

## POLITICAL THEORY AND LANGUAGE POLICY

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**L**anguage policy is an issue of considerable ethical, political, and legal importance in jurisdictions around the world. In recent years in the United States, “English-only” activists have waged a campaign to remove a number of rights previously enjoyed by linguistic minorities and to declare English the official language of the country. In the European Union and in many developing countries, efforts to construct common institutions and a shared identity have been severely complicated by linguistic diversity and demands for recognition by numerous language groups. And in Quebec, Catalonia, Belgium, the Baltic States, and elsewhere, local linguistic majorities have sought to normalize the use of their languages in the public sphere, often to the protests of other language groups.

Despite the ubiquity and salience of language disputes, surprisingly little has been written about language policy from a normative point of view.<sup>1</sup> It is true, of course, that there has been a great surge of interest in multiculturalism on the part of political philosophers in the past fifteen or so years and that books and articles on this topic often refer to language examples.<sup>2</sup> It is also true that language disputes bring into play a number of concepts and values that have been dealt with extensively in the multiculturalism literature, including equality, recognition, freedom, identity, democracy, and cultural preservation. But in language disputes, these concepts and values are addressed in the context of a distinctive set of social facts that makes it problematic to fold language questions into multiculturalism too hastily. These

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include the fact that language is the medium in which most social interaction takes place, the fact that most people can speak only one or several languages, the fact that learning new languages is very difficult for most adults, and the fact that translation is expensive, inconvenient, and always imperfect. Given the distinctive constellation of ethical considerations and social facts that surrounds language disputes, sustained normative reflection directed specifically at language policy should be able to generate some insights that are at best implicit in the existing multiculturalism literature. This essay is a contribution to such reflection.

Disputes over language policy raise a number of different normative questions. The most hotly contested of these typically concern the problems of *public recognition* and *individual linguistic autonomy*. According to my terminology, a language enjoys public recognition when it is possible to access public services and/or conduct public business in that language. For example, we can say that the Spanish language is recognized in some jurisdiction when it is possible to receive services in Spanish from public schools, hospitals, or government offices or when Spanish can be used in the courts, the legislature, and so on. The problem of public recognition is the problem of which languages should be recognized and in which domains of public language use. In a linguistically plural society, should every language spoken by some minimum number of persons be publicly recognized, or just one or several? If it is just one or several, then how should the public language(s) be selected?

An individual enjoys linguistic autonomy, I will say, to the extent that he is free from state interference to select which language he will use in various nonpublic domains and which of the publicly recognized languages he will use in various public domains. The problem of linguistic autonomy concerns whether it is ever permissible for the state to restrict an individual's linguistic autonomy in either of these contexts. Is it ever permissible for the state to require individuals to access public services or transact public business in their "own" language (or in some other language) in a context where a number of languages enjoy recognition? And is it ever legitimate for the state to restrict an individual's freedom to choose which language to use in various nonpublic domains? Is it permissible, for instance, for the state to regulate the language of the workplace or of commercial signs?

All of the real-world language disputes mentioned earlier raise one or both of these kinds of problems. The U.S. "English-only" debate, for instance, has been centrally concerned with the recognition of the Spanish language. To what extent should particular states or the federal government offer various public services (education, social services, etc.) or conduct various pieces of public business (e.g., voting) in Spanish—as well as in English? In various

European jurisdictions and in Quebec, a central point of contention has concerned whether the language of the local majority should be made the principal language of public business and services or whether and to what extent the languages of local linguistic minorities should enjoy recognition too. In addition, in a number of these cases—most famously in Quebec—the government has imposed certain restrictions on individual linguistic autonomy. In Quebec, laws restrict the use of English in certain language domains, including education, public signs, and the workplace.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, a full inquiry into the normative issues surrounding language policy would require tackling both the public recognition and linguistic autonomy problems. My focus in this essay, however, will be almost exclusively on public recognition. As will become apparent, the issues surrounding this problem are more than complex enough for a single essay. Moreover, it seems likely that the ethical considerations underlying possible responses to the public recognition problem will end up being central to reflection on linguistic autonomy as well. If we can clarify the former problem as much as possible, then we should be in a much better position to address the latter.

The problem of language recognition starts to become theoretically interesting as soon as a superficially attractive solution is discarded. According to this solution, the appropriate response to linguistic pluralism is akin to what many liberals think of as the best response to religious pluralism—namely, disestablishment or public disengagement. Just as there ought to be no official or state-sanctioned religion, the same is true for language: there ought to be no official, publicly recognized language(s). This kind of response to the public recognition problem offers a good example of why it can be confusing to analyze language issues in the context of the broader debate about multiculturalism. Whereas the idea of disestablishment might have some merit in certain corners of the multiculturalism debate, it clearly has none as a response to the language recognition problem. Disengagement cannot be the best response of public institutions to linguistic pluralism because disengagement from language is impossible.<sup>4</sup> Public services must be offered, and public business transacted, in some language(s) or other. Even if a conscious choice is made not to declare any particular language “official,” as has been made in the United States, decisions still need to be made about the *de facto* language(s) of public communication.

Once the implausible disestablishment solution is set aside, we are left with the challenge of identifying more promising ways of thinking about the recognition problem. I propose to take up this challenge by distinguishing between, as well as laying out as clearly as possible, three different models for thinking about language recognition issues. I call these the “official

multilingualism,” “language rationalization,”<sup>5</sup> and “language maintenance” models. I show how each model is connected with a distinct and (under certain conditions at least) attractive idea of equality and how each has certain affinities with themes in liberalism.

I will argue, further, that none of the three models obviously dominates the others. By this I mean that none is obviously superior to the other two in all the kinds of empirical circumstances in which language disputes have arisen or are likely to arise. In some contexts, there is no deep conflict between the three approaches. In many situations, however, the three models pull in different directions, and the normatively best policy will seek to balance the competing considerations. This would be the best way of balancing the different aspects of equality that come into play with language recognition issues and of being responsive to the different themes in liberal thought.

I start by setting out the official multilingualism model and exploring its normative foundations. The language rationalization and language maintenance models are then presented as possible challenges to this first model. Throughout the discussion, the emphasis is on determining where the considerations underlying the different models are in harmony and where there are inevitable trade-offs. The order of presentation of the models is to some degree arbitrary, and it should, in principle, be possible to arrive at the same final destination no matter what order they are examined in. But it is also true that starting out from the official multilingualism model reflects my belief (to be motivated in the conclusion) that this model is the most ethically appropriate default position and thus the one to opt for except where some sufficiently strong challenge to it can be mounted.

