

**THE DIFFERENT FACETS OF DIVERSITY
AND SOCIAL COHESION**

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THE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY ON SOCIAL COHESION

Introduction - Definitions and dimensions

Globalization, increased mobility, economic restructuring and changing demographics, among other forces, are making Canada an increasingly diverse society. This paper will discuss the various facets of this diversity and will situate them within the context of current concerns about social cohesion. Since the concepts of social cohesion and diversity utilized in the paper are somewhat broad, this introductory section will begin by defining the term *social cohesion* and the various ways that diversity both contributes to and challenges it. It will then sketch the elements of diversity that are likely to represent the greatest challenges to social cohesion in Canada over the medium to longer-term.

Broad based disaffection with governments and institutions is rampant as they no longer seem capable of managing the growing sense of anxiety/insecurity evident in society, resulting in a general sense malaise in public life. The common factors driving this malaise are aging populations, labour market instability, rapid pluralism and public fiscal crises.

Ekos Research Associates Inc. in Rethinking Government III - Final Report, 1997

The working definition developed to guide current federal government research in this area emphasizes that social cohesion is not a steady state, but an **ongoing process** -- one that aims at **developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity within Canada, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity among all Canadians**. As societies become more diverse, cleavages or faultlines can develop if measures are not taken to ensure inclusiveness and a sense of belonging for all citizens. Because of the need to accommodate difference peacefully, the issue of diversity usually features prominently in contemporary discussions of social cohesion. In fact, the sustainability of communities, including national communities, may increasingly depend upon the success with which they manage social, economic and cultural diversity both at the systemic and the symbolic levels.

Historical forces made it imperative that Canadian governments recognize from the beginning the role of French, English and Aboriginal peoples in nation building, and as a result, decision makers in this country became relatively more accustomed than their counterparts in other countries to accommodating both ethnic and regional diversity. Accommodation of diversity became even more of a pragmatic necessity throughout the 20th century as successive waves of immigrants landed on Canadian shores. However, as the 21st century approaches, new types of policy initiatives may be needed to address diversity issues arising from new pressures, such as an aging population and structurally-induced income inequality.

On the positive side, diversity has the potential to be one of Canada's greatest strengths and comparative advantages. For example, Anne Golden has described how Canada's reputation as one of the world's most successful multicultural, tolerant, law-abiding and civil societies—a society widely recognized for its high quality of life and equality of opportunity -- figures prominently in many decisions to invest in Canada over other countries. It may also represent a comparative advantage in the social and cultural sphere, as Canadians seek to influence foreign policy through the exercise "soft power" – the power that rests in the values and ideas that have shaped our responses to diversity.

On the other hand, Canada also finds itself challenged in a variety of ways by changes in its social and demographic landscape. Major elements of diversity and their concomitant challenges include:

- 1) age structure with its potential to stimulate intergenerational conflict over issues of equity and entitlements;
- 2) ethno-cultural composition, with its many challenges to racial and religious tolerance, effective citizenship and questions as to the access and equality of services and programs;
- 3) changing family structures, which may entail a higher risk of child poverty, family violence and domestic abuse, and other dysfunctional outcomes;
- 4) growing disparities between “haves” and “have nots” which may be weakening Canada’s traditional self-image as a caring, compassionate and tolerant community.

Many of these demographic shifts often interact with one another, as well as with other types of potential polarization—gender relations, for example, and rural-urban cleavages. They therefore are important foundational points of departure for understanding the complex structural challenges confronting citizens and governments in strengthening social cohesion as we approach the new millennium. This paper will examine diversity from the broad perspective described above. Due to time and data constraints, other background papers in this series may take a narrower and more traditional view of the subject. However, their focused analytical approach should be considered within the more complex and recursive framework set forth in this document.

