'DIFFERENTLY THE SAME'MULTI/ INTER/CULTURALISM AS IMMIGRANT GOVERNANCE MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Interculturalism vs multiculturalism: Two solitudes? Scorpions in a bottle? Strange bedfellows? Tweedledum or tweedledee? Many believe these 'isms' are fundamentally different and incompatible, with interculturalism positively contrasted as a new and improved model for integrating immigrants. This paper challenges each of these notions by reframing the debate over multi/inter/culturalism along governance lines. The paper argues that, despite differences in tone and emphasis, the principles of an integrative inclusivity inform the discursive logic behind both governance models. The paper also contends that Canada's official multiculturalism is less 'multi' than widely perceived, while Québec's interculturalism is less 'inter' than many propose. The paper concludes on a cautionary note: In that neither multiculturalism nor interculturalism have a knack for meaning what they say or for saying what they mean, debates over the 'isms' as competing governance models will remain a contested affair.

INTRODUCTION: FRAMING THE ISSUES

References to multiculturalism invariably conjure up images of a federal program for managing diversity. But federal multiculturalism is not the only governance game in Canada. Each of Canada's ten provinces embraces a series of formal policies, laws, advisory boards, or commitments that often overlap with federal commitments. Of these provincial multiculturalisms, few have attracted as much attention as Québec's interculturalism,[1] with some arguing the case for diametrically opposed agendas in integrating immigrants (Gagnon and Iavcovino 2007), while others dismiss dissimilarities as largely semantic – little more than a superficial (and exaggerated) gloss for rebranding Québec's model along non-federal lines (Jedwab 2011; Leuprecht 2011). Still others endorse interculturalism as a governance improvement over federal multiculturalism for living together with differences in dignity and equitably (Steering Paper 2011). Its virtue resides in straddling the extremes between assimilation (stifling unity) and multiculturalism (unbridled diversity) with respect to cross-cultural dialogue and interaction, recognition of dynamic identities, balancing unity (integration) yet respecting diversity, promoting collective good over individual impulses, and rejecting illiberal practices (Council of Europe 2008). Yet others still disagree, and contend there is little about interculturalism as an immigrant governance model to inspire such confidence (Meer and Modood 2011).

This paper argues that rephrasing the debate over the 'isms' along governance lines challenges conventional wisdom. That is, interculturalism as an immigrant governance model is neither different from nor superior to federal multiculturalism in managing diversity and the integration of newcomers. A convergence of 'isms' prevails instead, given the necessity to absorb newcomers into the body politic, with both governance models designed to depoliticize differences by making society safe from differences as well as safe for differences. To put this argument to the test, the paper addresses the politics of federal multiculturalism and Québec's interculturalism as convergent models of inclusive immigrant governance. The paper contends that, notwithstanding shifts in focus since its inception in 1971, Canada's official multiculturalism policy retains its core mission – namely, a commitment

to an inclusive immigrant governance, thereby ensuring no one is unreasonably excluded for reasons beyond their control (Fleras 2012). A similar line of reasoning may be applied to Québec's interculturalism notwithstanding differences in tone and emphasis. The paper concludes accordingly: multiculturalism and interculturalism converge in securing integrative models of immigrant inclusivity and society-building, yet both rarely say what they mean or mean what they say. In terms of organization, this paper begins by analyzing federal multiculturalism as a governance model for managing immigrant integration along inclusionary lines, followed by a look at Québec's interculturalism as an equally inclusive ('absorptive') model for immigrant governance, and concludes by pointing out the shared logic behind both governance models, despite continuing misconceptions and distortions.

FEDERAL MULTICULTURALISM AS IMMIGRANT GOVERNANCE MODEL

Is there a federal multiculturalism model? To an extent such a model can be constructed, it must be gleaned from the following sources: (a) the 1971 policy statement and the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, (b)a close reading of official documents such as the Annual Reports, and (c) an awareness that, when it comes to state policy, what is said is not necessarily what is really meant.

The logic underlying Canada's multicultural model was articulated by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau who famously announced that the Canadian government would (1) assist all cultural groups who have developed a capacity to grow and *contribute to Canada* (2) assist all members of cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers for equal *participation in Canada,* (3) promote *creative encounters and exchanges among cultural groups in advancing national interests* and (d) assist all newcomers in acquiring one of *Canada's official languages to ensure full involvement.* The following themes in balancing unity with diversity reflect these priorities, namely, individual freedom from nationalist straightjackets; equality of opportunity for all persons; interaction of groups in fostering cultural sharing as well as retention; and tolerance for differences (with limits) (Fielding 2006). As Trudeau explained later in life, Multiculturalism was never intended to celebrate a newcomer's country of origin, although policy was increasingly twisted in that direction, but rather to celebrate their right to become full members of Canadian society.[2]

