Chapter Two

The Scholarship

Many Canadians mistakenly believe that a mosaic ideology has long reigned in Canada while the melting pot still enjoys hegemony in the United States. This is not so. Over the course of the twentieth century, multicultural ideologies displaced dominant assimilationist ones often called Anglo-conformity in Canada and the melting pot in the United States. Multiculturalism became a formal state policy in the former but not in the latter, though in neither case was the trajectory from a minority to a leading if contested creed a linear or straightforward one.

The Canadian federal policy adopted in 1971 initially emphasized an ethnicity-based multiculturalism and provided funding for ethnocultural organizations interested in the preservation of cultural heritage and for research on ethnic groups. By the 1980s, most provincial governments, some of which had earlier passed similar policies, had their own multiculturalism policy. In 1982, multiculturalism was recognized by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which superseded the 1960 Canadian Bill of Human Rights. In 1988, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed. In response to the growing calls to combat racial discrimination against newer immigrants, the 1980s also saw the creation of some equity- or rights-based policies and programs. Official multiculturalism has always attracted critics, but the experts report that it remains popular with Canadians, though to a far less extent in Quebec.[1]

American Multiculturalism

American ideologies of multiculturalism were less codified but no less far-reaching and, in some cases, more insurgent in questioning existing hierarchies of race and gender. In the United States, the term "multiculturalism," while it surfaced in the 1970s, rose to prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s to describe movements in universities and the public schools demanding greater curricular attention to non-European groups in American life. The term quickly spread beyond the academy to take in popular affirmations of the value of diversity. As an ideology or

a set of ideologies, American multiculturalism holds, in David Hollinger's 1995 formulation, that "the United States ought to sustain rather than diminish a great variety of distinctive cultures carried by ethno-racial groups." Ideologies of multiculturalism thus share a baseline commitment to American diversity as a positive good – with "diversity" functioning as a keyword and defined ethno-racially or even more broadly to include gender and sexuality – and reject assimilatory stances promoting greater cultural homogeneity.[2]

Such ideologies were expressed in movements, especially in education, and in academic and popular discourse, and became institutionalized in state policies such as affirmative action, where the keyword "diversity" figures as a "compelling state interest" that can justify using race as a criterion in university admissions.[3] As Russell Kazal notes, historians have tended to delineate different versions of post-1970 American multiculturalism, often cast as dichotomous pairs, as in "hard" versus "soft" and "radical" versus "liberal." While these dichotomies run along varying axes, the first terms tend to denote a greater emphasis on group boundaries and autonomy and an insurgent questioning of racialized inequality and structures of power, often aspiring to "Third World" coalitions of peoples of colour. The second terms express concerns that tended to value, respectively, the American nation understood as diverse – a feature of state-sponsored celebrations – interaction and harmony among groups, and the freedom to choose identities.[4] However varied, multiculturalist ideologies were never hegemonic in the United States, contending from their inception with racially exclusionary and nativist views and movements that became particularly evident in and after the 1990s.[5]

A number of historians have argued that American multiculturalism, in its different strains, grew out of the crises of the 1960s, with Black nationalism serving as a key source. As Bruce Schulman argued, Black Power's rejection of integrationism in the late 1960s and stress on group autonomy and identity hastened the demise of liberal universalism and assimilationism and became a model for other groups, helping to fuel the Chicano, AsianAmerican, and American Indian movements and what came to be called the "white ethnic revival." For Schulman, the ideal of "diversity" emerged in the 1970s as an answer to the question whether the United States could effectively merge several different types of cultural nationalism. Affirmative action policies in hiring, government, and universities shifted their rationale from integration to diversity on the grounds that "welcoming" racial and cultural differences into institutions would reflect US society's multicultural character. Such changes signified an ideological shift that reconceived the nation as less a melting pot than as "discrete peoples and cultures sharing the same places." The "center of gravity," in other words, "had drifted toward multiculturalism." Gary Gerstle similarly traced the rise of "soft" and "hard" versions of multiculturalism as part of a larger crisis of American nationalism triggered by the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War. In

his study of the post-1945 white ethnic revival, Matthew Frye Jacobson located roots of both a contemporary "Ellis Island whiteness" and a left "brand of multiculturalism," the latter initially fostered in part by white ethnic New Leftists and feminists pushed by revivalist strains towards radically pluralist positions.[6]

