

- 10 See for example Canada's national paper *The Globe & Mail*: Letters 15.3.97; 22.3.97; 26.3.97.
- 11 For example, see Hall on Dirlík (Hall 1996).
- 12 Andrew Milner (32) points out that Raymond Williams coined this term.
- 13 For discussion of the term 'visible minorities' see Bannerji and Carty and Brand.
- 14 This is also very much the line taken by Himani Bannerji in her critique of Canadian multiculturalism which she sees as a direct legacy of the colonial struggle between the English and French.
- 15 No matter how much recent attempts to redefine multicultural rhetoric occur, e.g. Minister for Immigration, Phil Ruddock's speech, arguing that the First Fleet was multicultural and that Australia has always already been multicultural, as though the simple citation of points of origin for a few individuals were equivalent to and interchangeable with the demographic changes brought about by postwar migrations.
- 16 Compare this with Canada e.g. Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* where Chinese and First Nations relationships are represented.
- 17 See, for example Terry O'Connor's interview with Mudrooroo.
- 18 Bobbi Sykes has come into the news again with the recent publication of two volumes of a projected three-volume autobiography. Sykes too has had to defend her genealogy in the national press. See K. Mead and R. Sykes. 1998b.
- 19 Though this may be changing. See Docker.
- 20 See footnote 1.
- 21 For the very different response of two writers to this debate see Drakulic and Hoffman.
- 22 According to a personal email from Joseph Pivato (University of Athabasca and leading critic of Italian Canadian writing: "The term *magiacakes* originated in Ontario among Italian construction workers as a derogatory term for English Canadians. It literally means the cake-eaters and implies that English Canadian men were less manly than Italian men. It uses the food that we eat as symbolic of our character, and is a common practice among Italians. For example, the people of Vicenza, my home province in N. Italy, are identified in a nursery rhyme as 'Vicentini mangiagatti' the cat-eaters, an example of our poverty. I have been told that *magiacakes* refers to the soft sliced breads in sandwiches that Canadians often eat and to the donuts and cakes that workers eat during breaks on the job. It is a sissy image. In contrast, Italian men ate big crusty buns, often, hot meats and raw vegetables. They often did not take coffee breaks but continued to work.
- The Italians cultivated the image of the better, stronger worker. This did not endear them to their English Canadian coworkers. So in answer to being called a "wop" or a "dago" an Italian could always answer back with *mangiacakes*. Now it seems to be applied to both men and women.'

AUDREY KOBAYASHI

MULTICULTURALISM AND MAKING DIFFERENCE: COMMENTS ON THE STATE OF MULTICULTURALISM POLICY IN CANADA¹

Canadian multiculturalism is an aspiration and an ideology, a national discourse and a personal project, a way of life and a structural framework. It is contested, transformative and transforming, a product of collective imagination and an ideal that fuels the imagination. The imaginative plane of multiculturalism is diverse, fragmented, complicated and extensive, and as a result often incoherent or incomprehensible. To a large extent this fragmented picture represents the contradictions that arise from a diverse society, in which ideological and cultural divisions, riven with unequal power relations, create conflicts of interest and frustrate the postmodern dream of living harmoniously in our diversity. In this paper, I explore briefly some of the tensions over multicultural citizenship that inform current public discourse.

If multiculturalism were defined only as demographic diversity, Canadians are more diverse than ever. Currently, about 42% of the population is of non-English and non-French backgrounds. Of that number, more than one third are from communities of colour. And, whereas many of those communities have roots going back over a century, the majority of what we call 'visible minority' Canadians are in the first and second generations. They are very heavily concentrated in the larger cities, especially Toronto and Vancouver. It is expected that the next Census, in 2001, will show the Toronto population at just over half visible minorities, and the Vancouver population approaching 40%. The discourse over multiculturalism, then, is increasingly a discourse over 'race'.

But to view multiculturalism only as cultural diversity, or even racialised difference, is deeply problematic. The diversity paradigm essentialises difference in the guise of celebrating it. It reduces inequality to generalised particularity, and it ignores historic oppression as the basis for multicultural struggles. The so-called 'diversity' specialists of the 1990s are very little different from the 'race relations' specialists of the 1970s and 1980s, in that both groups circumvented racism; both are the products of normative whiteness, and have contributed to a great deal of smug assumption at the level of everyday human relations about the lack of prejudice in Canadian society. My concern here, therefore, is to address some of the issues that impede multicultural diversity, in particular, the dominance of a Euro-centric hegemony.

