Minority-Majority Relations in Canada:
The Rights Regime and the Adoption of Multicultural Values

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Abstract: How have changes in the management of cultural diversity and efforts to prevent discrimination impacted public opinion toward immigration and multiculturalism in Canada? This article sets out to examine how attitudes have shifted toward immigration, ethnic and racial diversity and multiculturalism since the 1970s. Drawing on a wealth of polling data available through the Canadian Opinion Research Archive, evidence is presented that public opinion has shifted dramatically since the early 1990s toward more positive attitudes. It is argued that this opinion shifts reflects both significant policy developments in Canada concerning minority rights, anti-discrimination and multiculturalism and inter-generational differences in experiences with diversity. The paper concludes by arguing that younger generations of Canadians have grown up with a unique set of multicultural norms, which reflect unprecedented levels of openness toward ethnocultural diversity in the youngest generation of Canadians.

Introduction

Canadian democracy has experienced a massive transformation in the past forty years. It has formally entrenched a constitution, withstood two attempts by Quebec to secede from the federation, and undertaken a radical shift in immigration policy – tripling the visible minority population. These changes were accompanied by a policy framework that defined Canadian society as bilingual and multicultural and by legal frameworks that ensure all are treated equally before the law. What impact have these changes had on the attitudes of Canadians? Does Canadian society reflect the values espoused in these policy developments? Have conditions of greater equality between minorities and majorities facilitated more positive outgroup attitudes?

This paper traces the development of the "rights revolution" in Canada and critically examines how these developments, combined with the reality of a more racially, ethnically and religiously diverse population, have led to a massive shift in public opinion since the early 1990s. This shift not only reflects the significant changes in public policy and legal norms, but also the everyday experiences of more recent generations. Canadians born after 1970 have grown up in a fundamentally different norm environment where respect for both rights and pluralism play a prominent role in defining Canadian identity. They have also had unprecedented opportunities to interact with people from various racial, ethnic and religious communities.

The Rights Revolution in Canada

The Canadian story of the rights revolution must be understood simultaneously for its uniqueness and its relationship to a broader trend that was occurring, in various forms,

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in many states around the world. Epps (1998: 7) defines a rights revolution as "a

sustained, developmental process that produced or expanded new civil rights and

liberties." This process is reflected in newfound attention by the courts to questions of

individual rights such as speech, assembly and religion as well as popular and legislative

attention to rights issues.[1] Competing explanations exist for the sources of the rights

revolution. Yet in Canada, as in the United States and many other industrialized countries,

the last fifty years have been marked by successive attempts at codifying basic civil

liberties and ensuring that individuals have equal access to these rights.

     In Canada as in other countries, this process included a shift toward anti-

discrimination legislation and the legal elaboration and protection of individual rights. The

rights revolution in Canada began in the 1960s with the passing of the Bill of Rights, which

was a piece of legislation which prevented federal agencies from discriminating on the

grounds of race, national origin, colour, religion and sex.[2] This bill, while limited in scope,

marked the starting point for anti-discrimination legislation, and was followed shortly

thereafter by the 1962 Immigration Act which prevented discrimination based on skin

colour, race or ethnic origin in the selection of immigrants and was replaced with the

points system in 1967 which is still largely in place today.[3]

     Meanwhile, as the development of anti-discrimination policies began to take shape,

an intense focus on language rights was also emerging to address the unequal position of

French-speaking Canadians, largely motivated by the increasingly nationalist discourse of

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[1] There are, of course, intense debates about whether this increased attention by the courts reflects an increase, or even an overstepping, of judicial power. See, for example, Morton and Knopff (2000).

[2] For a detailed history of the development of the Bill of Rights, see MacLennan (2003).

[3] However, the preferential treatment provided to Commonwealth countries meant that certain immigrant groups were still provided some advantage in gaining citizenship. This preferential treatment was removed in the 1977 Citizenship Act.

the Quiet Revolution in Quebec.[4] The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism

was set up in 1963, and many of its recommendations enacted by Prime Minister Trudeau

appear in the Official Languages Act of 1969. The emphasis on language rights in Canada

was also accompanied by an increasing focus on other cultural groups, notably immigrant

communities. The Commission Report recognized other cultural groups in book four, aptly

titled "The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups." The discourse of

biculturalism initially faced resistance from established immigrant communities in Canada

who sought recognition of their role in Canadian society. This recognition was granted in

Trudeau's announcement of an official policy of multiculturalism in 1971. Pal (1993)

provides a detailed account of how government institutions provided the foundation for an

increasing focus on identity and collective rights in Canada, especially among language

communities, immigrant communities and women.

        The anti-discrimination as well as collective rights discourse from the Canadian

government would flourish in the 1970s and 1980s in Canada, perhaps most notably in the

Constitution Act of 1982 which included the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a

bill of rights that, unlike its 1960s counterpart, was entrenched in the Constitution. The

Charter itself has received an immense amount of scholarly attention (see, for example,

Cairns, 1991; Manfredi, 2004; Dobrowolsky, 1999; Morton, 1987, 1998; Morton and Knopff,

2000; Pal, 1993; Russell, 2008; Seidle, 1993; Hiebert, 2002; Cairns, 1992) and receives

widespread support among the Canadian population (Fletcher and Howe, 2001).

