A. Eisenberg, “Two Types of Pluralism in Canada,” in H. Lazar and T. McIntosh, eds., *Canada: The State of the Federation 1998-1999* (Kingston, 1999)

**Overview**

Federalism and multiculturalism are both pluralist policy in the sense that they distribute resources amongst particular groups – and both have been shaped by pluralist theory. Hwr, beyond these features, the two have little in common, and have contradictory aims in some sense. In Canada, federalism was historically instituted to limit the authority of the central state, and in doing so, sustain provincial communities. Meanwhile, multiculturalism is meant to advance the social equality of cultural groups and to this end, it has required more state involvement. The two policies seem to clash when their aims are confused – when federalism is viewed as a means to social equality, or when multiculturalism is interpreted as heightening the autonomy of ethnic minorities. Paper discusses both policies in terms of the pluralist strategies they employ.

**Background**

* Two types of pluralist strategies are relevant to this discussion
  + “Pluralism to limit state sovereignty” – associated with late 19th and early 20th century ideas of Harold Laski and other British pluralists. It divides resources between groups, first in order to limit the power than any one group can exert over other groups or individuals and second, to sustain group life (FEDERALISM)
  + “Pluralism to enhance cultural equality” – includes pluralist theories that aim at distributing resources to cultural groups so that individuals can enjoy similar resources regardless of which cultural group they belong to. This second type informed by writings of Iris Marion Young and Will Kymlicka (MULTICULTURALISM)

**Conclusions**

Aim of the Chapter has been to show that these pluralisms are inevitably accompanied by drawbacks. Eisenberg argued that the more federalism succeeds at enhancing the group life of provincial communities – for instance through policies that decentralize powers to provincial govts – the more it erects obstacles to social equality.

In the case of multiculturalism, its success at ensuring that cultural minorities have access to the same resources as the majority undermines the ability of these groups to enjoy the autonomous group life extolled by the first type of pluralism. Multiculturalism is about integration, not about autonomous group life. This fact is largely misunderstood in political and social analysis and as a result, so is the complex interaction between federalism and multiculturalism.