

State Culture: The Advancement of 'Canadian Values' Among Immigrants

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article propose le concept de « culture d'État » en tant qu'alternative pour comprendre et analyser la formation et le maintien d'une nation. La culture d'État est définie par les valeurs sous-jacentes aux politiques, pratiques et écrits qui émanent de ses différents intervenants et institutions. Bref, il s'agit de déterminer quelle est la signification de l'appartenance à une collectivité politique et quelles en sont les valeurs fondamentales. L'auteur se sert du concept de culture d'État comme d'un outil pour analyser les contradictions entre le Canada, tel représenté par l'État, et les revendications de groupes sous-nationaux. Pour ce faire, il a recours à une analyse critique du contenu des brochures de l'État canadien remises aux nouveaux arrivants et aux futurs citoyens. En dernière analyse, l'étude révèle les valeurs intégrées à ces importants documents de socialisation et expose les mythes associés à la « nation canadienne ».

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Abstract

This article advances the concept of 'state culture' as an alternative way of understanding and analyzing the construction and maintenance of nations. State culture refers to the values projected through different state actors and institutions and represented in their policies, practices and literature – it tells us what it means to be part of the political community and what values are central to belonging. Using the concept of state culture as an analytical tool, the article proceeds to explore the contradictions between Canada, as represented by the state, and the claims of sub-national groups through a critical discourse analysis of the materials distributed by the Canadian state to newcomers and potential citizens. Ultimately, this paper reveals the values embedded within these important socialization documents and exposes the myths about the 'Canadian nation' contained within them.

Résumé

Cet article propose le concept de « culture d'État » en tant qu'alternative pour comprendre et analyser la formation et le maintien d'une nation. La culture d'État est définie par les valeurs sous-jacentes aux politiques, pratiques et écrits qui émanent de ses différents intervenants et institutions. Bref, il s'agit de déterminer quelle est la signification de l'appartenance à une collectivité politique et quelles en sont les valeurs fondamentales. L'auteur se sert du concept de culture d'État comme d'un outil pour analyser les contradictions entre le Canada, tel représenté par l'État, et les revendications de groupes sous-nationaux. Pour ce faire, il a recours à une analyse critique du contenu des brochures de l'État canadien remises aux nouveaux arrivants et aux futurs citoyens. En dernière analyse, l'étude révèle les valeurs intégrées à ces importants documents de socialisation et expose les mythes associés à la « nation canadienne ».

Introduction

In his book *Nationalism Without Walls*, Richard Gwyn referred to Canada as a “state-nation” emphasizing the dominant role of the state in the processes of nation-building in Canada. In a similar vein, this paper proposes the concept of ‘state culture’ as an alternative way of conceptualizing the construction and maintenance of national identity. State culture refers to the values projected through different state actors and institutions and represented in their policies, practices and literature. It focuses on the role of the state, its institutions and actors in nation-building, employing a “top-down” approach

to understanding national identity. This approach is particularly appropriate in Canada, where the Canadian state has a long history of engaging in the politics of identity in order to promote stability and address the diversity within its borders.

This paper begins by proposing the concept of state culture and then proceeds to explore the contradictions between Canada, as represented by the state, and the claims of sub-national groups. Based on a critical discourse analysis of the materials distributed by the Canadian state to newcomers and potential citizens, this paper explores the values embedded within these important socialization documents and the idea of the “Canadian nation” that they advance. In conclusion, this paper argues that the texts advance four myths about the Canadian nation that serve to obscure historical and contemporary differences and which conflict with the claims of various marginalized and autonomy-seeking groups.

Nation-Building and State Culture

State culture is a tool for understanding how states participate in the construction of national identity and the definition of national values. It refers to the values projected through different state actors and institutions and how they are represented in their policies, practices and literature. A state culture evolves over time and exists in an uneasy relationship with society, responding and reacting to the challenges posed by the diversity of ethnicities, nations, and other identity-based groups within its borders. As such, it tells us what it means to be part of the political community and what values are central to belonging. In order to understand conflicts surrounding identity within a state and the potential mechanisms for addressing them, it is essential to understand the role and position of the state in the construction and maintenance of ethnocultural boundaries. By understanding the different values advanced by state actors that influence how they choose to act in certain situations, we can better understand certain policy goals and outcomes and the values embedded in the policies themselves, and—as a result—have the potential to change them.

