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The Models of Our Mind: Conceptions of Social Integration and Immigrant Integration

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Choice is always exercised with respect to a limited,
approximate, simplified 'model' of the situation
(March and Simon 1958: 139)

1. Models of social integration

As in all other areas of social life, debates over social integration are structured by simplified models, which define the nature of the problems we face and the causal processes at work.[1] Significant disagreements about integration policy seldom turn primarily on different readings of the facts on the ground; more often, they flow from different understandings of what an integrated society would look like, and the factors that nurture a strong community. These models in our minds are usually implicit rather than explicit. But they are no less powerful for their buried nature. Indeed, their impact is undoubtedly enhanced when they go unrecognized and unchallenged.

Two conceptions of social integration contend for predominance in debates in western nations, and much depends on the balance between them (Berger 1998). The first approach sees social cohesion as flowing from elements of a common culture, including a common sense of identity and shared cultural values.[2] Here, the essential question is "Who is us?" From this perspective, an integrated society is one in which the population sees itself as a "people" with a shared identity, shared values, and a shared history. In such a society, people know they belong, and their sense of community enables them to undertake great national projects together, to support each other in times of need, and to make personal sacrifices for the common good. This cultural conception of integration has ancient roots, but retains considerable force in contemporary debates over immigrant integration.

The second approach places less emphasis on shared identities and values, and argues that a commitment to democratic rights and participation is the key to an integrated society. Here the key question is not "Who is us?" but rather "How are we to live together?" Analysts in this tradition insist that contemporary societies are characterized by multiple identities and diverse values, and cannot hope to secure cohesion through a common culture. What is essential is the acceptance of the legitimacy of such differences, and agreement on the institutions and procedures through which we manage the tensions inherent in pluralism. In democratic countries, the irreducible minimum is the institutions of liberal democracy and the commitment to the democratic rights and equalities on which they rest (Bauböck 2001). But the approach can be broadened also to include active engagement in civic and voluntary associations as well as political processes (Putnam 2000; Jenson 1998).

It is important not to overly polarize the cultural and participative models. To some extent, they simply approach the same relationships from different directions. The cultural conception assumes that reinforcing a sense of common identity and attachment will lead to active participation in democratic processes and solidarity among fellow citizens. The participative conception assumes that sharing rights and participating together in civic and political processes will build a common identity or at least attachment over time. Moreover, in policy terms, most countries rely on an amalgam of the two approaches. Despite the overlap, however, the two models do capture different emphases in contemporary debates.

Canadian experience illuminates the power of these models. This paper argues that the two conceptions generate quite different assessments of how well Canada is doing and whether we are on the right policy track. Section Two draws on the two approaches to assess whether Canada faces significant problems in the social integration of immigrants. Section Three moves on to the broad policy strategy in Canada, and Section Four examines the implementation of the approach in greater detail. The final section summarizes the argument, and draws out its implications for other plural societies.

2. Social integration of immigrants in Canada

Canada faces formidable challenges in integrating the large numbers of immigrants it accepts each year from many parts of the globe. These challenges go well beyond the economic issues which preoccupy policy-makers. While economic integration is necessary, it is clearly not sufficient to ensure social integration, as Canadian history attests. The dramatic economic convergence between francophone Quebec and English-speaking Canada during the last half-century has been accompanied by the growing strength of a distinct *québécois* identity and sovereignist opinion in the province. The economic successes of Canadian-born Japanese Canadians did not reduce the intensity of their campaign for a formal apology and financial redress for the injustices done to them during the Second World War. And, as we shall see, the educational and economic successes of second-generation members of racial minorities do not guarantee they feel fully comfortable in Canada. Feelings of identity, community and solidarity have a life of their own, and deserve attention in their own right.

Does Canada face problems in the social integration of immigrants and racial minorities? Viewed through the lens of the cultural approach, the answer is yes. Admittedly, at the level of identity and attachment, the greatest challenges continue to reflect the historic tensions among the founding peoples. On measures such as pride in Canada, a sense of belonging in the country and trust in other Canadians, it is francophone Quebecers and Aboriginal peoples who on average feel less integrated into the pan-Canadian community. In the case of newcomers, Canadian society does generate powerful integrative processes. The longer immigrants are in Canada, the more their sense of pride and belonging comes to equal – and in some cases exceed – that of long established groups. Nevertheless, there are troubling limits to this integrative power. Although newcomers from southern and eastern Europe become progressively more comfortable in the country, racial minorities remain less confident they fully belong (Soroka, Johnston and Banting 2007). Social integration appears to be considerably slower for racial minority immigrants than for white immigrants, partly because of a greater sense of discrimination and vulnerability (Reitz and Banerjee 2007).

