"Canadian" as an Ethnic Category: Implications for Multiculturalism and National Unity

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Parmi les canadiens de langue anglaise, non-autochtones, il existe une identité ethnique canadienne. Fréquemment, l'ascendance biologique est confondue avec l'ethnicité sociale de telle manière que la "vrai" identité de tout le monde est présumée provenir d'une autre racine. Malgré cela, les personnes nées au Canada, ou qui ont immigrées au Canada en bas âge, deviennent des canadiens de souche. Allant à l'encontre de ce "canadiannisme", les personnes supportants un multiculturalisme non-libéral prônent plutôt une identification plus forte des canadiens avec les groupes ethniques ancestraux. La politique publique sur le multiculturalisme libéral, au contraire, supporte les choix d'identité individuels privés. Paradoxalement, cette politique libérale encourage aussi une identification avec le Canada et avec la citoyenneté canadienne, ces derniers étants vitaux pour l'unité canadienne. La politique multiculturelle au Canada ne devrait pas se pencher vers le côté non-libéral où le multiculturalisme est orienté vers les groupes ethniques, comme certains le demande.

Among English-speaking, non-aboriginal Canadians, there is such a thing as an ethnic Canadian identity. Frequently, biological ancestry is confused with social ethnicity, so that everyone's "true" identity is presumed to be rooted somewhere else. Yet most people who are born in Canada, or who immigrate to Canada at young ages, become ethnic Canadians. Against this view of Canadianness, illiberal multiculturalists argue for strong identification of Canadians with ancestral ethnic groups. By contrast, the public policy of liberal multiculturalism encourages private, individual choices of identity. Paradoxically, this liberal policy also encourages identification with Canada and Canadian citizenship, both vital to Canadian unity. Canada's multiculturalism policy should not change to the illiberal, group-oriented multiculturalism some critics demand.

In a world of increasing ethnic fragmentation and nationalism, Canada is a social experiment that other countries view with some astonishment. Canada is populated by persons who come themselves, or whose ancestors come, from hundreds of different ethnic groups. Yet they coexist in what seems in many other countries remarkable harmony. Even more extraordinary from the point of view of outsiders, Canada has a paradoxical policy of multiculturalism which, far from promoting divisions among Canadians, seems to promote their integration.

To explain this paradox, this paper addresses the question of identity among English-speaking, non-aboriginal Canadians. It argues that there is such a

thing as an ethnic Canadian identity. Frequently, biological ancestry is confused with social ethnicity, so that everyone's "true" identity is presumed to be rooted somewhere else. Yet most people who are born in Canada, or who immigrate to Canada at young ages, become ethnic Canadians. The application to English-Canadians of standard sociological theory about the characteristics and creation of ethnicity is rarely done, yet it reveals Canadian ethnicity. The government policy of multiculturalism permits — even encourages — Canadians to retain aspects of their ancestral ethnic heritage, yet it does not undo the tendency of most people living in Canada to become ethnic Canadians.

Part of the debate about multiculturalism pits illiberal against liberal multiculturalists. Illiberal multiculturalists argue for stronger identification of Canadians with ancestral ethnic groups. By contrast, Canada's present public policy of liberal multiculturalism encourages private, individual choices of identity. Paradoxically, this liberal policy also encourages identification with a Canadian nation. The more members of minorities are encouraged to retain their ancestral identities, the more welcome they feel in Canada, and the more they identify with Canada and with Canadian citizenship, both vital to Canadian unity. But if, as some illiberal critics argue should occur, multiculturalism were diverted to promote identification with ancestral ethnicities at the expense of social assimilation into Canadian ethnicity, the net result would be to reduce identification with Canada.

SOCIAL ETHNICITY, BIOLOGICAL ANCESTRY

In early 1996, Lucien Bouchard shocked many people in the "rest of Canada" by stating that unlike Quebec, Canada was not a real country (Seguin 1996, p. A4). Canada, it seemed, had no sense of coherence and unity, and Canadians (other than Québécois) were just a mishmash of individuals from all over the place. Bouchard was wrong. English-Canadians, like Québécois, are an ethnic group;

like Québécois, they form a nation as well as living within a state. By English-Canadian is meant Canadians, other than indigenous peoples, who normally speak English, rather than French, in the public realm. (Indigenous peoples are not included as English-Canadians because they are the original inhabitants of the country with their own original languages, and they are covered in law by their own sets of rights, separate from the policy of multiculturalism.)

As this paper will argue, there is such a thing as an ethnic Canadian. But both public policy and much academic analysis conspire to prevent Canadians from recognizing this by insisting that their "ethnic" identity must be that of their ancestors. This occurs in public policy via the failure, until very recently, to recognize "Canadian" as an ethnic category. At the same time, among some academics, as discussed below, Canadianness is viewed as a covert means of promoting immigrants' assimilation, at the expense of their cultural heritage.

