SOCIAL COHESION IN CANADA

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Canada is a diverse society of almost 34 million people. Its population is about half the size of Great Britain and France, the two nations whose colonization projects strongly shaped Canada’s development. For most of the country’s history, the original or Aboriginal peoples were increasingly marginalized despite the many ways in which they contributed to the nation’s economic, social and political development. After the British took Quebec from France, formalized in 1763, the French Canadians relied upon natural increase in order to sustain their population, while Great Britain encouraged mass immigration from the British Isles to increase population, practices which ensured national duality. During the 20th century, Canada recruited more than 13 million immigrants, mostly people of European background, but immigrant recruitment over the past forty years has been increasingly diverse. Canada has become a multicultural society characterized by very diverse ethnic and cultural origins. The Canadian federation is a complex society whose components are provinces with a great autonomy, regions with different resources, a diverse population that include many ethnic groups, two official languages, and fifty-seven aboriginal nations with their own national identities.

The remarkable and continuous transformations of the Canadian population over the centuries has deeply marked its social cohesion and posed strong and varied challenges from one epoch to another. Canadian society is structured so its components – whether these are
conceived as individuals, provinces, regions, aboriginal nations or ethnic groups — are weakly subject to a binding normative order; consequently, coordinating the components into an integrated whole is continuously challenging.\(^1\) The challenges to Canada's social cohesion are both unique and general. The unique challenges include issues such as national duality, the underdevelopment of aboriginal nations, and the uneven development of the different regions. More generally, Canada shares many of the same cohesion challenges found in other nations, including the effects of globalization on national economy, growing population diversity, expanding social differentiation, generational effects, and new socio-economic cleavages. This contribution will document social cohesion issues that are both situation-specific situation in Canada (its singular situation) and those that are shared with other comparable societies.\(^2\)

The essay begins by considering some unique issues of Canadian society, specifically its multinational character (linguistic duality, Aboriginal peoples, high immigration) as well as its regional tensions. This is followed by the examination of inclusion/exclusion indicators, the social bonds, and democratic issues commonly referred to in the majority of the studies on social cohesion. Macrosociological issues – some specific to Canada, other common to other developed societies – will complete the proposed analysis. The conclusion gives consideration to the idea that the relatively high level of social cohesion in Canada is related to the extensive level of cross-cutting ties.

1. POPULATION DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

Population diversity has underwritten three specific social cohesion issues in Canada. These issues are the marginalization of Aboriginal peoples, the difficult and lengthy process of recognizing French Canadians, and the integration of an increasingly-diverse immigrant population.

Aboriginal Peoples

The Canadian Constitution of 1982 and federal and provincial governmental instruments recognize four different categories of Aboriginal peoples: registered status Indians (registered in 605 "Indian bands"), non-status Indians (neither registered nor granted lands), Inuit (aboriginal peoples of the Arctic region), and Métis (of
mixed European and aboriginal ancestry). Aboriginal peoples represent about 4% of the Canadian population. The majority continue to live on separate lands or “Indian reserves” that are governed under the provisions of the federal Indian Act. The majority of reserves constitute a “third world” inside the borders of the Canadian state. Among Aboriginal peoples, life expectancy is lower than that in the general population, and communities typically experience major economic, social and public health problems as well as highly-constrained versions of local self-government.

Despite these problems, there are positive developments. The legal and political recognition of Aboriginal peoples was entrenched in the 1982 Constitution Act. And, since that time, the social, economic and political grievances of Aboriginal peoples have been recognized as central to the national public agenda. This recognition is shown by such institutional forms as the creation of umbrella organizations (Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapirisit Kanatami, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples), a major federal inquiry and report into the condition of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people (Royal Commission on Canada’s Aboriginal People), and by the federal government’s commitment to the comprehensive renegotiation of First Nations land claims. Since 1978 there have been 21 such comprehensive land claims, negotiated by individual and confederations of First Nations. In 1978, the James Bay Cree and Northern Quebec Indians negotiated a settlement with both the federal and Quebec governments that recognized their right to self-government and a financial share of Quebec’s important hydroelectricity developments. Since 1992, the British Columbia Treaty Commission has worked to end the anomaly in which almost no first nations in that province had signed formal treaties with Canada or British Columbia. Sixty of that province’s First Nations are participating in sets of negotiations, with 51 in the final stages of negotiation. Although there has been an exceeding slow pace to developments, social and economic conditions of Aboriginal peoples are improving.¹

Charter Groups

Relations between the so-called “charter groups” of French and English (actually British) Canadians have gone through several grave crises since the mid-18th century. In the 20th century, French
Canadians have battled to gain recognition as an equal partner with English Canadians in the institutional and cultural life of Canada. Many of the most prominent members of the francophone political elite, beginning in the 19th century, worked from the premise that a partnership between two charter groups was at the heart of Canada. For decades, this argument about Canadian biculturalism was either rejected or glossed over by the intelligentsia and elites of English Canada. In recent decades, with the emergence of a strong francophone provincial state in Quebec, this argument has faded. The bicultural vision has been replaced by another view, shared by francophone as well as Anglophone intellectuals, claiming that Canada is a multinational society and a classic federation of states.⁴

The national recognition of French language (or Francophone) rights occurred only gradually during the 20th century. French and English were used in Parliamentary debates from the outset in 1867, although simultaneous translation only began in 1959. French was introduced on postage stamps in 1927, on bank notes in 1936, and Family Allowance cheques in French as well as English in 1962. Richard Joy⁵ noted that only 5% of the senior executives appointed in the federal administration in 1965 were French Canadians. The situation has changed significantly during the past forty years, and now more than 30% of all public servants are Francophone. French and English were equally recognized as official languages in the Official Languages Act of 1969.

According to polls conducted by Decima Research for the Commission of Official Languages, a robust majority of Canadians support official bilingualism of federal institutions. Moreover, this support is growing. In the 2006 survey, the level of support was higher in Quebec (more than 90%) and lower in Alberta (58%), with a mean of 72% for Canada. This compares to 50% support at the turn of the new Century. This level of support is the highest since the adoption of legislation on official languages and marks a radical change in the history of Canada. It is now fair to speak of the political institutionalization of the two languages spoken since the origin of Canada.⁶

During the decades in which the French Canadian presence was grudgingly acknowledged by English Canadians, francophone Quebeckers developed another model of national affirmation: the
sovereignty of Quebec. This model was a counter to the blockages to recognition they continually experienced in Canadian society. During the 1970s, the sovereigntist vision of the provincial leader René Lévesque opposed the bilingual one of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who sponsored bilingualism of federal institutions and the respect of the rights of linguistic minorities – English in Quebec and French outside Quebec. Lévesque’s vision was to promote the French as the language of integration of immigrants inside Quebec, and ultimately an association with English Canada following what sovereignists called “the European model” of association between independent states. Their battles reflected and provoked a long period of tension between Francophones and Anglophones that substantially threatened the cohesiveness of Canadian society.

