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# Ethnic Identity, Intergroup Relations and Welfare Policy in the Canadian Context: A Comparative Discourse Analysis

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*This paper illuminates the negotiation of group identities and intergroup relations in the Canadian context. It presents an empirical, comparative analysis of group claims around social assistance policy using discourse analysis. Lexical, semantic and narrative analyses of Aboriginal and multicultural documents show a complex organization of intergroup relations, with distinct and at times conflicting claims. In view of the tensions, responsive policy development requires that historical specificity, complexity, and even incompatibilities be taken into account.*

## Ethnic Identity, Intergroup Relations and Welfare Policy in the Canadian Context: A Comparative Discourse Analysis

This paper discusses ethnicity by examining the social organization of group identity, group claims and intergroup relations (Barth, 1969) in the Canadian context. This is of particular relevance to the increasing pluralism and complexity of contemporary societies.

As Oommen (1989) has shown in his comparison of India and the U.S., the nature of ethnic relations varies across societies. Ethnic concepts and explanations are context-specific (Bovenkerk, Miles & Verbunt, 1991; Phizacklea, 1984) encompassing dimensions of culture, nationality, race and religion. A given constellation is associated with a specific organization of social identities and group membership, and a particular group distribution of social statuses and resources.

Oommen suggests that ethnic identity be considered dynamically, as the outcome of intergroup tensions and community transformations. Similarly, for Horowitz (1985), intergroup competition and conflict are aimed at recognition and self-esteem, countering status-loss anxiety, and resulting in a changing social organization. As groups appeal for social reorganization, ethnic relations come to be defined and acted upon from the perspective of symbolic resource distribution (Breton, 1984; 1986), with the state acting as the legitimating avenue for change. The crisis of legitimacy characteristic of such transitions can only be resolved through a process of "restructuring of the symbolic order". In summary, for Horowitz and Breton, following Barth, ethnic identity is fundamental to the social contract and is negotiated through intergroup relations. Intergroup tensions indicate an unsatisfactory distribution of statuses and resources. A symbolic dimension is part of the groups' contests for legitimacy, claimed in rational and emotional terms.

In pluralistic societies, groups may compete using similar or dissimilar claims which are not necessarily compatible. Horowitz found two sets of claims and sources of legitimacy coexisting in the new independent states of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Indigenous groups tend to make claims of exclusion based on uniqueness and priority of land use, and to express status anxiety through their fear of genocide. Immigrant groups tend to make claims of inclusion based on a rhetoric of equality and participation (Horowitz, 1985). This multiplicity of logics and discourses will be examined in part in the case of Canada.

The Canadian "mosaic" (Porter, 1965) is a particular constellation of languages, cultures, visible minority groups, and native issues. Group participation in the social compact, as historically reflected in the constitutional accords (Cairns, 1992), can be differentiated into (a) an "initial ethnic agenda" addressing the relations between the "two founding nations", Quebec and English Canada, and the two language communities, and (b) a "second ethnic agenda" addressing the remaining groups of non-English/non-French origin including ethnic citizens, recently arrived immigrants, visible minorities, and Aboriginal peoples. A fundamental shift of group statuses and resources

is currently taking place, as reflected in recent constitutional debates, (Cairns, 1989 and 1992)

Although mostly the political arena has been examined (Kallen, 1990), group negotiations occur in multiple forums, among them the public policy arena. Specifically, social welfare or social assistance, as a fundamental mechanism of social integration, is a forum for resource and status reallocation. This paper limits itself to examining the second ethnic agenda at a single level of policy making, of social assistance policy. Social assistance benefits are delivered by the provincial legislation in Canada and vary widely. The province of Ontario was selected for this analysis as it is the most populated province which resettles the highest percentage of immigrants and visible minorities in Canada (Ontario, 1991).

As part of a major policy review conducted in 1987, The Social Assistance Review Committee of Ontario requested that constituencies submit background papers and recommendations for change. Two such working documents, prepared by "ethnic" constituencies, will be analyzed: (1) "First Nations Self-Government: A Background Report 1987" prepared by Heather Ross, vetted by the Chiefs of Ontario, and (2) the "Report on Multiculturalism and Social Assistance" prepared by the Multicultural Advisory Group comprised of immigrant service organizations (August 1987). These are comparable documents responding to the same policy. Moreover, as working documents, rather than final policy texts, they contain opinionated positions of the respective groups.<sup>1</sup>

In summary, this paper illuminates the nature of ethnic group relations through an analysis of group claims anchored in the debate for resource redistribution in welfare reform. A second question is whether multiple groups use similar claims to improve their access to resources and achieve status enhancement, or whether divergent sources of legitimation and claims are made, thus (a) indicating a complex organization of ethnic groups, and (b) requiring that social changes, particularly in the sector of social welfare, take this complexity, if not incompatibility, into account.

