

The Limits of Tolerance: Evaluating State-Sponsored Multiculturalism in Canada

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Throughout the last part of the 20th century multiculturalism, the celebration of coexistence between diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural identities, became a powerful rallying call for progressive political visions¹. However, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century, some politicians heralded its demise. Chancellor Angela Merkel said multiculturalism had “failed utterly”² in 2010. Former British PM David Cameron claimed that multiculturalism’s “hands-off tolerance”³ had failed to bring Muslim immigrants into the fold, opening up the way for increasing alienation and violence. Conservative and anti-immigrant movements in many countries capitalized on these fears, using them to paint multiculturalism as a Trojan horse; one that provides cover for anti-democratic cultural practices to flourish in the West. These narratives jeopardize more lenient assimilation policies, not only in Europe and the U.S, but also in Canada. As recently as 2017, Conservative MP Kellie Leitch proposed a test to screen immigrants for anti-Canadian values. Calls to ban religious garb have also returned to

national and provincial political debates. As the first country to adopt multiculturalism as an official state policy, Canada provides an important case for diagnosing the contemporary condition of multiculturalism. Even more vital, Canada may be one of multiculturalism’s last defenders, given the successes of xenophobic politics throughout Europe and the U.S.

Canada provides a provocative counterpoint to current European and American narratives about multiculturalism and immigrant incorporation. Amidst a resurgence of nationalist movements across Europe and the United States, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau even went so far as to call Canada the “first post-national state”.⁴ But does Canada truly live up to its utopian branding? A 2016 poll by CBC and the Angus Reid Institute shows that 68% of Canadians agreed with statements that minorities should do more to fit in with mainstream Canadian society, surpassing the results of a similar survey conducted in the U.S where only 53% shared this sentiment.⁵ Another study revealed that 80% of Canadians surveyed felt that European immigrants made a positive contribution to Canada, while only 59% felt this way about Asian immigrants; 45%

1 Kymlicka, Will. “The rise and fall of multiculturalism? New debates on inclusion and accommodation in diverse societies.” *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 61, no. 199, 23 Nov. 2010. Wiley Online Library.

2 “Merkel’s Rhetoric in Integration Debate is ‘Inexcusable.’” *Der Spiegel*, October 18, 2010.

3 “State Multiculturalism has failed, says David Cameron.” *BBC*, February 5, 2011.

4 Foran, Charles. “The Canada experiment: is this the world’s first “post-national” country?” *The Guardian*, January 4, 2017.

5 Reid, Angus. “Canadians aren’t as accepting as we think — and we can’t ignore it.” *CBC*, October 4, 2016.

for East Indians, and 33% for Caribbeans.⁶ Meanwhile, there are persistent concerns that ethnic enclaves in major Canadian cities are on the rise, and that this segregation threatens social cohesion and the creation of a shared Canadian identity.⁷

These anxieties are not new in Canada. Politicians and academics were already questioning the value of the multicultural experiment during the 1990's, evoking fears of hyphenated identities, conflicting social and legal norms, and the ghettoization of newcomers: all of which they attributed to the "cult of multiculturalism".⁸ We can see these same critiques reemerging in Canada's political discourse today. In 2018, then-conservative MP Maxime Bernier attacked Prime Minister Trudeau's "cult of diversity", claiming it would "divide us into little tribes that have less and less in common."⁹ Bernier has since broken with the Conservative Party to form his own People's Party of Canada, which has defined itself in opposition to "extreme multiculturalism."¹⁰ But what is "multiculturalism" in Canada, and how have its critics arrived at these damning conclusions? Fulfilling dual roles as both official policy guideline and symbolic virtue, this paper finds that the measure of multiculturalism's successes and failures are often too superficial to draw meaningful

conclusions. A more balanced assessment requires an understanding of Canada's history with integration policy.