Quebec officially affirmed its French character with the 1977 adoption of Bill 101, which defined French as the province’s official language while establishing language rights and policy. The provincial government held two unsuccessful referendums on sovereignty in 1980 and 1995. Since then, there has been a noticeable decline in the support of the project of sovereignty or independence for Quebec. There are several explanations for this trend. On the one hand, the success of the politics of the “francization” of Quebec has calmed the worries of francophone Quebeckers. Neither can the continuing impact of modernization on Quebec society, with all of its diverse effects, be overlooked in explaining the decline of the separatist option. In addition, the recognition of the French presence in the federal bureaucracy, and its broad acceptance by the rest of Canada, has further helped to diminish support for separation.

It should also be noted that French-speaking Canadians living in Quebec and francophone minorities living amongst English speaking majorities developed two different national outlooks during the second half of the 20th century. The former defined themselves as part of the Quebec society, while the latter viewed themselves as French speaking minorities in the midst of a bilingual Canada. There has been a double national re-foundation, rather than a divorce, in the midst of the old French Canadian nation. There has also been an important national re-foundation that emerged from, and has largely displaced, the old British anglophone Canada during the same period.
The threat of Quebec separation has lessened even if problems remain over the recognition of the special status of Quebec. One of these issues is the strong presence in the midst of the Federal Parliament of a large group of Quebec Members of Parliament (45 out of a total of 75 in 2008) who are members of the Bloc Québécois—a party that supports sovereignty for their province. Despite the vitality of the Bloc Québécois since its formation in 1990, national tensions have diminished during the 2000s along with the threat of separation. The decline in support for sovereignty has certainly not led to its disappearance. Polls indicate support for sovereignty or independence remains stable at 40%.

The redefinition of Canada as a multinational country offers a path for the emergence of a much greater sense of social cohesion. The importance of this redefinition is that it seeks to accommodate non-charter peoples, First Nations and French Canadians alike. One sign of this new concept was the “recognition” of Quebec as a distinct nation in a declaration by the Canadian Parliament, which included all of the national political parties, in 2006. This symbolic recognition marked a fundamental turning-point in the understanding of Quebec, dealing with an issue that had previously led to very serious political conflicts throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Western Alienation

Political discontentment with or even alienation from Canada has been widespread in the four provinces of Western Canada since the 1970s. These provinces comprise 27% of the Canadian population and 39% of the Gross National Product with dynamic economies as well as strong population growth. Their provincial governments, federal political representatives, and opinion leaders have consistently criticized national policy and federal institutions for failing to effectively represent regional interests.

The Canada West Foundation completed a multi-year survey of western discontent in 2004. It found that, despite repeated predictions that “western” identity would decline as provincial identity increased, regional identity remains very strong, and about 80% of westerners continue to identify themselves regionally more so than provincially. There is a strong if varied sense of western economic autonomy that gets stronger moving west from Manitoba to British Columbia. The Canada West Foundation survey found that
27.5% of westerners thought that the west would be “better off” if the region separated from Canada. Finally, more than 64% of westerners tend to think that the region is treated either “poorly or very poorly” within the Canadian federation, while more than 58% thought that the region did not receive its “fair share” of national resources. Conditions are present for significant political discontent and, yet, the actual expressions of discontent remain focused on reforming national institutions and policies and rebalancing the federation rather than disengagement from it.8

National surveys have been conducted annually since 1985 on the question of federal government treatment of federal-provincial matters. These surveys indicate persistent patterns of discontentment throughout the country. These surveys also show considerable variation between provinces and/or regions. The western provinces and Quebec tend to be more disapproving, whereas Ontario, comprising over 40% of national population, and the Atlantic Provinces, are most approving. The 2006 poll, however, showed range of approval of federal government activities ranges from 37% in Quebec, 54% in Ontario, 39% in Saskatchewan and 55% in British Columbia, with the national average of approval being 49%.9

Imigrants

Until the 1970s, Canada’s “vertical mosaic” meant that immigrants entered a segmented and hierarchical political, social, and economic order. Canadian policy was to recruit immigrants, but Canadian practice was to ensure ethnic, racial and religious segmentation. With the exception of elite representatives of ethnic groups and members of the most-preferred peoples, immigrants experienced either ambivalent or hostile receptions.10

A fundamental shift in Canadian immigration policy was expressed in the 1976 Immigration Act. Canada’s long standing national policy of encouraging large-scale immigration chiefly on the basis of economic need was revised, and with it the national policy abandoned the equally long standing bias towards peoples of European and chiefly British ancestry. Since the late 1970s, Canadian immigration policy has been more global in scope, based on two pillars of economic requirements and family reunification. In 2002, the policy was revised as the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, indicating a stronger emphasis on refugee recruitment as a third
policy pillar. Currently between 20-25% of immigrants are family members, 60-67% are economic immigrants, and about 10% are refugees.11

Immigration levels have been high, with about two million people entering Canada during each of the 1990s and the 2000s. The source countries of immigrants has shifted dramatically, away from Great Britain, the United States and western Europe (particularly Italy and Germany) in the 1950s and 1960s towards Asia (especially China, India, Philippines), plus lesser proportions from other regions of the world throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. In the period from 2001 to 2006, more than 70% of immigrants were not native speakers of English or French.

The foreign-born population in Canada continues to increase. As of the 2006 census, 19.8% of the population was foreign-born. There has been a high concentration of new immigrants in the three largest metropolitan centres of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. These three large cities received 69% of all immigrant arrivals in the 2001-6 period. More than 45% of Toronto’s population is foreign-born, while 40% of Vancouver’s and nearly a quarter of Montreal’s are foreign-born.

