

RETHINKING JUSTICE AND RECOGNITION: A NEW APPROACH TO IDENTITY AND EQUALITY

Jetty Joe Odey, PhD* & Jude Emeka Odoh, PhD**

Abstract

This paper interrogates the recognition theories of Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka, highlighting their limitations in tackling systemic misrecognition experienced by marginalized groups. Communitarian thinkers such as Taylor emphasize the dialogical nature of identity. He argues that an individual gains self-understanding through recognition within their communities. Contrariwise, Kymlicka's idea of cultural membership emphasizes the relevance of cultural contexts in molding individual autonomy and self-expression. He opines that liberal states should support individual freedoms by protecting cultural frameworks. However, the views of Taylor and Kymlicka present a number of issues. In implementing Taylor's politics of recognition the challenge of finding a balance between cultural rights and universal human rights arises. Although, Taylor stresses the importance of acknowledging cultural rights, this can also serve to justify actions that violate universal human rights, such child marriage and female genital mutilation. Also, Kymlicka's liberal democratic approach to dealing with misrecognition experienced by marginalized groups is insufficient because it prioritizes protecting individual rights over the rights of communities. Employing the philosophical method of thematic content analysis, this paper argues that affirmative action and the strengthening of public institutions through broad-spectrum legal and policy frameworks support more practical and impactful responses to identity-based marginalization and historical injustice, with specific reference to the Igbo in Nigeria and the Oromo in Ethiopia.

Keywords: Recognition, Justice, Identity, Affirmative Action, Public Institutions, Liberalism, Communitarianism, Igbo, Oromo.

Introduction

The liberal political philosophy paradigm supports the free market economy, equality, liberty, human rights, the rule of law, and proper and individual rights. These universal liberal ideas are based on human reason and are intended to be applicable in all social and economic contexts. Because these principles are supported by reason, which is a universal and fundamental aspect of man, their validity is independent of the social context in which they are used. Regretfully, there are clear indications that when liberalism's tenets of individual liberty and equality are upheld to a great degree, minority groups, racial groups, and gender identity groups experience significant injustices in the form of marginalization, exploitation, and oppression as well as an uneven distribution of rights and resources. This paper aims to analyze Kymlicka and Taylor's perspectives on minority group recognition. In order to do this, the study first examines the ideas of recognition, justice, and identity before focusing on Taylor and Kymlicka's perspectives on the acknowledgment of minority rights. The study argues that improving public institutions and implementing affirmative action are preferable courses of action.

Liberal and Communitarian Conception of Recognition in correlation to the Issue of Identity

The individual's relationship to a community is the main area of disagreement between communitarian and liberal conceptions of identity. According to communitarianism, the self's identity and *telos* are determined by the community. Liberals view community more as the environment in which an individual lives. While community does play a role in defining an individual's identity, Kymlicka maintains that community does not serve as the boundary for an individual's identity. Becoming a part of a community provides a platform for personal expression rather than permanently fixing an individual's identity. Kymlicka responds to Taylor by saying: Taylor believes that liberalism works well for protecting individuals, but it falls short when it comes to protecting communities. This is because the liberal concept of "neutral political concern" is insufficient for pursuing justice and providing equitable protection for

communities. The government does not give preference to any particular idea of what constitutes a good life over another under the neutrality approach. The government invokes the concept of equality of rights, namely the right to equal treatment, in situations where the neutrality principle is breached. However, Taylor argues that the right to equal treatment can only defend people, not communities, as this strategy puts the interests of the individual ahead of those of society as a whole (Kymlicka, 1995:76). According to Taylor, "rights-talk" thereby severely limits communal life. However, Taylor's interpretation of liberal politics offends Kymlicka. While Kymlicka feels that using right-talk is not a violation of the neutrality principle in and of itself, Taylor sees the liberal neutrality principle as failing to address claims of justice because individual rights that restrict significant communal practice are not neutral at all but rather carry out an act of moral judgment. He asserts that moral primacy does not apply to rights: According to Kymlicka (1995:76), "they [rights] do not define what is of primary significance... but rather they promote those interests which are of moral significance." According to Kymlicka, the philosophical notion of the common good—as opposed to liberal rights discourse—is where liberalism and communitarianism fundamentally divide and provide a challenge. According to Kymlicka (1995), a liberal views the common good of a society as a collection of individual conceptions of the good life, while a communitarian views the common good as the substantive conception of the good of society, in which all members share this substantive *telos*. The substantive conception of the common good is contested by Kymlicka. Furthermore, he contests the idea that the government has the right to enforce or favor particular substantive concepts. Liberals, on the other hand, define the common good as safeguarding those who come to exercise and pursue their shared ideas of what it is to have a good life in a society (1995: 82). An individual may view himself as a member functioning as a "island of freedom," where society offers a framework for pursuing personal objectives, rather than as a "organic part of society," participating in a greater substantive purpose.

