

Multiculturalism and the Globe

MULTICULTURALISM AND ME, ME AND MULTICULTURALISM

Shariq Haidery

Abstract

There exists an asymmetric dynamic two-way relationship between individual identity and multiculturalism. Whilst multiculturalism's effect on me is inevitable – given the way history has unfolded at both the national level and personal level – our capacity to inform multiculturalism turns on context. My argument has three parts. First, I define multiculturalism and individual identity. Second, I argue that our cultures give us a basis for that which we can express as our individual identity – explaining why multiculturalism inevitably affects my individual identity. Third, I argue that multicultural persons can express the different cultures they come from and participate in a malleable hybrid-culture – shaping the multicultural world(s) they inhabit. Finally, in using my narrative as an example, I hope to have altered our understanding of the positive experiences “multiculturalism” itself entails, thus changing our understanding of “multiculturalism” itself.

Introduction

The title refers to the two-way dynamic relationship between multiculturalism and individual identity. Multiculturalism makes us who we are, but we also make the multicultural worlds we inhabit, and also, as I shall finally claim, potentially “multiculturalism” itself. However, the relationship is asymmetric: multiculturalism's bearing on us is much greater than our bearing on it. We do, however, in the correct circumstances, still have the ability to affect multiculturalism – altering the content of the many existing cultures that comprise multiculturalism in a society.

I have explicitly referred to “me” because much of this essay is devoted to my individual experience, coming from a multicultural (or equivalently cross-cultural) background. I am starting from a first-person perspective, employing the methodology of an SPN (Scholarly Personal Narrative)¹ because the only way in which I can understand *my* relationship with multiculturalism is by turning inwards to my own experience. SPN is a form of standpoint

¹ For further discussion of SPN, see Robert J. Nash and Sydnee Viray, “The Who, What, and Why of Scholarly Personal Narrative Writing,” *Our Stories Matter: Liberating the Voices of Marginalized Students Through Scholarly Personal Narrative Writing* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 1-9.

epistemology. It is also worth highlighting that my methodological approach to social ontology is a markedly pluralistic one. In my search for understanding the relationship between individual identity and multiculturalism, by a pluralistic approach, I mean one that is not methodologically monistic in so far as it claims that all of our social world cannot be grounded in one philosophical concept.² My pluralistic methodological approach is significant since I am using an SPN, an approach that social ontologists might not consider if they had a monistic approach. SPN, as an example of stand-point epistemology, has traditionally been seen as a tool wielded by critical race theorists, feminists, and other marginalized authors as a way of giving an account of one's experience in overcoming social injustices. I am not using SPN specifically as a means of overcoming any social injustices but rather to make sense of my experience in coming from a multicultural background.

This essay has three parts. In section 1, I define multiculturalism and individual identity, specifically, defining "cultures" and distinguishing two parts of our identity: our sense of self and our individual expression of that sense of self (henceforth, individual expression). I also link multiculturalism and individual identity by developing C. Thi Nguyen and Matthew Strohl's claims about sub-agential group intimacy to use as a general framework for my overarching argument.³ In section 2, using my own narrative, I argue that multiculturalism means individuals share multiple cultural group intimacy relations that constitute their sense of self. This, in turn, gives individuals the ammunition to express those cultural group intimacy relations that they share as part of their individual identity. Furthermore, some of these cultures I cannot but participate in – leading to the inevitable effect of cultures on individual identity. The fact that there are such cultures that I cannot but participate in explains why multiculturalism's effect on me is inevitable. However, despite coming from multiple cultures, there is a sense (different for each of those cultures) in which I feel as though I am between them, stuck in no man's land. In section 3, I turn to how despite being between national cultures, I can participate in hybrid-cultures – forging my multicultural world. I illustrate this using Riz Ahmed's poem titled "Where you from" as an example of British-Pakistani hybrid-culture. If the context around our participating in hybrid-cultures is right, then we can shape this more malleable culture, and thus also shape the content of the many cultures that exist within a multicultural context. The fact that *my* ability to shape multiculturalism is a matter contingent on the context shows that the relationship between individual identity and multiculturalism is asymmetrical. But, it is still a dynamic two-way relationship nonetheless. Finally, in being an illustrative example via SPN and in giving a more determinate outline to those positive, meaningful experiences that "multiculturalism" entails, I hope to have also altered the possibilities for "multiculturalism" to which we (anglophone philosophers) are open to embrace.

1. 'Multiculturalism' and 'me'

² For a defense of a pluralistic methodological approach in social ontology see Matti Sarkia and Tuukka Kaidesoja, "Two Approaches to Naturalistic Social Ontology," *Synthese*, Vol. 201, No. 3 (2023), p. 104.

³ C. Thi Nguyen and Matthew Strohl, "Cultural Appropriation and the Intimacy of Groups," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 176, No. 4 (2019), pp. 981-1002.

At this juncture two points need to be clarified about the method I adopt here. First, although this paper should be seen as an SPN, throughout it I will be drawing upon ideas of various authors for the purpose of making sense of my experience as a multicultural person. And second, it is also necessary to point out that the key terms of this essay, such as “multiculturalism,” “culture,” and “individual identity,” have been used in ambiguous and non-uniform ways in social ontology. I will thus aim to be as precise as I can in outlining the usage of these terms here in section 1.

With regard to the term “multiculturalism,” here I will use it *descriptively* – referring to the fact that in developed Western societies, such as the United Kingdom, there exist multiple cultures. This *descriptive* understanding differs from multiculturalism that denotes a *normative* thesis. For example, some argue that multiculturalism is the doctrine that all cultures are equal and that we thus ought to provide special protections for the ones of minority groups.⁴ Such views are of no concern here, as in this paper I will not construe “multiculturalism” in the sense of a norm. I can thus also leave aside the debates regarding the justification of multiculturalism.⁵ Instead, since I draw on the descriptive sense of the term, I shall aim to elucidate multiculturalism as a matter of social ontology. Åsa Burman’s distinguishes between nonideal and ideal social ontology, and in this essay I will largely adopt the perspective of the latter.⁶ I will not venture on the important theme of oppression as a factor impacting the way one writes on the social ontology of multiculturalism and individual identity, as it is beyond the scope of this essay.⁷

1.1. Cultures

In its usage here “multiculturalism” merely denotes the existence of multiple cultures and thus raises the question of the definition of “culture.” Most generally, “culture” can be understood as a way of life, but this is not saying much. David Miller is more precise in distinguishing between public and private cultures: a public culture refers to the political values attributed to a culture,⁸ while a private culture refers to one’s cultural customs and practices.⁹ This distinction is artificial as one’s private culture would invariably have some effect on one’s

⁴ Will Kymlicka (ed.), *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 108.

⁵ For related work, see Sarah Song, “Multiculturalism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/multiculturalism/>

⁶ Åsa Burman, *Nonideal Social Ontology: The Power View* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), pp. 14-15.

⁷ Post-colonial writers, such as Homi Bhabha, would be of relevance here.

⁸ For instance, American culture is often claimed to be associated with a rugged sense of liberal individualism expressed in phrases such as “the American dream” – the idea that any individual can achieve their goals in the United States, if they worked hard enough. To be sure, this is not necessarily a value that all those who belong to and participate in the American culture accept, and indeed many people who claim to both belong to and participate in the American culture may disagree with regard to what is meant by “American values.” And yet, it is a widespread belief in the country that even those who reject the idea of “American values” still have to take it into account.