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[4] One such expression of Quebec collective identity was the Charte québécoise des droits et libertés which
was passed into 1975 (Morel, 1987). While the Quebec charter was a simple piece of legislation, it is
interesting to note how rights are intimately tied to a sense of collective identity, both within Quebec and
within Canada more generally.

While the Charter receives the vast majority of attention, several other key pieces of legislation reflect important steps in the development of anti-discrimination policies and in an institutional discourse around equality. These include the Canadian Human Rights Act, which was enacted in 1977 and prohibits discrimination in all areas under federal jurisdiction[5], the Employment Equity Act in 1986, and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988 that creates a legislative framework for the 1971 policy of multiculturalism.[6]

In the thirty-year period from 1960 to 1990 Canada experienced a rights revolution: civil rights and liberties were not only protected through successive legislation, but they were entrenched in the new Canadian constitution and increasingly the focus of the courts' attention.[7] These changes were not exclusive to Canada. Other countries have reacted to an international discourse on human rights, as well as interest group mobilizations of previously marginalized communities (Epps, 1998; Walker, 1998; Glendon, 1991).[8] Yet, Canada's existing pluralism – and the ways in which government chose to manage it – make it a unique case. The development of a rights culture was accompanied in fundamental ways with discourses around accommodating cultural pluralism and defining Canadian identity. How has a discourse around equality rights and multiculturalism impacted Canadian values? Has it changed the ways in which minorities and majorities relate to each other?

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[5] This Canadian Human Rights Act followed the enactment of similar legislation at the provincial levels.
[6] It should be noted that Quebec has developed an alternative framework to multiculturalism called interculturalism, which was elaborated by the provincial government in 1990. For a discussion of the differences, see Karmis (1994).
[7] Epps (1998: 172-174) documents that beginning in about 1975, and especially by 1980, civil rights cases were more often examined by the Supreme Court of Canada.
[8] For an alternative perspective on these changes, see Brodie and Nevitte (1993b). They argue that the New Politics of the 70s and 80s reflected a wider value change in advanced industrialized democracies toward more post-materialist values.

Political Values and Institutional Frameworks

Much of the focus on the rights revolution in Canada has taken a decidedly institutional approach where three main actors play central roles: the courts, parliament, and interest groups. This literature, in general, addresses two key questions. On the one hand, intense scholarly debate has emerged about the social and political implications of judicial review and the degree of parliamentary supremacy in Canada (Hiebert, 2002; Morton and Knopff, 2000; Howe and Russell, 2001). On the other hand, detailed studies have also examined the mobilization of interest groups around the newly enshrined rights provided by the Charter (Epps, 1998; Pal, 1993; Manfredi, 2004; Seidle, 1993), especially as they relate to the equality clause (Section 15), which recognizes the right to equal protection and recognition before the law.

This institutional approach has provided a thorough examination of how these three sets of actors interact and the implications this has had in terms of policy and legal developments in Canada. However, relatively little attention has been paid to how these policies reflect – and perhaps shape – public opinion. This is an important lacuna in the research, yet the implication is clearly present in past research. Many authors have argued, in Canada as well as elsewhere, that rights revolutions lead citizens to frame conflicts in terms of individual rights – often, it is argued, to the detriment of the development of a socially cohesive society (Bibby, 1990; Cairns, 1988, 1991, 1992; Glendon, 1991; Ignatieff, 2000; Walker, 1998). The extent to which political values are shaped by these institutional changes requires an analysis of how public opinion has changed during this key periods.

To be fair, the interest group literature does emerge from a civil-society perspective, but little empirical evidence has related these social movements to broader attitudes shifts

toward a more tolerant society. Broader trends in public opinion are largely viewed as cultural frames which "undoubtedly shape the kinds of claims that individuals can conceive, as well as the kinds of changes that they view as within the realm of possibilities" (Epps, 1998: 17), but these so-called cultural frames have been studied largely in isolation from the study of rights revolution.[9] Yet, there is a sense that legal developments like the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms will allow institutions like the courts to "be active in shaping the character of Canadian society" (Vaughan, 2001: 23). Cairns captures this sentiment starkly when he argues, "Over time, the cumulative results of its [the Charter's] applications will reach deeply into our inner-most being, manipulating our psyche and transforming our self-image" (Cairns, 1991: 62).

We do know that Canadians are largely supportive of both the Charter and the courts more generally. Fletcher and Howe (2001, 2000a, 2000b) have conducted one of the only studies that examines attitudes toward the Charter itself.[10] They find that there is widespread support for the Charter among Canadians, as much in 1999 (87%) as there was in an earlier study conducted in 1987 (84%). They find a surprising amount of consistency in people's attitudes toward the court at these two points. They also find little differences across salient social and demographic categories, reinforcing the view that this support is widespread. In short, since its adoptions, Canadians seem to generally feel quite positive about it.

The extent to which such institutions – and more specifically the policies and decisions of such institutions – impact Canadian values more generally remains an empirical question that has received very little scrutiny (see, however, Brodie and Nevitte,

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[9] Although see Glendon (1991) for a discussion of how a rights frame has shaped public discourse in the U.S.
[10] For a more pessimistic view of Canadians attitudes toward the Charter, see Nanos (2007).

