

Hidden Hegemony in Public Health: A Qualitative Approach to a Comparative Discourse Analysis of How Colonial and Post-Colonial Discourses Shaped the Calgary IODE's Approach to Child and Family Public Health

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Abstract The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) is a Canadian women's auxiliary founded in 1900 that aligned with British colonial values. This study explores colonial and post-colonial discourses within the IODE to understand how these dynamic ideologies produced power effects that influenced the Calgary IODE's child and family public health work. Calgary IODE colonial discourse between 1930 and 1970 reveals that public health resources used to sustain the English-Canadian population were employed as assimilation tools for non-English speaking immigrants and the Indigenous. However, texts produced after 1970 show a shift in ideological positions, which is apparent in the Calgary IODE post-colonial discourse of its texts between the 1970s and the early 2000s, and the shift from family to community public health. This research is on the impact of historical, social conditions and can be expanded to help mitigate systemic practices, improving health outcomes for all Canadians.

Background

Health inequities produced by socio-economic and political conditions are connected to social order and resource distribution, however more research is needed to explore their entrenchment into Canadian public health. The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) was founded in 1900 for Canadian, female British subjects, aligning the Order with British colonial values. Borrowing from Barbara Aneil, British colonialism ideologically imposed British values onto Canada's land, Indigenous inhabitants, and non-English immigrants for purposes of improvement. Canada's eugenics movement was driven by colonial values due to low English-Canadian birthrates amidst rising immigrant and Indigenous populations, spurring the IODE's focus onto public health. Other studies analyze the IODE using nationalism and critical race theory.ⁱ My historical approach uses a critical lens to examine how ideological discourses shaped IODE family public health work. I aim to understand how colonial and post-colonial discursive power effects impacted the development of Canada's family public health by asking how changing assimilation and education ideologies within these discourses produced power effects influencing the Calgary IODE's family public health work. Placing Canadian colonial and postcolonial discourses mirrored in Calgary IODE documents within their social and historical contexts reveals their significance in Calgary IODE family public health work.

Methodology and Theoretical Approach

The methodology uses a social constructionist approach within a critical theory paradigm. A critical discourse analysis was applied to IODE public health initiatives targeting various Canadian populations. Michel Foucault's theory of discourse as a language construct producing observable power/knowledge effects reveals the IODE's ideological discourse, while biopolitics as a form of population control using collective health parameters shows how the IODE sought to improve these populations. Pierre Bourdieu's theories of social division and power distribution based on social positionality explain power differences between the IODE and other social groups. Bourdieu's concepts of how learned behaviors and practices define social standards and reproduce social order through actions and interactions, combined with the manipulation of social power to maintain dominant culture expose the ideological power effects impacting IODE distribution of public health resources. In this paper, Hegemony is an overarching process arising out of economic, political, and cultural conditions maintained within social structures that allow the dominance of one social group over the others.ⁱⁱ This framework divulges how the IODE utilized power/knowledge relationships based on social status to create a discourse that defined access to Canadian public health resources.

Data collection and analysis

The IODE is hierarchically organized, allowing a case study analysis of the Calgary IODE to be applied within a wider Canadian context. Historiographical documentary and iconography methods collected data from Calgary IODE minute books, records, correspondence, images, scrapbooks, newspaper articles, constitutions, and the IODE Echoes publication. Documents were systematically selected by content containing records of the Calgary

IODE activities in immigration, education, and child and family welfare, and its ideological perspectives. The collection process was iterative and inductive. Data was triangulated by including records from the Calgary municipal chapter, 10 primary chapters, and three Calgary IODE members, as well as the Victoria Order of Nurses (VON), and the Alberta Council of Child and Family Welfare (ACCFW) archival records. Data was considered saturated when no new data was revealed within the sources.

Data was analyzed deductively within the developed framework. Matching colonial and postcolonial ideologies circulating in Canadian society and within IODE documents with IODE activities between 1918 and 2010 revealed ideological shifts within the Order that produced recognizable connections between colonial and post-colonial ideologies and the IODE's public health approach. Analyzing the colonial and postcolonial shifts within the IODE emphasized how each of these discourses dynamically shaped its public health initiatives. An intersectional, intracategorical approach accounted for the social meanings that shaped the social identities, positions, and lived experiences of various Canadian social groups, explaining how these combined to create different experiences around public health. Reflexivity acknowledging my own personal standpoint was maintained by journaling during data collection and analysis activities, as well as peer debriefing.ⁱⁱⁱ