⁹ David Miller, *Strangers in Our Midst: The Political Philosophy of Immigration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 67.

political values but is useful for the purpose of narrowing the scope of this essay. More particularly, I am interested in one's private culture, with the *aspects of life* that constitute it, rather than what Miller refers to as public culture. In other words, my usage of "culture" refers above all to cultural aspects of life. Based on Miller's distinction then, I shall construe cultural aspects of life as constituting at least in part the sense of culture as a way of life.

With regard to the cultural aspects of life, we can find a more precise understanding in Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz's work.¹⁰ For example, in national cultures, "we expect to find national cuisines, distinctive architectural styles, a common language, distinctive literary and artistic traditions, national music, customs, dress, ceremonies and holiday."¹¹ For instance, we would call holidays such as Thanksgiving a cultural aspect characteristic of American life. Cultural aspects of life emerge from historical contingency and the way the past played out. The Union Jack flag, being the British flag, is a matter of historical contingency. However, as Margalit and Raz rightly point out, "none of these [aspects of life are] necessary" for cultures, rather, they are "typical examples."¹² This is partly explained by the fluidity of what is part of a culture at any given time.¹³

National cultures, then, are constituted by "many, varied and important aspects of life."¹⁴ In contrast to national cultures, sub-cultures encompass fewer aspects of life. As I shall show, hybrid-cultures are a kind of sub-culture. Another kind of sub-culture is queer culture. It does have artistic traditions and its own fashion, however, it does not have a cuisine.¹⁵ My primary focus here is on how national cultures interact and give rise to hybrid-cultures, provided that the former tend to be more wide-ranging across the aspects of life that inform individual identity.

1.2. "Me"

I shall now outline my conception of individual identity, and who the titular "me" refers to. Firstly, the "me" refers to me in the sense that I am an adult cross-cultural kid. Ruth Van Reken's influential definition of an adult cross-cultural kid follows:

*A cross-cultural kid (CCK) is a person who is living or has lived in – or meaningfully interacted with – two or more cultural environments for a significant period of time during childhood (up to age 18). An adult CCK (ACCK) is a person who has grown up as a CCK.*¹⁶

¹⁰ Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz, "National Self-Determination," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 87, No. 9 (1990), pp. 439-61.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 444.

¹³ See Samuel Scheffler, "Immigration and the Significance of Culture," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2007), p. 104; and Jeremy Waldron, "Immigration: A Lockean Approach," in Daniel Butt, Sarah Fine, and Zofia Stemplowska (eds.), *Political Philosophy, Here and Now* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 107.

¹⁴ Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz, "National Self-Determination," p. 443.

¹⁵ For additional work on queer culture as a sub-culture, see Jodie Taylor, "Claiming Queer Territory in the Study of Subcultures and Popular Music," *Sociology Compass*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2013), pp. 194-207.

¹⁶ David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, revised edition (Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009), p. 31.

As I will elaborate below, I have grown up living in three distinct cultural environments. I also believe that I fittingly apply to myself the terms “cross-cultural” and “multicultural background,” which I will use here interchangeably.

Secondly, there are at least two parts to individual identity, our sense of self and individual expression. The former denotes what one understands as the elements of one’s own self. The latter includes what one would do to indicate and evidence to others the elements that constitute one’s own sense of oneself. Thus, in addition to those parts we take to constitute ourselves, we also distinguish ourselves from others through what we express to the outer world. For example, this could be the clothing we wear or our activism. Individual expression, unlike our sense of self, is the publicly significant part of our individual identity. To put it briefly, individual expression constitutes one’s self for others, while one’s sense of one’s own self constitutes one for oneself. There is obviously much overlapping here. Importantly, however, our individual expression is constrained and informed by the particular context in which we find ourselves. Whereas one’s sense of self and composition of collective identities are affected by one’s specific socio-cultural genealogy.

Here is an example that draws out these aspects in one’s individual identity. One’s sexuality is a paradigmatic case of an element of one’s sense of self that is not necessarily a part of one’s individual expression in public. A large part of the queer community rightly celebrates their sexuality by making it a part of their individual expression in actively displaying it to others, for example, by attending Pride festivals or wearing rainbow-colored clothing and apparel. Nevertheless, there are also others in the queer community who choose not to make their sexuality part of their individual expression, preferring to keep it a private matter. One may choose to be closeted, or even appear as a straight person, in order to counterbalance harmful heterosexist stereotypes and norms. Regardless whether or not one chooses to express their sexuality publicly, it is a part of who they consider themselves to be, including a part of their collective identity.

Let’s take up the hypothetical case of someone with the name Adam, who is an ethnic minority and bisexual. Adam’s ethnicity and sexuality are both part of his sense of himself. However, instead of emphasizing his sexuality in expressing himself to others, he may instead focus on his ethnic background. For instance, rather than being a vocal activist about issues to do with homophobia and biphobia, he may choose to be an activist about issues of racism and racial discrimination.¹⁷ This in no way means that Adam’s sexuality is somehow invalidated. It is still part of himself. It is just not what he chooses to express to others in most contexts. In this sense, it is part of his sense of himself and not his individual expression. Queer culture is still something to which Adam *belongs* by virtue of his sexuality, which makes him a part of a collective identity that is a part of Adam’s sense of his own self. We just cannot say that queer culture is something that Adam *participates* in, given the fact that he keeps his sexuality out of his individual expression in public contexts. This also does not mean that his sexuality is something that is expressed to nobody; keeping one’s sexuality a private matter with those we are intimate with is consistent with not expressing one’s sexuality in public contexts.

¹⁷ Of course, the two are not mutually exclusive, but in this hypothetical, we could additionally suppose (the not-uncommon occurrence) that Adam’s society is one in which racism is present and more pressing an issue than other issues relating to his queer community.

This view of one's sexuality as constituting part of one's sense of self but not necessarily one's individual expression is supported by sociological studies on social media's impact on LGBTQ+ identity formation. Thus, Maryann Tovar, Mineudis Rosillo, and Alma Spaniard write, "[o]n social media, it is possible to express and develop aspects of one's personality that [are] kept hidden in real-world contexts. Since the internet has no geographical constraints, the opportunity for identity exploration and connecting with others is vastly expanded."¹⁸ For Tovar et al., social media provides a platform for queer youth to develop the queer aspect of their sense of self. Through, for instance, following queer social media influencers, one can develop their sense of who they are. One can also go further and express their queer identity on social media. The differences between these two cases of social media's impact on queer identity formation correlate with the distinction between one's sense of self and their individual expression.

Alice MacLachlan's model of coming out, i.e. expressing one's queer sense of one's own self as part of one's individual identity, highlights the importance of context in expressing one's queer identity through her metaphor of the stage-light. On coming out and expressing one's queer sense of self, MacLachlan writes "judgements about the quality of a revelation/exposure (i.e., the quality of light shone on the object) are always at least partly indexical to the nature of the play (i.e. the individual and her life) in question."¹⁹ MacLachlan makes a salient point here, relevant not just for the queer community but all of us in understanding how our individual expression, i.e. "the quality of light" we shine on our sense of self, is "always at least partly indexical" to our context; that is, "the nature of the play."