Social scientists frequently confuse ethnicity with ancestry. Then, wishing to promote the multiculturalism which is so much a part of prevailing Canadian ideology, they propose public policies based on people's ancestries. Evelyn Kallen asserts that Canada should become a multilingual as well as a multicultural society; all children should be taught in their "ethnic languages"(1990, p. 178). Kallen believes that all privileging of French and English as the founding (non-aboriginal) languages of Canada should end. No assimilative policies should exist: the Canadian government should do as much as it possibly can to assure that immigrants to Canada retain their ancestral language and culture. Yet in 1996, 84 percent of people living in Canada listed English or French as their sole mother tongue or one of their mother tongues (calculated from Statistics Canada 1998*b*), and only 1.7 percent of the population claimed to speak neither English nor French (calculated from Statistics Canada 1998*a*).

In Kallen's reading, the policy of multi-culturalism means that the government must encourage citizens to define their ethnicity as that of their ancestors. The government must preserve the ancestral languages, customs, and religions of immigrants. No matter how long an individual or her family has lived in Canada, her ethnicity is still that of her ancestors who never left the "old country." Moreover, such ancestry always can be identified and is always unitary; there is no room in Kallen's analysis for the products of mixed marriages with multiple ethnic ancestries. Yet in 1996, 10,224,500 Canadians, or 36 percent of the population, reported that they had mixed ethnic ancestries (calculated from Statistics Canada 1998*c*).

The 1991 Citizens's Forum on Canada's Future revealed a strong sense of Canadianness. Overall, the commissioners of the forum wrote, "participants told us that reminding us of our different origins is less useful in building a united country than emphasizing the things we have in common." As one group from Richmond, BC stated: "We are generally in favour of celebrating our cultural heritage.... However, we must remain Canadian first ... We must have a strong core"(Spicer 1991 p. 85). Yet Abu-Laban and Stasiulis, writing in *Canadian Public Policy*, were strongly critical of the Citizen's Forum, claiming that "what is being favoured in this report is for multiculturalism to serve as a device for immigrant integration" (1992, p. 370).

There is, among these academics, a notion of ethnicity as a fixed, concrete entity. Ethnicity cannot be changed; you are what your ancestors were. Yet many students of ethnicity argue that it is a social creation. Ethnicity is not a "thing" outside and immune from human action and perception; it is "a process by which individuals either identify themselves as being different from others or belonging to a different group or are identified as different by others" (Isajiw 1985, p. 9). Max Weber defined ethnic groups as "human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent"; ethnic membership, according to Weber, was a "presumed

identity" (1978, p. 389). There is no such thing as a fixed primordial group: there are only socially constructed groups, sometimes so constructed by ethnic entrepreneurs for reasons of self-promotion rather than preservation of a romanticized ethnic heritage. (Amit-Talai 1996; Burnet 1987, p. 74).

To posit ethnicity as a static entity derived from one's ancestors is to ignore socialization. Socialization is the process by which individual members of the human species learn to be human beings, to be members of society. Socialization occurs in the home, but it also occurs in peer relationships, in the schoolyard, via the media, and via the larger world. Yet in the Canadian discussion of multiculturalism, socialization frequently has become forced assimilation, seemingly a racist practice denying to immigrants the right to maintain their own culture. The changes in identity that happen to any immigrant to Canada, and the Canadian identity that any immigrant's child born in Canada absorbs, are viewed as enemies of the immutable, "natural" ancestral ethnicity that immigrants and their children ought to exemplify (on this, see also DiSanto 1989, p. 147).

There are many advantages to the Canadian policy of multiculturalism: most important is that non-European and/or non-Christian immigrants receive a strong message that they are welcome in this predominantly white, predominantly Christian country. But these advantages should not be allowed to obscure that, as this paper argues, there are also ethnic Canadians in Canada. The complexity of social roles and identities in modern Canadian life creates a new type of individual, not closely tied to his ancestral origins.

By encouraging individuals to think of themselves, and identify themselves, in terms of their ancestral ethnicity, public policy may render it difficult to instill a sense of Canadian identity in the population at large. As Weinfeld stated, "support for the image of Canada as an ethnic mosaic is facilitated when census data reify arbitrarily assigned

census categories" (1981, p. 91). If, on the other hand, people living in Canada are permitted to be Canadians in public policy and official ideology, the result is likely to be a thickening of the sense of citizenship, and a consequent strengthening of the sense of nationhood.

LIBERAL VERSUS ILLIBERAL MULTICULTURALISM

In a discussion of educational policies in the US, K. Anthony Appiah distinguishes between liberal and illiberal multiculturalism. Liberal multicultural education allows each child "to negotiate the creation of his or her own individual identity, using ... collective [racial, ethnic, etc.] identities as one (but only one) of the resources" available to him or her; illiberal multicultural education "wants to force children to live within separate spheres defined by the common culture of their race, religion or ethnicity" (1997, p. 34). Liberal multiculturalism, that is, makes racial or ethnic identity a choice; illiberal multiculturalism categorizes people and obliges them to live within those categories. The individual takes precedence over the group in liberal multiculturalism; in illiberal multiculturalism, the group takes precedence.

