The Politics of Multiculturalism

Multicultural Governance in Comparative Perspective

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Managing Difference, Making a Difference: Multiculturalism as Inclusive Governance in Canada

Introduction: The Paradoxicality of Multiculturalism in Canada

Canada represents one of several democratic societies to have capitalized on multicultural principles as a principled (formal/official/rule-based) basis for multicultural governance. That it has managed to pull off the once seemingly impossible is quite astonishing—namely, to forge a working unity from its disparate parts without compromising its principles in the process (see Saul 2008). Multiculturalism emerged as part of a broader liberalization process for shoring up minority rights by abolishing inherited forms of inequality and capricious patterns of exclusion consistent with Canada's long-standing self-definition as a "white man's country" (Kymlicka 2007a). In redefining conventional patterns of governance, multiculturalism sought to establish a new political arrangement based on individual multicultural rights rather than on the tyranny of nationalistic (French-English) group attachments (Lupul 2005). In hopes of harmonizing competing ethnicities without losing control of the overall agenda, Canada's official Multiculturalism persists for similar reasons—the pursuit of political, ideological, and economic considerations involving state functions, private interests, and electoral survival. A commitment to multiculturalism is reaping dividends: Canada's reputation in spearheading the concept of multicultural governance has garnered rave reviews—as gleaned from high-flying personalities including Bono of U2, who claims the world "needs more Canadas," and the Aga Khan, who praised Canada as the world's most "successful pluralist society" (see Biles et al. 2005:25).
In advancing Canada's society-building interests while acknowledging a commitment to social justice and cultural identity, official Multiculturalism has emerged as the quintessential strategy of pluralistic governance. A normative framework is established to not only prescribe a proactive role in facilitating interethnic equity through removal of discriminatory barriers and prejudicial attitudes but also secure national interests by defusing potential intergroup conflicts (Goody 2007; Ley 2007). In that narratives about Canada's national identity pivot around its much-ballyhooed status as a tolerant and inclusive society (Moosa 2007), Canadianness is increasingly informed by an embrace of multiculturalism. But theory is one thing, practice has proven another. When it comes to the multiculturalism in a multicultural governance, Canadians appear better at "walking the walk" rather than "walking the talk," in effect reinforcing the complexities and contradictions of operationalization, implementation, and enforcement. In other words, no matter how revered or vilified, an official Multiculturalism is inescapably prone to paradoxes that invariably generate oppositional tensions, including the following (also Belkhodja et al. 2006).

- To one side, Canadians believe that all citizens are equal before law; to the other side is the notion that the majority should reasonably accommodate minority rights (within limits and without imposing undue hardships on the host society), even when cultural practices clash with core mainstream values.
- A multicultural Canada is predisposed to accommodate diverse cultural practices, but how can it do so without compromising the commonalities that bind and unite (Cardozo 2005)?
- How does Canada's Multiculturalism balance collective rights with the rights of individuals within minority communities (Kymlicka 1995; Okin 1999; Stein 2007), and can it do so without rupturing a commitment to national unity and identity?
- Multiculturalism is about recognition and respect alongside integration and inclusion. It also constitutes a political act to achieve the political goals of preserving the prevailing distribution of power, privilege, and resources.
- Multiculturalism is about challenging and changing patterns of inequality, but it appears to have had minimal impact in dislodging a racialized status quo.
- Canada is widely regarded as the quintessential multicultural society in need of constant reinforcement and modification. However multiculturalism is so woven into the fabric of people's lives and Canadian society that its assumptions or hidden agendas are rarely questioned.

- Multiculturalism is explicitly about justice, participation, and inclusion for minorities and migrants; implicitly its about securing dominant interests and the prevailing status quo.
- Multiculturalism creates a long-term investment for living together with differences, although it also constitutes a stopgap measure for cooling out troublesome constituents.
- While Multiculturalism may reflect the sincerest intentions of creating a just and inclusive Canada, it can end up exercising the opposite effect by inadvertently fostering inequality, ethnic separatism, and intergroup friction (Berliner and Hull 2000; Kostash 2000).
- Critics of Multiculturalism often label it as a scapegoat for the failures of immigration and integration (Siddiqui 2007). Such accusations may be unfair; nevertheless, Multiculturalism can be justifiably criticized for glossing over structural barriers that deter full and equal inclusion, upholding a static and essentialized notion of culture, and paying insufficient attention to institutional designs that deny or exclude.

In short, a central paradox underpins the question of multicultural governance: how to establish a rules-based framework alongside a set of normative standards that can engage difference as different yet equal, without eroding the goals of unity, identity, and prosperity in the process? Or phrased alternatively, how to construct a multicultural governance that makes Canada safe "for" difference (maximizes benefits), yet safe "from" difference (minimizes costs) (see Schlesinger 1992; Samuel and Schachhuber 2000; Pearson 2001). The perils of balancing unity (commonality) with diversity are all too obvious. Too much difference and not enough unity may destabilize a governance to the point of dismemberment. Too little difference but too much unity can create a one-size-fits-all leviathan that stifles as it standardizes (Fish 1997). This paradox—multiculturalism as progressively inclusive yet potentially exclusionary—reinforces a widely held perception that Canada's official Multiculturalism suffers from a dearth of critical analysis with respect to what it says it is doing versus what it is really doing, and why (Dupont and Lemarchand 2001; Wood and Gilbert 2005).

In that Canada defines itself as the premier multicultural governance in terms of demographics, ideology, policies and programs, and outcomes, there is much to commend in taking a closer look at what works—how and why. This chapter addresses the principles, policies, and practices of Canada's official Multiculturalism as well as its politics and paradoxes in constructing an inclusive governance, one that engages the politics of difference without capitulating to chaos or abandoning a commitment to
community, consensus, and cohesion. The chapter contends that, notwithstanding shifts in emphasis and narratives since its inception in 1971, an official Multiculturalism retains its core mission—a commitment to an inclusive governance where none are excluded (or rewarded) because of who they are or where they come from. The chapter also emphasizes Multiculturalism as official policy and program in terms of (a) its evolving political framework, (b) its implementation as practice at political, minority, and institutional levels, (c) promotion of a multicultural integration and integrative multiculturalism, (d) debates over reasonable accommodation, and (e) public opinion and critical reactions. Competing notions of multiculturalism in Canada are also addressed, namely Quebec's interculturalism project with its focus on an inclusive nation building. The chapter concludes, accordingly; that Canada's multicultural agenda may not be perfect in aspirational design or enforceable implementation. Nevertheless, with its pragmatic blend of checks and balances, it may constitute one of the least imperfect governance models for living together with differences.

Diversity and Difference in Canada

To say that Canada is a diverse society is clearly an understatement. Canada’s diversity is reflected in the visibility of its demographics, the nature of its immigration program, and its patterns of immigration settlement. It is also reflected in the decisions of numerous migrants and minorities to preserve their ethnocultural distinctiveness. The following overview provides a look at diversity and difference in Canada based on 2006 Census data. This overview is disaggregated into visible minorities and immigrants, a Canada-wide picture, and breakdowns by province and urban areas. Also included are immigrant sources and flows for 2006.

- In the 2006 Census, over 200 ethnic origins (including Aboriginal) existed in Canada. In 1901, only 25 ethnic origins were reported. Canadian was the most frequently reported ethnic origin in 2006 with just over 10 million, either alone or in combination with other ethnic origins (comprising 32 percent of the total responses, down from 39 percent in 2001). Following behind Canadian were (both single and multiple origins) English (6.6 million), French, Scottish, Irish, German, Italian, Chinese, North American Indian, Ukrainian, and Dutch (1 million). The percentage of those reporting multiple origins continued to rise, from 35.8 percent in 1996 to 41.4 percent in 2006. A total of 5,068,100 persons claimed to belong to the category of visible minority (itself a contentious category; Fleras 2008a), thus accounting for 16.2 percent of Canada's population, up from 11.2 percent in 1996 and 4.1 percent in 1981. Canada's visible minority population increased by 27.1 percent between 2001 and 2006 compared to an increase of 5.4 percent for the total population. Fully 75 percent of all immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 were visible minorities. South Asians surpassed Chinese as the largest visible minority group in 2006, with blacks as the third-largest minority. Most South Asians reported ancestral backgrounds from the Indian subcontinent, with East Indians the largest in number, followed by those from Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Over half of the black population reported Caribbean origins, followed closely by African origins. Next were those who identified with the British Isles, Canadian, and French origins.
- With 54.2 percent of Canada's visible minority population living in Ontario, visible minorities are 22 percent of Ontario's population. Twenty-five years ago, visible minorities accounted for 6.4 percent of Ontario's population.
- Nearly 96 percent of visible minorities lived in a Metropolitan census area, compared with 68.1 percent of the general population. If just the MTV areas—Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver—are included, they are home to 75 percent of visible minorities. Markham, Ontario (just north of Toronto City), has the highest percentage of visible minorities at 65.4 percent of its population. Richmond BC follows closely behind with about 64 percent. By contrast, cities like Moncton, Trois Rivieres, and Saguenay reported statistically insignificant levels of visible minorities.
- Toronto remains the demographic diversity hub of Canada; 42.9 percent of Canada’s visible minority population live in Toronto (as well, over 40 percent of all immigrants to Canada), while 42.9 percent of Toronto’s population declare a visible minority status. Vancouver’s visible minority population accounts for 41.7 percent of its total population; the figure for Montreal is 16.5 percent, with the vast majority living on the island rather than in the suburbs.
- The year 2006 was a fairly typical year for immigration with respect to overall numbers, source countries, and patterns of selection. A total of 251,639 immigrants arrived in Canada, with the majority arriving under the economic class (138,257), followed by the family class (70,508), refugee and protected persons class (32,492), and other (10,223). Plans for 2007 and 2008 are to admit between 240,000 and 265,000 new permanent residents (immigrants) (Citizenship and Immigration 2006). Also, 112,658 temporary work permits were
issued to foreign workers; 61,703 new study permits were granted to international students; 13,412 temporary resident permits were dispensed; 987,378 temporary visitor visas were issued; and Canadian citizenship was granted to 259,802 permanent residents who qualified to apply for citizenship after living in Canada for three years. Nearly 80 percent of immigrants to Canada reflect non-European and non-American sources, with India, China, Pakistan, and the Philippines ranking as the top four.

Putting Canada's Multiculturalism into Perspective

Canada is widely admired for its many qualities; two, however, appear foremost. First, people around the world marvel at Canada's ability to resist the pressures of absorption as the fifty-first state of the world's most powerful melting pot. Second, people are also astonished by Canada's resourcefulness in weaving a united society from the strands of diversity (Adams 2007). How do Canadians manage to keep a lid on those ethnic tensions that have fractured other societies into warring factions? Consider the relatively smooth transformation of once stodgy provincial capitals like Toronto and Vancouver into cosmopolitan complexes without experiencing paralyzing strife (Ibbotson 2005). To be sure, the potential for unraveling Canada's social fabric along ethnic lines is always present. But while other countries are groping for solutions to "accommodate difference," Canada is pursuing a promising, if unprecedented, quest for multicultural coexistence along principled lines (Adams 2007; Kymlicka 2007a). Or as Canada's governor-general, Michaëlle Jean, put it, Canada constitutes a multicultural role model in the art of living together with differences (cited in O'Neill 2008).

How does this assessment stand up to scrutiny? Any response must acknowledge a sense of perspective. First, compared with its historical past, Canada's engagement with diversity and difference has shown vast improvement. The country's racist history left much to be desired: Canada originated in the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples and their lands, while Canada-building was predicated on policies and practices that routinely exploited or excluded racialized minorities—including restrictions to Chinese and East Indian immigrants (Li 2003); the internment and dispossession of Japanese-Canadians during World War II (Sunahara 1981); the enslavement of blacks and their segregation from mainstream institutions until the 1950s (Walker 1997; Backhouse 1999); and the pervasive anti-Semitism of the 1920s and 1930s, which culminated in the rejection of Jewish émigrés from Nazi Germany (Penslar 2005). The extent to which this exclusion went beyond the perversions of a few misguided bigots but pervaded both institutional structures and government policies speaks volumes of the systemic embeddedness of white supremacist ideologies (Thobani 2007; Wallis and Fleras 2009; Hier et al. 2009).

Second, consider global comparisons. Compared with other societies that routinely violate human rights, with abuses ranging from ethnic cleansing and mass expulsion to forced exploitation and coercive assimilation, Canada possesses an enviable reputation as a paragon of virtue, tolerance, and compassion. The enshrinement of the 1960 Bill of Rights, the Human Rights Act of 1977, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that came into effect in 1985 has seen to that. And yet Canada's commitment to the protection and promotion of aboriginal rights is routinely criticized both domestically and internationally. Canada's rejection of a widely backed UN protocol to protect indigenous people's rights has done little to disabuse critics of this notion (Maaka and Fleras 2008). To add insult to injury, UN Human Rights Committees have rebuked Canada's treatment of vulnerable minorities, citing antiterrorist legislation that is too broad and imprecise, especially over the issuing of security certificates to arrest, detain, or expel immigrants without due process. Paradoxically, however, Canada's lofty status as a global pacesetter makes it vulnerable to criticism. Even the smallest of infractions, which would barely register a mention in many foreign countries, tend to be amplified in Canada because of its exacting standards (Levitt 1997). Not surprisingly, Canadians appear perplexed and angry when international bodies chastise Canada for relatively minor human rights violations, including its use of the label "visible minorities" (Fleras 2008a), while rogue regimes are rarely condemned.

