

Everyone's a Critic: Addressing Criticisms of Multiculturalism and Immigration in Canada

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***The opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Metropolis Project, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, or the Government of Canada.**

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Introduction

- “Opponents of Multiculturalism seem to use the word [multiculturalism] to indicate their dislike of a number of changes occurring within Canada in the last three or four decades, with the nature of their criticism going well beyond the nominal target of official multiculturalism”

(Earnscliffe Research 1996)

Introduction (cont.)

Significant elision between Multiculturalism and Immigration for both proponents and opponents of multiculturalism

Will Kymlicka Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada (1998)

Diane Francis Immigration: The Economic Case (2002)

Daniel Stoffman Who Gets In: What's Wrong with Canada's Immigration Program and How to Fix It (2002)

Peter Li Destination Canada: Immigration Debates and Issues (2002)

Michael Adams Unlikely Utopia: The Surprising Triumph of Canadian Pluralism (2007)

This will probably accelerate now that the multiculturalism program has been moved from Canadian Heritage to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Immigration is at least theoretically a societal choice. Multiculturalism is a demographic reality.

Multiculturalism

Levels of Meaning of Multiculturalism

AS FACT	AS IDEOLOGY	AS POLICY	AS PRACTICE	AS CRITICAL DISCOURSE
Descriptive and empirical statement of what is	Prescriptive and projective statement of what ought to be	Explicit government initiatives to foster social equality, cultural diversity, and national interests	Putting multiculturalism into practice at two levels (a) political and (b) minority women and men	Challenge, resist, and transform the distribution of cultural power in society

(Fleras and Kunz 2001:7)

Multiculturalism as Fact

- Little argument courtesy of Statistics Canada, Ethnic Diversity Survey, and Other Data Sources.
- To the extent that there is criticism, it is mostly a lament for a bygone era and a longing for a fictional homogeneous, simpler past.
- Canada is ethnically, religiously, linguistically and racially diverse and would continue to become ever more so even if immigration ended tomorrow.

Multiculturalism as Fact (cont.)

- Ethnicity / Visible Minority

In 2006 16.2% of Canadians identified as visible minorities, representing over 215 different ethnic origins

Demographic projections suggest that by 2017 this will rise to 19-23%

- Religion

In 2001 43% of Canadians identified as Catholic, 28% as Protestant, 2% Muslim, 1% Jewish, 1% Hindu, 1% Sikh, and 1% Buddhist

Demographic projections suggest non-Xian religions to increase from roughly 6% in 2001 to 10-11% by 2017.

- Language

In 2006 anglophones represented 57.8% of the population, francophones 22.1% and allophones 20.1%

Multiculturalism as Ideology

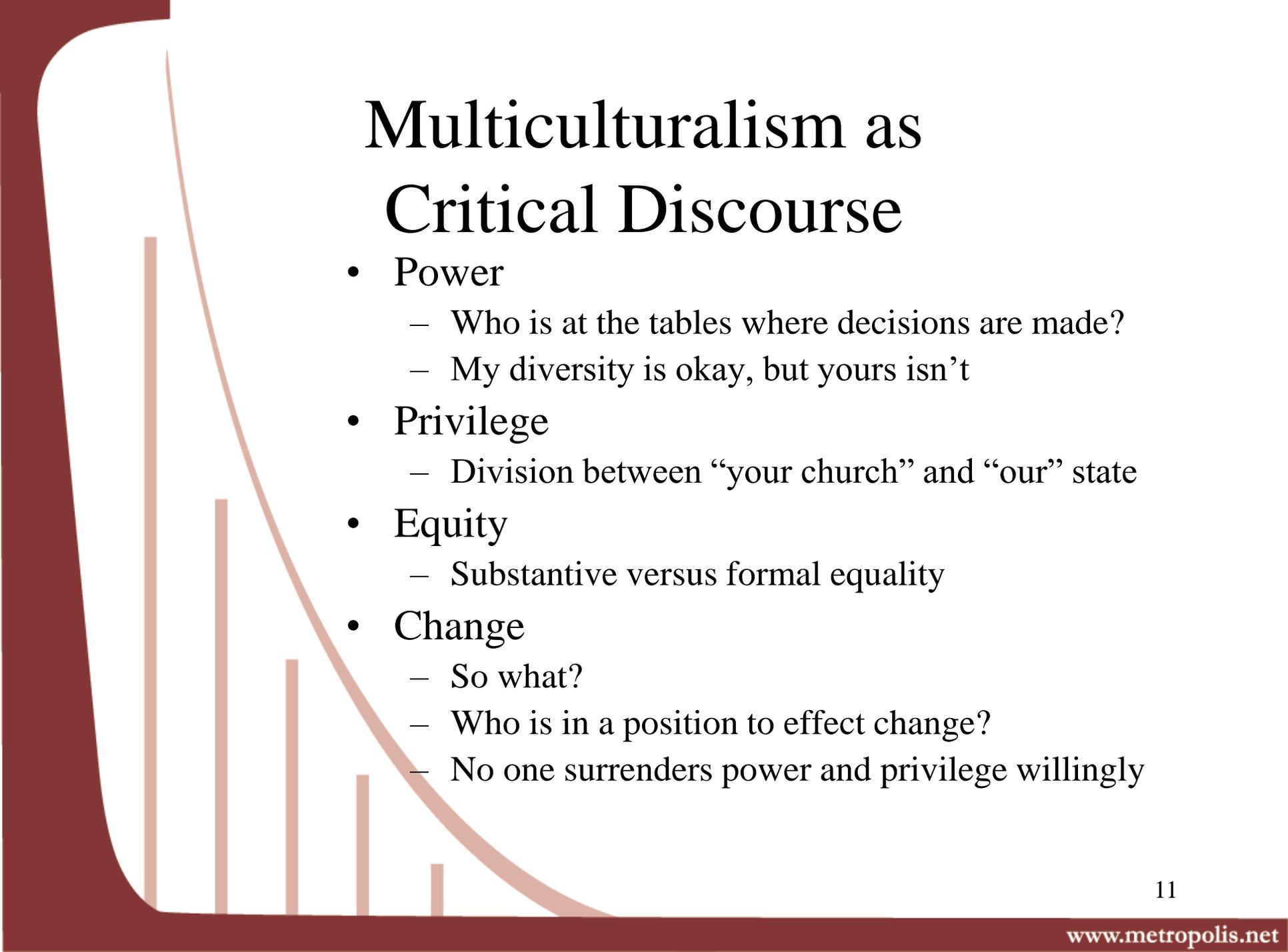
- Has come to be accepted as a public idea in Canada – Canadian identity is often said to include bilingualism and multiculturalism.
- Critics occasionally cite opinion polls with numbers that show lower numbers, but the preponderance of polls are overwhelmingly supportive of the idea.
- Both proponents and opponents are entrenched in their beliefs.

