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The Ambivalent Model Minority: Japanese-Canadians and Canadian Multiculturalism*

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Abstract

This paper synthesizes the development of Canadian multiculturalism and its effect on Japanese-Canadians. It argues that although Japanese-Canadians are showcased as a model minority in modern multicultural Canada, their key representative voices exhibit an ambivalent attitude towards multiculturalism. Since the 1960s, Japanese-Canadians have been featured as a model minority due to their high levels of education, professional success, integration, and English language proficiency. However, using the documentary film *One big hapa family* and an interview with its director Jeff Chiba Stearns, along with other works by Japanese-Canadian cultural producers, we can see that they exhibit a vacillating attitude towards multiculturalism. Applying discourse analysis through a postcolonial theory lens combined with Will Kymlicka's "The Three Lives of Multiculturalism," I demonstrate how historical trauma distorts the effect of multiculturalism on Japanese-Canadians. Although they may now be viewed by the white majority as a model minority, their history of suffering racism in Canada and previous labelling as yellow peril causes a caution towards representations of them by government, media, and society. The study shows the importance when administering Canadian multiculturalism of considering immigrant identity and voice, political and social conditions in the past, and political economy in the present.

■ **Keywords** : Canada, multiculturalism, Japanese-Canadian, identity, minority

Introduction

2018 marks the 30-year anniversary of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. Canada is lauded as the champion of multiculturalism, an

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“Unlikely Utopia” (Adams & Langstaff, 2007, front cover). 2018 is also the 30-year anniversary of the award of Redress to Japanese-Canadians by the Canadian government for their wrongful incarceration during the Second World War. Since then, Japanese-Canadians have been showcased as a model minority within modern multicultural Canada (Hawkins, 2009). However, this paper argues that prominent Japanese-Canadians exhibit an ambivalent attitude towards multiculturalism.

To provide evidence I use three documentary films by the Japanese-Canadian filmmakers Jeff Chiba Stearns, Karen Suzuki, and Anne Marie Nakagawa. I combine these with my interviews with Chiba Stearns and Suzuki. I employ a discourse analysis to find the relationship between their language and the rhetoric surrounding multiculturalism. Specifically, I use a postcolonial reading of the effect of Canadian multiculturalism on Japanese-Canadians corresponding broadly to the time periods set forth in Will Kymlicka’s “The Three Lives of Multiculturalism” (Kymlicka in Guo & Wong, 2015, pp. 17-35). My approach attempts to understand power relations within multiculturalism by questioning meanings, assumptions, and interpretations.

My analysis shows the importance to minorities such as Japanese-Canadians within Canadian multiculturalism of identity and voice, political and social conditions in the past, and the political economy in the present. Multiculturalism should not be thought of as affecting all immigrant groups the same. Nor should minorities be channeled into broad groups such as Asian Canadians, since each minority’s social, political, and cultural history is different. Historical trauma distorts the effect of multiculturalism on Japanese-Canadians, causing a caution towards representations of them by government, media, and society. Japanese-Canadians provide a good case-study to understand how it is possible to go from one extreme (unwanted aliens) to the other (model minority).

Existing scholarship examining Canadian multiculturalism can be divided into that arguing for Canadian multiculturalism (Adams & Langstaff, 2007; Berry, 2013; Kymlicka, 2007); or against it (Bissoondath, 2002; Hasmath, 2012); or that offering theories, histories, or explanations

of it (for example, Guo & Wong, 2015). There is a scarcity of scholarship on Canadian multiculturalism relating specifically to Japanese-Canadians. Historians, social scientists, and other academics tend to incorporate discussion of this topic into larger works on the history or socio-economic conditions of Japanese-Canadians (Makabe, 1998), or on multiculturalism in general. Multiculturalism tends to be overshadowed by the issue of Redress, an apology and financial settlement to compensate Japanese-Canadians who suffered unfairly under the government during and after the Second World War through incarceration, property confiscation, and racial discrimination.

Audrey Kobayashi writes on Japanese Canadian social spaces (Kobayashi, 1992a); the Redress settlement and race relations (Kobayashi, 1992b); gender and race (Kobayashi, 1994); and incarceration (Kobayashi, 2005). Roy Miki's work spans poetry and critiques of literature; race (2000b, 2000a); Redress (2004; Miki & Kobayashi, 1991); and Canadian literature (2001, 2011). Both write of multiculturalism from a historical perspective, often in relation to Redress, and are critical of aspects of multiculturalism in relation to Japanese-Canadians. In his book *In flux: Transnational shifts in Asian Canadian writing*, Miki (2011) argues that the meanings of the terms "Asian," "Canadian," and "writing" are constantly in flux depending on the circumstances of the time. Therefore, the position of Japanese-Canadian artists is also subject to change. Miki uses Roy Kiyooka a writer positioned within the discourse of the Canadian nation as a Japanese-Canadian for the sake of multiculturalism. Miki (2005) describes Joy Kogawa's (1981) novel *Obasan* as "probably the most important novel of the last thirty years for understanding Canadian society."