This work is guided by the conceptual orientation presented initially. Breton's emphasis on the symbolic aspect of social

organization has encouraged us to conduct an empirical examination of institutional discourse (Breton, 1984). The distinctions made by Horowitz between social identity, status claims and status anxiety are used as the core analytical categories. The following analysis examines (1) social identity and group membership through the group denomination, (2) normative group claims, legitimating arguments and objectives of group status enhancement and social reorganization, and (3) the emotional aspect of group recognition. The method used is a discourse analysis of policy documents.

### Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a method of inquiry based on an interpretive and constructivist approach to social science. Discourse is conceptualized not merely as form, or secondary process, but as behavior or constitutive process. Instead of assuming that major issues preexist to their formulation, a discursive approach implies that through discourse social identities are constituted along with specific claims, possible courses of action and particular strategies of social change (Potter & Whetherell, 1987). In this perspective, language use is the central social practice to be addressed.

The importance given to speech and text stems from the postulate that in given historical contexts, societies adopt restricted discourses which give meaning to categories of experience, shape institutional arrangements, and structure the analytical tools of science (Foucault, 1976). Further, the relative positions of social groups define the vantage point from which their definitions of self and other stem, the range of alternatives they consider (Bourdieu, 1990) and their vision of change. Proponents articulate their stakes (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) within the context of a dominant public discourse which defines the legitimate parameters of group claims (Edelman, 1988). Groups use a variety of means to formulate their claims, from the type of narratives they put forward (Kaplan, 1986), the nature of their arguments and rhetoric (Hirschman, 1991), to the use of specific vocabulary and "governing metaphors" (McGraw, 1991).

We adopt the position that the discourse of ethnicity, as any social issue, concerns the social organization and cognitive schemata of the community, or "habitus" as developed by Bourdieu (1990). Van Dijk's (1984) study of prejudice in speech has demonstrated the close link between public discourse and individual behavior. A discourse pattern used by Native Canadian groups in their appeals to redress was recently examined (Ponting, 1990), while a study of Alaskan Natives showed the importance of group identity claims for policy making (Korsmo, 1990). Comparative claims across ethnic groups have not been extensively studied.

Discourse analysis is consistent with the constructivist and interpretive approach currently advocated in social work practice and research (e.g. Scott, 1989; Sherman, 1991). Narrative and discourse analyses have been applied to the examination of life-histories (e.g., Cohler, 1988), coping mechanisms (Borden, 1991) and clinical process-change (e.g. Chambon, 1994; Sherman & Skinner, 1988). The tools have not been extensively used to assess policy developments. As differentiated from traditional content analysis which utilizes externally defined analytical grids for recording, relying on word frequency and objective indicators of themes (such as standard synonym list), discourse analysis proceeds by deconstructing the text into its structural components and reconstructing its internal logic. Discourse analysis encompasses a range of methods (Valverde, 1991); it can be used in various manners, depending upon the disciplinary and theoretical orientation of the authors (Potter & Whetherell, 1987), and needs to be specified for operational purposes.

This paper rests on a fine-grain textual analysis of the documents identifying central structuring terms, their semantic organization (Spradley, 1979), and dominant narrative features. A combination of linguistic and literary means is adapted from earlier work on dialogue (Chambon, 1994) in which the documents were treated as ethnographic data following a partial grounded theory approach (Altheide, 1991; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A preliminary analysis led to the refinement of the initial analytical tools, to which were added word frequency count and proximate textual context, commonly used in traditional

content analysis (Weber, 1990). The social identity of groups is analyzed through their lexical use of identity labels. Group claims are analyzed through the rhetorical and narrative strategies of claim-making and the network of pivotal terms around which arguments are elaborated. The narrative analysis examines the global organizing features of the texts: the dominant story genre, narrative themes, major events and protagonists, and the secondary processes of narrative subtext and external references used to legitimize the group's claims. Finally, the emotional character of the claims is analyzed through the affective and relational words.

### The Terminology of Group Identity and Group Claims

Key terms are defined in their notional-cognitive sense. Words which share the same root meaning but take different morphological shapes are grouped under a single term, such as colonialism/colonization or compassion/compassionate (cf. Culioli, 1978 for a linguistic argument).

#### *Emphasized Text in the Aboriginal Document*

Title and chapter headings are considered emphasized text as is the "Executive Summary". The emphasized text in the Aboriginal document uses, and gives prominence to: (1) Aboriginal Nations as group identity; (2) colonization, assimilation, isolation as negative claims, and equality, self-government, and local control as normative claims; (3) despair, respect and recognition as emotional claims. The distribution of these terms in the three analytical categories is summarized in Table 1.

