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## Canadian Multiculturalism: Global Anxieties and Local Debates

In much of the world, and particularly in Europe, there is a widespread perception that multiculturalism has failed, and Canada has not been immune to these rising global anxieties. A number of commentators have argued that smug complacency is blinding Canadians to growing evidence of stresses and failures in ethnic relations in their country. In this article, we explore this evolving debate. We briefly review the global backlash against multiculturalism, and why some commentators see warning signs in Canada as well. We then look at the evidence about how the multiculturalism policy in Canada operates, and about trends in immigrant integration and ethnic relations. We show that there are indeed stresses and strains within Canadian multiculturalism, with real issues that require serious attention. But we misdiagnose the problems, and their remedies, if we read the Canadian experience through the lens of the European debate.

**I**N MUCH OF THE WORLD, and particularly in Europe, there is a widespread perception that multiculturalism has failed, and that it is time to pull back from the approach, which has been taken too far. To some extent, Canada has bucked this trend; popular support for multiculturalism remains relatively strong, and none of the major national political parties is proposing to abolish or retreat from multiculturalism. Indeed, Canadians often exhibit general confidence about the state of ethnic relations in Canada when compared to the riots in Bradford, Paris and Sydney, or the rise of anti-immigrant parties in Denmark, Austria and the Netherlands. There is a general sense that the Canadian model of immigrant integration has been relatively successful, and that it needs only minor tinkering, not major U-turns.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Canada has not been immune to the rising global anxieties about multiculturalism. A number of commentators have argued that this smug complacency is blinding Canadians to growing evidence of stresses and failures in ethnic relations. According to these commentators, Canada

too is 'sleepwalking towards segregation', to quote the now-famous phrase of Trevor Phillips in his critique of multiculturalism in the UK (Phillips 2005), and that the backlash against multiculturalism in Europe should serve as a wake-up call to Canadians.

In this article, we will explore this evolving debate. We will begin by briefly reviewing the global backlash against multiculturalism, and why some commentators see warning signs in Canada as well. We will then look more closely at the evidence about how multiculturalism policy in Canada operates, and about trends in immigrant integration and ethnic relations. We hope to show that while there are indeed stresses and strains within Canadian multiculturalism, we misdiagnose the problems, and their remedies, if we read the Canadian experience through the lens of the European debate.

## The Global Context

According to many scholars, there has been a major shift in the general trends regarding immigrant integration in the western democracies, away from multiculturalism and towards social cohesion and integration. Whereas the 1970s and 1980s exhibited growing support for, and experimentation with, multiculturalism, the 1990s and 2000s have witnessed a backlash against it, and a retreat from it.

Perhaps the most vivid example of this retreat from multiculturalism is the Netherlands. It adopted perhaps the most ambitious set of multiculturalism policies in western Europe in the 1980s, yet in the 1990s it started to cut back on these policies, and then abandoned them almost entirely in the 2000s. Multiculturalism in the Netherlands has been replaced with fairly harsh and coercive 'civic integration' policies, which (to critics at least) appear to be indistinguishable from old-fashioned assimilation.<sup>2</sup>

The Dutch case is now widely viewed as the prototypical example of 'the failure of multiculturalism', and is cited in other European countries as grounds for retreating from their own multiculturalism policies, or for not adopting such policies in the first place. We see this, for example, in the UK, where New Labour has distanced itself from its earlier commitment to multiculturalism (Back et al. 2002). And several European countries that had once considered multiculturalism are now following the Dutch model of adopting mandatory civic integration policies, for example Austria and Germany.<sup>3</sup> While this backlash is strongest in Europe, we

see a similar trend in Australia, where the conservative Howard government disavowed multiculturalism, and cut back on its funding (although some of the slack was then picked up by enhanced multiculturalism policies at the Labor Party-dominated state level).

This global backlash and retreat is now so widespread that even intergovernmental organisations that had once championed multiculturalism are now backing off from it. For example, the Council of Europe recently declared that multiculturalism is simply the flip side of assimilation, equally based on an assumption of an irreconcilable opposition between majority and minority, leading to ‘communal segregation and mutual incomprehension’ (Council of Europe 2008: 10).

In this European debate, multiculturalism is blamed for a variety of ills.<sup>4</sup> In particular, it is said to have promoted:

- the residential ghettoisation and social isolation of immigrants;
- increased stereotyping, and hence prejudice and discrimination, between ethnic groups;
- political radicalism, particularly amongst Muslim youths; and
- the perpetuation of illiberal practices amongst immigrant groups, often involving restricting the rights and liberties of girls and women.

According to critics, these problems have been worsening since the 1980s, but were ignored due to the naive and indeed pernicious ideology of multiculturalism, which assumed that it was somehow natural that society should be divided into separate and disconnected ethnic groups, each with its own territorial spaces, political values and cultural traditions. As a result, European societies were sleepwalking to segregation, leading to an ethnic crisis. Citizens applauded themselves for their tolerant, live-and-let-live attitude towards immigrants, while ignoring the growing levels of segregation and marginalisation.

This, in short, is the dominant narrative about multiculturalism in Europe. Multiculturalism, it is said, has been tried and has failed, with serious social consequences. It is now repudiated, both by individual countries and by pan-European organisations. The only remedy now is to insist that newcomers must give priority to their new national identity over their inherited ethnic or religious identities – they must agree to be ‘British first’ or ‘Dutch first’, at least in relation to public life – and to renounce claims for the institutional accommodation or political expression of their ethnic identities. Ethnic identities, if they are to be preserved at

all, must be expressed only in private, and not provide the basis for political claims to multiculturalism.

