

## The Relevance of Multiculturalism in Antonio Gramsci's Concept of Hegemony

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### Abstract

This study presents a comparative analysis of pluralist and liberal approaches to multiculturalism, focusing on the contributions of Bhikhu Parekh, Will Kymlicka, and Charles Taylor. The primary objective is to examine Parekh's pluralist conception of multiculturalism and situate it within the framework of hegemony, as theorised by Antonio Gramsci (Hoare and Smith, *Selections from prison notebooks*, 1971; Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 2000). The paper argues that Parekh's pluralist account provides a more flexible and context-sensitive understanding of cultural diversity compared to the liberal tradition, which tends to emphasise individual rights and group-differentiated citizenship (Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship*, 1995). By contrast, Parekh foregrounds intercultural dialogue, mutual respect, and the coexistence of diverse cultural communities within a shared political framework (Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 2000). Drawing on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, particularly as articulated in the Prison Notebooks, the study explores the cultural and ideological grounds of civil society, which fulfil both common and private interests of citizens. In addition, Gramsci highlights the fluidity or historically contingent nature of culture, the dialogical or reciprocal relationship between popular (subaltern social groups) and high cultures (culture of elites), and the plural institutions of civil society in shaping socio-political and economic power relations (Hoare and Smith, *Selections from prison notebooks*, 1971; Hoare & Sperber, *An introduction to Antonio Gramsci*, 2016). Furthermore, the paper demonstrates how multicultural theorists address

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cultural conflicts through the lenses of pluralism, diversity, and ideological structures embedded in civil society. By linking Parekh's pluralist multiculturalism with Gramscian hegemony, the study underscores the importance of developing an inclusive and dialogic cultural framework that challenges domination and contributes to the realisation of a more equitable and oppression-free society (Hall, *Representation*, 1997; Young, *Justice and the politics of difference*, 1990).

**Keywords:** Multiculturalism; Diversity; Pluralism; Civil Society; Hegemony.

### Introduction

Multiculturalism has emerged as one of the most significant intellectual and political responses to the growing diversity of modern societies (Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship*, 1995; Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 1994; Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 2000). Its origins can be traced to the socio-political transformations of the 1960s and 1970s in countries such as the United States and Britain, where increasing migration, decolonisation, and civil rights movements challenged the dominance of monocultural national identities ((Hall, *Representation*, 1997; Young, *Justice and the politics of difference*, 1990).

During this early phase, the question of accommodating minority and immigrant communities within societies structured around assimilationist ideals was the dominant concern. The "melting pot" model, which encouraged minorities to dissolve their identities into a dominant culture, gradually gave way to more pluralistic frameworks such as the "salad bowl", which recognised the coexistence of diverse cultural identities within a shared political space.

By the 1980s, multiculturalism had evolved into a more structured normative and theoretical discourse, engaging with issues of justice, recognition, equality, and identity (Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 1994; Fraser, *Rethinking Recognition*, 2000). It became closely associated with debates on minority rights, citizenship, and the ethical foundations of liberal democracy. In this phase, multiculturalism moved beyond mere tolerance for diversity toward its active recognition and institutional accommodation. In contemporary contexts, it further extends to the positive affirmation of cultural identities, including religious, linguistic, and ethnic differences, thereby reshaping the nature of public life and democratic participation (Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship*, 1995).

Given its conceptual richness and diversity of interpretations, multiculturalism has been theorised through multiple frameworks. Among these, three prominent models stand out: liberal, pluralist, and cosmopolitan multiculturalism. The liberal model, associated with thinkers such as Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor, emphasises individual autonomy, equal rights, and the recognition of minority cultures within the framework of liberal

citizenship (Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship*, 1995; Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 1994). While this approach seeks to reconcile cultural diversity with universal principles, it has often been critiqued for privileging a rights-based perspective that may insufficiently capture the depth and complexity of cultural life.

In contrast, the pluralist model, most systematically articulated by Bhikhu Parekh, offers a more nuanced and context-sensitive understanding of multiculturalism. Parekh challenges the assumption that any single culture embodies universal values or represents the full spectrum of human possibilities. Instead, he argues that all cultures are inherently partial, limited, and open to critique. From this perspective, multiculturalism is not merely about accommodating differences but about fostering a dialogical engagement among cultures, where each can learn from and be enriched by others. It thus combines respect for diversity with the pursuit of a shared civic framework grounded in mutual understanding and ethical dialogue (Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 2000).