This paper begins with a brief summary of the "modes of incorporation" framework proposed by Alexander (2001), followed by a description of Canada's history with multicultural policy. This discussion prefaces a critical examination of two of the more popular critiques of multiculturalism. After describing these critiques, I turn to the work of Canadian scholar Kymlicka (2010) who offers an alternative interpretation of the current results of Canada's multiculturalism policies. Kymlicka's argument suggests a far more positive interpretation of the impact of Canada's experiment with multiculturalism. In my conclusion, I recommend ways to counter and shore-up the compelling arguments for continuing to support a structural multicultural policy approach.

Origins of Multiculturalism

What is multiculturalism? Multiculturalism emerged in response to growing numbers of migrants and the diversity of their origin communities and nations.¹¹ As immigration from the global south to north increased from postcolonial to contemporary times, global north or western nations faced challenges for how to absorb the new entrants to their nations. Alexander (2001) lays out three major modes of immigrant

6 Gregg, Allan. "Identity Crisis: Multiculturalism: A twentieth century dream becomes a twenty-first-century conundrum." *The Walrus*, March 12, 2006.

7 Ibid.

8 Bissoondath, Neil. *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*. Penguin Books, 1994.

9 Wright, Teresa. "Tory MP Maxime Bernier criticizes Trudeau's 'extreme multiculturalism' in series of tweets." *The Globe and Mail*, 13 Aug. 2018.

10 Budd, Brian. "What I learned at a People's Party of Canada rally." Editorial. *National Post*, 20 Nov. 2018.

11 Kymlicka, Will. "The rise and fall of multiculturalism? New debates on inclusion and accommodation in diverse societies." *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 61, no. 199, 23 Nov. 2010. Wiley Online Library.

incorporation¹² - assimilation, hyphenation, and multiculturalism. Alexander defines assimilation and hyphenation as variations on a theme, in which dominant groups seek to either diminish or privatize the expression of ethnic differences so that they can maintain control over the terms of mainstream citizenship.¹³ By contrast, multiculturalism is an attempt to dismantle these hierarchies by expanding the definition of what mainstream citizenship entails. Alexander argues that "instead of trying to purify the characters of denigrated persons...discursive conflicts that are mediated by the multicultural mode of incorporation revolve around efforts to purify the actual primordial qualities themselves"¹⁴ or, put another way, a multicultural approach values minority cultures as equally valid expressions of mainstream citizenship, rather than an impediment to integration. When this approach is adopted by public institutions, Alexander claims that multiculturalism is also an empirical policy framework which produces quantifiable progress towards reducing the marginalization and disenfranchisement of minority cultures and immigrant populations.

Canada started down its own path to multiculturalism during the 1970's with the adoption of the Canadian Constitution and the Official Languages Act. Enshrined within the former is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Article 27 of which

mandates that the charter be interpreted in a manner "consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians."¹⁵ This article, in tandem with the Official Languages Act, was intended to codify Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's vision of a multicultural Canada within a bilingual framework, and to defuse the tensions between Ottawa and the burgeoning nationalism of French Quebec. Trudeau acknowledged how the policy was in response to these tensions in his Memoirs, describing his actions as necessary to combat the "shriveled intellect"¹⁶ of nationalism which he feared would jeopardize the ethnic and cultural tapestry of Canada. Others, however, have also suggested that multiculturalism was at least partially a surreptitious bid by the Liberal Party to court ethnic votes through special favors and taxpayer-funded multicultural program funding.¹⁷ Subsequently, this critique would be echoed by multiculturalism's detractors in the decades that followed, most recently by Maxime Bernier when he said multiculturalism relegated immigrant groups to "political clienteles to be bought with taxpayers' money and the offer of special privileges."¹⁸

Whether or not one ascribes to the more cynical views of the elder Trudeau's motives for promoting multiculturalism,

15 Government of Canada. "Your Guide to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." Accessed January 23, 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/how-rights-protected/guide-canadian-charter-rights-freedoms.html>.

16 Pierre, Trudeau. Memoirs. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993.

17 Plamondon, Bob. "The truth about Pierre Trudeau and immigration." Maclean's, October 4, 2016.

18 Wright, Teresa. "Tory MP Maxime Bernier criticizes Trudeau's 'extreme multiculturalism' in series of tweets." *The Globe and Mail*, 13 Aug. 2018.