Formal immigration policy has been relatively uncontroversial in the past two decades, as public policy and popular reaction have emphasized the positive aspects of immigration. Citizenship policy has been accommodative and citizenship acquisition has been very robust, with about 95% of new Canadians acquiring citizenship within a decade of arrival. The experience of visible minorities has been fairly positive, although awareness of racial prejudice and a degree of economic subordination are notable, measurable aspects of immigrant life. One study concluded that awareness of “difference” and social segmentation remained sufficiently strong that a “new vertical mosaic increasingly distinguishes between European-origin immigrants (charter groups and third force) and more visible minorities, including aboriginal peoples as well as more recent immigrants from Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Latin America.”12

Public policy debate about immigration has focused on such matters as the effectiveness of citizenship and language acquisition programs and the distribution of immigrant populations among the
provinces. In Quebec, understandably sensitive to the matter of language, there have been strong measures taken to make French the language of education and work and a successful drive to develop immigrant recruitment policies jointly with the federal government. The latter project has now been offered to all provinces, which has begun to encourage greater dispersal of immigrants away from the three main urban centres. There are no significant anti-immigration movements. Incidents of “white supremacist” organization and behaviour in western Canada in the 1990s were induced by tiny fringe groups and were dealt with as criminal offenses.13

Two anomalies in immigration policy have emerged. The first concerns foreign students. The number of foreign students admissions have increased from an annual total of less than 100,000 in the early 1990s to well over 200,000 during the 2000s. Foreign students have been recruited heavily by Canadian colleges and universities and pay double the tuition fees charged to Canadian students. Their role in the post-secondary system has occasioned little debate except for some unease about the additional revenues [premium fees] Canadian institutions [charge] have acquired. The second surrounds temporary workers. Canada has dramatically increased the number of new and continuing temporary workers from about 175,000 per year during the nineties to well over 300,000 in each of 2007 and 2008. The category of temporary worker encompasses a range of occupations, including business managers, factory workers and farm labourers. In the case of both foreign students and temporary workers, there has been very little public awareness of or policy debate about what have become large groups neither of which has as yet any formal claims to permanent residency.

2. INCLUSION/EXCLUSION

Inclusion requires bringing people into recognised forms of economic activity, especially holding jobs of quality, and access to income in order to purchase basic goods in the consumption market. Two institutions are important to determine the net income required for disposition as household consumption: the market and the state (income tax and transfer payments). As Jane Jensen has noted, “social cohesion is related to economic institution and especially one central institution of modern societies, that is, markets. One can ask about any institution, such as a market for example, who has access and
who is excluded, who has effective opportunity and who is marginalised from full participation?\textsuperscript{14} In her work on social cohesion, Jenson also insists on the social economy as an important institution along with the labour market and the State. “For many proponents, the social economy also means moving more service delivery out of the informal economy;”\textsuperscript{15} more precisely, out of black economy and of unpaid family or caring work. The social economy creates paid jobs but outside the regular market and outside public service, and this “third sector” contributes by including more people in a recognized form of economy and providing needed services. It is important not to confuse the social economy with voluntary work. The social economy sector is growing in importance and it is financed by different sources: the state, foundations of all kind, unions, and associations, among other sources. People working in the social economy generally receive lower pay, compared to salaries paid on the market or inside the civil service. The social economy contributes to increased social cohesion from the point of view of the labour force participation, but not necessarily from the point of view of providing more disposable income for consumption.

Labour force participation as well as income and redistribution provide indicators of Canada’s evolution toward stronger social cohesion in terms of inclusion/exclusion.

\textit{Work and Unemployment}

More people are working or are ready to work (including unemployed people and people looking for a job) in the labour market, while the employment rate (percentage of individuals effectively working among 15–64 years population) is increasing over the long term, a trend affected by economic cycles. Women’s participation rate continues to increase and men’s participation rate stopped its decline and is still increasing.

A large Canadian bank has estimated an index of Employment Quality that shows a clear decline in the overall quality of employment in the Canadian labour market during the 1990s and 2000s. Job quality is measured with three indicators: part-time/full-time distribution, relative income, and relative stability of a given job. The younger generation suffers more of job insecurity and receives less for hours worked. More young people were in low-paid jobs in 2000 (45% of 15-24 year-olds) than in 1980 (31.2%).\textsuperscript{16}
Trends in unemployment rates reveal that labour market conditions have improved steadily over the past 25 years. Over this longer term, the Canadian labour market has offered good employment opportunities. Major labour shortages were found in some regions, particularly Western Canada (Alberta and recently Saskatchewan). For the first time since the end of the Second World War, during the 2000s Quebec’s unemployment rates were lower than Ontario’s. This trend has been affected by the economic crisis that began in 2008, since unemployment is a lagging indicator. Demographic trends such as the aging of the Canadian population suggest that the labour market will remain strong in the future. Over the long term, the ratio of job-losers to total employment is declining and fewer workers tend to suffer involuntary job-loss.

As a source of social exclusion for the most vulnerable persons, the duration of unemployment tends to be more significant than the specific incidence of unemployment. Long-term unemployment has surpassed short-term unemployment during the second full economic cycle examined. But both types of unemployment have been declining during the period of prosperity from the mid-1990s to the late-2000s. The long-term unemployment rate was higher than the medium-term rate. It is likely that the reverse will take place during the recessionary period starting in 2009. Sharpe and Arsenault have pointed out that fewer unemployed people have been eligible to receive “employment insurance” benefits since changes were made to the system in the mid-1990s.

Incomes and Redistribution

The average market income (total income and after-tax real total income of Canadian family units) followed the ups-and-downs of the economic cycles between 1981 and 2006. Real total income began to increase after 2000 following a long period of either decline or “stability”. Income redistribution mechanisms continue to work effectively over the entire period. Transfer payments have raised average income over both cycles, but the importance of these transfers has become greater at the end of the period (11.7% of total income in 2004) than at the outset (8.8% of total income in 1981). The contribution of income taxes to incomes has increased slightly, from 15.3% in 1981 to 17.5% in 2004. State intervention, therefore,
has been important to helping raise the net disposable income of households in the bottom quintiles.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Inequality}

Inequality in the distribution of income — and therefore the disposable income of Canadian households — has been increasing between 1981 and 2006. This increase is revealed in two classic indicators, the ratio of top to bottom quintiles and the Gini coefficient, which measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of income. Taxes and transfer payments contribute to lowering the level of inequality, but they are not sufficient to ensure a decrease in after-tax incomes.