Academics such as Kallen and Abu-Laban and Stasiulis, are illiberal multiculturalists. Kallen wants all children to remain within their ancestral collectivities, with state-supported multilingual education dedicated to this goal; Abu-Laban and Stasiulis also want the state to recognize the fixed, unchanging ethnic identity of all Canadians. For these scholars, multiculturalism as a policy must ensure that individuals identify themselves as members of their ancestors' ethnicities. They believe in the idea of fixed, primordial groups.

But for liberal multiculturalists, multiculturalism is a resource of which citizens may or may not avail themselves, as they see fit. It is not a policy to which citizens must conform, in part because there are no

fixed, primordial groups. Official Canadian multiculturalism is liberal, reflecting Canada's overall liberal political democracy. Section 27 of Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) states explicitly "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." Following this, the Canadian *Multiculturalism Act* (Bill C-23, 1988) notes in its preamble "the importance of preserving and enhancing the multicultural heritage of Canadians." It also proclaims (in s. 3, b) that "multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity." The Act makes clear the government's intention not merely to recognize the multicultural origins of Canadians, but to maintain and foster their various cultural heritages by engaging in policies that enhance the diversity of Canada's culture, such as disbursement of funds to groups promoting their ancestral languages and arts. This includes policies to "facilitate the acquisition, retention and use of all languages that contribute to the multicultural heritage of Canada" (s. 5, 1, f). Thus the government encourages Canadians not only to retain languages they may speak already, but also to repossess or adopt languages that they and several generations of ancestors may never have spoken. Canadians do so, however, on an entirely voluntary basis: the groups they "belong" to cannot oblige them to preserve or repossess their ancestral languages.

This official commitment to a culture of racial and ethnic diversity is less than 30 years old. For it to become absorbed as part of the underlying cultural belief system of most Canadians requires constant promotion by the state and by educational institutions. This effort seems to have had some effect — public opinion polls indicate less racism and fear of strangers in Canada in the late twentieth century than 30 years ago. For example, in 1968 53 percent of Canadians polled answered "disagree" to the question: "Do you agree/disagree with a marriage between whites and non-whites?" (Gallup Report 1968). But in 1991 only 15 percent of Canadians agreed that "It is a bad idea for people of dif-

ferent races to marry" (Angus Reid Group 1991). Yet even if racism has declined substantially in Canada, memories of past discrimination fester and demand recognition. Here too, the federal government has taken action, for example, by agreeing in 1988 to pay compensation to the entire community of Canadians of Japanese ancestry who had been stripped of their property and interned as enemy aliens (some despite Canadian citizenship) during World War II (Griffin 1992).

By compensating groups for discrimination that they themselves or their ancestors suffered, the Canadian government makes a symbolic gesture that reaffirms Canadian values. The liberal values enshrined in Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* symbolize a change from religio-ethnic exclusivity to religio-ethnic openness. Racist expressions and assertions of religious superiority are excluded from the realm of acceptable public discourse, as the application of hate speech laws demonstrates (Jones 1998, pp. 205-11). The prescribed political culture at the end of the twentieth century assumes that all ethnic affiliations are equally valuable.

But this political culture rests on the assumption that in the final analysis, religion and ethnicity are private matters. Life in Canada is characterized by choice. Regardless of race (used here in the sense of phenotypical variety), ethnicity or religion, one is supposed to be able to choose one's occupation, to be fully mobile, to work and live wherever one can afford. One is supposed to be free to choose friends and a spouse from any background, religion or race. Religion, ethnic or cultural affiliation, indeed choice of language used in private, are matters of official public indifference; the groups that practise different religions, promote cultural or ethnic memberships, or speak unofficial languages are private groups. It is not the business of the government to ensure the preservation or influence of such private groups. The government can only encourage their preservation when their individual members indicate their desire for its assistance.

Nevertheless, in the interests of acknowledging the diverse origins of Canadians, the state supports some aspects of multiculturalism. "Heritage" language programs provide public funds for children to learn the language of their immediate or even more remote ancestors. But again, no child is obliged to attend such a program, and children who are not members of the ethnic group identified with the language are free to enrol in the class if their parents wish. Language usage is part of the private sphere. Anyone in Canada is permitted to speak whatever language she wishes in private conversation. Each individual Canadian can choose to identify herself as a member of her ancestral community or to withdraw from that community and stress other aspects of identity, such as occupation. Public multiculturalism is thus a liberal multiculturalism, posited on the preservation of private identity. And indeed, despite the academic and social movements of identity politics that have dominated much discussion of multiculturalism in the 1980s and 1990s, early evidence suggests that members of minorities in Canada preferred that the multiculturalism policy take this approach; "members of ethnic groups do not want to be 'locked in' by ethnic boundaries" (Breton 1986, p. 54).

