The Puzzling Persistence of Racial Inequality in Canada

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This chapter examines the puzzling persistence of racial economic disparities in Canada, which continue despite a social safety net and a model of diversity governance that many assume are far more robust, redistributive, and egalitarian than those that exist south of the 49th parallel. Many racial minorities remain disadvantaged compared to white Canadians, and the picture is even more troubling for Aboriginal peoples, who face incredible disparities in terms of almost every socioeconomic indicator. Why did not the transformative policy regimes introduced during the postwar decades in welfare, immigration, equality rights, multiculturalism, and Aboriginal policy have greater success in alleviating racial economic inequality?

We argue that these policy regimes largely failed to eliminate racial inequality in Canada because, simply stated, that was not their original purpose. The policies were put in place during an era when Canada was not as racially diverse as it is now. In 1961, more than 96% of Canadians traced their ancestry to Europe, and Aboriginal people, who represented less than 2% of the population, were not politically mobilized. As a result, the postwar policy regimes were shaped primarily by the concerns of a white European population divided primarily by ethnicity, language, and culture rather than race. Canadian society and politics became more racially complex in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of changing immigration flows and the political mobilization of the Aboriginal peoples. However, established ways of thinking about difference and growing constraints on state activism ensured that the inherited policy architecture was not retooled explicitly to address racial economic inequality. The welfare state underwent major retrenchment with disproportionate—although not purposeful—effects on racial minorities. Problems of immigrant economic integration were defined as failures of the immigration system rather than racial discrimination. Legal innovations such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms have never been interpreted as guaranteeing economic rights or redistributive benefits, and multicultural policies have been instruments of cultural equality rather than mechanisms for addressing racial or economic inequality. Finally, the Aboriginal peoples define themselves as autonomous nations rather than racial minorities, and the resulting policy struggles—which focus on self-governance and territorial rights—so far have done little to alleviate socioeconomic gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

The prospects for the near future suggest continuing policy drift. The decentralization of the federation makes less likely a concerted national campaign against racial inequality. The party system in Canada has never been class-based, which accounts for the weakening of the redistributive role of the state and a general Right-ward shift among political parties, both of which limit the potential for political challenges to racial inequality. Finally, Canadian policies are shaped by liberal ideologies, which often work to foreclose more radical, redistributive, and antiracist politics. The chapter concludes by offering preliminary strategies for enhancing racial equality in the Canadian context, including reinvigorating policy tools designed to reduce economic inequality among the general populace; developing explicit policy tools to problematize, target, and alleviate racial inequality; and acknowledging the urgency of Aboriginal poverty by taking concrete steps to improve program delivery.

THE PUZZLE

Canada presents a puzzle in the context of racial inequality. The country often is perceived as having a robust social model and as being an international leader in the development of multiculturalism policies and the nurturing of cultural tolerance. Yet, these policies, which together should work to enhance equality and social solidarity, coexist with significant levels of racial economic inequality—smaller perhaps than in the United States but significant nevertheless.

In our opinion, the fact of Canadian inequality is far less interesting than the persistence of inequality. In the two

decades between 1960 and the early 1980s, several new policy paradigms emerged, with consequences that fundamentally shifted the Canadian socioeconomic landscape: (1) the emergence of the welfare state in the 1960s and early 1970s; (2) the implementation of an immigration points system in 1967 and the subsequent focus on attracting economic immigrants to the country; (3) the move away from assimilationist models of diversity governance with the adoption of an official multiculturalism policy in 1971 and a change in direction in Aboriginal policy at roughly the same time; and (4) the adoption in 1982 of a constitutionally entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms, with powerful antidiscrimination provisions and a section explicitly protecting affirmative-action programs from challenges on the basis of individual rights. Combined, these initiatives established a social safety net and a model of diversity governance that many Americans assume are far more robust, redistributive, and egalitarian than those that exist south of the 49th parallel. Yet, racial economic disparities stubbornly persist.

Since the postwar era, Canada has become one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the OECD.

This chapter addresses this persistence of racial economic inequality and the failure to adequately address it through public policy. In other words, why did these policies not have greater success in alleviating racial economic inequality? We contend that the key policy regimes established between the 1960s and 1980s—welfare, immigration, multiculturalism, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and Aboriginal policy—largely failed to eliminate racial inequality in Canada because, simply stated, that was never their purpose. These policies were all put in place during an era in which Canada was not as racially diverse as it is now. In 1961, more than 96% of Canadians traced their ancestry to Europe. Aboriginal people represented less than 2% of the population and were not politically mobilized and, in combination, Asians, blacks, and other racial minorities also represented less than 2% (Li 2000, table 1). As a result, the policy regimes put in place in the postwar era were shaped by the concerns of a white European population. Moreover, there was a dark side to those decades. The historical record indicates clearly the many ways that the state created and maintained a specifically Canadian "racial order" (King and Smith 2005) by restricting immigration from non-European sources and by denying racialized minorities equal access to and treatment under the law in key areas of political, social, and economic life (e.g., voting, education, housing, employment, and criminal justice) (Backhouse 1999; Thompson 2016; Walker, J. 1997; Walker, B. 2010).

Since the postwar era, Canada has become one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In addition, the policy regimes built in the postwar era have morphed into new shapes, reflecting changing economic and social realities. These changes included the adoption of several laws that prohibit explicit discrimination on the basis of race. However, the policy regimes under study were not retooled to directly address racial economic inequality. Furthermore, given the prevailing political and ideological climate of the country, such a strategic change in direction seems unlikely.

To anticipate our arguments about the key policy fields, we first examine the welfare state, which emerged in an era when Canada was still a predominantly white society. By the time Canada became more racially complex in the 1980s and 1990s, important components of the welfare state underwent major retrenchment with disproportionate—although not purposeful—effects on racial minorities. Second, changes to Canadian immigration policy in the late 1960s catalyzed a dramatic shift in the country's racial demographics, but new immigrants soon began to experience problems in economic integration. These problems have intensely preoccupied successive governments, but they were always defined as failures of the immigration system, not as evidence of racial discrimination. As a result, policy responses did not address race as such. Rather, they focused first on training and credential recognition and then increasingly on new immigration policies that intended to change who is admitted to the country, with as-yet uncertain implications for the racial composition of the inflow.

Third, although state-sponsored multiculturalism policy has a revered place in the national psyche, multiculturalism has been an instrument of cultural equality rather than economic or racial inequality. The legal institutions designed to protect individual rights—such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the federal and provincial human rights commissions—have been more important in addressing explicitly racial and religious discrimination. The Charter, however, has never been interpreted as guaranteeing economic equality and redistributive benefits.

Fourth, Aboriginal policy in Canada has been substantially shaped by nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century laws and policies designed to eradicate indigenous cultures, traditions, and languages. Since 1973, the focus has been on jurisprudence, governance, and territorial

rights. So far, however, this focus has done little to alleviate the socioeconomic disparities between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginal Canadians, which are further exacerbated by an institutional quagmire in which neither the federal nor the provincial and territorial governments have taken comprehensive responsibility for creating effective social policies.

Aboriginal peoples have come to define themselves less as separate races and more as separate nations with distinctive identities, cultures, languages, and goals of self-determination.

In short, racial inequality—especially racial economic inequality—has never been a major, explicit policy target in Canada. Members of racial minorities undoubtedly have benefited from welfare policies, integration programs, and multicultural policies. However, these policies were set in place before Canada was as racially diverse as it is today. They were not designed with racial economic inequality as a distinct, central preoccupation and, in the main, they have not been retooled to directly address the problem.

Moreover, the evolution of major policy drivers in the country suggests that such a retooling is unlikely in the future. The decentralization of the federation, coupled with growing asymmetries of power between Quebec and the other provinces, makes a concerted national campaign against racial inequality more difficult. The party system has never been class-based and electoral politics are now defined by political parties that are comfortable with immigration and diversity. Unlike the United States, all parties recognize that any platform featuring anti-immigrant or antiminority overtones would be a form of political suicide. However, the weakness of class politics also accounts for the weakening of the redistributive role of the state and a general Right-ward shift in the party system, both of which limit prospects for an assault on all forms of inequality, including racial inequality. Finally, Canadian policies continue to be shaped by liberal ideologies, which often work to foreclose more radical, redistributive, and antiracist politics that, perhaps, would more explicitly address the scope and persistence of racial inequality. Ultimately, the prospects are for continuing policy drift.

Underlying these proximate factors are elemental political realities. From Canada's founding as a federal state in 1867, politics have been defined primarily by cultural and linguistic cleavages, especially the division between English- and French-speaking communities. This historic divide continues to create political sensitivities, with Quebec almost voting for separation in 1995. In addition, the large waves of immigration that filled out the country in the early decades of the twentieth century came mostly from Europe, generating a more ethnically but not racially diverse country; that was to emerge much later. As a result, the politics of ethnicity, culture, language, and identity dominated Canadian politics, and racial minorities—even those that are now second and third-plus generations—tend to be incorporated into these embedded understandings of difference.[1] Racial-minority immigrants have been incorporated into multicultural approaches to integration, and the Aboriginal peoples have come to define themselves less as separate races and more as separate nations with distinctive identities, cultures, languages, and goals of self-determination.