One simplifying assumption will be made throughout the main body of the essay. The language recognition problem arises because of linguistic diversity within some particular jurisdiction. To keep the discussion as focused as possible, I will assume that the linguistic diversity at issue is *not* generated by (recent) immigration. The different language groups making claims for recognition are, I shall imagine, on all fours with one another in the degree to which they can claim to be indigenous. I make this assumption, not as an approximation of empirical reality, but to sidestep the vexed question of whether there is some basic moral distinction between recognition claims on behalf of immigrant languages and those on behalf of the language(s) of the host society. Although much work needs to be done on this question, there are also questions about language recognition *within* the host society, and these will be more easily examined in isolation from the issues surrounding immigrant languages.<sup>6</sup> In the conclusion, I briefly explore the implications of dropping the no-immigrant-language assumption for the main arguments of the essay.

### OFFICIAL MULTILINGUALISM

A language is recognized in public life, I said earlier, when public services are offered and public business can be conducted in that language. The official multilingualism model maintains that each of the various languages spoken in the community should be accorded the same recognition. Suppose, for instance, that the jurisdiction to which the language recognition regime applies contains three main language groups. Under official multilingualism, the same kinds of public services that are made available in one of these languages—schools, hospitals, social services, and so on—are also made available in the other two. And it is possible to conduct public business—in the legislature, in the courts, in dealing with public officials, and so on—in any of the three languages.

It is this model, or something like it, that inspires the regimes of official multilingualism found, for instance, in federal institutions in Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland and in the institutions of the European Union. In almost all of these cases, however, official multilingualism is a controversial policy, and in many other jurisdictions in the world, where it might have been introduced, it has been rejected. We will get a sense of some of the most important objections to official multilingualism when we turn to the other two models. For now, however, let us focus on setting out the positive case on behalf of this first model. What ethical considerations underlie it?

My answer to this question will have two parts. The first part offers an account of three different interests that are served by language recognition—interests that *L*-speakers have in the public recognition of *L*. The second part consists of the claim that official multilingualism is an appropriate way for public institutions to balance the interests that people have in the recognition of their respective languages. The argument here will be that official multilingualism embodies an attractive idea of equality that is central to much contemporary liberal thought.

Let us begin, then, by examining some of the interests that are served when one's language is publicly recognized. It is useful to distinguish three such interests: the interest in *communication*, in *symbolic affirmation*, and in *identity promotion*.

*Communication.* Different people have different language capabilities. Some people speak two or more languages fluently and seem capable of learning additional languages almost effortlessly. Others find it difficult to achieve competence in a second language even when they make very great efforts to do so. The first and most obvious good that is achieved through recognition of some language *L* is accommodation of the communication needs

of *L*-speakers who lack fluency in any of the other languages that are used in public settings. A person is better able to exercise his rights if he receives communications from government officials or public utilities in a language he can understand. He can more effectively use public transportation when instructions and directions are posted in a language he can read. And so on. In general, those who cannot, because of their linguistic capabilities, access public services or participate meaningfully in the conduct of public business will encounter more obstacles to achieving their ends and are vulnerable to having their rights and interests overlooked.

Obviously, these considerations apply with particular force for people having little or no facility in any of the publicly recognized languages, but in certain contexts they are important even for people who have achieved a reasonable degree of competence in a public language. In highly stressful contexts, such as hospitals or courts of law, or in contexts involving a particularly technical vocabulary, such as filling out one's tax return, even a quite fluently bilingual person can find it easier to communicate in her own language. Recognition serves the individual's interest in communication, then, in the straightforward sense that it facilitates understanding and communication in the public domain on the part of people who have limited fluency in other public languages.

*Symbolic affirmation.* Being offered a service or having some piece of public business conducted in one's language is for many a sign of consideration and respect.<sup>7</sup> Enjoying the consideration and respect of others, in turn, seems crucial to developing a full sense of one's own worth and an undistorted sense of one's agency and identity.<sup>8</sup> No doubt this connection between recognition and symbolic affirmation rests on contingent, culturally specific, and potentially mutable facts about the ways in which people show respect and consideration for one another. Nonetheless, the connection seems deeply rooted in historical facts about subordination and hegemony. Throughout history, more powerful social groups have sought to impose their language on the less powerful by requiring linguistic accommodation as a condition of economic and political opportunities and advantages. Against this background, a refusal of recognition can become symbolically connected with a sense of powerlessness and subordination. Some might argue that the world would be a much better place if people could only lower the temperature of language policy decisions by divesting them of some of their status-symbolic connotations. But until and unless the social meanings attached to patterns of linguistic recognition do shift in this way, it seems reasonable for recognition claimants to appeal to the good of symbolic affirmation.<sup>9</sup>

*Identity promotion.* For many people, particularly for those in linguistic minorities, language is a central and defining feature of identity.<sup>10</sup> People identify with the (local) community of speakers of their language, recognize one another as members of the same group on the basis of language, and have a more or less settled desire that the group should survive and flourish into the indefinite future.<sup>11</sup> Individual members of the group have the same kind of interest in group survival and flourishing that they have in the realization of any other kind of goal to which they attach great importance. Public recognition contributes to the goal of group survival and flourishing and serves the interest in identity promotion in this sense. All else being equal, people are more likely to make decisions that contribute to the maintenance of the group—for example, the decision to raise or educate their children in the language of the group—to the extent that there are meaningful public activities taking place in that language. Of course, the language of public institutions is only one aspect of a complex calculation, and other considerations, such as language use in the economy and in civil society, may well be of greater importance. But the use of the language in public institutions helps to signal that the language is a going concern and that committing oneself or one's children to the group will not be futile or disadvantageous.