This paper therefore seeks to fill the missing voice of Japanese-Canadians in discussing the effect of Canadian multiculturalism. Too often, the voices of minorities in the political discourse on multiculturalism are not heard amongst the louder voices of government, media, academics, and society. It is easy to assume (especially due to their Redress award and labeling as model minority) that Japanese-Canadians have

benefited from multiculturalism and therefore hold a positive attitude towards it. As demonstrated by Miki, cultural producers allow Japanese-Canadians to participate in the political discourse on multiculturalism. In this paper, I show how the history and development of multiculturalism relates specifically to Japanese-Canadians. I build on Miki and Kobayashi's work by arguing that a selection of Japanese-Canadian filmmakers question multiculturalism (despite their films sometimes being funded by multicultural initiatives) due to lingering historical trauma.

The paper uses a postcolonial reading perspective (based on Gilroy, 2006) combined with Kymlicka's framework, which categorizes Canadian multiculturalism into three broad periods: pre-1971, 1971-2001, and 2001-present characterized respectively by ethnicity, race, and religion (Kymlicka in Guo & Wong, 2015). These periods and conceptualizations provide a template to juxtapose with Japanese-Canadian social history to determine the effect of multiculturalism. It provides a better framework for comparison and analysis than Shinpo's (in Caldarola, Shinpo, & Ujimoto, 2007) four phases of immigration model usually used by researchers on Japanese-Canadians. This paper is interested in the political discourse on Canadian multiculturalism involving Japanese-Canadians in the public sphere where debate among minorities, government, media, and society occurs. We can understand power relations between these groups and obtain a more complete understanding of Canadian multiculturalism by observing this level. Ordinary Japanese-Canadians have tended to keep their opinions private, even silent (Tupper, 2002), partly in the hope of forgetting past trauma, partly in the hope of integrating discreetly. Therefore, their cultural producers act as important representatives capable of giving them a collective voice.

To answer my research question of why Japanese-Canadians hold an ambivalent view towards Canadian multiculturalism, I use a multi-pronged approach of interviews with cultural producers and analysis of their cultural productions conducted combined with participant observation in the Japanese-Canadian community during a five-month field-work stay in Canada in 2013. By understanding multiculturalism from

a variety of perspectives in relation to Japanese-Canadian history, we can understand how power structures from various sites affect this minority group. I chose to interview Jeff Chiba Stearns and Karen Suzuki since they are amongst the most prominent Japanese-Canadians today and they both directly address multiculturalism in their work. These interviews were supplemented by participant observation and conversations with the Japanese-Canadian public allowing me to test whether what is being said by Japanese-Canadian cultural producers is a fair reflection of the views of other Japanese-Canadians.

The History of Japanese-Canadians & Development of Canadian Multiculturalism

To understand how multiculturalism in Canada developed and affects Japanese-Canadians, let's look back on Canada's twentieth century treatment of immigrants in relation to Kymlicka's three lives of multiculturalism. From the time of the first arrivals of immigrants from Japan to Canada in 1877 until around the time of the Second World War, Canadian cultural identities were thought of by most Canadians as either English or French, or to a lesser extent aboriginal (Robinson, 2013, p. 86). This tallies with Kymlicka's assertion that pre-1971 Canada used ethnicity to nation build, thus marginalizing those who were not Anglo-Canadian or French-Canadian. The pre-1971 history of Japanese-Canadians fits Kymlicka's assertion that "In its original incarnation, multiculturalism was based on a logic of ethnicity—that is, the policy encouraged the *self-organization*, *representation* and *participation* of ethnic groups based on their country of origin" (Kymlicka in Guo & Wong, 2015, p. 1).

Pioneer Japanese immigrants arrived in the late 19th century (Nakayama, 1984), followed by a group of male settlers (Takata, 1983). From the 1920s, 'Picture Brides' joined these men, also attracted to Canada by dreams of making money and enjoying greater social freedom, facilitated by a seemingly immigrant-friendly government policy

(Makabe, 1983). They lived together in enclaves, and they had their own institutions (Yamagishi, 2010, Chapter 2), following Kymlicka's description of "self-organization," "representation," and "participation." Canada at that time was still in the early stages of its development as a nation-state, so early settlers were not able to relate to Canada the nation as people can today. Stemming from the economic depression in the 1930s amidst increasing Canadian nationalism, many *issei* (first generation immigrants) became more insular. The *nisei* (second generation) were torn between retaining traditions from their Japanese heritage whilst adapting to their life in Canada (Fujiwara, 2012).

The government incarcerated Japanese-Canadians as a reaction to the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Imperial Japanese navy. The government argued that Japanese-Canadians might side with Japan and become involved in espionage or other acts against the interests of Canada. Japanese-Canadians were labelled "enemy aliens" under the War Measures Act (Fujiwara, 2012, p. 65), which gave power to incarcerate all persons of Japanese racial origin. The government succumbed to the widespread fear of the "yellow peril," rounding up twenty-seven thousand people in early 1942 without charge or trial. After the war, Japanese-Canadians were released but only given a choice of relocation within Canada east of the Rockies or deportation to Japan, which was chosen by about 3,700 people (Broadfoot, 1977, p. 309). Thus, the previous characteristics of their self-organization, representation, and participation were temporarily fractured. Until the Canadian Bill of Rights (1960), the civil rights of (Japanese) immigrants in Canada remained restricted (Church, Schulze, & Strydom, 2007, p. 82).