12 Alexander, Jeffrey C. "Theorizing the Modes of Incorporation: Assimilation, Hyphenation, and Multiculturalism as Varieties of Civil Participation." *Sociological Theory* 19, no. 3 (November 2001).

13 Ibid., 242

14 Ibid., 246

the important role which non-Francophone minority groups played in defining multiculturalism should not be understated. Having relaxed its immigration quotas on other non-Western countries during the 1960's, the Canada which elected Pierre Trudeau was diversifying at an increasingly rapid pace. In 1971, the majority of new immigrants to Canada were non-white for the first time.¹⁹ In this respect, the switch from biculturalism to multiculturalism under Trudeau served a necessary role in augmenting Canada's identity politics to better reflect its increasingly diverse population. These immigrants also played an active role in lobbying for their interests during the 1960's, effectively co-opting the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism as a means to communicate their own concerns to Ottawa.²⁰ This was pivotal to expanding the discussion of ethnocultural relations in Canada, beyond the Royal Commission's original motivation of traditional Anglo-Franco concerns. In 1971, Trudeau formally acknowledged this shift by introducing a multicultural policy with four main objectives: to support the development and retention of ethnocultural identities, to minimize the barriers to integration facing non-Western immigrants, to encourage intercultural awareness and communication, and to help newcomers acquire at least one of Canada's two official

languages.^{21,22}

Critiques of Multiculturalism

Canada's decision to pursue a culturally pluralistic vision for the country marked an important shift in the politics of citizenship and immigration for the country, and it stood at odds with contemporaneous policies of incorporation in many other Western democracies. This was true just south of the border, where the melting pot approach encouraged immigrants to shed their more foreign qualities in pursuit of a more homogenous mainstream American society. Multiculturalism was not only a formal recognition of the contributions of immigrant and indigenous cultures made to Canada, but it formed government agencies and allocated funds to preserve and promote those cultures. Critics of Canada's multiculturalism policies were suspicious of these programs, arguing that state intervention in cultural relations could risk perpetuating differences and justifying the continued economic and social balkanization of immigrant populations.²³ Another common concern was that laissez-faire policies regarding immigrant assimilation might weaken the influence which public institutions and even laws hold over those populations. Left unchecked, it has been suggested this could create a tolerant

21 Library and Archives Canada. Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 28th Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 8 (8 October 1971): 8545-8548, Appendix, 8580-8585.

22 Kymlicka, Will. *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada*. N.p.: Oxford University Press, 1998.

23 Gregg, Allan. "Identity Crisis: Multiculturalism: A twentieth century dream becomes a twenty-first-century conundrum." *The Walrus*, March 12, 2006; Vertovec, Steven, and Susanne Wessendorf. "Introduction: assessing the backlash against multiculturalism in Europe." *In The Multiculturalism Backlash*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf, N.p.: Routledge, 2010.

19 Burnet, Jean, and Leo Driedger. "Multiculturalism." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 27 June 2011.

20 Ley, David. "Multiculturalism: A Canadian Defence." *In The Multiculturalism Backlash*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf, N.p.: Routledge, 2010.

climate towards deviant and even illegal activity.

Bissoondath (1994) analysis of a 1993 Decima Research Center poll finds strikingly similar results as the more recent poll reported on by Angus Reid.²⁴ In Bissoondath's study, 72% of respondents felt that the "multicultural mosaic isn't working and should be replaced by a cultural melting pot."²⁵ This sentiment, as Bissoondath attempts to illustrate, was the product of an overbearing drive towards state-mandated tolerance and diversity, at the expense of meaningful understandings of other people and the retention of a cohesive Canadian identity. Moreover, he asserts that these fears were actualized in ways that threatened both the socioeconomic and physical security of Canadian communities. The primary concerns were that multiculturalism had further marginalized immigrants by encouraging ethnic enclaves, and that the emphasis on respect and tolerance towards difference had been internalized in ways which prohibited meaningful inter-group mutual understanding. He also argued that cultural relativism and political correctness were paralyzing the state when it came to addressing the possible inherent contradictions between supporting cultural beliefs that might be associated with illegal practices.

