard opportunities) and the normative assumption (that contestatory processes are constitutive of justice). However, I would argue that these assumptions also miss some important truths. This vision works well for some groups, but not so well for others.

First, there are many disadvantaged groups who are simply constitutively unable to engage in self-initiated forms of collective political mobilization and contestation. This is true of young children, for example, or people with severe cognitive disabilities, or animals. Members of these groups certainly have strong preferences, but whether these preferences matter politically depends on whether those in power make a deliberate and conscientious effort to solicit and be responsive to their preferences. These groups cannot muscle their way into politics: they need to be invited. Given this obvious limitation of the prevailing ethos, it is interesting to ask what progressive political theorists of justice say about such groups. And the short answer is: nothing. They are essentially invisible in liberal egalitarian and other progressive theories, precisely because they do not fit the preferred model of self-initiated contestation from below.

Second, there are many groups who are simply too small, poor and dispersed to engage in effective forms of contentious politics. In some countries, a particularly despised ethnic or social group may just form 1-2% of the population – perhaps the Roma, or indigenous peoples, or gays. If dominant groups are seen as implacable defenders of their privilege, insensitive to moral arguments, the prospects that such small groups can wrest justice seems vanishingly small.

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29 For one of many examples, see Weeks’ contrast between “demands” aimed at antagonizing the powerful from “moralizing pleas and proposals” aimed at persuading the powerful (2011: 46ff).
30 For a review of recent political philosophy textbooks documenting the almost complete silence on the case of children, cognitive disability and animals, see Donaldson and Kymlicka 2016.
31 Levy 2017 argues that immigrants can often gain an effective foothold in politics because it may be in the self-interest of one political party to grant them the vote and then solicit their support as a strategy for reaping partisan advantage. But the plight of the Roma in much of Europe suggests that political parties often make the opposite calculation, that they lose more votes than they gain by reaching out to small pariah groups.
Third, there are reasons to think that contentious politics is no longer an effective vehicle even for the classic case of class inequality. According to Piketty (2014), the structural conditions that made it possible for the working class to wrest redistribution from the powerful in the mid-20th century were exceptional, and we are reverting to the historical norm in which the powerful are able not only to hoard their opportunities but indeed to expand inequality. If true, the prospects for justice will increasingly depend in part on whether the powerful willingly forego the opportunity to hoard their power and privilege.

Across a broad range of cases, therefore, the prospects for social justice depend in part on the advantaged having an effective sense of societal solidarity that will lead them to forego opportunities to exploit their power and privilege. As I noted earlier, this was a lesson that the left had to learn in the twentieth-century, but it has been neglected by the contemporary left. For a select few groups, some combination of universal humanitarianism, self-interest and agonistic contestation can help secure social justice. But for many other cases, social justice requires a sense of “we”-ness that connects the advantaged and disadvantaged. And to date at least, that has been largely provided by nationhood.

In these three ways – and I suspect we could extend the list – LE requires that citizens be committed, not just to nationally anonymous liberal-democratic principles, and not just to universal humanitarianism, but also to a robust ethic of social membership. It requires people to believe that they belong together and that they form the kind of shared society that generates obligations of social justice and bounded solidarities. Stories of peoplehood have filled this need. In her book 1993 book *Liberal Nationalism*, Yael Tamir argued that, if you scratch the surface, all liberals are liberal nationalists. Liberals may not self-identify as nationalists, she noted, and indeed may reject the label, but their visions of democracy and the welfare state in fact tacitly presuppose the successful inculcation, not just of nationally-anonymous liberal-democratic principles, but of a story of peoplehood (Tamir 1993). I believe that remains true today, and will remain true for the foreseeable future. LE requires a robust ethics of social membership, and nationhood is the most readily available and effective basis for such an ethics. In that sense, nationhood is, for now, the inevitable starting point for thinking about LE’s ESM.

### 3. Membership Penalties

However, while liberal nationhood might be inevitable, it is also unacceptable, at least if not actively contained and counterbalanced by other values and principles. As I noted earlier, efforts to shape the demos and society along ‘national’ lines have come at a huge (and ongoing) cost to many groups. In effect, liberal nationhood works well as an ESM for some groups, and very badly for others. It helps underpin strong membership stakes for some groups, but it equally creates endemic membership penalties or membership deficits for others.

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32 G.R. Grice (1978) famously said “Rawls’ methodology seems to be both inevitable and unacceptable”. I think the same is true about liberal nationalism.
The precise nature of these membership penalties will vary from group to group, country to country, and time to time. But the existence of these penalties is, I think, an endemic feature of a world order built around ideas of nationhood. Whatever the story of peoplehood is in a particular country – whatever the story is about how we came together as a particular people on this particular territory and of why we belong together into the indefinite future - it will inevitably give centrality to the history, language and culture of the historic founding majority or the colonizing settlers, while viewing the history, language and culture of minorities as at best abnormal, and at worst, as a threat to the cohesion or survival of the people.