ETHNICITY: ENGLISH CANADIAN

The current buzzword for multiculturalism, tolerance, and racial harmony is "diversity." Diversity must be not only protected but also promoted, many multiculturalist activists believe. Yet while diversity does shower a host of blessings onto Canada, nevertheless national unity requires a Canadian community with a common, shared understanding of identity in all citizens. Such a community is based on common experiences in Canada and a common set of fundamental principles. Citizenship in Canada, as in any other country, must have more meaning than merely legal rights; it must imply shared ways of living, shared values, and loyalty to the country. Without a deep sense of shared citizenship, an emotional attachment of Canadians to the country and

to each other, little except common material goals will hold Canada's inhabitants together.

A country will be more closely knit if it shares a special sense of common life; if it is indeed a national community, not merely a collection of individuals sharing the common legal status of citizen. Communities are often thought to require common ethnic (actually ancestral) origins. But in Canada, there are fewer and fewer commonalities of historic ancestral origin. Immigration patterns and intermarriage create a mélange of citizens, many with four or more ethnic ancestries. At the same time, official policy requires that a community be created voluntarily by people from myriad different ancestral groups. Community in Canada is not supposed to, and cannot, require ethnic, religious or other types of ascriptive conformity.

To many citizens, community is also an ideal that can remedy the individualism that seems to afflict modern Western society. There is a general concern that modernity has produced aggregates of individuals plagued by angst, anomie, and malaise who are incapable of exercising responsibility to their families and the wider society (see e.g., Bibby 1990). One recent result of urban angst has been a social movement toward preoccupation with one's ancestral identity. Tightly-knit communities of recent immigrants, often centred around a temple, mosque or church, seem to have retained the sense of community that native-born Canadians have foolishly lost in the pursuit of material prosperity (Frideres 1993, 65). Thus, many individuals are returning to their religious, national, and ancestral "roots," frequently several generations removed. As in the United States, these ancestral roots endow their fictive Canadian descendants with a symbolic sense of difference from the North American mainstream. (Gans 1979; Breton 1986).

In part, this preoccupation with roots enhances equality, as it signifies the passing of the social domination of the anglo-Protestant elite. For example, Canadians of Eastern European origin who 50 years ago might have changed their names to something sounding more English now feel little or no pressure to do so. In part, however, this new preoccupation with ethnic identity is a manifestation of a social fiction. Yearning to be different, to somehow escape the social malaise of urban life, Canadians seek identity in symbolic adoptions of ancestral ethnicity. "Small differences" of dress, food or ritual behaviour are cultivated as symbolic indicators of uniqueness, in a pattern identified decades ago by Weber (1978, p. 388). But this social movement toward recognition of ancestral difference obscures the reality, argued in this paper, that there is such a thing as an English-Canadian ethnicity.

Community is possible in heterogeneous societies. It is not a community of ascriptive assignment to particular ethnic, religious or ancestral groups; it is a community of diversity, heterodoxy, and individual choice. To a significant extent, Canadians have in the last three decades accommodated themselves to the increasing diversity of their society. They have, in fact, created a new ethnic group, the ethnic English-Canadian. The ethnic English-Canadian is not necessarily a possessor of English or even British ancestry. Mainstream Canadian culture has long since ceased to be "English": even the language bears differences in Canada and the United Kingdom, and English immigrants to Canada frequently find the country, its customs, and linguistic usages strange (Greenhill 1994, p. 33). The ethnic English-Canadian is a new social creation.

Ethnicity is not a static entity; it is not a marker of what one intractably *is*. Ethnicity is a form of cultural practice. It is created and recreated by the perceptions and actions of individuals in society. In part, a sense of ethnicity is located in obvious social markers such as territory, language, religion, and ancestry. But ethnicity is also a complex of cultural behaviours that people have in common. Ethnicity is located in shared customs, beliefs, rituals, norms, and social conventions.

Two important characteristics of English, Canadians are their territory, Canada, and their language,

English. Territory gives individuals a mental map of the world and a sense of how space, time, and topography interact. Even if one has never travelled, as a Canadian one has a sense of expanse, of the flatness of the Prairies and the enormity of the Arctic; this sense is inculcated in school geography lessons and national news and weather reports. Canada, for Canadians, is the centre of the world.

Likewise, English is the public language of social intercourse. English is the vibrant, dynamic language of technical change, modern slang, and the arts. In the public world, language evolves; together, groups of English-speakers create a language that reflects the changing world around them. By contrast, the private non-English maternal language of the home that some Canadians speak may well be dated and outmoded, not having a living public world with which to keep up.

While territory and language are usually accepted as markers of ethnicity elsewhere in the world, they are often ignored in the discussion of what makes a Canadian. Only characteristics brought to Canada by immigrants, not characteristics acquired by virtue of immigration, are deemed relevant to the discussion of Canadian ethnicity. If one speaks English and one's ancestors did not, that is an indication that one has had to give up one's ethnic identity to live in Canada, even if one's nearer ancestors have been speaking English in Canada for several generations. One is similarly expected to have a fictive sense of place, an attachment to a homeland one has never seen, rather than to view Canada as one's homeland.