1) Age Structure

In its portrait of the demographic situation in 1997, Statistics Canada reported a substantial decline in natural population growth since 1991. By 1996, natural growth accounted for only 47% of the total growth, while immigration accounted for 53%. By comparison, in the U.S., immigration accounts for only one-third of the total. The population as a whole was also getting significantly older—with the notable exception of the Aboriginal population. Projections show that the number of those aged 65 and over will triple over the next 40 years, and that by 2030, this age group will represent fully 23% of the population, the majority of whom will be women. This aging of the general population has the potential to generate intergenerational conflict with younger Canadians who face higher unemployment rates, earn less than their parents, are more insecure about their job opportunities and conditions, yet are better educated.

Many of those “younger Canadians” are Aboriginal. A study by the Four Directions Consulting Group of Winnipeg estimated that over 50% of the Aboriginal population is under 25 years of age. This trend is expected to continue in both the short and medium terms. As a result, the number of on-reserve children attending elementary or secondary schools is expected to increase by 250,000 students over the next fifteen years and the number of registered Indian post-secondary enrolments could increase by more than 19,000 during the same period. Because of this Aboriginal “baby boom”, annual on-reserve employment growth will need to be four to five times the rate of job growth in the 1980s to achieve the average Canadian employment rate by 2010.

In a Statistics Canada paper on Parent-Child Exchanges of Supports and Intergenerational Equity, Stone, Rosenthal and Connidis found that unpaid work and informal care-giving was more extensive than the formal supports of one generation to another (for example, through the pension system). While such conclusions are still subject to dispute, an aging society will

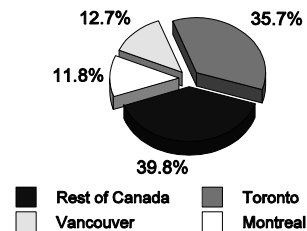
undeniably present tremendous challenges to individuals, communities, and governments of all jurisdictions across virtually every field of personal choice, public policy and governance. These challenges may be exacerbated if a younger, more ethnically diverse population sees itself disadvantaged by an older, more homogeneous one. The impact on social cohesion will depend on whether the needs and expectations of older Canadians can be accommodated over the next two decades without depriving younger Canadians of jobs, educational opportunities and pensions.

2) Ethnic and Cultural Composition

The ethno-cultural, racial, religious and linguistic make-up of Canada has become steadily more diverse over the past 40 years. In 1941, half of Canada's population was of British origin and 30% was of French. By 1996, 44% of the population reported an origin other than English, French or Canadian. Of this 44%, German was the most frequently reported ethno-cultural origin in 1996, followed by Italian, Aboriginal, Ukrainian, Chinese and Dutch. Six non-European groups were among the top 20 most frequently reported ethnic origins: Aboriginal, Chinese, South Asian, Filipino, Jamaican and Latin American. Moreover, this diversity is compounded by the large numbers of Canadians who report more than one ethnic origin. For example, over 2 million people of German extraction also reported other ethnic origins, as did about two-thirds of the Ukrainians and the Dutch.

According to Statistics Canada, immigrants represented 17.4% of the population in 1996, as compared to 15% in 1950 and 16% in 1986. And in Canada's largest urban centres (e.g. Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal) ethnic minorities make up anywhere from 30% to nearly 40% of the population. Given the substantial decline in natural population growth, Canada's reliance on immigration to maintain a minimum level of population and labour force growth will continue for the foreseeable future.

Distribution of Immigrant Population, 1996



SOURCE: 1996 Census of Canada

Some researchers have suggested that Canada's multicultural diversity provides an opportunity to exploit diaspora networks, particularly within the East Asia community. Aryn B. Sajoo, in a study on [Diversity and its Dividends](#), noted that ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and Indians in Singapore have afforded access to transnational business networks for those countries and suggested that, "Given the remarkable trade-investment potential at hand, the failure to deploy Canada's human resources as conduits for economic revitalization would be costly." Another researcher, Karim Karim, has documented the extensive use made of broadcasting and information technologies by this diaspora, but has concluded that it is too early to tell the effect that this will have on citizenship and social cohesion.