Admittedly, MacLachlan's purpose for her model of expressing one's queer identity is very different from my own. MacLachlan's purpose is to argue against a general obligation to express one's queer identity. The stage-light model is meant to illustrate there is no obligation to come out and express one's queer identity because it turns on context.²⁰ I argue that expressing one's queer identity is a paradigmatic case of expressing part of one's sense of self that is not necessarily part of our individual expression. In doing so, just as the expression of one's queer identity is informed by context, so too is one's identity more generally. When expressing our sense of self, it is informed by the context we find ourselves in.

For example, which culture those of us from multicultural backgrounds express more depends on the environment we find ourselves in. Some of us may wish to distinguish ourselves from others coming from a different dominant culture. For instance, I have a university-branded jumper from my university's Pakistani Society (Oxford University Pakistani Society). I wear it at university where, as a British-Pakistani, I am part of a minority. I do not wear it at home, where I am surrounded by other British-Pakistanis and Pakistani culture, and do not feel the need to express my Pakistani identity. My participation in the (British-)Pakistani culture distinguishes me from others at university, but it does not at home. Thus, my expression of my

¹⁸ Maryann Tovar, Mineudis Rosillo, and Alma Spaniard, "Social Media's Influence on Identity Formation and Self Expression," in Alma Spaniard and Janki Modi Avari (eds.), *Teens, Screens, and Social Connection* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2023), p. 95.

¹⁹ Alice MacLachlan, "Closet Doors and Stage Lights: On the Goods of Out," *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2012), p. 330.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

(British-)Pakistani identity via participation in (British-)Pakistani culture, in this context, allows me to distinguish myself from others. Given the particular context we are situated in, we choose what parts of our sense of self we want to express to others in our individual expression.

I have devoted considerable space defining my usage of “multiculturalism,” “cultures,” and “individual identity.” As already noted, it is particularly important that these terms are pinned down because different authors use them in a variety of different ways. For instance, Anthony Appiah gives considerable space to critically discuss both identities and cultures. His bone of contention is with what he refers to as an ideal of culture that is too restrictive, namely, the “*common culture*” from which individuals would derive “beliefs and values and practices (almost) universally shared and known to be so.”²¹ However, as I see it, in order for cultural practices to be identified as part of a culture, they need not be “(almost) universally shared or known to be so;” instead, they can be merely typical examples of cultures.²² Thus, in contrast to Appiah’s restrictive conception of culture, my conception is broader in scope.

Still, Appiah’s discussion is very helpful for elucidating the relationship between culture and ethnicity. As he writes:

I have insisted that we should distinguish between cultures and [ethnic] identities; but ethnic identities characteristically have cultural distinctions as one of their primary marks. That is why it is so easy to conflate them. Ethnic identities are created in family and community life. These – along with mass-mediated culture, the school, and the college – are, for most of us, the central sites of the social transmission of culture. Distinct practices, ideas, norms go with each ethnicity in part because people *want* to be ethnically distinct: because many people want the sense of solidarity that comes from being unlike others. With ethnicity in modern society, it is often the distinct identity that comes first, and the cultural distinction that is created and maintained because of it – not the other way around. The distinctive common cultures of ethnic and religious identities matter not simply because of their contents but also as markers of those identities.²³

To Appiah, our ethnic identities precede our cultural distinctions because our ethnic identities (unlike cultures) are formed in “the central sites of the social transmission of culture,” e.g. schools, universities, and families. People want to distinguish themselves from one another and do so on the basis of ethnic identities, around which we form cultural distinctions (e.g. leading one to say “that cultural practice that is theirs, not ours”). I will follow Appiah on this – agreeing with his account of the nature of the relationship between cultures and ethnic identities. This (as I shall explain in section 2) also explains why I have a greater affinity to the culture(s) embedded in my ethnic identity than to those which are not.

That said, I differ with Appiah’s above remark on two key points. First, unlike Appiah, my concern is not to give a correct account of the nature of the relationship between ethnic identities and cultures, but rather what genealogy we might tell about the formation of our sense of self. On this point, it is important, as Samuel Scheffler claims, to note the role of the state in enforcing historically contingent cultural norms and practices wherever we become

²¹ Anthony Appiah, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity: Creed, Country, Colour, Class, Culture* (London: Profile Books, 2018), p. 87.

²² Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz, “National Self-Determination,” p. 444.

²³ Anthony Appiah, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity*, p. 89.

acculturated to a culture.²⁴ As a matter of historical contingency, the state cannot help but promote the proliferation of a national culture (e.g. the British government promoting English language, British art galleries etc.). My sense of self is determined by those cultures dominant in my life, which, at a national level, can be explained by the role of the state. This helps explain why in my case I cannot, for the most part, help but participate in British culture, rather than in the Tanzanian and Pakistani culture.

Second, another difference, which I will explain further in 1.3 that Appiah is not sensitive to, is that the *expression* of our cultures in our individual identity differs greatly from the expression of our ethnic identities. I have no choice but to express my ethnicity. It is a part of me that is visibly shown to others that I have no choice but to express. Even in cases in which someone misidentifies my ethnic identity, it is still on display for everyone else to see. This appears in contrast with the expression of cultures that are part of one's identity. My ethnicity is part of what distinguishes me from others (whether I remain active or passive); whereas, my cultural identity is constituted by how I choose to distinguish myself from others (that is, by being active only) via my participation in a culture. There is nothing necessary about my participating in one culture and expressing it as part of my sense of my own self. For instance, even someone from a monocultural background always has the option to express oneself as a member of a subversive sub-culture. And, of course, since some cultures are dominant and influential, there is the possibility that in practice, I will be informed by a) the cultures I participate in with others, and, b) the intimacy I am ascribed by and form with others.

1.3. My relationship to cultures

Before turning to my story as an example, it is necessary to first explicate a generally applicable framework between individual identity and cultures. Nguyen and Strohl maintain that participating in practices leads to group intimacy – claiming that “[g]roup intimacy does not entail that all the members of the group know each other or spend time around each other. Rather, it entails that the group is bound together by common practices that ground a sense of unity among members of the group.”²⁵ Additionally, they write, “acts of group intimacy are not necessarily predicated on the prior existence of the group. Certainly, pre-existing groups can create intimate practices and build bonds of group intimacy through these practices. Consider, for example, the origins of African American culture. [...] It is also possible, however, for individuals who previously did not constitute a group in any sense to coalesce into an intimate group through such practices.”²⁶

These remarks from Nguyen and Strohl indicate how group intimacy is generated between different persons. In addition to distinguishing the *generation* of group intimacy, another important distinction to draw, which Nguyen and Strohl hint at, is how members of the group may *ascribe* intimacy to others. Whether one is ascribed group intimacy will be determined by the nature of the boundaries of the group at hand. For instance, if the group is a “group-agent” because it has a certain organizational structure, then that structure will

²⁴ Samuel Scheffler, “Immigration and the Significance of Culture,” p. 112.