The welcoming of immigrants in the 1960s coincided with the accelerating development of multiculturalism in Canada. Immigration was not necessarily the main driver of Canadian multiculturalism. More likely, the intensity of Quebecois nationalism during the 1960s drove the government to consider how to maintain the unity of a single nation Canada under the pressure of separatist Quebecers and those supporting 1957-1963 Prime Minister Diefenbaker's "One Canada Policy."

Multiculturalism offered a way to prioritize both the Anglophone and Francophone ethnicities within the national framework. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963), overseen by Prime Minister Pearson, was established to “inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution.” Although reference is made to “other ethnic groups” and there were some advocates for a Multiculturalism Policy for “Third Force: Canadians, the main effect of the Commission was to enshrine biculturalism and bilingualism (in 1969 through the Official Languages Act) and thus the dominance of the two main ethnic groups.

For Japanese-Canadians this created uncertainty. On the one hand, a new generation of Japanese-Canadian immigrants was being welcomed. They had gained or regained some of the rights they had lost during incarceration. Due to their forced dispersal across Canada, they were contributing to and integrating into society (or, for the elder generations, assimilating). On the other hand, the government’s apparent support of Canada along hierarchal ethnic lines triggered the traumatic memory of their mistreatment during their incarceration. Their institutions (self-organization) were dispersed or decimated, their voice and representation, although improved compared to the previous Orientalized “other,” was lost amongst larger minorities in Canada, and their participation was no longer based on being “Japanese” but as a more general visible minority or “Asian.” The Canada First nationalist movement, started in 1868 “to create links between Canada and Britain and other northern and ‘civilized’ nations” (Mackey, 2002, p. 30), kickstarted this ethnic hierarchy that “othered” Japanese-Canadians. The British North America Acts from 1867-1975 had a similar effect until it was eventually superseded by the Canadian Constitution in 1978. Citizenship remained an issue for

Japanese-Canadians. Until the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1947, people were considered British subjects rather than Canadian citizens. Hence, from the first arrival of Japanese immigrants up until the 1970s, Japanese-Canadians were at the lower end of an ethnic hierarchy within Canada.

Joy Kogawa, Trauma & Redress

In the 1970s and 1980s, we move from Kymlicka's description of multiculturalism based on "ethnicity" to "race." With increasingly liberal political conditions in Canada, the Asian Movement in the United States, and a worldwide push for human rights, Japanese-Canadians became emboldened. The most prominent Japanese-Canadian voice belonged to Joy Kogawa, whose novel *Obasan* (Kogawa, 1981) has preeminent status in the Asian American literary canon. *Obasan* is a semi-autobiographical story told by interspersing a child narrator recounting incarceration. Although the plot's temporal timeline precedes the development of multiculturalism in Canada, the novel's first publishing in 1981 intervenes politically with the multiculturalism then. It questions the narrative put forward by people such as Charles Taylor (1994) that Canada's wrongdoing belongs to the past and has no relation to contemporary multicultural Canadian society.

Kogawa's impact forces rethinking the dominant narrative of Canadian history. Scott McFarlane contends that "no single text concerning the internment has had a greater impact on the Canadian imaginary than Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*... [*Obasan*] has played, and continues to play, a significant role in the way the internment is understood" (in Okihiro, 1995, p. 402). From a postcolonial perspective, Kogawa allowed the subaltern voice to finally speak and was a major step in overcoming Orientalism (derogatory cultural representations made by western people to dominate eastern people). Kogawa is important because she shows how trauma can continue to affect a minority group even in a multicultural society many years later.

Historical trauma refers to events from the past that are the result of violence committed by one party on another, often with a lasting impact on the victimized party. Studies on trauma have shown that it can be passed down through generations (Bussey & Wise, 2013). Thus, trauma refers to not only the actual event of incarceration but also responses to the event (Denham, 2008). Recent trauma theory emphasizes the relationship between trauma and its discursive representation. Often there is a gap—both temporal and descriptive—between the traumatic event and the narrative of it. Cathy Caruth (2010, p. 7) explains: “The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality [...] rather attests to its endless impact on a life [...]. At the core of these stories, I would suggest, is thus a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of its survival.” Thus, historical trauma is difficult for Japanese-Canadians to escape.

The timing of the first publication of Kogawa’s book in 1981 was effective since it coincided with a period of rapid development of Canadian multiculturalism. The later-to-be Prime Minister Trudeau’s 8th October 1971 speech to Canadian Parliament maintained support for bilingualism but questioned biculturalism, arguing instead for greater inclusion of the “other ethnic groups” cited in the 1963 the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. It is arguably here that Canadian multiculturalism in its present guise was born. Canada’s Multiculturalism Policy was considered the first of its kind and truly progressive. In 1982, Trudeau formally enshrined multiculturalism into the Canadian Constitution. Article 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms asserts a declaration of rights in a manner consistent with the multicultural heritage of Canadians. By the end of the 1980s at around the same time as Japanese-Canadians were being awarded Redress, a Ministry of Multiculturalism was established, and the Multiculturalism Act (1988) was passed to “recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and *racial* [my emphasis] diversity of

Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage” (“Canadian Multiculturalism Act”, 2014). Such was the progress that “some white ethnics were saying that the policy [...] had been ‘hijacked’ by newer non-European immigrants” (Kymlicka in Guo & Wong, 2015, p. 5).