We advance this argument in four sections. The first section is a brief overview of trends in economic inequality and racial inequality. The next section examines the major developments and attributes of each of four key policy areas: the welfare state, immigration policy, rights and multiculturalism, and Aboriginal policy. The third section assesses the prospects for change by examining the evolution of three political drivers of policy change in Canada: federalism, political parties, and dominant ideologies. The final section pulls the threads of the argument together.

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY AND RACIAL INEQUALITY

Trends in economic inequality and racial inequality evolved along separate but related tracks. This section summarizes the main trends.

Economic Inequality

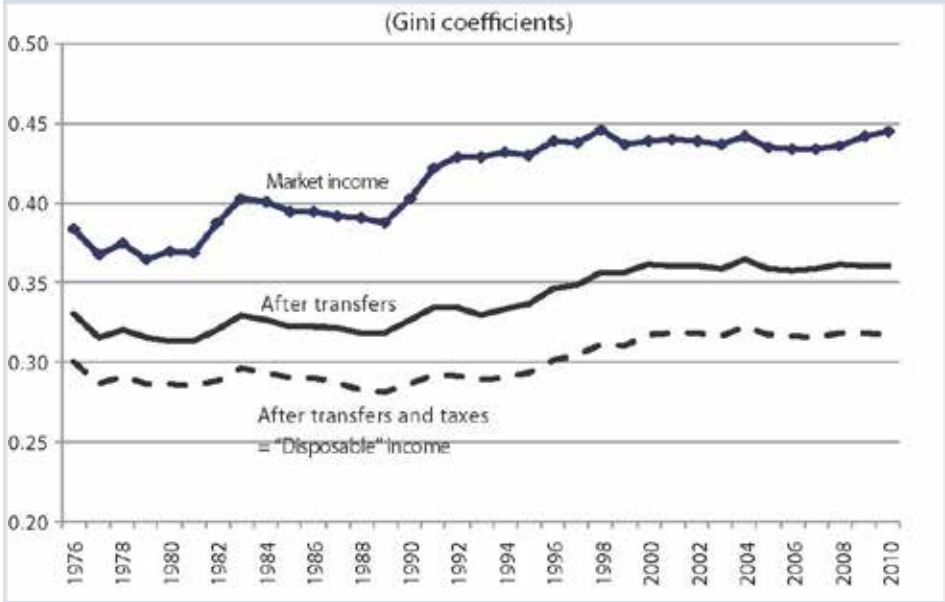
After four decades of relative stability, income inequality in Canada surged upward in the 1980s and 1990s. Figure 1 illustrates one view of the trends. The top line shows the long-term increase in inequality in the market income of families from 1976 to 2010. The bottom line shows the growth in inequality in final income, which captures the combined impact of taxes and direct transfers. It is striking

that the tax-transfer system completely offset the rise in market inequality until the mid-1990s. Until that point, the welfare state was accomplishing its purpose and there was little change in final-income inequality. In the mid-1990s, in part because of cuts to unemployment benefits and social assistance, the tax-transfer system could no longer keep up with rising inequality in market incomes. The result was a sharp rise in inequality in post-tax/transfer incomes, and the Gini Index for disposable incomes rose from about 0.29 to 0.32 by the end of the decade. Since then, inequality as measured by the Gini Index has remained essentially flat.

However, this view of inequality obscures what has been happening at the extremes of the income distribution. Figure 2 focuses on the top 1% of tax filers, whose share of total income rose from approximately 7% in the mid-1980s; peaked at 12% in 2006–2007, approaching levels reached in the Gilded Age of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s; before falling back to 10.6% in 2010 following the financial crisis of 2008–2009 (Banting and Myles 2013; Banting and Myles 2016; Fortin et al. 2012).

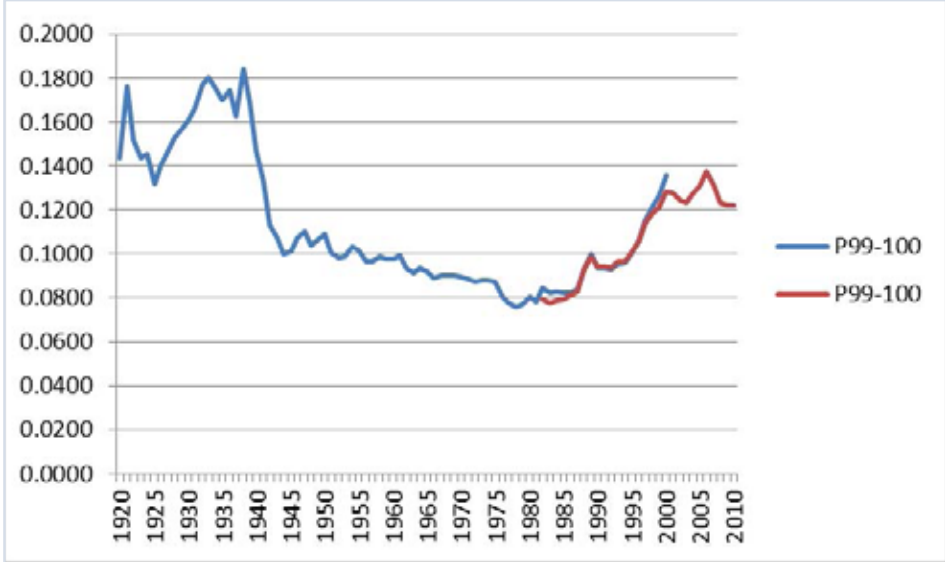
It is interesting that growing inequality does not appear at the other end of the income distribution, in the form of growing poverty. Using the standard international benchmark for poverty (i.e., percentage of the population with incomes less than 50% of the median), the poverty rate has remained more or less stable for more than three decades (Banting and Myles 2013). This does not mean that Canada does not have a poverty problem; the poverty rate is one of the highest in the OECD. The stability in the poverty rate means that incomes in the bottom and the middle of the distribution have largely been moving in tandem. Growing inequality has been a matter of the top half of the income distribution pulling away from the middle, not the bottom falling away from the middle. In other words, the rich have been getting richer but the poor have not been getting poorer.

Figure 1: Inequality by Income Type, 1976–2010



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM database, table 202-0709.

Figure 2: Top 1% Income Shares in Canada, 1920–2011



Source: Veall (2012), with updates provided by Veall.

Table 1: Poverty, Inequality and Redistribution: Select OECD Countries, 2011

	POVERTY RATE (%)		INEQUALITY (GINI)	
	Market Income	**After Tax-Transfer**	**Market Income**	**Final Income**
SWEDEN	27	10	0.435	0.273
FRANCE	35	8	0.512	0.309
GERMANY	33	9	0.506	0.293
CANADA	25	12	0.438	0.316
UNITED STATES	28	17	0.508	0.389

Note: Poverty line is based on 50% of median income.
Source: OECD (2008).

To put the Canadian case in perspective, table 1 provides comparative indicators of poverty and inequality rates for comparable affluent democracies.

Racial Inequality

Canada has become more racially diverse since the postwar era. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, Aboriginal peoples represent approximately 4% of the total population (Statistics Canada 2011b). Categorized by identity group, registered Indians represent 50% of the overall Aboriginal population, whereas non-status Indians represent approximately 15% and Métis and Inuit represent 30% and 4%, respectively (ibid.). About half of First Nations people and Métis live in urban areas; many others live in rural non-reserve areas; and only about a quarter live on reserves. They also have a much larger presence in the western part of the country and comprise the largest minority group in many prairie cities.

To these percentages, immigration has added a more complex pattern of racial diversity. According to the 2006 Census, immigrant-origin racial minorities represented 16% of the population, a third of which were born in the country (Statistics Canada 2010). These immigrants traditionally have been attracted to major portal cities—Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal—but are increasingly settling in smaller communities as well.