The state culture of Canada could be investigated in a variety of different ways. Two potential places to look are Speeches from the Throne, which fulfill a symbolic role in Canadian politics and set the agenda for governments (Brodie), and the state materials on constitutional reform, in which the Canadian state engaged in a dialogue over what it meant to be Canadian (MacKay; Cairns). This analysis, however, uses immigration and integration policies and practices as an entry point into understanding the national values projected through Canadian state culture. In particular, integration documents and materials often deal with mundane day-to-day aspects of belonging to the national community, much more so than a Speech from the Throne or

constitutional accord. As well, the way in which the Canadian state represents Canadian values or being Canadian likely changes based on the intended audience—in other words, the way the state talks about being “Canadian” will be different if it is talking to foreigners as opposed to other Canadians.

In addition, immigration and integration policies and practices represent an ideal entry point for exploring identity construction within states because waves of immigrants both shape and challenge understandings of national identity (Mackey; Abu-Laban; Wilton). Rose Baaba Folsom and Hijin Park argue that “every nation-state is believed to be the product of multiple overlapping generations of immigrants” (11). Thus, immigration is an area of policy that all countries share, whether it occurred hundreds of years ago or is occurring today. Immigration policies and the state materials for new immigrants are especially revelatory of state discourses because they define who can belong to the nation, what it means to belong, and what is expected of new members. Patten, for example, argues that the most important conflicts occur around political debates that shape state policies. This is particularly apparent in areas pertaining to language, culture, citizenship and structures of governance. “While many of the policies seem to presuppose a political community that is already defined, they actually serve to (re)define who is Canadian and to (re)construct the social and discursive boundaries of our national political community” (28). In Canada, the state and civil society actors have a history of producing documents aimed at attracting and socializing newcomers (Wagner, Boyd and Vickers, Harper; Wilton). These documents reflect changing national norms and the role of the state in the nation-building process in Canada.

Furthermore, state materials are also important because they serve to control the public discourse and communication in a way that the average person cannot; thus, they are important symbolic resources (van Dijk 355). The materials produced for newcomers and citizens act as socialization documents and both explicitly and implicitly set out the political and social values and norms of society. And, in the case of new immigrants, these texts speak to a fairly passive audience with little power vis-à-vis the state. For them, then, the texts are authoritative and play a significant role in shaping their understanding of their new home and their role in it.

Canadian Values and the Materials for New Immigrants

The method for revealing the values embedded in a state culture is based on a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the texts and/or materials produced by the state. In this case, an analysis of the materials prepared by the Canadian state through Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and distributed to new and potential immigrants to Canada. Critical discourse analysis is the study of texts, their structures and different linguistic, cultural, social and political

implications, in order to determine how language constructs meaning (Burnham et al. 236). Tuen A. van Dijk defines critical discourse analysis as:

a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality. (352)

Critical discourse analysis thus attempts to create linkages between discourses, text, language and social context suggesting that language is not merely a tool for conveying discourse, but a site of struggle in itself. Thus, discourses are important because they carry social meanings that are politicized by the concepts of power embedded within them (Henry and Tator 25).

Wodek, Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart, in *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, argue that a dialectical relationship exists between institutions and discourses. They state that “the situational, institutional and social contexts shape and affect discourse and, in turn, discourses influence social and political reality” (8). At the same time, however, one of the challenges of conducting CDA is the lack of a core method for employing CDA. Nonetheless, certain attributes are consistent among CDA. First, the researcher takes an active role in the reconstruction of the discourse through a qualitative analysis of texts. As such, CDA is inherently unquantifiable, which is not to say that it cannot be combined with other quantitative methodological approaches (Paul 9). Second, as mentioned above, the research is generally aimed at uncovering marginalized discourses. As such, CDA “focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of *power* and *domination* in society” (van Dijk 353). Third, CDA rejects positivism and truth-seeking science (van Dijk 352). Because of its qualitative and political nature, including its refusal to pretend to be objective or neutral, “CDA research needs to be ‘better’ than other research in order to be accepted” (van Dijk 353). Finally, CDA usually involves the analysis of the structure of the document, the central themes of arguments of the text, narratives, rhetorical devices and ideological assertions (Trimble and Sampert 329).