The three interests have different implications for the character of a regime of official multilingualism. To the extent that such a regime is designed merely to serve the interest in communication, it can be fairly weak and limited in character. In many contexts, communication for *L*-speakers can be facilitated through translation (e.g., in courts of law) or by personal bilingualism on the part of selected service providers (e.g., medical professionals, customs officials, etc.) and does not generally require separate *L*-speaking institutions. If official multilingualism is primarily grounded in the interest in communication, moreover, then recognition claims by highly bilingual linguistic minorities will be proportionately less compelling. Where most people in the group have achieved a high degree of fluency in one of the public languages, then the argument that recognition is needed to promote communication seems very weak. Even where there are people who lack fluency in a public language, public recognition of their language need only be a temporary measure, so far as the good of communication is concerned. If communication is all that is at stake, there is no principled objection to the state implementing a program of intensive language training so that within a generation or so, public recognition of the minority language can be dropped.<sup>12</sup>

Once the interests in symbolic affirmation and identity promotion are brought into focus, however, the case for stronger, more widely applicable,

and more permanent recognition claims becomes stronger. Offering *L*-speakers health care in a mainly *L*-speaking environment, or making it possible for some key piece of public business such as a trial to proceed in *L*, shows respect and consideration for *L*-speakers and allows *L*-speakers to enjoy the same public promotion of their identity that speakers of other public languages take for granted. An appeal to the interests in symbolic affirmation and identity promotion also suggests that even highly bilingual linguistic minorities are eligible for recognition and that any such recognition is best thought of as a permanent measure rather than a transitional one that expires as soon as members of the minority group have mastered the majority language.

Many people will balk, however, at appeals to the interests in symbolic affirmation and identity promotion to defend official multilingualism. They will ask, Is there really a general duty to design public institutions so that nobody feels demeaned or insulted and all are receiving as much help as possible with the promotion of their identities? People claim to be insulted or demeaned by all kinds of social arrangements, but this does not always imply that those arrangements are objectionable. A Christian fundamentalist who feels insulted and demeaned by the exclusion of Christian prayers from the public schools does not have a stronger claim to recognition just in virtue of this feeling. Likewise, different people define their identities in a huge variety of different ways. For some, ethnic identity is central; for others, religious, sexual, local, professional, or lifestyle identities are more dominant, and so on. We presumably do not think that social and political arrangements ought to be designed in such a way as to promote as much as possible all these different identities.

To address this objection, it is necessary to move on to the second part of the case in favor of official multilingualism—the claim that such a regime is the appropriate way to balance the interests that speakers of different languages have in the public recognition of their respective languages. As I promised earlier, the defense of this claim involves showing how official multilingualism embodies an attractive idea of equality that is central to much contemporary liberal thought.

The link between equality and language recognition policy is far from straightforward, however. Treating people as equals is widely thought to require treating them equally along some privileged dimension (and thus differently along other dimensions).<sup>13</sup> But what dimension should be privileged when it comes to language policy? I can think of three main kinds of answers to this question.

According to the first, the dimension to be privileged should have nothing to do with the interests that people have in language recognition. Rather, deci-



sions about language policy should seek to leave people as equal as possible with respect to some aspect or aspects of their social, economic, and political lives. For example, such decisions should seek to leave people as equal as possible with respect to their socioeconomic mobility, their opportunities for democratic participation, and so on. On this view, the selection of a language recognition regime is completely instrumental to the achievement of equality along some non-language-related dimension.

A second possible answer is that the dimension to be privileged consists of the actual satisfaction of the interests people have in language recognition. Decisions about language policy should seek to leave people as equal as possible with respect to the satisfaction of their interests in communication, symbolic affirmation, and identity promotion. Individuals are equal in this sense, for instance, when each has roughly the same possibility of communicating with other members of society, each is deriving roughly the same degree of self-esteem and self-respect from the status and success of their language, and the language-oriented identity of each enjoys roughly the same degree of security and success.

As we shall see, these first two conceptions of equality underlie the language rationalization and language maintenance models, respectively. According to a third view, however, recognition itself is the dimension along which people should be left equal. Decisions about language policy should seek to leave people as equal as possible in the degree to which the languages they speak are publicly recognized. Equality on this understanding (*equality of treatment*) is a matter of achieving a certain distribution of institutional space and capacity. Indeed, it is given expression to by a policy of official multilingualism. As we saw earlier, official multilingualism is simply the view that each language spoken in the community ought to enjoy the same public recognition.

It might seem odd to start by arguing that recognition is important because it serves particular interests but then to propose a conception of equality that focuses on recognition itself rather than on the interests it serves. Why should we try to equalize along a dimension that is only derivatively important rather than along the dimension that is intrinsically important? It is roughly this question that underlies the language maintenance challenge, and I shall postpone consideration of it until later. For the time being, let me just suggest that the view now being proposed is less odd than it first appears. A person with a \$100 to distribute to four people he wants to respect as equals can sensibly decide to give each \$25 even though money is only important because of its instrumental importance to well-being, and the four may end up with very different levels of well-being as a result of his decision.

The idea underlying equality of treatment is that we sometimes respect people as equals by devoting to each of them the same amount of resources and attention. We do this even though we know that those people will use the resources and attention to pursue various interests and that some will have more success than others at realizing those interests. This broad idea of equality is at the heart of much recent liberal egalitarian theory. In Rawls's liberal theory of justice, for instance, it is not welfare or the satisfaction of interests but primary goods, such as income, wealth, and the social bases of self-respect, that are distributed according to the principles of justice.<sup>14</sup> Dworkin is even more explicit in connecting liberal equality with the idea that public institutions ought to devote the same amount of resources and attention to serving the interests of each citizen. According to Dworkin, liberalism is defined by a commitment to a "principle of rough equality" according to which "resources and opportunities should be distributed, so far as possible, equally, so that roughly the same share of whatever is available is devoted to satisfying the ambitions of each."<sup>15</sup> It is this fundamental idea of equality that underlies official multilingualism: public institutions treat speakers of different languages as equals by devoting the same space and capacity to each of their languages.<sup>16</sup>

#### *LANGUAGE RATIONALIZATION*

A regime of official multilingualism could conceivably contribute to two broad kinds of outcomes. One possibility is that it could assist the maintenance of a number of different languages in regular use within the community. A second possibility is that it would not be able to prevent a shift away from some languages and a convergence on some dominant language. These two possible outcomes give rise to two different challenges to official multilingualism. The first challenge criticizes official multilingualism by appealing to some of the advantages of linguistic convergence. From this point of view, official multilingualism is defective because it does too much to encourage linguistic diversity and not enough to encourage convergence. The second challenge spotlights the second kind of outcome and makes essentially the opposite objection. It appeals to the idea that an important responsibility of public institutions is to promote the maintenance of vulnerable languages. Official multilingualism is objectionable from this point of view because it does not do enough to ensure the survival of vulnerable languages and is too tolerant of social forces that lead to linguistic convergence. I will consider the first of these challenges in the present section and the second in the next section.