Third, while Canada glitters by comparison with its past and with others, it also falls short of established benchmarks. Canadians are adept at "talking the walk" when articulating the ideals of tolerance, openness, and inclusiveness; they are less inclined to put these ideas into practice. Relations between racialized minorities and the rest of Canada tend to waver uneasily between grudging acceptance and thinly veiled racism, with the specter of public backlash ever present (Hier and Bolaria 2007). Discrimination and racism are not simply relics from the past, but are so deeply ingrained and structurally embedded that any chance of disappearing in the foreseeable future is nil to none (Razack 2004; Jiwani 2006; Thobani 2007). And while racism is no longer blatant, more subtle forms of racism exert an equally powerful negative impact. Anti-Semitism persists, albeit in different guises (Weinfeld 2005); white supremacist groups proliferate because of digital media and mobile technology; and racialized minorities continue to do poorly in socioeconomic terms despite a commitment...
to inclusiveness, justice, and participation (Galabuzi 2006; Henry and Tator 2006; Jimenez 2009). The fact that highly skilled immigrants find it difficult to secure appropriate employment exposes a gap between immigration ideals and multiculturalism realities (Pendakur 2005; Teelucksingh and Galabuzi 2005). Of particular dismay as Canada’s most egregious human rights violation is the continued disengagement of Aboriginal peoples (Belanger 2008). In that Aboriginal communities remain politically repressed, economically depressed, and culturally oppressed, such an indictment reflects poorly on Canada’s lavish reputation (Fridères and Gadacz 2008).

This admittedly selective overview paints a discordant picture of Canada’s multicultural aspirations. From a distance, Canada looks idyllic; up close and the picture blurs, with little to boast about in the mismanagement of diversity and difference. That discord suggests the possibility of a fourth interpretation—that Canada is positioned somewhere in between the extremes of good and bad. Neither a paragon of virtue nor the fountainhead of all evils, Canada’s record for managing difference probably falls somewhere in the middle. In comparison to the past or to other countries, Canada soars; when compared to the ideals that many Canadians espouse, Canada misses the mark. Initiatives for engaging diversity and difference are enlightened at times, yet callously expedient at other times, especially as Canadians strive to balance minority rights with national interests. Perhaps the best possible spin acknowledges a creative tension at the heart of Canada’s multicultural governance, with difference (cultural) and equality (social) and unity (national) pulling in opposite directions. And nowhere are the paradoxes and promises more evident than in the emergence and evolution of Canada’s official multiculturalism as an aspirational blueprint for multiculturally governing difference and diversity.

Official Multiculturalism: An Unfinished Policy-Project in Progress

That Canada is officially multicultural is stating the obvious. Yet the irony is improbable: from its inception in 1971 when it barely garnered a paragraph in Canada’s national newspaper, official Multiculturalism has evolved to the point where it constitutes an inextricable component of Canada’s national narrative. Having profoundly altered how Canadians think about themselves and their relationship to the world, four decades of official Multiculturalism have orchestrated a national consensus over the principle of living together without disassembling Canada in the process. The origins of Multiculturalism revolved around the pragmatism of inclusiveness—to make ethnicity irrelevant as a marker in Canadian society by rejecting the single-minded nature of nationalism with its corresponding belief that one nation's culture is superior to others (Kruhlak 2003; Jacobs 2008). Ethnicity would no longer be used to rank Canadians or to exclude them because they lacked the status of the so-called founding nation groups (English and French). As a result, the inception of multiculturalism not only altered the conception of who legitimately was Canadian but also transformed the nature of power relations in Canada along the lines of justice, empowerment, and participation (Reitz 2009).

Multiculturalism also originated around the quest for Canada-building by establishing an inclusionary framework for intercultural relations (Kunz and Sykes 2008). It continues to persist for precisely the same reasons, namely, the inclusion of migrants and minorities by modifying the rules of integration (Kymlicka 2001). The goal of multiculturalism as governance has never wavered from its underlying rationale—the possibility of living together with differences without letting differences get in the way of the “living together.” Only the means for achieving this goal have changed because of demographic upheavals and political developments, with ethnicity-based solutions giving way to equity-grounded reforms and, more recently, the promotion of civic belonging and participation. Three overlapping policy stages can be discerned in describing Multiculturalism as an evolving political framework: ethnicity, equity, and civic multiculturalism. An integration stage is an emergent possibility (Kunz and Sykes 2008).

Ethnicity multiculturalism (1970s)

A commitment to multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was articulated by the Liberal government in 1971 when the then prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau declared his government's intentions to embrace "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework." In the words of Trudeau, the linking of individual rights with equal status under multiculturalism would “strengthen the solidarity of the Canadian people by enabling all Canadians to participate fully and without discrimination in defining and building the nation’s future.” Four major principles secured this reconfiguring of Canada along multicultural lines:

- **Equality of status**: Canada does not have an official culture; all cultures are equal. Yes, Canada would continue to have laws, rules, conventions, and so forth, but it would not explicitly favor any particular
culture, while consciously supporting an individual's freedom of choice (Forbes 2007).

- **Canadian identity**: Diversity lies at the heart of Canadian identity.
- **Personal choice**: Individuals have the right to identify with the cultural tradition of their choice.
- **Protection of individual rights**: Everyone is entitled to freedom from discrimination through removal of discriminatory barriers and cultural jealousies.

To put these principles into practice—preservation, participation, and interaction—the government proposed initiatives to (1) help those cultural groups that demonstrated a commitment to develop, share, and contribute to Canada; (2) assist the members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society; (3) promote creative encounters and exchanges among all Canadian cultural groups in advancing national unity; and (4) equip immigrants to acquire one of Canada's official languages to ensure full participation in Canadian society.

An ethnicity commitment to multiculturalism initially focused on the protection and promotion of Canada as an ethnic mosaic. Multicultural discourses were rooted in an almost essentialized understanding of ethnicity as primordial and immutable—rather than flexible, dynamic, and relational—with members locked into hermetically sealed groups. According to tabled documents, however, the government flatly rejected the principle of assisting any group to cut themselves off from the rest of Canada (Foote 2006). But a commitment to cultural preservation or celebrating diversity was not high on the multicultural agenda—at least not beyond an initial commitment when powerful ethnic lobbyists prevailed. If anything, the goals of an official Multiculturalism were twofold. The first was to eliminate discriminations rooted in cultural prejudices while improving minority and migrant participation and integration into a more inclusive Canada. This commitment was predicated on the assumption that migrants and minorities are more likely to emotionally embrace Canada—not less—if they cultivated a sense of shared identity and community pride (Adams 2008). The second was to create a new symbolic order: together with an official bilingualism (implemented in 1969), an official multiculturalism was designed to wean Canada away from its former essentialist conception of Britishness (and Frenchness), while differentiating Canada's multicultural mosaic from America's melting pot assimilationism (Dupont and Lemarchand 2001). Hegemonic interests prevailed as well. As Sunera Thobani points out, in addition to addressing the crisis of legitimacy created by Aboriginal, French, and minority protest, adoption of multiculturalism helped to stabilize notions of Canada as a white man's society by reinventing a national narrative that masked—and continues to mask—the racism and power intrinsic to Canada-building. She writes:

> Multiculturalist policies and its after-effects on popular culture eroded the salience of anti-racist politics and discourses; it disguised the persistence of white supremacy and power in the new constitution of whiteness as signifying "tolerance" Multiculturalism avoided recognition of the critical intersection of institutional power and interpersonal forms of racism, demanding only tolerance at the interpersonal level of interaction. Knowledge about the nature of racism, and the role it has historically played in Canadian nation-building, has thus been made peripheral. (Thobani 2007:160)

**Equity multiculturalism (1980s)**

The focus of official Multiculturalism underwent significant change by the early 1980s. Instead of emphasizing interethnicity as the multicultural core, the logic behind an equity Multiculturalism embraced the more pragmatic concerns of racialized immigrants. The often-different requirements of immigrants from so-called nonconventional sources proved more perplexing, since their visibility complicated the prospect of settling down, fitting in, and moving up (Fleras 2009). Migrant and minority concerns shifted accordingly: for new immigrants, the importance of dismantling racial barriers to opportunity superseded concerns over cultural preservation (McRoberts 1997). The earlier emphasis on ethnicity and identity as keys to integration was subsequently replaced by a commitment to the principles of equity, social justice, and institutional inclusiveness (Agocs and Boyd 1993; Donaldson 2004). Funding allocations shifted as well. Rather than simply doling out money to ethnocultural organizations or events as had been the case in the very early days of multiculturalism, authorities channeled multicultural spending into equity goals of antiracism, race relations, and removal of discriminatory barriers at institutional levels.

Subsequent developments consolidated the political profile of official multiculturalism. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which came into effect in 1985, constitutionally entrenched multiculturalism as a distinguishing feature of Canadian life. Section 27 read: "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." Implications of Section 27 were two-edged: Emergence of multiculturalism as an interpretative tool at the highest levels of constitutional decision making may have reinforced its status as a fundamental characteristic of Canada. But as an interpretive
clause, with little enforcement clout, multiculturalism constituted a weak, 
almost empty, norm (Eliadis 2007). The prominence of multiculturalism 
was further secured with passage of the Multiculturalism Act in 1988, 
in the process consolidating Canada's status as the world's first statutory 
multiculturalism. Passage of the act sought to respect cultures, promote 
participation, reduce discrimination, encourage ingroup bonding as a pre-
condition for outgroup bridging, and accelerate institutional inclusiveness 
at the federal level by helping all Canadians overcome racialized barriers. 
Under the Act, all government departments and Crown corporations must 
annually disclose their specific initiatives to preserve and enhance Canada's 
multicultural heritage—a commitment honored more in the breach than 
in the observance.

* * *

Canadian Multiculturalism Act 1985 (assented to on July 21 1988): 
An Act for the Preservation and Enhancement of Multiculturalism in 
Canada

Preamble

* Whereas the Constitution of Canada provides that every individual is 
equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protec-
tion and benefit of the law without discrimination and that everyone has 
the freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, 
peaceful assembly and association and guarantees these rights equally to 
male and female persons;
* And whereas the Constitution of Canada recognizes the importance of 
preserving and enhancing the multicultural heritage of Canadians;
* And whereas the Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of 
Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origins, colour and religion 
as a fundamental characteristics of Canadian society and is committed to 
a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the mul-
ticultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all 
Canadians in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of Canada.

Multiculturalism Policy of Canada

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to

(a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism 
reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canada and acknowled-
ges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, 
enhance, and share their cultural heritage;

(b) to recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism 
is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity 
and that it provides an invaluable source in the shaping of Canada's 
future;

(c) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and 
communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping 
of all aspects of Canadian society and assist in the elimination of 
any barrier to that participation;

(d) recognize the existence of communities whose members share a 
common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society, 
and enhance their development;

(e) ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protec-
tion under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity;

(f) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and politi-
cal institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of 
Canada's multicultural character;

(g) promote the understanding and creativity that arise from the inter-
action between individuals and communities of different origins;

(h) foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of 
Canadian society and promote the reflection and evolving expres-
sions of these cultures;

(i) preserve and enhance the use of languages other than French or 
English while strengthening the status and use of the official lan-
guages of Canada; and

(j) advance multiculturalism throughout Canada in harmony with the 
national commitment to the official languages of Canada

* * *

Even a cursory reading of the Act makes it abundantly clear. As an 
inclusionary framework for living together differently, Multiculturalism 
endorses a commitment to integration over separation, interaction over 
isolation, and participation over withdrawal (Adams 2008). But commit-
ment is not the same as enactment. With its broad set of ideals for living 
together differently rather than a blueprint with specific goals, measur-
able targets, and enforceable timetables, the Multiculturalism Act remains 
largely an aspirational document (Reitz and Banerjee 2007). Nevertheless, 
aspirational or not, the Act contributed to the Canada-building project 
associated with passage of the Official Languages Act in 1969, the State-
ment on Multiculturalism in 1971 and its enshrinement in the Constitu-
tion Act of 1982 and the inception of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 
1985. Each of these initiatives converged in hopes of creating a distinctive
and unified Canada, based on the principle that as self-defining agents all individuals should be able to participate fully and equally regardless of differences (Breton 2000).

**Civic multiculturalism**

Canada's Multiculturalism continues to acknowledge the importance of cultural identity. Its commitment to social equality is no less vibrant, including an emphasis on institutional inclusions to ensure minority access, representation, and equitable treatment at institutional levels. Equally evident is a more explicit commitment to national interests by equating multiculturalism with citizenship. In eschewing a Multiculturalism that was aimed only at minorities, the scope of a civic multiculturalism focused on “break[ing] down the ghettoization of multiculturalism,” according to Hedy Frey, former minister for Multiculturalism (1997):

As a national policy of inclusiveness, multiculturalism's activities aim to bring all Canadians closer together, to enhance equal opportunities, to encourage mutual respect among citizens of diverse backgrounds, to assist in integrating first-generation Canadians, to promote more harmonious intergroup relations, and to foster social cohesion and a shared sense of Canadian identity.

This shift was formalized in 1996 following the renewal of the Multiculturalism program. Three strategic goals prevailed: civic participation (full and equal involvement), social justice (equitable treatment), and identity (respect for people's differences in securing a belonging and attachment to Canada regardless of ethnic background). The renewed program prioritized the following proposals: (a) facilitate active participation of ethnic minorities, (b) support community initiatives to reduce ethnic conflict and hate crimes, (c) make public institutions respectful of, reflective upon, and responsive to difference, (d) foster more inclusive federal departments and agencies, and (e) increase public awareness of multiculturalism and cross-cultural understanding of difference. Finally to symbolically commemorate a commitment to Multiculturalism, the federal government announced that each June 27 would celebrate the diverse contributions of all Canadians to Canada.

The current Multiculturalism program continues along these inclusionary lines, namely, social justice (ensure fair and equitable treatment), cultural identity (foster a Canada in which all Canadians feel a sense of attachment and belonging regardless of their ethnocultural background), and civic participation (improve citizens' involvement in community and Canada). Priority objectives include a commitment to institutional change (inclusiveness through removal of discriminatory barriers), federal institutional change (integration of diversity into policies, programs, and services), combat against racism (removal of discriminatory barriers, antiracism programs, and cross-cultural understanding), and civic engagement (promotion of active and shared citizenship plus building capacity for minorities to participate in public decision-making) (Annual Report, Canadian Heritage, 2005/2006). With its emphasis on fostering a sense of belonging, a civic engagement, an active involvement in community life, and a shared awareness of Canadian identity against the broader backdrop of Canada's national interests, the conclusion seems inescapable: all signs point to inclusive multiculturalism as the governance choice for the twenty-first century.