Shifts in the composition of households also affect the changes in income per family unit. The characteristics of households are measured as either unattached individual units or economic families (two or more persons) and then each category is further refined. The growth in after-tax income of unattached units has been lower than the growth of all types of economic families. The proportion of unattached units has increased and this has tended to lower the overall growth of all family units. Clearly all units are not like boats on a rising tide of income. Between 1981 and 2005, average after-tax income for all family units increased by 8.8\%, by 15.1\% for all economic families but only 7.6\% for unattached individuals. It is notable that there has been a larger proportional increase in lone-parent families of this period (27.6\%). But it is also notable that both unattached individuals and lone-parent families have a higher entry-rate and a lower exit-rate into the low income category than other economic family types.

In general, poverty levels and low-income measures have followed the economic cycle both up and down since 1981. The incidence of low-income units based on the Low Income Cut-Off (a measure developed by the Government of Canada) peaked at 14\% of households in 1984 during one recession, declined to just over 10\% by 1989 but then rose to nearly 16\% of households in 1996 and declined to more than 11\% in 2005. However, the poverty level has declined over the long-term period according to measures such as the “basket” approach and the net income per unit.
Minimum wages expressed in constant dollars have increased over the long period of 25 years. But a measure of minimum wage growth as a proportion of the average wage also shows that “all of the relative improvement took place in the 1983-1995 period” when it peaked at 41% of the average wage.¹⁹

Future expectations

Long-term surveys conducted by Ipsos-Reid from 1991 to 2004 have measured public expectations about their own and the country’s economic future. In general, Canadians have held positive expectations about the future, and are more consistently positive about their family’s economic situation than about the Canadian economy, where they express much greater variation in their expectations. Clearly opinions will have changed during the 2008 and 2009 period of recession. Moreover, their subjective perception about the adequacy of family income is declining.

3. The Social Bond

The “social bond” is conceptualized as have both a structural component and a cultural component. The structural component refers to types of households as well as to various aspects of social interaction, including social engagement, social support, and community safety. The cultural component refers to various norms and values that support the social structure, including attitudes toward trust, respect for diversity, altruism, and a sense of belonging.²⁰

Social Engagement and Social Support

One important indicator of social engagement is participation in group activities. The literature on social capital demonstrates that participation in voluntary organizations is a key indicator of community vitality. The Canadian trend shows that about half of citizens participated in voluntary organizations in 1997, with this trend remaining stable until 2000. In the new millennium, the membership in voluntary organizations increased by about 20%, to a membership level of 61%. However, the levels of participation among the provinces vary considerably. The lowest levels of participation are reported in Quebec, where participation was under 45%, and rose to 53%. By contrast, the highest participation levels are
found in Nova Scotia, where the membership rose from 63% to 69%. Membership in voluntary organizations expresses a somewhat superficial level of commitment. A stronger level of social engagement is expressed in actual volunteer activity. The pattern in voluntary participation is similar to that of membership, rising over the reporting period. In general, the rates of actual volunteering are about 60% of the voluntary membership rates. In Canada, about one-third of citizens volunteer their services.

An extensive literature confirms that personal well-being is supported by close social ties. Alienation is not conducive to health or happiness. Strong social ties can take many forms, but an enduring, important source of these essential linkages are close relatives. Slightly over one-third of Canadians have relationships with close relatives. This number conceals considerable regional variation. In general, these close family ties are most prevalent in the Atlantic region. Central Canada reports the lowest rates, and Quebec at less than 25%. The trend for relationships with close relatives shows a decline. Between 1996 and 2003, almost all provinces reported a decline in the percentages of close relatives. This reduction was most prevalent in the Atlantic region, where this type of bond has been most prevalent. While family bonds are important, they are not the only source of social support. Members in healthy communities both give and receive support. The norm of reciprocity is well rooted across Canada. In all regions about 80% or more of adults report that they directly help others.

Strong social bonds serve dual functions; they both sustain and constrain. Social support and its myriad of consequences illustrate how social bonds sustain members. As social bonds weaken, their hold on members decline. As the constraining effects of social bonds lessen, "deviance" is more likely and property and violent crime are both more prevalent when the constraining effects of social bonds are reduced. The rate of violent crime in Canada is relatively low (under 1000 per 100,000) and has declined slightly in recent years. The rate of property crime has decreased by almost a third over the same period, from 5.571 in 1993 to 3.738 per 100,000 in 2005.

Objective conditions of crime are not necessarily aligned with subjective assessments of personal safety. Many factors, but
particularly sensationalist reporting in the mass media, help account for this misalignment. Nonetheless, the “Thomas dictum” about definitions of reality having important consequences makes subjective assessments as (or more) meaningful than objective conditions. Canadian perceptions of community safety have been measured using the percentage of persons reporting that they feel safe walking alone after dark. A very high percentage of Canadians feel a sense of personal safety in their communities rising from nearly 87% in 1993 to 90% in 2004. And this trend has grown slightly in recent years.

**Trust and Belonging to a Community**

Trust is a fundamental element of social capital and a central ingredient of social cohesion. The 2005 survey of Canadians who agree that “most people can be trusted” shows that a majority think so. While the Canadian average is 55%, there is considerable range between the regions. About two-thirds of citizens in the western provinces hold this belief, while only about one-third of those in Quebec do so. A sense of trust both supports and is a product of a sense of community. Surveys conducted in 2001, 2003, and 2005 of Canadians inquired whether they had a “very strong” sense of community. Similar to the evidence regarding trust, the survey shows that a majority of Canadians (55% to just over 60%) report a very strong sense of community belonging. Moreover, between 2001 and 2005, this sense has grown in almost all parts of the country. A stronger sense of community attachment is felt in the provinces of the Atlantic region (at least 70%), with the least sense being reported in Quebec (just over 50%).

Over the decade between 1994 and 2003, Canadians were asked about caring for others. A common belief is that the demands of modern living leave less time for oneself and even less for caring for others. Canadians were directly asked for their assessment of their concern for other people. In 1994, in all regions, a significant percentage of Canadians (one-quarter to one-third) resisted the idea that they were less concerned about caring for the needs of others. In the following decade, the trend has been toward increased concern for others, the rate growing by about 50% in most regions to about 40% of the population surveyed.
Discrimination

Trust, caring for others and a sense of belonging all cultivate a sense of social integration. These affective states encourage resistance to actions that corrode a sense of community — one of the most important of which is discrimination. A report on Canadians' experience with discrimination or unjust treatment was carried out in 2002. Viewed most generally, 86% of the population report never experiencing discriminatory or unjust treatment. However, the experience of different groups varies greatly. Among those who are not members of a visible minority, this percentage is at 90. Discriminatory acts are all-too evident among members of visible minorities. Within these groups, only 64% report never experiencing unjust treatment or discrimination. Within this group, one-fifth report that these acts occur sometimes or often and, as noted, nearly one-third have had some experience with discrimination.