Bissoondath argues that a focus on preserving cultural heritage impedes the process of social integration for newcomers

24 Reid, Angus. "Canadians aren't as accepting as we think — and we can't ignore it." *CBC*, October 4, 2016.

25 Bissoondath, Neil. *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism*. N.p.: Penguin Books, 1994.

and successive generations of immigrant families. He voices his concerns for a public which relies on a government policy to validate, or even create, its sense(s) of community.²⁶ Additionally, Bissoondath claims that the portrayal of minority cultures through educational programs or festivals may amplify misconceptions about those communities and trap them into reified categories that superficially caricature their heritage. By extension, multiculturalism could discourage meaningful, natural dialogue between different ethnic and cultural groups and undermine a newcomer's sense of belonging within the host country. The risk of multiculturalism distorting cultural expression was not unique to its opponents. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (1994), another influential intellectual authority on Canadian multiculturalism, agrees that misrecognition of identity could be its own form of oppression, "imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being."²⁷

There has also been concern that the lack of overlap between immigrant groups would encourage physical segregation based on ethnic and cultural affiliations. Concerns over immigrant segregation have emerged in more recent commentaries as well. Gregg (2006) cites two reports from Statistics Canada in an attempt to illustrate how immigrant segregation in Canada was not only real, but that it had worsened since the 1980's. The first report, published in 1981, identified six communities in Canada

26 *Ibid.*, 213.

27 Taylor, Charles. "The Politics of Recognition." *In Multiculturalism*, edited by Amy Gutman, N.p.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

where 30% or more of the population was comprised of a single ethnic identity. The report classified these communities as ethnic enclaves. In a more recent report published in 2001, there appeared to be a rise from 6 to 254 in the number of such enclaves, and that an "alarming number",²⁸ to quote Gregg, were significantly poorer than national averages. Gregg argues that these communities were breeding grounds for disenfranchisement, resentment, and, ultimately, outbreaks of intense violence - similar environments which he claims gave rise to violent outbursts in Paris and London. Indeed, the argument that multiculturalism "fosters separateness"²⁹ formed the backbone of the infamous Cantle Report on the cause of the Oldham race riots in the UK.³⁰ This report, paints a picture of immigrants living "a series of parallel lives,"³¹ and suggests that oaths of allegiance and a more "meaningful concept of citizenship"³² could serve as possible antidotes to ethnic tension. Cantle claims that multiculturalism in Britain was "past its sell-by date."³³

Related to the criticism that it fosters separateness, multiculturalism is often accused of stifling criticism and creating

a so-called "cult of multiculturalism",³⁴ as Bissoondath calls it. Bissoondath accuses multiculturalism of being a "state sanctioned mentality,"³⁵ and holds it responsible for a rise in censorship which silenced criticism of cultural practices like clitoridectomy or forced marriage.³⁶ This evasiveness, he claims, generated a dangerous form of cultural relativism which jeopardized the liberal democratic social and legal norms of Canadian society. Bissoondath uses the 1994 trial of a Muslim-Canadian man who was charged with, and convicted of, raping his stepdaughter, as an example. In this case, the judge decided to give the man a considerably more lenient sentence, because judge concluded that in sodomizing the girl, the man had actually exhibited a cultural respect for her virginity and her honor.³⁷ Bissoondath interprets this judgement statement as an indication of how misguided interpretations of cultural sensitivity could hamper the government's authority to apply its own laws and policies.

Gwynn (1995) employs the same rape case as an extreme example of what he calls the "cultural defence."³⁸ Gwynn puts the question bluntly: "if female genital mutilation is a genuinely distinctive cultural practice, as it is among Somalis and others,...why should this practice be disallowed in Canada any more than singing

28 Gregg, Allan. "Identity Crisis: Multiculturalism: A twentieth century dream becomes a twenty-first-century conundrum." *The Walrus*, March 12, 2006.