Notwithstanding a good deal of rhetoric to the contrary, evidence compiled by Reitz and Breton, Harles, Kymlicka and others suggests that the rate of integration of immigrants from cultural minorities into Canadian society has improved since the 1970s when an official federal policy of multiculturalism was instituted. However, ethnocultural and visible minorities continue to encounter serious systemic obstacles with respect to receiving equal treatment and access in a variety of areas. A study by Julian Roberts, for example, noted that hate crimes and hate-motivated violence against visible minorities (and other groups such as gays and lesbians) are among the most under-reported forms of criminality in the country, and indeed throughout

the Western industrialized world. Benjamin and Baker, as well as Pendakur and Pendakur, found that visible minorities born in Canada face an 8% salary penalty in comparison to white native-born Canadians. Aboriginal peoples suffer salary penalties of up to 22%. A recent study by Harvey, Reil and Siu for the Metropolis Project concluded that unemployment and poverty levels for certain ethno-cultural groups were consistently higher during the late 1980s and early 1990s than the national average.

Among the immigrant population, Adsett and Stone found evidence of a “vertical mosaic” of class differences, with most of the immigrants at the lowest rung of their “integration scale” falling into the visible minority category and those at the top rung having primarily European origins. While part of this stratification may be explained by the fact that the groups at the low end of the integration scale tend to have lower educational levels and an inability to speak either of the official languages, Adsett and Stone suggest that discrimination may be a factor and that stratification may continue to be perpetuated by immigration selection policies.

Linguistic issues cross-cut with immigration to produce complex variations on Canada’s traditional concern about acquisition of competencies in both official languages. The relative proportion of francophones (those whose mother tongue is French) in the Canadian population has declined steadily between 1951 and 1996. Marmen and Corbeil have attributed this decline to a reduction in the fertility of francophone women and to the arrival in Canada of many immigrants whose mother tongue is a language other than French. The fact that the children of immigrants tend to learn English as a mother tongue has also contributed substantially to the increased number of anglophones. On the other hand, a growing number of Canadians (about one in six) can speak both official languages. Proximity and contact, not surprisingly, promotes a greater degree of bilingualism, with much higher rates in the border zones where linguistic groups overlap. In the Ottawa-Hull area, for example, 44% of the population reported in the 1996 Census that they could speak both English and French.

Another study by Pendakur and Pendakur found that majority language knowledge is associated with higher earnings, disadvantaging workers without adequate majority language skills. However, they also found somewhat surprisingly that returns to language knowledge are quite different across Canada’s three largest census metropolitan areas (CMAs). They note that “In all CMAs, knowing an official language is better than not knowing ...[one], and in Montreal and Toronto, being official language bilingual is better than being unilingual..., but in Vancouver, knowing both English and French does not increase earnings.” Non-official language knowledge rarely improved labour market outcomes and, in many cases, resulted in income penalties. Knowing a non-official language appears to act as a marker for differential treatment by the majority population, but the larger the ethno-linguistic community, the less likely language speakers are to face a wage penalty.

A recent publication, “Gendering Immigration / Integration: Policy Research Workshop Proceedings and a Selective Review of Policy Research Literature 1987-1996”, documents the unanimous view of those concerned with immigrant women’s issues that a gender dimension exists in virtually all immigration policies. For example, a study by Miedema and Wachholz identified a number of barriers to the justice system for abused immigrant women and called for more cultural sensitivity training, increased funding for legal aid, more support services for immigrant families in conflict, more information to immigrants about legal rights and issues surrounding woman abuse and educational strategies which target personnel working with immigrant and refugee communities.

3) Family Structures

Family policy in industrialized countries like Canada typically has been based on a concept of the family as a male-headed household comprising two married adults of the opposite sex and their children. Modern publics seem increasingly prepared to accept the limited relevance of this concept to their daily lives. Higher divorce rates, more lone-parent and reconstituted families, increased social acceptance of “non-traditional” families, greater involvement of women in the paid workforce, as well as lower fertility and mortality rates, have shaken confidence in earlier norms of family life. These social changes have given rise to an often heated and polarizing debate about the role of “family values” and the “return to the traditional family” as solutions to the sense of insecurity and alienation that many Canadians experience in their daily lives. As commentators have pointed out for some time, globalization also has heightened this sense of insecurity and alienation within Canadian families as a new polarized employment, involving increased reliance on non-standard jobs and a flexible workforce, has taken its toll on family life as well.