To provide a very brief background, much better articulated elsewhere (Fleras and Elliot 1992; Danso 1998; Kobayashi 1993) in 1967, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson established a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which found in particular that Anglo-Canadians were more privileged than Franco-Canadians in the federal public service. In the same year, 1967, Paul Yuzak, a Canadian of Ukrainian background, was appointed to the Senate to become the first politician, albeit appointed rather than elected, of non-English and non-French background. In his first speech to Senate he introduced the concept of a 'Third Force' in Canadian politics, representing the rights and interests of minority ethnocultural groups, which were at that time entirely defined as white 'ethnics', in particular those of Eastern European background. At the same time, the B&B Commission recognised that the Canadian population was not quite as dichotomous as was commonly believed (First Nations Canadians did not figure in the definition of 'biculturalism') and a subsidiary report was commissioned to look into the condition of what was termed the 'other ethnic groups'. When Prime Minister Trudeau received the report three years later, he put in place the bureaucratic structure for what has become the celebrated Canadian multiculturalism policy, the first of its kind in the world. He established an official Multiculturalism Policy with a small budget, and the scope of the policy grew over the next decade and half. By the late 1980s, under the first Mulroney government, there had been established a Ministry of Multiculturalism, and an official Multiculturalism Act (1988). The Ministry has since been demoted from a Ministry to a Secretariat by the current Chretien government, but the Act remains in force.

What then does our official policy of multiculturalism, supported by legislation, mean? The liberal project — and this is a very liberal project, indeed — has been to cast multiculturalism as an individual, constitutionally guaranteed choice of freedom of ethnic identity. The Charter contains a weak interpretive clause that specifies that all rights should be interpreted in light of the multicultural character of Canadian society. The Multiculturalism Act of 1988 requires the government to act in a manner consistent with Canada's multicultural character, but what this means no one is really quite sure, and the major requirement is that annual reports be submitted by departments specifying how they have been multicultural over the past year. There are no specific guidelines, no penalties for failure to be multicultural, and no significant efforts to link multiculturalism to wider discourse. Multiculturalism has been an abstract concept throughout most of its institutional history, and the politics of multiculturalism have largely been the politics of containment. The one area where I believe that the policy has had some significant effect is through its grants program, which has provided a basis for ethnocultural communities to establish themselves and to act as effective lobbyists for human rights. Unfortunately, over the past year, the government has been in the process of dismantling core funding for such groups, however, and recently has become much more involved in dictating how community groups shall spend their resources. These latest developments signal a very serious threat to organized voices of dissent, and I believe that the political effects will be far reaching and quite detrimental. The following comment, written for an earlier decade, still holds true today:

...the limited and highly mediated representation of ethnocultural interests is evident in the multiculturalism administrative apparatus's subordinate position in the unequal structure of representation, the low status of its minister, and the modest resources allocated to the policy....Currently, multiculturalism joins other federal policies such as employment equity to form a parcel of symbolic measures that give the reigning [party] an image of being a government of liberal conscience on race and ethnic issues, without encumbering free trade and market driven strategies that have become its hallmark in economic policy. (Stasiulis & Abu-Laban 1990, 598)

Throughout this period of nearly three decades, the issues surrounding multiculturalism have been hotly debated. The academic and public policy literature (much of it funded, ironically, by Multiculturalism grants) has reached huge proportions, which I shall not attempt to summarise in this brief article. The arguments also indicate that multiculturalism is not simply about ethnic preservation. Rather, it is an expression of the deeper sentiments that underpin Canada as a liberal democratic society. It is about the level of commitment to pluralism as a democratic value and how this value binds, or fails to bind, the country together. Undercutting the commitment to pluralism, however, is the tendency in

public policy debates to encourage pluralism strongly only when it comes to the expression of individual rights. Towards group rights, we display profound ineptitude and recalcitrance.

To achieve multiculturalism as an expression of group rights, which is what I believe an effective multicultural citizenship at the end of the 20th Century would involve, is complicated by at least three additional issues, each as complex, contradictory and contested as the other. First, over the past recent years, resolve to settle land claims on behalf of First Nations people has increased. There is cautious room for optimism that, while the process may be protracted, we may begin in the near future to see some of the injustices towards native peoples redressed. But land claims are founded in a situation of unequal colonialism, and minority ethnocultural groups in Canada have played very diverse roles in our colonial history. Their claims will continue to be seen by many as secondary to the needs of the First Nations, if only because they complicate the relationship between the First Nations and the colonial administration.