²⁵ C. Thi Nguyen and Matthew Strohl, “Cultural Appropriation and the Intimacy of Groups,” p. 989.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 991-992.

demarcate who is to be included in it (e.g. which Native American tribe). If, however, the group at hand is what Nguyen and Strohl refer to as a “sub-agential group” – a group lacking the requisite organizational structure of group-agent, then “[m]any intimate groups are sub-agential. Such groups may have some animating basis for cohesion, but they are not group agents in the strict sense.”²⁷

However, as Nguyen and Strohl point out, their view that group intimacy of sub-agential groups can ground cultural appropriation claims show at least two difficulties. Only one of them, namely, “the boundary problem” is of relevance here because the boundary problem is directly related to who is counted as part of the sub-agential group and thus as subject to group intimacy.²⁸ To illustrate the difficulty of the boundary problem they use “the case of the *poser*.”

The poser identifies with outlaw biker culture, has motorcycle-themed tattoos, and wears a leather jacket under a sleeveless denim vest with a skull and crossbones patch on the back, but has never ridden a motorcycle. The intimate group of outlaw bikers objects to the poser’s appropriation of biker culture, but the poser insists that they self-identify as a biker and therefore are entitled to participate in biker practices. What’s being contested isn’t whether or not some established group has given the poser permission to participate in an intimate practice. Rather, what’s being contested is who gets to be a member of the deciding group in the first place. We think that intimate groups should have the prerogative to set their own boundaries, but this creates a circularity: in order to set the boundaries of a group, the group members need to arrive at a decision; but in order to identify which people have legitimate standing to participate in this decision, we need to know where the boundaries are.

This problem won’t exist if an intimate practice is created within some preexisting group with boundaries drawn on some independent basis. But the boundary problem seems a significant one in the case of groups that self-constitute through intimate practices. This problem is genuinely difficult, and the difficulty sheds light on an area which demands further investigation. Much of the work on the nature of groups and group agents has been directed towards explicitly defined groups with clear boundaries – corporations, nations, and short-term actively cooperating teams. Relatively little has been done to investigate, for example, how we are to determine the boundaries of a sub-agential group without objective membership conditions, such as the groups that constitute various types of communities. We hope that our work here encourages further inquiry into these issues.²⁹

While it is beyond the scope of the present investigation to explore how we might solve the boundary problem for all sub-agential groups, and thus clarify who becomes a subject to a certain group intimacy; a *prima facie* plausible way to view the boundaries of cultural groups as sub-agential, and thus as bearing the mark of group intimacy, is that others can recognize me as a subject of cultural group intimacy, if they perceive me to be an *uncontroversial* member of a certain group (indeed, when I do in fact belong to that group). In other words, if I am the

²⁷ Ibid., p. 996.

²⁸ The other issue Nguyen and Strohl raise is how sub-agential groups can make group-level decisions of the type “Don’t wear that headscarf; it’s part of our culture, not yours.” The difficulty here is directly related not to those constituting the sub-agential group per se, but rather to answering in principle the question of how sub-agential groups could reach a decision about whether something should count as an instance of cultural appropriation or not.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 997.

correct ethnicity and/or have been acculturated into the culture in question, then I express myself in such a way that I evidence that I am part of the group.

Nguyen and Strohl's purpose for explaining group intimacy differs from mine. They explore how group intimacy can ground contemporary claims of cultural appropriation that the property rights paradigm of the cultural appropriation literature has failed to catch-up with.³⁰ Nguyen and Strohl claim that the development of group intimacy leads to claims like "these cultural practices are ours, not yours." If another violated this expressive claim, it would be cultural appropriation. There are also other criticisms we could raise to Nguyen and Strohl's argument about cultural appropriation, such as Matthes account of cultural appropriation, which grounds the normativity of cultural appropriation in historical oppression, but detailing critiques of group intimacy in grounding cultural appropriation claims is not my concern.³¹ Instead, this paper uses Nguyen and Strohl's framework for understanding one's relation to different cultural groups.

These differences aside, Nguyen and Strohl's framework of cultural group intimacy and sub-agential group can explain my relationship to cultural groups well. I shall now bring more details on the national cultural groups that have shaped my cultural identity overall. I am born into a place with many cultures, but only two national cultures are dominant in my life. British culture due to the role of the state, and Pakistani culture due to my ethnicity. I have two parts of my individual identity both of which explain my relationship to the cultures in my life. First, my sense of self, an internal side – constituted by those various cultural group intimacy relations I have via both the generation and ascription of cultural group intimacy. And second, my individual expression, an external side, which I express to others and use to participate in cultural practices (e.g. singing, dancing, speaking a language, eating a cuisine, etc.) and thus to generate group intimacy. As I shall discuss in section 2, with my sense of self, the group intimacy relation I share with one cultural group may be stronger or weaker than another cultural group.

Before addressing multiculturalism's effect on me, it is worth retreading why it is that certain group intimacy relations are dominant in the expression of ourselves – doing so reveals the importance of context in thinking about the intimate relationship between individual identity and cultural group. The state ensures that there is a dominant cultural group, and thus a dominant relation of group intimacy within a society. However, a dominant relation of cultural group intimacy in wider society, is not necessarily dominant in all situations we may find ourselves in that society. In some contexts, other cultures may be dominant, e.g. Pakistani culture when I am around family members visiting from Pakistan. Context informs whatever a relation of group intimacy is dominant for me at any given time, with the context itself determined by exogenous factors, such as the state. Context also informs how I express those relations of group intimacy, which constitute my sense of self (a point which will be discussed in section 3 again).

³⁰ For examples of cultural appropriation literature based on property rights, see C. Thi Nguyen and Matthew Strohl, "Cultural Appropriation and the Intimacy of Groups," as well as Anthony Appiah, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity*.

³¹ Erich Hatala Matthes, "Cultural appropriation and oppression," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 176, No. 4 (2019), pp. 1003–1013.

To illustrate how context determines which relations of group intimacy are dominant for one's individual expression, I shall discuss an example of a British-Pakistani man called Billy (Bilal), who is engulfed by the British culture, living almost exclusively amongst monocultural British individuals in a remote part of the country, and having adopted the local accent as his own. As Billy has no contact with any other British-Pakistanis or Pakistanis, he cannot generate British-Pakistani group intimacy. Neither could Billy be ascribed British-Pakistani group intimacy by others because there are no other British-Pakistanis around him to confer him group intimacy. In this case, as Billy does not necessarily express an identity from an intersection of multiple cultures, it does not make much sense to say that his individual expression shows participation in the British-Pakistani hybrid culture and that thus generates British-Pakistani group intimacy. Rather, we can claim that Billy is generating a group intimacy with other British people. Furthermore, it might be the case that Billy is ascribed by others a British group intimacy (not least because of his impeccable accent), which in this context is perceived as dominant for him.

Now let us modify this example, supposing instead that Billy lives in London, where there are plenty of people coming from the same intersection of cultures as himself. Billy may still not express his identity as British-Pakistani, even though his ethnicity opens the possibility that he participate in the British-Pakistani culture by expressing himself as British-Pakistani and thus generating group intimacy with that culture. Since he does not do so in this case, there might be doubts about whether others can ascribe him such a group intimacy. For instance, due to Billy's ethnicity being something visibly on display, British-Pakistanis may presume that he is British-Indian or another ethnicity from South Asia. Thus, Billy may not be ascribed British-Pakistani group intimacy. Of course, this would all change if Billy became acculturated in the Pakistani culture and started expressing himself in it. But at the moment, Billy's relationship with British-Pakistani culture appears analogous to an unused lifetime club membership. Indeed, as a lifetime member of the club, one can always go back to it, but Billy's example here is to illustrate that even if one's ethnicity ties them to a hybrid-culture, it is not necessary that one has to express oneself as part of that culture.