1993b, 1993a; Cairns, 1993). It seems to be conventional wisdom that Canadian society has become more tolerant in recent decades, although little over time data has been available to support this perception. One of the few studies that has tracked changing values over time is Nevitte (1996).[11] He examines attitudes from the 1981 and 1991 World Value Surveys and argues that Canadians are becoming more post-material and less deferential to authority. This is reflected in less trust in political institutions and a greater willingness to engage in protest politics, as well as support for more egalitarian values. Of particular importance for this paper is evidence that Canadians have become more supportive of pluralism, as measured by a variety of tolerance measures, and that this is especially true for younger generations (see also Lambert and Curtis, 1984).

Two trends, then, are suggested by this work: first, there seems to be a period effect where attitudes are changing among the whole population. Second, there may also be a generational effect where younger generations are reporting a different set of values than past generations. Consistent evidence tends to support the claim that younger Canadians tend to be more open toward diversity, although this difference is usually reported in single waves of survey research which make it impossible to distinguish age from generational effects (Parkin and Mendelsohn, 2003; Adams, 2007). The period effect has received limited attention as well (Berry and Kalin, 1995; Palmer, 1996; Gidengil et al., 2003).[12] For example, Berry and Kalin (1995: 316) find that attitudes toward multiculturalism have become more positive between 1974 an 1991. In perhaps the most comprehensive test of over-time changes in attitudes toward immigration, Wilkes and

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[11] See also Nevitte (2002) and Wilkes, Guppy and Farris (2008).

[12] Gidengil et al. (2003: 395) provide evidence that those wanting less immigration has declined over four waves of the Canadian Election Study (1988-2000), both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada.

colleagues (2008) find that attitudes have become more positive toward immigration beginning in the 1990s. Relying on seventeen Canadian Gallup polls from 1975 to 2000, they find that interests, ideology and the state of the national economy help explain anti-immigrant sentiment. While not the focus of their analysis, they also find an age effect, with older individuals less supportive of immigration.

While these studies suggest increasing openness toward diversity, they do not directly test the impact of the rights and pluralism discourses on public opinion. Furthermore, since over time analyses have often been limited to two data points, trends across time and across generations have been difficult to assess. Evidence suggests that trends toward more pluralistic values have spread across advanced industrialized democracies (Nevitte, 1996; Inglehart, 1998; Nevitte, 2002). However, the empirical support for this contention is more limited in the Canadian case. This is unfortunate because Canada offers a unique case for examining how these larger trends correspond with actual policy developments in Canada, and for assessing the degree to which its unique approach to accommodating cultural diversity may have mattered.

Cross-national research suggests that Canadians are more supportive of multiculturalism and immigration than other industrialized countries (Ward and Masgoret, 2008; Adams, 2007) and some evidence suggests that there is less racial conflict (Reitz, 1988). Canada was the first country in the world to announce an official policy of multiculturalism and has served in many ways as an example to others as to how to successfully integrate a diverse society. There is research to suggest that policies that promote an inclusive identity are associated with improved intercultural relations and attitudes toward immigrants (Berry, 2000; Billiet et al., 2003) and that different regime

types impact the types of values toward diversity that citizens hold (Weldon, 2006). Given this research, it is important to examine how attitudes toward diversity have changed over time in Canada, and whether institutional changes have preceded or followed them. Given the emphasis on anti-discrimination over the past 40 years, it is essential to examine how intergroup relations have changed in Canada.

This paper will make three specific contributions. First, it will track attitudes over time toward diversity relying on a multitude of attitude measures at multiple points in time. Second, it will take a decidedly generational approach to examine if those who have grown up post-rights revolution are adopting more multicultural norms than past generations. Finally, unlike past studies, it will examine the role that intergroup contact plays in promoting positive attitudes toward diversity. Unlike a simple application of the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1958), such contact will be viewed as context-specific. In other words, the changing policies and discourses around diversity will be argued to facilitate the type of cross-group interaction that is hoped to promote positive outgroup attitudes.

Pluralist Policies and Pluralist Values

Clearly, Canada has experienced a major transformation in its legal and legislative frameworks. These developments have placed increasing importance on issues of equality and anti-discrimination, while also setting the stage for dramatic changes in the composition of the Canadian population itself. Yet we know little about how these institutional values have translated into Canadian political culture. This paper takes a decidedly reciprocal view of this process: while decisions about policy are clearly driven in

part by the mobilization of interest groups and a calculation of how policies will be received by the general public, once policies are put into place, they can also condition the ways citizens think and feel about various issues. This view is similar to the thermostatic model put forward by Soroka and Wlezian (2005), where policies respond to demands from the public, who in turn react to policy changes.

Figure 1 outlines the general theoretical framework underpinning the forthcoming analysis. As stated, substantial evidence has been accumulated that the rights revolution in Canada, as represented by current laws and policies in these areas, was driven not only by past policies and legal precedents, but also by the mobilization of interest groups and political competition in Canada to garner support from specific communities (Epps, 1998; Hiebert, 2002; Morton, 1987; Morton and Knopff, 2000; Manfredi, 2004; Pal, 1993; Seidle, 1993). Once these laws and policies are in place, they have two main outputs. First, the rights revolution arguably has impacted the frames of debate in Canada, with questions of identity and rights increasingly playing an important role (Cairns, 1991; Pal, 1993; Cairns et al., 1999; Uberoi, 2008; Ignatieff, 2000). Second, they have concrete policy outcomes related to diversity, such as changes in school curriculums, the nature and levels of immigration, and the creation of mechanisms to ensure equity in areas like housing and employment.[13] Both the frames of debate and policy outcomes are likely to impact the ways in which the public feels about pluralism and how they interact with racialized minorities. These opinions in turn foster interest group mobilization and political competition that fuel further policy developments.