#### *Frequent Terms in the Aboriginal Document*

A frequency count of key terms was used to identify the structuring notions of the text. In this document, the most frequently used terms in rounded numbers are: Aboriginal nations (130), self-government (80), colonialization (20), assimilation (20), isolation (10), surrender (10), and dependency (10). The two lists (frequency and emphasized text) show a great deal of overlap and consistency in the terms of: Aboriginal nations, self-government, colonization, assimilation, and isolation. The most

Table 1

*Emphasized Terminology in the Aboriginal Document*

Group Identity	Claims (cognitive/institutional)	Emotional-affect
Aboriginal Nations	Self-government, Equality Local control <hr/> vs. Colonization, Assimilation, Isolation Impoverished, Social disintegration	Respect Recognition <hr/> vs. Despair

noticeable difference concerns the emotional/relational terms. Although identified in the emphasized text, they are not among the more frequently used.

*Emphasized Text in the Multicultural Document*

In document 2, headings and introductory sections serve a similar function as headings and Executive Summary of the first document by introducing, summarizing, and structuring the topic while the remaining chapters deal with specific substantive issues. In this instance, as shown in Table 2, (1) emphasized group identity terms are: immigrant, refugees, domestic workers, immigrant women, minority group/visible minority/other minority, disadvantaged, and Ontario residents. (2) Emphasized normative group claims are: diversity, multiculturalism, access, equality, equity, participation, rights, and opportunities; and the negative claims: barriers, racism, discrimination, prejudice, and ghettoization. (3) Emotional terms are: compassion and sensitivity.

*Frequent Terms in the Multicultural Document and Comparison*

The most frequent terms in rounded numbers are: immigrant (170), refugee (40), multicultural (40), sponsorship (60), language (50), access (20), and discrimination (20). Terms shared



Table 2

*Emphasized Terminology in the Multicultural Document*

Group Identity	Claims	Emotion
Immigrant/woman	Multiculturalism	Compassion
Refugee/claimant	Diversity	Sensitivity
Domestic worker	Participation	
	Access	
Minority group	Equality	
Visible minority	Equity/Opportunity	
/Other		
Disadvantaged	Barriers	
	Discrimination	
Ontario resident	Racism/Sexism/Class	
	Ghettoization	

by the emphasized text and the frequency list are: immigrant, refugee, multicultural, access, and discrimination. Once again, the emotional terms are not the most frequently used.

A comparison shows a marked difference between the terminologies of group identity. One clear and consistent group identity term is used in the Aboriginal document, and functions as a single rallying cry. By contrast, group identity is plural in the multicultural document subsuming (1) broad immigrant terms (immigrant/refugee/newcomer), (2) immigrant subgroups (refugee claimant/immigrant women/domestic worker), (3) disadvantaged populations (minority, visible/other), and (4) a territorial and administrative entity of "Ontario resident," presenting thus a complex group identity with subgroups and multiple features.

The two claim lists share few terms, signifying profound differences. The notions of colonization, self-government and self-control are unique to the Aboriginal document. A number of terms such as discrimination, participation and access are emphasized in the Multicultural document, and given lesser prominence in the Aboriginal text. The respective grievances of colonization and discrimination, are not equivalent. Some

apparently similar terms become different notions in textual use. *Assimilation* is a grievance in the Aboriginal document, while *participation* and *access* are normative claims in the multicultural document. Even a single term takes a different connotation in context. The concept of *equality* is associated with *self-government* in the Aboriginal document; *access* and *equity* in the multicultural document stress, respectively, separateness and inclusion.

The emotional claims differ as well. The Aboriginal text, alone, emphasizes a negative notion (despair). Moreover, the notion of *respect*, emphasized in document 1 is absent from document 2, in which *compassion* and *sensitivity* are stressed instead. The notion of respect connotes a relation of equality among distinct partners, while compassion and sensitivity can be seen as pleas for closeness within a relation of relative dependence. In summary, the two documents show asymmetries in their emphasized group identity definition, normative claims and affective emphasis.

### Semantic Organization of the Texts

#### *Semantic Organization of the Aboriginal Document*

The semantic clusters and networks of related words, proximate and interchangeable word use, and word context (i.e., the semantic organization of the text) further illuminate the textual use of key words and of rhetoric. The word-cluster comprised of the key terms of *colonization/assimilation/isolation* stands out in the Aboriginal document. The two latter words are repeatedly used in the same sentence, while all three tend to appear in the same or adjacent sentences, as illustrated in:

Before Confederation, the legislation and ideology of colonialism were in place. The project of assimilation and isolation had begun. Following Confederation, this project was rationalized, expanded, and continues to the present (p.ii).

The additional less frequent terms of *civilize*, *acculturate* and *deculturate* which appear in the same textual context, are part of this semantic network.