A key contribution of Parekh's thought lies in his dynamic and non-essentialist conception of culture. As he spells out, "all cultures, the interculturally created and multiculturally constituted culture is an unplanned growth." (Parekh, *Rethinking multiculturalism*, page 221) Therefore, he rejects the view of cultures as static, homogeneous entities and instead conceptualises them as evolving, internally diverse, and historically contingent formations. Cultures are shaped by continuous interactions, both within themselves and with other cultures, resulting in ongoing processes of reinterpretation and transformation. Intercultural dialogue, therefore, becomes central to multiculturalism, as it enables critical self-reflection, facilitates the incorporation of external influences, and strengthens the capacity of societies to negotiate diversity constructively.

Furthermore, Parekh's framework situates culture within a broader matrix of social, political, and economic structures. He emphasises that culture is not an isolated domain but is deeply intertwined with institutional arrangements and power relations. Cultural practices and beliefs both shape and are shaped by political authority, economic organisation, and social hierarchies. This insight opens up a critical engagement with the concept of hegemony as developed by Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's notion of hegemony highlights how dominant groups maintain power not merely through coercion but through the construction of cultural and ideological consent within civil society (Hoare and Smith, *Selections from prison notebooks*, 1971).

In this regard, multiculturalism cannot be understood solely as a celebration of diversity; it must also be analysed in terms of power, domination, and resistance. Parekh says that misrecognition occurred due to a lack of social

identity or belongingness, which implies a cultural and economic basis of hegemonic relations, and it aligns with a specific kind of hegemony known as 'counter hegemony', given by Antonio Gramsci. Because counter-hegemony undermines the cultural beliefs and values, particularly among marginalised groups, they are often shaped in ways that reinforce existing power structures. At the same time, the plural and dialogical nature of culture provides opportunities for contestation and transformation, making multiculturalism a potentially emancipatory project.

Another significant dimension of Parekh's theory is his emphasis on the internal plurality of cultures. He argues that cultures are not monolithic entities but consist of multiple traditions, perspectives, and strands of thought engaged in continuous dialogue. Cultural identity, therefore, is not fixed or singular but is formed through ongoing processes of negotiation and reinterpretation. This internal diversity is crucial for fostering openness toward other cultures, as a culture that recognises plurality within itself is more likely to appreciate and engage with external differences.

By bringing together Parekh's pluralist multiculturalism and Gramsci's theory of hegemony, this study seeks to develop a deeper and more critical understanding of the relationship between culture, power, and social transformation. It highlights how multiculturalism, when viewed through a Gramscian lens, moves beyond a descriptive account of diversity to become a critical framework for analysing ideological domination and envisioning more inclusive and democratic forms of social life. In doing so, the study underscores the importance of intercultural dialogue, critical self-reflection, and institutional reform in the pursuit of a just, equitable, and genuinely pluralistic society.

### **Theoretical Framework: Integrating Pluralist Multiculturalism and Gramscian Hegemony**

This study is theoretically grounded in the intersection of pluralist multiculturalism, as articulated by Bikhū Parekh, and the concept of hegemony developed by Antonio Gramsci. Parekh presents a normative and philosophical perspective on cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, while Gramsci offers a critical framework for analysing power's functioning through cultural and ideological processes. Their integration facilitates a comprehensive analysis of multiculturalism that celebrates diversity and critically interrogates the structures of domination embedded within it.

**Multiculturalism:** Multiculturalism is one of the first movements that does not prioritise a universal approach to equality but rather celebrates cultural differences. It is closely related to the concepts of identity and recognition (Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 1994). In every society, culture shapes the identity of individuals or groups. In these discussions of multiculturalism, culture is an

essential element of one's political and social identity. Parekh specifies that "since a culture's system of beliefs and practices, the locus of its identity, is constantly contested, subject to change, and does not form a coherent whole, its identity is never settled, static, and free of ambiguity" (Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p.148).

Gramsci similarly notes that "culture is never fixed or rigid; rather, it is always in flux as an object of historical becoming" (Hoare and Sperber, *An introduction to Antonio Gramsci*, p. 29). For Gramsci, culture serves as a medium that connects the thoughts of individuals with the outside world. He specifies that "culture is a succession of quotidian practices" (Hoare and Sperber, *An introduction to Antonio Gramsci*, p. 28). This indicates that culture refers to a particular way of living in society or a method of acting as a social being. This dynamic aspect of culture also necessitates consideration of cultural diversity.