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[13] For a related argument between immigration levels and attitudes, see Stolle and Harell (n.d.).

This model provides a basis for expecting changes over time (i.e. period effects), but there is also reason to believe that this process will have a disproportionate impact on the attitudes and values of younger Canadians (i.e. generation effect). Political socialization research has demonstrated that early experiences, such as in the family and at school, contribute to political attitudes and behaviors that are surprisingly stable over the life course (Hooghe, 2004; Yates and Youniss, 1999; Gimpel et al., 2003; Jaros, 1973; Langston, 1969; Miller and Sears, 1986; Torney-Purta et al., 1975; Gerber et al., 2003; Green and Shachar, 2000; Plutzer, 2002). Changes in the institutional context, and subsequent changes in both the frames of debate and the environment in which these debates take place should therefore have a disproportionate impact on the values and attitudes of younger generations. The impact should be particularly strong for those who experience most directly the outcomes of these institutional developments. While some of these changes may be relatively constant for most youth (such as changes in the school curriculum), other changes will be experienced disproportionately by certain youth, such as increases in the ethnic and racial composition of the population resulting from a more open immigration regime.

Thus, the Policy-Public Opinion Model presented in Figure 1 offers two major expectations for public opinion data over time in Canada. First of all, we should witness a shift in public opinion toward more open attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism that proceeds the development of a rights culture in Canada. Second, this shift should be most acute among younger generations, especially those who have had the

opportunity to experience the effects of some of these changes, such as those who are exposed to increased ethnocultural diversity in their everyday lives.

Data and Methods

The data uses for this analysis are from public opinion surveys that have been conducted in Canada since the 1970s. The primary source of data is the Focus Canada series. This is a quarterly, representative public opinion survey conducted by Environics. While the survey questions vary from wave to wave, a number of questions have been repeated over time to allow for a more accurate tracking of attitude trends than is usually available. Additional data is also drawn from the Canadian Election Studies (CES), Gallup and surveys conducted by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC).[14] All results are presented in weighted format.

The Development of Multicultural Values

Have Canadians become more supportive of diversity over time in Canada? While this question seems relatively straightforward, the major obstacle to answering it has been the availability of over time measures on a variety of questions relation to diversity and multiculturalism in Canada. Figure 2 presents the trends in responses to eight different questions about immigration and racial minorities that were asked a minimum of three times between 1975 and 2006. The lines represent a two point moving average for responses that were considered positive toward diversity. In addition, a timeline is provided along the x-axis that plots out major changes in legislation and key events.

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[14] These surveys, along with technical information, are available through the Canadian Opinion Research Archive (www.queensu.ca/cora).

[figure 2 about here]

During the 1970s and 1980s, two different polling firms (Environics and Gallup)

repeatedly asked Canadians about their attitudes toward the level of immigration in

Canada. They suggest that there was some movement in attitudes during this period.[15]

Past research has suggested that support for immigration in Canada is linked to economic

conditions, which roughly mirror the ups and downs during this period (Palmer, 1996).

However, during the 1990s, across all eight questions, which range from support for

immigration to how much should be done for racial minorities, there appears to be a

significant upswing in support across the board. For example, whereas roughly one-third

of Canadians disagreed with the statement that there was too much immigration in the

early 1990s, by the early 2000s, this number double with nearly two-thirds of Canadians.[16]

Linking this shift to the former institutional context developed around pluralism

rights in the 1970s and 1980s requires more than simply temporal order. Yet the shift

which occurred in the 1990s is striking, and it followed a period rightly described as a

rights revolution which placed immense importance on the ideas of anti-discrimination

and equality. Was the public opinion shift consistent across the population? In Figure 3,

responses to the longest running question (Generally speaking, there is too much

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[15] The difference in levels of positive responses to these questions is likely due to different question wording.
Whereas the Gallup poll asked a question that provided both a positive and negative response, the Environics
question requires the respondent to disagree with a negative statement. Given response acquiescence, it is
not surprising that this question tracks at a lower level. What is important, however, is that the pattern over
time is largely parallel.
[16] This level is particularly remarkable because the question wording is biased toward an anti-immigrant
response. Acquiescence bias may in fact mean this level is muted.

immigration) are broken down by age group to address this question.[17]   The pattern, not

surprisingly, mirrors the aggregate trends. However, differences across age groups are

apparent. While no clear age trend appears in the 1980s, beginning in the early 1990s

where the upswing in support for immigration begins, the youngest age cohort are

consistently more supportive of immigration than older generations. In 2006, those

between the ages of 18 to 24 disagreed with the anti-immigration statement 70 percent of

the time, compared to only 58 percent among those over the age of 55 (p<.01). The gap

between the youngest and oldest cohorts ranges from four percentage points in 1992 to 14

percentage points in 1994 and 2001. While support for immigration has increased across

all age groups, the younger cohort consistently reports higher levels overall. This age

difference, it is important to note, was not consistently present before the early 1990s.