Semantic clusters differentiate among group claims. The negative claims or grievances, used as contrast and justification,

show two distinct subsets used in different textual contexts: (1) colonization/assimilation/isolation/destroy/decimate/surrender/ward; (2) racism/discrimination/disadvantaged/neglect. The former, the more frequent, connoting violent relations of domination and annihilation, is part of the political realm, while the second connotes relations of imbalance (lesser violence) in the social realm. The terms *wards of the state* and *dependency* appear more frequently than *neglect*, *disadvantaged*, or *discriminated*. A third subset, comprised of dependency and injustice, overlaps the two domains and is used in both contexts.

Similarly, the repeated normative and institutional claims show two subsets. Self-government/third-order government/inherent right is one cluster, to which are associated *statesmanship* and *body politic* to form a single semantic network. Municipality/self-administration/self-management cluster separately around social administration. Individual terms are used interchangeably within each of these sets, but cannot be used across sets (e.g. self-government cannot replace self-administration). They represent distinct if not antithetical claims. Whereas the first cluster appears throughout the document, the second is present only in the last chapters discussing the management of social services. This is also true of the cultural claims.

Emotional language is a particular form of group rhetoric which can accompany collective symbolic claims. More expected in oratory styles, it is less so in policy documents. The chapter heading *profile of despair* highlights the notion as an organizing category, which is extended into a semantic network to include distress, hopelessness, horror, and pain. The term *respect* is positively paired with *recognition* and negatively paired with *ignored*, emphasizing respectively equality of- vs. lack of- partnership (or invisible partner). The notion of recognition is associated by proximate use with the claim of self-government. The complementary use of negative and positive emotional terms construes them as cognitive dimensions.

The group identity of Aboriginal nations is used throughout the text with multiple associations, in an almost decontextualized fashion, achieving the status of an absolute identity claim. A second set of identity terms, *Indian community/Indian people* is more narrowly associated with the provision of social

assistance. It does not, however, replace Aboriginal nation, under which it becomes subsumed, the latter standing for the dominant identity. A legally-ascribed identity cluster of *registered/status/non-status Indian* has more limited use. *Ethnicity* is distinctly missing as an identity marker. Its use is restricted to naming groups in foreign countries (Nicaragua). This notion is, therefore, irrelevant to the Aboriginal nations' self-identity.

### *Semantic Organization in the Multicultural Document and Comparison*

A complex vocabulary characterizes the group's identity and claims. Its semantic mapping shows multiple principles, tensions, and ambivalence.

The notion of immigration is central to the document in various forms: immigration/immigration status/immigrant/immigrant woman/sponsored immigrant/immigrant community, and is a dominant component of group identity. *Minority* is used in close proximity to *immigrant*:

We recognize the rights of immigrant, refugee and minority groups . . . (p.2) . . . racism and ethnic discrimination, pervasive prejudice and discrimination against immigrants, visible minorities and other minority communities (p.3).

The two notions do not have equal authority. The notion of *immigrant* stands by itself more often than the notion of *minority*, most often accompanied by the former. The term *minority* covers two subsets: *visible minority* and *other minority*, which, in Canada, refers to *linguistic minority*, i.e., non-English/non-French, including groups known in the U.S. as *ethnic whites*.

The central notion of discrimination is used to encompass a range of grievances, "systemic and outright" (p.23) bridging diverse experiences. In conjunction with the *minority* identity, it is part of the semantic network of ethnicity-race-poverty-sexism-ghettoization-class division and prejudice. In conjunction with *immigrant*, it refers to policy inequity in settlement:

The failure of the system is exacerbated for specific groups which face discrimination on the basis of their immigration status: sponsored immigrants, domestic workers, and refugee claimants (p. 4) . . . discriminatory social assistance regulations which discourage and limit access (p. 11).

The broad description of injustice and inequity links different subgroups of the multicultural entity. It allows a certain ambiguity as to the relation between group identity and group claim.

In this document, the notion of *equality* is used in two ways: as a substantive ("achieving equality") and as an adjective mostly with the term of *access* ("gaining equal access"). Indeed, the terms of *barriers* and *access* are prominent in the text. The first usage, closer to the Aboriginal document, implies a collective claim of power sharing. The second draws the notion into a semantic network which includes notions of equity and opportunity, emphasizing instead individual rights and life chances. This dual usage of the notion is indicative of the document's dual logic and ambiguity. Unlike the Aboriginal document, the multicultural text presents a tension between the two emphases of group claims.

A differentiated use of affective terms to characterize segments of the multicultural community, such as *trauma/victimized* with the refugee experience, *violence* and the experience of women, highlights the heterogenous identity structure of the group. The words *compassionate* and *sensitive* are associated with the service system: "Ontario needs a social assistance system which is compassionate and sensitive" (p. 4). A diffusion of the notion occurs and sensitivity is associated with cultural differences ("culturally sensitive services"). The two derived notions of sensitive are used, *sensitivity* and *sensitiveness*, the first is closer to compassion, the second to responsiveness. This broadening of usage strengthens the argument and achieves greater consensus — however, through ambiguity.