To summarize: Canada's official Multiculturalism constitutes a complex and contested governance policy that has evolved over time in response to social and political changes (Sellar 2002). Despite shifts in emphasis—from ethnicity to equity to civic participation—an official multiculturalism has never wavered from its central mission: Canada-building through institutional inclusion and minority integration (Cardozo and Pendakur 2008: 27). In advancing the principle of inclusion through removal of discriminatory barriers and respect for cultural differences, an inclusive multiculturalism promotes a two-way process of mutual adjustment that bodes well for democratic governance. The following Table 3.1 compares and contrasts the different stages in the evolution of Canada's inclusive multiculturalism, keeping in mind the inevitability of simplification when comparing ideal-typical categories (Fleras 2009).

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<th>Table 3.1 Canada's inclusive multiculturalism: policy shifts</th>
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There are signs of yet another shift in Canada’s multicultural trajectory. A new multicultural agenda may be taking shape in reaction to post-9/11 security concerns, including the Toronto Terror Scare in June 2006 (when 18 males were apprehended on suspicion of fomenting terror). Its focus is broadly aimed at depoliticizing the multiculturalism in a multicultural governance by promoting integration for neutralizing the threat of ethno-religious extremism (Annual Report 2008; Freeze 2008; Kunz and Sykes 2008). A speech by Jason Kenney, now Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism (2008; also Libin 2009) confirms a proposed shift in fine tuning Canada’s multicultural program toward integration, social cohesion, and core liberal values:

The key to building such a Canada, to maintaining our model of unity-in-diversity, is the successful integration of newcomers. And that should be the focus of today’s multiculturalism. Integration that empowers newcomers by ensuring that they can speak one or both of our languages. Integration that opens the doors of economic opportunity by properly recognizing the skills, experiences, and education of new Canadians. Integration that ensures that new Canadians know, own, and identify our country’s history, symbols, and institutions. And integration which results in new Canadians giving back to Canada, not just as consumers, workers, or taxpayers, but as active citizens, as volunteers, as members of our Armed Forces, police and emergency services …

To be sure, with its emphasis on inclusion, this commitment to an integrative multiculturalism is not altogether different from the civic phase. Nevertheless, a repositioning toward integration as governance mode reflects parallel developments in Europe and the Antipodes, including a shift from diversity and disadvantage to that of integration, youth-at-risk, intercultural understanding, and Canadian values (Annual Report 2009). The

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Table 3.2 speculates on what an integrative multiculturalism might look like when compared using the aforementioned criteria.

**Interculturalism as Multicultural Governance in Quebec**

Federal multiculturalism is not the only governance in Canada. With the possible exception of Newfoundland and Labrador, each of Canada’s ten provinces has established formal policies, laws, advisory boards, or commitments that often overlap with federal commitments. Of these provincial multiculturalisms, few have attracted as much attention—or notoriety—as Quebec’s multicultural governance model. Called interculturalism (or transculturalism), it arguably shares similarities with Canada’s federal multiculturalism, yet also reflects differences in tone and emphasis (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007), with some arguing the case for fundamentally different governance priorities in integrating immigrants, while others dismiss any agenda differences as largely semantic (Gagnon 2008; Reitz 2009).

Quebec’s commitment toward interculturalism as governance and minority integration was first articulated by the 1990 Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration. An interculturalism commitment reflects what might be metaphorically called an arboreal model of multiculturalism that is, the tree trunk is unflinchingly French in language and culture, while minority cultures represent the branches grafted onto the trunk. According to the tree-trunk tenets of interculturalism, immigrants and their contributions are welcome. However, they must enter into a “moral contract” involving a reciprocal exchange of rights, duties, and obligations between newcomers and Quebec. They must also abide by the primacy of French as the language and culture of Quebec, observe prevailing cultural norms and rule of law, actively participate as citizens in Quebec’s society, become involved in community dialogue and exchanges, and respect democratic principles and practices (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007). With interculturalism, in other words, limits are explicit—you can be Haitian but always a Haitian in Quebec with a corresponding commitment to its values, institutions, and norms as set out in laws and constitution. As of January 2009, future immigrants to Quebec will be required to sign a declaration promising to learn French and respect Quebec’s shared values, including gender equity, separation of church and state, nonviolence, rule of law, democracy, and protection of individual rights and freedoms (Hamilton 2008).

Clearly, then, both federal multiculturalism and Quebec’s interculturalism share a core theme: a common commitment to incorporate newcomers into the larger community by way of an inclusive governance (Nugent
Two broad governance agendas prevail (Banting et al. 2007):

1) A difference agenda that seeks an inclusive citizenship by encouraging migrants and minorities to recognize, express, and share their cultural identities

2) An integrative agenda for incorporating migrants and minorities into the mainstream while strengthening the bonds of solidarity, community, and support

For some, the major difference lies in Quebec’s willingness to be more explicit about what it expects of migrants and what they can expect in return, what constitutes the limits of acceptable behavior, and the unassailable primacy of French language and culture. For others, the governance models appear to reflect distinct society-building projects. Canada’s multicultural governance model is aimed at constructing a universal citizenship based on nominal recognition of diversity and difference. In promoting the governance principle of unity within diversity, Canada’s Multiculturalism resembles a planetary model, that is, minority cultures orbiting around a mainstream center. By contrast, Quebec’s arboreal governance model aims at articulating a distinct political community whose cultural and language priorities supersede ethnic diversities. This governance establishes French as the language of intercultural communication; cultivates a pluralistic notion of society that is sensitive to minority rights; preserves the creative tension between minority and migrant difference and the continuity and predominance of the French culture; and emphasizes the centrality of integration and interaction to the interculturalism process (Bouchard-Taylor Commission 2008).

The logic behind federal and Quebec multicultural governance makes it difficult to mix or merge. According to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission on Reasonable Accommodation (2008), Quebec cannot possibly duplicate the federal multiculturalism policy. The paradoxicality of Quebec’s majority/minority status—a majority in Quebec, but a minority in Canada and North America—generates a heightened defensiveness because of perceived threats to their identity and integrity as a French-speaking oasis in an ocean of English-speaking North Americans (Gagnon 2008). The paradox of reconciling a growing pluralism with preservation of a small cultural minority in North America undermines any move toward Canada’s so-called laissez-faire multiculturalism. To do so would be tantamount to linguistic and cultural suicide. English Canada can afford a looser concept of multiculturalism as governance, concludes the Commission, because of fewer anxieties over English as a threatened language, less insecurities because they are a majority, and less rationale for protecting a founding nation since those who identify as British descent constitute only one-third of Canada’s population. Yes, Quebec can be a society that is pluralistic and open to outside contributions, but this pluralism can flourish only within the limitations imposed by Quebec’s French character, its democratic values, and the need for intercommunal dialogue and exchanges (Bouchard-Taylor Commission 2008). Or as the commission concluded when acknowledging that Quebec and English-speaking Canada are playing by different rules:

French-speaking Quebec is a minority culture and needs a strong identity to allay its anxieties and behave like a serene majority.

In other words, as the Bouchard-Taylor Commission implored, Quebeckers should continue to support the interculturalism principles of pluralism, equality, and reciprocity. With its emphasis on immigrant integration around a common culture, a moral contract, and centrality of French, a commitment to interculturalism as governance provides Quebeckers with the best chances for survival as irrevocably French yet unmistakably cosmopolitan.

Putting Multicultural Policy Principles into Practice

The implementation of multicultural policy principles is central to any multicultural governance. In acknowledging the convergence of policy and philosophy at a grounded level, multiculturalism as practice involves its application and manipulation by political, institutional, and minority sectors for advancing vested interests, promoting hidden agendas, and securing public good. The practice of multiculturalism incorporates a range of activities, including its implementation by government programs; its manipulation by political sectors for electoral advantages; its inclusion within mainstream institutions; and its use by multicultural minorities for articulating both individual and collective interests. An examination of how multiculturalism works by watching it work reinforces its status in advancing an inclusive governance.

Political agendas

The governing apparatus of the Canadian state has long relied on multiculturalism to fulfill a variety of legitimating functions related to national
unity, economic prosperity, and electoral survival (Fleras 2002). Multiculturalism originated in 1971 as part of an all-party agreement in Parliament, acquired constitutional recognition in 1982, and received royal assent with passage of the Multiculturalism Act in 1988. (To be sure, a commitment to multicultural principles of tolerance existed in Canada long before 1971; Bramadat and Seljak 2008). With British values losing their saliency as identity markers in Canada and elsewhere (see Jakubowicz 2005), Multiculturalism represented an ideological moral glue for bonding Canadians by bridging differences. A new national unity strategy evolved, based on a iconoclastic vision of Canada—not as a bicultural partnership between founding peoples, but as a multicultural mosaic of equality-seeking individuals (McRoberts 1997). It was hoped that an official multiculturalism would formulate a new founding myth of Canada as a land of opportunity and equality rather than a racialized colonial state. In addition to uniting all Canadians at a time of political turmoil without initiating any fundamental redistribution of power (Helly 1993; Mackey 1998; Bannerji 2000; Thobani 2007), Multiculturalism also sought to shore up electoral strength in urban Ontario, to counterbalance Western resentment over perceived favoritism toward the Québécois, to facilitate adoption of the Official Languages Act by alleviating mounting public pressure over official bilingualism (Gagnon 2008), to neutralize Quebec nationalism, and to preempt the encroachment of American cultural values by erecting a multicultural firewall.

Introduction of Multiculturalism is widely regarded as Canada’s foremost contribution to intergroup harmony and global peace. Yet it reflected a degree of political opportunism rather than any long-term vision or clearly articulated theory (Wood and Gilbert 2005). Instead of a compassionate or courageous social experiment devised by well-meaning liberals, Multiculturalism originated primarily as a pragmatic response to ongoing political struggles; that is, a political program to achieve political goals in a politically astute manner (Peter 1978). With evolving immigration patterns, multiculturalism secured a long-term investment for transforming Canada into a cosmopolitan galaxy without experiencing major disruptions in the process. Containment and control informed an official Multiculturalism, in other words, while its primary objective dwelt on cooling out potentially troublesome constituents. That critics say it persists for the same reason—the control of “unruly ethnicities by ruling elites”—makes it doubly important to concede the power of conflict management in fostering the illusion of change.

Also widely touted is the commercial potential of multiculturalism. The then prime minister Brian Mulroney promoted a business model of multiculturalism rooted in economic rationality and national interest in his “Multiculturalism Means Business” speech at a Toronto conference in 1986. The commercial value of multiculturalism remains stronger than ever because of the demands of a global economy. Diversity and the market are closely intertwined; after all, capitalizing on differences is good for the economy, especially when 40 percent of Canada’s GDP is export based.

The ethnocultural diversity of Canada’s population is a major advantage when access to global markets is more important than ever to our economic prosperity. Protecting this advantage means that steps to eradicate racism are essential... Canada cannot afford to have any of its citizens marginalized. As a knowledge-based economy in an increasingly global marketplace, every mind matters. All Canadians must have the opportunity to develop and contribute to their full potential. (Canadian Heritage 2001)

Like staple products in the past, Multiculturalism continues to be promoted as a commodity for sale or export (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002; Abu-Laban 2003). By enhancing Canada’s sales image and competitive edge in a global economy—particularly by cultivating and tapping into the lucrative Asian market (Hage 1998)—references to multiculturalism are touted as having the potential to harness lucrative trade contracts, to establish international linkages and mutually profitable points of contact, to attract members of the transnational elite, and to penetrate export markets (Multiculturalism/Secretary of State 1993; also Jupp 1986 for Australian equivalent). The promotion of multiculturalism as an ideology of racial harmony and ethnic coexistence reassures nervous investors and fidgety capital markets (Mitchell 1993). Perception of Canada as different friendly transforms it into a desirable destination to work, live, study, and do business in. Its reputation for multicultural tolerance snare a competitive advantage in the global competition for foreign investment, tourism, and skilled immigrants (Kymlicka 2004). Moreover, as the globalization of capitalist market economies continues to expand, multiculturalism may well provide the networking for addressing the realities of a shifting and increasingly borderless world. In that multicultural priorities will continue to be driven by an economic agenda more interested in improving Canada’s competitive advantage than in securing institutional inclusiveness, Multiculturalism indeed means business.

Minority agendas

Multicultural minorities are equally inclined to see multiculturalism as a resource for attaining practical goals. The needs of the minorities are basic: they as a group want to become established, expand economic
opportunities for themselves and their children, eliminate discrimination and exploitation, and retain access to their cultural heritage without loss of citizenship rights—that is, to retain their identities and heritage without abandoning a primary sense of belonging to Canada. Multiculturalism is employed as a tool for meeting these needs by opening up opportunities through elimination of discriminatory barriers in employment, education, housing, and criminal justice. With multiculturalism, minority women and men are empowered with a platform for staking out their claims while articulating their demands alongside those of the mainstream. An otherwise powerless sector is empowered with the leverage to prod or provoke central policy structures by holding them accountable for failure to close the gaps between multicultural ideals and everyday results. Appeals to official Multiculturalism are thus calculated to elicit public sympathy and global scrutiny—in the same way Canada’s Aboriginal peoples have relied on international fora (such as the United Nations) in leveraging concessions from the federal government. For minorities, rather than separate homelands and autonomous states, the driving force behind multiculturalism is equality, not nationalism; participation, not ghettoization; integration, not isolation; and inclusion, not separation.