The aforementioned thought experiment about Billy illustrates that context is key to understanding which relations of group intimacy are dominant within one's life. Whereas in his case the British group intimacy appears completely hegemonic, there are potentially other group intimacy relations within Billy's orbit that can also determine at least in part how he expresses himself. It is indeed still not certain that Billy will enter in relations of group intimacy with other cultural groups just because they are present around. In the end, how Billy expresses himself is entirely down to him – the group intimacy relations that might inform Billy's expression are determined by Billy's context.

2. Multiculturalism and me

To illustrate multiculturalism's effect on me, I shall now discuss my experience coming from a multicultural background and its impact on my individual identity. I shall start with a short autobiographical note. I am a British-Pakistani. I also have familial ties to Tanzania. My mother's family, originally from the different parts of pre-partition India, migrated to Tanzania

before immigrating to the UK. My individual identity has been informed by three distinct cultures: Tanzanian, Pakistani, and British.

The culture with which I share weakest relation of cultural group intimacy is Tanzanian culture. My mother was born in Tanzania. Although she moved to the UK when she was young, all her family was shaped by Tanzanian culture. The way they expressed themselves through the languages they spoke, the clothes they wore, the food they ate and fed others were all influenced by Tanzanian culture. They spoke Punjabi, English, and Swahili. My mother still wears traditional East African clothing even though her memories of Tanzania have by now faded. This means that, via my mother's identity, I inherited certain aspects of Tanzanian cultural life – I too have grown up participating in various Tanzanian cultural practices. My mother's Tanzanian dishes are an example of hybridity between Pakistani and Tanzanian cultures. They are not cooked in the traditional Tanzanian way – my mother adds certain spices to make them taste more like Pakistani cuisine, in effect creating a hybrid Tanzanian-Pakistani cuisine.

Regardless of the intentions of the person asking it, one way to interpret the question “Where are you from?” (which I will return to later in the essay) is as asking what cultures one comes from. In my case, I answer “I am British-Pakistani.” However, I may also say that my mother was born in Tanzania – expressing not only that British-Pakistani culture is part of my identity but also that my identity is influenced by Tanzanian culture. In expressing this to others, I am also choosing to express my ties to the Tanzanian culture as a part of my individual expression. If I did not do this, I would not be accurate about my cultural identity in two respects: first, with regard to the distinct influence Tanzanian culture has had impacting my life, and second, with regard to the way my sense of self is different from someone who comes from a strictly British-Pakistani background.

My relation to the Tanzanian group intimacy is, however, still the weakest of the three associated with my cultural identity. It certainly holds less weight than my relation to Pakistani culture because I have no direct ethnic ties to Tanzania. Both of my parents' families originally came from the Indian sub-continent pre-partition. Thus, my ethnicity is British-Pakistani, not British-Tanzanian. Consequently, Tanzanians may fail to ascribe me Tanzanian group intimacy because I am obviously not an uncontroversial Tanzanian. Furthermore, since my participation in Tanzanian cultural practices is much more limited than my participation in British and Pakistani cultural practices, there is simply less ground for uncontroversial Tanzanians to ascribe me Tanzanian cultural group intimacy. Nevertheless, I do share some cultural group intimacy with uncontroversial Tanzanians, however, it is a group intimacy I may well not be ascribed by them.

The culture with the second greatest impact on my individual cultural identity is Pakistani culture. One obvious reason for that is my ethnic Pakistani background. In agreement with Appiah, I earlier claimed that cultural distinctions emerge from ethnic identities. This explains how Pakistani culture has impacted my sense of self more than Tanzanian culture. For instance, as I alluded to earlier, I cannot help but express my ethnic identity to others – others can simply look at me and perceive me as belonging to a particular ethnicity (regardless of whether I do in fact correctly belong to that ethnicity). Hence, when I am around uncontroversial members of Pakistani culture, we may all choose to express Pakistani culture

as part of our individual identities and thus participate in Pakistani culture, including by generating and ascribing group intimacy to each other. However, they could also choose not to ascribe a Pakistani group intimacy to me because I participate in fewer aspects of Pakistani cultural life than they do.

In addition to being tied to my ethnic identity, Pakistani culture has also fundamentally impacted me by adding meaning and value to my life with the various Pakistani cultural practices which I have been acculturated into. From food at home, to traditional clothing I sometimes wear, to the Urdu insults I exchange with other Pakistanis, to the additional holidays I celebrate, to the music I listen to, participating in Pakistani culture has shaped the meaning I find in my life. Pakistani culture has engulfed me since my youth. Thus, Pakistani group intimacy ascribed to me because of my both ethnicity and participation in a wide(r) set of Pakistani cultural practices (compared to the set of Tanzanian cultural practices in which I also participate).

The culture that has impacted me the most is the British culture. There are at least two distinct but interrelated reasons for this. First, as already noted above, Scheffler is right in claiming that the state cannot help but use its coercive power to ensure that a nation's historically contingent culture is the dominant culture – we might refer to this as a background public consideration as to why British culture has impacted my sense of self the most. Second, there is also what we might refer to as the personal consideration of being born and raised in Britain, which means that British culture has shaped most of my sense of self.

Being born and raised in the UK means that most of the aspects of life that I have accepted as my own are British. For instance, as a consequence of watching British television and having British cuisine, even though, much like the Tanzanian dishes in my life, the British dishes that I have had together with my family, such as the Sunday roast, are often cooked with extra spices to make it taste more like Pakistani cuisine. Thus, although I have adopted many British traditions, some of them are not fully British but appropriated through the intersection with the other cultures in my life. (The obscurity over which cultures I belong to is something I will return to shortly). For these reasons, British culture has inevitably had the greatest impact on my sense of self, and hence it is to it that I have the strongest relation of cultural group intimacy as well.

Now while I do claim to share group intimacy with the three national cultures I have pointed out, there is a sense in which *I*, as a cross-cultural person, am stuck between cultures. The reason for this is that despite the various cultural group intimacy relations I share with others, I may still fail to be ascribed group intimacy by uncontroversial members of any of these groups by virtue of the fact that I come from a multicultural background. I have already indicated why Tanzanians may fail to ascribe to me cultural group intimacy with regard to the Tanzanian culture. I shall now turn to why British and Pakistani people may fail to do the same from their own respective cultures.

The reasons why I take myself to be in-between the British and Pakistani cultures with regard to my relations of cultural group intimacy with them can be seen as the two sides of the same coin. My ethnic identity ties me to the Pakistani culture which however, unlike British culture, is not something that I live in. Thus, my participation in Pakistani cultural practices is narrower than my participation in British cultural practices. This has two related consequences.