Secondly, multiculturalism is not only secondary, or tertiary, to issues surrounding the status of the province of Québec and the future unity of the country, but in many ways contradictory to claims for Québec sovereignty. The claim to sovereignty is based on a vision of a society united within a single linguistic tradition and a geographically bounded territory. Moreover, that vision is predicated upon the indivisibility of culture and language, which precludes the possibility of an effective multiculturalism. Within Québec, the negative tone of the debate over multiculturalism was exacerbated during the 1995 referendum on sovereignty² when Premier Jacques Parizeau made a much-publicised comment immediately after the referendum, blaming the 'ethnic vote' for the failure to endorse separation. In the ensuing emotionally charged events, it was clear that not only Québécois, but many Canadians, imagine themselves within a nation of two solitudes (Bruner 1997). Debates over multiculturalism have not significantly shifted that paradigm, while debates over Canadian unity have only strengthened it.

A third factor urging a public policy of containment over multiculturalism is the recent resurgence of a right wing backlash against what are constructed as 'special interests' (read: interests that are different to those of the dominant group). The federal Reform Party, which currently holds 57 of 301 seats in Parliament, and forms the Official Opposition, opposes Québec Sovereignty, First Nations land claims, and multiculturalism, which it links with immigration. The following quotations from its official platform express Reform principles:

The Reform Party of Canada opposes the current concept of multiculturalism and hyphenated Canadianism pursued by the Government of Canada. We would end funding of the multiculturalism program and support the abolition of the Department of Multiculturalism...

The Reform Party supports and shall uphold the principle that individuals or groups are free to preserve their cultural heritage *using their own resources*...

The Reform Party [maintains that] immigrants should possess the human capital necessary to *adjust quickly and independently* to the needs of Canadian society and the job market.

Reform Party of Canada³

Containing the backlash against multiculturalism, and progressive politics in general, has been a major preoccupation of the current Liberal government under Jean Chretien. When, during the spring following their election in 1994, the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, Canada's only national coalition of ethnocultural associations, held its annual 'Parliamentary Day' to lobby for multicultural concerns, they were told in blunt terms by those members of the Liberal, as well as the Conservative, party who would meet with them that their concerns were low on the list of government priorities. Moreover, some politicians were forthright enough to state that the government is wary about being seen to cater to what the Reform Party dubs 'special interests', because of the political backlash that may result (Kobayashi 1999). I shall return below to the backlash effect, and its role in stifling anti-racist movements.

All three of these major arenas of public policy discourse are animated by political pragmatism, where issues of multiculturalism are sacrificed to what are deemed to be more immediate and pressing concerns. They also, however, reverberate with the dominant ideological trends of the day. Despite inevitable political diversity, the dominant mood remains one dedicated to liberal democracy, with a slight pluralist sheen. One of the most influential liberal thinkers is Will Kymlicka (1996), who maintains that liberalism is compatible with the accommodation of needs of minority ethnocultural groups, in part because such groups want to integrate to the dominant culture. They do not, therefore, present the same sort of claim as those of Québec and the First Nations, and they can be treated with much less urgency. His general line of argumentation is well articulated by Michel Pagé:

In order to adjust liberal theory to reality, Kymlicka proposes to distinguish three forms of differentiated citizenship concordant with the kind of protection accorded to cultural minorities: 1) special representation within political institutions common to the whole society, conferring on minority groups the possibility of participation as such in deliberations where they are not normally represented; this type of recognition is most often sought by non-ethnic minority groups; 2) delegation of self-governing powers to a group to allow it to grant itself distinct measures aimed at protecting its identity; these kinds of powers can only be legitimately claimed by national

minorities; 3) protection of cultural practices through polyethnic rights most often accorded to new immigrants and aimed generally at removing the barriers to integration created by cultural or religious practices which come into conflict with established norms. (Pagé 1997:23, based on Kymlicka 1996:40).

Pagé also states the limits to multiculturalism under liberal democracy:

In recognizing as legitimate the plurality of the diverse identities which form the society, education for citizenship should concern itself with educating the young to live their social identity and to conceive of the collective national identity in a manner satisfying the demands of participation where the defence of identities is a secondary issue to that of common interests. (Pagé 1996:30)

The liberal perspective, and Kymlicka's in particular, has been widely critiqued as normative (Parekh 1997, Forst 1997). It insists that pluralism stop short of challenging the status quo, and requires the status quo to adjust itself within very limited margins, according to the terms set by the majority, not the minority. More obligation rests upon the minority to adjust to the majority than vice versa. Kymlicka is also criticised because his dualistic framework — separating 'national' and 'cultural minorities' — is too exclusive and fails to place minority needs in a context of political economy:

Kymlicka fails to distinguish here between inclusion in economic opportunity and political decision-making, and inclusion in the dominant national culture. Many of those groups Kymlicka classifies as ethnic minorities today demand inclusion in economic and political life at the same time that they reject the expectation that they should become socially and culturally integrated. (Young 1997:52).