Institutional inclusiveness

Canada’s historical track record for “doing multiculturalism” is not without blemish. Prejudice and discrimination reinforced a dismissive belief in difference as inimical to society building. Racialized immigrants were expected to integrate into the existing institutional framework, yet mainstream institutions routinely excluded minority women and men from the workplace or delivery of services (Henry and Tator 2006). With the inception of an official Multiculturalism, however, institutional responsiveness has improved markedly. Multicultural differences are no longer disparaged as a bothersome anomaly, with no redeeming value outside a personal or private context. Rather than being trivialized as a problem to solve or a challenge to surmount, difference is instead promoted as an integral and legitimate component of Canada’s social fabric, with untapped potential for improving national wealth and international standing. Its promotion as an asset for improving the bottom line, enhancing workplace climate, or delivering social services is critical in putting multiculturalism to work at institutional levels.

Few contest the necessity for more multiculturally responsive institutions. Only the pace or scope of adjustments remain open to debate. Public and private institutions are increasingly anxious to enhance overall effectiveness by maximizing the talent and creativity they can contribute. For service organizations eager to improve delivery quality, a commitment to multiculturalism can reap institutional dividends by easing workplace tensions, generating creative synergies, and facilitating community access. For private companies, the inclusion of diversity is tantamount to money in the bank. Corporations increasingly rely on the language skills, cultural knowledge, life experiences, and international connections that diverse people bring to the workplace. Diversity connections can also provide the catalyst for internationalizing domestic businesses, thus improving competitive advantage in global markets.

A commitment to inclusiveness entails a rethinking and restructuring of “how we do things around here.” It involves a process of adjustment (in design, values, operations, and outcomes) to make institutions more reasonably accommodate difference—both within the workplace (being more respectful and reflective of difference, and responsive to it) and outside (making service delivery more available, accessible, and appropriate). Yet efforts at putting multiculturalism to work have proven uneven. The commitment may be there, but it is easily undermined by the lack of political will or an adequate resource base for implementation, in effect leaving a slippage between rhetoric/theory and reality/practice. Resistance to institutional inclusiveness reflects the deep ambiguities that surface when attempting to simultaneously balance seemingly opposing models of inclusion, namely, culture-blind (equal treatment) versus culture-conscious (treatment as equals) (see also Lieberman 2006). This gap should come as no surprise. Institutions are complex, often baffling landscapes of domination, power, and control, invariably pervaded by prejudice, nepotism, patronage, and the “old boys’ network.” Moreover, moves to be inclusive are rarely simple or straightforward; rather, they routinely encounter individual resistance, structural barriers, and institutional inertia. Conventional views remain firmly entrenched as vested interests balk at discarding the tried and true. Newer visions are compelling but lack the critical mass to scuttle traditional ways of doing business. The interplay of these juxtapositions can prove disruptive as institutions are transformed into a “contested site” involving competing worldviews and opposing agendas.

Service-oriented institutions such as media, education, health, and policing are under particular pressure to move over and make institutional space (Fleras and Elliott 2007). Their mandate as agencies of socialization and social control expose them to greater demands for accountability and transparency in decision making. No one should be surprised by this. Both processes not only strike at the hub of social existence; they also influence the degree to which people are in harmony with their communities or alienated from them. Media and education furnish the “blueprint” for
acceptable behavior; by contrast, police and health services control the limits of unacceptable behavior by enforcing the rules. Consider these developments in doing multiculturalism by capitalizing on inclusiveness initiatives (Fleras 2002):

1. Educational institutions have responded to the challenges of multiculturalism by realigning the schooling and education along inclusiveness lines. Different levels of multicultural education can be discerned in engaging difference and including enlightenment, enrichment, and empowerment. Antiracist education transcends the principles of multicultural education by acknowledging structural barriers that underpin inequality both in schools and in workplaces (Dei 2005).

2. The criminal justice system has also taken steps toward more inclusiveness. Both the courts and the prison system have modified procedures and structures to become more diversity friendly. Of particular note is the policing service, which has embraced the principles of inclusive community policing (power sharing, partnership, prevention, problem solving) alongside those of conventional police work (Cryderman et al. 1998).

3. Mainstream mass media have stepped up to the challenge of diversity by way of programming and coverage that bodes well for the representational basis of media minority relations. But while many media institutions have improved both the quality and quantity of minority representation on television or advertising, other media processes such as newscasting continue to treat Aboriginal peoples and racialized minorities as troublesome constituents who are problems or who create problems (Fleras and Kunz 2001).

4. Health services in Canada are equally cognizant of the need to provide a range of services (from prevention to treatment to rehabilitation) that are accessible, available, and appropriate for the health needs of Canada’s increasingly diverse population. Particularly relevant is the challenge of constructing community-based and culturally responsive social work services and mental health supports for assisting often-traumatized immigrants and refugees (Fleras 2006; Cooke et al. 2007).

Mainstream institutions are under pressure to advance a more inclusive Canada. Some institutions have taken up the challenge in ways deemed workable, necessary, and fair. But not all institutions are gung ho about jumping aboard the inclusion bandwagon, resulting in gaps between multicultural ideals and multicultural practices. A focus group study by Catalyst (2008) concluded as much. Despite Canada’s much-lauded multiculturalism, including a commitment to respect, recognize, reflect, and respond, minorities believed they had to Canadianize—that is, shed their culture and lose their accent—if they entertained any hope for promotional success.

Nor is there much consensus regarding what constitutes inclusiveness. Consider the options: (1) should reform be directed at changing the institutional culture or revamping patterns of power? (2) should efforts aim at changing personal attitudes or reshaping institutional structures? (3) should programs and services be customized for particular cultural needs or should a one-size-fits-all approach prevail to ensure common standards? Responses vary: To one side is the belief that a Canada of many cultures is possible as long as people’s cultural differences do not get in the way of full and equal participation in society. Cultural differences are deemed largely irrelevant under multiculturalism; after all, true equality and inclusion arise from treating everyone the same regardless of their differences. To the other side is a belief that a Canada of many cultures is possible, but only when treating people as equals by taking differences into account when necessary. Rather than ignoring differences, in other words, true equality and inclusion arises by incorporating them into public policy processes and outcomes. The politics of this paradox animates the dynamics of multiculturalism within a multicultural governance.

**Reasonable accommodation as institutional inclusiveness**

The politics of reasonable accommodation extend the debate over institutional inclusiveness. Canada’s official multiculturalism is predicated on promoting inclusiveness, in a two-way process of integration (“you adjust, we adapt; we adjust, you adapt”) through reasonable accommodation (within limits and without undue hardship). Yet there remains unnecessary confusion over the concept of reasonable accommodation in terms of what it is, what it does, and its relationship to multicultural governance in Canada. As explained by the deputy minister of Canadian Heritage in a briefing to the federal secretary of state for Multiculturalism, “There is now a sense of urgency to more clearly define and explain the principle of reasonable accommodation, as alarming shifts regarding the split between ‘them’ and ‘us’ may occur” (cited in Wente 2007).

In debating how far Canada should go in accommodating difference, responses vary. Just as the Canadian state expects faith- and ethnic-based minorities to accommodate reasonably into society, so too do minorities expect the state to reasonably accommodate them. The politics of mutual
adjustment by way of reasonable accommodation raises questions: How much accommodation should be reciprocated; that is, what can "they" expect of "us" versus what should "we" expect of "them"? Should immigrants discard all outward signs of religiosity from hijabs to kirpans as part of the accommodation process, or does accommodation entail adoption of core Canadian values including a nominal separation of church and state, acceptance of religion primarily as a private matter, and respect for religious dissidents? Is this exercise in cultural bullying yet another example of privileging Eurocentric values in seeming opposition to Canada's official Multiculturalism? Are Canadians too accommodative of difference, thus compromising the integration of newcomers into Canada? Or is Canada so systemically racist that discriminatory barriers invariably coax immigrants into their own religious and cultural cocoons?

Despite the centrality of reasonable accommodation to Canada's inclusiveness debates (Abu-Laban and Abu-Laban 2007), Canadians tend to be confused or uncertain over references to "reasonable," "accommodation," "within limits," and "undue hardship." Questions abound: Is there a principled basis for defining reasonable accommodation with respect to institutional workplaces that are responsive, representative, and respectful, including services that are available, accessible, and appropriate? In creating reasonable accommodation within limits and without undue hardship, who decides, why, and on what grounds? Consider this response by a UN report (2006): While employees have a duty to accommodate, it is the claimant's responsibility to justify the reasonable, whereas institutions must assume the responsibility for justifying undue hardship and within limits.

Developments in the United States may untangle these conundras. The concept of reasonable accommodation sprang into prominence over religious-based discrimination in the employment sector (UN Report 2006). It was subsequently applied to the disability context, culminating in the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, which called on employers to reasonably accommodate qualified applicants or employees with disabilities. Under the ADA, reasonable accommodation consists of any institutional adjustment—from building design to job duties—that does not inflict undue hardship on the employer (Goren 2007). In determining whether an accommodation poses an undue hardship on the employer or service provider, the following factors are considered: (1) the nature and cost of the accommodation vis-à-vis institutional size, budget limitations, employee numbers, and types of facilities; and (2) the degree to which the accommodation could substantially alter the job requirement or the nature of the operation (Epilepsy Foundation 2007). To ensure reasonableness, an underlying proportionality test is implied, one that balances burdens with benefits for all persons affected by the proposed adjustment (UN Report 2006).

The situation is similar in Canada. The obligation to provide reasonable accommodation is enshrined within federal and provincial human rights legislation, in addition to judicial interpretation of the non-discrimination clause of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (UN Report 2006). According to the Ontario Human Rights Code, institutions have a duty to abolish those practices and programs that may exert a discriminatory impact on minorities. Institutions also have an obligation to implement programs and procedures for balancing a person's religious or ethnic practices with a requirement, qualification, or practice (Task Force 2006). The Supreme Court, too, has ruled that refusal by institutions such as school boards to make reasonable accommodations violates the constitutional rights of Canadians, namely the religious freedom guaranteed by the Charter (Abu-Laban and Abu-Laban 2007). Finally, the Employment Equity Act of 1996 obligates employers to reasonably and proportionately accommodate persons from the designated groups. In deciding whether an accommodation would impose undue hardship, the factors of health, safety, and cost must be considered, ranging from disproportionate costs to operational disruptions (Bouchard-Taylor Commission 2008). As well, there are limits to inclusiveness under reasonable accommodation as a frame of reference. Interventions that violate the rights of individuals (especially accommodations that victimize the most vulnerable members of a group), break the law, or contravene core constitutional values are rejected as unreasonable.

A sense of perspective is helpful; reasonable accommodation entails a process of making institutions more inclusive by making them more reflective of, responsive to, and respectful of diversity. It consists of any modification to service delivery or employment context that secures equal opportunities (a level playing field) for qualified minority women and men, in part by treating minorities equally as a matter of course (the same), in part by treating them as equals when necessary (differently). Modifications include those pertaining to the application process to expand the applicant pool; accommodations on the job to take distinctive needs into account; and ongoing adjustments to ensure all workers enjoy equal benefits and privileges (Epilepsy Foundation 2007). Two dimensions prevail in fostering reasonable accommodation: (1) the reactive, to remove discriminatory barriers, and (2) the proactive, to take necessary positive measures (affirmative action or employment equity) to improve institutional access, representation, and equity in training, participation, rewards, and advancement (UN Report 2006). Failure to provide reasonable accommodation at reactive and proactive levels can be construed as discriminatory (European Union 2005). It can also be interpreted as
violating the principles of multiculturalism in advancing an inclusive governance.

A Multicultural Model of Inclusive Governance/An Inclusive Model of Multicultural Governance

Canada’s official Multiculturalism revolves around an inclusive society-building agenda. In conjunction with the Official Languages Act in 1969 and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1985, multiculturalism represented the remaining piece of the puzzle for constructing a distinctive yet unified Canada (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007; Kymlicka 2008). In hoping to solve Canada’s unity and identity problems, a commitment to multiculturalism challenged conventional political wisdom. Many had assumed that diversity and difference were incompatible with good governance, given the perceived difficulties of forging unity and fostering identity from a hodgepodge of ethnicities. But a multicultural governance was predicated on an entirely different principle, namely, that a society of many cultures was possible provided that people were accepted and included regardless of their racial or ethnic differences. Such a governance was possible provided an overarching vision and a normative framework for managing difference was in place. As a calculated gamble in the governance of an ethnically diverse Canada, official Multiculturalism parlayed a potential weakness into an unanticipated strength without sacrificing a commitment to social cohesion, national identity, and domestic peace.

Canada’s Multiculturalism conforms most closely to a liberal model of multiculturalism. As noted earlier, a liberal multiculturalism aspires toward a multicultural governance that acknowledges the possibility of a Canada of many cultures as long as people’s cultural differences don’t get in the way of full citizenship and equal participation. Everyone is treated the same (equally), according to the universalism implicit in liberal Multiculturalism; after all, our commonalities as rights-bearing individuals outweigh any group-based differences—at least for purposes of recognition and reward. And yet Canada’s liberal Multiculturalism also concedes the need to take differences into account to ensure that individuals are treated as equals when their differences prove disadvantageous—as long as the concessions are needs based and temporary.

Clearly then, Canada’s liberal Multiculturalism operates at two levels: the micro (social and cultural) and the macro (national). First, it acknowledges the right of each individual to identify with the cultural tradition of his or her choice, as long as this ethnic affiliation does not interfere with the rights of others, violate the laws of the land, or infringe on core values or institutions. Under Canada’s liberal Multiculturalism, everyone has the right to be treated equally (the same) irrespective of their ethnicity; everybody also has the right—when required—to be treated differently (as equals) because of their ethnicity. Cultural differences are thus transformed into a discourse about social inequalities by privileging primacy of institutional inclusiveness and removal of discriminatory barriers (Hesse 1997).

Second, an official multiculturalism is concerned with society-building governance. Multiculturalism as governance does not set out to celebrate ethnic differences per se or to promote cultural diversity except in the most innocuous manner. Nor does it condone the creation of segregated ethnic communities with parallel power bases and special collective rights. The objective of a society-building multiculturalism is national in scope, that is, to create an inclusive Canada in which differences are incorporated as legitimate and integral without undermining either the interconnectedness of the whole or the distinctiveness of the parts (Flanagan 2009). Diversity and difference are endorsed, to be sure, but only to the extent that all differences are equivalent in status, subject to similar treatment, stripped of history or context, and consistent with Canada’s self-proclaimed prerogative for defining the outer limits of acceptable differences.