This is perhaps clearest in the case of indigenous peoples and historic minorities who were swept aside in the process of the formation of peoplehood: e.g., indigenous peoples in the New World, or substate and kin-state minorities in Europe (e.g., German-speakers in Italy), who often had quite different ideas about which territory belonged to which people. At the origins of any story of peoplehood, there was almost always some competing story of peoplehood that was suppressed (often violently). And these historic cleavages persist, marking these groups as potentially disloyal, as “marked citizens”, subject to either assimilation or exclusion, if not persecution, expulsion, or demographic engineering. Nation-states have been particularly harsh on minority groups seen as carriers of a competing story of peoplehood that might contest the territorial rights of the state (Toft 2005).

Stories of peoplehood also put immigrants under a cloud of suspicion. They are less likely to be seen as challenging the territorial rights of the nation (unless they come from a neighbouring power with expansionist histories or ambitions, as with ethnic Russians in the Baltics). But as newcomers, they are literally foreign to the prevailing story of peoplehood. They may share universal liberal-democratic principles, but they do not share the particular language, history and culture that explains why this people belong together on this territory. And insofar as they maintain any commitment to their “foreign” language, history and culture, this is seen as prima facie evidence of their failure to embrace the story of peoplehood. There may be a process for immigrants to “naturalize”, but this has historically been understood as subtractive or assimilationist: that is, immigrants need to renounce their “foreign” language, culture and history in order to embrace the national language, culture and history.

The result is to stigmatize any visible expression of immigrants’ cultural difference. Imagine that members of the both the majority and an immigrant minority are engaged in some cultural practice that is consistent with human rights (i.e., with the requirements of universal humanitarianism): speaking their language, celebrating their religious holidays and national heroes, engaging in traditional forms of arts and leisure, or rituals of greeting and mourning and so on. In the case of the majority, the free enjoyment of its culture is always already seen as consistent with the story of peoplehood. Indeed, this is one of the purposes of peoplehood. In the words of the UN, the whole point of the right to self-determination is so peoples can “freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”. But when immigrant minorities attempt to freely pursue their social and cultural development, they are always already subject to suspicion as a threat to national unity or to social cohesion. And so, historically, immigrants –

33 On minorities as marked citizens, see Klein 2014.
like indigenous peoples and national minorities – have been told that the only route to inclusion in the national “we” is to renounce their “foreign” identity and culture.

In short, stories of peoplehood inevitably generate membership penalties for minorities – new or old – who endorse some competing story of peoplehood, or who wish to maintain a distinctive identity, or who are perceived as different. It’s important to emphasize here that by “membership penalties”, I am not referring to the denial or withdrawal of formal legal membership (as in denaturalization). The number of people who would literally want to restrict citizenship to people of a particular race or religion is small in most Western democracies. However, studies show that even those Americans who endorse a racially-inclusive “civic” conception of nationhood – that is, who support (and vote for) laws that enable immigrants to become citizens - nonetheless think that white Christians are more “prototypically” American than others (Davos and Banaji 2005; Devos and Heng 2009; Theiss-Morse 2009). So there is a distinction, not just between members and non-members, but also between members and prototypical members. And this matters: the evidence suggests that people (whether members of the majority or minority), in a purely automatic and unconscious way, are more likely to accord greater weight to the views of those who are seen as prototypical.

In short, stories of peoplehood – even in “civic” nations - create “prototypical” members on the one side, and “burdened” or “marked” members on the other. Members of the dominant founding or settler group are always already seen as members of the people, and hence always already authorized to tell the story of peoplehood. Moreover, even when minorities are acknowledged as members, it is still individuals from the dominant group who are seen as “prototypical” members, and hence are accorded greater weight. Immigrants, by contrast, have to prove that they are no longer “foreign” and have properly “integrated”, and national minorities have to prove they are no longer disloyal carriers of competing projects of nationhood, in order to have any authority in relation to the story of peoplehood.

These issues are often described as issues of “identity politics” or “politics of recognition”, as distinct from politics of interests or of redistribution, and as such are often seen as, at best, marginal to LE, and at worst a deviation and distortion of LE’s fundamental aspirations. But if I’m right that LE is above all an ethics of social membership, and if stories of peoplehood systematically discount the membership of certain groups, then this in fact is an issue that should be at the very heart of LE.

One difficulty we face here is that we lack any clear or well-established indicators or metrics of “membership penalties”. This is not surprising, since as we’ve seen, liberals have tended to downplay the extent to which LE is rooted in a robust ethics of social membership. Since LE has been inarticulate about its conception of social membership, it is hardly surprising that we do not have well-articulated ways of measuring how social membership is discounted.

However, I think we can make progress on this front by looking at the deservingness literature. Martin Gilens famously said that
Politics is often viewed, by elites at least, as a process centered on the question ‘who gets what’. For ordinary Americans, however, politics is more often about ‘who deserves what’. (Gilens 1999: 2)

These deservingness judgements are, I believe, strongly shaped by the underlying ethics of membership in a society, and so provide a natural place to look for membership penalties. If I’m right that LE rests on an ethic of social membership, and that stories of peoplehood create membership penalties for minority groups, then we should expect these penalties to show up in people’s judgements of “who deserves what”. Exploring deservingness judgements provides a potential window to see membership penalties in action.