The contextual use of the term *isolation* shows a fundamental divergence in meanings between the two texts. In the second document, *isolation* refers to the personal loneliness of newcomers, particularly women and the elderly, in an individual sense. By contrast, it refers to collective marginalization in the Aboriginal text. These usages reflect radically different emphases between collective and individual affect and claims. The individualized use of affect in the multicultural text is consistent with its claims of equity and access equality, versus the collective, nation-based equality claim of the Aboriginal document.

### The Nature of Narratives

Using a distinct set of tools (Chambon, 1994), narrative analysis addresses the overall construction of the text, and provides a mechanism for understanding relationships among terms.

#### *Narrative Genre in the Aboriginal Document*

This is a narrative of the historical liberation of a nation presenting three features: (1) a story of the liberation of a collective entity, (2) a historical narrative, and (3) a political subtext.

The key words: conquer/surrender/struggle/self-government are part of a *narrative of liberation* showing a development from autonomy to dependency, and its reversal towards regained autonomy.

An Ojibway Chief: "Englishman . . . you have not conquered us. We are not your slaves (p.5) . . ." "The Aboriginal nations have not been defeated nor have they surrendered" (p.40).

The *historical narrative* opens with the "discovery" of the New World by the Europeans, demonstrating that the status of the Aboriginal people is that of a nation, whose position has not always been one of dependency:

In 1763, the reality was that the Aboriginal nations were sovereign nations; the British and the French acted accordingly (p.5) . . . For the first two and a half centuries, the relationship between the Aboriginal Nations of the New World and the European Nations was one of equality, respect, allegiances and enmities (p.ii).

History is used not only for the benefit of the non-Aboriginal audience, it also strengthens the collective memory and identity of the claimant group, as stated in the concluding section: "Aboriginal nations have not forgotten who they are nor where they come from" (p.145). Writings on native issues tend to follow this narrative mode, such as Timpson's (1990) discussion of the Ontario's Child Welfare Legislation, or Korsmo's (1990) work on policy formation and the Alaska Natives.

The *political subtext* of the narrative is made apparent through the extensive use of political terms:

Throughout the Constitutional process, the Aboriginal nations were striving to gain admission to Canada through statesmanship. They were working to have their rights recognized by the Canadian body politic as a matter of principle and policy — a positive recognition (p.58).

It is the main frame of reference under which community and social service issues are subsumed.

*Narrative Themes and the Legitimation of Claims*

National legitimacy rests on land rights of “first sons,” to quote Horowitz (1985).

These lakes, these woods and mountains, were left to us by our ancestors. They are our inheritance; and we will part with them to no one (p.5).

As illustrated in the quotation, land is at the centre of a number of arguments: land as territory with accompanying rights, as legacy, “custodian of land”, source of livelihood (hunting and fishing rights, and Guaranteed Annual Income), nature and environment to be protected. The use of the term *surrender* in conjunction with nation (“we have not surrendered”) and land (“surrendered and unsurrendered lands”), stresses this powerful identification.

Another main narrative theme is the threat of destruction, resulting from: the physical destruction of Aboriginal persons through epidemic, raid, war, removal of means of subsistence; the destruction of natural resources; and community and cultural destruction due to assimilation. This genocidal theme shapes the discussion on Aboriginal children (their deculturation in boarding schools, their life-threatening conditions, their suicide rate and overrepresentation in the penal system, (pp. 32–34). Annihilation is blamed on intrusive policies:

. . . the most contentious aspect of the Indian Act was the sweeping power that it gave to administrators and to the federal government. The Indian Act extended the regulatory reach of the government into virtually every nook and cranny of Indian life (p. 62);

and the dislocation of group membership through federal regulations:

From its earliest versions, the Indian Act and its precursors have defined who the state considers to be an Indian . . . they have reflected the assumption common throughout most of Canada's history that one could not be both Indian and Canadian. The result of these attempts at definition has been the creation of different classes of Indigenous peoples (p67).

The narrative of group splintering into status and non-status Indians, with service eligibility restricted to the former (i.e., persons registered under the Indian Act), and institutional provisions of membership loss (living off reserves, and, until recently, marriage to a non-Indian), is followed by the actions taken by the Aboriginal people to reverse the statutes and affirm their self-ascribed identity.

A third narrative is a narrative of social disadvantage and marginalization:

As with any group that experiences prejudice and discrimination from the dominant society, Aboriginal workers are last hired, first fired (p.34).

This narrative compares housing conditions, employment, health, education, and mortality rates to those of the broader Canadian society. Aboriginal peoples are in a more precarious position in each of those categories:

Racism, low educational levels, the many hours of labour required to survive in underserved communities, lack of employment skills and lack of employment services all contribute to unemployment levels of anywhere between 50 and 90% (p.46).