First, via my more frequent participation in British cultural practices due to the role of the British state, my cultural group intimacy with British culture is more pervasive and determines more aspects of my life than my cultural group intimacy with Pakistani culture. Second, following on from the first, since I grew up in the UK, my ability to speak, read, and write in Urdu pales in comparison to my ability to speak, read, and write in English. If I visited Pakistan, it is not certain that I would be an instance of an uncontroversial Pakistani, this is because while my ethnicity ties my identity to Pakistan at first glance, I may not be able to engage in the various cultural practices there and thus I may not be ascribed the same cultural group intimacy by those who have been acculturated in Pakistani culture (due to the influence of the state in Pakistan). Of course, my participation in some Pakistani cultural practices may generate some cultural group intimacy with a native Pakistani, but it is not certain that they would ascribe to me the same group intimacy that they would ascribe to their compatriots. This is why, despite sharing some level of Pakistani cultural group intimacy, Pakistani culture is one which I am not an uncontroversial member but instead fall in-between it and the other cultures in my life.

Things are reversed as to why I am in-between (rather than in) British culture. Here I am not easily identifiable as British because my ethnicity is Pakistani, even though when I express myself, I do so, by and large, via my participation in the British culture. Thus, while I am ascribed group intimacy by others when I am expressing myself, if I do not express my British identity, others may not ascribe to me the cultural group intimacy of British culture. (Of course, there are those racists or xenophobes who would not ascribe to me British cultural group intimacy even after I express myself as British.) It is such a lack of ascription of cultural group intimacy by either British or Pakistani people that weakens the relation that I have with those two cultural groups. Furthermore, the hybrid-cultural practices that I participate in (such as the hybrid-cuisines) are neither merely British nor Pakistani. Thus, even when I might express an adjacent but hybrid cultural aspect of my life to e.g. a British person (imagine they have one of my mother's Sunday roasts with additional spices), they may still fail to ascribe to me cultural group intimacy because they do not view those cultural aspects of life that I express as typical examples of the British cultural practices in which they participate.

This sense of being in-between the national cultures which constitute my sense of myself reminds me of an old Pakistani satirical short story about partition called "Toba Tek Singh."³² In the story, the titular character is a Sikh man – an inmate at a Pakistani asylum, who was subsequently moved to India. Throughout the story, the author presents his speech as a mixture of Urdu, Hindi, and English to show that he, as a Sikh person, does not quite fully belong to either Pakistan or India. The story ends with Toba Tek Singh collapsing at the border between Pakistan and India, thus remaining in-between the two countries: "There, behind barbed wire, was Hindustan. Here, behind the same kind of wire, was Pakistan. In between, on that piece of ground that had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh."³³ Here, Toba Tek Singh, as being in no man's land, not distinctly belonging anywhere, is an appropriate literary metaphor for those of us who come from multicultural backgrounds and feel stuck in between cultures.

³² Saadat Hasan Manto, "Toba Tek Singh," trans. Frances W. Pritchett, <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urdu/tobateksingh/translation.html>.

³³ Ibid.

This section began by outlining the impact of the three cultures I was raised in on my individual identity – ordering them from lowest to highest based on the relative strength of the relation of cultural group intimacy I share with each of them. The reasons for this ordering are based on the extent to which these cultures, as a matter of historical contingency, have been dominant in my life (at a national and personal level). Second, I discussed why I feel stuck in-between these national cultures – with me giving my reasons for each case. And, finally, I explained this sense of being in-between cultures using the character of Toba Tek Singh as a metaphor – I thus indicated that despite belonging to different cultures, the sense that I am in no man’s land, or between cultures, remains strong for me.

3. Me and Multiculturalism

In this section, using my own experience as a British-Pakistani, I argue that those of us who come from multicultural backgrounds do still have a culture we fully belong to despite the feeling of belonging neither here nor there that I just discussed. It is a new hybrid culture that is created via our individual expression when we associate it with others who belong to the same intersect of cultures. For instance, recall the Sunday roast with extra spices as an example of hybridity of both British and Pakistani culture. Hybrid culture, as a sub-culture that we create via individual expression with others *in the correct context*, interacts with the many cultures that already exist in the multicultural society. Therefore, the individual identities of cross-cultural individuals contribute to multiculturalism by adding another possibility for more cultures to interact with one another. I have emphasized the importance of the context because it indicates the constraints that the creation of hybrid-cultural practices can face.

When we express ourselves and participate in hybrid cultures, we can contribute to the multicultural worlds we inhabit. Hybrid cultures, by virtue of being *hybrid*, are not between cultures but are rather a blending of cultures. In hybrid British-Pakistani culture, the ascription of British-Pakistani cultural group intimacy that I get from others is not limited by my ethnicity, because my ethnic identity is an intrinsic part of that hybrid culture. Similarly, the cultural group intimacy that others may ascribe to me is not limited by my acculturation into British culture, as others who belong to the same group have had the same or similar experience of acculturation. Thus, British-Pakistani culture, as a hybrid culture, is different from either British or Pakistani culture and is more inclusive than they are with regard to cultural aspects of life that are not typical of either of them.

A creative artist with a multicultural background, such as a British-Pakistani background, is an analogical example a hybrid culture. It is an analogical situation because the way we choose which parts of our sense of self to express individually is similar to the way a creative may express influences from the different cultures they belong to in creating art. Our individual expression, as in the art, is an expression of our uniqueness in whatever context we express it. It is also analogical in the sense that the creative artistic expression is equally limited by contextual factors (such as, for instance, the type of artistic work – a song, dance, a book, an essay etc.). Thus, if an artist were to create a piece drawing on different cultural influences but kept it hidden or completely private, it would not have an effect on others. Likewise, if I kept the expression of my hybrid cultural identity hidden, then it too would not generate hybrid cultural group intimacy because its hiddenness would preclude others from being able to

associate with that individual expression and participate in the same hybrid cultural practice as well.

A poem by the British-Pakistani artist Riz Ahmed can serve as an illustrative example of how one's poetry is an expression of one's individual identity shaped by British-Pakistani culture.³⁴ The poem is called "Where you from" and captures the sense that being a British-Pakistani means belonging to a distinctively British-Pakistani hybrid culture.

Ahmed's words in the poem illustrate my argument. For instance, he remarks, "Britain's where I'm born and I love a cup of tea and that, / But tea ain't from Britain, it's from where my DNA is at."³⁵ This relates to my point that despite both the aspects of British life that British-Pakistanis have adopted and the feeling of belonging to Britain, my ethnicity still ties me to Pakistani culture. Similarly, Ahmed references how he was "Raised by bhangra, garage and halal southern fried chicken shops."³⁶ This is a prime example of how someone who has grown up being British-Pakistani has experienced various cultures intersecting in their lives. The various cultures to which British-Pakistanis belong have shaped our collective sense of self, as well as our being "raised by" the different cultural influences.

Ahmed also talks about creating his own distinct individual identity when he says, "Yeah I make my own space in this business of Britishness."³⁷ This quote resonates deeply with me, because it suggests that belonging to other cultures while being British also means that I need to *forge my own individual identity* within British society. He then says that "Very few fit these labels so I'm repping for the rest of us,"³⁸ thus associating himself with others from the same intersection of cultures. In this way, he associates his individual expression with those of us who do fit the labels he refers to, whereas in both associating his individual expression with other British-Pakistanis and creating this poem, he demonstrates his participation in British-Pakistani hybrid culture.