Considerable attention has focused on second-generation racial minorities, the children of immigrants, born and raised in the country. Until recently, Canadians tended to assume that integration proceeded smoothly across generations, with the children of immigrants being more fully integrated than their parents. On average, second-generation members of most racial minorities speak English or French with a flawless Canadian accent, match or surpass the educational achievements of their peers, and move effectively into the workforce. The prevailing assumption was that social integration would follow as night follows day. Evidence emerging in recent years, however, suggests that the children of racial minority immigrants are less socially integrated than their immigrant parents, as evidenced by a lower sense of attachment to Canada, higher levels of perceived discrimination and vulnerability, and lower levels of life satisfaction and trust (Reitz and Banerjee 2007; Banting and Soroka 2007).

The long-term implications of this decline of attachment among the second generation are unclear. The second generation undergoes a complex transition between cultures, and later generations may evidence a stronger sense of attachment to Canada. Certainly, the third and subsequent generations of racial minorities who came to Canada long ago tend to have higher sense of belonging (Banting and Soroka 2012). But the past is no guarantee of the future, and the attachment of the grandchildren of recent cohorts of immigrants remains an open question.

Viewed through the lens of the participative conception, Canada seems better positioned for the future. Consider participation in civic associations and other forms of social engagement. In the United States, there is troubling evidence that people living in ethnically diverse areas withdraw from many forms of community life, "hunkering down" in social isolation (Putnam 2007). So far, the evidence in Canada is more reassuring. While interpersonal trust does seem to be lower in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, there is

little evidence of a wider pattern of “hunkering down” in such areas in Canada (Soroka, Helliwell and Johnston 2007). In addition, evidence at the national level suggests that membership in groups that are likely to bridge social backgrounds does not differ across ethnic communities (Soroka, Johnston and Banting 2007), and that there is only a small racial gap in the level of volunteering in nonprofit organizations (Reitz and Banerjee 2007).

Differences across ethnic groups in the most elemental form of democratic engagement – voting in elections – are also small. The rate of naturalization of newcomers, an essential step for participation in electoral democracy, is among the highest in the world. According to a 2005 study, 84 percent of eligible immigrants were Canadian citizens in 2001; in contrast, the rate was 56 percent in the United Kingdom, 40 percent in the United States, and lower still in many European states (Tran, Kustec and Chui 2005). Moreover, although racial-minority newcomers and the second generation may not feel they fully belong, they do seem to exercise their franchise. Apparent differences in the probability of voting across ethnic groups disappear when controls, especially for age, are added.[3]

The reassurance offered by the participative conception is hardly complete. Turning out to vote is only the first form of political engagement. Actual representation in major public institutions is the surest way to ensure that minorities’ voices are heard, and the evidence here is mixed. According to one recent survey, “Canada has the highest proportion of foreign-born legislators in the world” (Adams 2007: 69). But racial minorities remain under-represented. For example, following the 2004 federal election, racial minority Members of Parliament filled only 7.1 percent of the seats in the House of Commons, compared to 14.9 percent of the Canadian population (Black and Hicks 2006: 27; also Andrew et al, 2008). A similar pattern emerges at the provincial and municipal level. In addition, recruitment of visible minorities into the federal public service lags behind their availability in the larger workforce (Canada 2007: ch. 3).

In summary, if social cohesion is well rooted only in a common sense of national identity and shared values, then Canada faces important issues. This is a long-standing story, and is most marked in relations among the founding peoples of the country. Although the integrative power of Canadian society for newcomers should not be under-estimated, troubling signs remain. Some racial minority immigrants and their children feel less comfortable in the country, less confident that they fully belong. In contrast, the participative conception of social integration offers a more optimistic interpretation. Although racial minorities may not feel they belong fully, they seem to participate. While there are important gaps in the representative face of Canadian democracy, this perspective suggests Canada is better positioned for the future.

3. Framing a policy response: how is social integration reinforced?

What should we do to reinforce the social integration of immigrants? The two approaches offer different policy recipes. Those who see social cohesion as most firmly rooted in a common culture seek to reinforce a shared identity, a common language, a deeper

understanding of the country's history and respect for its traditions. Newcomers to the country are expected to enter into a contract – implicit or explicit – to integrate into these core elements of the community. This approach has led many countries to try to define their core values more clearly. It also points to a distinctive set of policy levers. Immigration policies can be toughened, for example, by setting more stringent language requirements for entry. Requirements for naturalization can be made more demanding by lengthening the period residents must be in the country before they can apply, by requiring applicants to pass more challenging citizenship tests, and by restricting dual citizenship. The educational system can be pressed into service, with citizenship education that celebrates the heroes, historical achievements and military victories of the host community. The symbols of national identity can be diffused through citizenship ceremonies, national holidays, and the widespread display of national flags.