Canadians have long considered their country a mosaic of ethnic and racial hues. However, as Porter (1965) pointed out a half-century ago, this is a vertical mosaic, with British-origin Canadians at the apex of an ethno-racial hierarchy. Much has changed in the ensuing years. The income differences between English- and French-speaking Canada have almost totally disappeared and other white ethnic groups earn more, on average, than British-origin workers. However, racial minorities remain at a disadvantage—some groups significantly so—and Aboriginal peoples are significantly disadvantaged. Moreover, after minimal improvement in the 1970s and relative stability in the 1980s, the economic position of racial minorities weakened noticeably during the 1990s (Pendakur and Pendakur 2002). This suggests that minorities were affected more negatively by the growth in market inequality and the decline in redistribution by the state. Since then, the level of racial inequality apparently has stabilized—at least until 2006, the last date for which reliable data are available (Pendakur and Pendakur 2011).[2]

We first consider racial-minority immigrant groups. The first generation—immigrants themselves—face distinctive problems of language and credential recognition, which are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. We therefore focus on the second-plus generations—that is, Canadian-born members of racial minorities. As a composite group, racial minorities face a comparatively small economic gap. Indeed, Canadian governments celebrate the successes of second-generation members of racial minorities, pointing especially to educational outcomes that exceed those of the white population and stand out in international terms (OECD 2006). However, as shown in table 2, educational success does not translate directly into comparable economic success, especially for men. Compared to white workers, racial-minority men

Table 2: Racial Minorities in Canada: Education and Earnings by Generation, Ages 25–34

	MEN		WOMEN	
	Racial Minority	**White**	**Racial Minority**	**White**
UNIVERSITY DEGREE				
Second Generation	37.1	27.5	49.9	38.5
Third+ Generations	23.7	18.4	26.9	27.1
MEAN EARNINGS				
Second Generation	39,800	44,200	35,000	32,900
Third+ Generations	37,600	40,800	28,700	28,700

Note: Data include members of racial-minority immigrant communities, referred to by Statistics Canada as "visible minorities." Data do not include Aboriginal peoples.
Source: Statistics Canada (2011a).

face an earnings gap of approximately 10%; racial-minority women experience smaller gaps. Table 3 compares racial-minority workers with British-origin workers over time, controlling for personal characteristics such as age and education; these gaps are more significant. However, averages obscure more than they reveal because there are major differences across minority groups. Some minority groups do well; for example, Chinese and Japanese Canadians outperform white workers (Baker and Benjamin 1997; Reitz, Zhang, and Hawkins 2009). There are significant negative gaps for other groups, however, especially for male workers. In 2005, the gaps for men in the larger immigrant groups were South Asian (-0.19), Caribbean (-0.24), and Southeast Asian (-0.30).[3] There also are dramatic differences across cities, with the largest gaps in Montreal and the smallest in Vancouver (Pendakur and Pendakur 2011). Racial minorities are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed in positions with job insecurity, low wages, and few social benefits (Galabuzi 2006). A 2008 study comparing the economic status of black and white populations in Canada and the United States found that after controlling for the relative sizes of the first, second, and third-plus generations of immigrant groups, racial income and wage gaps in the two countries are strikingly similar (Attewell, Kasinitz, and Dunn 2010). In summary, poverty is increasingly racialized.

The situation is even more troubling for Aboriginal peoples. According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, these communities endure conditions "normally associated with impoverished developing countries" (Canada 1996). Educational levels are low and unemployment rates are high. Despite rapid increases in educational attainment in the past decade, outcomes are still well below the national average. In 2011, nearly 29% of Aboriginal peoples aged 25 to 64 had "no certificate, diploma or degree"—more than double the proportion in the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada 2011a). In 2012, the average unemployment rate for the working-age Aboriginal population was more than twice the rate for other Canadians (i.e., 13% compared to 6%) and was significantly higher for status Indians (i.e., 17%), especially those living on-reserve (i.e., 22%) (Canada: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013). There also is a persistent employment-income gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across every region of Canada. According to a 2010 report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the median income for Aboriginal peoples in 2006 was approximately 30% lower than for the rest of the Canadian population (Wilson and MacDonald 2010). In fact, in 2006, median incomes for Aboriginal peoples still fell short of the level non-Aboriginal Canadians reached a decade earlier in 1996. Even more troubling, these findings persist regardless of residence on-reserve or in urban areas (ibid., 3–8).[4]

Table 3 presents another view of the earnings gaps, calculated in this case with the previous methodology used for racial-minority immigrant groups. Controlling for age and education levels, the earnings gap for Aboriginals compared to British-ancestry workers is enormous, reaching almost 60% for men in 1995 and "improved" to slightly more than 40% in 2005. Again, there is considerable variation across cities. The 2005 gap for men declined to 20% when job characteristics are taken into account as well, suggesting that Aboriginal men are categorized into less favorable jobs (Pendakur and Pendakur 2011, table 2). These economic deficits translate into complex social problems. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, approximately one third of Aboriginal children lived in a single-parent family, and almost half of all children younger than 14 in foster care were Aboriginal (Statistics Canada 2011b). Approximately four in 10 Aboriginal children live in poverty and, in status First Nations communities—where the federal government has primary responsibility for providing income support and community services—a full 50% of children live in poverty (Campaign 2000, 2014). Suicide rates and substance abuse also are much higher than national averages (Noël and Larocque 2009; White, Maxim, and Beavon 2003), and the incarceration rate for Aboriginal adults is estimated to be 10 times higher than for non-Aboriginal adults. The overrepresentation of Aboriginal women is particularly disconcerting: in 2010–2011, approximately 41% of women in sentenced custody (i.e., provincially, territorially, and federally) were Aboriginal (Canada: Office of the Correctional Investigator 2013).

Table 3: Earnings Gap: Second-Plus Generations Racial Minorities and Aboriginals, Compared to British-Origin Workers, 2005

GROUP	SEX	1995	2000	2005
Racial Minority	Female	-0.04	-0.07	-0.03
	Male	-0.14	-0.17	-0.18
Aboriginal People	Female	-0.13	-0.22	-0.07
	Male	-0.59	-0.52	-0.42

Note: Data depict the earnings gap, controlling for personal characteristics of workers (e.g., age and education) but not characteristics of their jobs.
Source: Pendakur and Pendakur (2011, Table 2).

Clearly, Canada is a long way from being an egalitarian society. The next section discusses the impact of the primary policy instruments that normally are seen as enhancing equality.

THE POLICY TOOLS

During the middle decades of the twentieth century, the Canadian state developed a complex set of tools designed to respond to different forms of inequality: a liberal welfare state; a new approach to immigration policy; multiculturalism policies; and a new approach to Aboriginal issues. But none of these policies were designed explicitly to tackle to issue of racial economic inequality.

The Welfare State and Racial Inequality

What is the relationship between the welfare state and racial inequality? As discussed previously, Canada built its version of the welfare state during the postwar decades when it was still predominantly a white society and racial inequality was not a significant dimension in social politics. Important components of the welfare state were restructured in the 1990s and early 2000s, by which time Canada had become racially complex. The politics of race was not a major factor driving those changes, but racial minorities were undoubtedly disproportionately affected.

BUILDING THE WELFARE STATE

The postwar social programs clearly made Canada a fairer, less unequal place, and some Canadians likened their system to the social-democratic model found in Europe. In reality, however, the Canadian welfare state was always comparatively modest. In his typology of welfare states, Esping-Andersen (1990) classified Canada—along with the United States and other English-speaking democracies—as a "liberal" welfare state, in contrast to the more expansive corporatist or Christian-democratic welfare states of Continental Europe and the social-democratic welfare states of Scandinavia.

This Canadian outcome was driven by a distinctive combination of class and territorial politics (Banting and Myles 2013). Power-resource theory suggests that countries with strong Left parties and powerful trade unions were more likely to develop expansive welfare states; countries where parties of the Right and the Center dominated and trade unions were weak developed more modest systems (Esping-Andersen 1990; Korpi 1983; Stephens 1979). Canadian experience fits the latter pattern. Class-based voting is limited and labor unions have been weaker than in Europe. The Left party—the New Democratic Party—has always been a minor party. More than in most countries, class divisions in Canada are crosscut by linguistic and regional divisions at the national level, and the politics of equality have centered as much on regional as on class inequalities. The territorial politics that flow from this political geography generated a distinctively Canadian dynamic of expansion in social policy in the postwar period. National social programs were perceived as an instrument of territorial integration (Banting 1995; Jenson 2013). Over time, many Canadians—particularly in English-speaking Canada—came to see national social programs, especially universal health care, as part of the Canadian identity, distinguishing them from their powerful neighbor to the south and part of the social glue holding their vast country together (Boychuk 2008; Johnston et al. 2010).The social model that emerged from this distinctive combination of class and territorial politics is best characterized as a hybrid version of the liberal welfare state (Tuohy 1993). Income-security programs were a thoroughly liberal component of the social architecture. Social insurance and universal programs (e.g., family allowances, unemployment insurance, and pensions) provided modest benefits, and those in need continued to rely heavily on means-tested programs (e.g., social assistance). The major exception is health care, which assumed a more social-democratic configuration, with universal coverage for core services and funded from general tax revenues with no co-payments or user fees. However, the limits of the Canadian model become clearer when attention shifts to questions of income inequality and poverty. As described previously, the tax-transfer system reduces inequality and poverty more than in the United States. However, compared to European countries, the Canadian welfare state was not powerfully redistributive in design or effect.

RESTRUCTURING THE WELFARE STATE

Canadian social policy was restructured in the final years of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century. As elsewhere, the primary forces at work were rooted in globalization and neoliberalism (Mahon and McBride 2008; McBride 1992). In addition, however, many of the domestic political champions of the postwar welfare state have weakened: organized labor has been sidelined, equality-seeking social movements have declined, and progressive advisory bodies and think tanks have been crippled by the withdrawal of public funding (Phillips 2013). The role of territorial politics also matters less because decentralization in the federal system has reduced the role of the federal government. In the field of social policy, Canada is now one of the most decentralized federations in the OECD (Obinger, Leibfried, and Castles

2005, table 1.6) and national social programs are perceived much less as instruments for strengthening territorial integration.