**Diversity:** Parekh's concept of cultural diversity is logically deduced through a critique of Kymlicka's reliance on liberal individualism. For Kymlicka, individual autonomy takes precedence over cultural diversity, leading him to construct his liberal ideas around the notion of a desirable life grounded in individual choice. In his book *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995), he asserts that "we lead our lives from the inside, in accordance with our beliefs about what gives value to life" (Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 81). This suggests that Kymlicka distinguishes between the individual and society at large. Furthermore, Kymlicka's liberal perspective maintains that "cultural membership provides the context for individual choice; conversely, individual rights always take priority over cultural membership, since the value of cultural membership lies in enabling individual choice" (Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, p. 198). In contrast, Parekh's theory of multiculturalism places greater emphasis on cultural diversity, which he argues is valuable not only for individuals but also for society as a whole. He contends that "membership of a cultural community varies in kind and degree, and it is sometimes a subject of deep disagreement" (Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 148). Moreover, Parekh does not solely emphasise the formation of individual identity; he also considers that identity is influenced by various groups of people. He states, "One identifies a body of men and women because one shares a common identity with them, and one's identification with them gives that identity a social basis, emotional energy, and a measure of stability and objectivity" (Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 156). Thus, this discussion implies that Parekh perceives cultural diversity not as an individualistic phenomenon but as something socially and culturally ascribed. According to Parekh, "by definition, diversity is an inescapable fact of collective life and can neither be wished out of existence nor suppressed without an unacceptable degree of coercion, and often not even then" (Parekh,

*Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 196). This diversity can only be realised through the concept of intercultural dialogue. Parekh defines dialogue as a form of conversation that involves 'being beyond oneself, to think with the other and to come back to oneself as if to another' (Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 337). This intercultural, dialogical, or reciprocal aspect underscores the essence of cultural diversity.

This reciprocal or dialogical relationship is also evident in the social function of intellectuals, as articulated by Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci calls upon the organic intellectuals of the proletariat, who generate a new culture and forge strong alliances with other disadvantaged groups to advance their socialist agenda. He identifies one of the key characteristics of organic intellectuals as "homogeneity and an awareness of their function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields" (Hoare and Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 5). Gramsci elaborates on this idea in terms of the reciprocal relationship between organic intellectuals, or elites, and the subaltern populations. This cultural dialogue embodies the concept of plurality.

**Pluralism:** Pluralism denotes the multifaceted and diverse character of a democratic society. In such a society, various associations or groups—such as those based on religion, occupation, or voluntary service organisations—represent the differing interests of individuals and participate in the decision-making process. This perspective views government or state policies as the result of mutual discussion and the exchange of opinions among various autonomous groups. In relation to this theory, Andrew Heywood observes that "pluralism is a theory of the distribution of political power. As such, it holds that power is widely and evenly dispersed in society, not concentrated in the hands of an elite or ruling class. In this form, pluralism is usually seen as a theory of 'group politics', implying that group access to government ensures broad democratic responsiveness." (Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, p. 396) This discussion indicates that a democratic society comprises different cultural groups and communities, suggesting the plural nature of a multicultural society. It also implies the concept of institutional plurality. Consequently, the term 'pluralism' refers to the existence of multiple forms of institutions. In this context, Parekh highlights that

The state expects all its citizens to adhere to a uniform way of defining themselves and relating to each other and the state. This shared political self-understanding serves as its constitutive principle and necessary presupposition. While it can tolerate differences on various other matters, it cannot accept this one and employs educational, cultural, coercive, and other means to ensure that all its citizens conform. In a significant sense, it is a deeply homogenising institution. (Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 184)

This discussion clearly illustrates that Parekh's theory of cultural pluralism necessitates both the plural form of various unprivileged groups or communities and the plural forms of institutions.

The concept of pluralism is also evident in Gramsci's theory of subaltern studies. In Notebook 25, Joseph Buttigieg points out that "He does not conceive them as a single or homogenous entity, which is why he consistently refers to them in the plural" (Buttigieg & Green, *Subaltern Social Groups*, introduction part). In this regard, Kate Crehan notes in "Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and its Narratives" (2016) that Gramsci "identifies slaves, peasants, religious groups, women, different races, and the proletariat as subaltern social groups." (Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense*, p.15) Therefore, pluralism is a crucial element not only in discussions of multiculturalism but also in Gramsci's theory of subalternity. Consequently, the ideological and political unity of subaltern social groups relies on the institutions of civil society. In Notebook 25, Gramsci states, "For the subaltern classes, the unification does not occur; their history is intertwined with the history of 'civil society'" (Buttigieg & Green, *Subaltern Social Groups*, p. 24). This discussion logically leads to the conclusion that every type of social institution arises within the concept of civil society.