And indeed the literature does show that minorities are often subject to harsh deservingness judgements, although as will see, the explanation for this is contested. Perhaps the most common finding in studies of deservingness judgements is that immigrants are at the bottom of the “deservingness ladder” across the Western democracies in relation to welfare state benefits. When asked about a range of possible beneficiaries of the welfare state – the elderly, single mothers, people who are sick or unemployed, people with disabilities, immigrants – immigrants are ranked last. This is so ubiquitous that van Oorschot calls this “a truly universal element in the popular welfare culture of present Western welfare states” (2006: 25).

Why are immigrants seen as less deserving? One explanation draws on a comparison with the case of African-Americans in the United States. Studies show that whites view Blacks as less deserving because they are seen as lazy (and hence responsible for their own disadvantage) or as cheating (and hence not truly in need) (Gilens 1999). These are two of the core dimensions of deservingness: lazy vs hard-working; genuine need vs misrepresentation. Since immigrants in many countries seem to suffer the same harsh deservingness judgements as Blacks, it is widely been assumed that they too must suffer from stereotypes about laziness or dishonesty.

For a variety of reasons, I have never found this convincing, at least not in the Canadian case. Canadians have their share of stereotypes about immigrants, but laziness is not one of them. On the contrary, surveys have consistently shown that most Canadians “agree with the statement that immigrants tend to work harder than people born in Canada” (Environics 2019: 5).

But if the usual explanation focused on need or responsibility is incorrect, why then are immigrants seen as less deserving? My hunch, as you will have already guessed, is that deservingness judgements are intimately linked to ideas of membership, and that prevailing stories of membership disadvantage minorities. Recall that social justice, including redistributive solidarity, unlike universal humanitarianism, is tied to the idea of a moral commitment to a shared society. And as we’ve seen, this idea of a “shared society” is typically understood in national terms, in a way that puts members of the dominant group at the prototypical centre of this shared society, while putting the burden of proof on minorities to show that they belong at all. If this analysis is correct, then we should expect that members of minority groups, even if they are not seen as lazy or dishonest, would still be seen as less deserving because they are seen as less morally committed to the shared society. Moreover, these membership penalties should apply not just to newly arrived immigrant groups, but also to “old” historic minorities – such as indigenous peoples or the Quebecois – who are seen as carriers of some alternative or competing story of peoplehood.
Surprisingly, this hypothesis has never been tested. The desiringness literature is so focused on perceptions of responsibility and need that the impact of membership perceptions has never been directly tested. So, together with a few colleagues, we tested this hypothesis in a recent survey of Canadians, and here are some interesting if preliminary results.\textsuperscript{34}

First, as I expected, minorities in Canada score reasonably well in terms of the standard criteria of responsibility (“not their fault”) and need (“worse off”). Canadians generally accept that minorities are in genuine need, and that this is not their fault (Figure 1).\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} The following data is drawn from Harrel, Banting, Kymlicka and Wallace 2018, which provides details about the sample size, survey methodology, and statistical analysis. I should emphasize that the (speculative) interpretation of the data I give in this paper is my own, for which my co-authors are not responsible, and with which they might not agree.

\textsuperscript{35} In the following figures, the centre line indicates that majority respondents do not view members of minority groups as either more or less deserving than members of the majority. If the marker is the right, this indicates that majority respondents view minorities as more deserving; if the marker is to the left, majority respondents view minorities as less deserving.
However, as I expected, Canadians do penalize minorities for their alleged lack of commitment to the larger society. We devised a battery of eight questions to capture different dimensions of this idea of a moral commitment to a shared society – e.g., willingness to make sacrifices for the larger society; concern for its future\textsuperscript{36} – and on all eight criteria, minorities are judged to be significantly less committed (Figure 2).

\textsuperscript{36} See Appendix for the wording of these eight items.
FIGURE 2: MINORITIES ARE SEEN AS LESS COMMITTED TO SOCIETY
This is a strikingly consistent result. Across all eight dimensions of perceived membership, all three minority groups suffer from what we call a “membership penalty”.

And this “membership penalty” matters: it drives down support for redistribution to minorities. We measured this in two different ways. First, we explored how membership perceptions affect support for “inclusive redistribution” – that is, whether members of minority groups should have access to general welfare programs. (For example, whether immigrants should have access to general unemployment or health care benefits). Second, we explored how membership perceptions affect support for “targeted redistribution” – that is, spending programs targeted as particular needs of minority groups, such as immigrant multiculturalism, the protection of Quebeçois culture, or reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Membership perceptions have a clear effect on support for both inclusive and targeted redistribution (Figures 3 and 4).
FIGURE 3: IMPACT OF MEMBERSHIP PERCEPTIONS ON SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE REDISTRIBUTION
Indeed, strikingly, perceptions of membership matter more than beliefs about laziness or need (Figure 5):
FIGURE 5: RELATIVE IMPACT OF MEMBERSHIP PERCEPTIONS COMPARED TO OTHER DESERVINGNESS FACTORS

**Inclusive Redistribution**

- Membership
- Hardworking
- Poverty Not Their Fault
- Face More Discrimination
- Less Well Off

**Targeted Spending**

- Membership
- Hardworking
- Poverty Not Their Fault
- Face More Discrimination
- Less Well Off
So here is evidence that minorities suffer an important disadvantage within a world of nation-states built around stories of peoplehood. They are seen as less committed to the national project, and as a result are seen as less deserving of welfare state benefits, regardless of their need, work ethic or honesty. This suggests that membership penalties are an important dimension of justice in contemporary nation-states. A just society needs to find a way to eliminate or at least reduce these penalties in perceptions of membership-based deservingness. I will suggest in the next section that multiculturalism can play a role here.