According to a 1996 report prepared for the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee’s Environmental Scanning Working Group on *Trends Toward Polarization in Canadian Society*, of the nine richest countries in the world, Canada throughout the 1980s had the third worst child poverty rate (i.e. the percentage of those under 18 living in families with low incomes, or below the Stats Can low income cut-off) -- ranking behind only the United States and Australia.

The well-being of children is closely linked to family structure. Martin Dooley in a 1995 study done for the C.D. Howe Institute found that between 1973 and 1991 the economic status of single mothers over the age of 35 had improved, but in that period single mothers under the age of 35 had experienced stagnant wages, declining labour force participation and increased reliance on social assistance. By the early 1990s, fully 75% of single mothers under the age of 35 fell under Statistics Canada’s Low Income Cut-off (LICO). More recently, the Human Development Network of the federal government’s Policy Research Initiative concluded that a growing number of lone-parent families (mainly headed by single mothers) were becoming increasingly marginalized from mainstream economic activities due to lack of recent work experience, low levels of educational attainment, lack of accessible and affordable child care and welfare dependency. (Sustaining Growth, Human Development and Social Cohesion in a Global World, 16.)

A report commissioned by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Aboriginal Single Mothers, builds on the currently existing data and information to show how all demographic, social and economic factors affecting Aboriginal women are interrelated. There are two and a half times more Aboriginal single mothers under the age of 25 than other Canadian single mothers, and their families are also larger and younger than families headed by other Canadian single mothers. Aboriginal women have lower levels of completed schooling than non-Aboriginal women, tend to participate in the labour force less, are more likely to be unemployed, and earn less than non-Aboriginal women. Furthermore, Aboriginal single mothers do not receive much more in government transfer payments compared to non-Aboriginal single mothers, despite having consistently lower average incomes than other Canadian women. Aboriginal women are more prone to pregnancy and birth complications compared to non-Aboriginal women, and are also more likely to contract diseases, die of accidents and violence, and to commit suicide than other Canadian women. Finally, nearly half of all single Aboriginal mothers live in a Census Metropolitan Area, rather than on a reserve. Based on the reinforcing nature of much of their data, the authors conclude that the disparities between single Aboriginal mothers and other

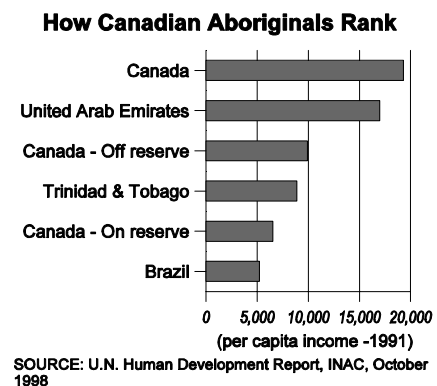
Canadian single mothers has less to do with the fact that these women are single mothers and more to do with the fact that they are Aboriginal.

With respect to family violence, the statistics are equally disturbing. According to the 1993 *Violence Against Women Survey*, 29% or 2.7 million women who had ever been married or lived common law had been physically or sexually assaulted by their partner at some point during the relationship. Information from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics indicates that there were almost 22,000 cases of spousal assault in 1996, 89% involving female victims. The same statistical profile of family violence also estimated that over 2,300 women and 2,000 children stay in shelters or transition homes across Canada every day, almost 70% of whom are seeking refuge from an abusive husband or ex-husband. A study of women abuse in rural Ontario, the *Ontario Rural Women Abuse Study (ORWAS)*, highlighted the unique difficulties encountered by abused women in rural areas. The study demonstrated that while marginalization and isolation often characterize the lives of abused women, the isolation experienced by rural women and their children was complicated by distance from services, limited transportation, and small town, closely-knit social structures. A rural ethic of self-sufficiency and pride often dictates how survivors want to be viewed in the community, preventing them from asking for help from social assistance services.