Multiculturalism as Policy

- Federal, provincial, municipal, and institutional policies are in place (Garcea 2006).
- Multiculturalism versus Interculturalism is a recurrent theme in the literature (Labelle 2009).
- Some critics argue that the policy is misleading as we have not achieved the full participation of all Canadians in the social, cultural, economic and political realms of Canadian society (Li 2002).
- Others argue that multiculturalism is okay, provided it remains in the private realm. Government should NOT provide legitimacy or funding to support it.

Multiculturalism as Practice

- Reasonable accommodation long pre-dates Bouchard-Taylor in Quebec.
- It plays out on the ground across the country on a daily basis.
- Treating neighbours, friends, classmates, and strangers with dignity and respect is a very “Canadian” thing to do.
- Critics seize upon the exceptions to the rule to generate media coverage and outrage.

A decorative background on the left side of the slide. It features a bar chart with five vertical bars of decreasing height from left to right. A smooth, light-colored curve starts at the top left and curves downwards towards the bottom right, passing behind the text.

Multiculturalism as Critical Discourse

- Power
 - Who is at the tables where decisions are made?
 - My diversity is okay, but yours isn't
- Privilege
 - Division between “your church” and “our” state
- Equity
 - Substantive versus formal equality
- Change
 - So what?
 - Who is in a position to effect change?
 - No one surrenders power and privilege willingly

Common Critiques of Immigration

- Xenophobia
 - Health (TBS, HIV, SARS, Leprosy)
 - Safety (Crime, Violence and Terrorism)
- Economic Impact
- Machinery of Immigration
 - Corruption & Malfeasance
 - Confusion among immigrant “classes”
 - Difficulties of entry and exit
- Social Cohesion / Integration

Critics

- Critics publish in many venues, including popular publications, the media, and academic literature.
- Critics comes from all along the political spectrum.
- Critics, like many proponents of multiculturalism, do not let empirical evidence stand in the way of a heart felt ideological position.
- In a pinch international examples can make $2+2=5$
- Isolated examples can be generalized to great effect (e.g. “honour killings” and other crimes).

Critics

- While the critics are ubiquitous, some garner more headlines than others. Those infamous for their views include:
 - James Bissett “Security Threats in Immigration and Refugee Policy” (2007)
 - Neil Bissoondath Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada (1994)
 - Martin Collacott “Canada’s Immigration Policy: The Need for Major Reform” (2002)
 - Allan Gregg “Identity Crisis” (*The Walrus* March 2006)

Criticisms (cont.)

