

Multiculturalism as an Integrative Process

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Abstract

Is multiculturalism citizenship a process, an aim, or an entitlement? In its initial iteration, normative theorists explained multiculturalism as an integrative approach to citizenship and compared it to TH Marshall's understanding of social citizenship across different social classes. Thereafter, most normative approaches to multiculturalism have focused on multiculturalism as a set of entitlements or outcomes rather than as an integrative process. This paper argues that to understand multiculturalism as an integrative process changes what can be expected of the theory. I consider three features of multiculturalism as process. First, integrative processes can be unpredictable and for this reason, can produce something new and unanticipated. This is especially true of community-building processes where outcomes depend on the interactions between diverse members whose collective synergies are unknown at the outset. Second, an integrative process requires all participants to integrate rather than only one group or part. In this way, integration is distinct from incorporation. Third, integrative processes are usually face to face and participatory, and for good reason. In social and political contexts, integrative processes take time and, if they are to be successful, provide people with the opportunity to learn how to share in community. As an experiential learning process, multiculturalism is a process through which we learn what it means to share citizenship and manage conflicts with a diversity of peoples in a variety of settings.

Biography

Avigail Eisenberg is a political theorist and professor of Political Science at the University of Victoria. Her work examines pluralism and diversity in Anglo-American societies from the early 20th century to the present day. Her publications include two monographs, eight edited or co-edited books and numerous research papers.