It is women and children, and the elderly who suffer the most if governments and communities fail to adequately recognize and respond to family diversity in the new millennium. Responsibility for child care and elder care in the home still rests primarily with women, women head most lone-parent families, and the unpaid work in the home overwhelmingly performed by women is still under-valued in the context of pension credits, income tax, custody and divorce settlements, etc. Research done for Status of Women Canada on the effects of the Canada Health and Social Transfer concluded that diminished commitment to social programs by all levels of government has had significant negative impacts on women and children. These researchers argued that off-loading responsibility for ambulatory care on to families and short-changing child care programs will compromise many of the broad national goals of social policy, such as healthy children and improved quality of life for the elderly.

4) Inequality, Polarization and Social Cohesion

While Canada continues to rank first in the world on the U.N. Human Development Index (HDI), the most recent report criticizes Canada and France, the top two countries, for still having significant problems with poverty, noting that “their progress in human development has been poorly distributed”. On the newly added “human poverty index” of the HDI, Canada placed 10th and France seventh out of 17 rich nations -- ahead of the United States (17th) and Britain (15th), but behind Italy (fifth), Germany (third) and Sweden (first). As the accompanying graph indicates, the per capita income of Canadian Aboriginals is probably one of the factors contributing to Canada’s record in this regard.



Between 1990 and 1993 (recession years in Canada), virtually all new job growth came in the managerial and professional occupations; almost all other sectors lost jobs. While the total population of Canada grew by 6.5% between 1989 and 1993, the low-income population grew by 35.8%. The percentage of Canadians living below the low-income cut-off (LICO) increased

from 16.8% in 1992 to 17.9% in 1993, up considerably from the 1989 low of 14%. The percentage of households receiving social assistance rose from 7.4% to 10.6% between 1984 and 1993, while the child poverty rate reached a new high of 21.3% in 1993. Despite the economic growth of recent years, 21% of Canadian children still lived below the poverty line in 1996, while the 1996 Census showed a drop of almost 6% in average Canadian household income between 1990 and 1995.

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, youth unemployment in Canada in 1997 was close to 18%, up from about 14% in 1990 and higher than that of Australia, Britain, the United States, Germany and the Netherlands. A dramatic divergence in real wage levels between younger and older workers was identified by Morissette, Myles and Picot, who found that between 1974 and 1993 real earnings of 25-30 year olds with full-time jobs fell 20% relative to workers over 30 years of age.

According to public opinion polling conducted for the Canada Information Office, poverty is a strong concern among all Canadians, with approximately 90% believing that the federal government should treat poverty as an important issue in the immediate future. However, beginning with their inaugural 1994 [Rethinking Government](#) project and running throughout subsequent iterations of the study, Ekos Research Associates have also discerned a growing rift between the comfortable and the insecure segments of Canadian society, focused primarily on the debate about whether or not a poverty problem really exists.

This debate has crystallized around several recent studies questioning the claim that greater income inequality and polarization have occurred in recent times. In a comparative analysis of income inequality in Canada and the United States between 1974 and 1995, Wolfson and Murphy contended that a large proportion of Canadian families had absolutely higher purchasing power than their American counterparts, and that in both countries, individual earnings polarization fell over the period from 1985-1995. In a wide-ranging exploration of income inequality in the primary agriculture sector, Waithe, Zafiriou and Niekamp noted that income polarization has marginally increased for non-farm families during the last decade. But from an historical perspective, farm family income inequality has decreased dramatically between 1971 and 1995, due largely to federal income support and stabilization, crop insurance, and other support programs, which in 1995-96 totaled more than \$4 billion. A related study by Vera-Toscano explored the dynamics of income in rural and small town Canada as compared to large urban centres. Again, several significant differences between the two emerged. The proportion of low-incomes is slightly lower in rural Canada, while the proportion of high incomes is considerably higher in urban Canada. But in rural Canada, low income tends to perpetuate a "cycle of deprivation/exclusion" as the rural poor have serious difficulty accessing a wide range of services and programs.