Restructuring reduced the equalizing impact of the welfare state (Banting and Myles 2013). Universal programs relied on by the middle class (e.g., pensions and health care) are sustained by major injections of new resources. However, programs for unemployed working-age people, including unemployment benefits and social assistance, were cut significantly (Battle 2001; Kneebone and White 2008). As table 4 indicates, by 2012, public social expenditures as a proportion of GDP were lower in Canada than in the United States. Tax levels also have been reduced, as well as the progressivity of the tax system (Boadway and Cuff 2013). An OECD study concluded that from 1995 to 2005, redistribution had weakened more in Canada than in other member countries (OECD 2011).

Was the growing racial diversity of Canada also a factor eroding redistributive politics? In the United States and Europe, many commentators argue that ethnic and racial diversity erodes a sense of community, weakens feelings of trust in fellow citizens, and fragments the historic coalitions that built the welfare state. They fear that members of the majority public might withdraw support from social programs that give money to "outsiders" who are not part of "us" (Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Gilens 1999). So far, such corrosive politics have been limited in Canada in the case of immigrant racial minorities. Analyses of the relationship between racial diversity and support for redistribution found little evidence of majorities turning away because some of the beneficiaries are racial-minority immigrants or "strangers" (Soroka, Johnston, and Banting 2006). Moreover, in contrast to findings elsewhere, nationalism is a positive force in this context. Strong identification with Canada increases tolerance for immigrants and support for the welfare state, especially among the affluent (Johnston et al. 2010).

However, there is a darker side to Canadian attitudes. Respondents who believe Aboriginal peoples are heavily dependent on welfare tend to reduce their support not only for social assistance but also for the redistributive state as a whole, an effect that is strongest in the western part of the country, where the Aboriginal population is larger (Banting, Soroka, and Koning 2013). Even there, however, the power of the politics of race should not be overstated. The impact is relatively modest, and less than the impact of stereotypes about blacks in American welfare politics.

Although the politics of race may not have been a major component in the politics of retrenchment, restructuring has had a significant impact on all marginal groups in Canada, including racial minorities. In addition to the impact of retrenchment in general programs such as social assistance, racial minorities have faced more targeted forms of retrenchment. Because the federal government does not control social-assistance programs, the Conservative government in Ottawa could only urge provinces to restrict benefits for immigrants (Smith-Carrier and Mitchell 2015). Its 2014 budget eliminated a condition attached to federal fiscal transfer to provinces that proscribed provincial residency tests for social assistance, in the hope that provinces would use this greater freedom to delay benefits for newcomers (Canada: Department of Finance 2014). So far, none of the provinces has done so. In addition, the federal government made cuts to the one social program that it does control—the Federal Interim Health Program—reducing the range of health benefits provided to refugee claimants and others not yet eligible for the regular provincial health insurance. The complaint was that the program provided more comprehensive services than what are available to the population as a whole (Canada: Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012). In addition, as discussed in the next section, the federal government tightened immigration regulations to limit further the admission of sponsored immigrants who are more likely to need social benefits.

Retrenchment of income support for Aboriginal peoples tracked the wider pattern. Aboriginal peoples living in urban areas rely on provincial health and social programs and suffered from cuts to those programs, especially in the case of social assistance. Aboriginal peoples living on reserves rely on the federal Income Assistance Program for First Nations and are six times more likely to receive income assistance than the Canadian average (Papillon 2015). However, the federal program is designed to mirror the social-assistance program in each province; the federal government essentially imported the significant benefit reductions and eligibility restrictions imposed by provinces on their programs in the 1990s. Until recently, however, it failed to introduce many of the activation and training programs designed to enhance

Table 4: Total Public Social Expenditures as Percentage of GDP

	1990	2000	2010	2014
Sweden	28.5	28.2	27.9	28.1
France	24.9	28.4	31.7	31.9
Germany	21.4	26.2	26.8	25.8
Canada	17.6	15.8	17.9	17.0
United States	13.1	14.2	19.3	19.2

Note: Includes public expenditures on health care and income transfers.
Source: OECD 2016.

self-sufficiency, which provinces mounted as part of retrenchment (Papillon 2015).

In summary, the politics of race may not have been a major driver of retrenchment, but racial minorities—who are more likely to be poor—were negatively affected disproportionately. Of course, racial minorities are also likely to be among the primary beneficiaries of a subsequent strengthening of redistribution. One of the first acts of the Liberal government that came to power in late 2015 was to significantly expand child benefits, which help low-income families most. It is worth noting that however, during the election campaign, the Liberals presented the child benefits proposal as part of a larger policy package designed to help "middle-class families" (Banting and Myles 2016). Strikingly for our purposes, there was no mention of race and racial minorities during the election debates over the proposal.

Immigration Policy and Racial Inequality

What is the relationship between immigration policy and racial inequality? Canada is a classic "settler society" and maintains one of the largest immigration flows, relative to its population, of any OECD country. First-generation immigrants represent 20% of the population—a level almost twice that of the United States. Moreover, changes in immigration policy in the late 1960s clearly altered the traditional flows, opening the door to non-European source countries and contributing to the emergence of a more racially diverse Canada.

The architecture of Canadian immigration policy is designed to attract immigrants who are likely to become economically successful, thereby limiting their potential reliance on social benefits (Banting 2010). The 1967 points system gave priority to newcomers with the education and training required to move reasonably quickly into employment and self-sufficiency. In addition, immigrants who want to sponsor family members to come to Canada must sign a formal undertaking to support them for a period ranging from three to 10 years, during which family members are ineligible for social assistance (Côté, Kérist, and Côté 2001). Because policies target economic immigrants and limit the ways that other migrants (e.g., refugee claimants or temporary foreign workers) may access public support, immigrants in Canada traditionally use social assistance and unemployment benefits less than native-born Canadians (Akbari 1989; Baker and Benjamin 1995a, 1995b; Baker, Benjamin, and Fan 2009; De Silva 1996; DeVoretz and Pivnenko 2004; Picot, Lu, and Hou 2009; Sweetman 2001).

The economic integration of immigrants is a constant preoccupation of the country. Traditionally, immigrants to Canada moved relatively quickly into the economic mainstream, with poverty rates among newcomers typically falling below the rate for the population as a whole within about a decade. However, this economic-integration machine began to falter when Canada was becoming more racially diverse. The incomes of recent cohorts of immigrants have declined relative to earlier cohorts—a decline experienced most strongly by men from nontraditional source countries. The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants found that only 40% of skilled principal applicants who arrived in 2000–2001 were working in the occupation or profession for which they were trained; many immigrants with university degrees were working in jobs that typically require only a high school diploma or less (Banting, Courchene, and Seidle 2007, 658). As indicated in table 5, the poverty rate among immigrants has been increasing at the same time that it has been decreasing among the Canadian-born population.

Canadian governments focused intensely on these problems. However, they overwhelmingly framed the problem as immigrant integration rather than racial inequality. To be sure, part of the explanation is in global economic trends. Larger numbers of racial minorities began to enter the labor market in the 1980s and 1990s, just as economic growth in Canada and other OECD countries began to slow, increasing unemployment rates. All new entrants to the labor market—including not only immigrants but also young white Canadians—bore the brunt of these pressures. This situation was further compounded by issues regarding the language competence of newcomers and the difficulties that employers had in evaluating foreign credentials and experience (Alboim and Cohl 2012). However, a part of the problem also undoubtedly reflected racial discrimination in the labor market. Studies using résumé experiments revealed patterns similar to those found in other countries. For example, one study found that English-speaking employers in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver—the major magnets for immigrants—were about 40% more likely to choose to

Table 5: Poverty Rates: Immigrants and Canadian-Born (%)

	CANADIAN-BORN	IMMIGRANTS
1980	17.2	17.1
1985	18.6	19.3
1990	15.1	17.1
1995	17.6	24.8
2000	14.2	20.2
2005	13.3	21.6

Note: Poverty rates are after taxes and transfers.
Source: Picot, Lu, and Hou (2009).

interview a job applicant with an English-sounding name than someone with a minority-sounding name, even if both candidates had identical education, skills, and work histories (Oreopoulos 2011). This dimension of the problem seldom framed the policy debates.

As a result, policy responses initially focused on integration programming. Both federal and provincial levels of government launched programs to assist employers to assess foreign credentials; they expanded basic language training and introduced professional-level language programs; and they tried bridge-training projects involving work placements to acquire Canadian work experience (Alboim and Cohl 2012). To the surprise of many observers, the Conservative government—otherwise fixated on reducing public expenditures—dramatically increased federal spending on immigrant-integration programs (Seidle 2010).