Passage of the Multiculturalism Act in 1988 shored up Canada's status as a premier multiculturalism society. The Act sought to respect cultures, promote participation, reduce discrimination, encourage in-group bonding as a precondition for out-group bridging, and accelerate institutional inclusiveness at the federal level.[3] This commitment to integration over separation, interaction over isolation, and participation over withdrawal clearly prevailed and persists into the present (Fries and Gingrich 2009). Annual Reports on the Operation of Canada's Multiculturalism Act are no less inclusivity oriented, although priority objectives have shifted over time, from institutional change (inclusiveness through removal of discriminatory barriers) to antiracism programs (including removal of discriminatory barriers and cross cultural understanding) to civic engagement (promoting active and shared citizenship and participation in public life) (Annual Report, 2005/2006). In the 2009/2010 Annual Report, three new policy objectives were articulated, namely, to remove barriers for participation especially at the level of federal institutions, to construct an integrative and socially cohesive Canada and to promote Canadian values at home and multiculturalism abroad. Since 2006, an integrationist multicultural agenda has taken hold – partly out of concerns over securitization and a disciplining of differences in the post 9/11 eras – in advancing shared values for a cohesive Canada (Fleras 2012).

To be sure, Canada's multicultural model as immigrant governance can be read along two inter-related lines. An *Inclusivity* narrative envisions multiculturalism as a relatively progressive framework for respecting differences while removing ethnicity-based disadvantages through institutional inclusion so that no one is unfairly excluded from full and equal participation in Canadian society. By contrast, a *Hegemony* narrative is focused on bolstering political and economic interests and the priorities of the Canadian state, with its prevailing distribution of power and privilege. References to depoliticizing differences and fostering the integration of newcomers are pivotal in securing a Canada whose vested interests are safe from differences yet safe for differences. To put it bluntly, what some call multicultural inclusivity may be interpreted by others as an assimilation in slow motion into a statist political project (Fielding 2006).

In short, Canada's official multiculturalism constitutes a complex and contested governance model that has evolved over time in response to social changes and political challenges. Despite shifts in emphasis – from ethnicity to equity to civic to integration – an official multiculturalism has never strayed from its foundational rationale: *an inclusive governance model for Canada-building through immigrant integration along multicultural lines* (also Kymlicka 2005). This overarching commitment should disabuse critics of notions that federal multiculturalism espouses a radical relativism in which anything goes, where individual choice prevails over collective interests, and that no dominant Canadian culture exists.

INTERCULTURALISM AS QUÉBEC'S IMMIGRANT GOVERNANCE MODEL

Québec's commitment toward interculturalism as immigrant integration policy was first introduced in the early 1980s, but articulated with the 1990 Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration. As a model for integration, interculturalism operates on two planes: the macro level of state policy and institutional programs plus the micro level of everyday interactivity within institutions and communities at large (Steering Paper 2011). According to interculturalism as immigrant governance model, newcomers and their contributions are welcome. But their entry activates a 'moral contract' involving a reciprocal exchange of rights, duties, and obligations between newcomers and the Québecois. Newcomers must agree to abide by the primacy of speaking French, acknowledge Québec as a free and democratic society as well as secular and pluralist (within limits), governed by the rule of law, and committed to gender equality (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007). Québec has also proposed an obligatory seminar to instruct newcomers about the province's common values, while cities such as Gatineau have released a statement of values to assist newcomer integration (Peritz 2011).

Québec's intercultural governance model articulates a distinct political community whose cultural and language priorities supersede the salience of ethnic diversities. Interculturalism begins with the centrality of French language (and culture); from there, it works to integrate other immigrants into a common public culture, while respecting their diversities (Bouchard and Taylor 2008; Montpetit 2011).[4] This intercultural governance establishes French as the language of intercultural communication; cultivates a pluralistic notion of society that is sensitive to immigrant rights; preserves the creative tension between the diversity of minority differences and the predominance of French culture; and emphasizes the centrality of integration and interaction to the interculturalism process (Bouchard-Taylor Commission 2008:121).

How does federal multiculturalism and Québec's interculturalism compare as models of integrative inclusivity? In promoting the governance principle of unity within diversity, Canada's Multiculturalism is thought to resemble a planetary model, that is, a mosaic of minority cultures in varying orbits around a mainstream centre. The theme of hyphenated Canadian is unmistakable: *You can be Haitian-and-Canadian as long as you obey the laws, not deprive others of their rights, and respect core constitutional values.* By contrast, an interculturalism commitment reflects what is metaphorically equivalent to an 'arboreal' model of immigrant governance: That is, the tree trunk is unflinchingly French in language and culture, while minority cultures constitute the branches grafted on to the trunk. With interculturalism, in other words, limits are explicit – *you can be Haitian but always a Haitian in Québec,* with a corresponding commitment to its values, institutions, and norms as set out in laws and constitution. In short, it would appear any differences in these agendas reflect points of emphasis rather than fundamental opposition, although Québec may have a stronger preoccupation with balancing rights at the level of policy and debate (and hence be more liberal) but a weaker commitment to addressing interethnic inequalities (McAndrew undated).