The evidence indicates that Canadians have social bonds that are conducive to social cohesion. On all the examined indicators, only a few are of concern with respect to social cohesion, and on most of these the results are not overly troubling. For instance, while rates of volunteering have dropped, they are on an increasing trend and approaching their former levels. While, in most regions, less than a majority report having close relatives, this is a structural feature common in modern societies with extensive social mobility.

The most troubling challenge to social cohesion is in the proportion of visible minorities who report experiencing discrimination or unjust treatment. But even here almost 80% report these experiences as rare or never. Of course, there is clearly a need for social interventions to eradicate the 20% figure among visible minorities who do experience discriminatory treatment.

4. VALUES AND RECOGNITION

Given its substantial Aboriginal populations, its extended history of British/French tensions, and its diverse immigrant communities, Canada would appear to be well-positioned for substantial racial and ethnic cleavages. In the face of these diverse social conditions, Canada has done a remarkable job managing to maintain substantial social cohesion. Many observers claim the root of this cohesion is
grounded in Canada's adoption of the values-based multiculturalism policy.30

To Canadians and non-Canadians alike, multicultural policy emerged as one of the most significant examples of Canadian exceptionalism among nation-states. Multicultural policy is a peculiar development in a couple of ways. First, it is not just an example of the accommodation of two or more national groups within a state, which is an intractable enough problem in many countries. Nor is multicultural policy a variation of the colonialist domination of a conquering community over an indigenous one, which is an increasing challenge in the era of decolonization throughout the world. In Canada, multiculturalism has been taken as a statement of cultural pluralism to encompass both the host populations and immigrants to Canada. The words of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's 1971 statement constituted a startlingly strong expression of cultural pluralism. "We believe, he stated to the House of Commons, "that cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity. Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context. To say we have two official languages is not to say we have two official cultures, and no particular culture is more 'official' than another".31 While subsequent policy, such as the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, and more profoundly, the 1982 Constitution Act and Charter of Rights, might be said to have added more “teeth” to the goals of cultural pluralism and caution about the implicit cultural relativism, Trudeau's statement of 1971 remains a core encapsulation of the Canadian project. These policies may have succeeded in accommodating the multicultural dimensions of the new Canada, but not its binational/bicultural character in the case of Quebec, or the marginal status experienced by Aboriginal peoples.

Multiculturalism has been much debated since its adoption as a policy goal in 1971 and redefined as federal public policy in 1988, which inaugurated the era of strong multicultural policy.32 But multicultural issues and precursors of the multicultural policies had developed from the 1940s to the 1960s. This earlier period of development shows that the multicultural policy that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s was far from a major turning point in Canadian ethnic group policy making and was, to a great extent, an evolution from previous efforts at finding policies to realize a degree of cultural
pluralism. Finally the continuities between early and mature multiculturalism emphasize, if they do not prove, that multicultural policy was and remains subordinated to the policies of a liberal democratic state and society, with all the implications for the defence of parliamentary democracy and market economy that the term liberal democracy implies. This perspective will show that ethnic pluralism in Canadian society predated public policy by several decades. In other words, multiculturalism programmes and policies were developed as mechanisms to recognize and cope with ethnic diversity, not as cultivators of such diversity. However, the stronger Multiculturalism Act of 1988 and subsequent policy initiatives of the federal government move from the recognition to the promotion of diversity and that shift may well be the basis of new problems.

The relative success of multiculturalism as a mechanism for dealing with ethnic diversity can been seen in a number of ways. One is in Canadians' attitudes levels of immigration. Beginning in 1977, for almost two decades about 60% of Canadians reported that immigration levels were too high. Since the mid-1990s the proportion holding this view has steadily declined. Currently, only about 33% of Canadians believe immigration levels are too high.

Related to this increasingly positive attitude toward immigration has been the trend in views about the economic impact of immigration. In 1993, slightly over half (56%) of Canadians agreed that the economic impact of immigration was positive. In the last fifteen years, this proportion has steadily increased. Today over 80% report that immigration's economic impact is positive. In a similar way, beginning in 1993, the proportion who believe that “too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values” declined from over 70 to 60%.

These findings suggest that Canadians' attitudes toward immigrants and immigration are becoming more positive and progressive over time. This generalization holds up even in Quebec, where the extended debate over “reasonable accommodation” of immigrants into the province’s distinctive culture was the subject of the high profile Bouchard-Taylor commission in 2007-2008. The report concluded: “Like all democracies in the world, Québec must seek to reach a consensus against a backdrop of growing diversity, renew the social bond, accommodate difference by combating
discrimination, and promote an identity, a culture and a memory without creating either exclusion or division."

In the post 9/11 era, a challenging test of multiculturalism policy is exemplified in the case of Muslims. The following table illustrates Canada's comparative position on this case. The table presents the percentages who report that "many" or "most" Canadians/Europeans are hostile toward Muslims.

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<td>General Population</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Canada's exceptionality is evident on two accounts in this table. First, slightly over a quarter (28%) of the general population believes that many or most Canadians are hostile toward Muslims. While this figure clearly illustrates room for improvement, the comparable figure for France is double that of Canada's, and in Germany it is two and a quarter times higher. Shifting focus from Muslims to the general Canadian population the numbers are considerably higher, but Canada's relative standing compared to major European nations remains constant.

More evidence that Canada's progressive multiculturalism values and policies are relatively successful when applied to the Muslim case is found in a comparison of Muslim's ranking of Canadian values with those of the general population. When asked to rank which values are their greatest source of pride in Canada, Muslims and the general population ranked their top four values similarly. The Muslim ranking was freedom/democracy (33%), multiculturalism (17%), peaceful country (10%), and humanitarian/caring/friendly (9%). By comparison, the general Canadian populations ranked freedom/democracy (27%), multiculturalism (11%), humanitarian/kind/caring (9%), and peaceful country (6%). The similarity of these rankings, and the fact that Muslims were even more
impressed by the liberal-democratic values of freedom and democracy as well as multiculturalism than the general population, suggests that Canadian values and policies for recognizing and incorporating diverse populations into the social fabric are reasonably successful.

5. PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY

Inquiries into the cohesiveness of Canada, conducted by the Canadian Policy Research Network (CPRN) since 1998 and by the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, show that the sense of unease or malaise about Canadian political and social conditions that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s have continued in the current decade. The CPRN’s studies and several other assessments of Canadian politics since the 1990s have remarked upon significantly lower voter participation and lower levels of confidence in national politics. A recent series of nine volumes “auditing” Canadian democracy was based upon concern over the “democratic deficit” and the “democratic malaise” and a deep sense of public dissatisfaction with politics and government. Behind this dissatisfaction lie structural issues and several key measures of public disinterest in political participation.

Sources of Political Disunity

Three major political fault-lines have continued to demonstrate the limited cohesiveness of the Canadian federation. The first conflict has been the deep concerns about and conflict over the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada that first emerged at the outset of the 1960s and has continued. The strong Quebec separatist political movement emerged in the mid-1960s and consolidated as the Parti Quebecois in 1969. There have been two referenda on separation. The first was held in May of 1980. The question was to negotiate “sovereignty-association” between Quebec and Canada. This proposition was rejected by about 60% of the voters, who were promised a renewed federal system by the federal Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, during the referendum campaign. The post-referendum renewal led to the transformational Constitution Act and entrenched Charter of Rights in 1982. Quebec was the lone province to withhold provincial approval of the new Constitution, though it is bound by it, due to strong concerns about crucial matters ranging from the constitutional amending formula (where Quebec’s
traditional veto was lost) to the application of the Charter in areas of provincial legislative supremacy such as language legislation. None of these matters have been resolved, despite some efforts to do so. Quebec’s isolation in the matter remains a political landmine. The second referendum was held in October of 1995 on the more pointed question of whether Quebec should negotiate its political independence from Canada. The proposal was rejected by a very slender majority of voters, just over 1% of the total vote. The referendums of 1980 and 1995 were supervised by a neutral referendum commission which strictly regulated campaign spending and ensured wide participation. They attracted very strong voter turn-outs, 83.6% in 1980 and 93.5% in 1995, far above normal election turn-outs for either provincial or federal elections in Quebec.

The second conflict has been shaped by western Canada’s determined assertions of regional discontent with the federal system. This discontent has been made clear by continuing western opposition to many, if not most, of the major federal government policy initiatives of the past forty or fifty years, particularly economic development policies. It has also been expressed through persistent opposition to national governing parties, to national parties in general, and to the current system in which the second chamber of national government, the Senate, is unelected and unequally representative of each region.

The third conflict, somewhat more specific, has involved major reservations throughout Canadian society over the meaning and legitimacy of the Canadian Constitution and Charter adopted in 1982. Conflict emerged from the passage of the transformative Constitution Act of 1982, including a Charter of Rights and Freedoms and a constitutional amending formula, due chiefly to the isolation of Quebec in the ratification process, which remains. Beyond Quebec’s crucial refusal to adopt the Constitution Act, there has also emerged a more generalized and more or less permanent division between so-called “charter” Canadians (devotees of the Constitution Act and centralization of power) and “federalist” Canadians (advocates of the primacy of a classical federal system).

**Voter Participation**

The sharp decline in voter turn-out throughout Canada since the 1980s has been seen as an indicator of the crisis of social cohesion.
While Canada had never had particularly heavy voter turn-out (the long-term norms being in the 75% range), it had remained relatively healthy, or at least unexceptional, during the 1960s and 1970s, and seemed to be fairly stable. In 1980, national voter participation declined to just below 70%, a rare but hardly anomalous level. After an apparent recovery in the mid-eighties, voter participation at the federal level declined during the 1990s and continued to decline, with one blip in 2006, during the current decade. At the national level, the political system is prone to periods of minority government and the country has experienced no fewer than 16 elections in the past fifty years. There has been a notable decline from participation above the 75% range in the 1960s to the 60% range in the 2000s.\(^4\)

Not only has there been a broad decline in national voter participation, but it has been constant across the provinces in the four federal elections held in the new century. There is little difference between provinces that have been characteristically discontented with the Canadian federation, specifically Quebec and Alberta, and those most likely to be satisfied with the status quo, such as Ontario with its perceived political predominance at the federal level.\(^5\)

Provincial politics are sometimes often said to be closer to the electorate, but provincial voter participation also shows increasing signs of political malaise reflected in declining voter turn-out. Two examples may suffice. Alberta has been a hotbed of political discontent with Canada. It also demonstrates strong satisfaction with the provincial government, supporting one party, the Progressive Conservatives, since 1971. The provincial governing party has withstood not only four different leaders during its almost-four decades of rule but also the fracturing of its federal counterpart between 1988 and 2005 and many internal challenges. However, there has been growing voter disinterest since the advent of reliable data in the mid-1970s. The average voter turn-out since 1975 in Alberta has been 54.5%, somewhat lower than the relatively lower voter turn-out of the other western Canadian provinces. Since 2000, over three elections, Alberta voter turn-out has been under 49% and in 2008 it was remarkably low at just over 40%. This exceptionally low turn-out contrasts with Alberta voter turn-out at federal elections, which is actually higher in the new century at 58% in four elections.\(^6\)
Since 1970, Quebec elections have been conducted by political parties strongly polarized over the issue of Quebec's constitutional future and strongly animated about the role of government in the province. For those reasons and perhaps others, Quebeckers have been among the most heavily engaged voters at the provincial level in Canada over the past forty years. The pattern of voter turn-out has been more like that of western European states than any other part of Canada except Newfoundland (which was, until 1949, self-governing). The pattern of voter participation in Quebec provincial elections held at a very robust level during the 1970s (well over 80% turn-outs) but began a slow but persistent decline since the early 1980s. Since the start of the new century, three elections have been held, and the average turn-out is just over 65%, far higher than Alberta's of course and higher than Canada's participation rate in the same period. But the relative decline is remarkable and in the most recent provincial election of 2008, under 58% of the electorate voted.

Similar patterns of declining voter turn-out can be found throughout Canada at the provincial levels since the 1980s. Eight of the ten provinces have experienced declining voter turn-out similar in magnitude to those of Quebec and Alberta. For instance, Newfoundland, which once demonstrated western European style voter turn-out in the 80% range, has experienced a decline similar to Quebec's while Manitoba now attracts a bare 50% voter turn-out.