There are several questions that can be raised about this European narrative. If we look below the surface, we find that several de facto multiculturalist programmes remain in place in several European countries, even when their governments disavow the term; the 'retreat' from multiculturalism is more rhetorical than real.<sup>5</sup> The claim that multiculturalism is causally responsible for these social ills of segregation, prejudice, radicalism and oppression is highly debatable. We are not aware of any evidence that suggests that these social ills are worse in European countries that adopted multiculturalism policies (such as Netherlands, the UK and Sweden) than in European countries that did not adopt such policies (such as Denmark, France and Austria). Indeed, the evidence arguably suggests the contrary: these social ills are less prominent in countries with multiculturalism policies.<sup>6</sup>

However, our aim in this article is not to evaluate the European debate, but rather to explore its relationship to, and impact on, the Canadian debate. As noted earlier, the debate in Canada has not followed the same trajectory as in Europe, but Canadians have not been immune to the influence of this European narrative. Many Canadian commentators, persuaded that multiculturalism has indeed failed in Europe, have started to look for evidence that Canada is following the same trajectory. One well-known example is Allan Gregg's 2006 article, 'Identity Crisis: Multiculturalism: a Twentieth-Century Dream Becomes a Twenty-first Century Conundrum', published in *The Walrus*. Gregg begins with the Dutch case, blaming multiculturalism for its increasingly polarised ethnic relations, and then suggests that Canada too is showing signs of these social ills. Gregg argues that in Canada, as in the Netherlands, the elite consensus on a feelgood multiculturalism is blinding us to the reality of growing ethnic divides and animosities (Gregg 2006). Similar arguments have now been made by many other commentators, such as Margaret Wente, Michael Bliss, Robert Fulford and Jack Granatstein.

These commentaries all have a similar structure, which we could summarise this way:

- Multiculturalism has demonstrably failed in Europe, producing greater segregation, greater stereotyping and prejudice, and greater polarisation.
- These failures are inherent in the very idea of multiculturalism, which is built on stereotypical and isolationist assumptions about ethnic groups.

- While many Canadians think they are immune to these European problems, there is growing evidence that these problems are emerging also in Canada (as indeed they inevitably must, given multiculturalism's inherent flaws).
- The remedy is either the abolition of multiculturalism, or perhaps a post-multiculturalism, which is said to avoid the 'excesses' of multiculturalism without reverting to the sort of harsh assimilationism that we see in many European countries.

In short, in this view, Europe has done Canadians the service of revealing the inherent flaws of multiculturalism, and this lesson must be learned quickly in order to avoid the sorts of ethnic and religious animosities and divisions that are so visible in Europe.

Being convinced that Canada is following in Europe's footsteps, these commentators are constantly monitoring the environment to find the slightest evidence that Canada is witnessing the same sorts of segregation, isolation, prejudice and polarisation that we see in Europe. Attention has focused on any fact, event, or study which seems to suggest that Canada is replicating the European experience of failed multiculturalism. In particular, commentators have typically pointed to one or more of the following issues as evidence for their fears:

- Many commentators point to Statistics Canada's reports about the growing number of 'ethnic enclaves' as evidence of increasing European- or US-style ethnic ghettoisation (e.g., Jimenez 2007).
- Some commentators have pointed to cases of Islamic radicalism in Canada, including the 'Toronto 18', as evidence for European-style ethnic polarisation (e.g., Fulford 2006). After all, these are home-grown extremists who have grown up in social contexts that were committed to multiculturalism, such as the schools, hospitals, police force, media and so on, and yet they clearly did not internalise any loyalty to Canada or to its norms of democracy, peace and tolerance.
- Some commentators have pointed to the persistence of illiberal practices among some immigrant groups as evidence that they are failing to integrate into Canada's liberal-democratic norms. This issue emerged, for example, in discussions around Mr. Aqsa Parvez's case (an 'honour killing' of a Muslim girl by her father for not wearing the hijab in December 2007; Rogan 2008).
- Other commentators suggest that recent studies of the attitudes of second-generation visible minorities reveal evidence of growing

polarisation. One frequently cited study is that of Reitz and Banerjee (2007), which showed that second-generation visible minorities express lower levels of 'belonging' to Canada, compared not only to their white counterparts, but also to their own immigrant parents.

- Finally, some commentators have pointed to Quebec's recent 'reasonable accommodation' debate as evidence of growing polarisation. Stirred up by media reports of 'excessive' accommodations of minorities, newspapers and radio shows in Quebec were dominated for a period of time by calls for a new, tougher approach to immigrants, and surveys showed widespread support in Quebec for this idea. For the first time in many years in Canada, a major political party (the Action Démocratique du Québec) ran on an anti-immigrant and anti-multiculturalism platform, and this proved to be a successful tactic, increasing their share of the vote and of seats. To avoid further loss of electoral support, both the Quebec Liberals and Parti Québécois engaged in 'get tough' rhetoric, denouncing 'excessive' multiculturalism. For some commentators, this is the first crack in the wall, the first real sign of a European-style retreat from multiculturalism, and a harbinger of what is likely to happen in the rest of Canada.

This then is the current state of the debate on multiculturalism in Canada. Against a backdrop of enduring general support for multiculturalism, we find a growing chorus of concern, rooted in part in extrapolations or projections from the European experience, and in part in a miscellaneous collection of facts and incidents about trends in Canada.

### The Canadian Model

In order to evaluate these concerns and anxieties, we need to step back and lay out some of the basic features of the Canadian model of immigrant integration, and of the role of multiculturalism within it. Canada is a multicultural country along many different dimensions, containing indigenous peoples (Indians, Inuit and Metis), a major substate national(ist) minority (the Québécois), as well as countless ethnic groups formed through immigration. Our focus in this article is exclusively on this last form of diversity. These ethnic groups are sometimes called immigrant groups, to emphasise that they are neither indigenous nor colonisers, but

were admitted under Canada's immigration policy. However, the term is potentially misleading, since many of the group's members may be second, third or fourth generation. This is obviously true of those ethnic groups, such as the Ukrainians, Poles or Jews, who have been in Canada for over 100 years. By contrast, other ethnic groups such as the Vietnamese or Somalis are more recent, having arrived only in the past 30 years, and many of their members are still foreign-born immigrants.