However, I should emphasize that these survey findings are just one snapshot of public attitudes, at one moment in time, in one country. And as a result, it is premature to jump to any conclusions about the causes or remedies of these membership penalties. For example, we do not know how these membership penalties have changed over time in Canada: are they larger or smaller today than, say, 10 years or 25 years ago? Nor do we know how these membership penalties differ across countries: for example, are these penalties larger in pro-multiculturalist countries like Canada and Sweden or in more assimilationist countries like France and Germany? Without data about how these membership penalties are changing over time, or how they vary across different societies and different policy regimes, it is impossible to draw firm conclusions about their likely causes or remedies.

However, as a first step, it is worth pausing to note that, in the Canadian case at least, these membership penalties are found across all three types of minorities: indigenous peoples, Quebecois and immigrant groups. And this in turn means that they cut across many of the standard divides used to explain outgroup attitudes. For example, hostility to immigrants and indigenous peoples in Canada is often explained in terms of racism, and indeed there is much evidence for racist attitudes in Canada (Harell, Soroka, and Ladner 2014), but this cannot explain membership penalties for the (white) Quebecois. Similarly, hostility to immigrants in Europe is often explained in terms of Islamophobia, and there is indeed evidence for Islamophobic attitudes in Canada (Triadafilopoulos 2017), but this cannot explain membership penalties for indigenous peoples and the Quebecois. Yet others explain hostility to out-groups as a result of fears that poor minorities will depress working-class wages or will burden the welfare state. And indeed there is evidence that economic insecurity affects attitudes to immigrants in Canada (Banting and Soroka 2019). But these materialist/economic anxieties cannot explain why membership penalties arise not just for poor indigenous peoples but also for well-off Quebecois. Yet others explain hostility to immigrants as an inevitable response to rapid demographic change: people adapt to high levels of diversity if they are stable, but feel threatened by rapid increases in levels of diversity (Kaufmann 2018; Goodhart 2017). And here too there is evidence that Canadians are uncomfortable with rapid changes in levels of neighbourhood diversity

37 The closest comparison is Koostra’s (2017) analysis of British attitudes. In Britain, as elsewhere, immigrants are seen as less deserving. Koostra finds that the most significant drivers of these deservingness judgements are identity, reciprocity and attitude – what we are calling the membership-based dimensions of deservingness – not control or need. This suggests that the salience of membership-based deservingness may not be unique to Canada.

38 Or indeed for most immigrant groups: Muslims only form around 10% of the immigrant intake in Canada, and so when Canadians hear the term “immigrant” they do not generally equate this with “Muslim”.
(Soroka et al 2007). But this can hardly explain hostility to long-settled and sedentary indigenous and Quebecois minorities.

In short, membership penalties in Canada do not simply track race, religion, class, or rapid demographic change. All of these matter, and they all need to be addressed on their own terms, but the pattern of membership penalties is wider, and cuts across these divides. Membership penalties exist both for white minorities (Quebecois) and for racialized minorities (immigrants and indigenous); both for newcomers (immigrants) and for historic minorities whose presence in Canada preceded the English (indigenous and Quebecois); both for Christian minorities (Quebecois and indigenous) and for non-Christian minorities (Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist minorities); both for groups perceived to be poor and in need of public benefits (indigenous peoples) and for groups that are economically as well-off as the majority (the Quebecois). There appears to be something more going on, something more structural, affecting all types of minorities, new or old, rich or poor, white or non-white.

And this is what we would expect if, as I’ve argued, membership claims are filtered through stories of peoplehood. This pattern of membership penalties is the logical and predictable result of the interconnections between social justice, an ethics of membership, nationhood and deservingness. Put schematically:

- social justice, including redistributive solidarity, is tied to an ethics of membership (not to universal humanitarianism);
- an ethics of membership involves a moral commitment to a shared society;
- in our world, this idea of a shared society is usually tied to national stories of peoplehood;
- national stories of peoplehood put members of the dominant group at the prototypical centre of this shared society, while putting the burden of proof on minorities to show that they belong at all;
- all minorities (new or old, rich or poor, white or racialized, Christian or non-Christian) are therefore likely to be penalized in terms of their perceived deservingness for membership-based claims.

At any rate, this is one possible and plausible interpretation of the Canadian data, although I emphasize again that we need more evidence to confirm it.

4. Remedying Membership Penalties

If so, then the next question is what societies can do about these membership-based deservingness judgements. The prospects for justice in diverse societies depends on having effective strategies to counteract these predictable membership penalties. We seem caught between a rock and a hard place: on the one hand, it seems that we need to build LE on the basis of a sense of shared society; on the other hand, this very effort creates inevitable injustices.