The first challenge worries that the numerous advantages associated with linguistic convergence will not be achieved under official multilingualism. Once these advantages are taken into consideration, the appeal of official multilingualism is weakened, and a policy of language rationalization should be selected instead. Such a policy, as I shall understand it, involves a program of promoting convergence on a privileged public language (or set of languages) by limiting or denying recognition of other languages in certain spheres of language use.<sup>17</sup>

Four possible advantages of linguistic rationalization deserve to be highlighted. Linguistic rationalization can (1) enhance social mobility, (2) facilitate democratic deliberation, (3) encourage the formation of a common political identity, and (4) increase the efficiency of public institutions. Let us look at each of these advantages more closely.

*Social mobility.* Minority-language communities can easily become ghettoized when their members are unable or unwilling to master more widely spoken languages. The economic opportunities of those citizens will be limited by the work available in their own language, and they will have trouble accessing the culture of the larger society or participating meaningfully in its political life. A policy promoting the integration of members of smaller language communities into a larger language community could, in the long run, according to this argument, expand the choices and opportunities available to members of the minority community.

*Democratic deliberation.* Democratic decision making is not just a formal process of voting on the basis of antecedently given preferences. It also presupposes an ongoing activity of deliberation and discussion, mainly taking place in civil society, in which free and equal citizens exchange reasons and are sometimes moved by them to change their opinions and preferences. Linguistic diversity can be a serious barrier to the full flourishing of this informal dimension of democracy. If citizens cannot understand one another, or if they seek to communicate only with co-linguists, then democratic politics will inevitably be compromised.<sup>18</sup> Language rationalization can work against this problem by encouraging the formation of a single language community.

*Common identity.* Fellow citizens must be willing to tolerate and trust, defer to the requirements of public reason, and accept certain burdens and sacrifices for the sake of the common good. It is widely thought that, where the citizens of a particular community do not share some common political identity, these virtues and dispositions are likely to be absent or weakened.<sup>19</sup> Legitimate goals of the community cannot be achieved when the community

is fragmented into identity groups that do not share any of the bonds of citizenship and that view cooperation with one another solely as an instrument of mutual advantage. A successful policy of language rationalization could ensure that language would no longer serve to separate citizens into distinct and mutually antagonistic groups but would become one of the defining bonds of a common identity.

*Efficiency.* Perhaps the most obvious advantage of linguistic rationalization is its cost-effectiveness.<sup>20</sup> When all the citizens of a community converge on the use of one language, public (and nonpublic) institutions can make numerous savings. It is no longer necessary to spend as much money on translating written documents or on simultaneous translation in the conduct of official business. Meetings, as well as the policy-making process more generally, can be conducted more quickly, without the need to be constantly pausing for translations. And public institutions need not go to the additional expense of finding or training multilingual staff or of setting up parallel institutions (e.g., school boards) in a number of different languages.

All of these considerations should be of concern to people attracted to liberal and egalitarian values. All else being equal, liberals and egalitarians should prefer institutional arrangements that enhance equality of opportunity and reduce social exclusion, facilitate discussion between all citizens and make democracy more responsive to deliberation, encourage a shared political identity fostering civic virtues and dispositions, and make for a more efficient public sector, one that frees up time and resources for allocation to other priorities. To the extent that language rationalization would have these consequences and official multilingualism would not, the challenge to the latter is clear.

So how damaging is the language rationalization challenge to official multilingualism? One response is that there is no reason to think that a choice between equality of treatment and social, economic, and political equality should *always* be made in favor of the latter. The interests served by language recognition are themselves weighty and should not automatically be dropped as soon as certain advantages of rationalization are identified. For instance, the mere fact that a policy designed to establish equality of treatment is costlier than an alternative is not necessarily a decisive reason for rejecting it. In other areas of social policy, we are, to some degree, willing to tolerate costly or time-consuming procedures designed to promote equality. A similar point can be made about encouraging a common identity. The conjecture that a more homogeneous society might enjoy greater social cohesion is not always taken to be a good reason for compromising equality to promote greater

homogeneity. A religiously homogeneous society might have a stronger sense of shared identity than a heterogeneous one, but many people would hesitate in advocating state preference for the majority religion on this basis.

Even assuming that the advantages associated with language rationalization do take priority over the kind of equality embodied in official multilingualism, the language rationalization challenge makes three significant assumptions that can be questioned:

*Significant linguistic convergence will not be achieved under a policy of official multilingualism.* This assumption ignores the fact that people frequently learn more than one language. Despite the equal recognition of several languages, second-language acquisition may mean that one or several public languages emerge that are common to all or most people. This de facto convergence on a common (second) language, or set of languages, presents a significant problem for those who advocate abandoning official multilingualism to secure the advantages of linguistic convergence. It means that many members of smaller language groups are able, if they wish, to pursue opportunities in larger language communities and, to this extent, are not ghettoized by their linguistic capabilities. For these people, it cannot be argued that social mobility considerations support the abandonment of official multilingualism. The same is true to some degree for the problem of democratic deliberation. People will naturally conduct certain political discussions in their own language, but many will also be able to participate in political deliberations conducted in another language. For this reason, it is important not to exaggerate the extent to which the maintenance of linguistic diversity through a policy of official multilingualism impedes the process of democratic deliberation.

Of course it might be wondered why a community should bother recognizing several languages at all if so many people can get along in one common language. "They all speak X anyway" is a common complaint of X-speakers against extending language rights to other languages. The argument just made suggests a paradox: the more some linguistic group is able to speak another language, the stronger its case to have its own language recognized. This paradox should not alarm us, however, for the value of recognition only partially depends on assumptions about linguistic capabilities. As we saw earlier, communication is one of the interests served by recognition, but recognition also serves interests in symbolic affirmation and identity promotion. Moreover, communication considerations can still be important for people who have achieved a reasonable level of competence in another public language, for instance, in stressful or technical contexts, where it may be easier to function in their own language.

*Significant linguistic convergence is necessary to secure advantages such as social mobility, democratic deliberation, a common identity, and efficiency.* A problem with this assumption is that there do seem to be some relatively successful examples of bilingual or multilingual societies. Canada, Switzerland, and Belgium, for instance, are all reasonably liberal and egalitarian societies that depart significantly from the unilingual norm, and European institutions, although flawed in many ways, do engage in some economic redistribution and include some democratic fora (e.g., the European Parliament). The advantages associated with linguistic convergence can be secured without actual convergence if and to the extent that some or all of a number of conditions are met. These include the widespread use of translators to facilitate public deliberation and discussion, the emergence of a common identity defined in terms of an acknowledgment and affirmation of difference (e.g., linguistic diversity and official multilingualism become sources of pride and identity), and the relative institutional completeness of each of the particular language groups, so that members have significant opportunity and choice within their own language community. To the extent that these conditions are met or can be brought about, a multilingual community may be able to enjoy the advantages associated with language rationalization even if full convergence never takes place.

