Managing Cultural Diversity: North-American Experiences and Suggestions for the German Unification Process

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The aim of this paper is to evaluate the usefulness of thinking of assimilation and multiculturalism as strategies for managing cultural diversity. The illustrative case is Germany and its recent unification. These contrasting strategies have been most extensively explored in North America, and these experiences are reviewed through a discussion of the different forms that assimilation and multiculturalism take and the psychological underpinnings each involves. The recent shift in emphasis from assimilation to multiculturalism in Western societies is highlighted, leading to the conclusion that a fundamental contradiction exists between the ideals of meritocracy that pervade these societies and the ideals of collective multiculturalism.

En se servant comme exemple de l'unification de l'Allemagne, cet article a pour but d'examiner l'assimilation et le multiculturalisme en tant que stratégies utilisées pour gérer la diversité culturelle. Ces deux stratégies divergentes ont été étudiées considérablement en Amérique du Nord. Une analyse de ces deux stratégies est faite à l'aide d'une discussion sur les différents types d'assimilation et de multiculturalisme et des structures sous-jacentes à ces stratégies. Le passage de l'assimilation au multiculturalisme est souligné, et il est conclu qu'une contradiction existe entre les idéaux de la méritocratie répandus dans les sociétés de l'ouest et ceux du multiculturalisme collectif.

INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of "The Berlin Wall," many people, both inside and outside Germany, hoped that German unity would quickly lead to equally high standards of living in the East and West. Few analysts expected that so many major problems would persist after political unification. Actually, German unification has become a painfully slow process. As a consequence, Easterners

are prone to show impatience with the "free market" system and with democracy itself; at the same time Westerners are inclined to express frustration with economic initiatives that simply seem to involve the West providing more aid to the East. More generally, there is real concern that this climate of uncertainty and disappointment may prove to be fertile ground for the growth of radical political movements (although voter support for the *NPD, Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, in the former West Germany has so far only come close to 5 per cent).

Events in Germany continue to surprise and perplex both the lay public and researchers (Miegel, 1991). A major stumbling block is that no appropriate model has been found for examining the process of unification in Germany. Such a model could improve our understanding and management of both present and future social trends.

The objective of this paper is, firstly, to identify an appropriate model for viewing German unification. After considering a number of alternatives, I conclude that a "minority-integration" model is the most appropriate. Next, the minority-majority status of East and West Germany is illustrated through a brief description of Germany. The paper then reviews North-American applications of the "minority-integration" model, leading to a critical assessment of assimilation and multiculturalism as strategies for achieving minority integration. This discussion points to contradictions between collective multiculturalism and the free market ideology, and suggests that Western societies adopting a policy of collective multiculturalism potentially face a fundamental dilemma.

ALTERNATIVE MODELS

A number of alternative models could be considered. For example, one could apply a "group at war" model, and view the West as a victorious nation that has fought on a principle and defeated a smaller nation, the East. But this model is inappropriate because it is based on numerous invalid assumptions, for instance, that West Germans were "foreign invaders" who have overpowered a weaker nation by military force.

Unification might also be viewed as "a company merger." The West, the larger company, has achieved a take-over of the smaller company. But this model, too, is misleading: the key motivation for company mergers is economic, the larger company being motivated to take over the assets of the smaller company. Actually, the most important motivation for German unification is not asset acquisition, because it is, first and foremost, a concern for national identity and unity.

A third possibility is to view the relation between East and West Germanies through the perspective of "realistic conflict theory," and the "gaming" research related to it (see Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987, pp. 33–57). At first

glance, the "boys' camp" studies of Muzafer Sherif (1966) seem particularly relevant to the German experience. There were three main stages to these studies. Group members were first encouraged to interact with one another and develop attachments. Then, best friends were separated and placed in two different groups and these groups competed fiercely and were encouraged to become hostile toward one another. Finally, the two groups were "re-united" through the introduction of superordinate goals (defined as goals that have a "... compelling appeal for members of each group, but that neither group can achieve without participation of the other," Sherif 1966, p.89). But Sherif's field research, as well as the bulk of laboratory gaming studies inspired by Superpowers rivalry during the "cold-war" era, focused on competition between two groups of essentially equal power. The assumption of equal power is not valid in the case of East and West Germany.