[figure 3 about here]

As with previous research, there is a clear tendency among younger Canadians to

provide more positive responses toward diversity, and this is confirmed in Table 1, where

responses from a 2006 Environics survey are provided for six different immigration

questions by age group. In every case but one, young people ages 18-24 provide answers

more supportive of immigration than older generations, and these are significant (p<.01) in

four of the five cases. The one exception is responses to the statement: Immigrants take

jobs away from other Canadians. In this instance, youth are actually the least likely to

disagree. This is perhaps not surprising, since this is the age group who has or will be

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[17] Note that the 1977 data point is not displayed, as an age variable is not included in this data set.

shortly entering the workforce, and for whom employment competition may be highly

salient (Palmer, 1996). On the whole, however, public opinion among younger people

tends to be more positive about immigration. When these six items are combined into a

single scale (alpha=.738), where higher responses indicate more open attitudes toward

immigration, young Canadians, on average, have the highest score.

[table 1 about here]

The data show that support for social diversity has increased since the early 1990s,

and that young people are most likely to express socially tolerant attitudes. It is important

to note that during this time Canada experienced an immense growth in ethnic, religious

and racial diversity, largely driven by immigration. According to the Canadian census, less

than 5% of the population was considered a visible minority in 1981. Over the following

two and a half decades, this number tripled. In 2006, Census Canada estimated that one in

six Canadians is a visible minority. This growing diversity was *not* accompanied by

increased anti-immigrant sentiment, as it has been in Europe (McLaren, 2003).[18]

The structure of immigration to Canada is unique in many ways, partly because of

the types of immigrants that come to Canada. The point system, which was put in place in

1967, replaced the race-based policies that guided immigration pre-1967. This attempt at

a "merit" system prioritizes education and work experience, which means that Canadian

immigrants often arrive with comparably better socio-economic resources than

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[18] Wilkes and colleagues (2008) have provided a further test of this finding in the Canadian context and find no effect for the level of immigration on anti-immigrant sentiment.

immigrants in other countries.[19] This may mitigate some of the intergroup conflict

between immigrants and host societies that has been documented in Europe (Quillian,

1995). Yet, research suggests as well that the institutional supports in Canada provided to

immigrant play an important role in explaining immigrant integration, beyond the relative

differences in status of newcomers (Bloemraad, 2006).

While the nature of immigration is clearly an important factor in explaining

immigrant attitudes, I would argue that it reflects the broader institutional values of

equality and pluralism reflected in the Charter and other legal developments through the

1960s and 1970s. The types and levels of immigrants in Canada is a policy outcome, which

in part mediates the relationship between the institutional context and public opinions.

There is an immense amount of research that documents that increased contact between

minorities and majorities fosters more positive attitudes (Allport, 1958; Pettigrew, 1998;

Dovidio et al., 2003; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). There is also, however, a competing

literature that suggests that increasing diversity should actually result in more hostile

intergroup relations (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1986; Giles and Buckner, 1993; Quillian,

1995; McLaren, 2003; Tolbert and Grummel, 2003). The major distinction between these

two frameworks is the nature of intergroup interaction. The contact hypothesis requires

positive interaction, whereas the threat hypothesis simply requires proximity. Thus,

context is the key mechanism in translating experiences with diversity into social and

political attitudes about other groups. The Canadian context, I have argued, provides a

context in which positive interaction across group lines is likely to take place.

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[19] Clearly, this system has its drawbacks. There remains difficulty in translating these skills into employment in Canada, due to a lack of recognition of foreign credentials.   For a critique of the economic imperatives of immigration, see Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002). There is also some evidence that increasingly issues of racial discrimination are also creating barriers to full employment for more recent immigrants (Reitz 2007).

[table 2 about here]

We might expect that the gap in support across age groups will be amplified among those who have more exposure to diverse others. To test this, it is necessary to know the types of ethnic and racial diversity that individuals have actually been exposed to. One way to capture such exposure is by examining contact. The 2006 Environics survey, fortunately, asked about the frequency of contact with six different minority groups in Canada: Jews, blacks, Chinese, Pakistani/East Indians, Muslims, and Aboriginals. Responses were on a four-point scale from never to often, and the responses have been compiled into an additive contact scale that ranges from 0 to 18 (alpha=.815).   The mean for all age groups is about 10.1, with the exception of those over 55 who average an 8.7 on the scale. There is, then, little evidence that younger Canadians report substantially different levels of contact than older Canadians.[20] But consider the correlations between contact and pro-immigration attitudes in Table 2. While the two are positively related in all cases, note how the relationship appears to strengthen among younger generations. Youth contact seems to be more correlated with their attitudes toward immigrants. This is expected from a socialization perspective: early experiences are supposed to be more related to political attitudes.

[table 3 about here]

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[20] However, see Stolle and Harell (n.d.) for evidence that young people do report higher levels of ethnic and racial diversity in their friendship networks. They also show that in a multivariate setting, the positive impact of network diversity on generalized trust is only found among younger generations.

In Table 3, the relationship between contact and age are further explored in the multivariate setting. The contact scale is included in the model, as well as dummy variables for the different age groups. Controls are included for region of the country, where Ontario is considered the reference category, immigrant status (1=immigrant), visible minority status (1=first mention for ethnic background other than European/North American), gender (female=1), employment status (1=unemployed), and impressions of the state of the economy (4-point scale where 1=very worried and 4=not at all worried). The inclusion of the last two items are important, as they offer control for the impact of economic competition on anti-immigrant attitudes, a major explanatory factor in previous research (Palmer, 1996; O'Connell, 2005).