The participative conception points to other instruments. The goal here is to reinforce the legitimacy of difference, by reinforcing the rights and equalities inherent in liberal democracy, developing robust anti-discrimination regimes, and adopting multicultural policies that accommodate the traditions of minority communities. This approach also emphasizes efforts to incorporate minorities in the collective processes, starting locally with civic associations and networks. One example is the British idea that the waiting period for naturalization be shortened for newcomers who engage in periods of community and voluntary work. Others emphasize political participation, leading, for example, to proposals to extend the vote in municipal elections to permanent residents who are not citizens. More generally, this approach highlights the need to enhance the representativeness of political institutions, including the public bureaucracy, legislatures, and municipal councils. It also underscores the importance of the basic processes of governance and public administration, enhancing their responsiveness, trustworthiness, and accountability. In effect, this approach seeks to build a diverse but active citizenry.

Canada has long relied on a blend of the two approaches. Certainly, elements of the cultural strategy have long been components of the policy package. Competence in English or French is strongly valued in immigration - admissions policy, and language training is a significant part of settlement programs. The *Citizenship Act* (1977) encourages naturalization by requiring only three years residence in the country, but it also requires applicants to demonstrate adequate knowledge of one of the official languages as well as general knowledge of Canada and its democratic institutions, and recent changes have stiffened the citizenship test in several ways. In addition, the federal government was a pioneer in developing modern citizenship ceremonies, at which new citizens swear to "be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors." And we distribute a lot of Canadian flags, especially in times of tension.

Yet in the final analysis, the cultural approach to social integration faces powerful constraints in a multination, federal state. The diverse identities and cultures of the "old" Canadians – the founding peoples – mean that social integration cannot demand adherence

to a common culture or a single identity. There is no single culture into which to encourage or require newcomers to integrate. Rather the challenge is to build a sense of attachment to a country that incorporates distinctive identities. Some argue that the celebration of multicultural diversity has become a defining feature of Canada. Even here, however, there is no consensus. Many Quebec commentators insist that the multicultural definition of the country assumes the equal recognition of all cultures, effectively placing Quebec francophones on the same footing as all other enthnocultural minorities and neutralizing their role as one of the founding nations. Quebec's intercultural approach, in contrast, defines the francophone majority culture as the central hub towards which other minority cultures in the province are expected to "converge" so as to build a common civic culture that integrates all Quebecers, regardless of origin (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007; McAndrew 2007; Labelle and Rocher 2004).

The federal nature of the Canadian state also constrains a cultural approach to integration. Authority over policy instruments central to social integration is divided between the two orders of government, and different instruments are therefore shaped by different political currents. Traditionally, the federal government was the dominant player in immigration policy and settlement programs, as well as having exclusive authority over naturalization. In recent years, however, the sector has been reshaped by a sweeping – although asymmetric – devolution of aspects of immigrant selection and settlement to provincial governments.

As a result, both the intergovernmental division of responsibility and the structure of immigration and settlement programs now vary considerably from region to region (Banting 2012). Provinces also have their own multiculturalism programs (Garcea 2006). More importantly, many of the mainstream services that are critical to the long-term integration of minorities – labour market programs, education, health care and social services – fall largely within provincial jurisdiction. As a result, immigrants in different regions face different pathways to integration. The constraints inherent in divided jurisdiction confront the policy recipes flowing from both approaches to social integration. We will see the implications for aspects of a rights-based approach below. Nevertheless, divided jurisdiction represents a larger obstacle to the cultural approach, which requires closer coordination of a wider range of policies and services.

In combination, the multinational and federal dimensions of Canada narrow the scope for a cultural conception of integration, and tip the balance towards the rights-based, participatory approach, with its emphasis on the legitimacy of difference, the centrality of citizen rights, and inclusive participation in society and politics.

3. Implementing the policy response: "shared citizenship" and social integration

Citizenship becomes more important in a multination, federal state, not less. Despite the divisions of ethnicity, language, culture and region, Canadians are citizens of a single state,

a sphere of shared experience in a diverse society. As a result, the agenda of social integration tends to be defined by the rights inherent in a "shared citizenship." The Canadian approach to "shared citizenship" echoes the theories of T.H. Marshall, who argued long ago that the meaning of citizenship has been enriched over the centuries by a wider set of civil, political, and social rights (Marshall 1950; Jenson and Papillon 2001). To this Marshallian foundation, recent commentators have added cultural rights, which are designed to accommodate the cultural traditions of minority communities (Poirier 2007; Bauböck 2001). Canadian discourse sees a robust set of civil, political, social and cultural rights as sources of integration.