The extent and specific nature of government fiscal and social policies is critical in assessing the overall structure of income distribution and participation in the Canadian workforce. Lars Osberg of Dalhousie University explored in a 1992 paper some of the ways in which economic policies may affect social cohesion. He noted that unemployment, especially if it persists over an extended period, leads to increased rates of social dysfunction, ranging from depression to family violence to substance abuse. Not only is productivity lost, but the increased dysfunction experienced by those involuntarily separated from the workforce can lead to increased demands on the welfare system or on the law enforcement and correctional systems.

The exact extent of societal costs stemming from such dysfunction are notoriously difficult to estimate because of statistical inadequacies, but in a few instances hard figures are available. For example, in a 1997 study, Eric Single of the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse calculated that substance abuse cost Canadians more than \$18.4 billion in 1992 or about \$649 per capita. Graves, Hankivsky and Kingston-Richers of the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women estimated the annual partial costs of violence against women at nearly \$4.3 billion. Mark Cohen of the Owen Graduate School of Management suggested that each youth diverted from a life of crime saves society more than a million dollars. The Canadian Council of Social Development derived statistical evidence from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth and the National Health Survey showing that children living in low income households have poorer health, lower scores on vocabulary and math tests and lower participation rates in sports, but was not able to attach hard figures to this dysfunctional situation.

VALUES, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

Current Canadian concerns about diversity are symptomatic of broader global social and economic turbulence. Different elements of Canada's diverse population continuously and simultaneously make competing claims on increasingly scarce public and civic resources. They also often interact with each other in unpredictable ways. This places issues of culture, values, governance and institutions at the centre of many discussions of social cohesion and of strengthening the ties that bind Canadians to their national community.

Culture transmits and helps to inculcate shared values and traditions, one of the building blocks of a cohesive society, by telling stories that both remember the past and evoke dreams of the future. These stories, if widely shared, can help to create cross-cultural understanding, which is equally fundamental to social cohesion. However, globalization and the information society can fragment a sense of shared identity while strengthening more particular identities based on distinguishing characteristics such as race, gender, religion, region, income and ethnicity. This makes it considerably more difficult for policy makers and community leaders to develop long-term policies and programs on the basis of a shared framework of national values, leading some commentators to talk about "clashing intuitions of fairness" (Sniderman et.al., 1996), the emergence of "constitutional minoritarianism" and a concomitant fragmentation of Canadian citizenship (Cairns, 1995).

Historically, the federal government has used the public instruments of mass communications, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Film Board, to build understanding between the diverse elements of the Canadian population. For example, the *Broadcasting Act* pledges to serve "the needs and interests and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and children, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples in that society". However, in a world dominated by the Internet, instantaneous and continuous satellite transmissions and huge (mostly American) multimedia multinationals, telling Canadian stories is becoming a greater challenge. Because of the economic stakes involved, the future vitality of Canada's cultural sector and its ability to reflect Canadian diversity will likely be determined by trade negotiators, rather than by cultural bureaucrats or by the communities whose values may be eclipsed by the marketplace.

For more than two centuries, Canadians have built a political, economic and social system that has reflected one of these central values – the balancing of individual and collective rights. Paradoxically, sections 15.2 and 25 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, can support

arguments favouring both equal rights for all and unique sets of rights for specific groups of citizens, such as Aboriginal peoples. Traditional Canadian values regarding collective responsibility for social programs and for achieving social justice in such areas as employment equity support the latter interpretation of rights, but a growing trend toward individualism within Western societies has begun to interact with these values in unpredictable ways.

In a recent article in The Atlantic Monthly, Francis Fukuyama attributed many of the upheavals of the late twentieth century to the growth of individualism at the expense of community, commenting that “A society dedicated to the constant upending of norms and rules in the name of expanding individual freedom of choice will find itself increasingly disorganized, atomized, isolated, and incapable of carrying out common goals and tasks.” (Fukuyama, 60)

Greg Baeker of the University of Toronto examined these tensions within the domain of cultural policy. He contended that in Canada the rhetoric of national identity and cultural expression is inclusive and pluralistic, but the experience of many minorities is frequently of an exclusionary society. In his view, a “two-tiered” cultural system exists where the state-subsidized, predominantly Eurocentric, arts system is linked to national identity goals, but the various forms of non-subsidized popular culture (e.g. commercial and ethnic) are left to the marketplace or to the voluntary sector. He suggested that most calls for “shared values” or “common bonds” end up suppressing difference by excluding anyone who threatens traditional notions of identity. Consequently, the Canadian challenge in his view is not one of renewing civil society or repairing fractured cohesion, but of envisioning a new civic realm where diversity is supported by participation and genuine engagement.