No voice shall predominate in creating a community of communities, according to an official discourse, except the voice that says no voices shall prevail in defining what counts as difference, what differences count (Johnston 1994). Containment by multiculturalism could not be more artfully articulated.

The ethos of Canada’s Multiculturalism is unabashedly inclusive (Kymlicka 2007a). This multicultural ethos reinforces a commitment to inclusiveness through promotion of social justice, identity, and civic participation. Emphasis is focused on fostering tolerance toward difference, protecting a culture of rights, reducing prejudice, removing discriminatory barriers, eliminating cultural ethnocentrism, enhancing equitable access to services, expanding institutional inclusion, improving creative intergroup encounters, and highlighting citizenship (also Duncan 2005). With Multiculturalism, Canada affirms the value and dignity of all citizens, including equality before the law and equal opportunity, regardless of origins or ethnicity. As the editors of the Spring 2006 issue of the journal Canadian Diversity put it:

Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry, and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony
and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination, and violence. Through multiculturalism, Canada recognizes the potential of all Canadians, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic, and political affairs.

To be sure, a commitment to inclusion and integration is not without limits and costs. An inclusive multiculturalism is concerned with integrating people into the framework of an existing Canada rather than in bringing about transformative social change. The disruptiveness of difference is depoliticized by the simple expedient of institutionalizing differences or privatizing them into the personal. Emphasis is on neutralizing cultural differences by channeling potentially troublesome conflicts into relatively harmless avenues of identity or folklore. Differences are further depoliticized (or “neutered”) by treating all differences as the same, by circumscribing the outer limit of permissible differences, while stripping culturally charged symbols from public places. Difference is endorsed, but only to the extent that all differences are equivalent in status, justified by need rather than by rights, subject to similar treatment, in compliance with laws and core values, consistent with Canada’s self-proclaimed right to ‘draw the line’, and commensurate with the principles of liberal universalism (a belief that what we have in common as rights-bearing individuals is more important than what divides us through group membership). Far from being a threat to the social order, in other words, Canada’s Multiculturalism constitutes a hegemonic discourse in defense of dominant ideology. Depending on where one stands on the political spectrum, this discursive framework is cause for concern or contentment.

Public Perceptions/Critical Reactions

Public perceptions

Despite Canada’s much-lauded status as the quintessential multicultural governance, public perception varies. Some Canadians are vigorously supportive; others are in total rejection or denial; still others are indifferent; and yet others are plainly uninformed (see Cardozo and Musto 1997; Cameron 2004). For some, multiculturalism is at the root of many of Canada’s problems; for others, multiculturalism is too often scapegoated for everything that goes wrong when minorities are involved (Siddiqui 2007). The majority appear to be caught somewhere in between, depending on their reading of multiculturalism and its contribution (or lack thereof) to Canadian society. Variables such as age, income, level of education, and place of residence are critical in gauging support, with higher levels of approval among the younger, more affluent, better educated, and urban (Andersen and Valpy 2003). To the extent that many Canadians are unsure of what Canada’s official Multiculturalism is trying to do, and why, the prospect of living differently together is compromised.

Public support for official Multiculturalism is also subject to diverse interpretations. Opinion polls are known to provide different answers depending on the kind of questions asked. Nevertheless, national surveys on Multiculturalism suggest a solid base of support, often in the 60 to 70 percent range (Angus Reid 1991; ACS/Environic 2002; Dasko 2005; Jedwab 2005; Berry 2006). Yet, support for Multiculturalism is not as transparent as the data would suggest.

- First, Canadians may be supportive of multiculturalism as principle or as a demographic fact, yet reject Multiculturalism as official policy or mistakenly conflate Multiculturalism with unpopular government programs like Employment Equity.
- Second, support is not the same as enthusiasm. Canadians appear to embrace multiculturalism as a reality to be tolerated rather than an ideal to be emulated or passion to be pursued.
- Third, support or rejection tends to be selective and inconsistent. Most Canadians support some aspect of multiculturalism, including providing a hand up for newcomers, but are conflicted over issues of reasonable accommodation (Collacott 2006) or unintended consequences, such as worries over fostering conditions that breed terrorism, discourage integration, or encourage ghettoization (Baubock 2005; Friesen 2005).
- Fourth, support is conditional. Canadians are prepared to accept Multiculturalism if costs are low and demands are reasonable for assisting new Canadians to settle in, removing discriminatory barriers, learning about others, and promoting tolerance (Gwyn 1996). Support is withdrawn when endorsement is seen as eroding Canada’s sense of national unity and identity, challenging authority or core values, curbing the integration of cultural communities, criticizing the mainstream, or acquiescing in the seemingly un-Canadian demands of particular groups in utilizing multiculturalism as a smokescreen for illiberal practices.

Critiquing multiculturalism

Official Multiculturalism is unevenly supported across Canada (Duncan 2005). At one level, the federal government has slashed funding to Canada’s
Multiculturalism programs by one half, according to a press release from Conservative government dated April 13, 2007 – from $34 million in 2005–06 to about $17 million in 2006–07, with none of the money slated for spending on intercultural relations (Beaumier 2007). At another level are sectorial variations. Residents of Ontario and western Canada appear receptive, but the Québécois and Aboriginal peoples are disapproving (Ignace and Ignace 1998; Breton 2000; Kymlicka 2001). For the “nations within” (namely, Quebec and Aboriginal peoples), their concerns go beyond those of disadvantage or inclusion, but focus on the injustices and disempowerment imposed by conquest or colonization (Baubock 2005). Instead of self-defining themselves as immigrants who want “in” by leveraging Multiculturalism to their advantage, both Aboriginal peoples and the Québécois prefer the nationalist language of “getting out” over multicultural discourses of “getting in” (Harty and Murphy 2005; Maaka and Fleras 2005). With its roots in institutional inclusion and reasonable accommodation, an official Multiculturalism cannot possibly mollify the demands of fundamentally autonomous political communities who claim they are sovereign in their own right yet share in the sovereignty of Canada by way of shared jurisdictions. In short, a consensus-and-control, inclusive multiculturalism is poorly equipped to handle the highly politicized discourses of challenge and transformation (McRoberts 2001).

Political observers and social critics are no less critical (see Fleras 2002 for review). Some dismiss Multiculturalism as a bad idea that is doing badly as predicted: Multiculturalism originated to pander to ethnic interests or electoral politics, and remains a divisive force in Canadian society because it remains hostage to partisan politics and election results rather than sound public policy. Others are no less dismissive of Multiculturalism as a good idea gone bad: noble intentions aside, Multiculturalism continues to undermine Canadian identity and unity, in some cases because of minority leaders who have hijacked it for ulterior purposes. Multiculturalism is seen as divisive because of its tendency to tolerate practices incompatible with Canada’s central core, yet also as hypocritical in offering the illusion of tolerance while punishing behavior at odds with core values (Stoffman 2002). None other than the current Governor-General of Canada Michaëlle Jean (2005; also Dupepe 2007), in a speech prior to her installation as Canada’s viceroy, chided multiculturalism for ghettoizing Canada:

Citizenship means living together... But does “multiculturalism” really propose us living together? We are even given money so that we will stay in our own separate enclosures. There’s a kind of proposition of ghettoization that is there, and that is financed.

Even the much-touted mosaic metaphor comes in for criticism. References to Canada’s multicultural mosaic remains an emotionally charged yet potentially misleading metaphor: On the one hand, each tile is distinct and important, and contributes to the overall design. On the other hand, each paint-by-number tile is cemented into place by a mainstream grout that defines what differences count, what counts as difference (Johnston 1994). Not surprisingly, Canada’s multicultural discourses continue to be anchored in an almost essentialized reading of ethnicity and difference as primordial, determinative, and immutable rather than flexible, dynamic, and relational. Membership and participation in this sticky mosaic tends to slot individuals into hermetically sealed groups from which choice or escape are difficult. The end result? A virtuous multicultural ideology that glosses over and leaves unchanged the levers of power in Canada (Dupont and Lemarchand 2001; Thobani 2007).

Forty Years of Multiculturalism

Forty years ago Canada blazed a trail in the art of multicultural governance. A commitment to the inclusive principles of Multiculturalism resulted in the establishment of a national agenda for engaging difference in ways consistent with Canada’s liberal-democratic framework. A social framework has evolved that to date has managed to balance difference with unity—even if that balancing act is a bit wobbly at times. Such an endorsement may not sound glowing to those with unrealistically high expectations. Nevertheless, the contributions of multiculturalism should not be diminished by unfair comparison with utopian standards.

A sense of proportion is required: Compared to a utopia of perfect harmony, Canada’s multiculturalism falls short of the mark; in contrast with the grisliness of monocultural realities elsewhere, it stands as a paragon of virtue. But compared to the ideals enshrined in multiculturalism, Canadians could be doing better in the governance of living together with differences. A sense of perspective is also required: Just as multiculturalism cannot be blamed for shortcomings in Canada, so too should excessive praise be avoided. The nature of its impact and implications falls somewhere between the poles of unblemished good and absolute evil. Multiculturalism is neither the root of all Canada’s social evils nor the all-encompassing solution to problems that rightfully originated elsewhere. It is but one component—however imperfect—for improving the integration of migrants and minorities by balancing the tension between difference and equality on the one side and unity and identity on the other side.
Multiculturalism, in short, remains a governance of necessity for a changing and differentiated Canada. As a skilful blend of compromises in a country constructed around compromises, multiculturalism is an innovative if imperfect social experiment for living together differently and equitably. It has excelled in extricating Canada from its colonialist past by elevating it to its much-ballyhooed status as a trailblazer in multicultural governance. In building bridges rather than erecting walls, multicultural policies encourage minority women and men to participate in their communities, build productive lives, and make a contribution to society (see also McGauran 2005). Under the circumstances, it is not a question of whether Canada can afford multiculturalism. More to the point, Canada cannot not afford to embrace multiculturalism in its constant quest for political unity, social coherence, economic prosperity, and cultural enrichment. That is not to say that Canadians can uncork the bubbly in celebration of “been there, done that.” There is much to do before principles align with practices to the satisfaction of all Canadians. Perhaps what passes for multiculturalism is a fear of causing an affront, so that Canadians will do anything to avoid appearing insensitive to any issue involving diversity or difference for fear it will reflect badly on themselves (Fulford 2009). Still, there is much of significance in the entrenchment of multiculturalism as a political project for bonding Canadians by building bridges across differences. It has elevated Canada to the front ranks of countries in endorsing a multicultural governance—not a perfect governance model by any stretch of the imagination, but perhaps one of the less imperfect.

Multiculturalisms in the United States: Multicultural Governances, American Style

Introduction: Contesting the “E Pluribus Unum”

The emergence of multiculturalism as a governance blueprint has attracted unprecedented attention in a society whose ideological moorings pivoted around the metaphorical equivalent of a melting pot (Buenker and Ratner 1992; Bak 1993; Kymlicka 2000; Bass 2008). Unlike Canada with its espousal of a multicultural mosaic narrative, national discourses portray the United States as an amalgam that melts all differences into a homogeneous mass (Reitz and Breton 1994). Historically, migrants and minorities were expected to melt (assimilate) into the mainstream pot without much in the way of federal assistance. Even today, no national policies exist for specifically integrating newcomers, so that all immigrants (except refugees) are left largely on their own to navigate entry into the labor market, although some immigrant-specific social and welfare benefits are available (Waters and Vang 2007; also Hero and Preuhs 2006).

Admittedly, references to the melting pot as governance model concealed as much as they revealed: European minorities continued to maintain their cultural distinctiveness in private domains beyond jurisdictional control. And racialized minorities, namely African Americans, proved to be largely unmeltable because they were consigned to the margins of society. Nevertheless, the symbolism of the melting pot exerted a powerful hold on the American imagination. The fact that it continues to do so, despite multicultural inroads in advancing an alternative governance framework, speaks volumes about the power of national narratives to move or maintain.

That the United States is experiencing something of a multicultural transformation is widely acknowledged. In acknowledging the presence
of well-established public norms affirming American diversity, Nathan Glazer’s famous lament, “We are all multiculturalists now,” appears to have captured the zeitgeist in the nation. The United States may not possess a formal national multicultural policy, however, despite criticism and backlash (Clausen 2001), a de facto multiculturalism predominates. Even critics acknowledge the pervasiveness of multiculturalism as a core American value in domains from educational and media institutions to politics and business (Auster 2004). Multicultural initiatives are numerous at local and regional levels; they have proven successful and popular in renegotiating the terms of minoriy and migrant integration into society; and they have shown considerable staying power by taking hold of American politics (Bass 2008). Consider the following examples of this multicultural drift: the designation of Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday as a national holiday, observance of Hispanic Heritage Month, hate crime legislation, multicultural education, bilingual service delivery, affirmative action programs, and racially balanced congressional districts (Bass 2008).

But commemoration is one thing; commitment is quite another, especially when multicultural discourses invariably chafe against the monocultural narrative of the melting pot. A mixed reaction to this transformative shift is inevitable: multiculturalism has been applauded by some for reasserting people’s control over lives, detested by others as political correctness gone mad, deplored by monoculturalists for “fetishising” difference at the expense of national vision and collective goals, and tut-tutted by still others as a humanizing ideal that is blindly prone to excessive zeal (see Higham 1993). For some, it constitutes a bedrock for constructing an equal and inclusive society; for others a clear and present danger of balkanizing the United States; for yet others, a dynamic in constant competition for dominance with assimilationist forces; and for others still, little more than a fancy new label (multiculturalism) for the same old brew (cultural plurality) (Parrillo 2009). Finally, critics dismiss American multiculturalism as an illusion. The impressive integrative power of American society seems to generate a kind of oblivious indifference to the world, resulting in a tolerant and flexible society that has absorbed the entirety of the earth, yet has difficulty comprehending realities beyond its borders (Schneider 2004). On a planet where America remains a political and military colossus, such an assessment should be cause for concern.