Another common shared characteristic of Canadians is religion. In the 1991 census 83.4 percent of Canadians identified themselves as Christians (calculated from Statistics Canada 1993). Given the weakness of Christian practice in Canada, the divisions among Christians, and the tendency of some Christian churches to be identified with different ancestral groups, this commonality is little more than an overarching belief system (on actual reli-

gious practice, see Bibby 1993). It does, however, provide most Canadians with common festive days, and a common belief in Sunday as an appropriate day of rest.

Again, religion is seen as a standard mark of ethnicity in the rest of the world, yet in Canada it is often thought that to point out that there is a common religious heritage, experienced by the vast majority of the population, is to undermine the multiculturalist premise of diversity. Yet many Canadians whose ancestors lived in parts of the world outside Europe are also Christian: there are Christians in Canada of Indian, Korean, Chinese, and African ancestry. This is because in a liberal country such as Canada, religion — like culture in general — is not merely a matter of ancestral identity, it is a matter of choice.

Another overarching commonality of Canadian life is that in 1996 about 87 percent of Canadians were of European ancestry (calculated from Statistics Canada 1998*c,d*). Again, many analysts hesitate to point out this obvious fact, assuming that an observation of statistical frequency might be taken to be an observation about the ideal Canadian. But when we observe other parts of the world, "racial" homogeneity, whether African, Indian or Chinese, immediately strikes us as a marker of ethnicity. Nevertheless, common European ancestry is neither sufficient nor necessary to create a Canadian community. In Europe itself, divisions such as language and type of Christianity sharply distinguish one group from another. And as the proportion of Canadians not of European ancestry — or of mixed European and other ancestries — increases, the "racial" identification of Canadians changes to an identification with broader Canadian culture. In Canada, the sharpness of diverse ancestral origins is blurred easily among those who are either born in the country or immigrate at an early age. This is because ethnicity is active and malleable.

Ethnicity evolves, shifts, and changes partly as a consequence of structural factors. An important

structural factor in Canada has been the generational upward mobility that characterized almost all European immigrant groups during Canada's long period of settlement. Immigrants wishing to rise in the social scale knew that adoption of dominant Canadian customs would advance their opportunities. Some changed religions, or adopted more "Canadian" forms of Christianity such as membership in the Anglican or United churches (Bibby 1993, pp. 25-27). Most encouraged their children to learn and speak English, many going so far as to abandon their original language even within the home. Immigrant children attended Canadian schools, where they learned not only the English language but also Canadian rules, customs, and values. They met people not "of their own kind" whom they later frequently married (Reitz and Breton 1994, p. 52).

Among those favouring illiberal multiculturalism, immigrants' adoption of the English language or Christian religion indicates the "racist" (perhaps better "ethnicist") biases of the Anglo-Canadian elite. Certainly such biases existed. But choice also impelled immigrants. Life in Europe, like life in many parts of Asia, Africa, and Central and South America now, was hard and dangerous. Political democracy was unknown in most of the countries producing Canada's early waves of non-British immigrants. Parents who migrated often wished to shed their pasts, literally to change their children into the new breed of free, educated Canadians. Parents did suffer as their children abandoned their customs and churches and brought home previously unthinkable marriage partners. But this does not mean that immigrants abjured all change, that had it been possible they would have transported their entire cultures lock, stock, and barrel to the new world. A new Canadian ethnicity was adopted and created by immigrants, whose ancestral identifications were but one aspect of their sense of self in the new society.

Although Canada's economy is no longer as expansionist as it was during the decades of high European immigration, more recent immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Central and South America do find much economic opportunity, both for themselves and their children. Many also enjoy political democracy for the first time in their lives. In Canada, an orderly, hard-working, law-abiding life can bring security and comfort; this is a luxury in many other parts of the world where property can be arbitrarily confiscated, unemployment rates reach 30 or 40 percent, and political police can incarcerate and torture citizens at will. Canadian multicultural norms of religious tolerance are also attractive to many immigrants, who can equally take advantage of that tolerance by rejecting or by re-embracing their ancestral religions. If the price of this freedom and security is loss of language and strange sons and daughters-in-law, it is a price that for many is well worth paying.

This does not mean that becoming Canadian is a smooth, painless process for immigrants. Particular actions, such as religious worship, participation in ceremonial occasions, courtship rituals, and types of food preferred, are often taken in Canada as the most important markers of one's ethnic identity. These actions — Weber's small differences — do differentiate groups of Canadians from each other. How and on what occasions a family serves food to outsiders, how one welcomes a new child into the world, and how one mourns one's dead, are all important aspects of one's life. Feeling uncomfortable with "Canadian" social norms, recent immigrants may well prefer to socialize with one another, to ignore the public world of Canadianness in favour of the private world of familiarity (See e.g., Hoffman 1989). Nevertheless, as Howard Brotz pointed out, most of these customs are merely "private or social differences in ethnic tastes" (1980, p. 41). As he explained, with the exception of aboriginal Canadians "there are no ethnic differences in Canada about the desirability of the bourgeois-democratic way of life" (ibid.) Moodley makes the same point: "few immigrants choose to exchange attractive individualism, North American style, for the sake of cultural sentimentalities" (1983, p. 322).