*The advantages of language convergence can be secured through a policy of language rationalization.* Even granting the two assumptions above, it might still be questioned whether the advantages of convergence can be achieved through language rationalization. In certain respects, in fact, such a policy might make things worse, not better. Consider, for instance, the relationship between social mobility and language policy in the education system. Although the evidence is far from conclusive on either side of the debate, it has often been argued that policies of rapid educational assimilation designed to promote the social mobility of children from linguistic minorities can be counterproductive.<sup>21</sup> According to this view, children pushed into majority-language schooling at too young an age have trouble ever catching up and would, in fact, be much better served by a bilingual program.<sup>22</sup>

A similar argument can be made about the goal of forging a common identity. It is far from clear that denying recognition to some particular language would encourage speakers of that language to integrate into a common identity with majority-language speakers. Even if nonrecognition did bring about a language shift, the identity difference may survive or even be magnified by the way in which this is done. In some cases, far from leading to a common identity, a policy of withholding recognition from certain language groups would only lead to a sense of betrayal and alienation from the whole political

community.<sup>23</sup> Paradoxically, the best way to promote a common identity is sometimes to allow difference to flourish. It is in virtue of the fact that one's own group specificity is recognized and affirmed in the public sphere that one's attachment to the political community as a whole is strengthened and extended.

None of these arguments are meant to suggest that language rationalization ought to be rejected outright. The model is clearly connected to significant liberal and egalitarian ideas that should not be quickly dismissed, and it seems safe to assume that cases can be identified in which none of the responses to the model indicated above are likely to be applicable. What the discussion does show is that official multilingualism is not dominated by language rationalization. In some contexts, the considerations appealed to by language rationalization may well be compelling, but in others they are not. A trade-off between respecting equality of treatment and promoting other forms of social, economic, and political equality should not always be decided against equality of treatment. Moreover, at least three of the assumptions underpinning the challenge might be questioned. It might be questioned whether equal recognition would prevent wide-scale convergence on some common language, whether actual convergence really is necessary to achieve the advantages associated with convergence, and whether language rationalization would be any more successful than official multilingualism at securing those advantages.

#### *LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE*

I turn now to the language maintenance model, which can be thought of as the second challenge to official multilingualism. This challenge starts from the observation that the equal recognition of several languages does not guarantee that they will be equally successful or even that they will all survive. Even though public services are offered and public business can be transacted in some language, this does not ensure its health or vitality. It does not guarantee, for instance, a stable number of speakers of the language or that the language will retain importance in key spheres of language use.

There are numerous determinants of the success of a particular language, of which public recognition is only one.<sup>24</sup> The birth rate within the language community, the language that parents choose to raise and educate their children in, and the language repertoires and choices of newcomers each affect the size of a language community. Even though a language is publicly recognized, it may not be the principal language of work, business, or civil society;

some other language may be the de facto medium of economic opportunity and social interaction. In this context, it may be rational for adults to invest heavily in acquiring the more widely used language and for parents to educate their children in, and newcomers to integrate into, this language as well. Where these choices to adopt another, economically more powerful language become widespread, even a publicly recognized language may have difficulty surviving.<sup>25</sup>

These observations lead to the objection that official multilingualism is much too formal an approach to language policy. Equality of language recognition in effect advocates giving the same treatment to all even though it is predictable that some will race ahead and others lag behind. By treating all languages the same, very unequal outcomes result.<sup>26</sup> As we saw earlier, an alternative way of understanding equality in connection to language would focus on the outcomes themselves. On such a view, we treat speakers of different languages as equals when we ensure that the various languages they speak are equally successful—where success is a function of the number of speakers, the range of activities that can be conducted in the language, and so on.<sup>27</sup>

Although the policy implications of the language maintenance model can sometimes be hard to make out, it seems clear that they could diverge from the ones associated with official multilingualism. I will assume that a policy of selective language recognition is the primary instrument used to promote language maintenance. Under such a policy, the more vulnerable language is given fuller public recognition than the more secure one, as a way of signaling to people that the vulnerable language is worth learning and using on a regular basis.<sup>28</sup> Selective recognition of this kind is sometimes defended in the context of support for a policy of “territorial multilingualism.” With such a policy, different territories within the state each privilege their own majority language, and individuals on that territory must accommodate themselves to the predominant language or be prepared to move to a territory with a more suitable language regime.

But why should we care about equality of success rather than equality of treatment or facilitating non-language-related equality? The denial of equal recognition to certain languages entailed by language maintenance policies is disadvantageous to speakers of those languages. For instance, under a policy of territorial multilingualism, local linguistic minorities may find it a struggle to communicate in the public sphere, and they would lose a form of symbolic affirmation and an instrument for the promotion of their language and language-based identity. In light of these costs, it is important to know what the justification of such policies could possibly be.



Although many accounts seem possible here, a useful place to start is with the three interests served by recognition—communication, symbolic affirmation, and identity promotion. One reason for caring about the success of different languages is that language success is connected with the actual satisfaction of these three interests. The intuition underpinning equality of success is that it is better to equalize the degree to which people actually satisfy these interests than it is to equalize recognition, which, in any case, is only valuable because it serves these interests.

Consider first the interest in communication—the interest a person has in being able to understand and communicate with those around her. As the number of speakers of the language declines and the range of activities in which the language is used atrophies, a unilingual speaker of the language may eventually find her options becoming restricted. She may face difficulties finding a job, transacting business, making friends, practicing her religion, participating in the informal public life of her community, and so on. To borrow a term from Will Kymlicka, her “context of choice” may become severely limited, and to this extent she will be less free or autonomous than she was before.<sup>29</sup> One reason that equal language success might matter, then, is that individual autonomy matters: we want to avoid situations in which citizens face the possible loss of their linguistic context of choice.

It is important not to exaggerate the impact of this argument, however. The main difficulty is that it is not clear that many people would face the loss of their context of choice under a regime of official multilingualism. Context of choice is clearly a threshold idea. An individual has a secure context of choice so long as she has a sufficiently wide range of meaningful options and opportunities to choose from, given her linguistic capabilities. For this condition to be satisfied, it does not seem particularly important whether the individual’s language community has 2 million speakers or 80 million. In general, it seems possible for the number of speakers of a language to drop considerably without threatening the loss of context of choice.