29 Vertovec, Steven, and Susanne Wessendorf. "Introduction: assessing the backlash against multiculturalism in Europe." *In The Multiculturalism Backlash*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf, N.p.: Routledge, 2010.

30 Ibid.

31 "Key points of the Cantle report." *The Guardian*, December 11, 2001.

32 Ibid.

33 Bingham, John. "Multiculturalism 'past its sell-by date' warns race expert." *The Telegraph*, 15 Sept. 2012.

34 Bissoondath, Neil. *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism*. N.p.: Penguin Books, 1994.

35 Ibid, 7.

36 Ibid, 138-140.

37 Ibid., 90.

38 Gwyn, Richard. *Nationalism Without Walls: The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995. 198.

"O Sole Mio" or Highland dancing?"³⁹ Gwyn admits the starkness of this comparison, but suggests that dismissing these kinds of questions as racist without addressing the underlying societal anxieties could actually exacerbate distrust of immigrant groups and the kind of "cultural unease"⁴⁰ which sparked backlash against multiculturalism in the 1990s.⁴¹ Citing several opinion polls, Gwyn claims that a lack of clarity on the relationship between cultural accommodation and social and legal norms increased disaffection for multiculturalism as a whole. This emboldened the Reform Party to take increasingly aggressive stances against multiculturalism, eventually calling for its abolition in 1993.⁴²

Defending Multiculturalism in Canada

The anxieties outlined by critics of multiculturalism continues to shape debate on the value of multiculturalism in Canadian society. But to what extent have the trends they describe actually become manifest in Canadian society? The argument that support for cultural events and community programs will dilute immigrants' sense of citizenship and loyalty to Canadian values is not well substantiated by the preceding works. Rather, both Bissoondath (1995) and Gwynn (2005) cite polls of what native born Canadians think about immigrants' willingness to participate in Canadian society, rather than the opinions and actions of the immigrant groups. Critics of multiculturalism tend to treat it as a "single

doctrine",⁴³ rather than a "diffuse and myriad patchwork of policies, practices, and institutional adjustments",⁴⁴ which would otherwise more accurately characterize multiculturalism programs, practices, and policies in Canada. The complexities of multiculturalism, and the ways in which it manifests at the federal, provincial, and community levels, defy the kind of pass-fail criteria which often frame these debates. In fact, multiculturalism and its policies have evolved, and continue to evolve in many ways, to mitigate new definitions of equity and citizenship among immigrant communities.

To the first point, Kymlicka (1998) argues that in order to prove the theory that multiculturalism was decreasing civic participation by immigrants, needs to be a measurable decrease in naturalization rates and political participation among these groups.⁴⁵ Contrary to this, Kymlicka finds that the percentage of immigrants who pursued naturalization in Canada increased since the adoption of multiculturalism, despite the diminished role that citizenship had come to play in determining economic success for newcomers. This, he argues, demonstrates a genuine desire to participate in civil society, irrespective of whether it brings immediate material gain.⁴⁶ Other studies have also shown a positive correlation between the adoption of multicultural policies in Canada and

39 Ibid, 189.

40 Ibid, 190.

41 Ibid, 189.

42 Ibid, 189-190.

43 Vertovec, Steven, and Susanne Wessendorf. "Introduction: assessing the backlash against multiculturalism in Europe." *In The Multiculturalism Backlash*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf, N.p.: Routledge, 2010.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., 20

its naturalization rates. A 2010 article in the *Globe and Mail* compared Canadian naturalization rates to those in the U.S., noting that the two countries had almost identical rates of naturalization at the time Canada began implementing multicultural policies in the 1980's. By 2006 these rates had diverged significantly, leaving U.S immigrants at 43% naturalization compared to Canada's 73%.⁴⁷