In this section, I will consider some possible remedies, but my discussion here will be highly preliminary and speculative, and is intended mainly to stimulate more reflection on the issue. In my view, recent accounts of LE – and progressive thought more generally - have typically underestimated both the need for a sense of belonging together and the scale of the membership
penalties this imposes on minorities. Many of the basic terms and categories of LE – like “civic nationalism” or “creedal nationalism” – obscure both the membership privileges and the membership penalties that are involved. We need to move beyond these ritualistic slogans and think more carefully about how our ESM is actually organized.

In that sense, my aim is more to encourage others to think about possible remedies than to come to any definitive resolution of my own. That said, let me briefly evaluate three broad strategies for dealing with membership penalties.

**Pure/terrestrial cosmopolitanism:**

One radical alternative is to reject the very idea of membership rights. As we’ve seen, most political theorists assume that we need both membership rights and personhood rights, but why not just rely on personhood? Rather than distinguishing “us” from “them”, as is required by any ESM, why not view everyone as citizens of the world, or as earthlings, or as “commoners” of the world understood as a global commons, who carry their personhood rights with them?

For many people, this proposal is simply too distant from reality to be worth considering: it fails the test of being a “realistic utopia”. And I too find it difficult to imagine what this terrestrial cosmopolitanism would look like in practice, and how politics would actually operate in it. However, I would argue that it fails on normative grounds, even before we get to questions of realism. Affirming people’s personhood rights is not an adequate response to the problem of membership penalties. As Kenneth Karst showed, the great civil rights struggles were not articulated solely in the language of shared humanity, but rather staked claims to belonging and membership – indeed, he argues that the equal rights clause in the US should be understood as fundamentally a claim to equal belonging (Karst 1989; see also Drymiotou 2018). Equality-seeking groups typically want to be recognized, not just as fully human, but as fully American or fully French. They want to be recognized as belonging here and as participating in and contributing to a shared society. Claims to membership and contribution are often central to people’s sense of moral worth, and to the way they understand the claims they can make on others. Responding to membership penalties by negating the entire category of membership rights is therefore a Pyrrhic victory. This is one reason why even most self-identified cosmopolitans reject terrestrial cosmopolitanism: any cosmopolitanism that requires rejecting membership rights is normatively unattractive, as well as politically unrealistic.

**Membership without Deservingness**

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39 Given the history of slavery, which rested on the dehumanization of African-Americans, one central goal of the civil rights movement was (and remains) to emphasize our shared humanity, and hence to make claims to universal personhood or human dignity. But these claims to shared humanity were always accompanied by claims to belonging. Some commentators assume that the struggle against dehumanization must precede the struggle for membership – one must be recognized as fully human before one can be recognized as a member of society. I suspect the causal arrow often operates the other way: recognition as a member facilitates recognition of humanity, as Arendt famously argued.
Another possibility would be to maintain a commitment to membership rights, but to try to break the link between membership and “deservingness”. After all, the very language of “deserving” and “undeserving” sounds regressive and archaic, a retreat to Victorian-era moralism. Priming people to think about “deservingness” often seems to lead people to revert not only to xenophobic and racist tropes about who really belongs, but also to classist, ableist, and sexist tropes about responsibility and contribution. Indeed, some commentators suggest that the prevalence of deservingness judgements reflects the triumph of neoliberal tropes about self-reliance and “responsibilization” at the expenses of bounded solidarities (Somers 2008). On this view, solidarity and deservingness are incompatible frameworks: the more solidaristic we are, the less we would engage in deservingness judgements. Progressives have therefore been very wary of “deservingness” talk, and many have sought to develop a conception of bounded solidarity that avoids or pre-empts questions of deservingness.40

But this neglects the diverse sources of deservingness judgements, and in particular the distinction between responsibility-based and membership-based deservingness judgements.41 It is entirely plausible that neoliberalism has led to harsher assessments of whether individuals are responsible for their disadvantage, and whether they could succeed if they just worked harder. But as I noted earlier, this is not the basis on which minorities are judged less deserving in Canada. On the contrary, they are seen as less responsible for their disadvantage than members of the majority, in part because of the widespread recognition that they face discrimination, and in part because they are seen as hard-working. In that sense, neoliberal responsibilization judgements are as likely to target the majority as the minority, particularly native-born white poor, including the unemployed, or single mothers, or people with disabilities. The rise of these increasingly harsh responsibility-based deservingness judgements is a profound problem from an LE point of view, and we need to think about how to challenge and disrupt these neoliberal tropes about individual responsibility.