CONVERGENT MODELS OF IMMIGRANT GOVERNANCE

Clearly then, both federal multiculturalism and Québec's interculturalism share a core theme – a commitment to an inclusive immigrant governance by expediting the integration ('absorption') of newcomers into the larger community (Reitz 2009). To the extent differences in governance are perceived to exist, they reflect tone and emphasis. The major difference lies in Québec's explicitness in its expectations of migrants and what they can expect in return; what constitutes the limits of acceptable behaviour and the unassailable primacy of French language and culture. Federal multiculturalism appears to be more muted in its expectations and limits, although a careful reading of policy statements suggests an equally powerful nod to integrative inclusivity. The following principles point to commonalities in the underlying logic of multi/inter/culturalism as state-driven immigrant governance programs:

- Both federal multiculturalism (MC) and Québec interculturalism (IC) are first and foremost a political expediency, that is, a political act to achieve political goals in a politically acceptable manner. As a state project, any reference to IC or MC must acknowledge their hegemonic status as a discourse in defence of dominant ideology (Thobani 2007).
- Neither IC nor MC are not about celebrating differences or promoting minorities. The focus instead is on 'citizenization' by improving the integration of newcomers into Canada and Québec through removal of discriminatory barriers while respecting immigrants' rights to culture and identity (within limits).
- In advancing an immigrant inclusiveness, MC and IC are both clearly aimed at modifying mainstream attitudes, practices, and institutions to move over and make space without abandoning fundamental values of mainstream society (Steering Paper 2011).
- Emphasis is on *empowering* immigrant individuals - not in the sense of challenging the system - but in equipping them with the resources and resourcefulness

to integrate into the existing system. However inspirational this commitment, the status of MC and IC is aspirational (or symbolic) with little enforcement or compliance powers.

- Neither MC nor IC promotes immigrant differences or minority rights. Depoliticizing differences is the animating logic. The disruptiveness of differences is depoliticized by the simple expedient of institutionalizing differences or by privatizing them into the personal. Emphasis is on neutering these 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.
- Differences are endorsed by both IC and MC, but only to the extent they are equivalent in status, subject to similar treatment, comply with laws and core values, and recognize Québec and Canada's self-proclaimed right to define what differences count and what counts as difference. People can be different but in the same way ('pretend pluralism') rather than be 'the same but differently'.
- Neither IC nor MC condone an 'anything goes' mentality. It's about limits by drawing the line with respect to what's acceptable and what is not, namely, (1) you can be different but differences cannot break law, violate rights, or contravene core constitutional values such as gender equity; (2) you can belong to and identify with Canada and Québec through your ethnicity.
- Both IC and MC are committed to making society safe for, yet safe from immigrant differences by instilling in newcomers a sense of community, commitment, consensus, communication, and citizenship.

THE POLITICS OF ISMS

Multiculturalism has been a dirty word in Québec ever since Trudeau's attempt at 'multiculturalizing' Québecers to the same discursive level as other ethnic and immigrant groups. Not surprisingly, federal multiculturalism continues to endure relentless attack – and reams of misrepresentation – with many tainting it by association with the misadventures of European laissez-faire equivalents (Leuprecht 2011; Fleras 2009). For example, consider the January 2011 statement by Louise Beaudoin, PQ critic for Secularism who proclaimed 'MC may be a Canadian values, but it is not a Québec value' (Montpetit 2011; Patriquin 2011). Confusions and contradictions are rife: Gagnon and Iacovino (2007) criticize MC for privileging an individual right of choice at the expense of the collectivity in need of protection and encouragement. Others accuse federal multiculturalism of dismissing any dominant culture (partly because of a misperception that English speaking Canada has no national culture), in the process, elevating immigrant cultures to the same level as host culture (Patriquin 2011). And yet others criticize MC as a model that envisions immigrant cultures as relatively fixed spheres in orbit around the dominance of one majority English speaking culture (Ging and Malcolm). To their credit, the Bouchard-Taylor Commission (2008:121, 192) did acknowledge a tendency toward simplistic and distorted caricatures of federal multiculturalism as disinterested in (a) national identity and affiliation, (b) integration and social cohesion and (c) inequality and discrimination.