**Civil Society:** The philosophical discussion of civil society consists of diverse meanings, a range of concepts, and political theories. This present study formulates the cultural and ideological grounds of civil society. In addition, many multicultural theorists accept that civil society emerges from the idea of a combination of institutions that articulate and protect the rights and identities of various underprivileged groups while also promoting a democratic path. Will Kymlicka, Charles Taylor, and Bikhu Parekh give different views, though their path is the same, which is that civil society is a wide arena of ideological debates. In the book *Multicultural Citizenship*, Kymlicka defines civil society in terms of an institutional whole which reflects all different aspects of a society. For him, "institutionally complete" means containing a full range of social, educational, economic, and political institutions that encompass both public and private life". (Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p.78) Charles Taylor, in his essay *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, delves into how the institutions of civil society enable cultural groups to seek recognition and respect for their identities, which is essential for maintaining dignity and equality. He presents the concept of social recognition and identity derived from the dialogical relation with others. He argued that "the socially derived identity" was, by its very nature, dependent on society. (Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 1994, p. 34.) According to Parekh, civil society enables intercultural dialogue that fulfils cultural, political, and economic interests. In rethinking multiculturalism, Parekh provides an idea that "the development of a multiculturally constituted common culture requires a flourishing civil society

providing ample opportunities for different cultural communities to meet and pursue common cultural, economic and other interests on a regular and relaxed basis" (Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 222).

Gramsci's notion of civil society also incorporates a multicultural element. Gramsci developed the concept of civil society through the process of hegemony. He observes that civil society legitimates cultural as well as political transformation and specifies an important role of intellectuals in facilitating these changes by influencing public opinion and promoting critical thought. Thereby, Gramsci's analysis of civil society was a set of institutions of an economic sphere as well as churches, parties, professional associations, and educational and cultural bodies. Gramsci's theory of civil society suggests that the diverse institutions collectively contribute to the formation of a democratic society and social harmony. **An introduction to Antonio Gramsci** shows that civil society is a set of private institutions, including religious, political, and cultural organisations such as the Catholic Church, political parties, and publishing houses, as well as the social functions of different kinds of intellectuals. As well, it undermines public affairs like freely formed associations of citizens, which are needed to encourage democratic engagement and participation in governance. It highlights that "Gramsci conceives of civil society as a social terrain on which rivalries and struggles of a cultural and ideological nature are played out and decided among social groups" ((Hoare and Sperber, *An introduction to Antonio Gramsci*, p. 56). Furthermore, Gramsci establishes a connection between civil society and the economic structure of society. In the above discussion, it follows that civil society, or superstructure, and economic structure both build the concept of hegemony.

**Hegemony:** In the context of misrecognition, Parekh critiques Charles Taylor's assertion that the intellectual and moral appeal of the dominant culture is the sole solution to safeguarding the identity or recognition of marginalised groups. In contrast, Parekh contends that "misrecognition has both a cultural and material basis" (Parekh, *Rethinking of multiculturalism*, p. 343). He posits that economic and political power is essential for the cultural recognition of marginalised social groups. He asserts that "no multicultural society can be stable and vibrant unless it ensures that its constituent communities receive both just recognition and a just share of economic and political power" (Parekh *Rethinking of Multiculturalism*, p. 343). Consequently, this power-based cultural theory aligns with Antonio Gramsci's concept of proletarian hegemony. The term "hegemony" was initially used to denote "class alliance," where the proletariat allied with other exploited groups in a collective struggle against capitalist oppression. In this context, Gramsci focuses on proletarian hegemony over its allies through specific compromises. Such compromises, which are economically and corporately motivated, tend to narrow class interests. These compromises ultimately foster the confidence of smaller groups, leading to the

establishment of hegemony. Gramsci asserts that “there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential; for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity” (Hoare and smith, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, p. 161). From these discussions, it follows that Gramsci’s theory of hegemony encompasses both cultural and politico-economic recognition for subaltern groups and society as a whole.