Towards One Big Hapa Family?

The effect of these developments in Canadian multiculturalism was as Kymlicka suggested: to move from it being based around ethnicity (specifically, distinguishing between people of British, French, or Eastern European descent) to race. Although Quebecois nationalism was not (and still has not) completely quieted down, the government shifted attention from national unity based upon this to a more general inclusiveness. Immigrant groups such as Japanese-Canadians responded to this by becoming more engaged in propagating their concerns. Changing the focus of multiculturalism to anti-racism and immigrant integration, thus supplanting the previous paradigm of it being based on ethnicity with race, did not necessarily improve conditions for Japanese-Canadians. Kymlicka (2015, p. 6) puts it “[...]immigrants from East Asia are not discriminated against primarily based on their national origin as Vietnamese or Korean—many white Canadians have difficulty distinguishing these national groups—but rather they are discriminated against as ‘Asians’ or ‘Orientals’ on the basis of their race and skin color.”

So, on the one hand, Japanese-Canadians were benefitting through multiculturalism by being formally included and welcomed into the nation Canada: “In Canada, multiculturalism was adopted as a policy for citizens, as a way of reformulating the role of ethnic identities and ethnic organizations within the theory and practice of Canadian citizenship” (Kymlicka in Guo & Wong, 2015, p. 7). Multiculturalism in Canada, along with the efforts of Japanese-Canadian campaign voices such as Joy Kogawa, arguably helped finalize the decision to award Redress. On

the other hand, the shift towards understanding multiculturalism through race rather than ethnicity mitigated the benefits Japanese-Canadians received through Redress. Although Redress centered attention on Japanese-Canadians as an ethnic group, their racialization meant that often they were grouped together with “East Asians” or “Asians.” Through this, lingering racism towards Asians was perceptible.

This explains an interesting quirk I found in the data I collected from conversations with Japanese-Canadians during participant observation. By and large, the results show that Japanese-Canadians’ views of Canadian multiculturalism echo those of the fourteen cultural producers¹⁾ I interviewed for this study. During my five-month participant observation in Canada I met dozens of ordinary Japanese Canadians at Japanese festivals, events, the Vancouver Moku-Kai, Japanese cultural spaces and institutions (De Souza, 2016), and through the snowball effect. Although I did not formally interview all of them, whenever the topic of my research was brought up (as it invariably was) they almost universally supported Canadian multiculturalism in principle although pointed out problems with it in relation to their history during Kymlicka’s phases 1 & 2 of multiculturalism. However, I should point a couple of important differences between “ordinary” Japanese Canadians and the cultural producers I interviewed or other visible minorities in Canada. First, cultural producers are mostly liberal in political outlook and supportive of multicultural policy in principle, though quick to point out their ambivalent feelings. However, ordinary Japanese Canadians cover a far wider political spectrum (although they are generally supportive of Canadian multiculturalism even if Conservatives). They share an ambivalence consistent at all demographic levels, although younger generations are less questioning of multiculturalism than elder generations, perhaps because they have less direct experience of historical trauma. Second, unlike other visible minorities in Canada (particularly South Asian or Chinese), Japanese Canadians are less likely to identify as a visible minority and more likely to intermarry outside their ethnic group. In short, although ordinary Japanese Canadians support my argument, they arrive at it from a wider

variety of political, historical, and social circumstances than do cultural producers.

The quirk arises when studying the mission statements of the Vancouver Taiko Society over time. Whereas in the 1960s the society clearly targets Japanese-Canadians, from the 1990s this evolves into a more inclusive statement aimed at Asian Canadians. This shows that Kymlicka's second phase of multiculturalism as "race" has been recognized by some minorities. Perhaps it is for solidarity, or it may be for the greater bargaining power from being in a group. Although it should not be read as a conscious rejection of multiculturalism, it nonetheless hints that there is lingering racism towards (Asian and/or visible) minorities.

Perhaps this is the reason for the 95% intermarriage rate of Japanese-Canadians that Jeff Chiba Stearns explores in his documentary film *One big hapa family* (Chiba Stearns, 2010).

Jeff Chiba Stearns embarks on a journey of self-discovery to find out why everyone in his Japanese-Canadian family married interracially after his grandparents' generation [...]. One Big Hapa Family challenges our perceptions of purity and makes us question if mixing is the end of multiculturalism as we know it.
(One Big Hapa Family, 2010)

Mixing is unlikely to be "the end of multiculturalism as we know it"; however, it might be for Japanese-Canadians. Whereas earlier generations of Japanese-Canadians before the 1960s and recent immigrants from Japan (*shin ijusha*) can be grouped by their (Japanese) ethnicity, post-1970s generations of Japanese-Canadians cannot due to intermarriage. Thus, when we speak of "Japanese-Canadians" (hyphenated or not), we are not referring to a homogenous group of people. Even race is a problematic category because many Japanese-Canadians now are mixed-race. Although a majority of Japanese-Canadian marriages are with a partner coming from the predominantly white majority of Canada, as Chiba Stearn's documentary shows there are also marriages with other

Asians (e.g., Sophia and Greg) and Africans (e.g., Kevin and Melanie). A consequence of this is that even though the Multiculturalism Act aims to “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 them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation”, it becomes difficult to direct this when the community is not easily recognized. Ironically, multiculturalism and Redress came at a time when Japanese-Canadians had already successfully integrated within Canada, so recognizing them as an ethnic or racial minority is both too late and no longer entirely accurate.