Kymlicka rejects all of the accusations made by communitarians against liberalism as a result. According to him, communitarians are incorrect to advance a substantive conception of the good that harms other people, possibly minorities, even though they are correct that liberalism fails to protect communities due to the individualized nature of rights and legal procedure. Therefore, Kymlicka does not see anything in a communitarian argument that would shield outsiders from the majority's substantive doctrine. Kymlicka is unable to comprehend why communitarian politics ought to be superior to liberal politics. He believes that in civilizations such as ours, an egalitarian ethic of impartial concern and a liberal understanding of the common good are most likely to win over the people intrinsically varied and historically oppressive and racist and sexist (1995:95).

On the question of Liberal Justice and Colour-Blindness

According to the liberal conception, justice is a system of laws that uphold the autonomy of the free individual, who is seen as having the highest value. Justice is applicable to "public" political institutions, or systems whose laws are upheld by force, including the political system, the judicial system, and the economy. However, the values of justice do not immediately influence cultural activities, which are those spheres of social interaction characterized by voluntarily participating parties and impulsive behavior. This is the condition known as colorblindness. Moreover, colorblindness is a racial ideology that maintains that treating people equally, regardless of their race, culture, or ethnicity, is the greatest method to eradicate discrimination (William, 2011:1). Furthermore, justice in the liberal perspective essentially pertains to the allocation of basic goods, encompassing both the material and financial commodities required to sustain a life expectancy and the rights and opportunities essential to an individual's moral standing as a self-governing being. Minority groups, gender identities, and racialized individuals are not recognized under this system of justice (Christman, 2002: 159). Taylor's politics of recognition are shaped by this.

Charles Taylor on the Rights of Minority Groups: The Issue of Politics of Recognition

According to Taylor (1994:25), recognition is a crucial tool for comprehending and defending the demands of identity movements. One may say that one of the motivations underlying nationalist movements in politics is the necessity. Because of this, the demand is made in today's politics in a number of ways, including on behalf of minority or "subaltern" groups, in some other capacity, and in what is referred to as "multiculturalism politics." The requirement for acknowledgement implies a connection between acknowledgment and identity. This identity is somewhat shaped by other people's recognition of it—or lack thereof. As a result, actual harm or distortion may befall an individual or group of individuals. This occurs when those in their immediate vicinity reflect back to them an unflattering image of themselves. Because it turns into a kind of oppression or confines one to a false, distorted, and diminished manner of being, lack of recognition will undoubtedly bring suffering (Taylor, 1994: 26). It is important to emphasize that giving people their appropriate acknowledgement is a basic human need, not just a courtesy (Taylor, 2003: 52). By sharing an active political life, people can cultivate and nurture commonalities across organizations, cultures, and individuals (Taylor, 1994: 27). Equal recognition politics have emerged as a result of democracy and have evolved over time. Demands for the equality of cultures, tribes, and genders have now resurfaced (Mead, 1934: 47).

Human life is fundamentally dialogical, and as such, we develop into whole human agents that are able to comprehend who we are and hence define who we are. This is made possible by our development of a rich expressive language. Here, language refers not just to the words we use to communicate but also to other forms of self-expression, such as the languages of gesture, art, and love. The languages necessary for self-definition are not ones we learn on our own. Importantly, our interactions with people who are important to us introduce us to them. George Herbert Mead refers to these as "significant others" (1934:189-203). In this sense, the human mind's origin is not monological. That is, dialogical rather than something that each person does independently. For our purposes alone, learning the languages spoken in conversation is not sufficient. It is required of us to form our own perspectives, ideas, and stances on many matters to a great degree. However, when it comes to identity, we constantly define it through conversation with others. And occasionally fight against the qualities that our significant others wish to see in us.