This project employs CDA in order to uncover and understand the discourses surrounding the nation and national values embedded within state materials for new immigrants and potential citizens. These materials tell the “story” of the nation to newcomers and generally contain certain lessons that define what it means to be a good citizen of the political community. The analysis of the documents focuses of the narratives within the texts, the use of key terms, and the employment of specific discourses surrounding immigrants

and immigration in Canada, both today and historically. In particular, it asks two specific questions: First, how is the Canadian nation and its various sub-national and ethnocultural minorities represented? And, second, how does this vision of Canada correspond with other competing nationalisms in Canada?

The two texts analyzed are *A Newcomer's Introduction to Canada*, published by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for new immigrants, and *A Look at Canada* also published by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, but for permanent residents preparing to take the citizenship examination. These documents are available in both official languages from immigration offices or over the internet on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website (www.cic.gc.ca); however, the English version has been used for this analysis. *A Newcomer's Introduction to Canada* is thirty-eight pages in length and targets individuals and families who are preparing to move to Canada or who have recently arrived. As such, the focus on the text is primarily on practical matters, such as finding a place to live or a job and adapting to life in Canada. *A Look at Canada* is thirty-nine pages in length. It provides the information necessary for permanent residents to pass the citizenship examination. As a result, the focus is much more on the values of the Canadian community and ensuring that new citizens understand the responsibilities that accompany their new status in Canada.

Representing Canadian Nation(s)?

As a relatively “new” state, Canada has a fragmented national identity, challenged by regional and sub-national identities, such as *Québécois* nationalism, Aboriginal nationalism, and western regionalism. Conflicts in Canada have emerged through efforts to establish and maintain cultural boundaries, both within the country and with regards to external influences. The influx of diverse groups of immigrants throughout the twentieth century has added a new level to the discourse surrounding identity and identity construction in Canada. In some ways, the prior identity conflicts have created space for immigrants to challenge the dominant identities and notions of dualism. However, the idea of a “Canadian” identity or Canadian values continues to be contested. The following sections explore the four main interrelated discourses surrounding identity, diversity and nationalism within these texts and brief examples of each. These four discourses, or myths surrounding Canadian identity, are: (1) Canada is a nation of immigrants; (2) Canada is a country of regions; (3) Canada is a bilingual country; and (4) Canada is a multicultural country.

Canada is comprised of immigrants

In *A Newcomer's Introduction to Canada*, the history and society of Canada is outlined fairly briefly on pages twenty-six and twenty-seven, representing

five percent of the total text. The subject appears over halfway through the text, after the discussion about arriving and settling in for new immigrants, suggesting that Canadian history is not the focus of the text. After a brief discussion about the francophone population of Canada and bilingualism, the section begins by stating, "Canada is a land of many cultures and many peoples," (CIC, *Newcomers* 26) reinforcing the importance of cultural and ethnic diversity in Canada, but also undermining the importance of Quebec as a founding nation of Canada. The text proceeds to state that other than the Aboriginal people, everyone is an immigrant to Canada. "We have all come from somewhere else ... Canada is a 'nation of immigrants'" (CIC, *Newcomers* 26). This perspective on Canadian history, while not incorrect, tells the story of Canada in a particular way. The idea of a "nation of immigrants" distinguishes Canadian state culture from its European counterparts, while suggesting a unity of experience and the contribution of diverse ethnonational groups to Canada. It is beneficial to the Canadian state to portray Canadian history in this manner because it puts all groups in Canada on equal footing and undermines the claims of some groups, such as Quebec, for special treatment.

