

Critique

Conservative-directed change is a time honored feature of Canadian politics. Canada's elites have long recognized that self-interest may be served most effectively by accepting the inevitability of change and working to mitigate its effects rather than by seeking to block change entirely. In her illuminating article, Stasiulis holds that the development of racial policies of the Canadian state has been controlled by elites seeking to preserve their own dominance by simultaneously following policies of repression and responsiveness: bringing public attention to the problems confronted by minority groups in the Canadian society and attaching the legitimacy that accompanies expression of government concern while simultaneously pursuing policies designed to limit the growth of the minority groups and circumscribing their aspirations for political power.

North America has, for over three centuries, exerted a powerful attraction to people whose economic, political, or religious aspirations have been frustrated in other parts of the world. Wave after wave of immigration from overseas has populated the United States and Canada with persons of European, African, and Asian descent while pushing the Native American populations into even smaller portions of their historic territory, provided labor and entrepreneurial skills for explosive industrial and agricultural development, and created a heterogeneity of population rather more profound than that found elsewhere.

The processes by which the ethnic composition of their populations has changed and the political reactions to the changes in Canada and the United States have had both similarities and differences. Canada did not experience the forced immigration of millions of Africans, as the United States did, for example; the United States has not had a tradition comparable to Canada's biculturalism, on the other hand.

Official policy welcomed masses of immigrants into both countries until a transition occurred in the origins of the majority of persons seeking entry during the late nineteenth century. Persons from Eastern and Southern Europe and Asia found access more limited than their predecessors and contemporaries from Western and Northern Europe did. But expanding industry and agriculture needed their labor, and large numbers of immigrants were admitted. In the late twentieth century, however, as economies have stagnated in the developed countries, potential immigrants from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean have been confronted with official restric-

tions on their entry into either Canada or the U.S. Those who have entered legally, or in violation of the immigration laws, however, have generally found employment—at least in the fringe areas of the economy.

While the rhetoric of the “melting pot” has been conventional in the United States, Canada’s political language has adopted the “mosaic” as a more appropriate metaphor for the country’s society. Perhaps the tradition of biculturalism, despite the persistence of problems in ethnic relations, has enabled Canadians to recognize the societal value of multiculturalism more readily than residents of the United States have done.

John Porter’s classic 1965 examination of power in Canada, *The Vertical Mosaic*, argues that access to power in Canada is limited by selective recruitment into the dominant elite. Stasiulis demonstrates that the Canadian elite is capable of making effective use of policies which appear contradictory on the surface—repressive policies combined with apparent responsiveness—to keep the concerns of the visible minorities before the public and on the fringe of public policy making. Her research indicates, as well, that any societal change that might enable the minorities to assert their interests more effectively is obstructed by a politically skillful elite.

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Stasiulis has not only entered a great debate but has sought to order it. The interconnections between Canada’s recent policies on multiculturalism, immigration, and the efforts to implement the two are the reference points around which that debate is centered. The possibilities for racism, however, need to be made more clear by the author. Scholars can make significant contributions in this regard by investigating what seems to be unrelated programs and practices. Since practices are tied to the same policies, an identifiable theoretical