To be English-Canadian, then, is to have an ethnic identity. Someone speaking English as a first

language, or as the public language outside the home, is an English-Canadian. An English-Canadian may be of any ethnic or racial background; he may have Ukrainian or Ghanaian rather than British-Protestant ancestry. While the parents' sense of place may be Ukraine or Ghana, the English-Canadian's sense of place will be his immediate environment, the town or city that he knows well enough to get around — the personal map of schools, shops, offices, relatives, and friends (Fischer 1982). His personal life history will have taken place in Canada, not abroad. Though he may eat foods different from other Canadians and worship at a mosque or a temple rather than a church, he will have attended the same schools, learned the same Canadian history and geography, and been present at the same lessons in family studies and sex education.

An English-Canadian is likely to share many of her customs, desires and ambitions with people of dissimilar ethnic or even racial ancestry. Her class position will be an important marker of cultural behaviour. In the occupational sphere, everyone in Canada behaves in much the same way; choice depends significantly on education. Consumer choices are also much the same among groups with different ancestors. Canadians of all ancestral backgrounds favour one-family houses, and purchase cars and labour-saving household appliances.

Ethnicity is also characterized by common norms and values. Among the most important of these norms and values in Canada are the very principles of multiculturalism that the ideological elite now strives to implant in all Canadians via the educational system and state publicity, and which are absorbed (at least in part) by anyone whose education is primarily in Canada. To be Canadian, increasingly, is in state ideology and public practice to be a multiculturalist: multiculturalism is a key Canadian value.

This is not to deny that racial, religious, and ethnic prejudices still exist in Canada. They do, and they affect how Canadians think of themselves. To

be of Ghanaian ancestry, for example, is to be vulnerable to racism, whereas to be of Ukrainian is not. To bear non-European phenotypical features or speak with a heavy non-Canadian accent is always to be vulnerable to inquiries regarding where one is "from." Those perceived to be part of the "multicultural (minority) communities" may find that some of their fellow citizens do not accord them the status of "real" Canadian, although this implicit hierarchy of Canadianness long precedes the establishment of the policy of multiculturalism. And discrimination does affect the employment opportunities of some ethnic and racial groups (Henry and Ginzberg 1993; Reitz 1993; but for differences among non-European groups, showing that some earn above the average for British-Canadians, see Winn 1985). Yet incidents of racism are not sufficient in and of themselves to convince citizens of non-European descent that they are not Canadians. For example, of 19 civic leaders in Hamilton, Ontario of non-aboriginal, non-European descent interviewed in 1996-97, only one said racism made her feel an outsider in Canada: all the others expressed a strong sentiment that they were Canadian (Howard 1998).

That Canadians themselves recognize their ethnicity is evident in their willingness to identify themselves as "Canadian" when given the chance. In a national survey conducted in 1991, 89 percent of respondents "identified with being a Canadian," while only 6 percent did not. When told that they could choose only one answer to indicate their identity, 63 percent chose Canadian. Most tellingly, only 13 percent of those born in Canada identified themselves primarily by their "ethnic origin" (i.e., their ancestry), while among those born outside Canada, only 33 percent so identified themselves (Angus Reid Group 1991, pp. 3-4).

On the 1991 national census, only 2.8 percent of respondents wrote in that they were Canadian (in the box marked "other"). Yet prior to that census, Statistics Canada had conducted a series of mini-polls and focus groups that suggested that large

numbers of people chose "Canadian" as their full or partial ethnic identification when that option was presented to them. In one experiment the total of those choosing full or partial Canadian identification was 53 percent, although in others it was 30 or 35 percent. Wanting information about ancestral, not social, ethnicity, Statistics Canada did not include Canadian as a specific ethnic option on the 1991 census, leaving individuals to figure out for themselves that it was an ethnic category (Pryor *et al.* 1992; for other studies showing the tendency of respondents to identify as ethnic Canadians see Mackie and Brinkerhoff 1984; Roberts and Clifton 1982).

By 1996 Statistics Canada had decided to include "Canadian" as an example of an ethnic group in its census form. As a result, 18.7 percent of the population reported Canadian as their sole ethnic origin. Another 12.2 percent reported mixed origins that included Canadian, for a total of 30.9 percent reporting to be fully or partially Canadian in an ethnic sense (calculated from Statistics Canada 1998*c*). In recognizing Canadian as an ethnic category, Statistics Canada has opened the possibility of a stronger sense of Canadian identity. It remains for the government to follow suit, to encourage citizens' ethnic identification with Canada at the same time as it continues to pursue its policy of liberal multiculturalism.

LIBERAL MULTICULTURALISM AND CANADIAN UNITY

In 1994 the Montreal novelist, Neil Bissoondath, created a stir by publishing a book criticizing multiculturalism.