### *Social Service and Narrative*

The last two chapters deal specifically with Social Assistance, introducing new terms and arguments: Indian people, cultural uniqueness and need for cultural sensitivity and flexibility in service provision, the opposition to the municipal model of self-management, and reiteration of the claim for self-government.

- (1) Indian people are unique and want to preserve their different culture;
- (2) the reserves are the keystone to Indian culture;
- (3) community services must be adapted to meet Indian needs;



- (4)..need for additional resources to maintain communities; and
- (5) responsibility of Federal government (p.135).

Social service needs are described holistically:

Since people do tend to view their lives and their communities as a whole, it was not possible in the studies to isolate social services from the economy, from education etc. (p.135),

and recommendations are articulated with the political claims. The argument for culturally appropriate and sensitive service provision is coupled with community-control and political governance, as described in the recommendation made by the tripartite social services review comprised of federal, provincial and Aboriginal organizations:

The corner-stone of the policy would be community-based, Band controlled, culturally appropriate and specific services (p. 140).

Transfer of services or self-management is not Aboriginal government (p.114). To avoid the municipalization model, Aboriginal self-governments must have the authority to plan and manage programs as well as simply administer and account for them (p.153).

### *Marker Events and Protagonists*

The central narrative events are the negotiations and treaties, policy decisions, struggles and agreement violations, the process and outcomes of intergroup relations centered on institutionalizing domination and liberation. The nature of the protagonists shifts with the historical periods and changing nature of group relations. The protagonists of the pre-confederation period are the Aboriginal and European Nations, British and French, whose relation of political and economic alliances is characterized by *equality* and *respect*. Following Canadian confederation (1867) an adversarial relation developed between the Aboriginal nations and organizations, and (a) a settler state/nations, or settlers (applied also to the present); (b) specific levels of government, i.e., the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Territories; and (c) the dominant European culture.

*External Referents, Texts, and Exemplary Actions*

External references, decisive public policy texts and international references, bolster the narrative of liberation. Among the key political events and documents mentioned, the White Paper of 1969 and the Penner Commission of 1983 are discussed at length. They represent two opposing visions of intergroup relations (Weaver, 1981). The first undermines the special status of Aboriginal nations in the name of individual human rights, while the second recommends the entrenchment of uniqueness and Aboriginal self-government into the Constitution. Repudiated by native organizations, the first led to their mobilization. The second, widely supported though not implemented, is extensively quoted to support the arguments, underscoring the slow pace of change.<sup>2</sup>

The unexpected use of international references in a local policy document indicates the international strategy of the Aboriginal peoples (Ponting, 1990), and further underlines the text's political agenda. It discusses South African apartheid and its origin in Canadian laws, the Black Power movement, international courts to which the Aboriginal nations have appealed for redress (e.g., in recent years, the Bertrand Russell and the Hague Tribunals, and the U.N.), and recent autonomy arrangements won by Aboriginal groups in Greenland and Nicaragua. Explicitly quoted, the latter documents are contrasted with the individual rights orientation of the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

*Narrative Genre in the Multicultural Document and Comparison*

This text can hardly be thought of as a storied narrative. It does not have a historical or developmental dimension, but is about the current state of affairs. The document follows the narrative features of bureaucratic texts, and its discussion of social issues is organized around service arrangements and categories of benefits. Some chapters address universal social service concerns of the Canadian system, such as health, child care, education, social assistance, and employment; others focus

on immigrant and refugee needs, including sponsorship, settlement services, and E.S.L. This textual organization, constituted around administrative domains, is in sharp contrast to the previous document in which topics are intertwined holistically from a community standpoint.

This narrative genre is accompanied by its own rhetoric of legitimation. The multicultural narrative appeals to universal rights, not on historical priority grounds, but instead on apparently a-historical principles of equality, and above all, equity. Its legitimation rests on arguments of access and inclusion:

Multiculturalism is a goal, an ideal and an organizing principle. It is a vision of a society governed by equality of access, opportunity and participation in the social, political, cultural and economic life of the province (p.3).

Appeal is made for redressing imbalances and discrimination associated with the life conditions of minority groups. The intergroup claim is one of full participation to social services, and therefore access to "mainstream" services, and to the community as a whole. Barriers and obstacles faced by ethnic groups, such as ghettoization and vulnerability, are to be overcome to achieve full participation. Claims for women are described as the unmet needs of a particularly vulnerable subgroup. Universality and individualism are the subtext in the claims for equity and participation, in contrast to the Aboriginal document which emphasizes distinctiveness and the collective. The principle of universality does not exclude group specificity, but the combination is somewhat ambiguous.

A secondary narrative theme is that of cultural differences, based on two lines of argument: (a) a transitional claim of adjustment for newcomers, and (b) cultural uniqueness and distinctiveness.

#### Principles (printed in bold)

(1) We recognize the right of all Ontario residents to participate in the social, political and economic life of the province. (2) We recognize that all residents of Ontario have the right to equal access to the social services system. (3) We recognize the rights of immigrant, refugee and minority groups to special services in order to achieve equality (p.2).