Monological theory is a concept that is complementary to dialogicality. George defines monological interaction as the transmission of social expectations in a one-way manner. It's a scenario where people are expected to perform and behave in a certain way without consulting or hearing from others (1934: 200). Dialogical interaction, on the other hand, entails a more reciprocal communication exchange in which people negotiate and react to one another. Mead's theory is based on his larger social interactionism theory, which maintains that communication and social interaction are the means by which meaning is formed. Mead believed that people develop their sense of self by internalizing the expectations and social roles that are communicated to them by other people (1934: 200). People acquire a sense of who they are and the capacity to engage in meaningful interactions with others by identifying and meeting the expectations of others (Taylor, 1994: 40).

Taylor's three Approaches to Recognition

Taylor talks about how views of caring concern that are most important to people as the style of love acknowledge true individuality (Maigari, 2021: 9). They've even been explained as genetically unique phases that people go through to develop their sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and self-respect (Seymour, 2014: 237). In addition, Taylor delineates three discrete kinds of recognition: Political recognition, Social engagement, and Love and Care. Every one of these recognition modes has a distinct function and is predicated on a different kind of validation. Love and caring are the first ways that someone can recognize you. This method of self-recognition stems from our early experiences, when we learn to love and care for ourselves from our parents or guardians. According to Taylor, showing compassion is an extension of who we are and helps us to understand the wants and needs of others. As a

result, this method of acknowledgment promotes respect and understanding between parties. Where individuals learn to recognize and acknowledge the other as a unique and valuable individual(1992: 25).

Social engagement is the second method of recognition. Acknowledging one another's cultural and social differences is a form of recognition. Recognize the importance of these distinctions even more. Taylor contends that social connection aids in a person's development of a sense of self and belonging. It helps people to recognize who they are. Understanding the social and cultural groups they are a part of, which aids them in navigating their place in society (1992: 26).

Political recognition is the third type of recognition. This has to do with the fight for acknowledgment. For instance, marginalized communities that have traditionally been excluded from society and treated with disrespect and as such seek political acknowledgement. Taylor contends that excluded groups' social and political inclusion depends on their political acknowledgment. It gives people the ability to influence laws that impact their lives and to have a voice in society (1992: 56). Taylor's modes of recognition offer a framework for comprehending the various ways that people and groups identify themselves and are perceived by others. These styles also highlight the various social conflicts that people face in order to be respected and acknowledged. This helps us comprehend the finer points of the human experience as well. He went on to place these recognition methods in both private and public domains.

Intimate and Public Spheres of Recognition in Taylor

Taylor argues that the recognition question is based on two levels: first, in the intimate realm, where identity and the self are formed. We constantly discuss and occasionally fight against the qualities that our significant others wish to see in us when defining who we are (Taylor, 1994: 32). Maigari emphasizes the idea that Taylor characterizes this level as one where the sensitivity and demands of an original identity are weighed against the responsiveness—or lack thereof—of significant individuals. This level is personal, innermost, and foreshadows mutual affection. In addition to being essential for meeting emotional requirements, love connections are also vital because they act as a melting pot for the development of internally produced identity. He then goes on to demonstrate the relationship between identity and recognition, which is essentially the idea of authenticity, using the aforementioned loci of self-discovery and self-affirmation (Maigari, 2021: 9).