Survey research by Neil Nevitte of the University of Toronto has documented the “decline of deference” and the desire of Canadians to have a greater voice in public policy formation. However, there are signs that the collective Canadian will to engage in a “democratic conversation” across lines of diversity may be diminishing. Research carried out by Jeannotte, Leuty and Aizlewood for the Social Cohesion Network seems to suggest a growing rift between the “young and the restless” and the “mature and secure”. Based on these and other studies, the Network has concluded that generational rifts may compound the gender inequality that already exists with respect to income inequality, family issues, and a wide range of social and health policy issues. The plight of the economically and socially marginalized appears to be intensifying and is only partially masked by overall growth in the economy and incomplete statistics on such phenomena as homelessness. The situation of Aboriginal peoples extends across a broad spectrum of status, non-status, Métis and Inuit populations located in a variety of rural and urban settings, and is particularly acute for the younger members of this population.

Class issues are usually ignored in discussions of diversity, even though the social, economic and technological upheavals of globalization appear to be creating new faultlines within an already diverse population. There is evidence to suggest that the bedrock of Canadian society, the middle class, is losing hope and faith as well as economic ground. How is this affecting social cohesion in Canada? Are the most educated and wealthiest Canadians less inclined to share with those in the middle and at the bottom? Are those in the middle becoming more concerned about holding on to what they have at the expense of traditional notions of civic engagement or distributive justice? Have the poor lost hope and given up on the political and social system? All these questions are pertinent to an analysis of social cohesion and diversity, since democratic mechanisms that traditionally mobilized consensus across class lines are becoming less effective within a population overwhelmed by personal and professional demands and grown cynical about political processes.

GOVERNANCE AND DIVERSITY: BALANCING THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE

Over the past century, Canadian governments at the federal, provincial and municipal levels have been active in addressing the various elements of diversity described in this paper. Even before the advent of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, instruments such as the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, the *Official Languages Act* and Multiculturalism Policy sought to accommodate the tensions arising from diversity. Moreover, it can be argued that Canada's social programs, with their commitment to the well-being of all citizens, and the justice system, which has functioned as one of the chief means of managing value conflicts, have been important means of responding to the challenges of diversity. Both the provincial and the municipal governments have been key partners in the delivery of social programs and the execution of justice, and are playing increasingly active roles in the social and linguistic integration of immigrants into the Canadian community, particularly in urban areas. Yet despite these positive efforts, tensions between younger and older, richer and poorer, minority and non-minority Canadians persist, putting pressure on social cohesion and the sense of reciprocity and equal opportunity that has sustained public life, particularly over the last half-century. The reason for this perception may lie not only in the growing complexity of diversity, but also in uni-dimensionality of many public policy responses.

In her comprehensive study, Mapping Social Cohesion: The State of Canadian Research, Jane Jenson suggested that there are five dimensions of social cohesion:

Belonging / isolation
Inclusion / exclusion
Participation / non-involvement
Recognition / rejection
Legitimacy / illegitimacy

Effective government and citizen responses to diversity require attention to all five dimensions of social cohesion if they are to be successful. For example, such efforts should be inclusive of all types of diversity and should broaden the definition of "belonging" to include an economic as well as a community dimension. Similarly, to address issues of participation and legitimacy (such as time and information barriers and low levels of trust of government institutions), new mechanisms for civic engagement and a variety of new partnerships should be considered. A rethinking of government's role in fostering both harmony and opportunity is particularly pertinent to the dimension of "recognition", which is described by Jenson as "citizens' feeling that others accept them, and recognize their contributions". (Jenson, 16). It is important that institutional responses encourage acceptance, rather than rejection of or disregard for differences.

