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*Multiculturalism and Immigration in Canada: An Introductory
Reader (review)*

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(Review)

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data, the author demonstrates the threats to women's physical health and security, and their day-to-day survival strategies.

The chapters in this book provide a timely analysis of power, exclusion, identity, and gender within contemporary migration and citizenship practices. The authors link the personal and the political by situating migrant women's experiences of injustice within current national and transnational neo-liberal agendas. As a result, this collection of theoretical and empirical work is an important reference for students and scholars interested in international relations, women's studies, political science, legal studies, social policy, and social work. The case-studies in this book cast a spotlight on the global context of migrant women's substandard citizenship rights and protections. I have no doubt the troubling issues raised by this book will spur future scholarship and activism on the connections among "Women, Migration, and Citizenship."

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Elsbeth Cameron, ed. *Multiculturalism and Immigration in Canada: An Introductory Reader*. xxiv, 426 pp. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2004. \$49.95 sc.

Elsbeth Cameron introduces *Multiculturalism and Immigration in Canada* by noting that multiculturalism is an ideology with a complex meaning and an equally complicated history and is variously described as an instrument of state power and local empowerment. This edited volume pulls together such contradictory interpretations to diagnose all the rich diversity of Canadian society. The book is divided into sections on "Theory," "Experience," and "Documents and Tables." The first two sections cover multicultural policy and representative voices from diverse communities. There are short excerpts from landmark texts on multiculturalism such as the "Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism" and John Porter's *The Vertical Mosaic*. The organization is partly historical, with the early sections indicating that racial ideologies underpinned Canada's immigration policies before 1962. The selections illuminate the way a hierarchy of ethnic groups placed French Canadians and Native Canadians on the lower rungs of the social ladder. Asian and African groups fared hardly better. The last section includes summaries of Canada's ethnic composition alongside Pierre Trudeau's public policy statement of 1971 and the "Canadian Multicultural Act, 1985." In short, this publication can hardly fail as a comprehensive guide to the subject for undergraduates.

A common theme is the social adjustments forced upon immigrants by the “majority culture.” In the first three-quarters of the twentieth century the basic model of immigration for policy makers and academics was the assimilation and acculturation of ethnic groups into a society defined by “Anglo-conformity” and “Franco-conformity.” Assimilation created generational conflicts within the immigrant communities as second generation immigrants made adjustments which were anathema to parents clinging to the value systems of their countries of origin. Subsequent selections dealing with the period after 1971 indicate that although multicultural policy might have been designed as a corrective to racial ideologies and ethnic inequalities, Canada has not necessarily become a more tolerant society. Arguably, the dominant value system in Canada continues to suppress the expression of cultural diversity, at least according to Daniel Stoffman’s discussion of the “illusion” of diversity. This is reflected in contemporary debates in the popular media concerning the compatibility of Islam and liberalism.

Therefore, this volume ties into recent public debates on whether the rights of diverse cultural groups are safeguarded by secular, liberal values or if liberalism conflicts with cultural diversity. In the post 9/11 world there is a fear that multicultural policies increase cultural or ethnic tensions. Following a contrary line of thought, Stoffman suggests that multicultural policies hold out the promise of tolerance and acceptance only for new immigrants to be suppressed and marginalized in a historically familiar way. In an interesting discussion of the East Asian communities in Vancouver, he points to the emergence of a minority culture that in its rapid growth challenges the majority culture, citing for example dog-eating mainland Chinese confounding dog-loving Canadians.

These sorts of discussions beg a better understanding of immigrant experience, moving beyond the old paradigms of assimilation and acculturation. Studies of the immigrant “experience” question a conceptual framework that assumes that a liberal and democratic, multicultural society creates a framework for tolerance and acceptance; on the contrary, it replicates the colonial logic that identified public space with liberal individualism, while relegating the “cultural” or “ethnic” to a secondary status. This type of logic is obvious in Cameron’s selections dealing with the aboriginal peoples of Canada, particularly those concerned with debates during the Meech Lake constitutional negotiations. The colonial rationale is challenged by ethnic groups that attempt to bring cultural difference into public discourse. There is also the well-known example of the Sikh Mountie defending his right to wear a ceremonial dagger. The veil has become deeply symbolic of the conflict between secular liberalism and a multicultural society. The policy of France is clear on this issue. In 2006 the Labour government in Britain broke with its multicultural policies and questioned the right of women to wear the veil in public. Canada’s policy is less clear.

The confused public space created by multiculturalism is reflected in the fictional and sociological accounts of the immigrant “experience.” The selection from Neil Bissoondath’s *On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows* and Parin Dossa’s “On Social Suffering” underline the prevalence of systemic racialism in the majority culture (both social and governmental). All that unites immigrants in Bissoondath’s writings is social and economic marginalization – residence in a run-down set of flats in the Plateau quarter of Montreal. Clark Blaise draws a comparable picture in the entirely different social milieu of Montreal’s aspiring professional immigrants, gathered together for language instruction at McGill. Inadvertent racism is deftly described by Rohinton Mistry in “Swimming Lessons,” where one individual’s fear of swimming is interpreted by an unknowing pool attendant in Toronto as an Indian cultural taboo.

These selections hold the Canadian government and society largely responsible for the marginalization of ethnic groups. But other selections, such as Fred Wah’s “From Diamond Grill,” point to a “zone of contact” between majority and minority cultures. This theme is less well represented in Cameron’s volume, perhaps reflecting a need for more research on the way ethnic identities have transformed or shaped the dominant culture. This collection does indicate that the contemporary period has brought about greater interaction, as well as confrontation, across ethnic lines. Contemporary ethnic minorities are less reluctant to voice complaints or organize sub-cultures that defy, implicitly or explicitly, the majority culture. Sometimes interpreted as a rejection of the dominant culture, this kind of political activism also suggests an assertive engagement with the majority culture that was not characteristic of an earlier era.

Clearly, a remarkable dynamic is underway. While charting the history of immigration and multiculturalism, this volume shows that multicultural policies are taking the Canadian polity in new directions. In the final contribution on “Theory,” Alan B. Simmons notes that multiculturalism is central to Canada’s “imagined future” as a “global niche player,” but its very centrality has brought about unexpected challenges to the old question of national identity and unity.

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Peter Showler. *Refugee Sandwich: Stories of Exile and Asylum*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006. 235 pp. \$27.95 sc.

There has long been a striking discrepancy between the controversy that surrounds the treatment of asylum seekers in Canada – especially by the Immigration and