The representation of Canada as a nation of immigrants is not only explicit within the text, as outlined above, but is also reflected in the images present in the books. Images are important because they help the reader to interpret the text. They also provide an overall image of the country for newcomers. The presence of visible minority individuals in the images representing the nation is noteworthy as the presence of individuals who are identifiably "other" reflects the role of such individuals within the country. The Government of Canada defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (Government of Canada). Obviously, not all immigrants or refugees are visible minorities, and not all visible minorities are new immigrants. Rather, it is the racialization of "white" people (even in the Government of Canada definition) that is "invisible". At the same time, however, an image of Canada that includes faces that are not all white conveys the impression that immigrants can and do integrate and play a role in the national community. If these are supposed to be images of the Canadian people, then what they look like and who is included in that definition is important. Therefore, exploring the representation of "visible" or "racialized" minorities in the texts reveals whether the state sees immigrants as comprising the face of the nation and how it presents images of immigrants to the newcomer.

Non-white individuals appear in over half of the images in *A Newcomer's Introduction to Canada* (twenty out of thirty-eight). As well, people of colour are represented in positions associated with prestige and power, including health care workers, teachers and business people. Among these images of visible minorities, women are also presented as obtaining positions of power in Canadian society; for example, the image of a black female doctor (CIC,

Newcomers Cover) and the image of a black female teacher (8). Images of individuals associated with the law and the state, however, are all of white individuals; for example, a white female customs and immigration officer (9), white police officers (34), and a white woman presiding over the taking of the oath at a citizenship ceremony (37).

In *A Look at Canada*, there is only one image that contains only visible minority people—the image of two women of colour examining their new citizenship papers (CIC, *Look at Canada* 30). There are, however, three images of groups of mixed ethnicity and four images of Aboriginals, three of which present Aboriginals in traditional dress. This compares with five images that only contain white individuals. In other images containing people, the ethnicity or skin colour of the individuals is not clear. Thus, in over half of the images of individuals, people of colour are present. The majority of pictures of people in *A Look at Canada* are of people engaged in cultural activities that can be seen to reflect the cultural diversity of Canada; for example, Ukrainian dancers (20), Aboriginals in traditional dress (11, 19, and 22), a cowboy on a horse (20), and a young woman playing the bagpipes (14).

In both Canadian texts, the images display a conscious effort on the part of the state to represent Canada as diverse and welcoming of immigrants. Overall, immigrants are seen as blending into the images of the nation. This reflects the Canadian state's emphasis on multiculturalism, diversity, and tolerance within the texts. However, it also raises the question of whether or not whiteness can still be seen as the defining racial identity of Canadians, thus, reinforcing the idea of Canada as comprised of immigrants.

The construction of Canada as a nation of immigrants within the texts is also reinforced by the use of language to describe the Canadian population. Of particular interest are the use of the words “immigrant” or “immigration”, “newcomer”, and “settlers”. *A Newcomer's Introduction to Canada* clearly distinguishes between immigrants and immigration and newcomers. Immigration is used to describe a process, policy or person/organization who aims to serve new arrivals. For example, Chapter Two, “The Day You Arrive in Canada” outlines the process of customs and “immigration” and discusses “immigration officer[s]” and “immigrant-serving organizations” (9). When talking about the population of Canada in general terms, the text refers to everyone other than Aboriginal peoples as “immigrants” and states that Canada has experienced many “waves of immigrants” (CIC, *Newcomers* 26). Otherwise, as reflected in the title of the document, individuals arriving in Canada or newly immigrating are “newcomers.” This terminology serves to further reinforce the distinction between historical groups of immigrants, who comprise the bulk of the Canadian population, and newly-arrived individuals.

A Look at Canada continues with the distinction between immigrants and newcomers, but adds a new term, that of the “settler” (CIC, *Look at Canada*). “Settlers” refers specifically to historical groups of immigrants, primarily from Europe, who “settled” the various regions of Canada. For example, in the discussion about Atlantic Canada, the text states: “In the 1600s, French settlers, who became known as Acadians, were the first Europeans to settle permanently in Canada. Over time, they were joined by other settlers from the British Isles and Germany” (14). The term is used repeatedly, describing the “settlers from France” in Quebec (17) and how “British Columbia was settled by Europeans when the fur trade spread to the west in the early 1800s” (21). One exception to this use of the term appears in the section on Ontario, which states that “newcomers from all over the world continue to settle in Ontario” (18), implying that perhaps newcomers can become “settlers” over time. What is not clear in the documents, however, is when or how a “newcomer” becomes merely a Canadian, other than by adopting the values of Canada as described below.