To fully understand how participating in British-Pakistani hybrid culture via our individual expression shapes multiculturalism, that is, to fully understand the asymmetric relationship between multiculturalism and individual identity, we can recall Alice MacLachan's stage-light model of expressing one's queer identity. When we express our individual identity "judgements about the quality of a revelation/exposure (i.e., the quality of light shone on the object) are always at least partly indexical to the nature of the play (i.e. the individual and her life) in question."³⁹

In other words, our individual expression of our sense of self will be partly indexical to the context of its expression – depending on the context in which we express ourselves and participate in hybrid-cultures, we may be able to generate group intimacy. For instance, a friend playing and dancing to a song that blends British garage with Pakistani music is an instance of participation in British-Pakistani culture. If I decided to dance and sing along with them, then I

³⁴ Riz Ahmed, *Riz Ahmed - Where You From | The Big Narstie Show*, online video recording, YouTube, March 7th 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DmabQguml4>> [accessed August 2022].

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Alice MacLachlan, "Closet Doors and Stage Lights: On the Goods of Out," p. 330.

too would be participating in the British-Pakistani culture and would be also creating cultural group intimacy with my friend. Thus, in this context, I would be also expressing my British-Pakistani sense of self as participating (with my friend) in British-Pakistani hybrid culture.

The context that we find ourselves in largely determines the way in which we (as individuals) express ourselves, participate in cultures, and consequently form a relation of cultural group intimacy. The above example of Ahmed as a public figure expressing himself on national television is an example of an expression in a distinctly public context. This is an expression of participation in a distinct culture – British-Pakistani culture – of which the poem itself and its content are illustrative examples making it possible for other British-Pakistanis like myself to generate group intimacy between us as British-Pakistanis. In my case, in the context of writing the present essay on British-Pakistani hybrid culture, I too express myself as participating in that culture precisely by giving it in this way a more determinate outline. I am expressing my distinct hybrid-cultural background and using it as an illustrative example. British-Pakistanis reading this essay, reading me expressing my individual identity, might, as a result, generate group intimacy, not just with me but also between themselves. This relates precisely to the title. For the most part of this section, I have argued that participation in hybrid-cultures means being able to shape the multicultural worlds we inhabit. Now it may seem that my title is misleading and that my use of the term “multiculturalism” in “me and multiculturalism” is *prima facie* a categorial mistake. This is because one does not change multiculturalism *per se* but rather our multicultural worlds. However, in my discussion of this often vague and imprecise area of social ontology, I hope to have shown the dynamic of the asymmetrical relationship between multiculturalism and one’s individual identity. By shedding light on the positive experiences that “multiculturalism” entails for *me*, I hope to have altered what “multiculturalism” can entail as such and thus to have also contributed to its better understanding.

Both Ahmed’s poem and this essay are public examples of the British-Pakistani hybrid culture that place in the spotlight specific aspects of the life of British-Pakistani people. In this sense they appear removed from the way people ordinarily participate in British-Pakistani culture and in (hybrid) cultures more generally. But expressing one’s (hybrid) cultural identity in a public context is much more likely to create group intimacy with others and thus more properly shape a (hybrid) culture. As the above example of listening to hybrid music with a friend is meant to show, our capacity to shape hybrid cultures is going to depend on how we express ourselves, which itself will depend on contextual factors. For instance, when I choose to wear my university’s Pakistani Society jumper, it is informed by my context because I want people to see me as distinct from others in expressing myself as British-Pakistani. In this way, I am participating in British-Pakistani hybrid culture and at the same time conditioning the possibility for creating a group intimacy with others, e.g. those also wearing the same jumpers and making it clear they are unambiguous members of the British-Pakistani group in the sense that there is no doubt as to their participation in British-Pakistani cultural group intimacy.

This participation in British-Pakistani hybrid culture is voluntary because it is determined by the distinctive context of my conscious participation. However, one’s participation in any culture is a matter of context which itself determines the extent of its voluntariness. For instance, I may have less of a choice to participate in British-Pakistani culture

when I am around other British-Pakistanis who may say something to me in a mix of English and Urdu, eliciting a hybrid-response from myself. Here the context is informed by the fact that I am already ascribed a hybrid cultural group intimacy amongst fellow British-Pakistanis. Similarly, I have less of a choice over whether to help cook and eat my mother's hybrid-food and thus to participate in a typical example of British-Pakistani cuisine. But regardless of how much choice we have over participating in (hybrid) cultures, we create group intimacy in such participations. For comparison, if I was with my (monocultural) British friends and I played a piece of hybrid music to them, this choice to participate in the British-Pakistani hybrid culture would be entirely voluntary because it is me choosing to participate in this context with my distinctive British-Pakistani identity. Thus, the way a group intimacy is generated and ascribed, together with our capacity to shape (hybrid) cultures, will depend on the context which will specifically determine with whom I am, where and how I express myself (e.g. publicly or privately).

One interesting consideration (especially for its potential effects on the dominant national culture) is who the term "ours" refers to in a cultural group intimacy relation to determine something as ours. In my case, I would obviously claim it to encompass those who are like me in so far as they live in Britain but have their ethnicity tied to Pakistan. However, it may include also those who are just British but can participate in British-Pakistani culture with me, e.g. watch related movies, listen to hybrid-music, eat Pakistani honey mangoes etc.⁴⁰ (A case in point here would be cultural practices from one culture becoming typical examples of another, such as chicken tikka masala being seen as a British dish.) As far as I am concerned, I do think that "ours" could include those with British monocultural backgrounds, though this is merely a suggestion for further exploration of the idea of participation in cultures in a multicultural society.

A relevant question that can be raised here is: If individual expression shapes and changes multiculturalism, does this not mean that multiculturalism is in constant flux? The answer can only be "Yes!" Obviously all cultures evolve and develop over time via their members' various participations. This is a point that has been advanced by a number of authors in anglophone philosophy.⁴¹ I endorse it, as such a claim is entirely consistent with what I have argued so far. Hybrid-cultures are just more malleable than their preceding cultures and offer a greater capacity for change of the preexistent culture. It is also true that the context of our expression (e.g. Ahmed's public performance) determines the extent to which we can change a hybrid culture. As hybrid-cultures are normally new(er) sub-cultures, there are fewer aspects of life and values which we could call typical examples of that hybrid culture. Thus, we can more easily add with our participation to the aspects of life associated with a hybrid culture. Additionally, since there are fewer people who can belong to a hybrid culture, each individual's expression counts for a greater factor in shaping its respective aspects of life. In other words,

⁴⁰ Nguyen and Strohl claim that intimacy is *flexible*. In this sense, I can provide for generating British-Pakistani hybrid cultural group intimacy to my monocultural British friends. See C. Thi Nguyen and Matthew Strohl, "Cultural Appropriation and the Intimacy of Groups," p. 991.

⁴¹ See Samuel Scheffler, "Immigration and the Significance of Culture," pp. 93-125; and Jeremy Waldron, "Immigration: A Lockean Approach."

hybrid cultures are more malleable than their preceding cultures since they are new and fewer people belong to them.