In time, however, it became clear that fixing problems inside the country would require major state intervention in labor markets and even larger public spending on integration. Rather than taking that approach, the federal government increasingly shifted from integration to immigration policy, transforming the admissions process through a long, tortuous series of incremental steps. Language-testing became more stringent; the family reunification stream was narrowed further; and the minimum income that immigrants need to be eligible as a sponsor was raised. As one commentator observed, "These changes are intended to reduce immigrant welfare access and, ultimately, will allow only wealthier immigrants to benefit from the family reunification program" (Smith-Carrier and Mitchell 2015).[5] Most important, however, a preexisting offer of employment has become increasingly important for admission. The Temporary Workers Program, which depends on a preexisting job offer, expanded dramatically. Furthermore, changes to the points system for permanent entry significantly increased the value of a preexisting offer of employment. It is premature to assess the impact of the most important of these changes, Express Entry, which commenced on January 1, 2015. However, two points are clear. First, changes in immigration policy have already altered the balance of source countries; for example, more stringent language standards seem to be contributing to a decline in Chinese immigrants (Canada: Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015). Second, given the evidence of discrimination in studies of employers' selection of people to interview from among those inside the country, commentators fear that a similar preference for people with English- and French-sounding names will determine who enters the country.

Immigration policy represents a case in which the state took serious action in response to growing inequality experienced by racial minorities. However, governments never framed the problem as one of racial inequality.

Multiculturalism Policy and Racial Inequality

What is the relationship between Canadian multiculturalism and racial inequality? Canada is widely recognized as the first state to implement an official multiculturalism policy, and Canadians—especially in the Anglophone parts of the country—have embraced multiculturalism as a revered national value integral to Canadian identity. As a policy area, multiculturalism has evolved from its initial formulation of providing government assistance for cultural groups to retain their ethnic identities to its contemporary focus as an instrument of immigrant integration and social cohesion. Moreover, multiculturalism policy has consistently focused far more on issues of identity and the equality of cultures—as Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (1994) suggested, a "politics of recognition"—rather than racial or economic equality.

ORIGINS

In 1963, in response to rising Francophone discontent in Quebec, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson established a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism with a mandate "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..." (Canada 1969). Commissioners also were instructed to consider the cultural contributions of other ethnic groups outside the English–French cultural and linguistic binary. The fourth volume of the 1969 final report did precisely this, recommending that ethnic minorities (largely defined by language) be given greater recognition and support in preserving their cultural traditions. In response, Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced the implementation of a federal policy of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework." In his speech before the House of Commons on October 8, 1971, Trudeau outlined his vision for achieving national unity through multiculturalism, stating that "A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the government as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians....National unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on the confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes, and assumptions."[6]

Trudeau's conceptualization of multiculturalism was premised on a liberal primacy of individual rights and freedoms as well as a multiculturalism policy designed to help individuals celebrate their cultural affiliations—what Kunz and Sykes (2007) termed "ethnicity multiculturalism." In part, the adoption of multiculturalism was a response to political lobbying by other ethnic groups, especially Ukrainian Canadians, and a means of reducing the formidable opposition to bilingualism in English-speaking Canada, especially in the western provinces. However, according to some scholars, multiculturalism also was an effort to enhance national unity through the negation of biculturalism. They argued that in context of rising separatist sentiment in Quebec, Trudeau strategically introduced multiculturalism to counter the "compact thesis" of Quebec nationalists, which states that Canada is a compact between two founding peoples. Whatever the mix of motives behind Trudeau's initial policy, Quebec nationalists rejected the new multicultural vision from the outset. They argued that in advancing a conception of the country that Anglophone Canada found highly appealing, the policy encouraged the rest of Canada to think of Quebec as simply one more minority group and to become increasingly unsympathetic toward Quebec's claims to be a distinct society (Isajiw 1983; McRoberts 1997).

Yet, in practice, these laws and policies did little to alleviate the growing economic inequality between racial minorities and white Canadians.

MULTICULTURALISM AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS PROTECTIONS

Although antidiscrimination provisions often are considered an integral element of the multiculturalism-policy regime, they offer little protection for social or economic rights and no guarantees of racial and class equality in economic terms. The increase in the arrival of more racial-minority immigrants in the late 1970s and 1980s shifted the focus of multiculturalism policy from social adaptation in largely linguistic or cultural terms to providing clearer laws and policies that could address racial discrimination in employment, housing, and education. In 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was entrenched in the constitution of the country. Section 15(1) of the Charter provides constitutional protection to equality rights before and under the law and the right to "equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, and in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability." Steps also were taken to ensure that the Charter did not become a barrier to affirmative action. Section 15(2) states that the protections in Section 15(1) do not preclude the establishment of laws, programs, or activities that use positive action to ameliorate conditions of racial and other forms of disadvantage. In addition, Section 27 states that "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." There is no question that, armed with the Charter, the courts have provided redress against a number of discriminatory policies, especially against religious minorities (Eliadis 2014). However, the courts have dismissed efforts to find support for social rights in the Charter.

In 1984, the Special Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Visible Minorities in Canadian Society published its report, "Equality Now," which acknowledged that racial minorities faced obstacles limiting their full participation in Canadian economic, social, and cultural life. It presented 80 recommendations to address persistent inequalities in the areas of social integration, employment, public policy, legal and justice issues, media, and education (Canada: Parliament 1984). Shortly thereafter, the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment was tasked with ascertaining the "most efficient, effective, and equitable means of promoting employment opportunities for and eliminating systemic discrimination against four designated groups: women, native people, disabled persons, and visible minorities" (Canada 1984). The Commission's report became the foundation of the Employment Equity Act of 1986, which confirmed that "employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences." The Conservative government under Brian Mulroney also introduced a Multiculturalism Act in 1988, which combined the initial approach to multiculturalism as the preservation of culture and languages with the newer mandate of reducing racial discrimination.

Together, these federal initiatives were important symbols, especially in promoting multiculturalism as a social ideal and a national value. Yet, in practice, these laws and policies did little to alleviate the growing economic inequality between racial minorities and white Canadians. For example, as federal legislation, the Employment Equity Act applies only to federally regulated industries (e.g.,

banks, Crown corporations, and the public service), which combined employ a relatively small percentage of the Canadian workforce. In an effort to avoid the controversy associated with American affirmative-action programs, the legislation did not establish quotas or mandate the hiring or promotion of people from the four designated groups. The only enforcement mechanism in the 1986 Act was a $50,000 fine that could be levied against employers who failed to submit annual reports to the federal government detailing the representation of women, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, and Aboriginal peoples in their workforce (Grundy and Smith 2011). The revised 1995 Act improved compliance provisions by giving the Canadian Human Rights Commission the authority to conduct audits and by creating a tribunal to enforce compliance. With this new power to review employers' employment-equity goals, the Canadian Human Rights Commission found in 1999 that many employers set goals that were lower than the labor-force availability of the designated groups (Agocs 2002, 264). Whereas the employment gap between men and women has greatly dissipated in the past three decades, employment equity has largely failed to rectify the underrepresentation of visible minorities, Aboriginal peoples, and persons with disabilities—even within the federal public service (Weiner 2014).

MULTICULTURALISM AS INTEGRATION

Beyond the promotion of multiculturalism as a laudable but largely symbolic social ideal, there has been a shift away from this antiracist orientation of Canadian multiculturalism policy toward a more explicit focus on integration (Abu-Laban 1998; Kymlicka 1998). This goal became clearer in the early 1990s as Canada faced yet another national-identity crisis and the danger of Quebec separation following the failure of the Meech Lake Accord in 1988. The 1991 Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future (i.e., Spicer Commission) called for a more civically oriented refocusing of official multiculturalism that favored immigrant integration, the reduction of racial discrimination, and the promotion of equality, with the key goal of multiculturalism being "to welcome all Canadians to an evolving mainstream—and thus encourage real respect for diversity." Critics suggested that this "Canadian mainstream" was envisioned as far more of a homogenizing than a pluralizing force that ultimately gives primacy to retaining national symbols and culture rooted in British heritage (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992, 370–1). In Quebec, the multicultural regime is explicitly intercultural, meaning that newcomers are encouraged to develop a sense of belonging to Quebec's specific political and cultural community through policies that define French as the language of public life in the province (Salée 2007).

In cultural terms, immigrant integration has been a successful endeavor in the Canadian context (Banting 2010): ethnic enclaves exist but are limited (Myles and Hou 2004); children of immigrants "do better" than their parents even when there are controls for skills, education, and income (OECD 2006); and multiculturalism has nurtured a more inclusive sense of Canadian identity, helping to "normalize" diversity, particularly for younger generations (Harell 2009). In addition, as Bloemraad's (2006) comparative study of immigrant political integration in the United States and Canada demonstrated, multiculturalism programs encourage the active participation of immigrants in Canadian political institutions. Broadly speaking, social integration or social cohesion, defined as an immigrant's sense of belonging in the country, is relatively strong and tends to increase over time (Soroka, Johnston, and Banting 2007). In an era when many Western governments have declared multiculturalism to be a "failed experiment" and scholars argue that there is a global "retreat from multiculturalism" (Brubaker 2001; Joppke 2004), Canadian multiculturalism policy remains intact and is heralded as a (somewhat *sui generis*) success story (Banting and Kymlicka 2010; Kymlicka 2012).