> I would venture that a Canadian of Italian descent and a Canadian of Pakistani descent are likely to have more in common with one another than with Italians or Pakistanis ... Such commonality is not possible, however, if a racial vision leads the way.... [M]ulticulturalism has

failed us. In eradicating the centre, in evoking uncertainty as to what and who is a Canadian, it has diminished all sense of Canadian values, of what is a Canadian (Bissoondath 1994, p. 71).

Originally from Trinidad, and possessing extremely remote Indian/Hindu ancestral background, Bissoondath may be read as an immigrant pleading to be recognized as an ethnic Canadian. His behaviour, he says, is Canadian, like the behaviour of many other immigrants, no matter what their ethnic or racial background. He lives in Canada, not Trinidad; he lives in the present, not the mythical Hindu past of his distant Indian ancestors. It is one thing to recognize the interesting and valued cultural backgrounds of the many immigrants to Canada: it is another to force those backgrounds on them as their sole ethnic identity.

Bissoondath seems to be afraid of the illiberal multiculturalism — forcing individuals to stay in their ancestral boxes — that he thinks is the dominant ideological trend in Canadian discussion. This is a fear also expressed by Reginald W. Bibby in his provocatively titled *Mosaic Madness*: "Since the 1960s ... [Canada] has been leading the world in advocating freedom through pluralism and relativism ... trying to be a multinational society, enshrining coexistence and tolerance. The preliminary results are beginning to appear. The news is not that good" (1990, p. 3).

Bibby confuses multiculturalism with multinationalism, a policy which, if it did exist, might indeed fracture the Canadian nation, as Bibby believes is happening (ibid., p. 96). For critics such as Bibby and Bissoondath, multiculturalism is an illiberal policy which promotes individuals' and families' preoccupations with ancestral identity to such an extent that it undermines the sense of community necessary to shared citizenship in Canada. But this is a false fear. The official multiculturalism policy in Canada to date is liberal, and as such, it promotes the integration of immigrants into the dominant society. It does not promote multi-

nationalism; rather, by incorporating immigrants and non-whites into the Canadian mainstream as equals whose ancestral cultures are symbolically valued, it promotes Canadianness.

This democratic and egalitarian approach to all religions, languages, and customs promotes Canadian inclusivity. Multiculturalism "normalizes" a wide range of customs and makes the enjoyment of such customs part of what it means to be a Canadian. It paradoxically universalizes specificity; all Canadians are expected to have and to enjoy a specific ethno-cultural ancestral identity as well as their universal Canadian identity. To be Canadian now, in the dominant ideology, is to revel in the exciting international flavour of the society. Far from threatening it, as they might have been perceived to do in the past, recent immigrants vivify Canadian culture.

For the state to symbolically recognize the varied cultural origins of Canadians, as Canada's multiculturalism policy does, is to acknowledge that individuals have identities other than mere citizen. Liberal multiculturalism acknowledges the social need for difference, for smaller, more close-knit communities separated from the Canadian mainstream. But it does not mandate such difference. In contrast, to stretch multiculturalism to the point at which it becomes an illiberal principle, as academics such as Kallen and Abu-Laban and Stasiulis suggest, would force Canadians into ethnic groups and ignore the fundamental individualism of Canadians' cultural choices.

Abu-Laban and Stasiulis want group identities to take precedence over individual ones: "At best," they state of Canada's policy of multiculturalism, "what is left is a discourse emphasizing individual as opposed to group rights through the subsumption of the pluralist notion of multiculturalism under the individualist notion of citizenship" (1992, p. 372). In an earlier article Peter made a similar comment, criticizing multiculturalism for promoting ethnicity as a sort of cultural festival, while actually advocating "societal mobility of the ethnic individual while retarding the advancement of ethnic groups" (1981, p. 65).

But the Canadian multicultural policy is indeed predicated on individual citizenship, not on group rights. Citizenship requires a "thick" sense of belonging: individual citizens of a country must feel that they have ties to other members. As Fierlback notes, "Too strong an emphasis upon cultural identity discourages identification with those who are clearly different from oneself" (1996, p. 20). An illiberal multiculturalism policy that forgets or ignores the many commonalities of citizenship — such as regionalism, professional affiliation, personal interests, or intermarriage — that emerge from identities other than religion, culture, and ethnicity would undermine individual citizens' connectedness with other Canadians and their sense of belonging to Canada. Canada's multiculturalism policy does not protect the rights of groups. It protects individuals' rights to enact or preserve ancestral cultures, as they see fit, without any obligation whatsoever to the groups to which they may be perceived to belong.