This is not to say that multiculturalism has been entirely ignored by Japanese-Canadians. I have mentioned the political and economic benefits of Redress and multiculturalism. Another has been increased cultural expression. Pre-multiculturalism generations who suffered from racism hid their Japaneseness, for example, by speaking English rather than Japanese or by living amongst whites rather than in Japanese enclaves. However, multiculturalism challenged this with its encouragement to “preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French” and “recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society and enhance their development” (1988 Multiculturalism Act). In conjunction with Japan’s promotion of its popular culture through its “Cool Japan” campaign started around 15 years ago, multiculturalism has led to younger generations rediscovering Japanese language, heritage, and culture. Chiba Stearns explains that: “I think that just means that us, as a society, a Canadian culture, are getting a little more used to the fact that there is diversity and there’s multiculturalism and there’s blending and mixing, right.” Multiculturalism has made it acceptable for Japanese-Canadians to be different to the extent that now they are more likely to play to their cultural background rather than hide it:

Now it’s becoming more blended, becoming more multicultural in Canada that, you know, that little piece of you that makes you differ-

ent you want to stand out a bit, right. So, I find that the kids are really embracing that, so there really isn't much worry. (Chiba Stearns, 2013)

Multiculturalism might eventually lead to as Randall Hansen (in Jedwab, 2014, pp. 73-88) puts it "assimilation by stealth" for second-generations onwards thereby risking the "[...] appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and [...] evolving expressions of those cultures" (1988 Multiculturalism Act). Japanese-Canadians had arguably integrated before the start of Multiculturalism Policy so there was a concern that multiculturalism would end the community rather than protect it. Chiba Stearns shows that Japanese-Canadian cultural identity is diversifying through intermarriage. This does not mean it is weakening since cultural identity can be shaped by individual agency.

Japanese-Canadians therefore act as groundbreakers for other ethnic minority communities. They arguably suffered racism more than any other visible minority in Kymlicka's "ethnicity" period, yet they recovered to become the country's most feted model minority. Although in Kymlicka's "race" and "religion" periods they are numerically one of the smallest ethnic groups, they are amongst the most pioneering in their cultural productions expressing the complexity of the modern diaspora identity. The Chinese in Canada share strong similarities in their history of suffering racism, designation as a model minority, and identity issues. This has often been explained in terms of Asian cultural values, but this underestimates the effect of the demands of acculturation.

One big hapa family shows that the racism Japanese-Canadians experienced from their arrival in Canada through until after the Second World War was pronounced, often institutionalized, and that in modern-day multiculturalism in Canada racism persists albeit in a modified form: "And I think American audiences are really intrigued by thinking that Canada is this, you know, happy, loving place for multiculturalism and everyone gets along, there's no racism in Canada, but it's polite racism" (Chiba Stearns, 2013). Chiba Stearns' position is undecided between what he

sees as a binary opposition: the melting pot of the United States which boils down everybody into the same (i.e., attempts to assimilate minorities) or the patchwork quilt multiculturalism of Canada which instead ostensibly allows difference as part of the overall national “quilt.” He shows the importance of questioning multiculturalism:

And it was always phrased like that, so I think that was something that [...] my first reflectional film was the ‘What Are You Anyways’ film, and that film was commissioned by the CBC as a film that explored a different kind of multi-ethnic, you know, angle, or multiculturalism a little bit differently, it was [...] so it was just the weird things that happened to me growing up in Kelowna, British Columbia, a small little Canadian town, being part-Japanese and being one of the only minority kids in the class, right, and being treated a little different. (Chiba Stearns, 2013)

Karen Suzuki

Karen Suzuki is a Japanese-Canadian actor and filmmaker. Her documentary film *Hapa-ness: A Canadian experience* (Suzuki, 2010) explores multiculturalism and Japanese-Canadian identity. Producing her film was a way for Suzuki to work through McAllister’s (2010, p. 1) “necessary crisis”: Making the documentary definitely gave me an insight into my own mixed-race identity through connecting me to the Japanese-Canadian community and meeting and relating to other hapas (John Endo Greenaway, 2012). Suzuki describes the importance of nuanced discussions on multiculturalism and cultural identity:

When asked, I say I’m half Japanese and half German, knowing full well the person asking is probably only really interested in the Japanese side. Then I hope that it can lead to a more nuanced conversation about multiculturalism, the internment and being bi-racial. In terms of my own identity, I was brought up to be a proud Canadian. I was aware of my Japanese ethnicity, but Japanese culture was never a big part of my day-to-day life, aside from the Japanese dishes that