Canada is a country of regions

In *A Look at Canada*, the discussion of Canadian history begins with Confederation and the process of bringing together the provinces that comprise the Canadian state. The section begins by outlining the acquisition of Canadian territory and the development of symbols representing the state—both very nationalistic activities. Following this, the history and role of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is presented—almost as a sidebar to “Canadian” history. The history of Canada continues at the beginning of the sections for each region of Canada, thus reinforcing the importance of region and regional identity in Canada and reflecting the regional development and westward expansion of the Canadian state. Interestingly, the idea of Canada as founded by two national groups—the English and the French—is not present in the text. This undermines the claims of Quebec nationalists for special status and treatment in Canada as one of the two founding nations.

The representation of Canada in regionalized terms within the books provides the exception to the presentation of Canada as built by immigrants and unified by their diversity. By presenting Canada in a regionally fragmented manner, both texts contribute to the impression of Canada as divided, but without any of the problems associated with the lack of a strong national identity (CIC, *Newcomers* 23; CIC, *Look at Canada* 14-22). In *A Look at Canada*, the history, development, population and economy are all presented in regionalized terms. Canada is represented as divided along geographic lines and the geography of the different regions is portrayed as influencing other types of growth and development. As well, both texts refer to federalism and the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments (CIC, *Newcomers* 28; CIC, *Look at Canada* 23). Regionalism and the div-

ided identity and culture within Canada are reinforced; a peculiar approach given that one of the goals of the federal government is to promote Canadian unity, helped through the construction of a strong Canadian identity. Thus, the emphasis on regionalism and other identity-based cleavages in Canadian politics seems counterproductive to the project of instilling a strong sense of “Canada” among newcomers. At the same time, the usual suspects—Quebec and Aboriginal nationalisms—are absent from the texts.

By omitting the claims of minority nations in Canada, the memory and power of their claims to special status in Canada are removed from the national memory of Canada’s newest members, who in turn are a growing part of the population. Furthermore, by presenting Canada in terms of competing but equal provinces and regions, these texts reinforce the efforts of the Canadian government since the Trudeau years to redefine Canada—moving from two equal nations to ten equal provinces (McRoberts). Again, this undermines the claims of Quebec and Aboriginals on the Canadian state as their claims no longer fit well within the federal model and are increasingly opposed by the other provinces.

Canada is a bilingual country

Additionally, both texts refer to Canada’s linguistic divide. A Newcomer’s Introduction to Canada discusses Canada’s Francophone population, stating that although Francophones are concentrated in Quebec, almost one million French speakers live in other parts of the country (CIC, Newcomers 26). The text goes on to provide web sites that offer additional information on Franco-ophone communities outside of Quebec (26). This is interesting because it creates a distance between Quebec nationalism and Quebec’s ownership of French language and culture in Canada, reflecting Trudeau’s strategy of displacing Quebec’s claims to represent the French people in Canada. Also, it conveys the impression that Canada is both a bilingual and linguistically diverse country. The text later refers to official bilingualism and the Official Languages Act; in particular, the availability of federal services in either official language is emphasized (29). Canada is represented as bilingual and diverse, while the politics of identity, Quebec nationalism, and the politics of language are ignored. The debates surrounding these policy areas, including issues around their creation, their funding, and their contribution to Canadian identity and unity, are not mentioned in the two texts. Ultimately, there is no mention of the historical conflicts surrounding issues of identity in Canada. State-endorsed diversity is presented as a positive attribute, embraced by all Canadians.

