

What does it mean to be “Canadian”?

“Although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other” - **Pierre Elliott Trudeau**

If there is “no official culture,” what words, categories, or labels can describe being “Canadian”?

Canadian Multiculturalism

The **paradox** of multiculturalism:

How to make society safe “for” diversity yet also make it safe “from” diversity?

Is it Political? Social? Economic?

MC can be defined as a principle and a practice for engaging diversity as different yet equal (Fleras 2002).

Multiculturalism can be understood in several ways:

As a social fact

As an ideology

As a policy (1970s Ethnicity Multiculturalism; 1980s Equity Multiculturalism; 1990s and beyond Civic Multiculturalism)

Criticisms of Multiculturalism

- Encouraging ethnic separatism
- development of socially harmful and politically dangerous transnational ties.
- Putting up ‘cultural walls’ around ethnic groups
- eroding our ability to act collectively as citizens
- Only emphasis on depoliticized “song and dance” activities that are non-threatening to British economic, political, and cultural hegemony
- “Symbolic Multiculturalism” maintains the status quo and is premised on a hierarchical order of cultures

Domination & Subordination

- **Dominant groups** hold power and authority in society & set the parameters and limits within which subordinates operate
- Dominant groups can define who is a “real” Canadian
- The dominant group (white, monied, older, Christian, men) is seen as the “norm” for humanity

Forms of Racism

- 1) **Racial bigotry**: open, conscious expression of racist views by an individual
- 2) **Institutional or systemic racism**: racist practices, rules, and laws that have become part of the system
- 3) **Polite, smiling, or everyday racism**: racism hidden behind smile or words that seem friendly (i.e. microaggressions)
- 4) **Aversive Racism**: when people try to avoid contact with members from different racial communities

The Question: “Where Are You From?”

- Brings race to the forefront of identity
- “where are you from?” Hill suggests is code for “what is your race”?

Microaggressions is a name for brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities or put-downs, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights, invalidations, and insult

- can be expressed verbally, nonverbally, and environmentally
- They can be very difficult to identify
- Often meant as complimentary

Can be asked out of genuine curiosity

Can also be a microaggression by implying that:

- non-whites are not “real” Canadians
- non-whites do not belong
- non-whites are inferior

Microaggressions often dismissed as insignificant by members of dominant cultures

At a structural level, exclusion and belonging materialize in meaningful ways: example of racism and the justice system in Canada