Such readings tended to cast post-1970 multiculturalism as fundamentally new, in marked contrast to the cultural pluralism of the early and mid twentieth century. The latter was Eurocentric at its inception and, some scholars argued, limited in popular reach and substance, betraying an assimilationist undertow.[7] Yet, as Kazal argues, more recent work has depicted American pluralist ideologies before the 1960s as far more robust, with wider popularity and stronger roots in particular communities and institutions. Such histories have tracked ethnic pluralist expressions that not only predated Horace Kallen and his early- twentieth-century intellectual contemporaries (see chapter 1), such as Kazal's work on late-nineteenth-century Pennsylvania, but also mid-twentieth-century variants of bottom-up, egalitarian, and at times interracial pluralisms. One example is the radical 1930s unionism of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Another is the interwar cultural gifts movement in education. Yet another is the left and left-liberal political and civil rights mobilizations that crossed multiple colour lines in interwar, wartime, and postwar Southern California.[8] Nor should we forget the revolutionary multiculturalism of the Industrial Workers of the World. The Wobblies' organizing strategies among African American, foreign, and women workers included the use of interpreters, multilingual materials, ethnic intermediaries, "folk" music, and storytelling.[9] Some of this work, in fact, points to continuities between mid-century pluralisms and the multiculturalisms, both liberal and radical, that emerged during and after the 1960s.[10]

Canadian Multiculturalism

A Eurocentric cultural pluralism was more clearly a precursor to official multiculturalism in Canada. But here, too, more light is being shed on the earlier roots of intellectual and popular as well as social work pluralism. As the studies of the US Institutes suggests, though, US historians have done more than their Canadian counterparts to trace the longer community roots of women's pluralism (see chapter 1). By contrast, the Canadian scholarship, whether sympathetic or critical, highlights the ideas and actions of male elites. These include colonial and Dominion officials, prime ministers, politicians at every level of government, intellectuals, state-recruited academic experts, policy-makers, ethnic leaders, senators, civil servants, royal commissioners, political philosophers, and promoters of mega folk festivals.

Whether revered or reviled, Canada has its "fathers" of multiculturalism. They include Trudeau, of course.[11] And Ukrainian Canadian Paul Yuzyk. The third-force argument in favour of multiculturalism so closely associated with

the high-profile Conservative senator, nationalist Ukrainian Canadian leader, and Cold Warrior tapped into a settler ideology of nation-builders.[12] In Toronto, the Institute women cultivated a relationship with a range of ethnic elites, including other conservative Ukrainian Canadians who would lay claim to the title.[13] At least one scholar has awarded the title to the federal civil servants of the Canadian Citizenship Branch.[14]

To be sure, one-half century after Canada's official multicultural turn, the writing on the subject is both vast and varied. There are the many volumes that consider the challenges and national debates of the post-1945 and sixties eras and the continuing machinations surrounding the making of citizenship, human rights, and linguistic as well as multicultural policy and its implementation.[15] Next to them stand the now numerous critiques of the (evolving) multicultural state and society. Drawing on feminist, critical-race, post-colonial, Marxist, Foucauldian, and postmodernist insights, these studies highlight the state's regulatory power over the lives of racialized immigrants and Canadians, particularly women but also over-policed youth and men, and the hyper-surveillance since 9/11 of Arab, Muslim, and other dark-skinned people.[16]

The paradoxical nature of Institute-style multiculturalism certainly owes something to the slipperiness of the term and of liberal ideologies more generally. In Canada, as elsewhere, multiculturalism has been invoked to refer to a wide range of phenomena. In addition to referencing a social reality and a government policy, Canadians scholars have discussed it as a progressive ideology in support of ethnic diversity, an ethno-political or multicultural movement that challenged the dominant two-nations narrative of Canada, a promoter of civic virtue and a more open society, and as an anti-racist or equity rights strategy.[17] Leading liberal theorists such as Will Kymlicka have approached multiculturalism as a liberal theory of minority rights and as a cultural resource assisting immigrant adaptation into the mainstream. Charles Taylor's definition of multiculturalism as a politics of identity recognition builds from the assumption that people's feelings of self-worth and self-esteem are possible only when they are positively recognized for who they are.[18] Scholars have also examined multiculturalism as a state strategy for managing diversity, whether viewed in terms of managing majority-minority relations or politically polarized ethnic groups, in war, peace, and Cold War contexts.[19]

In arguing for the detrimental or superficial impact of multiculturalism, popular and scholarly critics have invoked such terms as "cultural apartheid" (as in the emphasis on how cultural difference retards integration into the mainstream and reduces cross-cultural interactions) and a "food and festivals" brand of "aestheticized difference."[20] Or featured small-town white Canadian-born Ontarians who use the white-settler term "*Canadian* Canadian" to distinguish themselves from everyone else.[21] Almost sixty years after John Porter coined the term, the "vertical mosaic" includes many more culturally varied racial groups

and shows greater extremes of privilege and disadvantage than the European ethnic groups Porter studied.[22] One scholar has invoked the term economic apartheid to underscore what the COVID-19 pandemic has laid so bare: the overrepresentation of racialized workers, many of them women, in low-paying and precarious jobs, and living in racially segregated, poor, and unhealthy housing and neighbourhoods.[23] In another iteration of multiculturalism-as-hypocrisy, feminist anti-racist scholars remind us that the era of liberal multicultural policy-making also introduced the illiberal domestic worker and other temporary worker schemes that continue to create unfree pools of racialized labour in Canada.[24]