A person or group of people can experience real harm or distortion if those in their immediate environment reflect back to them an unflattering, demeaning, or disdainful image of themselves. This is because identity is partially formed by recognition or lack thereof, frequently as a result of others' misrecognition (Taylor, 1994: 25). Misidentification or nonrecognition can be harmful; it can be an oppressive tactic that confines a person to a distorted, diminished, and false way of being. Taylor's perspective here is in opposition to both the modern reformulations of this tradition and the liberal atomist theories of the 17th century. These theories are characterized by their emphasis on the importance of the individual and their rights in defending political institutions and norms (Morag, 2000: 8). It tends to follow on this view that individual rights are inviolable, whereas the rights and obligations we incur as members of a particular society are secondary and should be sacrificed for the sake of individual rights. Moreover, they contend that the self precedes and is entirely independent of the historical and cultural context in which it finds itself (Morag, 2000: 8). According to Benhabib's theory in *Situating the Self*, atomistic selves cannot be human selves. A political theory based on the false notion that the ego is epistemologically and metaphysically prior to its individuating characteristics puts itself up as being intolerant of gender and cultural differences. The "moral injunction to face the "otherness of the other," [or] their irreducible uniqueness and dissimilarity from the self," is eliminated by any theory predicated on the idea of perfect symmetry between persons (Benhabib, 1992: 167).

Will Kymlicka on Cultural Membership

In her defense of the rights of minority cultures, Kymlicka argues that: 1) cultural membership has to be expressly acknowledged as a fundamental good; and 2) individual cultural membership needs to be corrected and shielded from potential harm by means of minority rights (Kymlicka, 1995: 162). According to Kymlicka, this is congruent with Rawls's concept of self-respect. Our judgments are predicated on self-respect, which is defined as "the sense that one's plan of life is worth carrying out." Furthermore, as we are the only ones who can evaluate the choices we make, we must have access to all worthwhile options, which are defined by our cultural heritage (Kymlicka, 1995: 165).

Thus, the idea of cultural membership acts as a mediator in the relationship between human freedom and culture. Cultural membership is seen as a personal right since it facilitates the exercise of autonomy, because decisions are the result of autonomous self-creation. The framework for an individual's self-creation is their cultural heritage. It is expressed in a particular cultural form that either expands or contracts the range of possibilities available to us while making decisions. These decisions are positioned and shaped by the cultural locus, which serves as our main context of choice; they can never be ahistorical or apolitical. Such a system is referred to as a "cultural structure" (Kymlicka, 1995: 165) in *Liberalism, Community, and Culture (LCC)*. He asserts: "We make judgments precisely by looking at the cultural structure, by realizing the opportunities it presents, the various activities it considers important" (Kymlicka, 1995: 165). He contends that while cultural structure offers a variety of beneficial possibilities, it does not have a moral standing of its own. The liberal cultural philosophy is concerned with a safe and rich cultural framework (Kymlicka, 1995: 166). Cultural structure: what is it? Kymlicka makes a distinction between a cultural community's structure and character in his examination of LCC's cultural community. For Kymlicka, the norms, ethics, and moral values that are preserved in a range of conventional and customary beliefs and behaviors make up the cultural community's character. The term "cultural structure" refers to the social framework in which certain cultural practices and beliefs are expressed, embodied in, and upheld by means of society institutions. Multicultural politics is the challenge of establishing these institutions and ensuring their proper operation. The relationship between culture and community should be understood and embraced as the blending of the two concepts of culture and community into one, the structure of cultural community. This concludes my earlier question regarding what Kymlicka means by cultural community. Culture is defined by the composition of a cultural community, not by its characteristics: "Culture" is described as the presence of a thriving group of people who have a common heritage (Kymlicka, 1995: 168). According to Kymlicka, this is in line with liberal ideals and beliefs. His revised liberal theory holds that the state should uphold and promote not only individual liberties but also cultural contexts, which make individual liberties possible, and the importance of cultural contexts, which give individual decisions some weight.

Does Kymlicka make everything better? Does he really succeed in balancing claims to minority cultures with liberal ideals of individuality and egalitarianism? To restate the quotation above, he rejects outright the notion that ethnocultural minority only need collective rights and instead calls for a harmonious balance between the two. Kymlicka argues that the first liberal principle of individuality can be used to resolve the conflict between individual and collective rights (1989: 150). He contends that respect for an individual, which extends beyond acknowledging her as a citizen or a part of a cultural group, is at the core of the issue. In order for me to identify someone as French, I must acknowledge their cultural affiliation and, by extension, the validity of their cultural assertions. Liberalism has done its work; there is no need to use other methods to preserve a community as a community as long as her cultural dignity is upheld and she is protected, allowing her to follow her francophone conceptions of the good life. What does it mean to protect both French and English, Kymlicka asks next? In response, Kymlicka invokes egalitarianism, the second liberal concept he addresses. For instance, in Canada, protecting the French population necessitates greater government subsidies, greater social acceptance and support than protecting the English population does, and—unusually—an uneven allocation of rights and authority. According to Kymlicka (1989: 151), there is nothing wrong with such an unequal allocation of power; in fact, differentiating citizenship rights might be precisely what multinational nations need to safeguard