Discussion

Early on, Alberta attracted many charitable organizations focused on public health due to disparate social and economic conditions. Founded in Calgary in 1909, between 1918-1930 the Order funded veterans' hospitals, supplied food, clothing, and household items to soldier families and war widows, and supported post-war work throughout the British Empire. Calgary IODE minutes record funds for hospital equipment, tuberculosis patients, primary schoolbooks and education bursaries, university scholarships, and libraries. A major Calgary IODE public health initiative, the Sylvan Lake Fresh Air Camp for underprivileged children, received \$25,000 between 1922 and 1933.^{iv}

Eugenics arose in Alberta in 1928, and in 1929 the IODE began recording all public health resources allocated to immigrants under the Immigration committee instead of the Child and Family Welfare Committee, targeting these resources toward British immigrants. Calgary IODE minute books record resource distribution to families with surnames such as Lockhart, Fraser, and Sloan and to "soldier settler" families, supporting the change made by the National chapter. Organizing the distributions of public health resources according to racial profiles implies IODE resources were not just to aid immigrants. Rather, public health resources and education were openly used to assimilate non-English immigrants, providing rural schools in these communities with learning equipment, nutrition, and hygiene products, the same resources given to the English-Canadian population to maintain social dominance. These racial dynamics can be interpreted as a direct employment of public health resources as an assimilation technique requiring compliance to English-Canadian standards. Calgary chapters also participated in Child Welfare Week, an initiative that focusing on improving health by implementing English-Canadian values. IODE participation in health education to reform undesirable social groups reinforces public health resources as tools of assimilation that also limited access to resources for non-conforming families.^v

After WWII, communism concerns turned IODE interests to Northern Indigenous communities. Calgary chapters provided Northern communities with Empire-based education, clothing, and food. Often the IODE depicted the Indigenous as socially and culturally backwards, seeking to acculturate and assimilate this group using familial division, a direct contrast to the IODE's program to reunite British settlers in Canada with their families. The willingness to remove Indigenous children from their families exposes how the IODE used resources as tools of Indigenous assimilation. Additionally, the Indigenous communities were portrayed as ungrateful, increasing the social distance and power between these two groups. Evidence that the IODE continually sought recognition for their work is found consistently throughout the Calgary chapter minutes that record many thank you letters. By seeking recognition for their work, the IODE retained dominance over the social groups they assisted by indebting these underprivileged populations through gifts that could not be repaid.^{vi}

Toward the 1970s as postcolonialism was on the rise, the IODE realigned itself: in 1967, the Immigration and Citizenship committee became the Citizenship committee, implying a change in its approach to this work. By the mid-1970s, the IODE dropped its imperialist title, using only its acronym and changing its approach to public health work. The Calgary IODE supported local, community-based initiatives such as crisis centers, school food programs, the Food Bank, Boys and Girls Club, Ronald McDonald House, Meals on Wheels, purchased several

Handi-buses for Calgary, and financed a training program for childcare workers assisting behaviorally challenged children. These changes show that the postcolonial ideologies circulating within Canadian society reoriented the IODE to distribute public health resources on a needs-related basis rather than for colonial improvement.^{vii}

Conclusion

Discourses within Calgary IODE texts between 1918 and 1970 reveal that the same public health resources used to sustain the English-Canadian population were employed as tools of assimilation for non-English speaking immigrants and the Indigenous. However, the post-colonial discourse within IODE texts produced between the 1970s to the early 2000s highlights the IODE's shift from family to community public health. Understanding how colonialism distributed resources based on social and cultural positions in Canadian society still has systemic effects for Canadians today is vital to changing health inequity. This research is about the impact of historical, social conditions on Canadian public health and can be expanded to mitigate systemic practices, improving health outcomes for all Canadians.

Endnotes

ⁱ Key Health Inequalities in Canada: A National Portrait. Pan-Canadian Health Inequalities Reporting Initiative. Canada: Public Health Agency of Canada; 2018; Dennis Raphael. *Social Determinants of Health: Canadian Perspectives*. 3rd edition. ed Dennis Raphael. Canadian Scholars Press Inc., Toronto, Ontario, 2016: 2; Lorraine Coops. "“Strength in Union”: Patterns of Continuity and Change Within the Sir Robert Borden Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire 1915-1965,” *Atlantis*, 20(1) (1995): 78-79; *Imperial Order Daughter of the Empire: What it is and what it does*, “Years of Peace”: 7. Chinook Chapter. Booklet outlining details and facts about the IODE. Located in M9474, Box 1 File 22, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; Barbara Arneil. “Colonialism versus Imperialism.” *Political Theory*, 52(1) (2024): 151-152; Heather Green. “The Rise of Motherhood: Maternal Feminism and Health in the Rural Prairie Provinces, 1900-1930.” *Past Imperfect: The History and Classics Graduate Student Journal*. XX, (2017): 48-70; “Introduction.” *Psychiatry and the Legacy of Eugenics: Historical Studies of Alberta and Beyond*. eds Frank W. Stahnisch and Erna Kurbegović, AU Press, Athabasca University Press, 2019: 3-35; Pickles, Caterine Gillian Pickles. “Representing Twentieth Century Canadian Colonial Identity: The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE),” (PhD diss., McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 1996): 102-103; Marjorie Johnstone. “The pervasive presence of the discourse of white civility in early Canadian social work in immigration services (1900–30).” *British Journal of Social Work*, 46, (2016): 1724-1740; Shauna Wilton. “Manitoba Women Nurturing the Nation: The Manitoba IODE and Maternal Nationalism, 1913-1920.” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35(2) (Summer 2000): 152-153; Lisa Gaudet. “Nation’s Mothers, Empire’s Daughters: The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, 1920- 1930,” (MA thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa, 1993); Katie Pickles. *Female imperialism and national identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire*. Manchester University Press, 2009