The discussion of need reflects this duality of inclusion and specificity in each of the document's target problem areas:

For immigrant parents, therefore, as for all parents, child care is an essential need (p.39) . . . Immigrant families also have specific concerns and needs in relation to child care (p.40).

The dual claims are translated into a proposal for a two-tiered service structure, with access to mainstream services and availability of ethno-specific services. This strategy conciliates the two principles of distinctiveness and inclusion (cf. Jenkins, 1981), and is in sharp contrast with the Aboriginal document which emphasizes equality through distinctiveness. Recommendations are made that mainstream agencies adapt their mode of functioning to their diverse clientele, while urging the establishment of crosscultural and race-relations training. These linking strategies are consistent with the objective of lowering barriers and achieving inclusion. They are not as relevant to a group concerned with specificity and recognition. Such intergroup strategies (particularly training) are not mentioned in the Aboriginal text, nor are mainstream agencies asked to change. Instead, the appeal is that services for Natives be adjusted to Native needs and governed by Native communities.

Further ambiguity is found in the multicultural document's delineation of the target group's identity. We have already discussed the overlapping group identities of *immigrant* and *minority*, and their multiple subgroups. A number of statements further indicate difficulty in defining membership and group boundaries. The statement:

The population of Ontario contains a great diversity of ethnic and national origins: 40% of Ontario's population has origins other than British, French or aboriginal Canadian. Over 850,000 Ontarians speak a home language other than English or French, and 148,000 Ontarians speak neither official language (96,000 of these are women) (p.3)

is consistent with the focus of the document on the "secondary ethnic agenda" of non-English, non-French, non-Aboriginal groups. This can be contrasted with the much more inclusive statement:

It is a vision of an Ontario where all social groups — whether they be Native Peoples; Franco-Ontarians; the Black, Anglo-Saxon and German descendants of the United Empire Loyalists; descendants of later waves of immigration; or recent arrivals — will share equitably in the enjoyment of the diversity and wealth of the province (p.3).

The multicultural document does not articulate the range of ethnic agendas, and steers clear of specifying those connections. Moreover, the status of the target group and its *contribution* to the larger community is ambiguous. At times, the phrase *all Ontario residents* implies the inclusion of the *multicultural* group in the collective. At other times, it is used as an aspired community to which the *multicultural* communities do not fully belong. Such shifting usage of the term indicates an ambivalent relation which serves as the basis of the group's claims.

#### *Events and Protagonists*

There is no plot, as the narrative describes a state of affairs. A tentative protagonist structure can still be inferred. One side is represented by the vulnerable target groups with an overlapping set of characters (immigrant, minority, and women). Another side remains unnamed and can be thought of as Ontario residents, or the aspired-to community presenting obstacles to full participation—more specifically, mainstream agencies which need to become more responsive and accessible. Last is the implied institutional audience of the Social Assistance committee to which the text appeals.

#### *External References and Subtext*

References are made to external policy texts. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, included in the current (1982) Canadian Constitution, is a major turning point of the social contract, in that it acknowledges cultural diversity and multiple constituencies as full constitutional players (Cairns, 1989). Reference is also made to subsequent multiculturalism implementation documents at the national and provincial levels, including the 1984 *Equality Now* report of the Canadian Parliament on race-relations.<sup>3</sup> The Charter is concerned with protecting individual

rights within a civil society: its reference legitimates the multicultural document's subtext of universalism and individualism, with priority given to the social arena. The Charter also contains sections on cultural specificity and the retention of "cultural heritage". Our multicultural text thus closely follows the Charter's orientation, in contrast to its negative connotation in the Aboriginal document.

### Discussion

Our initial question on the nature of ethnic relations as manifested in welfare reform, and the similarity or divergence of claims used to achieve access to resources, status enhancement, and social reorganization, can be answered as follows.

#### *Similarities, Overlaps, Differences and Incompatibilities*

A comparison of the main lexical and narrative features of the texts (see table 3) indicates that group identity is singular in the Aboriginal document, with secondary nested identities (Aboriginal people). It is plural in the multicultural document, encompassing immigrant and minority identities, to which the principles of multiculturalism and diversity serve as umbrella, without resolving their tensions or differences. Group relations are defined as relations among political entities or nations, in the first text, and as relations among social status groups, in the second. Although cultural identity is central in the latter, it is minimally mentioned in the former. Last, the Aboriginal statement rejects *ethnicity* as a self-concept.

At times, these two constituencies are opposed through their documents. Specifically, the Aboriginal document posits Aboriginal nations and settlers as conflicting groups, including, by implication, the recent immigrant constituency of the multicultural document:

Until now, 500 years later, the non-native inhabitants of the western hemisphere have difficulty remembering that Indians are not just another immigrant group (p.145)... Every campaign demanded that Canadians recognize the Aboriginal Nations as nations not as a uniquely disadvantaged sector of the Canadian society (pp. 89-91).