### **Gramsci’s Concept of Hegemony: Culture, Power, and Ideological Consent**

The theoretical insights of Antonio Gramsci provide a critical lens through which the dynamics of multiculturalism can be more deeply understood. Gramsci’s concept of **hegemony** refers to the process by which dominant groups maintain their power not merely through coercion but through the production of consent. This consent is generated within civil society through cultural institutions such as education, religion, media, and family, which disseminate and normalise the values and beliefs of the ruling class.

Gramsci challenges economic determinism by emphasising the relative autonomy of the cultural sphere, or the **superstructure**, in shaping social relations. Culture, in his view, is not a passive reflection of economic conditions but an active site of struggle where meanings are constructed, contested, and transformed. The distinction between **political society** (state apparatus) and **civil society** (institutions of consent) is crucial in understanding how hegemony operates and is sustained. A key aspect of Gramsci’s theory is the recognition of the **dialectical relationship between structure and superstructure**, wherein economic, political, and cultural forces interact dynamically. Hegemony is thus neither static nor total; it is continuously negotiated and subject to resistance. Subaltern groups, through the development of **counter-hegemonic practices**, can challenge dominant ideologies and create alternative cultural and political visions.

### **Analytical Implications for Multiculturalism**

By synthesising Parekh’s pluralist multiculturalism with Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, this framework offers several key analytical insights:

- Multiculturalism must be understood not only as a framework of cultural recognition but also as a terrain of power relations and ideological struggle.
- Cultural diversity is shaped by institutional structures and hegemonic processes, which influence who's voice is recognised and who is marginalised.
- Intercultural dialogue serves as a counter-hegemonic practice, enabling the transformation of dominant cultural norms and the creation of more

- inclusive social arrangements, such as fostering mutual understanding and respect among diverse cultural groups.
- The internal plurality of cultures provides a basis for critical self-reflection and resistance, making multiculturalism a dynamic and evolving project that challenges existing power structures and promotes social equity.

### **Toward a Critical Multiculturalism**

The integration of these two theoretical perspectives ultimately points toward a model of critical multiculturalism one that goes beyond the passive coexistence of cultures to actively engage with issues of inequality, domination, and social justice. Such a framework recognises that cultural diversity cannot be meaningfully addressed without examining the power structures that shape it.

In this sense, multiculturalism becomes both an ethical project and a political struggle: an ethical project in its commitment to respect, dialogue, and mutual recognition, and a political struggle in its challenge to hegemonic domination and its aspiration toward a more just and egalitarian society.

### **Literature Review**

The discourse on multiculturalism has developed through diverse philosophical, political, and sociological perspectives, engaging with questions of identity, recognition, equality, and power. This section reviews key contributions to multicultural theory, with particular emphasis on liberal and pluralist approaches, and situates them within a broader critical framework informed by hegemony.

#### **1. Liberal Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition**

Liberal theories of multiculturalism chiefly concentrate on harmonising cultural diversity with the tenets of individual rights and democratic citizenship. Will Kymlicka (1995) is a central figure in this tradition, arguing that minority rights are essential for ensuring genuine equality in multicultural societies. He introduces the concept of *group-differentiated rights*, suggesting that cultural membership provides individuals with the context necessary for making meaningful choices. For Kymlicka, multiculturalism is compatible with liberalism insofar as it protects individual autonomy through the recognition of cultural identities (Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship*, 1995).

Similarly, Charles Taylor (1994) advances the idea of recognition politics, emphasising that identity is shaped through social acknowledgement. Misrecognition or non-recognition, he argues, can inflict harm by distorting individuals' sense of self (Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 1994). Taylor's work highlights the moral importance of recognising cultural differences within a democratic framework, though he remains grounded in a liberal commitment to shared political values.

Despite their contributions, liberal theorists have been critiqued for their tendency to prioritise individual rights over collective cultural practices and for insufficiently addressing structural inequalities and power imbalances (Young, *Justice and the politics of difference*, 1990; Barry, *Culture and equality*, 2001). These critiques have paved the way for alternative approaches that foreground cultural embeddedness and social context.

## **2. Pluralist Multiculturalism: Dialogical and Contextual Approaches**

In contrast to liberal frameworks, Bhikhu Parekh (2000) offers a pluralist account of multiculturalism that emphasises the dialogical nature of cultural interaction. Parekh rejects the universalist assumptions of liberalism, arguing that no single culture possesses a complete understanding of human values. Instead, he conceptualises multiculturalism as a process of intercultural dialogue, where cultures engage with one another in a spirit of mutual respect and critical reflection.