Kymlicka diagnoses the health of Canadian multiculturalism again in a 2008-2010 survey, which reaffirms the trends he had found in the 1990's.⁴⁸ Moreover, the study finds that children of Canadian immigrants received better education than in any other Western nation, and that there was an "almost complete absence"⁴⁹ of ethnic ghettos in Canada. This finding runs counter to the assertions of Gwynn (2006), which Kymlicka claims is a misinterpretation in Statistics Canada's reporting. Kymlicka calls these claims a "red herring" and, "an artifact of poorly defined Statistics Canada categories, combined with a misunderstanding of the historical record of immigrant settlement".⁵⁰ In defining an ethnic enclave as any community which consisted of 30% or more of the same ethnic group, Kymlicka argues that Statistics Canada sets the bar too low. Further, Kymlicka asserts that the residential concentration of immigrants today is actually lower than it was in

Canada's immigrant ghettos of the early 1900's.

Kymlicka (2008-2010) also finds no decline in minority political participation and civic engagement, but rather an increase. This trend is borne out by electoral results, with a record number of minorities, many from immigrant communities, being elected to the House of Commons in 2015.⁵¹ Members of non-Western immigrant groups have also achieved leadership positions in Canada's federal ministries and political parties, such as Harjit Sajjan, a first generation Sikh immigrant from India and the current Minister of National Defence; and Jagmeet Singh, the son of Indian immigrants and leader of the New Democratic Party. Kymlicka further notes the absence of ethnic voting blocs, noting that immigrant communities display diverse and active political affiliations within Canada.

The characterization of multiculturalism as a feel-good celebration of ethnic food and dance - what has been referred to as the "3S" model of multiculturalism in Britain (Saris, Samosas, and Steel drums) - is also problematic. On the one hand, state-sponsored preservation of cultural identities can be seen as a superficial attempt to promote diversity with the potential to reinforce the notion that cultural minorities are something "other" than normal citizens. This criticism is levelled by Bissoondath (1994), who sees cultural programs as nothing more than "a

47 Bloemraad, Irene. "Multiculturalism has been Canada's solution, not its problem.", October 28, 2010.

48 Kymlicka, Will. *The Current State of Multiculturalism in Canada and Research Themes on Canadian Multiculturalism 2008-2010*. N.p.: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Chowdhry, Affan. "Record Number of Visible Minority MPs Elected to Commons." *The Globe and Mail*, October 20, 2015.

dash of colour and the flash of the dance".⁵² However, this concern is belied by the fact that the primary funder of multicultural programming, Heritage Canada, requires that cultural events and community programs must facilitate understanding between at least two cultural or religious groups, foster civic pride or memory, and promote respect for core democratic values to be eligible for government assistance.⁵³ It is the stated purpose of these grants to "support the socio-economic integration of individuals and communities and helps them to contribute to building an integrated, socially-cohesive society."⁵⁴ The other problem with this critique is that it overstates the centrality of cultural events at the expense of discussing the more systemic shifts in Canadian public policy that multiculturalism has led to.

In *Multiculturalism: A Canadian Defence*, David Ley (2010) cites Audrey Kobayashi's theory of the three stages of multiculturalism to describe how Canada's policies have evolved. In the first stage of multiculturalism - demographic multiculturalism - the state formally recognizes additional ethnic identity groups with viable claims to citizenship, beyond the original "charter groups" of English and French. In the second stage, Canada entered a period of symbolic multiculturalism. This included the funding of heritage programs and the amplification of minority art, music, food and language

within mainstream society. Today, however, Canada is implementing a "structural multiculturalism,"⁵⁵ which he describes as seeking four goals; fostering cross-cultural understanding, combating racism and discrimination, promoting civic participation, and "making Canadian institutions more reflective of Canada's diversity."⁵⁶ Thus, while Canada still provides support for cultural preservation and education, the belief that multiculturalism is nothing more than "a dash of colour and the flash of the dance"⁵⁷ ignores the ways in which multiculturalism produces profound shifts in redefining Canada's social, economic, and political landscape.