Of course, not all multicultural discourses are shaped by the same American cookie cutter. Vincent Parrillo (2009) distinguishes inclusionist multiculturalism from separatist multiculturalism, with an integrative pluralism lying somewhere in between. Henry Giroux (1994) classifies multiculturalism into demagogic multiculturalism (“reverence for cultural differences”), critical multiculturalism (interrogating the racist foundations of society), and insurgent multiculturalism (action to bring about progressive change). Diane Ravitch (1990) makes a distinction between particularistic multiculturalism (preserving ethnic groups) and pluralistic multiculturalism (melting pot). Patrick West (2005) compares a soft multiculturalism that focuses on removing intolerance and discriminatory barriers to ensure full and equal participation versus a hard multiculturalism that embraces the legitimacy and distinctiveness of minority cultures as equally good and valid. Finally Shana Bass (2008) argues that multicultural politics can be sorted into four classes, based on the promotion of diverse principles and goals—Celebration, (fostering respect) Harmony (increasing tolerance/less prejudice), Facilitation (improving race relations), and Parity (advancing equality and political participation). Obvious differences in form and function notwithstanding, each of these multicultural models tends to reflect the fundamental ethos of many multiculturalisms—rejection of a straight-line assimilation norm, promotion of ethnocultural and racial equality, respect for and tolerance of cultural difference and diversity, and assertion of certain rights for particular groups. Taken together, Bass concludes, these policies have produced a multiculturalism whose underlying logic seeks to renegotiate the terms of minority integration and migrant entry into American society.

A four-fold pattern captures the range of multiculturalisms in the United States. To one side are inoffensive styles of “happy-face” or celebratory multiculturalism that are commonly displayed in American schools. Under this milquetoast multiculturalism, multicultural diversity is defined as something to enjoy rather than to act upon (Eisenstein 1996; Hesse 1997; Kundnani 2007). This a commitment to celebrating diversity is normally devoid of critical content, historical context, or patterns of power—in effect reinforcing the status quo rather than contesting it. To the other side is a communitarian style of multiculturalism. With its emphasis on diversity-within-unity (compared to the Canadian slogan of unity-within-diversity), a multicultural governance for living together is promoted, but one with relatively explicit curbs on what is acceptable (one may identify as a Latina, but one is always a Latina within the confines of the United States). To yet another side is laissez-faire multiculturalism that best describes the governance of difference and diversity at federal and state levels, often by consequence or default, in the process confirming America’s status as a defiantly multicultural society without a definitive multiculturalism policy. Last is critical multiculturalism. Inasmuch as diverse interests are openly contesting the power to shape the (re)production of knowledge within core institutions, critical multiculturalism complements the cultural wars in contesting the much vaunted “e pluribus unum.”
It is clear that the cumulative impact of multicultural discourses is challenging the descriptive prescription of the United States as a melting pot society. Admittedly, reference to the melting pot as an emotionally charged symbol and prescriptive ideal remains solidly entrenched; nevertheless, it does so in the face of demographic upheavals, mounting criticism, and ideological transformations. But problems persist despite growing perception of America as a multicultural society that increasingly abides by the principles of a de facto multiculturalism. No one is quite sure what is meant by multiculturalism, whether the term provides an adequate description or explanation of contemporary intergroup relations, or if multiculturalism represents a worthwhile goal whose long-term impacts and implications have yet to be worked out (Kivisto and Rundblad 2000). Because controversy mars its definitional, descriptive, and prescriptive utility, the politics of multiculturalism remains contested in America’s evolving governance landscape, with few signs of subsiding from a lingering post-9/11 malaise.

In an effort to make sense of what is going on, and why, this chapter addresses the emergence and entrenchment of multiculturalisms as de facto governance in the United States. The chapter begins by looking at assimilationist (melting pot) governance patterns that preceded the shift toward multicultural governance at state and institutional levels. It then explores the evolution of multicultural discourses as governance narratives in the United States, their impact on national identity and unity, and implications for governing difference and diversity. Also discussed are the different multicultural discourses and models of multiculturalism—celebratory, communitarian, laissez-faire, and critical—as they compete for space in establishing a made-in-the-USA style of multicultural governance. The chapter concludes by comparing the concept of critical multiculturalism with Canada’s consensus-oriented equivalent—in the process exposing the oppositional rationales that contrast a state (official or top-down) multiculturalism with a bottom-up peoples’ multiculturalism. A note of caution before beginning: Multicultural discourses in the United States tend to incorporate the identities and divisions of gender, ability, and sexual orientation, alongside those of race, ethnicity, and Indigeneity (Hollering 1995). The content of this chapter is restricted to the politics of multiculturally managing race and ethnic difference.

Diversity and Difference in America

For a country that many see as synonymous with a melting pot metaphor, the United States exhibits an astonishing range of diversity and difference that is projected to accelerate as the twenty-first century unfolds. In 2006, the population of the United States stood at an estimated 298,448,000, with the foreign born accounting for 12.4 percent of the total population. According to Jack Martin, Director of Special Projects for FAIR (Federation for American Immigration Reform), one in every eight residents in the United States (or 37.4 million) was foreign born—largest immigrant share in this country since 1920. Of the foreign born, 53.5 percent were from Latin America (30.7 percent of those from Mexico alone), including South America, Central America, and the Caribbean; 26.7 percent from Asia; 13.6 percent from Europe; and 3.5 percent from Africa. About 28 percent of the foreign born, or 10.3 million in 2004, were unauthorized (or undocumented or irregular) migrants, with 57 percent of them from Mexico.

Contemporary immigration patterns reflect in part the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. In liberalizing a once highly restrictive immigration program that favored Western and Northern Europeans, the Act abolished the national origins quota system as the basis for immigration and replaced it with a seven-category preference system in allocating immigrant visas (Kivisto and Ng 2005). The Migration Policy Institute (2007) estimates that just over 1.8 million people (including unauthorized migrants) entered the United States between 2002 and 2006. Put into perspective, the United States boasts a net migration rate of 3.05 migrants per 1000 population (2007 estimate), second only to Canada’s rate of 5.79 migrants per 1000 population (Seidle 2007). The principal sending countries include Mexico, China, India, the Philippines, and Cuba (in order of importance based on 2006 data). Family members continue to account for the lion’s share of new immigrants, with an annual average intake of 64 percent between 2002 and 2006 (Migration Policy Institute 2007). Those entering the USA on employment-based green cards account for only 16 percent of the annual average during that period.

Patterns of permanent residency are no less interesting. In 2007, over one million (1,052,415) individuals attained lawful permanent resident status, with new arrivals accounting for 431,368 of those and readjustment of status for 261,047 (Migration Policy Institute 2007). By contrast, a total of 1,266,264 foreign nationals obtained lawful permanent resident status in 2006, according to the Department of Homeland Security’s Yearbook of Immigration Statistics (cited in Terrazas et al. 2007), representing an increase of 12.8 percent over 2005 and a 50.6 percent increase from the 841,000 in 2000. The difference between the figures for 2007 and 2006 reflected readjustments of status. Family-sponsored immigrants accounted for 65.5 percent of the new admissions in 2007; 15.4 percent entered through an employment-based preference, 12.9 percent had refugee status, and 4 percent were winners in the diversity lottery. Of the one million who
groups whose religious and cultural differences complicate multicultural governance. This is not surprising, because the United States is a deeply religious society, with religiosity occupying a more important space in private and public life than in many other advanced democracies (Seidle 2007). To be sure, the numbers on religious diversity at present are relatively modest, with approximately 80 percent claiming to be Christian, but significant increases are projected for Islam by 2050. While Americans expect the assimilation of newcomers across varying dimensions, they are more tolerant of religious differences—as might be expected in a country that separates church from state. In that America's concept of secularism seeks to protect religion from the state (versus the European model that seeks to protect the state from religion), the public expression of religion is allowed, thus guaranteeing not only individual rights and autonomy for religious communities, but also freedom from excessive state interference (Blond and Pabst 2008). In other words, although Americans take religion seriously and are a highly religious people, including 92 percent who believe in God or a transcendent spirit, there is an element of openness and lack of dogmatism in their religiosity and approach to other people's faith, according to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2007).

In addition, different religious organizations may be granted special local, national, and state tax exemptions. The following table demonstrates the U.S. religious membership by denomination for 2000 and estimates for 2050 (cited in Parrillo 2009; figures for 2007 cited in Pew Forum 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2050</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Born in the USA: From Americanization to Multiculturalism**

The United States has long endorsed the virtue of fostering both diversity and uniformity—aptly captured by the insignia on the American eagle bearing Benjamin Franklin's exhortation, "e pluribus unum" (out of many, one) (Parillo 2009). Immigrant communities have enjoyed the freedom to maintain their own communities, and the emergence of hyphenated citizens attests to the retention of roots. But with continuous mass migration since the latter half of the nineteenth century, the absorption of

received lawful permanent residence status in 2007, the leading regions of birth were Asia (36 percent) and North America (33 percent). By country, 14 percent came from Mexico, followed by China (7.3 percent), the Philippines (6.9 percent), India (6.2 percent), and Colombia (3.2 percent), accounting for about 37 percent of all such persons. The following is a breakdown of the U.S. population by race for 2000 and projections for 2050 (based on current birth rates, life expectancies, and immigration patterns) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, cited in Parrillo 2009):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2050</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non Hispanic Whites</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Americans</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Americans</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
newcomers into the mainstream underscored a key American project: to foster a multicultural America as a measure of success and predictor of greatness. Known as Americanization, an aggressively assimilationist program emerged at federal levels before and after the First World War. Both federal and private effort combined to hasten the assimilation of immigrants into American society (Schain 2008)—primarily by eradicating all vestiges of the immigrant’s culture via indoctrination into the American Dream.

Under assimilation, all minorities were expected to absorb the cultural values and social practices of the ruling majority, if only to secure the grounds for centralized control and smooth governance. An obsession with moral and cultural unity stemmed from mindsets that equated moral and cultural differences with deviance and disorder (Parekh 2005). Through assimilation, the mainstream sought to (1) undermine the cultural basis of indigenous societies, (2) expose minorities to dominant norms as normal and acceptable, (3) convert immigrants into patriotic, productive, and God-fearing citizens, and (4) facilitate their entry and transition into the mainstream. Dominant values, beliefs, and social patterns were valorized as inevitable or desirable; conversely, differences were demonized as inferior or irrelevant. Such Eurocentrism proved both paternalistic and patronizing. Those singled out for assimilationist treatment were often portrayed as children in need of discipline under the ever-vigilant eye of a judicious father figure.

The melting pot as governance

A federal commitment to Americanization began to ebb after the initial immigration wave. A melting pot model of governance gradually displaced it, although references to the melting pot continued to justify the Americanization campaigns of the early twentieth century. Under a melting pot paradigm for living together, all immigrants can be transformed into new Americans—a cultural alloy forged in the crucible of democracy, freedom, and civic responsibility (Booth 1998). As widely noted, a commitment to a melting pot envisaged a blending of the best European traditions into a dynamic unity (called America) that would differ from any of the original groups yet reflect a combination of them all. The benefits of such a cultural convergence were widely acclaimed: as Woodrow Wilson said in the 1913, “The great melting pot of America, the place where we are all made Americans of, is the public school, where men of every race, and of every origin and of every station in life send their children, or ought to send their children, and where, being mixed together, they are all infused with the American spirit and developed into the American man and American woman.” That the melting pot metaphor continues to be employed as the preferred idiom to describe minority-majority relations—the mixture and assimilation of minorities without state intervention and at their own pace—reveals a lot about the tenacity of national symbols.

But melting pot clichés are one thing and clarification is quite another. What exactly is meant by the melting pot? Does it mean to absorb? To assimilate at a particular pace? To amalgamate (“fuse”) like paints in a bucket, resulting in a mix that is homogeneous (Swerdlow 2001)? Are references to the melting pot intended to describe what is happening or to prescribe what ought to happen for best governance results? Are immigrants alone changed by the melting, or will their presence irrevocably transform the pot (Kivisto 2002)? Other difficulties are no less problematic: however popular and useful, metaphors such as “melting pot” may prove inadequate shorthand, especially when oversimplifying complex matters to the point of being simplistic—in the process concealing and confusing more than revealing and clarifying (Kivisto and Ng 2005). Finally, reality does not always match rhetoric. Although immigrants to the United States are expected to forge a new alloy by melting into the American pot, this cauldron remains irrefutably “pale male” in composition and control. Any restructuring of American society is recast along the lines and priorities of the prevailing monocultural framework, while the multicultural sector sprinkles a “dash of spice” into an otherwise monocultural stew.

Toward multicultural governances: Principles as practice

Diversity and difference were historically framed along the assimilationist lines of a melting pot metaphor. But the metaphorical idiom of cultural pluralism and multicultural mosaic challenged the melting pot as a normative governance ideal. Instead of focusing on melting down differences into uniform American citizenship, emphasis shifted to reinforcing minority cultural differences at individual and group levels while retaining an indisputably American outlook and attitude. This commitment to a multicultural governance originated for a variety of reasons, including the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, the relatively open immigration policies after 1965 (Schain 2008), 1960s identity politics (including women’s liberation), and government programs (like affirmative action) that effectively consolidated the salience and status of diversity and difference. The ensuing cultural wars and corresponding social movements that emphasized difference and diversity not only undermined the melting pot image of a homogeneous United States. Challenged as well were patterns of power and
authority, including the institutional structures that legitimized them (Bass 2008).