Parekh's work is particularly significant for its emphasis on the internal plurality of cultures and the dynamic nature of cultural identities. He argues that cultures are not monolithic but consist of diverse traditions and perspectives that evolve. This perspective challenges essentialist notions of culture and demonstrates the value of negotiation and reinterpretation in multicultural societies.

Moreover, Parekh situates culture within a broader socio-political context, recognising its interdependence with economic and institutional structures. His analysis extends beyond normative theory to address issues of power, legitimacy, and social cohesion, making his framework particularly relevant for engaging with critical theories of hegemony.

### **Cosmopolitan and Critical Perspectives**

#### **Gramscian Perspectives: Hegemony and Cultural Power**

The concept of hegemony, developed by Antonio Gramsci (1971), provides a crucial analytical framework for understanding the role of culture in sustaining power relations. Gramsci contends that civil society not only generates consent but also uses coercion to achieve dominance. Cultural institutions play a key role in shaping beliefs, values, and norms that legitimise existing social arrangements.

Gramsci's insights have been widely applied in cultural studies and critical theory to analyze how dominant ideologies are reproduced and challenged. His emphasis on the dialectical relationship between structure and superstructure highlights the interconnectedness of economic, political, and cultural forces. This perspective holds particular relevance for multiculturalism, highlighting the ways hegemonic power structures can influence cultural recognition.

Scholars influenced by Gramsci have argued that multicultural policies may sometimes reinforce existing hierarchies by incorporating minority cultures into dominant frameworks without fundamentally altering power relations (Hall, *Representation*, 1997). This critique points out that there must be a more transformative approach to multiculturalism that addresses both cultural and structural dimensions of inequality.

### **Synthesis and Research Gap**

The existing literature reveals a rich and diverse body of work on multiculturalism, ranging from liberal theories of rights and recognition to pluralist, liberalist and critical perspectives. While liberal theorists such as Kymlicka and Taylor offer important perspectives on the normative foundations of multiculturalism, their approaches have been critiqued for insufficiently addressing issues of power and structural inequality. Parekh's pluralist framework provides a more dialogical and culturally situated viewpoint; however, it necessitates deeper engagement with critical theories to comprehensively examine the dynamics of domination and resistance.

The integration of Parekh's multiculturalism with Gramscian hegemony remains relatively underexplored in existing scholarship. This gap is significant, as it limits the ability of multicultural theory to account for the ideological and institutional mechanisms through which cultural hierarchies are maintained, such as the ways in which dominant cultures impose their values and norms on marginalised groups. By bringing together these two perspectives, the present study seeks to develop a more comprehensive framework that not only values cultural diversity but also critically examines the power relations that shape it.

### **Methodology**

#### **1. Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative, theoretical, and interpretative research design to examine the relationship between pluralist multiculturalism and the concept of hegemony (Creswell, *Research design*, 2014). Rather than relying on empirical data, the research is grounded in conceptual analysis and critical theory, focusing on the works of Bikhū Parekh and Antonio Gramsci. The study is both analytical and comparative in nature, aiming to explore points of convergence and divergence between these two theoretical frameworks.

#### **2. Method of Inquiry: Textual and Conceptual Analysis**

The primary method employed is textual analysis, involving a close reading and interpretation of key theoretical texts. Core works such as Parekh's *Rethinking Multiculturalism* and Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* form the central basis of analysis. These texts are examined to identify major concepts, arguments, and underlying assumptions related to culture, power, and social organization.

In addition, conceptual analysis is used to clarify and critically engage with key ideas such as multiculturalism, pluralism, hegemony, civil society, and intercultural dialogue. This involves defining concepts, tracing their theoretical development, and analyzing their interrelationships within and across the works of the selected theorists (Bryman, *Social research method*, 2016).

### 3. Comparative Framework

The study employs a comparative theoretical approach to systematically relate Parekh's pluralist multiculturalism with Gramsci's theory of hegemony. The comparison is structured around the following analytical dimensions:

- **Nature of Culture** (static vs. dynamic, homogeneous vs. plural)
- **Role of Power** (normative recognition vs. ideological domination)
- **Function of Civil Society** (site of dialogue vs. site of consent formation)
- **Possibility of Social Transformation** (dialogical reform vs. counter-hegemonic struggle)

This comparative framework allows for a nuanced understanding of how multiculturalism can be interpreted both as an ethical project and as a field of power relations.