What then is a more appropriate model for examining German unification? My nomination is the model of the integration of minorities in culturally diverse societies, an example being the case of minorities in North America. This model assumes that both groups desire: (1) to integrate, and (2) to achieve integration through peaceful means rather than through war and conquest. This model also assumes that the two groups are perceived to be in some important ways culturally different. Thirdly, it assumes that the groups have minority-majority status. Experience supports these assumptions and the following discussion underscores the explanatory value of viewing East and West Germanies as minority and majority groups, respectively.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

The unification of Germany took place formally on October 3, 1990. The larger partner in this unification was West Germany, which had been a sovereign country officially constituted on May 5, 1955, as the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland* or *BRD*). The smaller partner is East Germany which had also been a sovereign country, officially constituted on October 7, 1949, as the German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik* or *DDR*). Together with the Republic of Austria (*Republik Österreich*), the BRD and DDR are the successor states that evolved from the Greater German Empire (*Grossdeutsches Reich*) or Nazi Germany, after its dissolution through the Potsdam Conference Declaration of August 2, 1945 (see Raff, 1988; Turner, 1987).

The unification of Germany came about with the official agreement of the major powers. The foreign ministers of the Two-Plus-Four countries—the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the French Republic, the Soviet Union and the United States of America—gave their official blessings by signing the "Treaty on the Final Settlement with respect to Germany" on

September 12, 1990 in Moscow. Article 1 of this treaty states that: "The united Germany shall comprise the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic and the whole of Berlin."

The united Germany covers an area of 357,000 km² (249,000 formerly BRD, 108,000 formerly DDR), and has a population of almost 80 million people (in 1988, 61.7 million lived in BRD, 16.7 million people in DDR). The total workforce consists of 38.3 million people (29.7 million BRD, 8.6 million DDR). Prior to unification, important differences existed with respect to the percentage of men and women in the workforce (BRD: males 60.7%, females 37.0%; DDR: males 55.1%, females 48.3%), birth rate (BRD 1.3%; DDR 1.7%), and the distribution of the workforce across economic sectors (BRD: agriculture 5%, industry 41%, services 54%; DDR: agriculture 12%, industry 48%, services 40%).[1]

Apart from size of territory and population, BRD and DDR were characterized by economic inequalities prior to unification, and to a large extent such inequalities remain. BRD has been economically far more prosperous, with a gross domestic product per person of $19,500, as compared to $9,300 for DDR (as of 1988). This disparity is consistently reflected in all major standard of living indicators. For example, while 98% of households in BRD had at least one telephone, 87% a car, and 76% an automatic washing-machine, the respective figures for DDR were 7%, 52%, and 10%.

Parallel to this economic inequality has been the political inequality of the BRD and the DDR. It is more accurate to state that the BRD has absorbed the DDR, than to describe the change as "unification." A treaty on monetary, economic, and social union came into effect on July 1, 1990, establishing West Germany's "social market economy" as the official model for the united Germany. The West German D-mark became legal tender in the united Germany, replacing the DDR Ostmark. The West German Bundesbank became the central bank of all Germany. Most importantly, the political system of communism was replaced by democracy in the DDR, with national elections on December 2, 1990, (the first free all-German elections since 1932) leading to a West German dominated government being established in Berlin, the "new" capital of the united Germany.

Politically, the united Germany is comprised of 16 states (Länder), five from the east (Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg) and eleven from the West (North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, Baden-Wurttemberg, Lower Saxony, Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Berlin, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Bremen, Saarland). The Länder have considerable responsibility in regional affairs, including culture, education, and the police, and in shaping national policy through the Bundesrat, the second chamber of

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[1] In this section I have relied heavily on surveys published in *The Economist* on the *New Germany* since 1990, particularly No.5 of June 30, 1990.

the federal parliament. The Bundesrat is particularly important because it has a veto on tax legislation. The five Eastern states have a total of 20 seats in the Bundesrat, while the 11 Western states have 49 seats (out of a total of 69).

The initial tendency has been to try to create a new West Germany in the East, to push the East through rapid changes so as to copy the successes of the West. Enormous material resources have been put to work towards this goal: "Current estimates are that the equivalent of $90 billion will have been transferred from west to east by the end of 1991, and similar amounts will be made available in 1992" (Kimmitt, 1992). In addition, thousands of "experts" from the West have moved into key decision-making positions in the East, in part to direct the assimilation process.

MINORITY-INTEGRATION AS THE MODEL FOR GERMAN UNIFICATION

If one adopts the "minority-integration" model for viewing German unification, the experiences of assimilation policy in North America may help identify certain predictable stumbling blocks in its functioning.