Grandma made for special occasions [...]. I think that being mixed has had more influence on me than either culture on its own. I'm proud to be Canadian and Half Japanese, but neither of those things fully identifies me. (Suzuki, 2013)

For Suzuki, being Japanese or being Canadian is of lesser influence than being hapa, one of several terms used to describe people of Japanese descent within multicultural societies. The word *hapa*, also used in Chiba Stearns' documentary and in the documentary *Hafu: The mixed-race experience in Japan* (Nishikura & Takagi, 2013), refers to a person of mixed ethnic heritage (Folen & Ng, 2007). The word was coined in Hawaii in the 1960s from the Hawaiian word for *half* and was originally a pejorative term for Japanese people of mixed ancestry in Hawaii (Folen & Ng, 2007). In the 1970s, hapa was applied in Hawaii to anyone of mixed (usually Asian) ancestry (Folen & Ng, 2007). It was then appropriated by the hapa themselves with a much more positive meaning and its usage spread amongst Asian Americans in mainland United States (Fulbeck, 2010, p. 261). However, it did not spread as prevalently elsewhere amongst the global Nikkei diaspora.

Hapa as a concept has become more widely used in Canada more recently perhaps due to a need for Japanese-Canadians to distinguish themselves within multiculturalism from broad groups such as Asian Canadian. It is now a slightly more globalized concept—to the chagrin of some Hawaiian hapa who believe that the term should only apply to them—that has emerged because of global cultural networks. However, it has still not yet been universally adopted. It is also changing in meaning from its original usage in Hawaii based mostly on ethnicity and race, to something “[...] more rooted in their experiences, parental upbringing, and the locality/environment in which they grew up” (Noro, 2009, p. 1).

Although Chiba Stearns makes a case for its use in his documentary it as much because it has resonance with kanji readings of his name as because it is in any way better than currently used terms. Indeed,

hapa is sometimes still associated in Japan with the more negative connotation of “half-breed.” This explains why the term is used more by younger Japanese-Canadians who are not as aware of these negative connotations. Also used, although more within Japan rather than for Japanese diasporas, is the term *hafu* literally meaning *half*. These terms suggest an interrogation and awareness of the minority position within Canadian multiculturalism.

Redress started as a disparate movement that eventually unified, so a similar unification may also be the case with those negotiating the position of Japanese-Canadians within Canada. That Suzuki and Chiba Stearns both produced a work on a similar theme at a similar time suggests that they did not know of each other’s work and that they (at least then) were not part of any cultural network. When asked whether she was aware of any Japanese-Canadian cultural network, Suzuki replied: “Not that I’ve found, though I’ve not looked very hard for one [...] There are Asian Film Festivals in Vancouver and Toronto that bring together Asian filmmakers, but nothing specific to Japanese-Canadian producers” (Suzuki, 2013). Suzuki’s ties with other Asian filmmakers are important because they offer an alternative avenue to the exploration of cultural identity in multicultural Canada. In their attempts to provide self-definitions of Japanese-Canadian cultural identity, filmmakers such as Suzuki and Chiba Stearns start to reify these definitions and cultural identity starts to appear deterministic. By appearing at festivals with other ethnic cultural producers, Japanese-Canadian filmmakers can look to learn other ways to think about their material—possibly including conceptualizations of cultural identity at a pan-Asian level bypassing the ethnic or racial categorizations implied by multiculturalism.

Whereas elder generations of Japanese-Canadians appear to reject multiculturalism due to the past, younger generations appear to wish to work within multiculturalism for the future. Suzuki is like her Eastern Canada peers (and different to those in Western Canada) in her recognizing a “Japanese-Canadian culture” as well as characterizing different generations of Japanese-Canadians:

The current Japanese-Canadian Community has been described to me, as being like oil and water comprised of the older Nisei and Sansei that were interned and the newer immigrants that arrived post war. These two groups have very little to relate to each other about. As the generation that was interned die out, their hapa children and grandchildren will be the only ones to represent their experiences within the community. Like most immigrant communities, by the 3rd and 4th generations, interest in the “old ways” starts to wane. I find that people that spend time in Japan teaching English know much more than I do about Japanese culture and as long as there is interest in Japan, its culture will always have a place in Canada and will continue to change as all cultures do. (Suzuki, 2013)

Suzuki’s “story of internment” demonstrates the lingering effect of historical trauma, of how it can be retold and passed from generation to generation. Suzuki predicts that the old ways of Japanese-Canadian culture will become less important to younger generations of Japanese-Canadians. In a sense, she is saying that the human rights violations against Japanese-Canadians during incarceration are the only thing of significance to younger generations of Japanese-Canadians. Ethnic (Japanese) identity is less important and there is ambivalence towards its unlikely survival into the future in terms of “Japanese-Canadian culture” or multiculturalism. Mixed identities because of intermarriage is the chief reason behind this. In addition to Chiba Stearns, this is a theme taken up by a third Japanese-Canadian filmmaker.