Ethnic groups are a major element in Canadian society. First generation immigrants – i.e., the foreign-born population – formed over 19.8 per cent of the overall population, according to the 2006 census. If we add the descendants of earlier waves of immigration, the percentage of Canadians who have origins other than British, French or indigenous rises to around 50 per cent.<sup>7</sup> So the issue of the status and treatment of ethnic groups has been an important and longstanding one in Canada.

In the past, Canada, like the other major British settler societies (the US, Australia and New Zealand), had an assimilationist approach to immigration (Palmer 2002). Immigrants were encouraged and expected to assimilate to the pre-existing British mainstream culture, with the hope that over time they would become indistinguishable from native-born British Canadians in their speech, dress, recreation and way of life generally.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, any groups that were seen as incapable of this sort of cultural assimilation (such as Asians and Africans) were prohibited from emigrating to Canada, or from becoming citizens.

This racially discriminatory and culturally assimilationist approach to ethnic groups was slowly discredited in the postwar period, but was only officially repudiated in the late 1960s and early 1970s. There were two related changes. First, the adoption of race-neutral admissions criteria, known as the points system, meant that immigrants to Canada are increasingly from non-European (and often non-Christian) societies. This change was completed by 1967. Second, a more multicultural conception of integration was adopted, which accepts that many immigrants will visibly and proudly express their ethnic identity, and which imposes an obligation on the part of public institutions (like the police, schools, media, museums and so on) to accommodate these ethnic identities. This second change was formalised in 1971, with the adoption of the multiculturalism policy by the federal government.

The original goals of the policy were four-fold:

- to 'assist all Canadian cultural groups that have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada';

- to 'assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society';
- to 'promote creative encounters and interchange amongst all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity'; and
- to 'assist immigrants to acquire at least one of the Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society'.<sup>9</sup>

There have been various changes to the policy since 1971, primarily in the relative emphasis given to these four goals. Over time, starting in the mid-1970s, the second and third goals have increasingly received the lion's share of funding under the programme.<sup>10</sup> But the core ideas have remained fairly stable: the recognition and accommodation of cultural diversity; removing barriers to full participation; promoting interchange between groups; and promoting the acquisition of official languages. The policy was reaffirmed and given a statutory basis in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988. It was renewed in 1997, after 25 years of operation, following a major policy review.<sup>11</sup>

The policy operates at two levels. First, there is a small Multiculturalism Directorate within the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. It has a very modest budget (averaging around \$10–15 million per year), administering a number of funding programmes relating to ethnic diversity, including: support for academic research and teaching on ethnicity; anti-racism education programmes; support to ethnocultural organisations to organise heritage-language education and multicultural festivals, or to assist in immigrant integration services; and support to public institutions to implement reforms to remove barriers to the participation of ethnic groups.<sup>12</sup>

Second, multiculturalism is also a government-wide commitment that all departments are supposed to consider in designing and implementing their policies and programmes. For example, policies regarding Canada's public radio and television networks are decided by a separate federal agency – the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) – but these decisions are supposed to be informed by the goals of the multiculturalism policy, and to some extent this has happened (Zolf 1989). Similarly, citizenship policies and programmes to teach official languages are administered by a separate branch of the federal department of Citizenship and Immigration, but decisions about these policies are supposed to be informed by the goals of the multiculturalism policy, and one could argue that this too has been the case.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, one reason given for the meagre budget provided to the

Multiculturalism Directorate is that the task of promoting multiculturalism should not fall on one office, but on all government officials. In this view, the directorate is mainly a coordinator or clearing house that assists other departments in fulfilling their obligations to promote the goals of the multiculturalism policy. In reality, the extent to which other government departments pay attention to issues of multiculturalism varies, and officials in the directorate have complained about the lack of support from other departments and agencies.<sup>14</sup> However, the idea of multiculturalism as a pan-governmental commitment is affirmed in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988, which requires the directorate to monitor and report annually on how other government departments are fulfilling this commitment.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, multiculturalism is best known as a policy of the federal government in Canada, and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act covers only federal government departments and agencies. However, versions of the policy have been adopted by provincial and municipal governments, and even by businesses and civil society organisations.

As a result, to refer to the 'multiculturalism policy' in Canada is potentially ambiguous. It may refer to the modest funding programmes administered by the multiculturalism directorate, which can be seen as the core of the federal policy. Or it may refer to the general federal commitment to promoting the goals of multiculturalism across all departments and agencies. Or it may refer to similar programmes and policies at the provincial and municipal levels and within civil society.

Standing at the apex of this field of multiculturalism policies is the multiculturalism clause of the constitution. Section 27 states that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms will be 'interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians'. This clause does not guarantee that multiculturalism policies will exist in perpetuity in Canada, or that the funds available for these programmes will not be cut (Kobayashi 2000). In fact, this clause has limited legal significance.<sup>16</sup> But it does provide some symbolic affirmation of the public commitment to the goals of multiculturalism, and serves to place it above the fray of partisan politics.

Most Canadians have no clear idea how this complex field of multiculturalism policies operates. They are vaguely aware that the federal government has an official multiculturalism policy, but have little idea how this federal policy is connected, if at all, to the adoption of a new multiculturalism curriculum in the local public schools, or to the appearance of a new multilingual 'ethnic' channel on cable TV. In this

sense, multiculturalism policies have permeated Canadian public life, with ripple effects far removed from their original home in one branch of the federal government. The 1971 federal statement on multiculturalism has initiated a long march through institutions at all levels of Canadian society.

This, then, is a brief outline of the basic contours of Canada's policy towards immigrant/ethnic diversity, and the shift from racial exclusion and cultural assimilation to race-neutral admissions and multicultural integration. This shift was remarkably quick, given the breadth of changes involved. The initial demands by ethnic groups for a multiculturalism policy arose in the mid-1960s; it was declared official public policy in 1971, and the administrative framework for implementing the programme had been worked out by the mid-1970s. So the new contours of this approach essentially took shape between 1965 and 1975. While the policy was (and remains) contested, it quickly became so embedded in Canadian political life that it was seen as appropriate to enshrine a multiculturalism clause in the constitution in 1982. In short, multiculturalism went from being the bold idea of a few ethnic organisations in 1965 to the supreme law of the land in 1982, and has since been reaffirmed in 1988 and 1997 with only minor changes in emphasis.