A second reason why speakers of a vulnerable language might not face a loss of context of choice under a regime of official multilingualism appeals to an important fact about how language shift occurs.<sup>30</sup> Imagine that language *L* did gradually decline in use—to the extent that it fell below the threshold in which it offers a context of choice. It would be a mistake to conclude from this fact alone that *L*-speakers would be left without a context of choice. It would only be unilingual *L*-speakers who would necessarily have lost their context of choice since multilingual *L*-speakers may find meaningful options and opportunities in other languages. And the very same processes that generated the decline in usage of *L* in the first place—the massive attraction of some

other language, for instance—would help to ensure that there are very few unilingual *L*-speakers. Consider the plight of the Welsh language in Wales. Although the Welsh-speaking community is probably near or below the relevant threshold, it does not follow that many Welsh speakers lack a secure context of choice. Only a tiny number of people in Wales—less than 1 percent of the population—are unilingual Welsh speakers, whereas most Welsh speakers can and often do find opportunities within the English-speaking community.

I do not wish to reject the context of choice argument outright as a way of supporting the language maintenance model. What I do think is that the premises of such an argument are sufficiently demanding that it is only likely to be applicable for a restricted set of cases. The argument is probably at its strongest in cases where a language's decline threatens to exclude it altogether from key spheres of language use (e.g., white-collar employment). When this happens, unilingual speakers of the language face a significant deterioration in the meaningful options they have. Often, however, language shift is not so abrupt. Options in the vulnerable language will not disappear completely but will gradually diminish in importance, and the language's decline will be accompanied by a gradual shift away from unilingualism.

So, although the connection between language success and individual context of choice provides a plausible reason for caring about equality of success, it will often not provide a good reason for abandoning official multilingualism. But let us now turn to the interests in symbolic affirmation and promotion of identity to see if stronger support for the language maintenance challenge can be found from those quarters. Even if their language community is above the threshold of viability, people might still feel very strongly about the health and vitality of their language and its relative place in the world. They might derive part of their self-esteem from speaking a language that is shared by millions of people or that serves as a vehicle of international communication. The success of their language—that a constant or increasing number of people should continue to use it in a wide variety of domains—might be an important part of their identity, and they might experience a psychic cost when they must use another language to pursue their goals. Perhaps the importance of equality of success derives simply from the goals of promoting self-esteem and identity?

Unfortunately for this version of the argument, equality of language success ceases to be an attractive ideal when it appeals to self-esteem and identity in this way. The idea that social and political institutions ought to be designed to equalize everyone's sense of self-esteem, or the promotion of everyone's identity, has unappealing implications. As was observed earlier, people report a drop in self-esteem in response to all kinds of social and polit-

ical arrangements, but this does not always imply that those arrangements are objectionable. Likewise, different people define their identities in a huge variety of different ways. We presumably do not think that social and political arrangements ought to be designed in such a way as to promote as equally as possible all these different identities.

To see these points more concretely, consider an analogy to the language maintenance challenge, which we might call the “religion maintenance challenge.” It is possible that a state’s policy of equally recognizing different organized religions (or its decision not to recognize any religion) could be powerless to prevent very different degrees of success among the different religions. For any number of possible reasons, some religions might be relatively successful (by some measure), whereas others decline in importance. For members of the less successful religions, the plight of their religion might conceivably contribute to a diminished sense of self-esteem and a feeling that a cause that is central to their identity is not faring very well. But we surely do not think that *these* are good reasons for abandoning the policy of equal recognition (or universal nonrecognition). To some extent, at least, any plausible view of equality has to hold people responsible for the esteem and identity commitments that they have and not seek to compensate whenever projects they attach importance to do not turn out as well as they would like.<sup>31</sup>

So the language maintenance challenge does not become more compelling through an appeal to the interests in symbolic affirmation or identity promotion. Social and political arrangements should not be rejected just because they produce or fail to prevent outcomes in which some end up with greater self-esteem and success in their identity projects than others. This does not mean that the language maintenance challenge is never valid, however. In general, it seems strongest when a policy of selective recognition can help to avert a rapid and profound language shift that would disrupt and undermine the options of stranded speakers of the vulnerable language.

### CONCLUSION

The first task of this essay has been to set out three distinct approaches to the problem of language recognition. According to the official multilingualism model, each of the various languages spoken in the community should be accorded the same public recognition. The language rationalization approach, by contrast, involves a program of promoting convergence on a privileged public language or group of languages by limiting or denying recognition to other languages. Under the third approach, language mainte-

nance, a policy of selective language recognition is adopted to promote the maintenance of some vulnerable language in the community.

Each of these approaches to language policy can be associated with a distinctive interpretation of equality, and each can be related to particular themes in liberal thought. Official multilingualism is an expression of the egalitarian idea that the same kinds of valuable institutional spaces and resources that are made available to speakers of one language in the community ought to be at the disposal of speakers of other languages as well. This idea of equality is itself a liberal one: it focuses on the resources available to people with which they can pursue their interests rather than their actual degree of success at satisfying those interests. Language rationalization, by contrast, can be associated with equality along a non-language-related dimension. The priority here is to adopt a language policy that leaves people as equal as possible with respect to some aspect or aspects of their social, economic, and political lives. These concerns are, again, clearly liberal ones. Finally, language maintenance can be linked to an idea of equality that focuses on the degree to which the interests in communication, symbolic affirmation, and identity promotion of speakers of different languages are actually satisfied. Equality in this sense should be of concern to liberals to the extent that satisfaction of these interests is an indicator of whether individuals have a secure context of choice.

In addition to setting out the three approaches to language recognition, I have also argued that none is clearly dominated by the others. It is possible to think of circumstances in which either language rationalization or language maintenance (or both) poses a strong challenge to official multilingualism but other circumstances in which neither form of challenge would be particularly compelling. Under favorable conditions, there is no deep conflict between the three approaches. A regime of official multilingualism can be established without threatening anyone's access to a context of choice and without a significant trade-off in terms of social mobility, democratic deliberation, the formation of a common identity, or efficiency. In less favorable conditions, the three approaches pull in different directions, and difficult choices need to be made. Here the key is to try to be as attentive as possible to all of the aspects of equality and liberalism that come into play in language disputes and to try not to do excessive damage to any one of them.