Public Political Concerns

The decline of interest in electoral politics does seem to reflect the malaise about political participation that has prompted the many studies of social cohesion and the democratic deficit. Conversely, polling data about the perception among Canadians of "the most important problem facing Canadians today" does not confirm this conclusion. National polls conducted since 1989 indicate that political questions about national unity or the place of Quebec in Canada have been ranked highly by only a small proportion of the population. Only to a limited extent do worries about national unity or Quebec capture more than a limited sense of concern among the Canadian population. At the height of constitutional debates in the early to mid 1990s, about 5% of the population thought that the matter of national unity including French/English relations or constitutional issues was the primary national problem. Instead, matters such as the
state of the economy and, above all, unemployment and the condition of the economy, ranked far higher, identified by 15 to 20% or more of those polled as the most important problem facing Canadians. Even environmental issues, from time to time, have been seen as more significant than national unity or English-French problems.45

When the Canadian economy began a period of expansion in the mid 1990s, the proportion of Canadians identifying political concerns began to decline almost steadily. It now stands at less than 2% and ranks as one of the least important concerns. Instead, the health of the national healthcare system, during the 2000s, has consistently ranked as the most important problem facing the country, often capturing the concerns of 15 to 25% of the population, though economic matters such as unemployment and the economy in general remain buoyant issues to 8 to 10% of Canadians.46

Political Corruption

Canada's de Tocqueville, Andre Siegfried, marveled a century ago at the high level of political and electoral corruption.47 Indeed, not only electoral corruption but administrative corruption struck him as lying at the heart of the political culture, serving as a unifying factor amidst Catholic/Protestant, French/English antipathies. In the past twenty-five years, political corruption scandals at each level of government have surfaced regularly. Most prominently, perhaps, at the federal levels three of the last five Prime Ministers have been embroiled in corruption or serious mismanagement charges affecting their governments and themselves.

There was considerable public interest in 2004 and 2005 over the awarding of federal advertising contracts and other projects, dubbed the "sponsorship scandal." This political scandal cast a shadow on activities of the federal Liberal government over the previous decade. It focused on weak if not corrupt administrative controls on the part of cabinet ministers and deputy ministers and very weak financial controls by both Parliament and government departments surrounding federal advertising contracts. It led to a judicial inquiry into the sponsorship program and other federal advertising and political financing activities, conducted by Justice John Gomery of the Quebec Superior Court from 2004 to 2006. The Gomery Inquiry identified not only a specific project of diverting public funds to advertising agencies to develop pro-federal government
announcements in Quebec but also a crisis of political accountability in the cabinet and Parliament as well as among very senior civil servants alike. The Gomery Inquiry reached the conclusion that there is a crisis of political and administrative ethics. A leading political scientist, Donald Savoie, who also served as Gomery’s research advisor, has described the crisis as a “collapse of governmental accountability.” Savoie has warned in several academic studies conducted over a number of years about a condition of excessive executive partisanship and weakening public service and parliamentary roles.

Yet the problems of political and administrative accountability are not found in comparative assessments of the broad indicators of Canada’s quality of governance. At least at the federal level, the government of Canada appears to have not only long since escaped from the condition Siegfried described but to have sustained one of the highest levels of effective governance. The “World Governance Indicators” project, sponsored by a research group working for the World Bank since 1996, has assessed more than 200 countries using 35 data sources. These indicators examine six dimensions (voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption). Canada’s ranking in each of these, and particularly in the control of corruption, has turned out to be in the top rank of countries less subject to corruption. For instance, the assessment of control of corruption reveals that Canada’s country ranking has remained the best of all of the largest 10 economies in the OECD and, indeed, in all dimensions Canada’s ranking is either first or second among the large OECD countries. Certainly Canada’s ranking has been inferior to the small liberal democracies (e.g. Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, or Switzerland) in one or more dimension.

None of this information should lead to the conclusion that there are not problems with all aspects of governmentality in Canada, ranging from public accountability and effective government to the rule of law and political corruption. But it does indicate that there is no empirical evidence of systematic decline or crisis. Even Justice Gomery stated that the sponsorship scandal was “an anomaly”.

Social cohesion in Canada
6. MACROSOCILOGICAL ISSUES

Welfare state issues

A principal source of social cohesion is labour force participation that fosters inclusion in our societies. Public policies can help develop employability of individuals and the state can adopt macroeconomic policies that contribute to maintain a healthy labour market. But social cohesion is not only the result of the aggregation of actions of individuals on the labour market; it is also the result of solidarity in the Durkheimian sense. More precisely, in developed societies social solidarity is enhanced by different interventions of the welfare state that insure minimum wages for employed people, basic income (insurance) for unemployed workers, grants to students, minimum social security benefits for the poor and dependent population, pensions for the elderly people, and the like. Social cohesion depends upon minimizing poverty, unemployment, and extensive income polarization through different state interventions.

In Canada, poverty levels of families with children are persistently high, in spite of the adoption in the 1990s of a public discourse that proposed elimination of child poverty at the horizon 2000. Between 1980 and 2006, poverty levels followed the two full economic cycles with up and downs. The depth of poverty of the poor population has intensified in at least four identifiable social categories: single parents, persons with disabilities, single individuals in the last part of their life cycle (45-65 years), and recent immigrants. In addition, poverty rates in almost all Aboriginal communities and villages are at a very high level, with some exceptions among the Crees in northern Quebec, band in the some western provinces, and some villages close to large cities.

In their study of the living standards domain of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, Andrew Sharpe and Jean-François Arsenault concluded that the “frayed social safety net provides less support for the disadvantaged” than it did in the past. This conclusion is based on a decrease in real welfare benefits between 1986 and 2006, an increase in private family expenditures for healthcare, and a decline of the overall index of economic security. The composite index of well being built by the two authors – based on average values of a dozen indicators – fell 4% between 1988 and 2006, and suggested that Canadian have suffered a deterioration in the living standards over
the period. Other studies supporting this conclusion observed that employment insurance was less generous in terms of coverage and required longer qualifying periods and reduced duration of benefits in the 2000s than in the 1980s.

The welfare state remains important in Canada and it continues to play a major role in maintaining social cohesion in the society. Sharpe and Arsenault conclude [from] their study that increased inequality in income does not mean that persons and households at the bottom of the distribution are worse off in absolute terms, only that they are worse off in relative terms. These growing inequalities clearly have their source in the operation of markets and the fact that the welfare state is less capable or inclined to reduce resulting inequalities, contrary to the situation in the 1960s and 1970s.