Legislation proved pivotal in ushering in a de facto multiculturalism, especially the Civil Rights Act of 1964, followed by the Voting Rights Act and establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 1965. These initiatives not only abolished the formal second-class status of blacks; they also prohibited racial discrimination by upholding the multicultural ideal that individuals should be treated equally regardless of race or ethnicity (Guibernau 2007). In reality, despite seemingly progressive integrationist legislation, a paradox of unintended consequences appeared. It became increasingly apparent that African Americans as a group were unlikely to achieve both equality or acceptance. Having failed in the integrationist project (largely because white America would not allow them to assimilate), blacks proposed the principle of cultural distinctiveness as grounds for living together, while simultaneously critiquing the exclusionary Eurocentric assumptions about the value of cultural pluralism (Stratton 1999). A commitment to a de facto multiculturalism subsequently emerged that legitimized the claims of blacks and other minority groups to their cultural differences. Other fronts proved equally pivotal in advancing the multicultural project, including passage of the 1967 Bilingual Education Act (Banting and Kymlicka 2006). As well, the 1990 Immigration Act created a category of diversity visas to include up to 55,000 immigrants per year by lottery from underrepresented countries.

That the United States embraces a multicultural governance without a formal multiculturalism is neither unique nor inconsequential. With the exception of Canada and Australia, few countries can claim an official multiculturalism, despite commitments and practices that incorporate the multicultural as principle and practice. In general, multiculturalism as governance in the United States addresses issues of identity, diversity, race relations, political participation, and racial inequality. More specifically, programs based on the principles of multiculturalism are numerous and varied, including equal opportunity and participation, voice and representation, respect and tolerance toward cultural diversity and difference, removal of discriminatory barriers, creating racial harmony through hate crimes and diversity training programs, provision of language translation services or multilingual services in fundamental social service environments, bilingual education programs in schools, attainment of equality through affirmative action programs, preservation of ethnic cultures, introduction of ethnic studies programs at universities, and recognition of minority groups with respect to their history and difficulties in adjusting to American society (Bass 2008).

Clearly, then, a multicultural commitment to diversity and difference has evolved into an accepted feature of American life with a corresponding set of values and priorities that transcend the assimilationism of a melting pot discourse (see Ley 2007:15 for evidence of a return of assimilation). But reactions to multiculturalism vary. For some, multiculturalism constitutes the definitive statement in fulfilling America’s quest for universal equality; for others, it represents the antithesis of what America stands for while subverting its unifying values (Schlesinger 1992).

Some like Kymlicka (2000) defend an emergent consensus and dominant paradigm of multiculturalism in the United States. The principles and practice of multiculturalism are here to stay; consequently, debates must transcend the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and focus, instead, on what kind of multicultural governance people want.

Critics of multiculturalism are legion, including those who lament the privileging of culture at the expense of more fundamental categories of social analysis, including class, gender, and race (Glazer 1997). A multiculturalism restricted to culture alone may well end up bolstering the advantage of relatively affluent groups, while glossing over the economic and social difficulties of groups for whom cultural recognition is not a central priority (Martiniello 1998; Wieviorka 1998). Critics fixate on the divisiveness of multiculturalism (Huntington 2004; Schlesinger 1992), fearing that a multicultural cult of ethnicity could endanger national unity and identity, in part by inflating differences rather than promoting commonalities, in part by reviving ancient prejudices, thus retribalizing and fragmenting America to the detriment of national unity and democratic governance. Finally, others like Dinesh D’Souza (1996) have attacked multiculturalism for subverting the universal values of the Enlightenment in exchange for the relativistic embrace of inferior cultural values on the somewhat dubious assumption that all cultures are of equal value. In contrast to liberalism, which extols the primacy of individual freedom, multiculturalism is accused of promoting those tribalisms and collective group rights that impinge on people’s freedoms and choices. In other words, multiculturalism is believed to be incompatible with liberalism because it compromises people’s rights to be treated as individuals, subordinates the interests of individuals to group interests, and classifies and identifies people on the basis of ascriptive identities (Baber 2008).

Models of Multiculturalisms: An Abundance of Niches

Notwithstanding these ideological rifts and legislative shifts, there is no official multiculturalism policy at federal levels. Yes, there is a de facto multiculturalism by consequences or default, including a broad array of civil rights for leveling the playing field for migrants and minorities. Government policies and state laws do promote tolerance, support equal dignity
and recognition, and guarantee equal rights for minorities (Guibernau 2007). Proactive multiculturalism at state levels is associated with English-Spanish bilingualism, including initiatives by California that allow driver's tests in several languages (although 26 states have also passed English-only legislation). But without an explicit (de jure) policy statement on multiculturalism, multiple multicultural models have emerged, including laissez-faire (or de facto) multiculturalism, celebratory (“multiculturalism lite”) multiculturalism, communitarian multiculturalism, and critical (counterhegemonic) multiculturalism.

**Laissez-faire multiculturalism**

Laissez-faire multiculturalism is constructed around the principle of individual choice within a context of civil rights (Barry 2001; Bloemraad 2007). Minorities are accorded equal rights, without having to sacrifice their distinctiveness, although an expectation of conformity to key values prevails. With a laissez-faire multiculturalism, federal authorities do not actively support the principle of ethnic diversity in advancing social justice. The value of difference and diversity may be legitimate topics of debate in the public realm, yet public funds should neither promote the survival of specific cultural groups nor accommodate the cultural concerns of historically disadvantaged minorities. Immigrants are ultimately responsible for utilizing their own resources either to create ethnic associations or to mobilize for political ends as a way of getting things done.

In many ways, the dynamics of laissez-faire multiculturalism tend to mirror the principles of America's immigration program. Immigration policy in the United States revolves almost exclusively around regulating admissions and monitoring unauthorized entries. Issues pertaining to integration and settlement of immigrants rarely receive federal attention; as a result, they are left to fend for themselves by taking advantage of opportunities created by market forces, mainstream and immigrant voluntary organizations, and self-initiatives on the part of the immigrants themselves. Compare this with Canada's commitment to an immigration-driven multiculturalism. While Canada's immigration program acknowledges the centrality of multiculturalism in promoting naturalization and fostering the settlement of new Canadians, only a small number of newcomers to the United States receive federal assistance or encouragement, with the result that multicultural practices are expressed through initiatives at local, regional, and state levels, although some national measures toward a multicultural integration are known to exist (such as federally mandated affirmative action) (Bloemraad 2006).

**Celebratory multiculturalism as multicultural education**

The status and value of multiculturalism continue to attract lively debate no more so than at educational levels where the centrality of different cultures puts pressure on dislodging the once-unquestioned canon of traditional American culture and history. The impetus for multicultural education constitutes a departure from conventional ways of doing things. Its introduction has not only challenged how schools should relate to difference but also raised questions about the dynamics of formal education in a changing and diverse society. In striving to be inclusive by ensuring that differences do not disadvantage students, multicultural education encompasses a variety of policies, programs, and practices for engaging difference within the school setting. The National Association for Multicultural Education (2003) provides a definition of multiculturalism that reveals its many dimensions—from empowering to enriching and enlightening.

Multicultural education is a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity... It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. It challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of democratic principles of social justice. Multicultural education is a process that permeates all aspects of school practices, policies, and organization... Thus, school curriculum must directly address issues of racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, religious intolerance, and xenophobia. Multicultural education advocates the belief that students and their life histories and experiences should be placed at the centre of the teaching and learning process and that pedagogy should occur in a context that is familiar to students and that addresses multiple ways of thinking. In addition, teachers and students must critically analyze oppression and power relations in their communities, societies, and the world... offer students an equitable educational opportunity, while at the same time, encouraging students to critique society in the name of social justice.

Notwithstanding this range of initiatives under a multicultural education umbrella, celebratory models tend to dominate. They flourish at different levels of education, from primary to universities, with changes primarily to the culture content of textbooks and curriculum (Bass 2008). Under a celebratory multicultural education, students are exposed to a variety of different cultures in the hopes of enhancing an appreciation for cultural diversity. Each of the four major ethnicities (Native American, Latino/a, African American, and Asian American) has a month dedicated to the
observance of its history and culture. The curriculum is enriched with various multicultural add-ons: special days are set aside for multicultural awareness, projects are assigned that reflect multicultural themes, and specific cultures are singled out for intensive classroom study. For example, colleges and universities throughout the USA organize "international days" to celebrate diversity by celebrating diverse cultures through food, dance, and information displays (Boli and Elliott 2008). Additional perspectives under celebratory multiculturalism may incorporate insights into healthy identity formation, cultural preservation, intercultural sensitivity, stereotyping awareness, and cross-cultural communication. The goals of these initiatives are to foster greater tolerance, enhanced sensitivity, a more positive sense of ethnic identity, and more harmonious intercultural relations by honoring the pasts of all (Bass 2008).

A celebratory model is widely accepted because of its nonthreatening nature. Yet, the very innocuousness of a samosas-saris-steel bands style of multicultural education makes it vulnerable to criticism. Celebratory styles have been criticized as too static and restrictive in scope. They tend to focus on diversity (rather than difference), that is, on the exotic components of a culture that everyone can relate to, rather than more substantive issues pertaining to patterns of inequality within contexts of power. Diverse cultures are studied at the level of material culture, stripped of their historical context and existing power relations, and discussed from an outsider’s point of view (Mukherjee 1992). A focus on the costumes, cuisine, and customs of culture reinforces the dangers of overromanticizing minorities as remote or removed. Alternatively, in cases where cultural differences are perceived as un-American, minorities are framed as troublesome constituents who have problems or create social problems that cost or create inconvenience. Failure to initiate sweeping institutional changes, much less to challenge the racism within institutional settings, has also besmirched celebratory models. A celebratory discourse is criticized as little more than a hegemonic distraction that does nothing to challenge structural inequalities. Worse still, it conveys the impression that fundamental issues of inequality are addressed, even if nothing is done to disturb the racialized distribution of power and privilege (see Thobani 2007).

Communitarian multiculturalism: Diversity within unity as governance

A commitment to liberal universalism exposes a governance paradox. To one side is a belief in the fundamental unity of humanity—that what we share as free-wheeling and morally autonomous individuals is more important for purposes of entitlement and engagement than what divides us because of membership in some group. Racial and ethnic differences are only skin deep, hence, they really don’t matter or count; or, alternatively, they pose a threat that needs to be defused. To the other side is an equally powerful belief that denying the relevance of difference may violate a person’s (or group’s) equality rights. For an equitable governance, it may be necessary to treat people similarly (equally), but also differently (as equals) by taking context into account. Yet another governance paradox is exposed: on the one hand, a commitment to recognize difference and diversity by incorporating it into a multicultural governance; on the other hand, the need to acknowledge the centrality of unity, if only to secure the conditions for diversity and difference to flourish without erupting into conflict. Ideally this unity should not be imposed by government or decree. For maximum effect it should reflect the outcome of civic education, commitment to the common good, a society’s shared values and common experiences, and robust institutions (Communitarian Network 2002).

The emergence of a communitarian movement provides a compromise governance model. By engaging difference and diversity without forsaking unity and order, communitarianism is based on the belief that a just and fair society reflects a carefully crafted balance between the conflicting principles of unity versus difference as played out in the debate between individual rights versus community responsibilities. With its focus on the theme of Diversity Within Unity (DWU) (Communitarian Network 2002), the communitarian network proposes a middle-ground governance. According to a communitarian governance model, members of distinct cultural groups are entitled to identify and practice their cultural customs without having to forfeit their right to democratic citizenship. But the recognition of diversity swings both ways: Just as people’s cultural differences should not bar them from full and equal participation in society, so should their differences be deemed irrelevant in terms of allocating who gets what. Yes, difference and diversity, but secondary to national unity and core societal values.

In other words, a communitarian commitment to DWU comes with strings attached. First, while individuals are free to preserve their cultural distinctiveness, they can do so only as long as these cultural practices do not clash with those basic values and core institutions that secure a cohesive societal governance. This shared framework incorporates the protection of fundamental human rights, including gender equality, rule of law, compelling public interest, freedom of movement and expression, and respect for democratic processes. Second, individuals may identify with the cultural tradition of their choice provided that, in situations of conflicting loyalties, their culture of origin does not supersede or compromise their
loyalty to the country of permanent residence. Third, minorities have the right to challenge the first and second conditions, but not through violence. They must utilize the democratic processes that are available for such purposes. In the words of the Communitarian Network (2002:2):

_The basis approach we favor is diversity within unity. It presumes that all members of a given society will fully respect and adhere to those basic values and institutions that are considered part of the basic shared framework of the society. At the same time every group in society is free to maintain its distinctive subculture—those policies, habits, and institutions that do not conflict with the shared core—and a strong measure of loyalty to its country of origins, as long as this does not trump loyalty to the society in which it lives if these loyalties come into conflict. Respect for the whole and respect for all is at the essence of our position._ (Emphasis in the original)

The message is clear. A DWU governance not only subordinates difference and diversity to the primacy of national unity as the basis for governance; it also rejects the extremes of either assimilation or separation/segregation as grounds for living together differently. A commitment to assimilation is discredited as unnecessarily homogenizing, morally unjustified, and sociologically implausible. Mainstream institutions like schooling cannot be used to suppress cultural differences or to reinforce minority segregation and ghettoization. By the same token, a DWU governance disallows the notion of minority rights to uphold practices that contradict UN human rights codes or the prevailing laws of the United States. Also rejected is the assertion that minorities are entitled to more rights and entitlements than those of the mainstream population. Special measures may be provided to overcome historical disadvantage in isolated cases, but these concessions must be based on need and discarded when no longer needed. And DWU most certainly rejects the plural notion of minorities establishing separate communities that not only are segregated from society at large, but also legitimize practices and laws at odds with societal standards.

On the surface a communitarian governance model provides an appealing compromise between unbounded multiculturalism and stifling assimilation. In advocating an integrative model within a shared framework, a multicultural governance proposes an overarching vision, laws, and values that simultaneously (and paradoxically) transcend racial and ethnic differences, yet within limits acknowledge their value and importance. To achieve equal citizenship and full democratic rights under this mosaic governance model, minorities only need to depoliticize their differences, that is, privatize and personalize their differences rather than manipulate them in public to secure advantage. But this you-can-be-different-but-not-too-different mentality creates problems when disallowing differences that make a difference. To the extent that a communitarian governance is incapable of taking differences seriously, its status as a compromise in deeply divided societies is jeopardized (Maaka and Fleras 2005).