In practice, the definition of these rights is shaped by the contours of a multination, federal state. Some rights are established on a pan-Canadian basis by pan-Canadian instruments; other rights vary by region and emerge in a more variegated fashion. Civil and political rights are defined most strongly on a pan-Canadian basis. The essential principles of liberal democracy, the rights and equalities which underpin them, are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is entrenched in the constitution, as well as by the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, and provincial human rights commissions. Central to the framework is the concept of equality expressed in section 15(1) of the Canadian Charter.

The rights specified in the Charter are guaranteed on a pan-Canadian basis, and are interpreted by an integrated court system with the Supreme Court of Canada at its apex. The role of the Charter as an integrating device is not without controversy. Quebec nationalists in particular object to the way in which the Charter was embedded in the constitution, without the agreement of the province of Quebec, to its interpretation by a court appointed exclusively by the federal government, and to its integrative or "Canadianizing" implications. Aboriginal nationalists occasionally raise similar objections. But in the context of immigrant groups, the rights and equalities in the Charter and other rights instruments constitute an integrating framework, both legally and symbolically.

In contrast, cultural and social rights are less firmly established. Canada has established cultural rights for its historic minorities, entrenching language rights in Sections 16-20 and 23 of the Constitution Act and Aboriginal rights in Sections 25 and 35. In the case of immigrant multiculturalism, however, a rights-based strategy has been secondary. Canadian governments have developed a fuller set of multiculturalism programs to accommodate the cultural traditions of newcomers than is found in most other countries.[4] However, these policies have evolved over time (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002), and have not acquired the status of legal rights, firmly embedded in the constitution. Section 27 does state that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms will be "interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." However, the section is an interpretive clause, conferring no new rights on its own, and has played a marginal role in constitutional jurisprudence (Doering 2008). Indeed, important judgments which touch deeply on issues of immigrant integration do not even mention the section.[5]

Social rights are perhaps the least robust dimension of Canadian citizenship. National social programs have long been seen as instruments of territorial integration, creating networks of mutual support that span the regions of this vast country and reinforce the sense of a pan-Canadian community (Banting 1995). In principle, this integrative role now extends to ethnic and racial differences. The inclusion of newcomers in core social programs can be a powerful symbolic statement that they are full members of the community.[6] Nevertheless, this symbolic statement is increasingly qualified. In part, this represents the politics of retrenchment in social programs.

While restructuring in Canada has not been driven by the politics of immigration and race, the resulting cuts matter for immigrant integration. Canada has not formally denied immigrants and their children access to social services as in the United States, but the weakening of income protections can have the same effect indirectly. For example, changes in the Employment Insurance (EI) program in the mid-1990s significantly increased the amount of time new entrants to the labour force, including recent immigrants, must work before qualifying for unemployment benefits. The restrictions are doubly important because eligibility for EI is a precondition for many other labour-market programs, including training programs and training allowances. These changes have eroded effective coverage, especially in those parts of the country in which newcomers congregate. What symbolic message about inclusion do such policies send (Banting 2010)?

Federalism also leads to a more variegated pattern of social rights. The federal government delivers part of the public-pension system for the elderly, unemployment insurance, and child benefits directly to citizens across the country as a whole. But the bulk of labour market programs, health care, education, and social services are delivered by provincial governments. In the postwar era, the federal government relied on conditional grants to provinces to set a Canada-wide framework for social services. But the social role of the federal government has weakened since then, and federal conditionality has faded. In theory, federal conditions still define important parameters of provincial healthcare programs, but in reality the federal government has stopped imposing penalties on provinces as they slowly stretch the limits. The result is a more variegated pattern of social citizenship.

Despite the somewhat variable geometry of shared citizenship, the Canadian policy response predominantly reflects a rights-based, participative approach. From the perspective of the participative conception, Canada is on the right path, even if it still has a distance to travel. From the perspective of the cultural conception, however, the Canadian strategy might seem dangerously thin.

5. Concluding reflections: models in the mind

As we have seen, Canadian experience underscores the power of different conceptions of social integration. Assessments of the seriousness of the problems Canada faces vary with the conception of social integration through which we measure them. A cultural definition,

rooted in shared identity, values and sense of history, points to significant weaknesses in Canadian cohesion. A participative definition paints a more optimistic picture, albeit one with an agenda for action. Similarly, an assessment of the Canadian policy response depends on the underlying conception of the factors that nurture a strong sense of community. Viewed from the imperatives implicit in the cultural model, Canadian policies need a significant rebalancing. Viewed through the lens of the participative model, Canada is on the right track.

