

HISTORICIZING WHITENESS IN CANADA

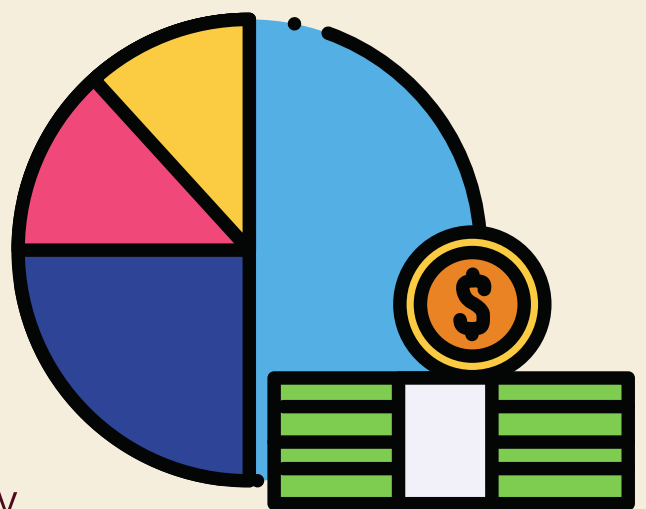
WHAT IS WHITENESS? HOW IS IT CONSTRUCTED?

- J.S. Woodsworth's *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909) laid out a racial hierarchy: through the simple process of organizing each immigrant group in descending metaphysical order.
- Mariana Valverde argues that "Anglo-Saxons could see themselves as a specific race only in contrast to others. These others were not all identical: there was an elaborate classification system that ranked national and ethnic groups according to a combination of geographical, physiological, and moral criteria." (p.110)
- This racial hierarchy operated to categorize people as preferred and not-preferred in Canada's Immigration policy.
- Preferred immigrants, in descending order, were immigrants from Great Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, and France.
- Non-preferred immigrants were the Italians, Jews, Balkans, Austro-Hungarians, "the Levantine races," "the Orientals," and "the Negro and East Indians."
- Whiteness refers to a category in this racial hierarchy and refers to those desirable "first-class" immigrants.
- Canada's exclusionary immigration policy in the early twentieth century exemplifies who exactly counted as "white."
- Less-than desirable Europeans were permitted to enter Canada because they too "had their place in nation-building." These groups were pressured to assimilate into the Anglo-Saxon dominant culture.



ANGLO-SAXON PROTESTANTS

- Valverde suggests that in the early 20th century the Anglo-Saxon Protestants perceived themselves to be the vanguard of race: the apex of civilization. They perceived themselves to be distinct in the sense of their superior biology, culture, and political institutions: and so crafted a hierarchy that categorized every other "race" below them.
- The construction of racial difference gives power to one group while denying power to others. Race projects identity onto bodies and minds. Race is socially constructed.
- Anglo-Saxon Protestant Canadians mobilized racialization ideas. Being "white" determined one's social status, rights, privileges, and access to economic and power structures in the context of an Anglo-Saxon superiority complex.
- The construction of this racial hierarchy enabled Anglo-Saxon Protestants to monopolize access to Canadian power structures to certain national and ethnic groups while denying any form of social or political power to others.
- When non-preferred immigrants managed to get into Canada they were restricted to certain types of jobs. The managerial positions were predominantly reserved for those of Anglo-Saxon descent.



WHO COUNTED AS "WHITE" IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY?

- Vic Satzewich argues that “during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many groups of people from the European periphery were defined as racial others who were fundamentally different from and inferior to dominant groups in North American society.” (p.289)
- Satzewich argues whiteness should not be conflated with skin colour.
- European settlers in the early twentieth century are often seen as a unified group who had access to the same opportunities and privileges. However, this is fiction.
- Not all Europeans were considered “white” in the early early twentieth century. There was, in fact, a distinct hierarchy.
- Not being “white” meant discrimination, pressure to assimilate, and being barred from immigrating to Canada.
- Satzewich argues that peripheral Europeans were considered to be of “inferior stock” compared to the Canadian Anglo-Saxon elites.

UKRAINAINS, A CASE STUDY.

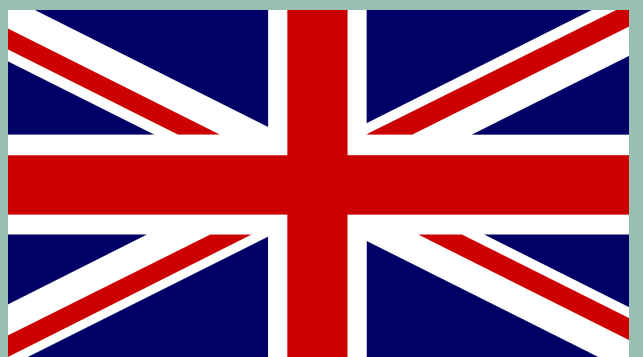
- The Ukrainian case study exemplifies that “Whiteness” is not synonymous with skin colour.
- Ukrainians were perceived to be less-than, uncivilized, and racial “others.” Nonetheless, Ukrainians were believed to have a place in nation-building: to expand the settlement frontier and settle the prairies.
- Ukrainians were allowed into Canada, but they were expected to assimilate into the majority culture.



- Ukrainians faced harsh discrimination as "others" and responded in different ways. Some turned inward to community and preserved their language and culture. Others chose to assimilate and shed what marked them as outsiders.
 - In World War I, thousands of Ukrainians (and others of Austro-Hungarian/German descent/subjects) were reclassified as enemy aliens.
 - The 1914 War Measures Act gave the state the right to suspend civil liberties of anyone suspected of collaborating with the enemy and regulate all areas of life.
- Many Ukrainians were interned in a context of high unemployment and as a way for Anglo-Saxon elites to profit off their labour.
 - Ukrainians had become an essential group in building the settler-colonial state: they emerged as crucial players in the agricultural and rapidly industrializing sectors.

ANGLO-CONFORMITY

- The Canadian majority culture expected non-British immigrants to discard their languages and culture.
- Immigrants were also expected to adopt the values and behaviours of English-speaking Canadians. This was “Canadianization,” a synonym of assimilation.
- Moral reform projects were a crucial component in the assimilation of immigrants from less-than-desirable places.
- Churches sent home missions as a way to assimilate immigrants into Anglo-Christian society, to “sanitize” their moral and sexual impurities, and to install the standard Anglo-Saxon Protestant abstracts of faith, character, and behavior.
- These projects stemmed from the belief that these immigrants would degenerate “Canadian” society with their impurities.



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