Exclusion in the economic and political realm is not a new story in Canada. Activists have been trying for some time to shift the terms of the debate from one of rights, identity and political philosophy to focus instead upon the risks that members of minority groups, and in particular members of racialised groups, face in their every day attempts to participate as equal citizens (Bannerji 1996, Dei 1996, Kobayashi & Ray 2000).

What the liberal project fails to recognise is the need to shift the discourse, therefore, from the dominant (read 'white', Euro-centred, colonialist) project of achieving diversity to the project of overcoming racism, and other forms of oppression. Multiculturalism, defined as a diverse society in which cultural identity is freely expressed and provides no impediment to equality, may follow from anti-

racism; but the reverse is not necessarily the case. Indeed, our difficult, frustrating and fractious attempts to achieve multiculturalism indicate this failure.

Is the Canadian imagination sufficient to the task of recognising and renovating its racist past? Recent political developments lead to a pessimistic picture (Harney 1996), and the power of the neo-liberal ideological agenda, including the scholarly agenda, supports this pessimism. Carl Stychin presents a more optimistic picture:

Canadian nationalism itself is signified in part by its own otherness — an absence of essential definition that creates space for identities which are articulated from the vantage point of social groups. Indeed, such group identities can come to be defined in nationalistic terms. Thus, 'Canadian' becomes an identity open to resignification and intersection through an increasing variety of perspectives engaged in a dialogue guaranteed by the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. (Stychin 1995, 103)

Canadians will never, of course, overcome their deeply racialised and colonial past. Stychin's vision presents the possibility, however, that we might overcome it, if we could only re-focus the dominant imagination upon that project of resignification. To do so, however, requires a very thorough re-writing of the racialised citizen, in a context where:

...Euro-Canadian/American society is so racialized that to have no racial identity is to be in danger of having no identity at all. We live in a racially conscious society and our racial (like class and gender) identities influence the social and political practices in which we choose to engage. (Dei 1996, 257)

The choices made by anti-racists in the current context are of crucial importance, the more so because in the face of considerable political backlash against the achievements of anti-racism of the 1980s and early 1990s, one of the most difficult challenges is to overcome the neo-liberal project of achieving multicultural diversity at the expense of anti-racism. The neo-liberal challenge is a formidable one, and involves addressing the many ways in which racisms, including the racisms that are silent, benevolent, unacknowledged and so deeply entrenched in cultural practice that they are difficult to see. The liberal position presents multiculturalism in such a way as to cast best light upon the dominant values of our society, giving the country an opportunity to feel good about its benevolent gesture of 'including' minorities within the bosom of Canadian culture — as long as they are willing to conform to that culture. The majority is free to celebrate multiculturalism, therefore, while the minority looks on in wonderment.

Framed in such benevolent terms, it is very difficult to see the ways in which the anti-racist agenda has been colonised by the agenda of 'multicultural citizenship'. This aspect makes it very difficult to confront and overcome the subtle, entrenched racism of the turn of the century, which is often denied as racism because of the very benevolent, rather than malevolent, terms in which it is expressed. Those critics who have seen this process most clearly have tended to abandon the multiculturalism project altogether as irredeemable (Bannerji 1996), a product of a whitened gaze that simply reinforces difference as a marker of marginal status. Taking Stychin's prescription seriously, however, implies a need to revitalise multiculturalism, re-colonise it if you will, as the possibility for overcoming oppression rather than simply promoting diversity.

I make this suggestion not because I wish to confirm the liberal democratic perspective that I have been critiquing, but because I believe that the most effective strategy would be to wrest the project of multiculturalism from the neo-liberal grasp, placing the onus for change on the dominant, rather than the minority, population. This project requires a shift from the present attitude — seen, for example, in the policies relating to immigration — of giving minority populations the resources needed to adapt to and integrate with the majority (while of course maintaining their distinctive 'identity'), to one in which the majority changes itself and, most fundamentally, abolishes the very concept of majority.