Anne Marie Nakagawa

Anne Marie Nakagawa is a Japanese-Canadian filmmaker and cultural anthropologist. Nakagawa’s wrote and directed her documentary film *Between: Living in the hyphen* (Nakagawa, 2005) for the National Film Board. It examines the cultural identities of seven interviewees of mixed ancestries that cannot easily be categorized. Nakagawa explores the tension between a multicultural society that seeks to categorize and

people who seem to defy categorization. The film predicts a future where hyphenated terms such as Japanese-Canadian are no longer used; instead, fluidity and hybridity of cultural identity are understood and accepted.

The description for *Between: Living in the hyphen* states: “In Canada, diversity often means ‘one ethnicity + hyphen + Canadian,’ but what if you don’t fit into an easy category? What if your background is a hybrid of ancestries and you live somewhere between, where cultural identities overlap?” (Nakagawa, 2005). Cultural identities are described not just with words but also with mathematical terms: ethnicity + hyphen + Canadian; hafu, daburu. Daburu is a Japanese approximation of the English word *double*. This is a reaction to the word *hafu* (half) suggesting that people with mixed ancestries are more culturally complete than the word hafu suggests. What documentaries such as those by Chiba Stearns, Suzuki, and Nakagawa do is to open debate on the cultural identity of Japanese-Canadians, show how it is affected by all manner of different influences throughout history, and show the parallels (and differences) that Japanese-Canadians have with other minorities in multicultural Canada.

Nakagawa’s approach differs from other Japanese-Canadian filmmakers since her subject material does not directly include Japanese-Canadians themselves. Instead, she uses a range of other cultural backgrounds. Nakagawa’s choice of interviewees is telling since all seven of them combine a subject with a parent with a European background with a parent from a visible minority. Choosing a subject with two parents from visible minorities should still bring about the same discussion on the nature of the hyphen and in-betweenness. Yet, by choosing the binary of European and Other, Nakagawa guides the discussion towards representations of power and difference. Her subjects speak of “getting away with being white” as a way of avoiding social problems such as racism and discrimination in Canada. Those who cannot get away with being white instead speak of the aggressive cultural politics behind the simple question “Where are you from?” Japanese-Canadian marriages between two visible minorities are included and explored in *One big hapa family*,

where the emphasis is more on how those getting married from dissimilar cultural backgrounds are received by their families and by other Canadians. For Nakagawa, “identity is very relative to where you come from.”

The main concern with difference, identity and inequality in multiculturalism from 2001 to present according to Kymlicka centers on religion. It is here that Kymlicka’s conceptualization breaks down in its relevance to minorities such as Japanese-Canadians, who generally no longer practice religion. In 2001, 46% of Canadians of Japanese origin said they had no religious affiliation, compared with 17% of the overall population (2001 Census). Nonetheless, Japanese-Canadians are still affected by religion. Kymlicka acknowledges that this “[...] third stage of multiculturalism, and its evolution is still very much a work in progress. There remains much uncertainty about the role of religion within the multiculturalism policy, and about the sorts of religious organizations and faith-based claims that should be supported by the policy.” (Kymlicka in Guo & Wong, 2015, p. 10). As such, there is little precedent for how to administer multiculturalism when dealing with religious groups, particularly when these groups are globalized and politicized. Religion may be the biggest challenge since certain interpretations of it violate the liberal ethos underpinning Canadian multiculturalism. Perhaps the lack of religious practice—let alone politicization of their (mainly traditionally Buddhist though increasingly Christian) religion—is another of the reasons for the ready acceptance since Redress of Japanese-Canadians as a model minority. The issue for Japanese-Canadians in this third phase of multiculturalism therefore again becomes one of representation and voice. Who represents them? How can they be heard from beneath the din of competing and louder religious minority groups? These are important questions for future research.

Conclusion

I have shown how historical trauma leads to Japanese-Canadian am-

bivalence towards multiculturalism policy despite their being heralded as a model minority within it. Looking at the relationship between Canada (as colonial power) and Japanese-Canadians (as colonized) allows differences in power to show and distinguishes state multiculturalism (which administers multicultural policy) from the critical multiculturalism used by minorities to negotiate their position within this. Although definitions of race and ethnicity blur, if we agree with Gunew (1997, p. 28) that “race is structured by the desire to be considered human; ethnicity is structured by a concomitant desire for citizenship,” the change Kymlicka describes from ethnicity to race shows that minorities do not unquestioningly support multiculturalism. Multiculturalism shares with post-colonialism a central concern with race, and in the case of Japanese-Canadians the entwining of race with history and culture creates a complex heterogeneous multiculturalism beyond mosaic plurality.

