Re-branding Canada: The Origins of Canadian Multiculturalism Policy, 1945-1974
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Abstract:
Canadian multiculturalism policy is often said to have come about in 1971 because of factors such as the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, the multicultural movement of the 1960s, or the more liberal political and social climate of the postwar period. While all of these played roles in the emergence of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework," this dissertation takes the approach that the federal civil service was the most important factor behind the adoption of a federal multiculturalism policy in Canada. The author makes the case that the Canadian state had adopted multiculturalism policy and programs as early as the 1950s. A small branch of Government, known as the Canadian Citizenship Branch sought to integrate members of ethnic minority communities into the mainstream of Canadian life, but also sought to reassure native-born Canadians that these "New Canadians" had vital contributions to make to Canadian culture. This dissertation shows how this state discourse intersected with the more familiar elements associated with the rise of multiculturalism, such as the multicultural movement, and ultimately coalesced in 1971 with the announcement by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau of a "new" state multiculturalism policy.

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Third, the Multiculturalism Act explicitly empowers a policy of multiculturalism to promote understandings of what Canada is, or what we might call, “Canada’s identity.” This is surprising because scholars claim that policies of multiculturalism are used to “repudiate” and remove popular understandings of a country (Scruton, 2014: 82; Taylor, 2015: 336), not to promote understandings of a country. Understanding that multiculturalism encompasses the cultural and racial origins of all Canadians. This phraseology avoids excluding any Canadians in the second aim of the policy of multiculturalism in the bill: to promote multiculturalism as “a basic element of the Canadian heritage and identity.” This aim was said to have two purposes Multiculturalism arrived in Canada almost literally out of the blue. One moment we were improving our Bilingual and Bicultural character with a Royal Commission and the next moment all that was thrown out the window and a new concept adopted. I was alive during that period, but I must have been asleep, as were almost all of my fellow Canadians. According to the Free Library article on Multicultural Policy in Canada: The commissioners heard about more than just English and French relations. Ethnic spokespersons everywhere argued that the old policy of assimilation was both unjust and a failure.