The strongest rebuke to Canada's oft-cited liberal philosophers comes from feminist anti-racist and left scholars such as Himani Bannerji and Richard Day, who locate Canada's "troubled" experiments in state pluralism in a history of conquest and colonialism. The policy agenda that its makers and supporters claim will finally solve the nation's supposedly ongoing crisis of diversity and national unity, they argue, derives instead from a long history of treating others, be they Indigenous peoples, conquered colonials, or mixed-ethnic populations, as problematic entities to be managed, dispersed, interned, or exterminated. In her own oft-cited critique of official multiculturalism, Bannerji notes that the ethnocultural identities assigned to "visible minorities" are official categories of belonging that reify culture and serve the interests of English Canada in its ongoing rivalry with Quebec.[25] Meanwhile, the liberal analyses as well as the insistence on pluralism's benefits continue apace.[26] So, too, do the acrimonious debates in Quebec over reasonable accommodation of religious diversity that led to the establishment of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission.[27]

Where Are Canada's Women Multiculturalists?

Some women do appear in the literature on Canadian multiculturalism, whether as early-twentieth-century US or Canadian popular writers[28] or late-twentieth-century academic experts.[29] There were women on the staff of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B&B) and among those who presented briefs. The Toronto Institute brief stressed the value of a cosmopolitan citizenship.[30] Accustomed to negotiating with Toronto's ethnic elites, Institute women were familiar with the "we are nation builders too" politics waged by the Ukrainian-led ethnic lobby during the lengthy commission.[31]

The women-centred and gendered immigrant histories penned by feminist historians such as Frances Swyripa, Marlene Epp, and Laurie Bertram offer critical insight into the cultural hybridity of women's everyday pluralism. Or into the deployment of female images, roles, and myths by the male advocates of an ethnic group's cultural politics. But most of them focus on the cultural adaptations within an individual group.[32] An exception is Swyripa's recent book on the

everyday socio-religious multiculturalism being practised by European groups on the prairies already in the late-nineteenth century through place-naming, the erection of places of worship and cemeteries, public commemoration, and more private observances.[33] Canadian studies of the roots of pluralism date the rise of an intellectual pluralism in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century debates among English Canadian academics and reformers, and that of organized ethnic pluralist movements in the interwar era.[34] The Toronto Institute's cultural mandate echoed that of John Murray Gibbon, impresario of the well-studied interwar folk festivals and author of the 1938 book that popularized the idea of the "Canadian Mosaic."[35]

Women receive significant attention in two twentieth-century histories of bottom-up pluralism that highlight the lived experiences, negotiations, and mutual accommodations of individuals, groups, and communities. Robert Vipond's study of a west end Toronto school that reflected Toronto's transformation from an Anglo-Protestant to more European and then global city offers a lively analysis of how teachers, parents, and students grappled with the challenges posed by differing waves of immigrants and the intervention or indifference of officialdom. In their important synthetic treatment of immigrants in western Canada, Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen propose a regional model of urban prairie pluralism. It posits that the adaptations of sequential waves of immigrants, who both created their own rich ethnic webs (such as family, church, and ethnic associations) and interacted with others in imagined boundary zones (sites of interaction with the hosts that could be negative or positive), encouraged a distinctive form of ethnic diversity and hybridity in prairie cities.

While instances of racism, failure, and compromise are noted, the main portrait in both cases is of well-intentioned men and women who, in Vipond's case, arrived at solutions, such as ESL (English as a second language) classes, that were later called multiculturalism. According to Lowen and Friesen, after 1945, the process of mutual accommodation and cultural reimagining was aided by open-minded civic and community leaders who sometimes relinquished control of the social agencies and civic institutions to the immigrants and their children. The lack of a sustained gendered analysis in Vipond's case, however, obscures women's particular experiences and contributions to the making of a school- and community-based pluralism. A similar problem with Loewen and Friesen's book, which certainly incorporates histories of immigrant women, reflects the privileging of theories of ethnic boundary-making and the like that privilege men's activities.[36]

Nevertheless, I share with the scholars just cited, and with the feminist and anti-racist scholars cited here, a desire to do more than simply excoriate Canadian multiculturalism. In assessing a women-led, and deeply flawed, variant of multiculturalism against today's horrific realities, I ask whether it offers any lessons for our current times. The question animates the whole study, but I return to it explicitly in my conclusion.