Dominick LaCapra (2000) in *Writing history, writing trauma* conveys the difference between “acting out” and “working through” trauma. According to LaCapra, a traumatic historical event first tends to be repressed, then returns in the form of compulsive repetition (LaCapra, 1996, pp. 192-193). Clearly, some Japanese-Canadians felt marginalized their trauma. By narrating and “working through” their trauma through their cultural productions, Japanese-Canadians find a middle voice somewhere between the two poles of positivism versus constructivism that LaCapra thinks need to be navigated when writing on history and trauma. *Obasan* has been criticized for its constructionist approach to Canadian Nikkei history; however, it defends itself against this by including documentary evidence. By initially repressing (or “forgetting”) trauma then eventually apologizing through Redress, the United States and Canada are attempting to uphold their integrity as democratic and fair nations. Slavoj Žižek (1993, p. 201) writes that “national identification is by definition sustained by a relationship toward the Nation qua Thing. This Nation-Thing is determined by a series of contradictory properties” and what unites a nation is “a shared relationship toward a Thing.” For Jacques Lacan (1988, p. 164), trauma occurs when there is an interaction with the Real

and “there’s an anxiety-provoking apparition of an image which summarizes what we can call the revelation of that which is least penetrable in the real, of the real lacking any possible mediation, of the ultimate real, of the essential object which isn’t an object any longer, but this something faced with which all words cease and all categories fail, the object of anxiety par excellence.” Žižek and Lacan’s conceptualizations of trauma therefore would suggest a strengthening of Japanese-Canadian identity alongside a distancing from the (Canadian) nation.

The relationship between Canadian multiculturalism and Japanese-Canadians is an uneasy one, balancing their broad agreement in its ethos of liberal principles and protection of minorities with an aversion to being “othered,” whether it is in negative terms in the past such as yellow peril or even seemingly positive terms in the present such as model minority. The award of Redress and the cultural productions of prominent Japanese-Canadians have offered political intervention into the discourse of Canadian multiculturalism. Now that Redress has been achieved, their main challenge is their continued existence and recognition as a group distinct from the rather general Asian Canadian category, which is bound neither by any common language nor religion. Despite their apprehension, multiculturalism encourages a self-thinking about identity that might not have happened if Japanese-Canadians had maintained their post-incarceration trajectory of silence whilst going to great lengths to fit into white Canadian society.

The study provides a caveat to congratulatory narratives of Canadian multiculturalism yet throws a spanner in the literature that reasons against multiculturalism. Whilst there are positives to be taken from Canada’s leadership in multiculturalism policy, this case study shows that ultimately this policy struggles to escape from being based upon ethnic and racial othering and therefore creates hierarchies. Canada the nation is based on the myth of European settlers and the myth of confederation. These myths are overcome by a multicultural narrative that sidesteps historical injustices against minorities such as African Canadians, Indigenous peoples, Japanese-Canadians and other historically marginalized com-

munities through incarceration, genocide, slavery, segregation, and discriminatory government policy. The Japanese-Canadian cultural producers showcased in this study provide a reminder of this and make multiculturalism something requiring dialogue and working through of (historical) issues. Despite this, multiculturalism has the potential to come out of this encounter stronger than ever whilst dealing a blow to its critics. By admitting its failures and taking steps to address them to make sure they never happen again, multiculturalism may adapt and evolve. For example, the treatment of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War and Muslims after the September 11 attacks show parallels. By showing that historical experience, particularly injustices, can be learned from to allow varying cultures to exist peacefully within Canada whilst recognizing diversity addresses a common complaint of multiculturalism: that it creates communities who are separate from other Canadians. In this way multiculturalism moves into something more meaningful beyond celebrations of ethnic culture through food, folk, and fashion that tend to reify cultural stereotypes and othering. Part of the reason of Canadian multiculturalism's success is that "the fragility of multiculturalism in other countries derives precisely from the fact that it isn't tightly connected to national unity, human rights, anti-racism, and citizenship" (Kymlicka in Guo & Wong, 2015, p. 9).

This study shows that the effect of multicultural policy on minorities is not always direct but can be moderated by the contingent histories and social conditions of a minority. An issue with the implementation of any multicultural policy is that in attempting to cater to diversity it needs first to recognize diversity within diversity. Not all minority groups are the same; they are defined by their respective origins, histories, mores, and traditions. They respond socially in different ways to other Canadians, including other minorities. Their cultural expression correspondingly will vary according to these characteristics. Governments implementing multicultural policy therefore should recognize that the effect of the policy will vary on different minority groups and even on different people within these groups. This raises some important questions, of which the follow-

ing is the most important to address in future research on “minority minorities” such as Japanese-Canadians: is a national-level comprehensive multicultural policy enough, or should there be increased efforts to address minorities within multiculturalism on a per-case basis?

By recognizing diversity within minority communities, policymakers can fine-tune multicultural policy. This is no easy task considering Canada’s vast number and variety of minority groups. Nevertheless, the Japanese-Canadian experience provides an (albeit imperfect) template of how to tailor policy and government interaction to a minority that sometimes sits uneasily within multiculturalism. The government needs to shift focus from centrally organized policy to an awareness of the needs of specific minority groups at the local level. This can be achieved through listening to group leaders or cultural producers from such communities as part of an intercultural dialogue with the liberal values of the government’s Multicultural Policy. Although Redress may be an extreme example of this, it is a good illustration of how to effectively consider within multiculturalism immigrant identity and voice, political and social conditions in the past, and the political economy in the present.

1) Susan Aihoshi, Jeff Chiba Stearns, Sally Ito, Audrey Kobayashi, Joy Kogawa, Kyo Maclear, Roy Miki, Satoko Norimatsu, Midi Onodera, Michelle Sagara, Kerri Sakamoto, Karen Suzuki, Mariko Tamaki, and Chieri Uegaki.

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