## Evaluating the Policy

But is this approach working? We will discuss this in two parts: evidence about immigrant integration, and evidence about attitudes towards immigrants within the larger society.

Canada faces formidable challenges in integrating the large numbers of immigrants it accepts each year from many parts of the globe. Canada is certainly not some sort of a multicultural paradise. But despite a variety of stresses and strains, there is little evidence that Canada is facing deep new divisions, pervasive radicalism or an illiberal challenge to its core democratic culture.

Most policy attention in recent years has focused on economic integration. Traditionally, immigrants to Canada moved quickly into the economic mainstream, with poverty rates among newcomers typically falling below the rate for the population as a whole within a decade or so. Moreover, this pattern of economic inclusion has strengthened across the generations. On average, second generation members of most racial

minorities speak English or French with a flawless Canadian accent, match or surpass the educational achievements of their peers, and move effectively into the workforce. Success rates in schooling and in the economy do vary across minorities, with Asian children doing well but children with black, Latin American and Middle Eastern origins doing less well than the national average. Overall, however, an OECD survey of the educational attainment of the children of immigrants found that little difference between the performance of immigrant and native students (OECD 2006; also Corak 2008).

This record has come under attack recently. Since the 1980s, immigrants have not enjoyed the same economic success, despite having higher levels of education and training than previous cohorts. The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants found that only 40 per cent of skilled principal applicants who arrived in 2000–1 were working in the occupation or profession for which they were trained, and many immigrants with university degrees were working in jobs that typically require high school diplomas or less.<sup>17</sup> As a result, escaping poverty is taking longer than in the past. Canadian policy communities have seized on the issue of the economic integration of immigrants, and a variety of policy responses are being rolled out. So far, there is no sign of deterioration in the economic integration of second generation minorities.

However, economic integration does not represent the heart of the debate over multiculturalism. This debate focuses primarily on the social integration of newcomers into the mainstream of Canadian life. In this respect, there is little evidence of the deep social faultlines feared in parts of Europe. Consider, for example, three traditional indicators of social integration: language acquisition, residential location and intermarriage.<sup>18</sup>

- While countries such as the Netherlands and Germany worry about language acquisition by newcomers, Canada does not face the same problems, at least at the level of basic language proficiency. With English increasingly the international lingua franca and French another world language, immigrants to Canada usually have relevant language skills. In a survey of immigrants who arrived in Canada in 2000–1, fully 82 per cent of respondents reported they were able to converse well in at least one of Canada's two official languages when they first arrived (Statistics Canada 2003).
- There is also little evidence of entrenched racial concentration in poor ghettos. A study tracking residential patterns in Toronto over time finds that black and South Asian migrants follow a

traditional assimilation model: initial settlement is in low-income enclaves shared by their own and other visible minority groups, but they disperse in the longer term to higher cost neighbourhoods dominated by white people. An exception to this pattern is the Chinese community. Recent Chinese immigrants tend to settle in established Chinese neighbourhoods that include more affluent and longer-term immigrants, forming multi-generational ethnic neighbourhoods (Myles and Hou 2004). Given the educational and economic success of the Chinese community, this pattern has not generated significant anxieties.

- While rates of intermarriage vary significantly across immigrant minorities, the 2001 census revealed striking proportions of mixed couples among some minority communities: Japanese 70 per cent; Latin American 45 per cent; black 43 per cent; Filipino 33 per cent. The lowest rate was to be found among South Asians, at 13 per cent (Milan and Hamm 2004). Hybridity is an increasing element of Canadian multiculturalism.

In addition to these behavioural markers, recent studies have focused on the attitudinal underpinnings of social integration. Drawing on data from large-scale surveys, they examine the extent to which immigrant minorities develop a sense of attachment and belonging to the country, the extent to which they share in core liberal values, and the extent to which they participate in civic associations and the political process. Not surprisingly, there is considerable debate and at times disagreement in this rapidly developing literature. Nevertheless, the messages that shine through the fog of academic debate are comparatively reassuring.

At the level of identity and attachment, the primary divide in Canada is not between 'old' and 'new' Canadians. The greatest challenges continue to reflect the historic tensions among the founding peoples: on measures such as pride in Canada, a sense of belonging in the country and trust in other Canadians, it is francophone Québécois and aboriginal peoples who on average feel less integrated into the pan-Canadian community. In the case of newcomers, time in the country exerts a powerful pull. The longer immigrants are in Canada, the more their sense of pride and belonging comes to equal – and in some cases exceed – that of long established groups. To be sure, there are limits to this integrative process, some of which are troubling. Although newcomers from southern and eastern Europe quickly become comfortable in the country, racial minorities are less confident they fully belong (Soroka, Johnston and

Banting 2007). In comparison with white immigrants, minority immigrants have a greater sense of discrimination and vulnerability (Reitz and Banerjee 2007). It is important, however, not to overstate the level of alienation. In the case of a sense of belonging, for example, respondents from all backgrounds report on average that they feel they belong in the country. The difference is in the extent to which they feel they belong strongly or fully.

Nor is there evidence of emerging fault-lines on core liberal values. Analysts in some European societies fear that new waves of immigrants bring illiberal values with them, potentially weakening a public consensus in support of norms such as gender equality and tolerance for diverse sexual preferences. In Canada, attitudes towards gay rights and gender equality do not divide clearly along ethnic lines. Both native-born Canadians and immigrants are divided on issues such as gay marriage, but the mix of opinions does not differ dramatically across ethnic groups. Differences that do exist are almost completely explained by length of time since arrival, and gradually fade with settlement in the country. The arrival of newcomers does not seem to be tipping the balance of attitudes in the country on fundamental questions of equality rights (Soroka, Johnston and Banting 2007).