ASSIMILATION

The United States began as a predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant nation, but has become increasingly more diverse during the last century. Throughout the history of U.S. society, different competing models have been proposed for how minority groups integrate into society. The most important historically has been assimilation, although there are at least two major types of assimilation to consider: "minority-group assimilation" and "melting-pot assimilation" (Moghaddam & Solliday, 1991).

Minority-group assimilation is equivalent to what Cole and Cole (1954) have termed "Anglo-conformity" in the U.S. context, in which minority groups abandon their heritage cultures and take on the culture of the majority group. Minority-group assimilation is based on the assumption that the majority group culture is superior, and is associated with support for a growth policy that would give entry to those minorities who are best able and most willing to adopt the majority culture.

An important characteristic of "minority group assimilation" is that it is not inevitable, but is achieved through "proper" management, for example through "correct" schooling (Cubberly, 1909). In the U.S. context, supporters of minority assimilation expected that they would have to activate programmes that would "Anglicize" immigrant minorities, assuming that if left to their own devices, many immigrant groups would "retreat" to their ethnic enclaves.

In contrast to minority assimilation, melting-pot assimilation has been assumed to occur spontaneously in the particular social conditions of

America. For example, Turner (1920) argued that the challenging and often life-threatening existence of settlers in the American West inevitably resulted in a form of "pressure-cooker" melting pot. Out of this experience would emerge a "new stock" of people: Americans.

Thus, "melting-pot assimilation" is an old and well entrenched schema in U.S. society. It involves the belief that through a process of social interactions, a "melting" takes place among the members of different cultural groups, both minorities and majorities, and that the outcome of this process is a new "American" culture. This is a recurrent theme in the thoughts of American writers throughout the history of the New World. Writing in the 18th century, Crévecoeur (1782/1925) claims that in America, individuals of all nations are melted into a new race. In the mid-19th century, Ralph Waldo Emerson proclaims that the mixing of different immigrant groups "will construct a new race, a new religion, a new state, a new literature ..." (see Sherman, 1921, p.xxxvi). At the beginning of the 20th century, the term "melting pot" was popularized by Israel Zangwill's play of the same name. In the words of the play's hero, a Russian-Jewish immigrant who falls in love with a Gentile girl, America is "God's crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming!" (Zangwill, 1909, p.37).

By the 1920s, academic researchers fully endorsed the view that assimilation is taking place among immigrant groups (see Park, 1950; Park & Burgess, 1921). Through an ecological model, these researchers mapped out a scenario according to which first-generation immigrants settled in city centres with high ethnic densities, low rents, and segregated conditions. By the second and third generations, typical immigrant families would gradually lose the heritage language and way of life, become familiar with life in America, learn English, and improve their economic conditions. In essence, the bulk of them would eventually join the American mainstream.

Thus, two fundamentally different versions of assimilation have influenced American attitudes towards the integration of minorities. Both interpretations encompass ideals about how society naturally does develop and how it should develop, the "Anglo-culture" and the "melting pot." We can better appreciate the power of these ideals through a consideration of their psychological bases.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF ASSIMILATION

There are at least two sound psychological reasons suggesting that under certain conditions assimilation may be the most effective strategy for managing cultural diversity. The one concerns the necessary conditions for objectifying the meritocracy ideology, and the other the link that exists between similarity and interpersonal attraction.

Meritocracy. Perhaps the characteristic that most clearly distinguished the United States from the older regimes of Europe was the wholehearted adoption of what in recent years has been referred to as a meritocracy ideology (the word "meritocracy" seems to have first been coined by Young, 1958, but the spirit of the term finds expression in *The Declaration of Independence,* 1776, and other documents of late 18th-century America). The prejudices of the "Old World" were to be swept aside: inherited titles and rights were to be discarded, and society was to be led by an aristocracy of "talent," rather than dictated to by an aristocracy of birth and privilege. In this new "open society," the status achieved by individuals was to be determined by their characteristics as individuals, rather than their group affiliations.

The adoption of a meritocracy ideology necessitated the growth of a cult of individualism, marked by "self-help," "personal responsibility," and "individual mobility" (see Lukes, 1973, and Sampson, 1977, for a fuller discussion of individualism). Meritocratic ideology could only be plausible if: (a) the unit of social life was the individual, independent of group affiliations; (b) individuals could be assumed to be free to select their own destinies; and (c) they could be held personally responsible for their position in the status hierarchy. Most importantly, meritocracy involves "equality of opportunity," and immigrant children who do not learn English would not be able to enjoy "equal opportunities."