their ethnocultural groups. The liberal prerequisite of justice is the special position for minorities. Nonetheless, Kymlicka undoubtedly acknowledges that constraints are imposed by limitations on and unequal distribution of individual rights (Kymlicka, 1989: 183). The English community in Canada faces challenges related to unequal power distribution in areas such as language rights, immigration laws, education policy, and health care.

However, these policies are designed to disadvantage the English while simultaneously promoting equality for the French. Because of this, Kymlicka's cultural theory is based on his dedication to the equality principles that permit varied citizenship rights. varied treatment of an individual may be legitimate and equitable as long as their access to their culture is safeguarded, which is the basis for the justification of varied citizenship rights. As Kymlicka himself concedes, such a stance leaves out concerns regarding the preservation of cultural organizations as groups—and of any other collectives, for that matter—but he does not think this is essential, given that individual access to a cultural group—or cultural membership—is safeguarded. Like many liberals, he is wary of granting collective rights to religious, cultural, and other kinds of groups since, in Kymlicka's words, doing so may necessitate internal limits, which are in direct opposition to liberal ideals.

Examination of Taylor's and Kymlicka's views on Recognition of Minority Rights

Implementing Taylor's politics of recognition idea presents a number of difficulties. Finding a balance between cultural rights and universal human rights is one of the problems. Although Taylor stresses the importance of acknowledging cultural rights, this can also serve to justify actions that violate universal human rights, such child marriage and female genital mutilation. The problem of identity politics presents another difficulty in putting Taylor's politics of recognition and multiculturalism into practice. Taylor's focus on group identity has the potential to create identity politics, in which groups fight for acceptance and attention. Those who do not identify with any particular group or who do not fit into established standards and categories may end up being excluded as a result of this. Therefore, the difficulty lies in identifying group identities without rejecting or marginalizing people who don't fit into preconceived notions.

Many academics have thoroughly reviewed Kymlicka's work in the perspective of diversity and minority rights. In order to maintain cultural diversity, he contends that minority cultures in liberal democracies ought to enjoy special protection. His strategy falls short in addressing possible contradictions between cultural practices and liberal values, as well as in striking an appropriate balance between individual and community rights. The liberal democratic approach is insufficient because it prioritizes protecting individual rights over the rights of communities.

Seyla Benhabib describes Kymlicka's interpretation of culture as a safe haven of choice for personal autonomy as a preservationist approach to culture that aims to preserve culture (Benhabib, 2002: 63). Benhabib further claims that Kymlicka's argument on culture and cultural groups is illogical. She agrees with Kymlicka's basic tenet—that his theory should be based on the fundamental democratic values of equality and freedom—but she disagrees with his methodology and believes that his multiculturalism theory is moving toward cultural essentialism (Benhabib, 2002: 61). Benhabib criticizes Kymlicka's definition of society culture on multiple points, which is the core weakness in his argument. Two main points she makes in her critique of the social culture argument are that culture in general is not a single political principle that "encompasses private public" and that societal culture cannot be regarded as such (Benhabib, 2002: 60).

Benhabib argues that Kymlicka's interpretation of culture is merely incorrect, which has resulted in his misrepresentation of various forms of cultural expression, including his erroneous belief that the institutional form of culture is synonymous with society culture. Societal culture is the result of combining society and culture into a single notion, aligning culture with the demographic. Benhabib claims that Kymlicka makes other mistakes as well. The second flaw is that, while it occasionally makes

sense to coin such a phrase in theory, the society culture argument favors cultural identity over all other types of collective identity (gender, sexual preferences, religion, and so forth). Benhabib believes that such a framework is not feasible in real life. She asserts that although there are nations and societies in Britain, France, and Algeria that are structured as states, there aren't any British, French, or Algerian "societal cultures" in the sense defined by Kymlicka (Benhabib, 2002: 60). Her theory of culture holds that cultural narratives are always dialogical, made up of various material and symbolic activities that have been passed down through the ages.