**Equalization**

Among the most important factors that have limited the capacities of the provincial governments to deliver public services are constitutional limitations on their fiscal powers, particularly taxation. This leads to extreme variations in the capacities of Canadian provinces to deliver services, to deal with the ups-and-downs of the economic cycle, and to respond to the federal government's fiscal capacities to introduce new programmes. Fiscal equalization (revenue sharing) became a key part of Canadian government in 1943 and was formalized in 1957. The importance of equalization to the contemporary provision of government services was made clear by its entrenchment in the 1982 Charter of Rights.

Since its inception equalization has been a key mechanism by which the federal government redistributes federal taxes to provincial governments. Currently, equalization is one of three major federal transfers, along with a health transfer for medical and hospital insurance, and a social transfer for post-secondary education and social welfare programmes.

Redistribution under equalization is based on a complex formula assessing and averaging provincial fiscal capacities. The goal is “to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenue to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services.” The equalization programme means that the majority of provinces, usually seven or eight, receive unconditional funding for social programmes,
while the two or three wealthiest provinces do not. Equalization is a significant source of provincial funding, with the levels currently ranging under 10% to over 35% of provincial revenues and between about 70 and 80% of the revenues of the three northern territories.55

Constitutionally entrenched and established by practice, it should be an uncontroversial mechanism, yet the review and renewal of equalization against the backdrop of changing fiscal conditions leads to regular conflict if not crises about provincial social spending. During the economic downturns of the mid-1980s and early-1990s, federal decisions to limit or cut transfers had severe effects on the most dependent provinces and added to federal-provincial mistrust. Federal efforts to rebuild the fiscal relationship after about 2000 have repaired inter-governmental trust, but the current economic situation may well test it once again.

CONCLUSION

In recent decades globalization and related social forces are presenting multiple challenges to both specific nations and the international community. In the words of the OECD, these forces are resulting in “growing strains on the fabric of society.”56 Canada is certainly not immune from these strains. The evidence indicates, however, that while stressed and strained, and frayed in many places, the Canadian social fabric has resisted significant tearing.

There are many possible explanations for this relatively positive result in terms of social cohesion in Canada. In the introduction we mentioned that, in general, Canadians are embedded in a social context that encourages the kind of freedom and flexibility that makes successful coping with diversity more likely. These conditions include relatively high levels of “social differentiation” and “structural looseness.” Social differentiation, in the form of what sociologists call “complexity of role sets”, has long been recognized as a fundamental feature encouraging flexibility, autonomy, and adaptation.57 In addition, the relative structural looseness of Canadian society is evident in the social fact that normative social prescriptions are more a subject of interpretation than imposition. This “interpretiveness” provides degrees of freedom for accommodation within and between diverse orientations.
Social cohesion in Canada

In a parallel way, Canada’s comparative success in terms of social cohesiveness can be framed in terms of the pervasiveness of “cross-cutting” ties. A well-established axiom in social science is that social cleavages, discord, and violence are enhanced where group loyalty is high. Where groups establish high levels of loyalty, what Coser calls “patterns of undivided commitment,” integration between groups becomes more problematic. One social condition that inhibits the formation of overly-strong group commitments is the presence of extensive “cross-cutting ties.” This type of social bond occurs when members of a community have multiple links to members of other communities with differing orientations. The high levels of social differentiation and structural looseness present in Canadian society promotes the existence of extensive cross-cutting ties. These cross-cutting ties, in turn, discourage over-commitment along racial, ethnic, or other community lines, which results in greater collective (versus group) orientation and reduced issues of integration.

A recent study illustrates the extensive nature of cross-cutting social ties in Canada. In this study the authors created measures of three domains of social cohesion in Canada. The social domain covered recognition and belonging with issues such as volunteering, civic participation, ethnic diversity, and socializing. The economic domain captured the issues of inclusion and equality through measures of personal income, employment status, and job tenure. The political domain explored legitimacy and participation through voting studies of federal, provincial, and municipal elections. Let us remark that these three domains correspond more or less with the three constitutive dimensions of social cohesion identified by Michel Forsé and Maxime Parodi. Scores for each of these three domains were computed for census metropolitan areas (CMAs) across the nation. As predicted for a nation with high cross-cutting ties, the scores across the CMAs “varied enormously in the three domains.” No CMA scored high in all three areas and often high scores in one domain were compensated by low scores in another. The pattern was seen to prevent a “polarization in the overall rankings.”

This lack of clarity based on cross-cutting patterns is characteristic of Canada. One characteristic expression is in the stereotypical view of an enduring “identity crisis” Canadians have of themselves. Andrew Cohen recently framed the issue as follows: “The Canadian Identity, as it has come to be known, is as elusive as the Sasquatch
and Ogopogo. It has animated — and frustrated — generations of statesmen, historians, writers, artists, philosophers, and the National Film Board. "Canada resists easy definition." It is common for this ambiguous formulation of national identity to be assessed in negative, critical terms; as a sign of national immaturity or an object of derision. More systematically, political scientists and sociologists, have long puzzled over Canada's lack of unifying characteristics. Only by recognizing that Canada is held together by civic values rather than ethno-cultural characteristics let alone common historical experiences or myths, have social scientists come to appreciate the resiliency of the country. The importance of the evidence reviewed in this paper certainly suggests that an alternative explanation to the perpetual concern about Canada's "identity crisis" deserves greater consideration. The comparative strength of Canada's social cohesion is embedded in the comparative looseness of its national culture and social structures.

NOTES


[2] The difference between singularity and convergence is explained in Simon Langlois et al., Convergence or Divergence? Comparing Recent Social Trends in Industrial Societies, (Frankfurt, Campus Verlag and Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).


[6] The 57 languages spoken in Aboriginal communities have never been officially used in the governing institutions of the country.
[9] School of Public Policy Queen’s University, Canadian Opinion Research Archive, www.queensu.ca/trends/mip
[18] Idem p. 32.
[22] Idem.


The following evidence is taken from Michael Adams 2008 *Unlikely Utopia*. Toronto Penguin Canada.


See the website of Elections Canada for links to federal and provincial data: [www.elections.ca/](http://www.elections.ca/)

[42] Idem.

[43] Idem.


[45] School of Public Policy, Queen’s University, Canadian Opinion Research Archive, [www.queensu.ca/cora/trends/mip](http://www.queensu.ca/cora/trends/mip).

[46] Idem.


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[53] Idem p. 115.

[54] Charter Section 36.2