Similarity-Attraction. A second set of arguments in favour of assimilation can be summarized under the broad banner of "similarity-attraction." These arguments, sometimes made explicit, also have a long history in the United States. They can be grouped in two categories: one presents a case for similarity leading to attraction and the second supporting the idea that differences create a potential for conflict. Combined, these perspectives lend rationality to assimilation on the grounds that a more homogeneous society will be a more harmonious one, because its members will be more positively oriented towards one another, thus creating fewer divisions that could lead to conflicts.

A diverse array of experimental evidence and theoretical propositions in the behavioural sciences support the view that similarity and attraction are strongly linked. The "similarity-attraction hypothesis" proposes that individuals will be positively biased towards others who are seen as similar themselves (see Byrne, 1971, and Brown, 1984a, for discussions of research bearing on this hypothesis at the interpersonal and intergroup levels, respectively). Such positive dispositions will, it is argued, lead to a more cohesive and peaceful society.

A number of influential theories also assign similarity an important role in minority-majority relations. For example, Freud proposed that aggression is displaced onto outgroups that are more dissimilar (see Taylor & Moghaddam,

1987, pp.15–31). By implication, a society that is homogeneous will entail fewer "ready" targets and, consequently, aggression will more likely be displaced into other societies, or particular groups in other societies (e.g., Japan, a relatively homogeneous society, targeting "lazy American workers" as a result of its frustrations with the course of Japan-U.S.A. trade negotiations during the early 1990s).

The contact hypothesis and "melting-pot" assimilation suggest similar processes through which greater similarity could be achieved. Both assume that through social interactions, a sharing of values, attitudes, and sentiments occurs. Consequently, people become more similar to one another in the way they think and act. The implication is that supporters of assimilation should work to end "ethnic enclaves" and to increase contact between the members of different groups.

Shortcomings of Assimilation. I shall point out three shortcomings of assimilation when linked to the meritocracy system, the similarity-attraction hypothesis, or to what I shall refer to as the "copy-identity" problem.

The claim that assimilation is required in order to create a context in which meritocracy can work has been met by the counter-claim that it has not been the intention of elites to put meritocracy into practice, but simply to use this ideology to justify their own superior status. Not surprisingly, minority groups have often subscribed to this, somewhat conspiratorial, interpretation of the role of meritocracy ideology.

The interpretation of meritocracy as a "mask" that hides the group-based stratification of U.S. society underlies, for example, affirmative action programmes; "*Affirmative action* refers both to a specific federal policy and to specific policies of states and cities that address the same ends, to a general approach to overcoming the effects of past discrimination against blacks and other minorities and women, and to improving their present condition" (Glazer, 1988, p.329). This line of argument suggests that certain groups have been excluded from the policy of assimilation, and never given an opportunity to enjoy "equality of opportunity;" that is, that assimilation has not been put into practice in the fashion it has been preached. By implication, minority groups who attempt to assimilate are wasting their resources, because they are attempting to improve their situation through individual action, whereas social stratification has been based on group affiliation.

A second psychological basis of assimilation, the assumed link between similarity and attraction, has also come under attack. Critics point out that the criteria for similarity are not objectively defined; they are subjectively evaluated and highly influenced by social factors. For example, two groups may be highly similar on hundreds of characteristics, but dissimilar on characteristic "X". This single dissimilarity may be interpreted by one of the groups to be of

overriding importance, and may be used as the basis of intergroup differentiation and discrimination.

Findings from both laboratory experiments and field studies support the view that groups will in some instances seize on what seem to be "trivial" differences in order to differentiate and discriminate across groups. From anthropological field studies there are numerous examples of "trivial" differences between groups, such as height differences (Maquet, 1961), that are exaggerated and given importance so as to justify intergroup discrimination (see LeVine & Campbell, 1972, for a review). What seems to be most important in such contexts is not the objective basis of similarity, but power differences between groups, so that the majority group is able to propagate and establish its own "subjective" interpretations of the meaning of similarity as the valid ones.

Evidence from laboratory studies also suggests that people under certain conditions will use what seem to be highly trivial criteria as a basis for intergroup discrimination. An example of this research is the "minimal group" studies (Tajfel, 1978; 1984), aimed to create two social categories, excluding all of the conditions usually associated with group formation and intergroup conflict, such as face-to-face interactions, and conflicting material interests. The procedure followed involved two stages. First, subjects completed a "trivial" task, such as dot-estimation. In the second part, subjects were told that, on the basis of their behaviour in the first part of the experiment, they were in either group "X" or group "Y" and that their next task was to allocate points to other people in these groups. However, subjects did not know the identity of other group members, and the points they allocated would in no way benefit or detract from the points they received. It was found that even under these "minimal group" conditions, individuals consistently showed bias in favour of the ingroup: "X" or "Y". The basic findings of the minimal group experiment have been replicated through hundreds of studies (Brown, 1984b).