Bilingualism is introduced early in *A Look at Canada*: “English- and French-speaking people have lived together in Canada for more than 300 years” (CIC, *Look at Canada* 5). This sentence, the first in the section on Canada’s official languages, presents the French/English relationship in

Canada in a manner that does not reflect the history of conflict between the two dominant linguistic groups. Further, the text states that “linguistic duality is an important aspect of our Canadian identity—over 98% of Canadians speak either English or French or both” (5). This quotation gives the impression that Canadians are proudly bilingual, despite the fact that the national levels of bilingualism are low, only increasing slightly, and that the policy itself remains contentious in parts of Canada (Burgess). This section reflects the position of the federal government as a promoter of bilingualism in Canada and suggests that the federal state does see this as an important component of state culture. However, this presentation of bilingualism in Canada is misleading to Francophone immigrants who settle outside of Quebec, New Brunswick and other French-speaking “pockets” where English is the predominant language and speaking French is not necessarily viewed as an asset.

Canada is a multicultural country

Not surprisingly, Canada is also presented in the state literature as ethnically and culturally diverse. Tolerance and multiculturalism are presented as important Canadian values. In *A Newcomer's Introduction to Canada*, ethnic diversity appears in the discussion of Canada's history, which begins by stating that “Canada is a land of many cultures and many peoples” (CIC, *Newcomers* 26) and proceeds to describe the history of Canada's peoples in terms of waves of immigration (26). Formal multiculturalism receives brief attention in one paragraph at the end of Chapter Six. The text states: “Through the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, the government encourages Canadians to take pride in their language, religion and heritage, and to keep their customs and traditions, as long as they don't break Canadian laws” (29). This sentence is significant because it provides definite limits on the policy of multiculturalism in Canada, contradicting the claims of its opponents and fears that multiculturalism may spread indefinitely, dividing Canada into numerous ethnocultural ghettos (Kymlicka 22-24).

A Look at Canada, aimed at residents wishing to become Canadian citizens, goes much further in its efforts to define what it means to be Canadian, suggesting that certain values need to be adopted by those wishing to become Canadian citizens. On the first page, in a section entitled “Message to our Readers”, the text states that “respect for cultural differences ... is a fundamental value” (1). The next sentence states that “Canada was created through discussion, negotiation and compromise. These characteristics are as important today as in the past” (CIC, *Look at Canada* 1). This ties Canada's current values (as defined by the state) to our history, pointing to the roots of Canadian culture. This is restated a few pages later under the heading, “What does Canadian Citizenship Mean?” (4). The following quotation appears in bold text at the top of the page, reinforcing its importance: “Canadian history and traditions have created a country where our values include tolerance and

respect for cultural differences, and a commitment to social justice” (4). This section then proceeds to identify four key Canadian values (also in bolded text): equality, tolerance, peace, and law and order, and defining tolerance as trying to “understand and appreciate the cultures, customs and traditions of our neighbours” (4). The next section, entitled “Introducing Canada” further reinforces the theme of tolerance and diversity. Two key terms appear in boxed text aimed at pointing the reader to the important information. These two terms are official languages and multiculturalism. The section begins with the following bolded text: “Through Canada’s history, millions of immigrants have helped to build this country. Today, Canada, a country with two official languages, welcomes people from more than 150 countries each year” (5). Again, for the fourth time in almost as many pages, the state presents its message: Canada is diverse and multicultural and based on “the idea of equality” and “the importance of working together and helping one another” (5). The message of Canada’s multiculturalism is reinforced by the images in both texts, as discussed above, that portray Canada as comprised of culturally diverse peoples engaged in a wide variety of activities.

Overall, the society of Canada is presented as diverse, heterogeneous and relatively disunited. While the texts do present certain key “Canadian traits”—such as official bilingualism, tolerance, multiculturalism, and sustainable development—the way in which the information on the country is presented gives the impression of regional disunity. Furthermore, the lack of unity or a homogenous national culture in Canada is presented as a positive trait. The omission of the conflict and politics of identity, language and region in Canada is noteworthy because it represents a form of rewriting Canadian history, painting a somewhat false image of Canada as united by diversity and obfuscating the competing claims and conflict surrounding language, nation and culture in Canada.

Reconciling Conflicting Understandings of Canada

How then does this vision of Canada correspond with other competing nationalisms, in particular *Québécois* and Aboriginal nationalisms? As mentioned above, the texts distributed by the Canadian government to new immigrants and potential citizens deliberately omit any mention of these autonomy-seeking nationalist movements. In doing so, they undermine the legitimacy and future potency of the claims of these groups among new Canadians. This, however, corresponds nicely with the goals of the federal government to depict Canada as a federation of ten equal provinces with the federal government in the role of guide and mediator.