Policy of Affirmative Action and Strengthening Public Institutions: A Realistic Approach to Correcting Minority Groups' Identity Misrecognition

The weaknesses in Taylor's and Kymlicka's arguments stem from their incapacity to provide a sufficient and concrete solution to ethical problems like the conflict between group identity and individual identity, the potential for objectification and stereotyping of minority groups, and the conflict between cultural rights and universal human rights. Therefore, in multiple societies, strong legal structures are necessary to guarantee equitable opportunities and safeguard the rights of minorities. Policies that combat discrimination, support affirmative action, and protect minority languages and cultural customs can contribute to the development of a more just and welcoming society. The public institutions must be strengthened by advancing the rule of law.

The goal of affirmative action is to guarantee and advance equitable opportunities for underrepresented groups, especially in the fields of work and education. The foundation of this policy is the idea that all people, regardless of color, gender, or origin, should have an equal opportunity at success in life. By giving underrepresented groups preferential treatment, affirmative action seeks to rectify systematic and historical discrimination (Abdullah, 1979). The quota system for admission in unity schools is one instance of affirmative action in Nigeria. Unity schools are secondary, federally owned educational institutions that serve students from all fifty states in the union in an effort to foster national unity. According to each state's population, the quota system seeks to guarantee that a certain number of students from each state attend these institutions (Agbakoba, 2018). Some contend that this method has unjustly benefited students from some states over others and hasn't always succeeded in achieving the intended purpose of fostering national unity. For instance, there has been opposition to the quota system at the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), which is in charge of conducting entrance exams and admitting students into Nigerian institutions and colleges. Agbakoba questioned the program in 2018, claiming it was unlawful and went against the federal character and meritocracy ideals. He further asserts that the quota system has led to the admission of applicants who are not qualified and has exacerbated the nation's educational quality fall (The Guardian, 2018).

Nonetheless, the government can start the quota system by offering underprivileged minority groups high-quality early childhood and primary education so they can develop the skills necessary to be admitted to universities based just on merit. In light of this, in addition to bolstering public institutions through legal actions that forbid prejudice and other forms of injustice against ethnic and minority groups, the study suggests that affirmative action policies continue to be the most effective means of addressing the problem of ethnic inequality. Therefore, the quota system in Nigeria continues to be a crucial affirmative action measure that supports equal opportunity and educational access for historically underrepresented populations. Students from underrepresented states now have the chance to attend these esteemed institutions, and the policy has increased diversity in unity schools (Alli, 2019). It will advance justice and equality for underrepresented groups, which is essential to building a society which is more just and equitable. At this point, the study examines the Igbo and Oromo ethnic groups in relation to affirmative action.

Igbo and Oromo Ethnic Groups Marginalization: A Setting for Affirmative Action

Nigeria is a multilingual, multiethnic, and multi-religious nation. Although this diversity is ostensibly supposed to be a source of excellence, sadly, the opposite has happened. This is because there has been a conspicuous increase in marginalization, injustice, and repression of minority and ethnic groups. The Igbo ethnic group, one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, is one of these tribes. With 71 percent of Nigeria's total population, the Igbo ethnic group is one of the largest in the country (Oladipo, 2013: 79). They are mostly found in Nigeria's southeast, specifically in the states of Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu, and Ebonyi. Particularly as a result of the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), also known as the Biafran War, which had disastrous implications for the area, the Igbo people have faced marginalization and prejudice (Uduma, 2015: 91). With the military decree policy of Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation (3Rs) for the defeated Eastern region, General Gowon fulfilled his promise to rebuild and reintegrate the defeated Eastern region, whose infrastructure had been destroyed during the civil war, back into the nation on an equal footing. The policy was never put into practice. As a result, there were political and economic problems as well as a deliberate effort to sour ties between the Igbo people and other minority ethnic groups in the southeast (Nsoedo, 2019: 430).