The minimal group studies suggest potential weaknesses in assimilation policy for managing cultural diversity. One implication is that no matter how much minorities assimilate and become similar to majority group members, there is always the possibility that some other criterion—an existing one or possibly a newly created one—might emerge, even one that in other contexts would be highly trivial, for intergroup differentiation (Moghaddam & Stringer, 1986).

A third potential shortcoming of minority-group assimilation is that a minority group very seldom becomes exactly like the "model" majority group; at best it becomes a "good copy" (Moghaddam & Solliday, 1991). Even in cases where differences between minority and majority groups are cultural rather than phenotypic, minority group members may only assimilate far enough to become "good copies," not clones, of the majority group.

Frustrations with the experience of being "copy-identities" may lead the minority group to totally reject the model and move in a radically different direction—perhaps back to some original, distinct identity that was associated with high honour in some other social context. The nostalgia expressed by some people in East Germany for the "old Communist days" may be an example of this trend.

But if assimilation has shortcomings as a policy for managing cultural diversity, what other alternatives can Germany turn to?

MULTICULTURALISM

For almost two and a half centuries after Independence, the American ideal for managing cultural diversity has been assimilation, either in the form of "minority-assimilation" or "melting-pot assimilation." It is only in the last few decades that an alternative ideal, under the banner of "multiculturalism," has received serious support. I shall first introduce a number of terms which help unravel the different meanings of multiculturalism, then discuss the psychological basis of multiculturalism policy.

"Laissez-Faire" vs. "Active" Multiculturalism. The term multiculturalism is often used descriptively to refer to societies that are demographically characterized by cultural group differences. All societies with ethnic minorities are in this sense "multicultural." In such *laissez-faire* multicultural societies, the majority group tolerates minority cultures, but does not actively intervene to support or inhibit them. In contrast, "active" multiculturalism exists where the majority group intentionally supports or encourages cultural diversity by means of strengthening minority group cultures.

"Individual" vs. "Collective" Multiculturalism. An important but seldom adopted interpretation of multiculturalism is to conceive of every individual as possessing a culture that is to some extent unique. Support for multiculturalism in this case would involve support for the uniqueness of persons as cultural units with distinct characteristics. This interpretation of multiculturalism is grounded in the same moral and legal basis as is individualism and thus allows for a harmonious fit between multiculturalism and individualism.

But the more generally adopted interpretation of multiculturalism is "collective," in the sense that the focus is on *groups* as cultural units. Value is ascribed to the cultural features of groups, and particularly to assumed or actual cultural between-group differences (Moghaddam, Taylor, & Wright, 1993). Within-group, between-person differences are neglected.

The philosophical justification for this collective mode of multiculturalism is found partly in "cultural relativism," the view that one cannot properly comprehend or evaluate phenomena unless from the perspective of the culture in which these phenomena originate (see Moghaddam, 1992). Consequently, minority cultures should be strengthened, rather than assimilated.

From "Laissez-Faire" to "Active" Multiculturalism.   During the last few decades, we have witnessed in Western societies far stronger support for "active" multiculturalism, with an emphasis on collectives rather than individuals as cultural units. Among the factors leading to this situation, two are particularly important.

First, the recognition that assimilation is taking place in an uneven manner, so that some groups become assimilated fairly quickly but others are still not assimilated after several centuries of "residence" in the New World. Evidence of such uneveness comes from research on marriage patterns, showing that Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish groups tend to marry within their religious groups, creating a "triple melting-pot" (Kennedy, 1944). More recently, research has focused on the role that racism plays in marginalizing some ethnic minorities, particularly Blacks (Katz & Taylor, 1988).

A second factor leading to active collective multiculturalism has been the pursuit of political goals via ethnic mobilization. The inclination towards "ethnic separatism" has been present to some degree in previous periods of North-American history. For instance, during the mid-19th century some Germans were hopeful of creating an all-German state within the United States, or even an independent nation in North America (Hansen, 1940, pp. 129–140). But the "ethnic revival" (Belanger & Pinard, 1991) of the recent decades is unique, both in its scope and its impact. Ethnic minorities are mobilizing in a collective manner to confront what they believe to be group-based discrimination.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF COLLECTIVE MULTICULTURALISM

There are at least two psychological assumptions underlying collective multiculturalism, and both seem sound on initial examination. The first is that people are positively motivated to retain their heritage cultures. Given this desire, it is argued, governments should provide support for people to retain their heritages.