### 4. Sources of Data

The study relies on secondary sources, including:

- Foundational theoretical texts by Parekh and Gramsci
- Scholarly books and peer-reviewed journal articles on multiculturalism, liberal theory, and critical theory
- Works by key scholars such as Will Kymlicka, Charles Taylor, Iris Marion Young, and Nancy Fraser

These sources are used to situate the study within the broader academic discourse and to support critical interpretation.

### 5. Analytical Approach

The study adopts a critical-interpretive approach, combining elements of hermeneutics and critical theory. Hermeneutic analysis facilitates an in-depth understanding of the texts within their intellectual and historical contexts, while critical theory enables the examination of underlying power structures and ideological processes.

By integrating these approaches, the study moves beyond descriptive analysis to critically evaluate the implications of multiculturalism in relation to hegemony, cultural domination, and social justice.

## 6. Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study is limited to a theoretical engagement with selected key thinkers and does not include empirical investigation or case studies. While this allows for conceptual depth and clarity, it may limit the immediate applicability of findings to specific socio-political contexts. Additionally, the focus on Parekh and Gramsci, though justified by the research objective, excludes other relevant perspectives that could further enrich the analysis.

## Conclusion and Discussion

This study set out to examine the relevance of multiculturalism within the framework of hegemony by bringing into dialogue the pluralist theory of Bhikhu Parekh and the critical insights of Antonio Gramsci. The analysis demonstrates that multiculturalism, when understood solely as a framework of cultural recognition, remains incomplete unless it is situated within the broader dynamics of power, ideology, and social structure (Fraser, *Rethinking recognition*, 2000). From a normative standpoint, Parekh's pluralist multiculturalism offers a compelling vision of culturally diverse societies grounded in mutual respect, intercultural dialogue, and the recognition of the inherent limitations of all cultures. His emphasis on the internal plurality and evolving nature of cultures challenges essentialist and static interpretations, thereby opening up possibilities for self-reflection, negotiation, and transformation. Multiculturalism, in this sense, is not merely about coexistence but about the creation of a shared civic space in which diverse cultural traditions can engage constructively. However, the study also highlights that such a normative vision must be critically examined in light of the realities of power. Here, Gramsci's concept of hegemony provides an essential analytical lens. It reveals how cultural norms, values, and beliefs are often shaped by dominant groups to secure consent and maintain their position within society. Cultural recognition, therefore, can sometimes operate within hegemonic frameworks that subtly reproduce inequality, even while appearing inclusive. The integration of Parekh and Gramsci thus enables a more comprehensive understanding of multiculturalism as both an ethical and a political project. On the one hand, Parekh's framework underscores the importance of dialogue, plurality, and moral engagement among cultures. On the other hand, Gramsci reminds us that such dialogue is never free from power relations and must be understood as part of a broader struggle over meaning, legitimacy, and social order. A key insight emerging from this study is that intercultural dialogue can function as a counter-hegemonic practice (Hall, *Representation*, 1997). When genuinely inclusive and critically oriented, it allows marginalized groups to challenge dominant narratives, assert alternative perspectives, and participate in the reconstruction of shared cultural and political frameworks. In this way, multiculturalism can move beyond passive tolerance toward active

transformation. At the same time, the study cautions against overly idealistic interpretations of multiculturalism. Without addressing structural inequalities and institutional power, the recognition of cultural diversity risks becoming superficial or symbolic. A critical multicultural approach must therefore engage not only with questions of identity and recognition but also with issues of redistribution, representation, and social justice. Furthermore, the analysis underscores the importance of viewing cultures as internally diverse and historically evolving. This perspective not only challenges hegemonic claims of cultural superiority but also fosters openness toward other cultures. It reinforces the idea that the capacity for dialogue and mutual learning is rooted in a culture's recognition of its own plurality. In conclusion, the relevance of multiculturalism in the context of hegemony lies in its potential to bridge the gap between cultural diversity and social justice. By integrating the pluralist insights of Parekh with the critical framework of Gramsci, this study proposes a model of critical multiculturalism that is both dialogical and transformative. Such an approach acknowledges the complexity of cultural interactions while remaining attentive to the power structures that shape them. It ultimately points toward the possibility of a more inclusive, equitable, and democratic society in which cultural diversity is not only recognized but also critically engaged and institutionally supported.

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