As noted earlier, some analysts are concerned about second generation racial minorities, the children of immigrants born and raised in the country. Despite the educational and economic success of the second generation, evidence suggests that the children of racial minority immigrants are less socially integrated than their immigrant parents, as evidenced by a lower sense of attachment to Canada, higher levels of perceived discrimination and vulnerability, and lower levels of life satisfaction and trust (Reitz and Banerjee 2007). The long-term implications of this pattern are unclear. The second generation inevitably undergoes a complex psychological transition, and their orientation does not necessarily foreshadow a continuing downward spiral over the generations to come. Similar patterns have emerged in a number of countries, and third and subsequent generations often evidence a stronger sense of attachment again (Rumbaut and Portes 2006; Zhou 2001). In Canada, the third and subsequent generations of racial minorities who came to Canada long ago tend to have high sense of belonging, higher even than those of comparable white respondents (Banting and Soroka 2007).

Nor does Canada seem to face pervasive radicalism. For example, a recent survey of Muslims in Canada found that, although they tend to see themselves as Muslims first and Canadians second, they are

overwhelming proud of the country, and the reasons they offer for this pride mirror those mentioned by the population as a whole (including its freedom and democracy). Only one in ten respondents were very worried about Muslim women taking on modern roles in society, and fully half were not at all worried. Less than half of Muslim women reported wearing a head scarf of any kind, and only 3 per cent wear the niqab, which covers everything except the eyes and has excited such strong opinions in the UK (Adams 2007). In comparisons with their co-adherents in other western nations, Muslims in Canada appear less likely to perceive hostility to Muslims in their country, and less likely to perceive a struggle between moderates and extremists within their own community.<sup>19</sup> This does not mean that Canada is immune from extremist attacks, but it does suggest that Canada does not confront political radicalism on the level that is feared in some European countries.

Measures of participation in civic associations and political life point to similar conclusions. Engagement in civic associations has been celebrated as a means of building trust and enhancing the capacity for collective action in contemporary democracies (Putnam 2000). In Canada, membership of groups that are likely to bridge social backgrounds does not differ across ethnic communities (Soroka, Johnston and Banting 2007), and there is only a small racial gap in the level of volunteering in nonprofit organisations (Reitz and Banerjee 2007). Differences in democratic engagement are also small. The rate of naturalisation of newcomers, an essential step for participation in electoral democracy, is among the highest in the world. According to a 2005 study, 84 per cent of eligible immigrants were Canadian citizens in 2001; in contrast, the rate was 56 per cent in the UK, 40 per cent in the US, and lower still in many European states (Tran, Kustec and Chui 2005). Moreover, newcomers and the second generation seem to exercise their franchise. Apparent differences in the probability of voting across immigrant minority groups disappear when controls, especially for age, are added.<sup>20</sup> Racial minorities do remain under-represented in our legislatures. For example, following the 2004 federal election, racial minority Members of Parliament filled only 7.1 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons, compared to 14.9 per cent of the Canadian population (Black and Hicks 2006: 27). A similar pattern emerges at the provincial and municipal level. Nevertheless, according to one recent survey, 'Canada has the highest proportion of foreign-born legislators in the world' (Adams 2007: 69).

In sum, the Canadian record on integration is relatively strong. The economic integration of recent immigrants is taking longer; some racial

minority immigrants and their children feel less confident that they fully belong; and there important gaps in the representative face of Canadian democracy. In comparison with other western nations, however, the integrative power of Canadian society for newcomers should not be under-estimated.

What about the attitude of the host society to newcomers? In comparison with the citizens of many other countries, Canadians are relatively supportive of immigration and comfortable with the place of immigrants within society. Immigration policy has aimed for a comparatively high annual intake for many years, and opposition to this policy has failed to find serious political traction.<sup>21</sup> As in all democracies, opinion varies on these issues, and many of the factors that influence opinion elsewhere are at work in Canada as well. For example, individuals who have higher levels of education and are employed tend to be more favourable to immigration than those who are unskilled and work at the margins of the labour market (Wilkes et al. 2007; Fortin and Loewen 2004; Blake 2003; Filson 1983; Berry et al. 1977). As elsewhere, social psychologists find that Canadians who have a strong social-dominance orientation, preferring hierarchically structured social systems, are more likely to perceive cultural threats from high levels of immigration (Esses et al. 2001; 2003). Nevertheless, two basic realities stand out. First, as Figure 1 indicates, Canadians have become progressively more supportive of existing immigration levels over the last two decades, a period in which newcomers have increasingly been coming from non-traditional source countries. Second, evidence from the International Social Survey Program, which surveys public attitudes in over a dozen democratic countries, finds that public support for current levels of immigration in Canada is high compared with other western countries (see Table 1; also Simon and Sikich 2007; Simon and Lynch 1999).

The host society also seems reasonably comfortable with newcomers once they have arrived. Tensions found elsewhere sometimes resonate here as well, but in more muted form. For example, Robert Putnam has concluded that people living in ethnically diverse regions in the US withdraw from many forms of community life, 'hunkering down' in social isolation (Putnam 2007). To date, however, evidence for Canada suggests we should not automatically assume these conclusions apply here as well. While interpersonal trust is lower in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, there is little evidence of a wider pattern of hunkering down; there is little relationship between the ethnic diversity of the neighbourhood and such sensitive social indicators as friendship patterns, membership in civic