A second, more complex, psychological assumption concerns a hypothesized link between feelings of security and orientations toward others. This assumption has been discussed under the title of *multicultural hypothesis* (Berry, 1984; Berry, Kalin & Taylor, 1977; Lambert, Mermegis & Taylor, 1985), which proposes that a sense of security within an ethnic ingroup will lead to a more open and acceptable attitude towards outgroup members. From this perspective, government policies should aim to strengthen a sense of security among ethnic groups, presumably by supporting the retention of heritage cultures and raising pride in such cultures. For example, Canada's multicultural policy involves both support for heritage culture retention and sharing of heritage cultures with others.

These assumptions have received rather limited support from studies of attitudes towards multiculturalism among majority and minority groups in Canada and the United States (Berry, 1984; Lambert & Taylor, 1990; Moghaddam & Solliday, 1991). In general, the literature suggests that majority group members are fairly positively orientated towards heritage culture retention among minority groups, but that visible minorities seem to experience psychological ambivalence on this issue, perhaps because heritage culture retention makes them even more visible and a more obvious target for prejudice (Moghaddam & Taylor, 1987; Moghaddam, Taylor, & Lalonde, 1989). The findings of studies examining the multicultural hypothesis are even less clear, in part because basic concepts, such as "feeling of security," have not been adequately defined. Does "security" refer to social status, financial resources, job security, political influence, or perhaps to some psychological perception of self-status?

Despite these measurements challenges, the basic proposition underlying the multicultural hypothesis is bold and promising, and certainly worth serious consideration. This hypothesis stands in sharp contrast to the concept of *ethnocentrism* (Sumner, 1906). Ethnocentrism refers to attitudes that assume the ingroup culture to be superior, and suggests that feelings of pride and security in the ingroup are associated with negative rather than positive views of outgroups. A substantial body of social science literature has elaborated on the nature of ethnocentrism in many different societies (Brewer, 1986; LeVine & Campbell, 1972). Thus, the multicultural hypothesis is challenging a well-established social science concept and its body of supporting literature.

CONCLUSION: MULTICULTURALISM AND AMERICAN IDEALS

Almost half a century ago Myrdal (1944) pointed out that racism constituted a contradiction between American ideals and practices. This "American dilemma" arose from the fact that American ideal rest on a meritocracy ideology that gives central place to individualism whereas racism involves treating persons first and foremost on the basis of their group memberships. Myrdal (1944) believed the resolution of this contradiction to be inevitable, and the civil rights legislation that has been instituted since the 1960s seems to confirm Myrdal's thesis. This legislation has made racism illegal.

It is possible that on exactly the same grounds that Myrdal saw a contradiction between racism and American ideals, there will arise contradictions between collective multiculturalism and American ideals. The likelihood of such a "new American dilemma" (Katz & Taylor, 1988) increases when multiculturalism is associated, as it sometimes is, with affirmative action and other such programmes that explicitly emphasize the group memberships of

persons, rather than their characteristics as individuals. As such, collective multiculturalism may contradict the meritocratic system that is associated with strong individualism in society.

But it is important to distinguish between meritocracy as an ideal system, and meritocracy in practice. Minorities often claim that the rift between ideal and actual is enormous. Although meritocratic ideals require that all individuals enjoy equality of opportunity, in practice society is far from open and the status of individuals depends considerably more on their group memberships than their individual characteristics. Given this situation, minorities may perceive collective multiculturalism as the only feasible alternative for fighting against shortcomings in the way that meritocracy is *actually* put into practice.

In the context of Germany, collective multiculturalism may be adopted by minorities in an attempt to counter perceive problems with the way in which meritocracy has been put to practice. For instance, East Germans may come to believe that the unified Germany is not a meritocracy; that the social status of individuals and their employment positions depend on group affiliation, "Easterner" or "Westerner," rather than individual characteristics. From this perception may arise the belief that only through collective mobilization can East Germans improve their situation. Such mobilization might involve the strengthening of ingroup ties and support for affirmative action and other programmes that assume the collectivity rather than the individual to be the fundamentally important social unit. These considerations point to an important immediate challenge confronting German authorities: strengthening people's belief in the meritocracy ideology.

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