Nevertheless, as the Commission concluded, federal multiculturalism as a governance model cannot be duplicated in Québec. The so-called 'central assumption' of federal multiculturalism – that there is no dominant culture in Canada and the sanctity of cultural differences be maintained[2] – is a non-starter in Québec argues Gerard Bouchard (cited in Montpetit 2011). After all, Francophone culture is the majority culture and any governance model for managing diversity must acknowledge this reality. Besides, Bouchard-Taylor (2008) contends that English Canada can afford a looser concept of multiculturalism as immigrant governance model because of its privileged status. By contrast, the paradoxical nature of Québec's majority/minority status – a majority in Québec, but a minority in Canada and North America - militates against any move toward Canada's so-called laissez-faire multiculturalism ("diversity at the expense of continuity"). To promote such a passive and visionless coexistence of diverse ethno-religious groups, the Commission argued, would be tantamount to linguistic and cultural suicide. In other words, Québecers should continue to support the interculturalism principles of pluralism, equality, and reciprocity, if only to allay Québec's anxieties as a beleaguered cultural minority in an English speaking North America (Bouchard-Taylor Commission 2008).

However valid Québec's concerns, this paper has argued that Québec's interculturalism model does not differ in governance logic from federal multiculturalism. Both governance models constitute political acts to foster an inclusive society by managing the integration of newcomers without ruffling the feathers of the status quo. Both are predicated on the assumption that central authorities possess the right to define what counts as differences, and what differences count, so that newcomers can be different, but only in the same way, rather than being differently the same. As to claims that integration works better under interculturalism, several recent surveys

beg to differ, including those in Canada by the Historica-Dominion Institute (2010) and those abroad such as Transatlantic Trends (2010) and International Migration Integration Index (2011). Put bluntly, Canada is doing a commendable (if sometimes flawed) job of integrating newcomers (also Fleras forthcoming).

The conclusion seems inescapable: there is little that is unique about interculturalism as an immigration governance model except its openness in defining the limits and drawing the line. Rather, interculturalism appears to be alternative label for differentiating Québec from rest of Canada (Patriquin 2011) – little more than old wine in new bottles – just as the mosaic metaphor was once manipulated to differentiate Canada from America's melting pot imagery. To be sure, both multiculturalism and interculturalism represent workable models for integrating newcomers along inclusivity lines. Nevertheless, the flaws inherent in interculturalism are just as egregious as those of multiculturalism (McAndrew undated), (for example, a perceived inability to accommodate different ways of accommodating multiversal (super) differences [Fleras 2011]). In short, any justification for privileging interculturalism as different or superior fails to gain traction, or as Meer and Modood (2011:1) fittingly conclude:[5]

> *…[U]ntil interculturalism as a political discourse is able to offer a distinctive perspective, one that can speak to a variety of concerns emanating from complex identities and matters of equality and diversity in a more persuasive form than at present, interculturalism cannot, intellectually at least, eclipse multiculturalism and so should not be considered as complementary to multiculturalism.*

NOTES

[1] The number of conferences just in 2011 on this this topic (MC vs IC) is quite astonishing, including (1) Multiculturalism or Interculturalism? What are the Implications for Albertans and Canadians. November 10-11, 2011, University of Calgary, Faculty of Law; (2) The International Symposium on Interculturalism/ Symposium international sur L'interculturalisme – Dialogue Québec Europe. Québec City, 25-27 May, 2011 [This Symposium was preceded by a mini conference in Montreal in January (Yamani 2011)]. Symposia include papers on Québec Interculturalism in Context: Interculturalism, Multiculturalism, and the Demands of Transitional Justice. By Michael Schapira, Kevin McDonough, and Ryan Bevan. At Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. Oxford. 1-3 April, 2011.

[2] Although Trudeau made reference to Canada as having no official or dominant culture, no one is quite sure of his intent. He certainly expected newcomers and ethnicities to integrate into Canadian society – hence implicitly acknowledging a dominant culture despite denying its existence. He may have also approached the concept of culture as arts or an aesthetic (as many were prone to do so during this period) rather than as a total way of life with a corresponding set of rules for living.

[3] Textual analyses by Fries and Gingrich (2009) of the 1988 MC Act yielded five themes: diversity, harmony, equality, barrier removal, and resources.

[4] References to a Québec culture are problematic. Culture is framed in an essentialist way by reifying it as something real, uniform, and deterministic. Others would prefer to conceptualize culture as a composite abstraction of rules (blueprint) inferred from peoples thoughts and behaviour, based on a roughly shared values and norms, and subject to negotiation and contestation in constructing a fluid, multidimensional, and complex reality.

[5] During the Shafia 'Honour' Killing Trial which concluded in late January 2012 with a guilty verdict for the parents and eldest son, Canadians learned that the Shafia family entered Québec via the province's investor program, while their integration into society (or lack thereof) would evoke Québec interculturalism not federal multiculturalism. Also note that proposed legislation (Bill 94) that would require all individuals to reveal their faces when seeking government services (Choudhury 2012). Finally a Leger Poll reported by Jeff Heinrich (2008) suggests Québecers compared to other Canadians prefer to 'be with their own kind'. Reference List.

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