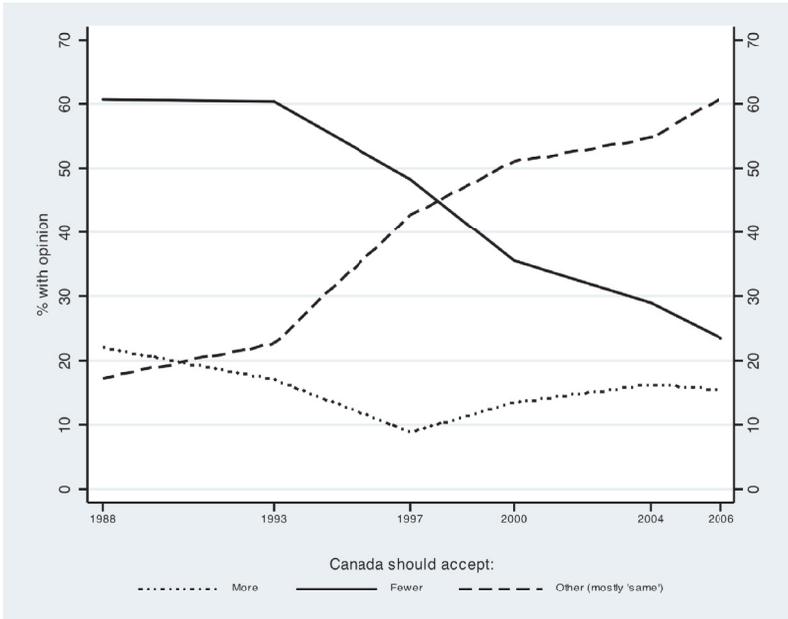


Figure 1 *Public attitudes towards immigration levels, 1988–2006*

Source: Data from the Canadian Election Studies, 1988–2006.

Figure provided by Richard Johnston.

associations, and support for redistributive social programmes (Soroka, Helliwell and Johnston 2007; Soroka, Johnston and Banting 2007; Soroka, Johnston and Banting 2005). Additional evidence comes from the ISSP. Canadians are as likely as citizens in other democracies to want immigrants to adapt and blend into society rather than to maintain distinct traditions. But they are much less likely to believe that immigrants increase crime rates, and are much more likely to believe that immigrants are generally good for the economy (see Table 2).

The evidence just reviewed suggests that the various attempts to find signs of European-style problems in Canada are misleading. This indeed is the conclusion reached by the Institute for Research on Public Policy in its 2007 publication *Belonging: Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*. Noting the increasing tendency for commentators to read the Canadian situation in light of European trends, the IRPP decided to convene a major research project to examine in a systematic

Table 1 *Attitudes towards immigration levels, 2003*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Reduce</i>
Australia	23.4	37.6	39.0
Austria	6.8	32.2	61.0
Canada	29.0	38.7	32.2
Germany	5.4	24.3	70.3
Netherlands	3.7	26.3	69.9
Norway	7.1	21.6	71.3
Spain	9.8	38.7	51.5
Sweden	11.9	30.3	57.8
UK	5.8	16.4	77.8
USA	11.2	32.4	56.3

Note: 'Increase' includes respondents saying 'increase a lot' and 'increase a little'. 'Reduce' includes respondents saying 'Reduce a little' and 'reduce a lot'. German data are for western Germany.

Source: International Social Survey Program, 2003.

Table 2 *Attitudes towards role of immigrants in society, 2003*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Should adapt to society</i>	<i>Increase crime</i>	<i>Good for economy</i>
Australia	81.1	34.9	70.6
Austria	67.5	68.8	38.2
Canada	71.1	27.2	62.6
Germany	64.2	62.6	28.6
Netherlands	87.8	47.8	26.7
Norway	79.8	79.0	30.5
Spain	68.1	57.6	49.2
Sweden	84.7	57.2	44.3
UK	75.3	39.8	21.6
USA	52.6	26.8	45.5

Notes: Entries regarding crime and the economy combine those who 'agree' and 'agree strongly' with the statement. German data are for western Germany.

Source: International Social Survey Program, 2003.

way whether 'the Canadian model' was indeed facing the same troubles witnessed in Western Europe. Having examined various facets of the issue – economic, political, and social – the IRPP team concluded that: 'there is little evidence of the deep social segregation feared in parts of Europe... Canada is not "sleepwalking into segregation". There is no justification for a U-turn in multiculturalism policies comparable to that underway in some European countries' (Banting, Courchene and Seidle 2007: 660, 681).

### The Role of Multiculturalism

What is more disputed is whether multiculturalism plays any significant role in this comparative success. Critics of multiculturalism sometimes argue that Canada's record of integration is explained by other factors, such as the fact that Canada's immigrants tend to be more highly skilled than immigrants in other countries, and the fact that there is a relatively open labour market. In other words, immigrants bring with them high levels of human capital, and can more easily move into the labour market compared to other countries. In this view, the presence of the multiculturalism policy contributes nothing to the successful integration of immigrants in Canada, and may in fact impede it (see, for example, Goodhart 2008).

However, new research has helped to clarify the role that the multiculturalism policy plays within broader processes of immigrant integration. This research on the effects of multiculturalism has operated at two broad levels: individual identity and institutional design.

At the individual level, surveys indicate that multiculturalism provides a locus for the high level of mutual identification among native-born citizens and immigrants in Canada. In many countries, native-born citizens with a strong sense of national identity or national pride tend to be more distrusting of immigrants, who are seen as a threat to their cherished national identity (Sides and Citrin 2007). But the fact that Canada has officially defined itself as a multicultural nation means that immigrants are a constituent part of the nation that citizens feel pride in; multiculturalism serves as a link for native-born citizens from national identity to solidarity with immigrants. Conversely, multiculturalism provides a link by which immigrants come to identify with, and feel pride in, Canada. From their different starting points, there is convergence on high levels of pride and identification with a multicultural conception

of Canadian nationhood. Studies show that in the absence of multiculturalism, these links are more difficult to establish, and national identity is more likely to lead to intolerance and xenophobia (Esses et al. 2006; cf. Weldon 2006).<sup>22</sup>

A recent international study of acculturation has also confirmed the constructive role that multiculturalism plays in enabling healthy processes of individual acculturation (Berry et al. 2006). Many studies have shown that immigrants do best, both in terms of psychological wellbeing and sociocultural outcomes, when they are able to combine their ethnic identity with a new national identity. Scholars often call this an 'integration orientation', as opposed to either an 'assimilation orientation' (in which immigrants abandon their ethnic identity in order to adopt a new national identity), or 'separation orientation' (in which immigrants renounce the new national identity in order to maintain their ethnic identity). Defenders of multiculturalism have long asserted that multiculturalism policies can encourage and enable this sort of integration orientation; indeed, this is known as the 'multiculturalism hypothesis' (Berry, Kalin and Taylor 1977). Members of ethnic minorities will be more likely to identify with a new national identity if they feel their ethnic identity is publicly respected. We now have new evidence to support this hypothesis. The International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth (ICSEY), studying over 5,000 youth in 13 countries, has confirmed that countries with multiculturalism policies encourage the development of this integration orientation, with better resulting outcomes (Berry et al. 2006).