However, it is worth highlighting that just because hybrid cultures are more malleable than their preceding cultures, this does not mean the effect(s) I have on multiculturalism is greater than the effect(s) it has on me. I cannot, for the most part, help but participate in the dominant culture and the other cultures that impact the way I express myself in my interpersonal social life. This is what I have referred to as the inevitable effect of multiculturalism on me. The effect my individual identity has in shaping the multicultural world I inhabit is not inevitable but highly context dependent, including on both the circumstances in which I find myself and consequently the way I express myself. In spite of this, because hybrid cultures are more malleable than their preceding cultures, I (a cross-cultural person) can still shape multiculturalism by participating in a hybrid culture via my hybrid-individual expression. Unlike the character Toba Tek Singh, stuck in no man's land, those of us who are in-between cultures can choose which culture(s) to participate in. We, cross-cultural people, can, as Ahmed says, "make [our] own space" in this no man's land. We can craft a hybrid cultural group intimacy which we cannot fail to participate in, unlike in either British or Pakistani group intimacy.

In this section, I argued that despite being in-between cultures – indeed often feeling as though we are stuck in this way – we, multicultural individuals, can make our own space, forging the multicultural worlds we inhabit via our participation in a hybrid culture. Multicultural individuals are not stuck in-between in hybrid-cultures because, unlike with regard to the national cultures I come from, there are no reasons for us not to be ascribed hybrid-cultural group intimacy. However, the two-way relationship that I share with the cultures that affect me is asymmetric. This asymmetry is explained by 1) the fact that my particular genealogy, which conditions the context I find myself in, prefixes which cultural group relations might be dominant for me; and 2) the assertion that the national cultures I come from are less malleable than the hybrid cultures per se. I believe that I have demonstrated this using both Ahmed's poem and this essay as illustrative examples, typical of British-Pakistani hybrid-culture, as expressed as part of one's individual identity. Ahmed's poem illustrated that we can shape the multicultural world we inhabit as a part of a two-way dynamic relationship between one's individual identity and multiculturalism. I hope that this paper has also demonstrated, and not just shown, not only our capacity to shape the multicultural worlds we inhabit, but also – via *my* relationship with multiculturalism – our capacity to alter what we understand "multiculturalism" itself to entail. Indeed, in offering an account of the positive and meaningful experiences of multicultural individuals, I hope to have altered our understanding of the positive experiences that "multiculturalism" can entail.

4. Conclusion

There is an asymmetric relationship between individual identity and multiculturalism. Indeed, I would also say that this applies to individual identity and cultures more generally. However, this asymmetry is more pronounced for multicultural individuals because hybrid-cultures appear to be more malleable. In contrast to someone with a monocultural background, in the correct contexts, the individual expression of cross-cultural people can shape and add to the

content of multiculturalism via the creation of cultural group intimacy that results from participating in hybrid cultural aspects of life.

Furthermore, unlike the general relationship between individual identity and cultures, I have claimed, through my own narrative, that *my* relationship with multiculturalism should alter our understanding of “multiculturalism” itself. This relationship is asymmetric because the effects of the cultures I come from on me are inevitable due to a) the way in which history has unfolded to determine the dominant cultures in my life at the national and personal level, and b) my ability to shape the hybrid cultures being contingent on the context of my individual expression. In the case b), it is easier for a public figure (e.g. Ahmed) to generate cultural group intimacy with more people via his participation in British-Pakistani hybrid culture than it is for me with my group of friends. Similarly, it is also entirely plausible that my participation in hybrid culture may not generate cultural group intimacy for a whole variety of other reasons (e.g. someone like me may fail to get the necessary validation from one culture). However, when the context is right, we have the ability to shape hybrid cultures by giving meaning to our identity and thus escaping the liminality of a no man’s land.

With regard to the possibility of being in no man’s land – between the national cultures dominant in my life – my exit is to claim British-Pakistani hybrid culture. Unlike the national cultures I participate in, this hybrid cultural group has no reason not to ascribe group intimacy to uncontroversial members like myself, who have the ethnicity and the acculturation. This might be different for different people of course. If we recall the example of Billy (Bilal), we note that, although he has the ethnicity, his lack of acculturation into British-Pakistani culture leaves him open to the possibility that other British-Pakistanis fail to ascribe to him British-Pakistani cultural group intimacy. In discussing Billy, I made an analogy between Billy’s relation to British-Pakistani hybrid culture and a lifetime club membership. We can say that by virtue of his ethnicity, he has lifetime membership to the British-Pakistani club. Even so, there is nothing inevitable about Billy eventually expressing himself in such a way that he will be able to share cultural group intimacy with other uncontroversial members of the club.

One conclusion that could be drawn from my argument here is that there will be an increasing individualization of cultures in a multicultural society. In a society in which there exist many cultures and people coming from multiple cultures, there will inevitably be cultures that intersect with one another, which can lead to new hybrid cultures. Hybrid cultures can also intersect with each other, which can in turn lead to the creation of triple hybrid cultures (and more). While I have focused here on the British-Pakistani culture, since I belong to British, Pakistani, and Tanzanian culture, there is the further possibility of a British-Pakistani-Tanzanian hybrid culture, especially considering there are other British-Pakistanis with familial ties to Tanzania. The manner in which those of us with this distinct background may choose to express our identity may indeed differ from the those from a strictly British-Pakistani background, as our sense of self will differ from those with a strictly British-Pakistani background. Thus, when those like myself associate with other British-Pakistanis who also have Tanzanian ties, we can create another distinct hybrid culture.

This type of triple hybrid culture, however, would be less significant than British-Pakistani hybrid-culture in at least two distinct but related ways. First, there are simply fewer people with British, Pakistani, and Tanzanian cultural ties. Thus, British-Pakistani-Tanzanian

hybrid culture is quantitatively less significant in the sense that fewer people participate in it. Consequently, even if the context is right for my participation in this additional hybrid culture, it is much less likely that this will happen just because there are fewer people with this mixed cultural background.

Second, there is a distinction between the way individuals *may* express themselves and the way they actually do when associating with others. For example, I could, in theory, contribute to British-Pakistani-Tanzanian hybrid-culture *by expressing all three cultures* as part of my individual identity when associating with others who share the same intersect of cultures. However, I do not normally do this, mainly because it is extremely difficult to be able to form cultural group intimacy with others who share the exact same intersection of cultures. One reason that I claimed that I could be ascribed British-Pakistani hybrid cultural group intimacy by other British-Pakistanis was the fact that my ethnic identity tied me to both Pakistani and British-Pakistani culture. Since my ethnicity does not tie me to Tanzanian culture, it is much more difficult for me to ascribe Tanzanian group intimacy to others, or be ascribed Tanzanian group intimacy by others in return. Therefore, while in principle it is possible for there to be an increasing individualization and multiplication of cultures in a multicultural society, there are various reasons this will not happen in practice.

In this essay, I hope to have given a determinate outline of what can be a very confusing and difficult experience of a person growing up as a cross-cultural individual in a Western multicultural society such as the UK. In claiming that not only does multiculturalism shape us, but we can also shape it back, I hope to have shown that those of us who, like Toba Tek Singh, may feel in no man's land are not stuck there – we can both generate and associate cultural group intimacy with others from the same cross-cultural background and thus craft meaningful hybrid cultural practices. In giving a SPN, telling my story of the positive experience of inhabiting a multicultural world, I also hope to have altered what we mean by “multiculturalism” itself.