THE MIDDLE-CLASS CHARACTER OF CANADIAN MULTICULTURALISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

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The "Canadian model" of large-scale immigration and official multiculturalism is highly regarded by international organizations like the OECD and national governments looking to manage demographic and economic growth in the 21st century. Canada's 1971 multiculturalism policy and, later, the 1985 Multiculturalism Act aimed to facilitate the economic integration of immigrants from diverse national and ethnic origins into federal government departments. It also served the broader symbolic function of re-envisioning Canadian national identity as ethnically inclusive, which is seen as important for empowering immigrants to participate fully in social and political institutions (see, e.g., Bloemraad 2006). This combination of economic, political and cultural integration is encompassed in Kymlicka's (1995) notion of multiculturalism as "multicultural citizenship." By removing symbolic barriers that might otherwise prevent individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds from claiming full membership in the national community, multicultural citizenship facilitates their ability to exercise the economic, social, and political rights attached to that status.

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This article reflects on the legacy of multicultural citizenship in light of evolving insights into the quality of membership it envisions and its poten-

tial for inclusion and exclusion. It focuses specifically on challenges posed by the rise of what scholars have called "neoliberal multiculturalism" and "middle-class multiculturalism." While there are subtle differences between these two contemporary iterations of multiculturalism, they both point to increasing socio-economic selectivity in who is considered a full member of the Canadian national collective. While ethnically and culturally inclusive, a multicultural citizenship that reserves full membership for individuals who display middle-class traits and/or demonstrate economic utility in a globalized economy can have negative societal consequences. It has the potential to erode socio-economic solidarity and public support for immigrants who tend to be defined in terms of their lack of economic utility, like family immigrants and refugees.

THE PROMISE OF MULTICULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship denotes the relationship between an individual and a state in terms of legal status, rights, political participation, and belonging (Bloemraad et al. 2008). These elements of citizenship are interrelated. In the modern era, citizenship is conferred by nation states while belonging, or perceived membership in the nation represented by the state, can affect the ability of individuals to exercise their rights and participate in a range of institutions. This is because "nations" are often envisioned as relatively homogenous communities that share traits such as ethnic origins, language, religion, and history. The promise of "multicultural citizenship" lies in its redefinition of the "nation" as ethnically, linguistically and religiously inclusive, and the knock-on effect of greater access to rights and participation for all. Moreover, Kymlicka (2017) argues, it furthers a core aim of citizenship as envisioned by theorist T.H. Marshall: the promise of "socio-economic solidarity." This refers to citizenship serving as a tool for redressing market-generated inequalities, by ensuring that individuals of both low and high socio-economic status have the legal and symbolic means to participate fully in society.

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MULTICULTURAL CITIZENSHIP AS "NEOLIBERAL" OR "MIDDLE-CLASS"

Recent insights into the quality of multicultural citizenship and a social, political, and cultural project could have implications for assessing that concept's potential for creating a national community that is more inclusive of diversity, especially if diversity refers to socio-economic differences, not just ethnic or cultural ones. These insights characterize contemporary Canadian multiculturalism as "neoliberal" or "middle-class" multiculturalism.

"Neoliberal multiculturalism" reframes the social value of ethnic diversity in terms of its economic utility (Kymlicka 2017; Winter 2014). In other words, diverse ethnic origins are considered valuable insofar as they give workers assets for competing in the globalized world, like linguistic or

cultural competencies for engaging in transnational economic cooperation and intercultural communication. As a result, recognition of full membership in the multicultural national community is reserved for individuals whose education, training, occupation, language and cultural capital make them economically relevant in a national and global context.

The concept of "middle-class multiculturalism" offers a complementary, though slightly different, diagnosis of how ethnic diversity is valued (Elrick 2020; in press). In addition to economic utility, that is, an individual's concrete value in the labour market, I argue that belonging in Canada's multicultural community is also contingent on displaying middle-class traits. These traits are framed in socio-economic terms (e.g., wealth, occupational prestige); cultural terms (e.g., education, manners); and moral terms. While the range of moral distinctions denoting the middle class varies over time and across national contexts, Lamont (1992, 34-5) identifies a relatively stable range of applicable ones, including ambition, dependability, self-reliance, discipline, perseverance, and self-mastery. I, furthermore, argue that both economic utility and middle-class socio-economic status are important selection criteria that became institutionalized in the 1967 Immigration Regulations that universalized skilled worker and family immigration. For the high-level immigration bureaucrats who developed this policy, this focus on middle-class traits for selecting individuals from diverse origins emerged as a solution for making large-scale, multicultural immigration a socially and politically viable prospect. In their words, this solution would "enable Canada to give a striking example to the world and to adopt a position of leadership at this difficult time when racial problems are so pressing" (quoted in Elrick 2020, 14).

THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC SELECTIVITY FOR MULTICULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

> **"The concepts of 'neoliberal' and 'middle-class' multiculturalism both point to the intertwining of race and social class in the Canadian state's efforts to manage immigrant diversity."**

The concepts of "neoliberal" and "middle-class" multiculturalism both point to the intertwining of race and social class in the Canadian state's efforts to manage immigrant diversity. When the OECD (2019, 13) lauds Canada's economic immigration program as a "role model for successful migration management," it is likely pointing to the benefits of such an intertwining. However, there are also downsides that have potentially large implications for social stratification, to which I now turn.

EROSION OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRATION POLICIES

The symbolic socio-economic selectivity of Canada's immigration program, and the demographic multiculturalism it produced, can conceivably shape ideas of who is or is not admissible to Canada as an immigrant or refugee in the eyes of the general public. As Blinder (2015) argues in reference to the United Kingdom, members of the general public formulate opinions on immigration policy based on "imagined immigration," that is,

the picture people have in the heads of who immigrants are. Insofar as public opinion influences immigration policymaking, public perceptions of who immigrants are can affect the kinds of immigrants a government admits.

There is reason to believe that, thanks to the admissions policies put in place in the 1960s, the Canadian public has become accustomed to associating "good" multiculturalism with "middle-class multiculturalism." In his analysis of how immigration policy is depicted in Canadian media, Bauder (2011) shows that the immigration and settlement of highly skilled and affluent foreigners is generally taken for granted. Public opinion surveys, like the one conducted by Environics (2019), consistently reveal that Canadians' positive overall attitude towards immigration rests, in part, on the widely held belief that immigrants are good for the Canadian economy.

If support for immigration among the Canadian general public presumes middle-class socio-economic status and economic utility, it seems logical that immigrant types not associated with these qualities in the public imagination could be vulnerable to losing support. Entry categories that are formally "noneconomic", (e.g., for family members, recognized refugees, and asylum applicants) select individuals for admission to Canada based on their presumed *lack* of economic utility and high socio-economic status. If public opinion supports restrictions for family immigrants, the rights of Canadian citizens and permanent residents to family life, including to have an extended immigrant family, will be further curtailed. If it supports further restrictions on refugee and asylum-seeker admissions, a large proportion of which are from the Global South, the few remaining pathways for mobility across international borders as a means of escaping economic, political and environmental hardship will be increasing blocked and vast global inequalities exacerbated.

EROSION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC SOLIDARITY

Turning from immigration to Canadian society in general, both "neoliberal" and "middle-class" multiculturalism may be fostering a decline in social solidarity (Kymlicka 2017; Elrick in press). This results from social closure along status lines, reserving notions of full membership in the Canadian nation for members of the economically useful middle class. Recent developments under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau suggest how deeply "middle class" has become internalized as a marker of Canadian national identity. In December 2019, the new post of Minister of Middle-Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance was created. That year, a Liberal Party document promised to build "a strong middle class," help "working Canadians get ahead," support entrepreneurs' efforts to "succeed and grow," and to make "life more affordable for middle-class Canadians," all without actually defining "middle class" (Liberal Party of Canada 2019, 6, 11, 19, 7). By excluding more economically and socially vulnerable groups in Canadian society (e.g.,

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the working class or many First Nations communities) from the middle-class national community, the socioeconomic solidarity promised by citizenship is reserved for the already advantaged.

CONCLUSION

As Canada's multiculturalism policy marks its 50th anniversary, a broad range of scholarship has emerged to explore its nature, benefits, and downsides. This article has focused on multiculturalism, not in the form of the 1971 policy, but as a demographic description and ethos that became anchored in Canadian immigration policy in the 1960s and thereby changed collective notions of who belongs to the Canadian nation. Moreover, it has highlighted the socio-economic selectivity of this ethos and its potentially detrimental effects on social equality, cohesion, and solidarity, both within and across Canada's borders. Governments and international organizations that see the "Canadian model" of mass immigration and ("middle-class") multiculturalism as a panacea for managing the social, political, and cultural challenges posed by immigration management would do well to note the under-recognized forms of exclusion that it can perpetuate.

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