It is worth noting that the appeal of both language rationalization and language maintenance seems contingent on the presence of specific empirical circumstances. Official multilingualism does not always generate unacceptable outcomes from the perspectives of language rationalization and language maintenance but may do so under unfavorable empirical conditions. By contrast, official multilingualism is a straightforward expression of equal-

ity of treatment—the ideal of a set of public institutions that devote the same kinds of spaces and resources to serving the language-related interests of speakers of different languages. For this reason, it seems appropriate to think of official multilingualism as a kind of default position, to be qualified or abandoned only when the relevant kinds of empirical situations arise.

To complete the argument, let me now relax the no-immigrant-language assumption made near the start of the essay. What difference should it make to a language recognition policy if language diversity is a matter, not just of diversity within the host society, but also of the arrival of immigrants with new languages? One approach to this question would seek to show that there is some reason for thinking that immigrants give up their claim to language recognition with the decision to immigrate. Such a view might conceivably be grounded in an argument about the voluntariness of immigration, or it might start from a less direct and more consequentialist appeal to the idea that states would be unlikely to adopt an open immigration policy if such a policy exposed them to a proliferation of language recognition claims.<sup>32</sup> My hunch is that none of the different variations on this strategy are likely to be successful on their own. They all end up assuming that it would be *permissible* for the liberal state to ask immigrants to waive their language claims, even though this is exactly what needs to be shown.

A more promising approach would be to compare the language claims by immigrant and national groups to see whether there are any reasons to think that one will tend to be stronger or weaker than the other. Here the various interests and models discussed in this essay can be of assistance. If we consider national groups, for instance, the interests they have in language recognition will generally be quite weighty. Members of such groups typically have a strong desire to reproduce their identity and interpret a refusal of recognition as symbolically connected with a history of subordination and powerlessness. On the other hand, the interests emphasized by the language rationalization model may be less strong for such groups. Their language communities may have sufficient institutional articulation to provide a wide range of options and opportunities for their members. If we turn to immigrant groups, by contrast, we find that they often do not want to maintain a separate identity from the host society and do not attach the same symbolic importance as national minorities to having their language recognized. Moreover, such groups will typically not find their own established, institutionally articulated language community in which their members can enjoy social mobility.

I am not sure whether using the three models I have been developing to guide this kind of detailed, contextual exploration of the particular interests and claims of immigrant and national groups will always generate the recom-

mendations that might be expected. It could conceivably turn out that (some) immigrant groups have much stronger claims to language recognition than is often assumed. This, in turn, might imply that a very large number of languages have a good claim to recognition—more than could possibly be accommodated in a single political community. Even here it would be a mistake to think that the official multilingualism and language maintenance approaches should simply be dismissed. It does not follow from the premise that *every* language cannot be recognized that only *one* should be recognized. (In some cases, the fact that every *X* cannot be recognized might imply that no *X* should be recognized, but, as we saw near the start of the essay, complete nonrecognition is not a possible language policy.) In a situation in which every language should not be recognized (given the demands of the language rationalization approach), recognizing several languages (perhaps the most widely spoken, or territorially concentrated, or internationally viable, etc.) does not seem any more arbitrary than recognizing just one and may be a superior policy given the interests people have in language recognition. Under this scenario, then, relaxing the no-immigrant assumption may well affect the mix of languages enjoying recognition, but the three approaches discussed in the essay remain as relevant as ever.

### NOTES

1. Notable exceptions include Leslie Green, "Are Language Rights Fundamental?" *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 25 (1987): 639-69; Jonathan Pool, "Thinking about Linguistic Discrimination," *Language Problems and Language Planning* 11 (1987): 3-21, and "The Official Language Problem," *American Political Science Review* 85 (1991): 495-514; Joshua A. Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 1991), chaps. 1-2; Denise G. Réaume, "The Group Right to Linguistic Security: Whose Right, What Duties?" in *Group Rights*, ed. Judith Baker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), and "Official-Language Rights: Intrinsic Value and the Protection of Difference," in *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, ed. Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jeff Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), chap. 7; Michael C. Macmillan, *The Practice of Language Rights in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), chap. 1; Joseph H. Carens, *Culture, Citizenship and Community* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000); Pierre Coulombe, *Language Rights in French Canada* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Philippe Van Parijs, "Must Europe Be Belgian? On Democratic Citizenship in Multilingual Polities," in *The Demands of Citizenship*, ed. Iain Hampsher-Monk and Catriona McKinnon (London: Continuum, 2000); and Rainer Bauböck, "Cultural Citizenship, Minority Rights and Self-Government," in *Citizenship Today: Global Perspectives and Practices*, ed. A. Aleinikoff and D. Klusmeyer (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, 2001). Despite these efforts, language policy has been all but ignored in major international journals of political theory. In four such journals—*American Political Science Review*, *Political Theory*,

*Ethics*, and *Philosophy and Public Affairs*—only one article on normative aspects of language issues has been published in the past twenty-five years (Pool, “The Official Language Problem”).

2. Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1989), chaps. 7-9; Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), chap. 6; Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism and the “Politics of Recognition,”* ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, [1992] 1994); Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1995), chaps. 6-7.

3. As it stands, Quebec’s *Charter of the French Language* permits public English-language schooling only to those children having at least one parent educated in English in Canada, it requires that French have marked predominance in all commercial signs, and it requires that French be the language of the workplace for all businesses with more than fifty employees. See Marc V. Levine, *La Reconquête de Montréal* (Montreal: VLB Editeur, 1997), for an excellent discussion of Quebec’s language politics.

4. Bauböck, in “Cultural Citizenship,” calls this “the fact of linguistic establishment.” For other statements of this point, see Pool, “The Official Language Problem,” 496; Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 111; and Carens, *Culture, Citizenship and Community*, 77-78.

5. This term is borrowed from David Laitin, *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 9-15.

6. For discussions of the immigrant versus host language question, see Carens, *Culture, Citizenship and Community*; Réaume, “Official-Language Rights”; and Bauböck, “Cultural Citizenship.”

7. Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 158; Van Parijs, “Must Europe Be Belgian?”; and Bauböck, “Cultural Citizenship.”

8. Charles Taylor, “Why Do Nations Have to Become States?” in *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 1993), and “The Politics of Recognition.”

9. There is a parallel here with an argument that is sometimes made in discussions of political equality. One important argument for an equal, universal suffrage maintains that the denial of full and equal suffrage to some citizens amounts to an insult and badge of inferiority; Charles R. Beitz, *Political Equality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 110; Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 200-1. Although there is a possible world in which people do not attach symbolic significance to the suffrage, it is a salient social fact—relevant to institutional design—that in our world they do.

10. John Edwards, *Language, Society and Identity* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1985); Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, chaps. 1-2; Coulombe, *Language Rights*; Macmillan, *Practice of Language Rights*; and Réaume, “Official-Language Rights.”