At the institutional level, we also have new evidence for the role that multiculturalism plays in creating more inclusive and equitable public institutions. For example, the massive OECD study that established Canada's comparative advantage in educating immigrant students emphasised that a crucial factor in this success was the presence of specific policies to address issues of cultural and linguistic diversity in the school population; policies that, in the Canadian context, have emerged under the rubric of multiculturalism (OECD 2006). These diversity policies help to explain why the children of immigrants do better in Canada even when controlling for the skills, education and income of their parents.

Similarly, multiculturalism has been shown to play an important role in making Canada's political process more inclusive. Consider the study conducted by Irene Bloemraad, comparing the political integration of immigrants in the US and Canada (Bloemraad 2006). She examines Vietnamese immigrants in Boston and Toronto, who provide an interesting

‘natural experiment’ in the effects of multiculturalism policies. There are virtually no relevant differences in the demographic characteristics of the Vietnamese immigrants who ended up in Toronto rather than Boston; they arrived with comparable levels of education, work experience, language fluency and so on. Yet the Vietnamese in Toronto have a much stronger sense of Canadian citizenship, and are more actively participating in Canadian public life. There are of course many possible explanations for this difference other than the presence of stronger multiculturalism policies (labour markets, political party structures and so on), but Bloemraad systematically canvasses these alternative explanations, and concludes that multiculturalism policies are indeed a crucial part of the story. These policies encourage and enable the Vietnamese community to participate more quickly and more effectively in mainstream Canadian institutions, by facilitating the self-organisation of the community, by creating new cadres of community leaders who are familiar with Canadian institutions and practices, by creating new mechanisms of consultation and participation, and more generally by creating a more welcoming environment. According to Bloemraad, the same pattern applies to Portuguese immigrants to Toronto and Boston as well; they arrived with similar demographic characteristics, but the Portuguese immigrants in Toronto have integrated better into Canadian citizenship, due in large part to Canadian multiculturalism (Bloemraad 2006). Subsequent research by Bloemraad has shown that multiculturalism policies in other countries have also had a positive effect on citizenship (Kesler and Bloemraad 2008).

If we put these various findings together, they suggest that it may be time to move beyond the 35-year debate in Canada between those who argue that multiculturalism promotes civic integration and those who argue that it promotes ethnic isolation. The evidence generated by these recent studies provides strong evidence that multiculturalism in Canada promotes integration and citizenship, both through its individual-level effects on attitudes, self-understandings and identities, and through its society-level effects on institutions.

## Conclusions

While Canada’s problems are not Europe’s problems, this provides no grounds for complacency. Indeed, there are a number of real issues that require serious attention. In this brief concluding section, we would like

to flag a few of these, focusing on some of the dimensions that are often overlooked.

The place of religious diversity within multiculturalism has not yet been adequately debated or explored (Kymlicka 2007; 2008b). The heated debates around religious family law arbitration and the funding of religious schools in Ontario, and the reasonable accommodation debate in Quebec, show that this is now the most controversial domain of multiculturalism. The Bouchard-Taylor report is perhaps the first sustained public report on the topic in Canada, and while it is focused on Quebec, its analysis is relevant nationally (Commission de Consultation 2008). In particular, it argues that while the existing constitutional and legislative framework of 'reasonable accommodation' and 'open secularism' in Canada is largely appropriate, more work needs to be done in helping front-line workers and officials who face the daily task of actually implementing the policy, and of managing the debates they raise. This is an issue of 'multicultural preparedness'. It is unrealistic and undesirable to expect the Supreme Court to adjudicate on every single case of religious claims (like the kirpan case), but nor do we want these issues to become fodder for yellow journalism, as happened in Quebec. We need to normalise these issues, establishing effective mechanisms of advice, consultation and decision-making that stakeholders can turn to, without having to resort to either the courts or the media. Such mechanisms exist in the case of ethnic diversity and race relations, but are under-developed in the case of religious diversity, such that we are continually having to react to crises, rather than proactively managing the issues.

The relationship between multiculturalism and the other two ethnocultural minorities – French-Canadians and aboriginal peoples – needs to be addressed. Diversity policies in Canada today typically operate within three distinct 'silos', with separate laws, constitutional provisions and government departments dealing with: multiculturalism in response to ethnic diversity arising from immigration; federalism and bilingualism in response to the French fact; and aboriginal rights for First Nations. (On the 'silo' metaphor in relation to Canada's diversity policies, see Kymlicka 2007b). In many respects, it is inevitable and appropriate that these three policy domains and frameworks be distinguished. No single set of diversity policies can encompass the distinct historical legacies and current needs of Canada's diverse groups. However, it is equally important to clarify how these three dimensions interact. It would be regrettable, indeed tragic, if these three policy frameworks were seen as operating at cross-purposes, as if anyone who supports aboriginal rights or Quebec's

national aspirations must reject multiculturalism, or vice versa.

This was an important issue in the Quebec debate on reasonable accommodation. Many Quebec intellectuals and politicians continue to believe that the federal multiculturalism policy, as it is currently worded in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, implicitly or explicitly plays down Quebec's national aspirations. In our view, this is a mistaken interpretation, since the federal multiculturalism policy is fully compatible with a special status for Quebec. However, it is fair to say that the issue of how multiculturalism relates to bilingualism, federalism and Québécois nationalism has not been clearly addressed. Similarly, important issues are arising about the relationship between multiculturalism and urban aboriginals in several western cities. Immigrants and aboriginals increasingly live in close proximity in various neighbourhoods and, while constitutionally speaking they may fall under different laws and regulations, the practical reality is that they often share public services and public space. Aboriginal leaders have sometimes viewed multiculturalism with suspicion, and while here again there is no inherent opposition between the federal multiculturalism policy and aboriginal rights, more work needs to be done on how they interact.