- There have been various efforts to summarize and debunk criticisms:
 - Will Kymlicka (1998)
 - Undermines integration; obligation to accept illiberal practices
 - John Biles (2002)
 - Divisive nature; political expediency; threat to the status quo; and cultural relativism
 - David Ley (2007)
 - Fragmentation; essentialism; co-opted and commodified; exercise in false consciousness
 - Joe Garcea (2009)
 - Fragmentation/segregation; divided loyalties; hinders to development of a Canada; frustrates the aspirations of “national minorities”; imports conflict; creates conflict among minorities / fosters competition and inequality among minorities; co-ops efforts of minorities

Criticism (cont.)

- Generally criticisms can be loosely divided into three groupings:
 - 1) Multiculturalism has gone too far
 - 2) Multiculturalism hasn't gone far enough
 - 3) Pro-forma criticisms

Multiculturalism Has Gone Too Far

- The Canada we knew is gone
- Canada will never gel as a nation
- Existential threat to Canada

The Canada We Knew Is Gone

- Assumes a fictional homogenous and harmonious past that immigration-fuelled diversity has destroyed (Granatstein 1998, Loney 1998, Stoffman 2002)
- Asserts that changes have been wrought surreptitiously without public debate (Bissoondath 1994)

Canada Will Never Gel as a Nation

Too much focus on what divides us rather than what brings us together

“The time of the “two solitudes” that for too long described the character of this country is past. The narrow notion of “every person for himself” does not belong in today’s world, which demands that we learn to see beyond our wounds, beyond our differences for the good of all. Quite the contrary: we must eliminate the spectre of all the solitudes and promote solidarity among all the citizens who make up the Canada of today.”

Governor General Michaëlle Jean’s Inauguration Speech
(27 September 2005)

Existential Threat to Canada

- Fragmentation
- Terrorism and Violence
- Sacrificing Liberal Democratic Values

Existential Threat: Fragmentation

- Ethnic Enclaves

“And today many of those communities are so robust that there may be a temptation amongst some new Canadians to stay within their familiar social and cultural networks, rather than venturing out into our broader society” (Kenny 2008)

“. . . it is clear that the degree of ghettoization in Canada is routinely overstated within the media and, to a degree, scholarly and policy debates as well” (Hiebert, Schuurman, and Smith 2007).

Existential Threat: Terrorism and Violence

- Imported conflict
- Crime rates
- Terrorism / Radicalization

Existential Threat: Values

- No limits to diversity?
- Gender equality
Susan Okin Is Multiculturalism Bad For Women?
(1999)
- Division between church and state

Multiculturalism Hasn't Gone Far Enough

- Song and Dance (and Food/Foodways)
- Essentializing Identities
- Integration/Inclusion has failed

Song and Dance (Food and Foodways)

- Culture Disneyfied / Comodified (Bissoondath 1994; Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002)
- Diminishes the power of arts and culture to effect change – e.g. Joy Kogawa's Obasan
- Importance of food and foodways / culture as economic sectors

Essentializing Identities

- Feeds into stereotypes
- Game of divide and conquer
- Erases internal heterogeneity
- Strategic essentialism of “visible minority” category
- Recent U.N. controversy

Integration/Inclusion has Failed

- Using Kymlicka's metrics Canada has:
 - a) High naturalization rates
 - b) High rates of intermarriage
 - c) High rates of acquisition of official languages
- Even the cases that dominate public discourse follow the rules – sharia tribunals in Ontario; Mark Steyn's article in *Macleans* and subsequent Human Rights Commission Cases
- Our record is mixed on integration outcomes in the social, cultural, civic and economic spheres
- Increasing interest in outcomes for second generation Canadians

Pro-forma Criticisms

- Waste of Money
- Crass Politics
- Reverse Discrimination

Waste of Money

- “Multiculturalism has, over the years, acquired aspects of a holy cow for many, a cash cow for some.” (Bissoondath 1994: 6).
- Next fiscal year funds expended by the Multiculturalism Program through its grants and contributions program will be \$11.4 million

Crass Politics

“Immigration and multiculturalism are life rafts on the Liberal ship” (Stoffman 2002: 128).

“The federal Liberals are so dependent upon the votes of multicultural Canadians. . . That they aren’t very likely to undertake a serious review of official multiculturalism (Gwyn 1995: 202).

“The Conservatives under Brian Mulroney also saw the electoral advantages to be gained by promoting links with ethnic groups and promoting multiculturalism policies” (Loney 1999: 148).

“Mission: Immigration. Tories hope for a breakthrough with visible minorities” (*National Post* 11 September 2008: A5).

Reverse Discrimination

“Pale patriarchal penis people”
(Gwyn 1995: 157)

Martin Loney The Pursuit of Division: Race, Gender and Preferential Hiring in Canada (1998)

Impact of Rae government in Ontario’s advertisements indicating that “white males need not apply” – end of employment equity in Ontario under Mike Harris

Conclusion

- Most criticisms have long histories and manifest themselves in various guises depending upon present day circumstances;
- Accordingly, there is no excuse for lacking an empirical evidence base to examine these critiques, and yet . . .