ⁱⁱ Michel Foucault. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Random House Inc., 1972; Norman Fairclough. *Analyzing Discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. 1st edition. Routledge. April 2023; Michael Foucault. “Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century.” *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. ed. Colin Gordon. trans. Colin Gordon et.al. Pantheon Books, New York, 1976: 166-182; Pierre Bourdieu. *Fields of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. ed. Randal Johnson. Columbia University Press, US, 1993; Pierre Bourdieu. “Symbolic Power” in “The Cultural Field and the Economic Field.” translated by Richard Nice. Theories and Methods Series: S.P. No. 46, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham: 1-2; Pierre Bourdieu. “The Berber House or The World Reversed.” *In Visions of Culture: An Annotated Reader*. ed Jerry D. Moore. Altamira Press, Plymouth, UK, 2009: 405-417; Jonathan Joseph. “A Realist Theory of Hegemony.” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30:2, June 2000: 181-183

ⁱⁱⁱ Clare R. Evans. Modeling the intersectionality of processes in the social production of health inequalities. *Social Science & Medicine*. 226 (2019): 249-253

^{iv} “Societies Join New Federation Alberta Women,” a newspaper clipping from 1936, that lists Mrs. R.C. Marshall, president of the Alberta IODE chapter as being elected the second vice-president of the Alberta Association of Child & Family Welfare: box M8401, file 21 Riley newspaper clippings, Harold and Maude Riley, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; Document listing the organizations that supported the VON, which includes the IODE as a sponsor. Located in M2465, Box 1 File 1, Victoria Order of Nurses, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; “Government Met Women’s Appeals with Much Favor,” A newspaper clipping from pre-1921 describing four petitions brought to the Alberta provincial law committee for review by Maude Riley, the secretary of the ACCFW, and Mrs. Higgenbotham, regent of the Westward IODE chapter of Edmonton. These petitions were advocating for mother’s pensions, equal parenting control, the treatment of venereal disease as regular diseases, and the abolishment of red-light districts. Located in M8401, File 21, Riley newspaper clippings, Harold and Maude Riley, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; “Chapter Notes-Calgary.” *Echoes*. June 1929, Toronto, Ontario, Canada: 33. Located in Periodicals 1929, No 117-118, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; “Minutes 1918-1922.” Military Chapter. Entries detailing IODE activities on Nov 27, 1918, p. 11, Nov 13, 1919, p. 159-160, Nov 13, 1919, p. 160. Located in M9005, Box 1 File 1, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; *History of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire*: 9-11 A typewritten history of the IODE that includes a detailed description of the Sylvan Lake camp and a list of its expenditures for the years 1922-1933. Mather, Mrs. JA, collector Scrapbook, 1936-42. Located in M1647, BC.M427 File 4, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB

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^{vii} "The letters I.O.D.E." a newspaper article discussing the IODE name change. Chinook Chapter. Scrapbook located in M9474, Box 2 File 23, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; "Venerable IODE finds an astonishing array of charities." A newspaper article discussing the realigned IODE and its new values. Chinook Chapter. Scrapbook located in M9474, Box 2 File 23, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; "Minutes of the Calgary Municipal Chapter, IODE, December 4, 2015." Details of IODE service activities in public health. Fort Calgary Chapter. Fort Calgary Minutes, 2015. Located in M9888, Box 4, File 04.04, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; Proposed Budgets for Fort Calgary Chapter, IODE for year 2011." Fort Calgary Chapter. Fort Calgary Chapter Reports, 1994, 2010-2012. Located in M9888, Box 4, File 04.04, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; "Helping the Community." A newspaper article outlining the community-based charity works of Calgary IODE. Military Chapter 1980-2002. Located in M9005, Box 4, File 21, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB; "Alberta." An article detailing the purchase of handi busses by the municipal chapter for City of Calgary. Military Chapter 1980-2002. Located in M9005, Box 4, File 21, Glenbow Western Research Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB

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