Jenson has suggested that the role of institutions in recognizing diversity and developing a community of shared values be given more prominence. Specifically, she asks:

- Do public institutions of representation have the capacity to mediate conflicts of value and recognize the contributions of all citizens, no matter their ethnic, cultural or socio-economic circumstances?
- Does sufficient institutional space exist for participation, or have governments, parties, and others effectively closed down discussion about priorities and collective choices in order to get on with their own projects? (Jenson, 32).

A recent Report of the Bertelsmann Foundation to the Club of Rome -- *The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict and Mediation in Pluralistic Societies* --

underscores that societies do vary a great deal with respect to how their institutions alternately polarize or successfully mediate fundamental normative conflicts and value disputes involving citizenship, national identity, the tension between modernization and traditional structures of religion, family life, authority, and the like. One of the world's leading sociologists, Peter Berger, noted in its conclusion, "in terms of social order and the peaceful resolution of normative conflicts, there are both 'good' and 'bad' macro-institutions, both 'good' and 'bad' civil-society institutions". (Berger, 363). In Berger's view, the critical issues are what ideas these institutions propound and whose interests they represent.

*Essentially, the notion of "normative order" means the way in which any human group tries to answer two fundamental questions: **Who are we?** And, **How are we to live together?***

Peter Berger (Ed.), The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict and Mediation in Pluralistic Societies, 1998

At this point in time, it is virtually impossible to anticipate the medium- to long-term structural impacts and possible interaction among and across the various lines of diversity -- the ageing population, for example, or child poverty, family violence, the likelihood of economic polarization, rural/urban disparities, the specific needs and aspirations of women, Aboriginal peoples, the disabled, gays and lesbians and other social minorities. However, we can speculate about some of the main directions of this change over the next decade or two and the challenges that might face public institutions seeking to mediate diverse interests.

- Tensions may rise between younger and older Canadians, as the former become increasingly resentful of the relative affluence and security of the latter. If current demographic trends continue, more of the young will be of Aboriginal and visible minority origins, compounding the potential age faultline.
- Gender-driven economic inequalities may intensify if the situation of lone parent families headed by women is not addressed, particularly that of Aboriginal single mothers. Changes in public policy and institutions that off-load more responsibilities for the elderly (the majority of whom will be women) onto already overburdened families may exacerbate income inequalities if one partner (usually the woman) is forced to leave the labour force to take on these responsibilities.
- Fragmentation of cultural programming, the marginalization of distinctive Canadian content on new information technologies and the growing dominance of American multinational media companies may sever an already-fragile sense of belonging and shared values within Canada unless current media policies to promote diverse content and universal access are extended to new media. If all elements of Canada's diverse population do not see themselves reflected in Canadian content, they may withdraw their support for cultural policies designed to reinforce shared identity and values.
- Tensions between those favouring individual rights and those favouring collective rights will continue to rise as post-materialist trends and rising individualism increase demands for more personal autonomy and freedom. Traditional Canadian concerns for regional equity, linguistic rights and social justice may come under pressure as more decision making power is transferred to the marketplace, where participation and inclusion are contingent upon purchasing power rather than entitlements.

- Erosion of trust in government and public institutions, coupled with a sense of exclusion, may lead socio-economic and ethno-cultural groups to rely more upon non-government organizations or interest groups to promote the well-being of their communities and the exercise of their citizenship rights. While such “self-help” initiatives may strengthen the identities and self-reliance of these groups, they could result in isolation, enclave communities and reduced interaction with broader Canadian society unless more attention is paid to bridging institutions and policies that connect diverse groups to the larger polity.

It is likely that a cohesive national community will increasingly depend on whether Canadians feel included in the economic, social and cultural life of the country. Citizens who accept differences and are willing to work together for the common good are not natural products of a consumer-oriented environment. Within a society as diverse and as dynamic as Canada's, special attention must be paid to policy initiatives and governance structures that foster a cohesive society. In large measure the future health, security, well-being and sense of belonging of Canadians will be determined by the success of governance structures, both formal and informal, in mediating the value conflicts resulting from diversity, fostering inclusion and creating “a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity”.

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