Sharia Makes a Splash

Polls show that the majority of Canadians view multiculturalism as one of the country's most important symbols and values.⁵⁸ However, polls that question whether immigrants do enough to fit in, or whether they share the same values, suggest that many Canadians are more comfortable with the symbolism of multiculturalism than the kind of reality it envisions. For example, a national poll showed a 13% decline in support for cultural accommodations and a 24% increase in support for assimilation

55 Ley, David. "Multiculturalism: A Canadian Defence." *In The Multiculturalism Backlash*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf, N.p.: Routledge, 2010.

56 Ibid.

57 Bissoondath, Neil. *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism*. N.p.: Penguin Books, 1994.

58 Thompson, Derek. "Canada's Secret to Escaping the "Liberal Doom Loop"." *The Atlantic*, 9 July 2018.

52 Bissoondath, Neil. *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism*. N.p.: Penguin Books, 1994

53 Government of Canada. "Inter-Action: Multiculturalism Funding Program." October 20, 2015.

54 Ibid.

between 2005 and 2006.⁵⁹ Similarly, a poll in 2008-2009 saw a rise in the number of respondents who agreed that laws and norms should not be changed to accommodate minorities.⁶⁰ The extent to which Canadians support the policy objectives of multiculturalism, juxtaposed with their support for the concept of multiculturalism, reveals a certain degree of dissonance manifest in the treatment of Canada's Muslim population.

The 2006 repeal of Ontario's Arbitration Act of 1991 is a good example of the rising unease with some forms of structural multiculturalism. The law permitted faith-based tribunals to resolve familial and business disputes in accordance with religious and cultural principles, though it still gave the powers of final review to the Canadian courts. The primary beneficiaries of this act had been the Catholic and Orthodox Jewish communities in Ontario, but in 2006 the law was repealed after the Muslim community sought to exercise similar rights under the law.⁶¹ Because the Arbitration Act allowed Ontario to enforce the rulings of religious courts, women's rights activists worried that extending the same autonomy to Sharia arbitration would amount to sanctioning and enforcing a version of family law that was "inherently discriminatory,"⁶² against women. The prevailing opinion in the

case was that Sharia law should never be permitted in Canada, and that there should be one law for all Ontarians.⁶³ However, these arguments ignored wording in the Arbitration Act that explicitly required gender parity in faith-based arbitration, and which maintained the supremacy of provincial and federal law in any instance where the dictates of religion contravened common law.

The 2016 proposed "Quebec Plan" revealed a similar distrust of the Muslim community in Quebec, sparking a heated provincial debate on integration. In 2016, an accountant named Nabil Warda proposed the construction of a neighborhood which would provide low-cost, interest free housing to Muslims who believed that mortgages violate Islamic views on usury.⁶⁴ The proposal was met with swift condemnation. Quebec's premier said that there was "no way (they) would allow discrimination,"⁶⁵ in housing development, and Quebec's Minister for Immigration, Diversity and Inclusiveness stated that "neither ethnic origin nor religious belief should ever be considered as criteria for the creation of a housing project."⁶⁶ Warda argued this was a misinterpretation of his proposal,⁶⁷ but the court of public opinion had already branded him an extremist. Quoted in a Globe and Mail article, Haroun Bouazzi, co-president of Muslims for a

59 Soroka, Stuart, and Sarah Robertson. *A literature review of Public Opinion Research on Canadian attitudes towards multiculturalism and immigration, 2006-2009*. N.p.: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009.

60 Ibid.

61 Sturcke, James. "Sharia law in Canada, almost." *The Guardian*, February 8, 2008.

62 Jimenez, Marina. "Rabbinical courts at core of dispute are seldom used." *The Globe and Mail*, September 14, 2005.

63 Freeze, Colin, and Karen Howlett. "McGuinty government rules out use of sharia law." *The Globe and Mail*, September 12, 2005.

64 Sevunts, Levon. "Quebec Premier slams proposed plan for Muslim neighbourhood." *Radio Canada International*, November 15, 2016.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Hassan, Farzana. "Multiculturalism must be a two-way street." *Toronto Sun*, November 24, 2016.