The effect for both contact and age are significant in Table 3. Those who report more contact with minority groups are more likely to have positive attitudes toward immigration (p<.01). As expected, the youngest age cohort (18 to 24 year olds) is also the most positive toward diversity (p<.10), with more negative attitudes evident with each successive age cohort (p<.01). These findings hold despite the inclusion of a variety of demographic controls. Furthermore, the effects are also present when the model is examined only for non-immigrants (results not shown). Both the contact scale and youth remain positive and statistically significant (p<.01 and p<.05 respectively).

[figure 4 about here]

Ideally, to fully test whether current contact impacts youth attitudes toward diversity more than other age groups, interaction terms would be included in the model. Unfortunately, the effect of age and the interaction term disappear when both are included in the model (not shown). This is likely due to the relatively small sample of 18 to 24 year olds in the sample.[21] In an examination of the youth sample alone, the contact scale remains significant. In fact, it is one of the only variables that attains statistical significance, other than feelings about the state of the economy (not shown). Figure 4 highlights the proposed interaction between age and contact. The graph plots the relationship between contact and pro-immigrant attitudes, with regression lines shown for each age group. As expected, the overall level for the youngest group is highest reflecting their higher levels of overall support for immigration. However, the relationship is also stronger for the youngest group (r-squared=.066 compared to .028 for those 55 and over) and the slope of the line appears slightly steeper compared to the oldest cohort.

While this is only suggestive evidence that contact may matter *more* for youth compared to older generations, it clearly does matter. This, combined with the consistent age differences, supports the contention that Canadians attitudes toward diversity have become more open toward diversity, and that this change has been felt especially among young people and those who have experience directly the pluralism that the rights revolution has made possible.

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[21] There are 197 youth respondents in the sample, and 155 of them provided valid responses on all items in the table 3 model.

Concluding Remarks

      This paper has set out to document changes in Canadians' attitudes toward diversity since the 1970s. Evidence was presented that a significant increase occurred beginning in the early 1990s that proceeded major institutional changes in Canada. These changes reflect the development of a rights regime which emphasizes individual rights and anti-discrimination. In Canada, the development of the rights regime took on unique characteristics which reflect the pre-existing cultural diversity that has characterized Canada since its founding, including the presence of two language communities, Aboriginals, and successive waves of immigration that brought with them cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. How successive Canadian governments have managed a respect for both individual rights and cultural pluralism are reflected in both policy outcomes as well as the frames of debate that structure public discussion around accommodating diversity.

      Clearly, there are limitations to the analysis put forth in this paper. The next logical step will be to model the age effects over time, controlling for individual level characteristics that are not captured by a simple breakdown of attitudes by age. The initial findings for the age effects in the multivariate setting suggest that the age effect is indeed robust to controls in the 2006 sample. A second limitation is the availability of contextual information. Because the impact of diversity is felt differently depending on where one is located, future research will need to control for both urban/rural dynamics and ideally for census-tract level information for each respondent, as well as changes in the levels of ethnic and racial diversity over time and the state of the economy.

Despite these limitations, the evidence presented in this paper does provide one of the few looks at changes in attitudes toward diversity over time in Canada. This study has relied on a multitude of questions that are asked repeatedly over time. While a comparison between two points in time is useful, confidence in the presence of trends is greatly increased by the presence of multiple data points. Furthermore, this paper presented a contextualized understanding of the environment in which these changes were taking place. While large-scale, cross-national value change is certainly part of the story in Canada, it is also clear that the multinational and multicultural nature of Canada has presented a unique challenge to policy makers as they have dealt with increasing demands for individual rights and equality between groups. The policy responses reflect broader trends in anti-discrimination as well as a uniquely Canadian focus recognizing and respecting cultural diversity.

Tables and Figures

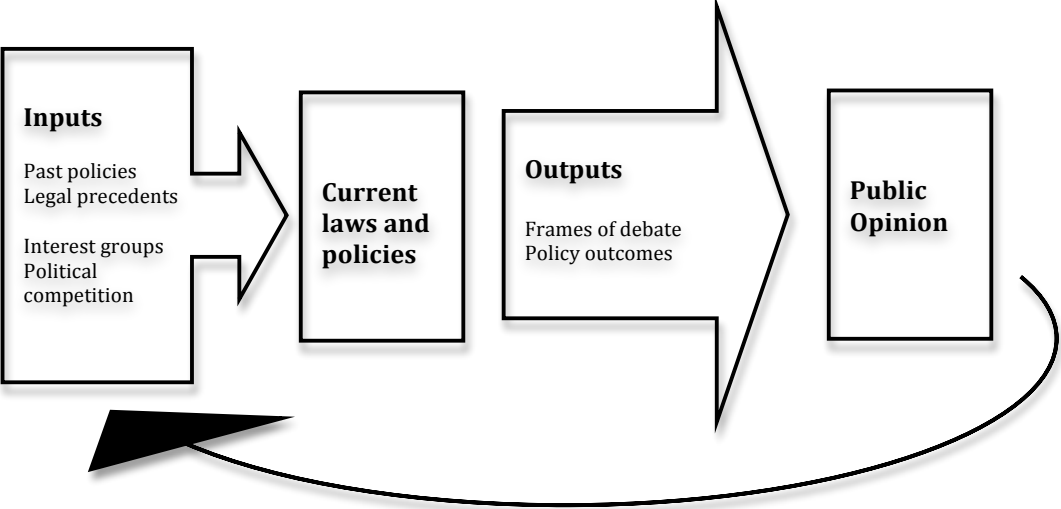**Figure 1: Policy-Public Opinion Model**