It is less clear, however, that we can or should avoid membership-based deservingness judgements. Certainly, there are some contexts where the legitimacy of people’s claims does not depend on perceptions of membership. The right not to be tortured, for example, is not something one “deserves” or “earns” through fulfilling an ethic of membership. It is owed to us simply as human beings. However, as I noted earlier, this sort of universal humanitarianism cannot support the robust and routinized redistributive demands of a progressive welfare state, which rest instead on membership claims. And once claims are tied to an ethic of membership, then we are likely to see membership-based deservingness judgments. When making membership-based claims, it is not enough to say that one is human or has urgent interests—that

40 In this respect, progressives have adopted the same attitude toward deservingness that they have to nationhood. Because it is potentially toxic, they have tried to avoid it entirely, leaving the field entirely to the right. This then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Having failed to develop their own progressive account of either nationhood or deservingness, the left has ensured that public discourses around nationhood and deservingness are indeed predominantly regressive.

41 It’s an interesting question whether “deservingness” is the right term to cover both these dimensions: perhaps perceptions of membership are better described as judgements about eligibility than about deservingness. But the use of deservingness to cover both is conventional in the field (eg., van Oorschot 2017), so I follow that convention here.
is the logic of humanitarianism. Rather, membership-based claims require individuals to have certain types of social relationships and affiliations. Someone is part of the national “we” because she has made a life here, complies with its social norms, shares in the burdens of social cooperation, participates in its institutionalized forms of reciprocity and risk-pooling, shows concern for its collective well-being and collective future, and contributes in ways that suit her capacities. It is these membership-based attitudes and behaviours that justify distinguishing solidaristic obligations to co-members from humanitarian obligations to tourists or foreigners. And if so, then bounded solidarity generates its own logic of membership-based deservingness. Our solidaristic obligations to co-members depend on the assumption that they have a depth of commitment to and engagement in our society that non-members do not have. And this, arguably, is what underpins membership-based deservingness judgements.

While the historical evidence is limited, I think it supports this claim that deservingness judgements are not somehow unique to the era of neoliberalism, nor are they unique to liberal market societies as opposed to social-democratic or corporatist welfare states. Contrary to some nostalgic commentators, even in the “golden age” of postwar social democracy, before the onset of neoliberalism, polls reveal a constant public assessment of (and anxiety about) the deservingness of recipients. Deservingness judgments may simply be the unavoidable flip side of an ethic of membership. If, as Marshall argued, the welfare state is rooted in a “sense of community membership”, then citizens are likely to ask whether others display the attitudes and behaviours that distinguish members from non-members (or conversely, whether someone has renounced the responsibilities of membership, shown no commitment to society and its future).

**Pluralizing Membership and Deservingness:**

This then leaves us with the third strategy: one which maintains a commitment to membership rights, and hence also to membership-based deservingness, but tries to pluralize the bases of membership and deservingness so as to reduce the predictable membership penalties that minorities face. On this view, the question is not whether citizens make deservingness judgements - this may be characteristic of any bounded solidarity - but how they make them. How do citizens evaluate the affiliation and commitment of others? The worry here is that dominant groups are likely to make deservingness judgements in biased ways. All too often, citizens privilege those who belong and contribute in the same way that they do. Inherited conceptions of membership have been defined by and for historically dominant groups, in ways that valorize their specific modes of being and belonging, while discounting the cooperation and affiliation of those who differ from them.

I think we can see this asymmetry in the Canadian survey results I discussed earlier. Recall the fundamental finding: members of the majority in Canada perceive members of all three

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43 Hudson et al (2016a; 2016b) cites surveys showing that British citizens made these deservingness judgements from the 1940s to the 1970s.
minorities as less likely to care about the larger society, less likely to make sacrifices for the larger society, and less willing to do their fair share to protect and promote the general good of the larger society. Where do these curious ideas come from?

There may well be times and places where these perceptions are well-grounded. If we look around the world, and at different times in history, we can certainly find examples of minorities who are genuinely hostile to the larger society. Think of the Sudeten German minority in Czechoslovakia, who practically invited the Nazis to invade Czechoslovakia. Far from cooperating with the Czech majority to defend the country, they collaborated with its conquest and dismemberment. We can find many other examples of minorities who are at best indifferent to the larger society, and at worst, collaborate with neighbouring enemies.

But this is not the situation in Canada (or in most Western democracies). Minorities in Canada have been allies of the majority, not enemies, in the great struggles of the twentieth century, whether it was the two world wars, or the Cold War against communism. All three minorities have fought bravely alongside other Canadians, and no one today fears that any of these groups would collaborate with Canada’s enemies. Minorities in Canada are not seen as a fifth-column for enemy powers.

So what then explains this perception of a lack of commitment or loyalty? The answer, I suggest, may lie in the way stories of peoplehood differentially locate majorities and minorities. Whenever majorities engage in political mobilization and make political claims – for or against increased taxes, say, or for or against building pipelines – this is taken as evidence of their concern for and commitment to the country and its future. They are seen as carrying forward the story of peoplehood, for which they are the natural (prototypical) bearers. By contrast, when minorities engage in political mobilization for the recognition of their differences, they are seen, not as expressing a commitment to the larger society, but as engaging in selfish behavior, as a form of group egoism. Majorities see themselves as acting from a commitment to the collective “we”, whereas minorities are seen as more likely to be acting upon group egoism rather than concern for others.44

If this is indeed what is happening – and I emphasize again this is a speculative interpretation of preliminary data - then it is a particularly perverse perception of Canadian realities. There is a healthy dose of group self-interest on all sides of inter-group relations in Canada, but if there is one group that has distinguished itself historically by its level of group egoism, it is surely the English-settler majority. The settler-state was built on the back of the conquest and dispossession of indigenous peoples, through the imposition of British law, language and culture, and though what has arguably been the most self-interested immigration policy in the world. And the majority has had no hesitation in imposing burdens and sacrifices on minorities to pursue its aims, from the recruitment of Chinese workers to build the national railway to the ongoing recruitment of Mexican farm workers to harvest Canada’s food. And yet the story of peoplehood magically turns these instances of majority group egoism into “nation building”, seen as evidence of a moral commitment to a wider collectivity.