I began this essay with scepticism about the value of a diversity perspective, and with a much less than optimistic picture of the current political will to achieve multiculturalism. My analysis shows that the challenge for the future is a double-edged one of simultaneously rescuing and re-valuing multiculturalism in the political arena, and de-bunking it as a neo-liberal myth. To state this contradiction is not to imply that multiculturalism should be championed only in a strategic manner in the realm of realpolitic, while challenging its assumptions in the realm of academy-speak. It is, rather, to engage the very genuinely contradictory nature of the Canadian multicultural imagination.

Works Cited

- Abu-laban, Yasmeen & Daiva Stasiulis. 1992. 'Ethnic pluralism under siege: popular and partisan opposition to multiculturalism.' *Canadian Public Policy* 18, no.4: 365-386.
- Bannerji, Himmani. 1996. 'On the dark side of the nation: politics of multiculturalism and the state of "Canada".' *Journal of Canadian Studies* 31, no.3: 103-128.
- Bruner, M. Lane. 1997. 'From ethnic nationalism to strategic multiculturalism: shifting strategies of remembrance in the Québécois secessionist movement.' *The Public* 4, no.3: 41-57.
- Cardozo, Andrew & Lewis Musto, eds. 1997. *The Battle Over Multiculturalism: Does It Help or Hinder Canadian Unity?* Vol. I. Ottawa: Pearson-Shoyama Institute.
- Danso, Ransford. 1998. 'Multiculturalism: how effective a tool for managing diversity in Canada?' Unpublished paper, Queen's University.
- Dei, George J. Sefa. 1996. 'Critical Perspectives in Antiracism: An Introduction.' *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 33, no.3: 247-267.

- Fleras, A. & J.L. Elliot. 1992. *The Challenge of Diversity: Multiculturalism in Canada*, Scarborough: Nelson.
- Forst, Rainer. 1997. 'Foundations of a Theory of Multicultural Justice.' *Constellations* 4, no.1: 63-71.
- Kobayashi, Audrey. 1993. 'Multiculturalism: Representing a Canadian Institution.' In James Duncan and David Ley, eds. *Place/Culture/Representation*: 205-231. London: Routledge.
- . 1999 (in press). 'Public Policy on the Margins: The Role of Minority Ethnocultural Associations in Affecting Public Policy in Canada.' In Keith Banting, ed. *The Non-profit Sector in Canada*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press.
- Kobayashi, Audrey and Brian Ray. 2000 (in press). 'Civil Risk and Landscapes of Marginality in Canada: A Pluralist Approach to Social Justice.' *The Canadian Geographer*.
- Kymlicka, Will. 1996. 'Démocratie libérale et droits des cultures minoritaires.' In F. Gagnon, M. McAndrew & M. Pagé, eds. *Pluralisme, citoyenneté et éducation*, 25-52. Montreal: Harmattan.
- . 1995. *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford & New York: Oxford UP.
- Pagé, Michel. 1997. 'Pluralistic Citizenship: A Reference For Citizenship Education.' *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Études Ethniques au Canada* 29, no.2: 22-31.
- Parekh, Bhiku. 1997. 'Dilemmas of a Multicultural Theory of Citizenship.' *Constellations* 4, no.1: 54-62.
- Stasiulis, Daiva & Yasmeen Abu-Laban. 1990. 'Ethnic Activism and the Politics of Limited Inclusion in Canada.' In Alain G. Gagnon & James B. Bickerton, eds *Canadian Politics: An Introduction to the Discipline*, 580-607. Peterborough: Broadview.
- Stychin, Carl. 1995. *Law's Desire: Sexuality and the Limits of Justice*.
- Young, Iris Marion. 1997. 'A Multicultural Continuum: A Critique of Will Kymlicka's Ethnic-Nation Dichotomy.' *Constellations* 4, no.1: 48-53.

Notes

- 1 I wish to thank Catherine Nolin-Hanlon and Ransford Danso for their part in contributing to the ideas presented in this essay.
- 2 On October 30th, 1995, residents of Québec voted for the second time on whether to form a separate, sovereignty association with Canada. The 'No' side won by a margin of about 1%. Immediately following the referendum, Québécois leader, Jacques Parizeau, gave a speech in which he blamed 'money' and 'the ethnic vote' for the loss. There followed considerable street violence, destruction of property, and burning of Canadian flags, as well as the constituency office of the Liberal leader, Daniel Johnson.
- 3 <http://www.reform.ca/bluebook/social.html/Multiculturalism>