However, there also is substantial evidence that despite multiculturalism policy, the experiences of the white and racial-minority populations of Canada are very different. Reitz and Banerjee (2007) demonstrated that second-generation racial minorities are less integrated than their first-generation parents, particularly in terms of key determinants of belonging (e.g., perceived discrimination, sense of vulnerability, and propensity to vote). There is an even sharper decline in the sense of belonging to Canada among second-generation racial minorities in Quebec (Banting and Soroka 2012). In a recent devastating article in *Toronto Life* magazine, journalist Desmond Cole described the consistent police harassment and scrutiny he faced as a young black man living in Kingston and Toronto (Cole 2015). Racial minorities also remain underrepresented in most formal institutions of government. For example, in April 2012, the *Globe and Mail* reported that of the 100 federal judges appointed between 2009 and 2012, an astonishing 98 were white. In Quebec, where multiculturalism has always had less traction, the 2008 public debate surrounding the boundaries of "reasonable accommodation" for racial, cultural, and religious minorities—the final report of the provincial commission confirmed—was partially based on distorted perceptions about the threats posed by those who are culturally different in French Canada—especially Muslims (Bouchard and Taylor 2008). Identity politics continue to swirl in the province and, in 2014, resulted in the introduction of a legislative proposal for a Quebec Charter

of Values, which would have forbidden public servants—including employees of schools, universities, and hospitals—from wearing religious symbols such as the hijab. The government was defeated before the Charter was adopted, but the issue continues to foment.

Given these mixed results, it is not surprising that multiculturalism has its critics, who argue that the policy is akin to a neoliberal diversion tactic that has worked to stabilize the hegemony of white-settler power relations, ultimately foreclosing a more serious and sustained discourse about the reality of racial domination and inequality in Canada (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002; Bannerji 2000; Haque 2012; Mackey 2002; Thobani 2007; Thompson 2008; Vickers and Isaac 2012). Defenders of the multicultural approach counter that there is no reason to assume that the scope of the political agenda is inelastic and that a focus on cultural equality inevitably squeezes out attention to racial equality. Indeed, a focus on one dimension of inequality might well prepare the ground for a broader egalitarian agenda, which apparently happened in the 1980s when the multiculturalism program concentrated on race relations and the breaking down of racial barriers to integration (Kymlicka 2015). This debate continues.

Multiculturalism is a revered social ideal that lies at the foundation of Canadian national identity in the twenty-first century. As noted previously, it reflects the centrality of the politics of ethnicity, culture, and identity in Canadian life. As a result, the policy was clearly aimed at greater cultural equality and was not designed to address—at least directly—economic or racial inequality.

Aboriginal Policy and Racial Inequality

What is the relationship between policy related to Aboriginal affairs and racial inequality? As discussed previously, Aboriginal peoples measure among the poorest in Canada. This racial stratification is morally troubling and economically inefficient on its own terms, but it also stands in stark contrast to Canadian values. Yet, so far, Canadian policies have had limited success in remedying the entrenched socioeconomic inequalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. As Salée argued, it is important to recognize the political nature of Aboriginal poverty—that is, the ways that broader political and institutional arrangements have shaped and reproduced positions of privilege and disadvantage over time (Salée 2006; Smith 2009).

> However, there also is substantial evidence that despite multiculturalism policy, the experiences of the white and racial-minority populations of Canada are very different.

From its inception, Aboriginal policy has never been primarily about alleviating the socioeconomic disadvantage affecting Aboriginal communities. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these policies were overtly and explicitly racist, designed to segregate, dominate, and assimilate Aboriginal peoples by eradicating indigenous cultures, traditions, and languages; appropriating Aboriginal lands; and removing Indian status (Lawrence 2005). The Indian Act, originally passed by Parliament in 1876, was central to these endeavors. The legislation and its many amendments over the decades defined Aboriginal peoples as wards of the state, incapable of managing their own affairs. The ultimate goal of the Indian Act was the assimilation of First Peoples into Canadian society—thereby eliminating any claim to underlying Aboriginal title and minimizing the fiduciary obligations of the Crown. However, the act also provided wide-ranging powers to the federal government to manage the lives of Aboriginal peoples and communities. Under the provisions of the Indian Act, status Indians could not access the same civil and political rights as most other Canadians, including the right to vote, the ability to retain legal counsel, and mobility rights, as well as prohibitions against public meetings to discuss indigenous affairs, cultural ceremonies (e.g., the Potlatch and Sun Dance), and alcohol consumption on-reserve (Coates 2008). Also, approximately 150,000 Aboriginal children were removed from their communities—at times forcibly—and placed in government-funded, church-run residential schools in which students often were subjected to mental, physical, and sexual abuse and forbidden from speaking their traditional language or practicing their culture. Driven by a changed normative environment in which explicit racial discrimination was no longer politically palatable, Trudeau's Liberal government introduced the 1969 White Paper, which proposed to eliminate Indian status and the Indian Act, dissolve the Department of Indian Affairs within five years, convert reserve land to private property, and transfer responsibility for Indian affairs to the provinces, gradually integrating these provisions with other provincial social services (Canada: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1969). This proposal inadvertently catalyzed the Red Power activism of the late

1960s and 1970s that forced the government to abandon the White Paper in 1971.

In the decades that followed, a powerful assumption underpinning much policy discourse is that the economic inequality and social dislocation experienced by Aboriginal peoples are consequences of political domination. Many indigenous and critical race scholars in Canada use the framework of "internal colonialism" instead of race/racism/racialization to emphasize the compounding effects of racial discrimination, territorial dispossession, and ongoing displacement of traditional Aboriginal cultures and governance structures. From this perspective, the real solution to the poverty and social pathologies experienced by Aboriginal peoples is decolonization—that is, the reestablishment of Aboriginal peoples as self-governing communities firmly based in historic territorial domains. Some scholars also question the viability and desirability of including Aboriginal peoples within the framework of Canadian citizenship, given the assumption of Canadian sovereignty on which it rests (Alfred 2005; Coulthard 2014; Green 2007; Simpson 2014; Simpson 2011; Turner 2007).

Aboriginal peoples measure among the poorest in Canada. This racial stratification is morally troubling and economically inefficient on its own terms, but it also stands in stark contrast to Canadian values.

Whereas governments have seldom adopted the language of decolonization, the dominant track in Aboriginal policy in recent decades has focused on land and governance. This approach was given legal traction in 1973, when the Supreme Court's decision in *Calder v. British Columbia* recognized for the first time the possibility that Aboriginal title to land existed before colonization. Since then, Aboriginal policy has largely concerned territorial rights, addressing the Crown's fiduciary obligations in terms of unresolved territorial disputes and land claims. In response to the *Calder* decision, the federal government established two separate negotiation processes to address land claims. The specific claims process was created to address claims made by a First Nation that the Crown failed to properly implement or interpret the terms of a historic treaty or improperly administered lands and resources under the terms of the Indian Act. Comprehensive land claims (also known as "modern treaties") are based on assertions by Aboriginal communities of unextinguished and continuing Aboriginal rights. Both processes rely on similar principles that acknowledge the constitutional protection of Aboriginal rights; the need for the Crown and Aboriginal groups to work cooperatively through good-faith negotiations to move toward reconciliation of Canadian sovereignty with the preexistence of Aboriginal societies; and the exchange of undefined Aboriginal rights for a clearly defined package of rights and benefits in settlement agreements (Canada: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2014; Canada: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1986, 1993; Canada: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 2007).

Aboriginal rights found more gravitas after the reform of the Canadian constitution in 1982. A new Section 35 recognizes and affirms the "existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada," including Aboriginal title (Canada 1982). This embedding of Aboriginal rights in the constitution led to substantial legal action against the Crown: a large body of jurisprudence now exists on issues ranging from hunting and fishing rights to commercial fishing rights, Aboriginal title, and the Crown's duty to consult with Aboriginal peoples before making important decisions that affect them (Asch 1997, 2014; Borrows 2002, 2016; Macklem 2001; Macklem and Sanderson 2015). In 1995, the Canadian government adopted the position that Section 35 includes an "inherent right to self-government" that "may be enforceable through the courts" and attempted to dissuade Aboriginal peoples from that course of action because "litigation over the inherent right would be lengthy, costly, and would tend to foster conflict" (Canada: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1995). However, a long-standing issue among Aboriginal communities that choose to enter into self-government and/or comprehensive claims negotiations concerns the federal government's requirement that Aboriginal groups surrender any claims to Aboriginal rights and title to lands and resources. Although several committees of the United Nations have called on Canada to abandon or amend this practice, the government's consistent position considers the extinguishment of Aboriginal rights as necessary to achieve "legal certainty" (Alcantara and Whitfield 2010; Belanger 2008; McNeil 2004). Moreover, self-government agreements exist within the bounds of Canadian federalism and presuppose the sovereignty of the Canadian state. As Papillon (2011, 315) noted, "[s]elf-government agreements

and other form of governance arrangements are not the expression of Indigenous residual sovereignty, despite Indigenous claims to that affect." Progress has been painfully slow: to date, the Canadian government has signed only 22 self-government agreements, of which 18 are part of comprehensive land-claim agreements.