Inputs

Past policies
Legal precedents

Interest groups
Political
competition

**Current
laws and
policies**

Outputs

Frames of debate
Policy outcomes

**Public
Opinion**

Figure 2: Attitudes Toward Diversity Over Time

- - · 2 per. Mov. Avg.(CES: How much do you think should be done for racial minorities (more)?)
— 2 per. Mov. Avg.(EFC: Generally speaking, there is too much immigration (disagree).)
- - - 2 per. Mov. Avg.(CES: Do you think Canada should admit more, fewer or about the same immigrants (same or more)?)
· · · · 2 per. Mov. Avg.(EFC: Immigrants take jobs away from other Canadians (disagree).)
- · · - 2 per. Mov. Avg.(EFC: There are too many immigrants coming to this country who are not adopting Canadian values (disagree).)
· · · · · 2 per. Mov. Avg.(Gallup: If your job to decide immigration policy, increase, decrease or keep number of immigrants at current levels? (same or more))
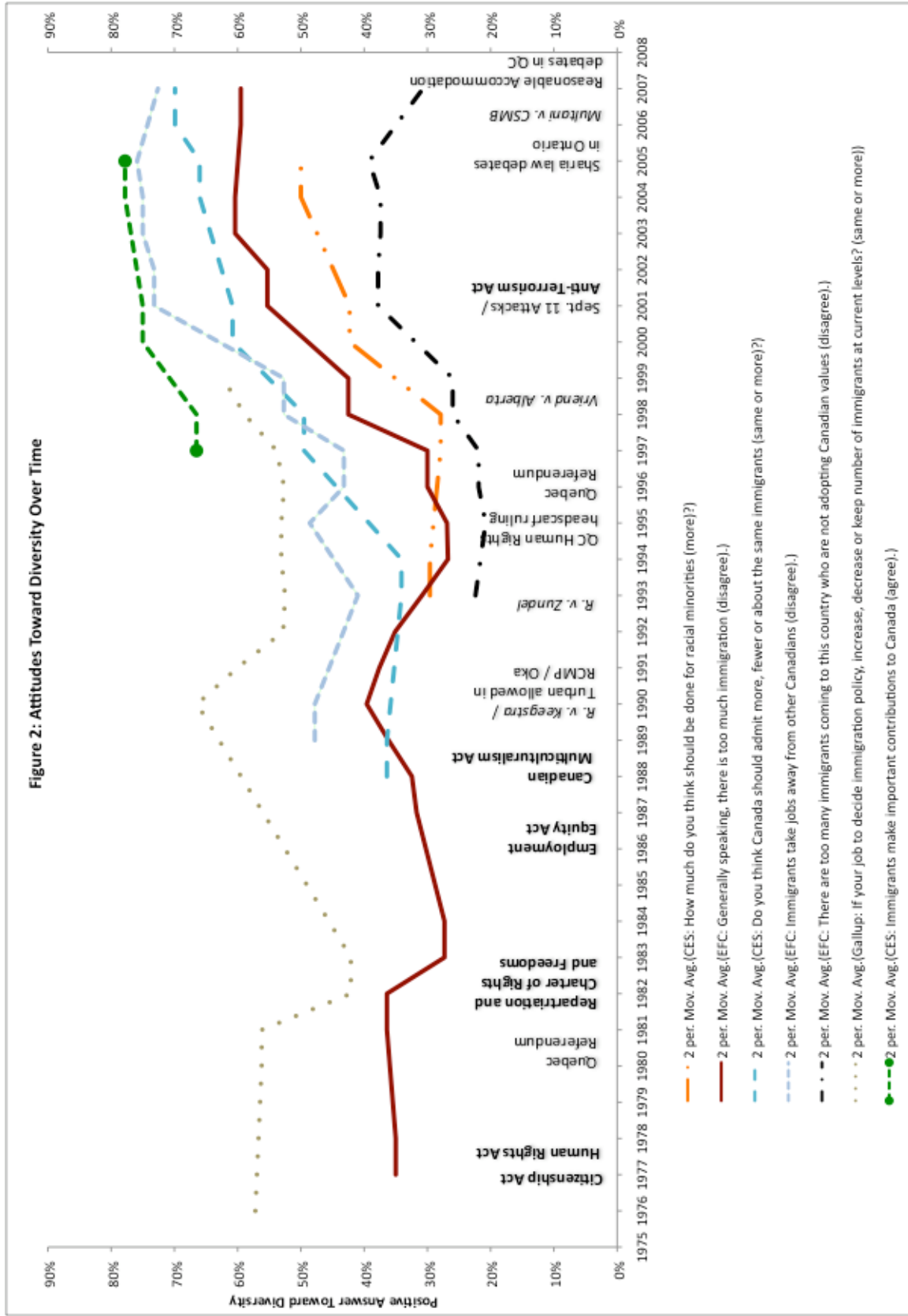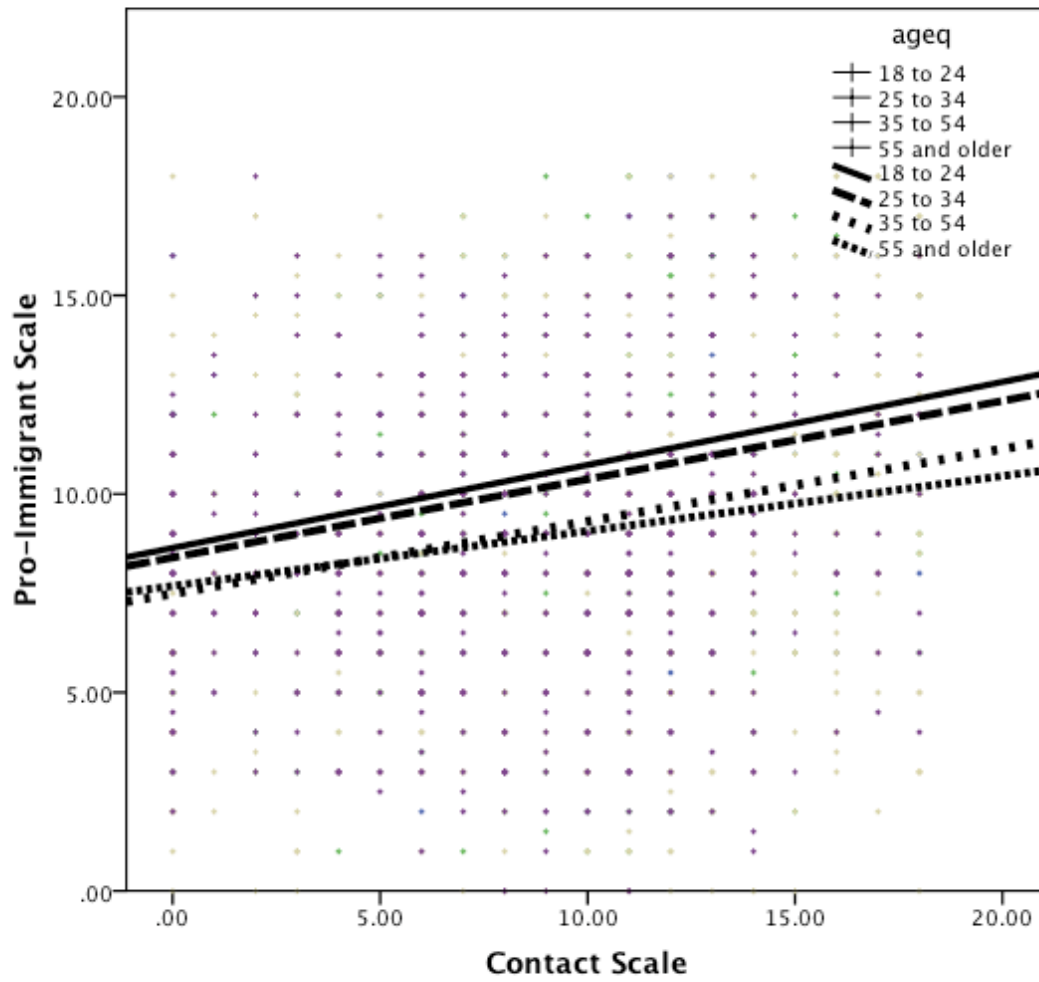—●— 2 per. Mov. Avg.(CES: Immigrants make important contributions to Canada (agree).)