Table 3  
*Comparison of the Lexical and Narrative Features of the Documents*

Document	Lexical features	Narrative features
Aboriginal Document	Aboriginal Nation Colonization/Assimilation Disadvantage Self-government Equality Respect vs. Despair	Historical/liberation narrative Land/priority Political subtext Distinctiveness + Collective rights Holistic community needs Penner Report vs. Charter Rights
Multicultural Document	Immigrant/Minority Participation/Access Equality/equity Discrimination Cultural transition Compassion & Sensitive	Administrative a-historical narrative Social subtext Inclusion + Individual rights Categorization of service Common & specific services Crosscultural/Race relations training & Interorganizational linkage Charter of Rights & Freedoms

Group claims differ, as well. Mainly political in the Aboriginal document emphasizing distinctiveness and separation, they are social in the multicultural document which stresses participation within a pluralistic frame.<sup>4</sup> The respective orientations of separateness and inclusion are similar to the distinctions found by Horowitz (1985). There is consistency here with the emotional vocabularies of the two documents, with the emphasis on the terms of *recognition* and *respect* in the Aboriginal text, and on *compassion* and *sensitivity* in the multicultural document.

Moreover, claims are formulated as collective rights in the Aboriginal document derived from a historical priority claim and equality among nations. They are stated as individual rights in the multicultural document drawing from a different source of legitimacy, that is, a universal individual claim to opportunity and equity.

#### *Ethnic Group Discourse and Policy Implications*

If social policies are to be responsive to a complex structure of ethnic relations, similarities and divergences in intergroup claims must be taken into account. Ethnic groups cannot automatically be included under a joint and unitary policy development, nor can variations in policy be thought of as adequate. A political orientation towards self-determination, together with a holistic understanding of community needs are essential for guiding policy solutions for Aboriginal groups. Solutions addressing primarily, though not exclusively, socioeconomic disadvantage and discrimination, and categorical access to services could better respond to the multicultural constituency. The plural group identity of immigrants and minorities discussed above and the consequent tension between the two require different handling in policy development and practice. It would follow that cultural uniqueness and service responsiveness would be shaped for the Aboriginal and the multicultural constituencies by each of these perspectives.

To illustrate further, the demand for respect stated in the Aboriginal document as an alternative to the current lack of respect, in its tangible and intangible forms (low status, exploitation, stereotyping and disregard), can also be perceived as part of the group's internal vocabulary and values. These



characterize the group's relation to its members, the community, and Nature. This connotation can be taken as a proposition for its enhancement, recognition, or even adoption. Again, separate policies need to be considered.

On the other hand, a number of converging themes could be drawn upon to develop common policy directions: (a) disadvantage and deprivation, (b) marginalization, and (c) cultural uniqueness and the need for cultural responsiveness in service delivery. It is, however, important to recognize that the convergence is limited.

### Conclusion

This study was limited to the "second ethnic agenda" of Canada and to a single province. The working documents drafted by two "ethnic" collectives showed distinct logics in group identity and claims, emotional stakes and intergroup relations, and demonstrated partial incompatibility of interests regarding social organization and resource distribution. It served to underscore the importance, in developing responsive policies, of paying attention to the specificity of group discourse, acknowledging historical circumstances, and issues of distinctiveness vs. participation, individual and collective rights, and institutional dispositions.

A further analysis of a larger number of documents would provide more detailed information as to the variations and tensions within and across groups. To further our understanding will require to: (a) increase the number of documents to be analyzed across human service fields and provinces; (b) broaden the ethnic focus to include the "first ethnic agenda"; (c) conduct a historical analysis of changing intergroup relations and policies; and (d) conduct international comparisons of intergroup relations.

The interpretive discourse analysis revealed the systemic discursive coherence of each document (between names, claims, and emotions), and consistency in the vocabulary, semantic organization, and narrative features of the texts. It is suggested that the mode of analysis employed in this study has an important place in policy research and development in the field of

ethnic group relations in diverse societies and in policy research generally.

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### Notes

1. Although a number of developments have taken place since then, they do not modify the messages communicated in these texts.
2. An agreement was reached on August 20, 1992 by the ten provinces, two territories and Aboriginal leaders for a constitutional revision (the Charlottetown accord) which included the recognition of a third level of government to the Aboriginal peoples, reflecting asymmetric group claims. The overall proposal was rejected in a Canadian referendum on October 26, 1992.
3. This tension is reflected in the various policy documents published since 1982 which tend to either emphasize an ethnocultural agenda, or an ethnoracial agenda.
4. The difference in subtexts between the two documents results in part from the different processes of consultation and authoring of each text. However, the latter reflect the distinct orientations and intergroup strategies adopted by the two constituencies.