So far, these initiatives have done little to change the socioeconomic inequalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. First, although comprehensive claims have been heralded as a new type of "treaty federalism" (Hueglin 2013; White 2002), relatively few self-government agreements have been signed and the economic-development provisions of final agreements have yet to substantially improve the situation on reserves. For the majority of First Nations not covered under self-government agreements, the economic-development programs of the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development also have fallen short. Meanwhile, there have been few significant efforts to directly address Aboriginal poverty. The only major effort was the Kelowna Accord of 2005, proposed by Paul Martin's Liberal government, which promised to dedicate $5.1 billion over five years to improve access to education, health services, housing, and economic opportunities through an unprecedented collaborative of federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as all of the major Aboriginal organizations (Noël and Larocque 2009). However, after the Liberal government was defeated a few months later, the new Conservative government considered itself neither bound by the terms of the Accord nor committed to spending government money to address what it viewed as an area of social policy under provincial jurisdiction. The Conservatives refused to inject much-needed additional funding into Aboriginal education on reserves unless the Aboriginal leaders agree to accountability measures, which leads directly back to disputes over governance. The new Liberal government, however, has promised to flow the educational funding.

Second, the policy drift is exacerbated by an intergovernmental quagmire of service delivery, in which neither the federal nor provincial and territorial governments have taken comprehensive responsibility for concrete policy direction. The situation is the result of Canadian federalism (Vickers and Isaac 2012, chap. 4). The constitution grants the provinces control over most areas of social policy (e.g., health care and education), but it stipulates that "Indians and lands reserved for Indians" remain under federal authority. As such, most provinces largely consider Aboriginal affairs—including economic development and poverty reduction—to be a federal problem. Problematically, the federal government has long interpreted its constitutional obligations as pertaining only to Indians *on* lands reserved for Indians, leaving authority for the Inuit, Métis, and Indians that live off-reserve unspecified and resulting in these populations being largely underserved (Hanselmann and Gibbins 2003). As discussed previously, more than half of Aboriginal peoples now reside in several urban areas, with concentrations in Winnipeg, Regina, and Saskatoon.

This liminal intergovernmental position of Aboriginal peoples means that they access social-welfare programming through a "somewhat modified version" of the Canadian welfare state, as noted previously. Noël and Larocque (2009, 16) provided more detail: "[l]abor market and economic development programs are provided by the federal government to all Aboriginal peoples, as they are for all Canadians, since they are within the bounds of federal jurisdiction. Child welfare, education, health and housing programs, on the other hand, follow the bifurcated social assistance pattern [of provinces determining the scope of the program and the federal government providing the funds to Indians on-reserve] because they constitute primarily provincial jurisdiction. On these matters, Ottawa more or less takes the role of the provinces for Indians on-reserve, and provinces respond to the needs of other Aboriginal peoples." They stated further, however, that there are numerous administrative anomalies that make the division of federal and provincial roles "ridiculously" complex. For example, their analysis of recent poverty-reduction strategies demonstrates wide variation among provinces in terms of how they understand their obligation to reduce Aboriginal poverty, ranging from neglect and the expectation of federal leadership in the Atlantic provinces; to a politics of engagement through bilateral, sometimes "nation-to-nation" agreements in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia; and to a politics of avoidance throughout the prairie provinces and by the federal government. Although poverty, and specifically Aboriginal poverty, seems to garner more attention now than in previous decades, this patchwork of policies and overlapping jurisdiction simply enables a situation in which the most vulnerable segments of Canadian society continue to fall through the gaping holes of the social safety net.

PATH DEPENDENCY AND POLICY DRIVERS: INSTITUTIONS, PARTY POLITICS, AND IDEOLOGIES

The broad patterns described here largely reflect the type of gradual, incremental institutional change normally associated with the concept of policy drift, which refers to situations in which institutional rules remain the same, but their impact changes because of shifts in external

conditions (Hacker 2005). In circumstances of drift, actors either choose not to respond to environmental changes or are purposefully obstructed from doing so. As Canada became a more diverse society and racial minorities began to experience socioeconomic inequality, the policy architecture was either not substantively retooled to address new forms of diversity and inequality (the welfare state, multiculturalism) or particular framings of policy problems prevented the policy tools from addressing racial economic inequality directly (immigration policy, Aboriginal policy). In essence, this policy drift demonstrates the extent to which inaction is a powerful form of political action.

. . . the continued decentralization and the increasingly asymmetrical position of Quebec seem to make concerted egalitarian projects less likely in the future.

Each of these policy sectors has distinctive features, inherent in the political interests at stake and the nature of the policy instruments being deployed. Nevertheless, several common political factors have shaped all of these domains and would shape any concerted effort to address racial inequality in the future. The consistency in Canadian formations of political institutions, political parties, and political ideologies suggests that the dominant story of the foreseeable future is one of path dependency, whereby the opportunities for new directions in these policy areas are constrained by the developmental pathways that have long been institutionalized.

Political Institutions

Canadian political institutions combine a parliamentary system, which concentrates power *within* governments, and a federal system, which divides power *between* governments. The decentralized nature of the federation has had powerful implications for social justice in Canada, and authority in each of the four domains is divided among levels of government in complex ways. In the welfare state, federalism largely divides major tax-transfer programs, in which the federal government is still predominant, from social assistance and major services such as health and education, in which provinces rule. In the immigration sector, federalism carves out a separate zone for Quebec; in the remainder of the country, it separates authority over immigration policy from authority over many of the policy instruments that shape immigrant integration in the long term. In the case of rights of individuals, those relative to the state are highly centralized through a constitutionalized Charter; however, nondiscrimination in the private sector falls to provincial bodies. Similarly, multiculturalism initiatives are divided between the two levels, and Aboriginal policy is a jurisdictional quagmire.

Canadians actively debate whether federalism obstructs social justice. For some, the division of authority weakens the state and inhibits the pursuit of social justice. For others, the capacity for action at the regional level opens new pathways for innovation and reform. Undoubtedly, both are true. However, on balance, the continued decentralization and the increasingly asymmetrical position of Quebec seem to make concerted egalitarian projects less likely in the future. In the case of the welfare state, for example, Quebec has made use of the additional provincial policy space it has achieved to chart a more egalitarian policy trajectory, one that offsets growth in economic inequality (Noël 2013). Despite the greater effort in Quebec, however, redistribution across the country as a whole has weakened more at the provincial level than at the federal level in recent decades (Fortin et al. 2012). Federalism makes a concerted, countrywide assault on racial inequality highly unlikely.

Party Politics

Canada has never had a class-based party system. Indeed, in a study of the Anglo-American democracies published a half-century ago, Alford (1963, x–xi) described Canada as a case of "pure non-class voting." Although subsequent studies have marginally qualified the observation, the central conclusion remains accurate: the Canadian electorate is much less likely than electorates in many other democracies to vote along class lines, whether measured by income, education, or occupation. Instead, to a level unusual among Western democracies, Canadian electoral cleavages are rooted in language, ethnicity, religion, and region.[7] This party configuration explains why Canada never developed a powerfully redistributive welfare state on the European model. What are its implications for a future agenda of racial equality? Here, the prospects are more complex. The importance of ethnicity, language, and culture in electoral politics explains why the country is more comfortable with ethnic diversity, immigration, and multiculturalism policies. Since the beginning, the

presence of Quebec removed a monocultural definition of the country from the political table. Given the facts of cultural demography, a Canadian national identity must accommodate and celebrate diversity. In addition, the size of the Quebec and immigrant communities in the electorate ensures that no political party can hope to win power at the national level by running against minorities. During the twentieth century, national politics was dominated by a party of the center, the Liberal Party, which was successful in capturing minority voters in both French-speaking Quebec and immigrant communities.

Conservative political forces have now come to accept this basic reality. In 1993, the Reform Party, a populist radical-Right party, broke through in Western Canada, propelled in part by attacks on Quebec, immigration, and multiculturalism. Its breakthrough decimated the traditional center-Right Progressive Conservative Party and divided conservative forces, ensuring the dominance of the Liberals for the next decade. The Reform Party soon realized that it could not win nationally with an antidiversity strategy; in the next election, its platform advocated *increased* immigration levels and muted previous criticism of Quebec and multiculturalism programs. Through a tortuous series of steps in several elections, the political Right reconsolidated in the form of the current Conservative Party and has successfully courted racial-minority votes. Its success consolidated its hold on power in Ottawa after 2006. More recently, the party seems to have paid a price for reverting to cultural wedge politics. The Conservative leadership's insistence on banning the niqab during citizenship ceremonies and its proposal to create a RCMP hotline for citizens to report "barbaric cultural practices" during the 2015 federal election seem to have contributed to the defeat of the Conservative government.