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Figure 3: Age group and disagreement with: "There is too much immigration."

Source: Environics Focus Canada surveys, 1981-2006.

Figure 4: Contact and Pro-Immigrant Attitudes by Age Cohort

Source: Environics Focus Canada, 2006-4

Table 1: Age and Support for Immigration					
	18-24	25-34	34-54	55 and older	
Overall, there is too much immigration (disagree).	70%	64%	59%	56%	***
Any people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees (disagree)	49%	49%	35%	22%	***
Canada is doing a good job keeping criminals and suspected criminals out of the country (agree)	68%	43%	39%	35%	***
Immigrants take jobs away from other Canadians (disagree)	65%	78%	71%	75%	***
There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values (disagree).	44%	41%	40%	21%	***
Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada (agree)	83%	78%	81%	81%	
Mean score: Pro-Immigration Scale (0-18)	10.7	10.2	9.4	8.8	***
Source: Environics Focus Canada, 2006-4.					

Table 2: Correlations between Contact and Pro-Immigration Attitudes		
Age	R	
18-24	0.258	***
25-34	0.203	***
35-55	0.208	***
55 and over	0.167	***
Source: Environics Focus Canada, 2006-4		

Table 3: Pro-Immigrant Attitudes (OLS)			
	B	Std. Error	
Contact			
Contact Scale	0.18	(.02)	***
Age			
18-24 year olds	0.67	(.38)	*
35-55 year olds	-0.82	(.27)	***
55 and over	-1.03	(.29)	***
Region			
Prairies	0.25	(.28)	
British Columbia	-0.10	(.31)	
Quebec	1.00	(.26)	***
Maritimes	1.51	(.40)	***
Controls			
University Degree	1.24	(.21)	***
Immigrant	1.24	(.29)	***
Visible Minority	0.18	(.33)	
Female	0.06	(.19)	
Unemployed	-0.95	(.50)	*
Positive about economy	0.72	(.12)	***
Constant	5.39	(.52)	***
Adjusted R-squared		0.13	
N		1595	
Source: Environics 2006-4			

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