W. Kymlicka, “Testing the Liberal Multiculturalist Hypothesis: Normative Theories and Social Science Evidence,” *CJPS* 43:2 (June 2010)

**Overview**

For much of the 1990s the academic literature on multiculturalism was heavily normative, dominated by political philosophers who developed idealized theories of a distinctly liberal-democratic form of multicultural citizenship. The “liberal multiculturalism hypothesis” – the notion that multiculturalism policies can be adopted without jeopardizing core liberal-democratic values – has been quite influential in shaping debates in public life. Paper argues that the evidence supports the liberal multiculturalism hypothesis, and recent rhetoric re: the failure of multiculturalism policies lack empirical evidence. “If it is a mistake to generalize the benefits of multiculturalism from the Cdn case, then surely it is equally a mistake to generalize the harms of multiculturalism from the Dutch case”

**Background**

* Normative accounts of multiculturalism that arose in 1990s were very influential in shaping debates in academia and public life
* Based on the liberal-multiculturalist hypothesis that suggests states can adopt multiculturalism policies to fairly recognize the legitimate interests of minorities in their identity and culture without eroding core liberal-democratic values (or, that one can adopt one or more policies on the left without jeopardizing the values on the right).
* Some see multiculturalist policies (MCPs) as presenting a tragic choice – between justice for minorities and broader liberal-democratic values
* Kymlicka attempts to test the hypothesis
* Ds
* Kymlicka raises the “bold and surprising possibility: namely, that the evidence to date, far from refuting the liberal multiculturalist hypothesis, actually supports it”
* Uses Canada as case – Kymlicka suggests that “the evidence suggests that MCPs are having a positive effect in the domains of freedom, equal opportunity, and solidarity” (all liberal-democratic values)
  + Then points to Australia, which closely followed Canada in adopting an MCP, followed by Sweden – as evidence of success –
  + Countries with strong and consistent policies of multiculturalism outperform the other Western democracies
* Other evidence – provided by other studies (Berry et al., 2006; Kesler and Bloemraad, 2010; Weldon, 2006; and Banting and Kymlicka, 2006)
  + Children are better adapted in countries with MCPs (what does this mean????)
  + MCPs have a positive impact on political participation and social capital
  + MCPs have a positive effect on reducing prejudice
  + MCPS may have a positive effect on redistribution
    - Though Kymlicka notes that none of these are offered up as “proof”
* Results stand in contrast to more recent political refrain that multiculturalism has failed, or is in crisis – especially coming out of Western Europe –
  + Dutch case is often used

**Conclusion**

* Paper is really just a argument for looking more carefully at the empirical evidence re: multiculturalism policies