Although these dynamics make the party system more responsive to immigration and diversity, proposals for a robust agenda of racial equality run against the current ideological orientation among the parties. The 2000s witnessed a greater ideological polarization of the federal party system, and during the 2015 federal election political parties responded to growing public anxiety about economic inequality. But none of the diverse policy proposals on offer was framed around an agenda of racial equality.

Political Ideologies

Canada is a liberal state and the limitations of many of its social-justice policies reflect the limits of liberalism. The country built a liberal welfare state, with a limited redistributive impact. Its immigration policies have always been dominated by economic objectives, with humanitarian impulses playing an important but secondary role. Canada's constitutional protections of the rights of individuals from state action are stronger than its machinery for limiting discrimination in the private sector, and its multiculturalism policies represent a liberal multiculturalism, compatible with liberal conceptions of social justice (Kymlicka 1995). Its approach to Aboriginal communities for much of the twentieth century reflected an individualist conception of their future, anticipating their assimilation into the cultural mainstream. Only the political mobilization of Aboriginal peoples in the 1960s diverted the path to a more collectivist conception of relations between indigenous peoples and the state.

There are, of course, multiple conceptions of liberalism. The Canadian variant has been traditionally a more social version of liberalism (Mahon 2008) and its dominance in policy debates has been challenged and qualified by social-democratic themes articulated by a minority party of the Left. Canadian liberalism shared the emphasis on the market economy and negative rights inherent in more classical forms of liberalism. However, it also accepted a legitimate role for government to advance equality of opportunity, including elements of social-citizenship rights such as health care. However, an attack on racial inequality would require deeper intervention in labor markets—among other actions—running against the commitment to the market economy. Moreover, the social dimension of traditional liberalism has been challenged by neoconservative voices. Neoconservativism has never had a "free ride" in the country, and social liberalism (now sometimes called "inclusive liberalism") remains part of the discourse. However, the ideological balance clearly shifted against state activism in the late 1990s and 2000s. Although there are tentative signs of growing support for redistribution, as noted previously, there are no serious signs of support for state activism premised on an agenda of racial equality.

CONCLUSIONS

We began with a puzzle. Why has the Canadian panoply of social policies not made more definitive progress in ending racial inequality? Undoubtedly, racial inequality would be even greater if these policies did not exist. Moreover, on several dimensions, the Canadian record on the integration of racial-minority immigrant communities is impressive in comparison with other countries. However, it cannot be denied that the Canadian record regarding Aboriginal peoples and several large racial-minority immigrant groups is embarrassingly weak.

Our answer to the puzzle is, at first glance, quite simple. The core social instruments of the Canadian state were never designed to directly address racial inequality. The major planks of the policy scaffolding were put in place when Canada was much less racially diverse and social divisions defined in linguistic and regional terms loomed larger. The large racial-minority immigration flow had yet to begin and the Aboriginal population was small and had not yet mobilized politically. More complicated is the question of why Canadian policy instruments have not been reengineered to respond better to the racial inequalities that have now emerged. Some new instruments were adopted, such as a constitutionalized Charter of Rights and Freedoms; multiculturalism policy went through a phase of addressing racial discrimination more explicitly; and Aboriginal policies moved onto a new track emphasizing territorial rights. However, these initiatives were not designed—at least in the first instance—to address the economic dimensions of racial inequality. A frontal assault on racial economic inequality as such was never debated, much less adopted.

In part, this is a story of path dependency and policy drift. In part, it is a story of long-term policy cycles. Canada became more racially diverse just as economic prosperity was fading, unemployment was rising, and social supports were eroding. The constraints on action were tightening just as the problems were becoming more apparent. Furthermore, as emphasized at the outset, this is in part a story rooted in constitutive elements of Canadian society, which nurture a politics of ethnicity, culture, identity, and peoplehood. Together, these factors have worked in some instances to obscure the realities of racial economic inequality. In other instances, it has deflected attention from a problem definition and concrete action using this framework toward more familiar approaches to diversity.

The evolution of key political drivers in recent decades does not inspire confidence in the prospects for a concerted campaign on racial economic inequality in the near future. What would be the best way to alleviate racial inequality in the Canadian context? Given the impressive set of policy tools already in place, what is missing? In part, the best strategy would be to reinvigorate policy tools designed to reduce economic inequality among Canadians in general. The jockeying among political parties during the run-up to the election in the fall of 2015 reflected pervasive public anxiety about the growth of inequality. The explicit political focus was overwhelmingly on the plight of the middle class, but some—although not all—of the policies proposed also would benefit low-income groups, including many racial minorities. As we have seen, the expansion of child benefits by the new Liberal government does have significant redistributive effect, suggesting that proposals framed in terms of helping Canadian families have a far greater chance than those framed explicitly in the language of race.

However, a general strategy of reducing inequality among all Canadians, on its own, may not be sufficient to address the dynamics sustaining racial economic inequality. Policy tools specifically designed to problematize, target, and alleviate racial economic inequality could also be an effective approach. For example, a more uniform model of human-rights laws could harmonize the 14 distinct human-rights systems (i.e., commission and tribunals), thereby ensuring that all Canadians are equal before the law (Eliadis 2014, 259–61). Similarly, given that the current model of employment equity is limited to public-sphere reporting mechanisms, a more aggressive and accountable approach toward "positive action" might be more effective. However, any explicitly race-based strategies in Canada must first traverse a political terrain full of pitfalls for reasons already alluded to: ethnicity, culture, language, and identity, not race, have been the dominant understandings of difference, and as a result, Canadians have been uncomfortable with the language of race.[8] This does not suggest that abandoning multiculturalism as an ideal necessarily would generate support for combating racism. Progress is likely to come not by subordinating ethnicity to race as an organizing principle but rather by finding political strategies that combine them in pursuit of stronger action.

Finally, neither a reinvigoration of redistributive social policies nor more effective race-based strategies will be sufficient to address the urgent circumstances of Aboriginal poverty. The mobilization of Aboriginal communities during the "Idle No More" movement in 2012 and 2013, repeated calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women, and the 2015 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada declaring that residential schools were an instrument of cultural genocide are all part of recent sustained public attention to Aboriginal conditions in Canada. These efforts have yet to elicit a response from the federal government. It is clear, however, that at a minimum, the federal government should be delivering programming on-reserve, especially in education, that is at least as robust as what is provided by the provinces.

Since the federal election of 2015, Canada has been experiencing something of a 'Yes we can' moment. It remains to be seen how much the altered political climate will change inherited ways of thinking about and responding to difference. But at some point, in the future if not now, political parties and governments will have to address issues of racial economic inequality openly and directly. The disconnect between our politics and our lived reality is growing too large to be ignored. ▪

NOTES

1. Many racial minority immigrants also define themselves in these terms. Consider the experience of one young man: "Growing up as a Somali–Canadian in Winnipeg and Toronto, the concept of 'black' was largely absent from my life. The first-generation Somalis around me rejected the concept entirely; they would say, 'I'm not black, I'm Somali.' There was no subtext to this declaration. They tended to think of themselves through the lens of culture and nationality" (Issa 2015).
2. Unfortunately, the decision of the federal government to make the detailed version of the census form voluntary in the 2011 census means that this source of consistent data over time ends in 2006. This is a serious gap because there are reasons to believe that the recession that began in 2008 had a significant impact on immigrant communities. In addition, evidence about the situation of First Nations populations on reserve is especially limited. These data limitations are one manifestation of the tendency in Canadian debates to think of "difference" in terms other than race. The standard definition of "vulnerable populations" employed by labour economists and income statisticians includes recent immigrants, Aboriginals, single parents, disabled persons, and unattached individuals aged 45–65. (For a recent example, see Fang and Gunderson 2016.) Racial minorities (or" visible minorities") are analyzed much less often.
3. The gaps are even larger for several small groups. For example, the gap for African black males in 2005 was 0.32.
4. There is one exception to this trend: Aboriginal peoples who have earned a bachelor's degree reduced their overall income gap from $3,382 in 1996 to only $648 by 2006. However, there still remains a significant gap in the number of Aboriginal people who have earned a bachelor's degree (8%) and other Canadians who have earned a bachelor's degree or higher (22%), as well as enduring disparities in educational attainment at the K–12 level (Wilson and MacDonald 2010, 15–19).
5. For an earlier case of restricting family reunification explicitly in the name of limiting welfare costs, see Banting (2010).
6. Canada, House of Commons Debates, 28th Parliament, 3rd Session, 1970–1972, vol. 8: 8545.
7. For a useful survey of studies exploring these issues, see the various contributions to Kanji, Bilodeau, and Scott (2012).
8. See Thompson (2016, especially chapter 5).

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