The danger of moving from a liberal policy of individual rights to an illiberal one of group rights underlies much of the recent concern with multiculturalism in both the US and Canada; Schlesinger, for example, worries about a cult of ethnicity whose "underlying philosophy is that America is not a nation of individuals at all but a nation of groups ... and that division into ethnic communities establishes the basic structure of American society" (1992, p. 16). This is the attitude reflected in Bannerji's (1997) argument that race and ethnicity are such salient aspects of the identity of all Canadians that there is in effect no difference in the way minorities were treated in 1920 and the way they were treated in the mid-1990s. Relying in part on her own experience as an adult immigrant, Bannerji implies that it is impossible for an individual not of European descent to feel Canadian.

Such a feeling is common, though certainly not universal among first-generation adult immigrants (Howard 1998). But as much empirical evidence shows (Reitz and Breton 1994), the salience of ethnicity declines drastically among second- and third-

generation immigrants (that is, Canadians with immigrant parents or grandparents), who normally feel a sense of connection to others in the country who have ethnically different ancestors. Even many first-generation immigrants feel such a connection, especially those who are already professionals prior to coming to Canada, who speak English before arrival, and who have a generally cosmopolitan outlook (Moodley 1983). A public policy that encourages liberal multiculturalism can simultaneously encourage identification with ancestral culture and a sense of connection with other Canadians.

The danger of a policy of illiberal multiculturalism, as Appiah suggests and as Bibby and Bissoondath fear, is that ethnic and racial essentialism could replace the complex, diverse identities of individual Canadians that enable them routinely to form ties with those who do not share their religious, ethnic or racial background. In the short term, a policy of illiberal multiculturalism might result in more social recognition of, and more pride in, a minority religion such as Islam, or a non-white race. But in the long run, the result might well be a fragmentation of society and a closing in of the different groups. Differentiated ethnic and national groups would coexist uneasily in a shared public space. This would be the result of the type of multiculturalism that Kallen and Abu-Laban and Stasiulis advocate.

But in fact, this warning about illiberal multiculturalism is presently a warning about a false danger. The Canadian public policy of multiculturalism remains — and ought to remain — liberal, rooted in individual citizens' choices; academic and activist advocacy of illiberal group-oriented policies has had no effect on government in this regard. And social behaviour reflects the appropriateness of government policy. Immigrants and their children do become ethnic Canadians.

Paradoxically, liberal protection of cultural "uniqueness" promotes a universal sense of citizenship. Immigrants' "strong affiliation with their new

country seems to be based in large part on its willingness not just to tolerate but to welcome cultural difference"(Kymlicka and Norman 1995, p. 307). Members of minorities and new Canadians feel more valued than previously; as such, they find it easier, and more to their liking, to become Canadians. Canadians exist: there is a Canadian identity in which all Canadians, regardless of ethnic ancestry, can share. Identity is a state of mind; to think of oneself as Canadian is to be Canadian. Public policy needs to promote this Canadianness, which increases citizens' loyalty to each other and the nation as a whole. A loyal Canadian will not question the nation "as a project" (MacIntyre 1995, p. 221): the entity Canada is something of which a person feels part and to which he or she is bound.

At its best, nationhood is based on a sense of commonality among all legal citizens; at its worst, on an exclusivist sense that only people of certain ethnic, racial, or religious background can be citizens. In part via its policy of multiculturalism, Canada has progressed beyond a notion of citizenship based on exclusion of the "Other." But it has not yet created a strong sense of citizenship based on common experience in, and loyalty to, the country of Canada. Yet Canada is increasingly composed not of strangers from different parts of the world and different cultural backgrounds, but of people who share not only the flat, thin legal state of citizenship, but also the complex, thickening state of fictive kinship that underlies the sense of nationhood.

The policy of illiberal multiculturalism suggested by Kallen and Abu-Laban and Stasiulis (and more broadly by those who adhere to the social movement of the politics of identity) would reduce Canadians' sense of citizenship and nationhood. National unity, a sense of identification with the country at large and with fellow citizens, would be undermined by a public policy that fears to acknowledge that people who live in Canada for any length of time become ethnic Canadians. The trick is in

the balance. Ethnic ancestry and actual personal culture are both valued forms of identity. But they are not the only forms. Personal life experience, personal connection with others in the land of one's birth or adoption, is also a form of identity. Individual immigrants frequently insist that they are Canadians. They value their citizenship papers and their new sense of belonging: their sense of Canadianness thickens as they and their descendants stay in Canada (Howard 1998). Canadian public policy can easily acknowledge and strengthen that thickened identity without undermining liberal multiculturalism.

The more important issue, though, is not the sense of identity adopted by recent immigrants: it is the sense of identity of all Canadians. Whether Quebec separates or not, Canadians in the rest of Canada will need a stronger identity in the twenty-first century than they presently have. A public policy that stresses difference and diversity, but forgets also to stress sameness and similarity, will make it more difficult for such an identity to coalesce. *Pace* Bouchard, English-Canada is a nation, but it is a hidden nation, not yet revealed to itself. One step in preserving and strengthening the nation of English-Canada is to recognize that there is such a thing as Canadian ethnicity. The other step is to preserve the policy of multiculturalism as it now exists; that is, to preserve liberal multiculturalism and not adopt its illiberal variant.

NOTE

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