44 See Thurairajah 2017 for one of many recent examples where the public expression of minority identities is interpreted as lack of concern for the country.
By contrast, minorities in Canada – unlike Sudeten Germans - have often reached out the hand of civic friendship to the English majority, seeking to establish relationships of trust and cooperation. To be sure, minorities have challenged the particular role that the national story of peoplehood assigns to them – as, say, “vanished races” or “grateful refugees” – and argued for a relationship that is more responsive to their interests and identities. But this is indeed the pursuit of a relationship with the larger society, and there’s ample evidence that minorities care about this relationship, and are willing to make sacrifices to protect that relationship and see it flourish into the future. There are important elements of concern, commitment and sacrifice built into the political claims of minorities. And yet, when viewed through the lens of the dominant story of peoplehood, these political aspirations look like group egoism.

In short, stories of peoplehood operate to cloak majority political mobilization in the veneer of moral commitment, while casting minority political mobilization in the veneer of group egoism at best, or disloyalty at worst, leading to pervasive and systematic membership penalties.

If so, the question is what can be done to shift majority perceptions of minority claims-making out of the box of group egoism and into the box of moral commitment? Sadly, some commentators argue that the clearest cases on record of such shifts are from the experience of war: nothing seems to help make clear the membership and contribution of minorities more than their wartime military service (Saldin 2011). Military service even in peacetime may help; willingness to fight for one’s country is a familiar indicator of shared membership, and the evidence suggests it still matters for perceptions of minority’s commitment to the larger “we”. 47

But military service is hardly a satisfactory strategy for promoting inclusive solidarity. So what are the alternative routes by which excluded/stigmatized groups gain recognition of their membership/contribution? And here, at the very end, I want to return to ideas of multiculturalism. We can think of multiculturalism as having two faces or dimensions. On the one hand, it has a purely protective or defensive function, to protect minorities from the excesses of nation-building. As I have discussed elsewhere (Kymlicka 1995), these minority rights will likely take a different form depending on the nature of the minority and the majority. In relation to historic minorities, it


46 That the English majority has rebuffed “gambits” by the Quebecois and indigenous peoples to establish (or re-establish) valued relations of trust and consent is a familiar refrain in the literature. See Tully 1992; Karmis and Rocher 2018.

47 An interesting example is the reaction to President Obama’s address to the nation after the 2015 San Bernardino attack, in which a Muslim fundamentalist couple killed 14 people and wounded 21. When Obama spoke of Muslims as our “friends” and “neighbours”, Islamophobic searches on Google remained robust. But later in the speech, he changed tack, introducing images of Muslim soldiers, willing to die for America, and Muslim athletes representing America. At that point, Islamophobic searches slowed down, replaced with searches for “Muslim athletes” and “Muslim soldiers” (Stephens-Davidowitz 2017).
may take the form of acknowledging rather than suppressing their alternative stories of peoplehood: e.g., through according territorial rights and self-government rights to indigenous peoples and substate nations. In relation to immigrants, it may take the form of a package of policies that (i) affirm basic rights to enjoy one’s culture and religion in association with other members of the group; (ii) repudiate older subtractive/assimilationist models of integration/naturalization; (iii) strengthen anti-discrimination provisions, including (iv) policies of recognition and accommodation that enable members of minorities to see themselves in the institutions of the larger society and to participate in them without having to hide or deny their identity and cultural difference. All of these are fundamentally protective or defensive rights: that is, they protect minorities from predictable threats of injustice that arise from the state’s commitment to nationhood.

On the other hand, multiculturalism also has a more reconstructive or transformative function, not just to protect minorities from majoritarian nationalism, but to transform majority attitudes, and in particular to transform majority conceptions of membership and belonging to create a more inclusive solidarity.\textsuperscript{48} The task here is to think about minority rights, not just as a set of defensive constraints on nation-building, but as positive contributions to a shared project, and hence as embodying an ethic of membership. This transformative function is essential, I believe, to addressing membership penalties.