Compared to other parts of Nigeria, this region lacks proper infrastructure, among other socioeconomic issues. In addition, there is the problem of high unemployment and poverty rates that have persisted in Igbo-dominated areas, restricting economic opportunities and feeding a cycle of deprivation. Despite their large population, the Igbo people feel excluded from national politics and have little representation in positions of power that determine policy. Basic amenities like roads, hospitals, and schools are frequently of subpar quality, impeding socioeconomic development. The Igbo people's marginalization peaked in the 2023 general election. Because Mr. Peter Obi of the Labour Party, one of the presidential contenders, is of Igbo descent, many of them were murdered and subjected to brutality (Eze et al., 2023: 135).

The Nigerian civil war has its roots in these marginalization occurrences (Onwubiko & Ugorji, 2022: 3). A number of agitations by various groups, including the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) from the Southeast region of Nigeria, have been caused by the high rate of marginalization of Igbo people in various areas of their lives (Ogu & Areji, 2022: 20). On the other hand, what is the kind of marginalization suffered by the Oromo people of Ethiopia? Following the socialist regime's overthrow in 1991, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) embraced multinational (ethnic) federalism. Article 47(1) of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) 1995 Constitution divides Ethiopia into nine national regional states. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) aims to address political, economic, and social inequality, particularly for groups that have been politically marginalized in Ethiopian politics for a long time. Nevertheless, the federation has an impact on groups that were forcibly reconstituted into newly established regional states and reside outside of Ethiopia. A good example is the Oromo community that lives in and around the town of Cheki in the North Shewa Zone, which stretches on the Amhara regional side of the border with Oromiya National Regional State. This community continues to be marginalized (Tulu & Roro, 2022: 4). It is a fact that the Oromo people are the largest ethnonation in the Horn of Africa; in Ethiopia, they make up forty percent of the population and inhabit the largest regional state of the federal state (Hussein, 2006: 1). They have historically been subjected to oppression and injustices in a number of ways, including land dispossession, where they frequently lose their ancestral lands to government-led initiatives and powerful entities, ultimately resulting in economic marginalization. Oromo individuals have experienced human rights abuses such as arbitrary arrests, torture, and the suppression of political dissent. They have also faced political marginalization, with limited representation in governmental structures, unequal access to resources, and underrepresentation in key decision-making positions. The Oromo culture and language have been suppressed, with attempts made to impose the dominant culture and language of the ruling elite, contributing to a sense of cultural alienation and loss (Tulu & Roro, 2022: 4). Given this level of marginalization suffered by the Igbo and Oromo ethnic groups in Nigeria and Ethiopia respectively, affirmative action is required to lessen the hardship experienced by the Igbo ethnic group. Affirmative

action should be introduced for fundamental reasons, among which are the necessity to provide equal opportunity for Igbo people to pursue careers, education, and public office.

Affirmative action can be a valuable tool for addressing historical grievances and promoting national integration, as well as solidarity among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groupings. By accelerating the developmental gap between the Southeastern area and other parts of Nigeria, certain policies can support stability and economic prosperity. In order to increase Igbo students' access to high-quality education and skill development, special programs and scholarships are the most practical ways affirmative action as a policy may be implemented in the Southeast of Nigeria. The Southeast region of Nigeria urgently needs significant investments in infrastructure projects to upgrade its roads, medical facilities, and basic utilities. In order to further the equal representation of Igbo people in government and public institutions, affirmative action laws must be put into place. Many open wounds and past injustices done to the people of Southeast Nigeria will be healed when the aforementioned actions are taken. Affirmative action policies would also promote inclusivity among Nigerians and foster socioeconomic growth in both Nigeria and the Southeastern region of the country.