11. Taylor (“The Politics of Recognition,” 40 n16, 52-53, 58-59) emphasizes the desire for cultural survival.

12. Réaume, “Official-Language Rights,” 246-52; Bauböck, “Cultural Citizenship.”

13. Ronald Dworkin, “What Is Equality? Part I: Equality of Welfare,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 10 (1981): 185-246; G. A. Cohen, “On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice,” *Ethics* 99 (1989): 906-44; and Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

14. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

15. Ronald Dworkin, “Liberalism,” in *Public and Private Morality*, ed. Stuart Hampshire (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 113-43 at 129. See also Ronald Dworkin,

"What Is Equality? Part II: Equality of Resources," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 10 (1981): 283-345, for a more elaborate account of "equality of resources."

16. In this paragraph, I have been ignoring an important complication that deserves more attention than I am able to give it in this essay. Liberals value equal treatment of *individuals*, and it is not clear to what extent and under what conditions this is equivalent to equal treatment of *languages*. To establish equality of treatment between individuals who speak different languages, I take it that public institutions would need to devote the same per capita level of resources to the provision of public services in each of those languages. Where there are significant economies of scale in the provision of public services in a particular language, equivalent services cannot be provided in less widely spoken languages without departing from this norm of equal treatment of individuals. In my view, equality between individuals should be the guiding principle in these cases, and this can justify departures from strict equality between languages. For instance, it is legitimate for a language regime to make recognition of less widely spoken languages regionally specific (e.g., by adopting a "where numbers warrant" condition) or to restrict recognition of those languages in other ways (e.g., offering primary health care in those languages but not the full range of specialist care). However one deals with these complications, equality of treatment is still quite distinct from the language rationalization and language maintenance approaches to language policy.

17. A program of promoting convergence might also involve restrictions on individual linguistic autonomy; indeed, such restrictions might be necessary if the program is to be successful. As I indicated at the start of this essay, to focus attention on the problem of recognition, I shall assume that there are no such restrictions on individual autonomy.

18. John Stuart Mill, "Considerations on Representative Government," in *On Liberty and Other Essays* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991), chap. 16; Van Parijs, "Must Europe Be Belgian?"

19. Mill, "Considerations," chap. 16; David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), 90-98; Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, chap. 9.

20. This concern is frequently raised in discussions of language policy in European institutions. See, for example, David Laitin, "The Cultural Identities of a European State," *Politics and Society* 25 (1997): 227-302; Peter A. Kraus, "Political Unity and Linguistic Diversity in Europe," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie/European Journal of Sociology* 41 (2000): 138-63.

21. See Ronald Schmidt, Jr., *Language Policy and Identity Politics in the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), for an excellent overview of this debate.

22. Of course, in the U.S. context, these programs typically aim at promoting eventual success in Anglo-stream society. My point is that this goal of promoting convergence may be better achieved by opting for policies involving more recognition of the minority language rather than less.

23. Young, *Justice*, 179; Réaume, "Official-Language Rights," 260-61, 270-71.

24. For good discussions, see, for example, Jean Laponce, *Langue et Territoire* (Quebec: Presse Universitaires de Laval, 1984); Edwards, *Language, Society and Identity*; Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, chap. 3; Spinner, *Boundaries*, chap. 7; and David Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near-Abroad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

25. Irish is a good example of a publicly recognized language that would be hard to call a success story. See Edwards, *Language, Society and Identity*, 53-65.

26. Many commentators take this to be a decisive objection to official multilingualism schemes (or at least to those that do not involve unilingual territories within a multilingual state). For a strong statement of this view, see Laponce, *Langue et Territoire*. Following Laponce, Van



Parijs, "Must Europe Be Belgian?" has argued that official bilingualism and enforced monolingualism are, in effect, two different forms of the same policy—with both leading to the ascendancy of one language and the gradual disappearance of all others. It is worth stressing that there is one important difference between the two approaches to language policy: unlike enforced unilingualism, official multilingualism gives expression to an ideal of equality (what I have termed *equality of treatment*) that has appeal independently of whether the different languages involved enjoy equal success.

27. Green ("Are Language Rights Fundamental?" 653) suggests that ensuring language survival is "the implicit value assumption of nearly every linguistic demographer and sociolinguist who has written on [language rights]."

28. As with language rationalization, unequal recognition may not be sufficient to achieve the goals of language maintainers; restrictions on individual linguistic autonomy might be necessary as well. I assume that no such restrictions are imposed in order to consider language maintenance in its most moderate and appealing form. It is worth remembering, however, that language maintainers may face a dilemma between achieving their goal of language success and avoiding the use of coercive policy instruments.

29. Kymlicka, *Liberalism*, chaps. 7-9, and *Multicultural Citizenship*, chaps. 5-6.

30. The argument of this paragraph, including the Welsh example, is elaborated further in my "The Autonomy Argument for Liberal Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 5 (1999): 1-17.

31. For this view of equality, see Dworkin, "What Is Equality? Part I." Several readers have objected to me that there are important differences between language and religion. In general, I do not dispute this assertion. But a connection with identity is something that language and religion *do* share in common. Because there are important differences between the two, it is problematic to defend language maintenance by appealing to identity considerations (rather than the "context of choice" considerations sketched above). A more specific version of the objection, however, worries that the analogy is flawed because religion, unlike language, is a matter of *belief*, and the liberal state has no business sustaining a belief. I suspect that *this* difference between religion and language may be less categorical than the objection assumes. On one hand, language does involve an element of belief: it is a commonplace of linguistics, after all, that language conditions the way we understand the world. On the other hand, religion clearly involves a set of practices, and the liberal's intuitions about state activities to sustain a religion are arguably just as strong about this practice dimension. Imagine, for instance, that the performance of some religious ritual requires the presence of a minimum number of people (who may or may not be sincere believers). It is not clear that the liberal state has any more business sustaining the religious community at this minimum size than it does in sustaining a belief. I am grateful to Jerry Cohen and Jacob Levy for discussion of this objection.

32. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, defends an immigrant–host culture dichotomy with an argument grounded in voluntariness. For critical discussion of this and other defenses of the dichotomy, see Daniel M. Weinstock, "Le problème de la boîte de Pandore," in *Nationalité, citoyenneté et solidarité*, ed. Michel Seymour (Montréal: Liber, 1999), 17-40; Carens, *Culture, Citizenship and Community*; Bauböck, "Cultural Citizenship."

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