How might multiculturalism transform these membership-based deservingness judgements? Let me start with the case of immigration. In some countries – particularly in Europe – immigrant multiculturalism is seen as an invitation to ethnic groups to segregate themselves from the mainstream, and to exist in “parallel societies”. Understood in this way, it seems to reproduce, or indeed exacerbate, the perception of a lack of commitment to the “we”. But this is not the only way to understand multiculturalism. In the Canadian context, multiculturalism has always had the opposite intention: multiculturalism was designed to recognize immigrants as vital contributors to the larger society, and to invite their further contributions.\textsuperscript{49} And the evidence suggests that multiculturalism in Canada has helped to reduce the membership penalty for immigrant-origin ethnic groups (Bloemraad 2011), in part because it is framed in a way that highlights immigrants’ participation in an ethic of membership. Where multiculturalism is understood as simply an apolitical celebration of diversity, or as an encouragement to isolation, it is unlikely to have a beneficial impact on membership-based deservingness perceptions. But where multiculturalism is tied to ideas of participation and contribution – a kind of “multicultural nationalism”, if you like – it may help to reduce the membership penalty, acting as a counterweight to recurring efforts to re-inscribe Britishness as the core of Canadian nationhood (Abu-Laban 2014).

The case of historic national minorities and indigenous peoples is more complicated, since in some respects they do indeed involve maintaining “parallel societies”, or at any rate, maintaining parallel stories of peoplehood. Nonetheless, we can think of the task of reconciling these

\textsuperscript{48} In Race and the Politics of Solidarity, Juliet Hooker (2009) argued that liberal multiculturalists focus too much on the protective/defensive function of multiculturalism, and not enough on the need to build solidarity between majority and minorities. I think her own account perhaps veers too far in the opposite direction, defending multicultural rights only if they serve the interest of advancing solidarity. I think we need to keep both dimensions in productive tension.

\textsuperscript{49} For a comparison of European and Canadian understandings of multiculturalism, see Miller 2019.
competing stories of peoplehood as something “we” (majority and minorities) do together. For example, perhaps both settler Canadians and indigenous Canadians could take pride in together facing up to the challenge of reconciling their competing stories of peoplehood. And if so, we could then show that minorities are in fact fully and equally committed to this morally valuable project and to this valued relationship, and that in this respect, they fully embody an ethic of membership, including the willingness to make sacrifices for this shared project. Negotiating minority rights for these substate national groups would no longer be seen as minority group egoism against a moral commitment to the “we”, but rather building a new “we” that minorities and majority alike are committed to and willing to make sacrifices for.

These suggestions about how multiculturalism might address membership penalties are, at this stage, speculative. Since we do not have comparative data on membership penalties in different countries or over time, it is difficult to predict the impact of either adopting or rejecting multiculturalism policies on these membership penalties. So we will have to wait and see the results of further research. But my hunch is that multiculturalism policies will turn out to have beneficial effects in reducing membership penalties, and that this will be particularly true if and when multiculturalism is designed with transformative as well as protective functions in mind. That is just speculation at this point, although several recent studies of the impact of multiculturalism on inter-group attitudes would seem to support this (Guimond et al 2013; Igarashi 2019; Kongshøj 2019).

This is a potential path to reducing membership penalties without abandoning either stories of peoplehood or minority rights, both of which I believe are essential to a decent and just liberal-democracy. This may sound very vague, and not without its own dangers. But if the findings from our Canadian survey are sound, then the challenge here is clear. Support for social justice depends on citizens seeing each other as expressing an ethic of membership, as having a moral commitment to the wellbeing and future of a morally salient “we”. If so, then we need to show how struggles for minority rights, and the active exercise of these rights, are not just forms of group egoism, but rather are ways of making a commitment to a “we”.

In my view, it is one of the perverse injustices of a world of nation-states that minorities continually face the burden of proving this moral commitment, whereas the naked group egoism of the majority goes unremarked, or indeed celebrated as nation-building. But that is the world we live in, and so we need to find ways of addressing the membership penalties that minorities face, without resorting to assimilationist/subtractive models of nationalism that are neither politically feasible nor morally legitimate.

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50 Eg., of interest-convergence (or neoliberal) models of minority rights, which only recognize rights for minorities if and when it converges with the interests of the majority (or with global capitalism). See James 2013 on this tendency in relation to Canadian multiculturalism; and Hale 2005 in relation to indigenous rights.
Appendix: Shared Membership Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BETTER PLACE</th>
<th>Do demands made by each of the following groups makes Canada a better place to live or a worse place to live?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PATRIOTIC</td>
<td>Where would you rate [group] on the following dimensions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unpatriotic-Patriotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDENTIFY</td>
<td>How much do you think each of the following groups identifies with Canada?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARES</td>
<td>How much do you think each group cares about the concerns and needs of other Canadians?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THANKFUL</td>
<td>The government provides various programs and benefits that seek to help various communities in Canada. How thankful do you think each group is to receive these benefits?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACRIFICE</td>
<td>How willing do you think the following groups are to make sacrifices for other Canadians?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIR SHARE</td>
<td>Given the resources available in each community, do you think the following groups are contributing their fair share, or more or less than their fair share?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGHT</td>
<td>If Canada was involved in a war, how willing do you think people from each of the following groups would be to volunteer to fight for Canada?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The eight items for each of the four groups load into a single dimension. Cronbach’s alpha scores, when excluding ingroup members, are .86 (Immigrant scale); .82 (Aboriginal peoples scale); .84 (French-speaking Quebeckers scale); and .71 (English-speaking Canadians).
References