Conclusion

In Taylor book *Politics of Recognition*—which can be succinctly summed up as politics of equal dignity and politics of difference—he chose to offer a solution to this difficult problem in response to the persistent lack of recognition for underrepresented groups, such as women, people of color, minorities, and the colonized. As such, he maintains that politics of equal dignity promotes fairness for all members of a community and that discrimination ought to be outlawed. However, he maintains that politics of difference supports acknowledging each citizen's culture to the extent that it helps to sustain their cultures. Although Kymlicka, using his concept of cultural membership, maintains that the community is the main source of human identity and the setting in which individuals have a variety of options. The paper argues that membership in a community does not permanently fix an individual's identity, and that affirmative action (implementation of unique policies and initiatives in education, the provision of social amenities, job opportunities, and access to public institutions and political positions at the federal level) and the strengthening of public institutions through serious legal frameworks are better ways to address issues of mis-recognition or non-recognition, historical injustices done to minority groups, particularly, the Igbo and Oromo marginalized ethnic groups in Nigeria and Ethiopia. These would enhance socioeconomic growth and encourage inclusivity in Nigeria generally and in the Southeast region specifically. It may also help build a Nigeria that is more just and unified.

*Jetty Joe Odey, PhD

Department of Philosophy University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Email: jettyjoeodey@gmail.com

**Jude Emeka Odoh, PhD

State University of Medical and Applied Sciences, Igbo-Eno, Enugu State, Nigeria

Email: Jude.odo@sumas.edu.ng

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, A. The 1979 Constitution ushered affirmative action. Daily Trust (2018).
<https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/1979-constitution-ushered-affirmative-action.html> (retrieved 19th May 2023).
- Agbakoba, O. "Examining the quota system in Nigeria." *The Guardian* (2018).
<https://guardian.ng/features/examining-the-quota-system-in-nigeria/> (retrieved 19th May 2023).

- Alli, T. "Unity schools and the quota system." *The Nation* (2019) <https://thenationonline.net/unity-schools-and-the-quota-system/> (retrieved 19th May 2023).
- Benhabib, S. (2002). *Claims of Culture*. Oxford University Press.
- Benhabib, S. (1992) *Situating the Self*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Christman, J. *Social and Political Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction*(2002). London: Routledge.
- Eze, F. C. Areji, A. C., et al. Exploring An Alternative To Nigeria's Dysfunctional Democracy. *Aquino Journal of Philosophy* vol. 3, Issue 1, June 2023, 131-142.
https://iep.utm.edu/recog_sp/#H2 (Accessed June 14th, 2021)
- Hussein, J. W. (2006). A Critical Review of the Political and Stereotypical Portrayals of the Oromo in the Ethiopian Historiography. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*. 15(3): 256–276
- "Interview with Will Kymlicka from June 2015". *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. 2 June 2015. Retrieved 2 October 2023.
- Kymlicka, W. (1995) *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kymlicka, W. (1995). *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford University Press.
- Kymlicka, W. (1989). *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*. Clarendon Press.
- Maigari, P. P. "A Critique of Charles Taylor's Theory of Recognition", *SOCIETIES: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* Vol.1, No.2, 2021.
- Mead, George Herbert. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Seymour, M. (2014). Recognition, Politics of Difference, and the Institutional Identity of Peoples. *Recognition Versus Self-Determination: Dilemmas of Emancipatory Politics*, 227-250.
- Taylor, C. (2003). *The Ethics of Authenticity*. USA: Harvard University Press,
- Taylor, C. (1994). The Politics of Recognition in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, C. (1992). The Politics of Recognition, in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Taylor, C. (2003). Conditions of an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights in *Human Rights in Global Perspective: Anthropological Studies of Rights, Claims, and Entitlements*, ed. Richard A. Wilson. New York: Routledge.
- Taylor, C. (1985). *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tulu, B.A. & Roro, A.G. (2022). Regionalisation or Marginalisation? The case of the Oromo living in Amhara region of Ethiopia. *Heliyon* 8 e11472.
- Uduma, D. O. (2015). Marginalization Syndrome in Nigeria's Politics: The Case of Ndigbo. *International Journal of Advanced Legal Studies and Governance*, Vol.5 No. 1, 91-98.
- Uchechukwu, K. O. & Areji, A. C. (2022). Ethnic Nationalism and Ethno - Religious Conflicts: Setting an Agenda for Stability and Development in Nigeria. *Sapientia Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 16, 18-28.
- William (2011) "What does racism look like? Colorblindness" <https://fitchburgstate.libguides.com> Retrieved 27 May 2023.