In comparative terms, the Canadian approach does represent a distinctive experiment in social integration. One cannot claim that the experiment was designed after a careful analysis of the strengths and weakness of the two models. Rather, the approach was largely dictated by the multination and federal characteristics of the country, which narrowed the scope for a cultural approach and tipped the balance towards the rights-based, participative approach. Despite its distinctive roots, however, it remains worth asking whether Canadian experience has resonance beyond the country's borders.

Wise counsel underscores the difficulty of transferring the Canadian model of multiculturalism abroad (Kymlicka 2004). However, Canadian evidence about the power of the models in our minds does travel. Policy debates in other countries also reflect the dominance of particular conceptions of integration, and changes in them are potent. Part of the recent shift in the Netherlands, for example, turned precisely on this issue: "More than before, immigrant integration appears to be defined in terms of [immigrants'] loyalties to and identification with 'Dutch values and norms,' rather than in terms of their social and institutional participation" (Entzinger 2006: 186).

Certainly, Canadian experience is likely to find the strongest parallels in other multination states. For example, when the head of the conservative Popular Party in Spain proposed that immigrants be required to sign an "integration contract," a spokesperson for the Association of Moroccan Immigrants in Spain replied: "I'm happy to sign an integration contract, because immigrants want nothing more than to be accepted… [But] what do you mean by integrating? Which customs? Which habits? Are they Andalusian ones or Catalan ones or Basques ones?" (Saunders 2008). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, some proposals advanced by Lord Goldsmith's citizenship review have played less well in Cardiff and Edinburgh than in London (United Kingdom 2008).

But does the Canadian approach have a more general resonance? Many countries, having embraced the cultural conception, are currently seeking to define their core values, to find the essence of "Britishness," to clarify what it is to be an Aussie or a Dane. Although initial results often disappoint, the response tends to be to try harder. Canadians are not immune from such temptations.[7] But the larger message from Canada points in the opposite direction. The "thinner" sense of a Canadian culture among the historic communities has benefits in a pluralist era, making it easier for newcomers to feel comfortable here. Moreover, there is no evidence that Canada pays a higher price in terms of the social incorporation of immigrants. For example, the pattern of a lower sense of attachment

among second-generation members of racial minorities is found in many other countries as well (Manning and Roy 2007; Rumbaut and Portes 2006; Zhou 2001).

Indeed, in the final analysis, the existence of Canada as a single state represents a wager that the first conception of social integration, with its emphasis on common national identity and shared values, is simply too narrow to capture the social potential of the modern world. Canadian experience suggests that "Who is us?" is the wrong question, and that social integration can be sustained by focusing on how we live together in a pluralist world.

Endnotes

[1] This paper builds on research with several co-authors: Thomas Courchene, Richard Johnston, Will Kymlicka, Leslie Seidle and Stuart Soroka. Their contributions to the ideas in this paper are gratefully acknowledged.

[2] Versions of this approach differ in the emphasis on shared values versus identity as the glue holding society together. For critiques of an emphasis on shared values, see Heath 2003 and Norman 1995.

[3] There is controversy on this point. At first glance, members of some racial minorities vote at lower rates than other Canadians. However, in large part, the differences reflect the fact that the average age among some minority groups is much lower. In the case of racial minorities who have come to Canada more recently, the average age among the second generation is much lower than the population as a whole or second-generation whites. This fact matters a lot, since lower turnout among young people is an ubiquitous pattern through western democracies, including Canada. Soroka, Johnston and Banting (2007) find that the voting gap for several visible minority groups ceases to be statistically significant when they control for age.

[4] For a Multiculturalism Policy Index which ranks the strength of multiculturalism policies across 21 countries, see www.queensu.ca/mcp Also Banting and Kymlicka 2006.

[5] For example, in *Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys,* the Supreme Court of Canada upheld the right of a Sikh student permission to wear the kirpan at school, provided he followed certain conditions. The Court held that the school board's ban on the kirpan constituted a violation of that student's freedom of religion under section 15 of the Charter. Section 27 was not referred to in the judgment.

[6] Some commentators are sceptical that social policy can perform such a role, insisting that ethnic diversity erodes the solidarity that sustains a redistributive state (Putnam 2007; Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Goodhart 2004). For a summary of studies that challenges these views, especially in Canada, see Banting (2008).

[7] Ipsos Reid, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and The Dominion Institute are currently conducting a survey to define "the 101 things that Canadians believe most define Canada."

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