One area where multiculturalism and aboriginal issues overlap concerns racism and discrimination. The challenges posed by racism are not fully captured in our inherited terminology of 'visible minorities'. While aboriginal peoples are not counted as visible minorities, they clearly are victims of racism. Moreover, within the category of visible minorities, there are important differences in the nature of the racism they encounter. Several authors have long argued that anti-black racism is qualitatively different from that suffered by other visible minorities. And, more recently, various authors have argued that anti-Muslim prejudice is also a very distinct form of racialisation. If we only look at aggregate statistics about how visible minorities are faring, we may lose sight of the evolving patterns of racism in Canada. Anti-racism initiatives might be working well for some groups even as prejudice is increasing against other groups. We know from other countries that anti-racism initiatives can sometimes get locked into outdated or inappropriate categories; for example, UK anti-racism initiatives for a long period of time treated anti-Muslim prejudice as if it were just another form of anti-black prejudice. We need to make sure that anti-racism and anti-discrimination programmes are tracking these differentiated and evolving patterns of racialisation.

The net result of these trends is neither the utopia celebrated by some defenders of multiculturalism, nor the 'sleepwalking to segregation'

scenario predicted by critics. It is rather a complex bundle of factors, each of which needs to be examined on its own terms. The first step in that direction, however, is to set aside the pervasive tendency to look at the Canadian experience through the lens of the European backlash against multiculturalism.

## Notes

- 1 See Banting, Courchene and Seidle 2007 for an overview of the current state of ethnic relations in Canada, and comparisons with Western Europe.
- 2 See, for example, Vasta 2007. For a more sympathetic view of these developments, see Entzinger 2006.
- 3 For an overview of these developments in western Europe, see Joppke 2007.
- 4 For an overview of these narratives of multicultural failure and backlash across Europe, see the collected essays in Vertovec and Wessendorf 2009. As the authors in this volume discuss, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether these ills are attributed to multiculturalism as a public policy, as an ideology (or political theory), as a public ethos, or as a form of minority political activism.
- 5 This is arguably true of the UK, for example (Hansen 2007).
- 6 For one of the few serious attempts to test multiculturalism's role in these trends, see Koopmans et al. 2005. For some doubts about their analysis, see Kymlicka 2008a.
- 7 See 2001 census figures at <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/Ethnicity/Index.cfm?Lang=E>. A more detailed breakdown of ethnic origins was done as part of the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, available at <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=89-593-X>
- 8 This is often called the anglo-conformity model of immigration. Historically, a relatively small number of immigrants integrated into the French-speaking society in Quebec, and prior to the 1970s, immigration was not seen as a tool of nation-building in Quebec.
- 9 These are taken from Prime Minister Trudeau's statement to the Canadian Parliament declaring the multiculturalism policy in 1971 (Trudeau 1971: 8546).
- 10 When people talk about the 'retreat from multiculturalism' in the Netherlands, they often cite the decision to shift funding away from mono-ethnic organisations to multi-ethnic ones that promote cultural interchange and political cooperation across ethnic lines. This shift had taken place already in Canada by the late 1970s, but in Canada it has been understood as an evolution guided by the original goals of multiculturalism, not as a 'retreat' from them.

- 11 For historical overviews of the origins of the multiculturalism policy, see Jaworsky 1979; Pal 1993; Blanshay 2001; Day 2000. For the 25-year review, see the Brighton Report 1996 and commentary in Kordan 1997.
- 12 For a detailed analysis of the types of projects and organisations that have received funding under the multiculturalism programme, see McAndrew et al. 2005.
- 13 See Bloemraad 2002 and Kymlicka 2003 for a discussion of the linkage between multiculturalism and citizenship policies in Canada.
- 14 See Jaworsky 1979 for the reluctance of the CBC and CRTC to adopt multiculturalism reforms.
- 15 For the latest annual report, see Government of Canada 2004, posted at [www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/multi-report2008/index.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/multi-report2008/index.asp). For doubts about the effectiveness of this reporting mechanism, see Kordan 1997.
- 16 Its main impact has been to help buttress the legitimacy of certain laws that probably would have been upheld anyway. For example, the Canadian Supreme Court upheld a law prohibiting hate speech on the grounds that this was a 'reasonable limitation' on freedom of speech. It cited Section 27 in support of the idea that this law was a reasonable limitation (*R. v Keegstra*). However, most experts agree that the courts would have come to the same decision even in the absence of the multiculturalism clause, as have most other western democracies (Elman 1993). Section 27 has also been invoked in defence of the idea that hate-motivated crimes should receive stiffer punishment (Shaffer 1995).
- 17 The literature is now substantial. See, for example, Reitz and Banerjee 2007; Picot, Hou and Coulombe 2006; Aydemir and Skuterud 2005; Picot and Sweetman 2005.
- 18 The next three paragraphs draw on Banting, Courchene and Seidle 1997.
- 19 This pattern is clear from comparisons of responses to the survey reported in Adams 2007, with surveys of Muslims in other western nations conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project (<http://pewglobal.org/>).
- 20 There is controversy on this point. At first glance, members of some racial minorities vote at lower rates than other Canadians. However, in large part, the differences reflect the fact that the average age among some minority groups is much lower. In the case of racial minorities who have come to Canada more recently, the average age among the second generation is much lower than the population as a whole or second generation whites. This fact matters a lot, since lower turnout among young people is a ubiquitous pattern through western democracies, including Canada. Soroka, Johnston and Banting (2007) find that the voting gap for several visible minority groups ceases to be statistically significant when they control for age.
- 21 For a review of anti-immigrant political mobilisation across the western

democracies, see Nevitte and Cochrane 2007.

- 22 For further discussion of the way multiculturalism facilitates rather than impedes mutual identification in Canada, see Uberoi 2008.

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