**Multiculturalism as critical discourse**

The surge of critically informed “subversive” multiculturalisms is interrogating the culture of whiteness that historically formulated public perception and democratic governance (D’Souza 1996; Eller 1997). A critical multiculturalism transcends the simple construction of identities or celebration of tolerance. Instead it embraces an “insurgent” discourse that challenges (a) the authority and legitimacy of white supremacy, (b) the Eurocentric canon at the core of American cultural life, and (c) the melting pot ideology that infuses government policies and programs. Differences do not just exist under critical multiculturalism; to the contrary, they are part of the struggle to redefine public culture by politicizing the “isms” within American society (Giroux 1994). With media and educational institutions spearheading this counterhegemonic insurgency, who, then, can be surprised when conservative critics equate multiculturalism with a thinly disguised Marxist assault on traditional American culture and values (Schmidt 1997)?

In an effort to unsettle the dominant monocultural conception of history, culture, and society, a critical multiculturalism originated in the 1980s within the context of school reform. In criticizing the Eurocentric bias and exclusion of minorities from a curriculum and pedagogy that privileged a Western canon, critical multicultural models became synonymous with challenge, resistance, and transformation—rather than consensus, conformity, and control as was the case with happy-face multiculturalism. The politics of power and privilege associated with these critically discursive frameworks not only questioned the authority and legitimacy of the status quo; they also contested the prevailing distribution of power and privilege while challenging entrenched patterns of inequality (Thobani 2007; also Hall 2000; Pieterse 2007). As well, a normative critique was directed at those institutional arrangements within the public domain that deprived minorities of their rights (Tiryakian 2004).

Equally contested is the core tenet of liberal universalism, namely, what people have in common as rights-bearing individuals and what they accomplish as equality-seeking rationalists are more important—at
least for purposes of recognition and reward—than ascribed membership in racial groups. Critically oriented multiculturalism instead advocates the distinctly un-American axiom that personal patterns of engagement and entitlement should reflect (1) disadvantage or birthright in addition to merit, (2) creativity rather than conformity, (3) identity instead of accomplishment, (4) difference rather than universality, (5) group rights versus individual rights, (6) ethnic cultures versus common cultures, and (7) pluralism versus assimilation (McLaren 1994). Four major themes anchored a critical multicultural discourse: postmodernism, cultural relativism, identity politics, and collective rights.

Postmodernism As an intellectual force, postmodernism challenges the conventional wisdom of order, rationality, and hierarchy associated with modernity. More specifically it disrupts those triumphalist narratives about America—a uniquely bestowed nation that has a date with destiny in the progress toward perfection—by uncovering the histories, perspectives, and voices of the marginalized (Kim 2004). It also takes to task the canons of positivism and universalism on the grounds that imposing homogeneity and hierarchy does a disservice to a fragmented and contradictory reality (Li 1999). In rejecting a concept of reality that is coherent, objective, and amenable to rational analysis by dispassionate language, postmodernism espouses a multiperspectival view of reality with no center or authority. In a mind-dependent world of postmodernists, there is no such thing as truth (objectivity, laws, absolutes), only discourses about truth, whose truthfulness reflects social context and power relations. Acceptance of reality as perspectival and provisional as well as socially constructed and culturally constrained not only transforms society into a multiplicity of pluralisms (Adam and Allan 1995); it can also capture the centrality of relativism that underpins a critical multiculturalism (Vertovec 1996).

Cultural Relativism A critical multiculturalism is animated by two related assumptions: First, that in a relativist world, all cultures are of equal validity and worth; as a result no one has any right to criticize or condemn, even if cultural values clash with mainstream values or are manipulated to justify actions at odds with human rights codes. Second, that nothing is neutral or impartial because everything/everyone is located in time and space. Only different standpoints are espoused; that is, everything is relative and everything could be true or equal since nothing is absolutely knowable, given the inseparability of theoriser and theorised. The patterns of power that traditionally secured societal definitions of truth are contested by this “radical relativism, as are the rules of normalcy and standards of legitimacy” (Harris 1995). This discourse of resistance repudiates the authority and legitimacy of white supremacy by contesting the racism, sexism, and patriarchy embedded in American society—much of which conflicted with the lived experiences of minority women and men (Giroux 1994).

Identity Politics In challenging the cultural hegemony in an advanced capitalist society, minorities have capitalized on their identities for mobilizing in defense of social, political, and cultural interests (Turner 1994; Henry and Tator 1999). Identity politics reflects the tendency to define one’s political interests and social identity in terms of some group category like race or gender rather than social class. A 1960s critique of American culture as exclusive or oppressive resulted in the framing of social justice and domination along identity grounds, thus transforming the idea of equality as sameness into the idea of equality as difference. Historically disadvantaged minorities began to identify with these subjugated groups and mobilize into action by pooling resources to defend interests and express values. Challenging the “dominant silencing of diversity” (Eisner 1996) fosters a framework by which new identities are (re)formulated, new communities are constructed, knowledge and power are contested, and Eurocentric universalisms are exposed for what they are—discourses in defense of dominant ideology. Both the politics of difference (Young 1990) and demand for recognition (Taylor 1992) transcend the universalism of liberal pluralism: by challenging white privilege and a Eurocentric moral order in defining what differences count and what counts as difference, each also demands nothing less than a commitment to politicize, recover, preserve, or promote the differences of a threatened collective identity.

Collective Rights Equally important is the primacy of collective rights. Just as earlier social movements contested the values and structures that once justified oppression, the new identity politics concedes the oppressiveness of moves to eliminate group differences in favor of individual rights—in consequence if not necessarily by intent (Eller 1997). This commitment to the primacy of ethnic group membership challenges the individualism of liberal universalism. Instead of privileging the liberal-universalist idea that differences are simply skin-deep since everybody is equal before the law, an oppositional reading prevails: because differences are real and fundamental, they must serve as the basis for respect, recognition, and reward. To be sure, the inward-looking dynamic of a critical multiculturalism may be problematic. The insulating and isolating of groups
may marginalize minorities by robbing the disprivileged of community or initiative. As bell hooks (1995:201) writes in critique of a multiculturalism that erects walls rather than builds bridges:

As more people of color raise our consciousness and refuse to be pitted against one another, the forces of neo-colonial white supremacist domination must work harder to divide and conquer. The most recent effort to undermine progressive bonding between people of color is the institutionalization of “multiculturalism.” Positively, multiculturalism is presented as a corrective to a Eurocentric vision of model citizenship wherein white middle-class ideals are presented as the norm. Yet this positive intervention is then undermined by visions of multiculturalism that suggest everyone should live with and identify with their own self-contained cultural group. If white supremacist capitalist patriarchy is unchanged then multiculturalism within that context can only become a breeding ground for narrow nationalism, fundamentalism, identity politics, and cultural, racial, and ethnic separatism.

Even within critical multiculturalism, internal disputes prevail. A critical multiculturalism may reject a unified and static concept of identity as a fixed inventory of experiences, meanings, and practices, in lieu of identities that are dynamic, provisional, fluid, and hybridized (Henry and Tator 2006). Descent-based communities may embody positive values and demand recognition in public policy making; nevertheless, this identity politics rarely reflects the dynamics of diversity while rigidifying into a framework that restricts free choice (Hollinger 1995; Gleason 1996). A mosaic multicultural model is rejected in favor of a kaleidoscope model—one that is open (belonging to a community does not exclude belonging/identification to society at large, since people’s lives should not be defined or compartmentalized by race or color); fluid (with open boundaries, multiple affiliations, socially constructed entities, and hybrid identities); and voluntary (reflecting deep values of individual freedom and choice) (Hollinger 1995). The presidential politics of 2008 clearly demonstrated this shift toward a postmulticulturality. By transcending notions of race and crossing color lines, the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States not only challenges notions of identity politics but reinforces the trend toward a postethnic America (Hollinger 2008).

**Duelleing Multicultural Discourses: “Unum” versus “Pluribus”**

Many have playfully said that Canadians and Americans use the same words but speak a different language. Nowhere is this pithy aphorism more evident than in the multiplicity of references to multiculturalism. Mosaic versus the melting pot? Tossed salad or kaleidoscope? “Unity in diversity” versus “diversity in unity”? “out of many, one” or “from one, many”? Canada may claim to be a multicultural mosaic but its **pluribus appears to be more attuned to integrating ethnic Canadians into the unum.** Or as Sneja Gunew (1993:207) observes in castigating Canada’s multiculturalism, “[M]ulticulturalism is a rhetoric of inclusion which can’t deal with the politics of exclusion.” Conservative and liberal models of multiculturalism in the United States appears consistent with the unum in e pluribus unum. But a critically informed insurgent multiculturalism has precipitated cultural wars whose **pluribus threatens to fragment the unum of a national vision.** Consider the polarities at play:

- Canada’s multiculturalism is largely about managing diversity by depoliticizing difference, whereas critical multiculturalisms in the United States are about politicizing difference for managing the mainstream. One is criticized for emphasizing commonality over difference; the other for overemphasizing difference at the expense of commonality.
- One multiculturalism (that of Canada) is directed at modifying the mainstream without straining the social fabric; the other is focused on transforming the monocultural firmament upon which society is grounded.
- One is officially political, yet seeks to depoliticize diversity for society-building purposes; the other falls outside the policy domain, but politicizes differences as a catalyst for minority empowerment.
- One is based on law and rooted in the state; the other consists of practices that challenge the national mythology upon which the legal and constitutional framework of society are constructed.
- One seeks to eliminate the relevance of difference as a basis for entitlement or engagement (depoliticizes); the other privileges and politicizes the salience of differences in allocating who gets what.
- One is riveted to the modernist quest for unity and universality as the basis for multicultural governance; the other embraces a postmodernist zeal for differences as grounds for living together differently.
- One acknowledges respect for diversity and difference without taking differences seriously (pretend pluralism), while the other focuses on empowerment through cultural politics as people of color strive to recover, preserve, or promote their distinct cultural identities (Garcia 1995; Parrillo 2009).
- Canada’s official multiculturalism transforms cultural differences into a discourse about social inequality (redistribution); critical
multiculturalism reformulates social inequalities into a discursive framework of cultural differences and public culture (recognition).

- A liberal multiculturalism allows the dominant group to establish the terms of the agenda for minority participation; a critical multiculturalism addresses the removal of barriers to the legitimacy of different ways of being and knowing (Parekh 2000).

Clearly, then, references to Canada’s official multiculturalism embrace a commitment to consensus by way of “conformity” and “accommodation” (Fleras 1998). Canadians for the most part have preferred to deploy multiculturalism in a “society-building” sense by endorsing it as a “discourse” for “managing” difference within an existing status quo (Fleras 2002). Canada’s consensus multiculturalism endorses a citizenship in which social equality is contingent on everyone being different in the same kind of way (conformity). Opposed to this is the thrust of popular multiculturalisms in the United States, which are critical of the Eurocentric cultural agenda that historically has denied or excluded. America’s critical multiculturalists tend to emphasize its “counterhegemonic” dimensions by framing multiculturalism as a subsersive discourse that challenges and resists.

How, then, do we account for this discursive divide? Multiculturalism in Canada is primarily a top-down political program for integrating migrants and minorities by balancing the national with the social and the cultural. A state-based multiculturalism is concerned with managing cultural differences to ensure that people don’t act upon their differences to disrupt the status quo (also Kundnani 2007). This hegemonic discourse in defense of dominant ideology endorses those policies and initiatives that subordinate minority needs to the greater good of national interests. The disruptiveness of diversity is dispelled by homogenizing differences around a singular commonality so that everyone is similarly different, not differently similar (Eisenstein 1996). In other words, the objective is not to celebrate or challenge, but to construct consensus by depoliticizing and institutionalizing difference for governance purposes. In taking the difference out of diversities, Canada’s consensus multiculturalism strives to do the improbable: to embrace differences without making a difference.

By contrast the postmodernist discourses that animate America’s critical multiculturalism subvert as they resist. Critical multiculturalism is largely driven from the bottom-up, including various forms of identity politics involving any group marginalized from the mainstream. It transcends the constraints of official policy initiatives; therefore, it is not compromised by the demands of political engineering or electoral pandering. Advocated instead is a discourse of resistance that challenges Eurocentricity by relativizing the white capitalist patriarchy with its exclusionary designs on the “Other” (Giroux 1994; Eisenstein 1996). Unlike a consensus multiculturalism with its liberal universalist propensity for treating everyone the same for purposes of reward or recognition, a critical multiculturalism addresses the issue of group differences and ethnic exceptionalism. Unlike consensus multiculturalism that connotes a pluralism devoid of historical context and power relations, a critical multiculturalism signifies a site of struggle around the reformation of historical memory, national identity, self- and social representation, and the politics of difference (Giroux 1994:336). In challenging the traditional hegemony of the dominant group, a critical multiculturalism proposes a fundamental reconceptualization of the power relations between different cultural communities. Such a counterhegemonic challenge could not be further from its consensus-seeking counterpart.

Let’s put it into perspective: Many accuse Canada’s official multiculturalism of securing the unum at the expense of the pluribus (Thobani 2007). Critical multiculturalisms in the United States are thought to have privileged the pluribus at the expense of the unum. Not surprisingly, there is an element of truth behind this fractured howler: Multiculturalism in Canada is essentially a society-building exercise that seeks to depoliticize differences through institutional accommodation. Compare this with American critical multiculturalisms where group differences and identity claims are politicized by challenging the prevailing distribution of cultural power. In other words, for Canada’s consensus multiculturalism, the objective is to make society safe from difference, in addition to making Canada safe for difference. By contrast, the underlying logic of critical multiculturalism seeks to make difference safe from society, while making difference safe for society. Time may tell which multiculturalism discourses will prevail in the crucible of a new world order that is pulled by globalization, polarized by ethnic fragmentation, pushed by human rights as trumps, and imperiled by the threat of global terrorism.