Not only do these texts omit to mention Aboriginal and *Québécois* nationalisms, they also portray Canada and Canadian values in a manner that is likely to be contested by these minority nations. In particular, while Aboriginal peoples may appreciate recognition of their presence in Canada

prior to colonization, the omission of the process of colonization from the history of Canada presented in the texts is highly problematic from an indigenous perspective. Furthermore, Aboriginal peoples appear to play no role in the Canada of today, other than as regular citizens. Again, this delegitimizes their claims for recognition and differential treatment within the Canadian state. For the *Québécois*, the representation of Canada as bilingual and the corresponding removal of French language and culture from the domain of Quebec are highly problematic. Not only does this undermine their claims for “distinct society” status, it places French-Canadian culture on an equal playing field with the multitude of other cultures that comprise a modern and multicultural Canada.

Finally, the presentation of equality and tolerance as core Canadian values (CIC 2001, 4) is contestable in the eyes of Canada’s marginalized groups. These groups, including the *Québécois*, Aboriginal peoples and visible minorities and women, could easily take issue with the idea of equality as a core Canadian value given their disadvantaged position in Canadian society. This is particularly true given the cuts imposed by the Harper government since 2006 for programs such as Status of Women and the Court Challenges Program. Under the political agenda of the Conservative government, equality-seeking initiatives have been seriously undermined. This is also evident in the rise of western populism in Canadian politics and the pervasive presence of the “average Canadian” as a discursive tool for undermining the claims of so-called “special interest groups” (Sawer; Brodie). The persistent inequality of vulnerable populations in Canada—particularly visible minorities, women, Aboriginals and disabled people—cannot, however, be laid completely at the feet of the current government. While the Harper cuts do represent a significant and ideological attack on equality-seeking groups, the past governments did little to address these inequalities in a systematic way (Brodie; Jenson).

The “myth of tolerance” plays an important role (Mackey) in Canada, although shifts since September 11 and rising anti-immigrant attitudes throughout the 1990s seriously challenged this myth. Further, this myth speaks from one perspective within Canada, but not all perspectives. Aboriginal peoples, arguably, did not find the process of land acquisition and colonization kind or tolerant. French Canadians, subjected to repeated attempts by the Canadian government to assimilate them, would probably also challenge this myth, as would many early non-French and non-English immigrants. As Eva Mackey notes, the reiteration of the myth of tolerance has permeated Canadian nation building over the past 100 years. “Others,” however, see the history of Canada not as one of tolerance but rather one of confrontation (23-24). As well, the idea of “tolerance” itself is problematic as it suggests that one group has the power to tolerate the differences of others who are outside of the group and display different norms of behaviour. Thus, tolerance often

implies the “acceptance” or “endurance” of difference without addressing the power relations between different groups and the presence of racism and discrimination within Canadian society and politics.

Conclusion

This paper proposed the concept of state culture as a way to approach the construction of Canadian national identity from the top down, focusing on the state documents for new immigrants. As the previous analysis demonstrates, the materials produced and distributed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to newcomers and potential citizens do contain and convey significant messages about Canadian values. As such, they participate in the construction of a Canadian state culture that advances certain key messages about what it means to be Canadian and to belong to the Canadian nation and political community. As I have also shown, however, this construction of Canadian state culture is not just a reflection of Canadian reality, but actively shapes discourses around the structure of power relations within the country, legitimizing the “truth claims” of some groups, while simultaneously delegitimizing those of other groups.

By obfuscating the divisions within Canada, and omitting the conflicts surrounding culture and identity from the Canadian history distributed to newcomers, these texts serve to advance the interests of the federal government by putting forward an image of the Canadian nation that reflects their policy goals. In doing so, the texts also undermine the claims of minority nations for increased power and autonomy within Canada. In this way, these documents potentially make it more difficult to deal with the claims of minority nations—while the foundation upon which their claims are being made has not changed, they do not match the image of Canada given to and adopted by newcomers.

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