Secular Quebec, was quick to highlight the role Islamophobia played in the public's reaction to Warda's plan, and the double standard to which Muslims were being held. Bouazzi noted that housing developments that court Orthodox Jews already exist,⁶⁸ so why not for Muslims?. This episode would not be the last bout of animosity between the Quebec government and the Muslim population either.

The passage of Bill 62 in October, 2017 further increased tensions between Quebec's political mainstream and the Muslim population of the province. This law made it illegal to give or receive public services without revealing your face, which disproportionately affected Muslim women. Proponents of the Bill argued that it was necessary to protect the secularity of Quebecois society, but many others saw this as an overtly racist law masquerading as neutral; the machination of "Catholaité." In another *Global and Mail* article, Haroun Bouazzi, decried the hypocrisy of the Bill, noting "sadly, secularism seems to be invoked just to take away rights from religious minorities and not for the right things."⁶⁹ Bourrazzi and others also noted the blatant contradiction between the secular rhetoric, and the fact that a crucifix hangs in the very chamber where the law was passed. While support for cultural accommodation consistently runs lower in Quebec than the rest of Canada, polls have revealed that previous iterations of Bill 62

were also viewed favorably by a majority of Canadians. Bill 94, introduced in 2010, contained many of the same provisions as 62, but received an 80% approval rating from Canadians outside of Quebec.⁷⁰

Conclusions

In this study, I sought to review the evidence surrounding the emergence and resilience of multiculturalism policies in Canada. I find that the focus of Canada's multiculturalism policies have evolved from demographic recognition, to cultural amplification, and now to structural multiculturalism. Overall, despite attempts to challenge multiculturalism, most Canadians are proud of the concept's centrality to the nation's normative priorities. In addition, rather than segregate communities, it appears to have led to much higher levels of integration than expected. High levels of political and economic participation on the part of immigrant communities is proof of this success. Nevertheless, claims that Canada is a post-nation state ignore the reemergence of pushback towards cultural accommodation, most recently directed towards religious tolerance in the context of structural multiculturalism. As Fo Niemi, Director of the Centre for Research Action on Race Relations, said in response to Quebec's Bill 62, "today it is the niqab, tomorrow it could be the hijab the day after that it could be the Sikh turban ... and then

68 Shingler, Benjamin. "Developer vows to go ahead with Montreal-area Muslim housing project despite opposition." *Globe and Mail*, 16 Nov. 2016. Accessed 13 Mar. 2018.

69 Hamilton, Graeme. "Ban the Niqab, keep the Cross?" *National Post*, December 7, 2017.

70 Chowdhury, Safia. "Is Canada's multiculturalism in peril?" *Al Jazeera*, April 2, 2014.

afterwards ... how far do we go?"⁷¹

Canada's ability to weave diversity into its narrative of nationhood has been helpful in maintaining support for the multicultural model of immigrant integration. Its embrace by both Conservative and Liberal governments - for the most part - has also helped to minimize direct attacks on multiculturalism policy. Nevertheless, some politicians at the provincial and federal level have been experimenting more aggressively with politics of division. The Conservative party's loss in 2016 was seen, in part, as a rebuke of their experimentation with more divisive messages on immigration and cultural assimilation. Maxime Bernier's People's Party now seems poised to test their own brand of right-wing populism in the 2019 federal elections. Attempts to use multiculturalism as a political wedge cannot be ignored on the presumption that Canadian politics are somehow immune to this kind of populism. As the Director of the Angus Reid Institute said, "if we view populism as bacteria, look in the petri dish: It's already growing, it always has. We deny it at our peril. The only antibiotic is to shine a light and acknowledge this."⁷²

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⁷¹ "Quebec will require bare face for service: Legislation addresses thorny issue of accommodating minorities." *CBC News*, March 24, 2010.

⁷² Kurl, Shachi. "Yes, Trump-style populism could happen in Canada. Here's why." *The Angus Reid Institute*. March 24, 2010.

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