# Transcending Diversity: Envisioning Shared Citizenship

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### Seeking Unity Within Diversity

Canada's multicultural policy envisions a culturally plural society guided by principles of freedom, equality, tolerance and respect for individual differences. Both the initial Policy Statement and the subsequent Multiculturalism Act articulate a vision of inclusion and incorporation of ethno-cultural minorities into Canadian society on an equal basis and sought to lay the foundations of a society "based on fair play for all." Initially presented in our parliament as a model for the integration of immigrant ethnic communities into a society primarily defined by the dominant British and French Charter groups, the policy emerges as a prescription for interethnic harmony in complex, culturally diverse societies.

Over the past few decades, multiculturalism policy and programmatic initiatives have largely realized a transition from expected assimilation to the celebration of cultural diversity. Increasingly the emphasis has also shifted from a focus on culture and language to greater awareness of other socially salient identifications including 'race' and more recently religion, as well as to their respective intersections with other dimensions of diversity including age, sex/gender, class, dis/ability, sexual orientation, official language status, and regional, aboriginal, or newcomer identities. Greater attention has also been given to institutional and organizational structures that either hamper or promote inclusiveness.

Official recognition of Canada's linguistic, cultural, racial and religious diversity is invaluable. By establishing that Canada's non-charter ethno-cultural groups are neither transitory phenomenon nor simply "overflow" cultures, and by also paying attention to other dimensions of diversity, multiculturalism policy transformed formerly excluded individuals and groups into important stakeholders. The underlying commitment to peaceful co-existence based on tolerance and mutual respect also continues to underwrite the growing demographic complexity of a country that has one of the highest immigration rates and migration flow from a wide array of source countries in the world. Most importantly it legitimates different types of identities as well as the right to choice of identity, and effectively underscores Canada's commitment to facilitating civic participation and ensuring social justice.

For all its strengths and successes, multicultural ideology, policy and programmatic implementations have nevertheless been critiqued for emphasizing 'difference' at the expense of 'commonality.' Whether by intent or via latent function, the directional focusing of individuals' identifications and energies towards the activities, interests and concerns of respective ethno-cultural communities is sometimes felt to exacerbate separation between various cultural, linguistic, 'racial' and religious communities and discourage greater participation in the wider Canadian public arena, thereby undermining the policy's expressed unity goal.

Multiculturalism policy encourages strong identification of Canadians with their ancestral ethnic group origins while simultaneously encouraging identification with Canada and Canadian citizenship, both of which are vital to Canadian unity. This apparent contradiction gives rise to a number of important issues. First, while Canada's multicultural policy perceives no incompatibility between the maintenance of ethno-cultural traditions and its expressed goals of social cohesion and unity, the actual mechanism by which to achieve a hither-to elusive sense of national unity seems not yet to have been worked out in full. Second, it is not quite clear how we might move from our rather complex accommodation of diversity to the construction of a sense of unity and a shared national identity. Third, nor is it evident how a policy promoting "cultural diversity within political unity" might continue to serve as the foundation of a post-modern nation state in the context of a new world order characterized by increased economic interdependence, geographical mobility and information flow. In brief, the challenge before us is the location and articulation of unity within multiple dimensions of diversity.

### From Cultural Difference to Shared Citizenship

To-date attempts to achieve "unity in diversity" have often been stymied by two erroneous assumptions. The first is that while accommodation of pluralism may be useful in maintaining social cohesion, uniformity – defined as "sameness" – is required to ensure a truly meaningful sense of national unity. This assumed inherent tension between unity and diversity arises out of a faulty equation: homogeneity (=unity) versus heterogeneity (= diversity). Forgotten is that while some socially salient identifications may serve to differentiate among individuals or groups, others seek to establish commonality and may therefore be used to unite. What is critical is the selection and saliency of the respective identification criteria used.

The second assumption is that primary cultural and national identifications must necessarily overlap if a meaningful sense of national unity is to be achieved. However, these respective identifications are actually based on quite different identity criteria that are, moreover, not necessarily mutually exclusive. Cultural identifications focus on shared history, values,

traditions and lifeways that are usually supported and transferred through language. In contrast, national identifications reflect geographically bound, largely autonomous, self-governing political entities. The assumption regarding necessary overlap only holds true if one remains firmly committed to the notion of a nation state predicated on the belief in "one culture, one autonomous self-governing entity;" it otherwise readily collapses.

The crux of the matter is whether we really need to fully share an identifiable Canadian culture in order to have a common civic identity as Canadians. The answer is no. Civil societies do not need to be bound by a complete set of common values, traditions and shared history. What they do need, however, is member allegiance and active commitment to a common politico-economic community that is based on shared core values and principles. This in turn forms the foundation of a sense of national unity and cohesiveness firmly rooted in and expressed through participatory citizenship. The solution, in other words, is to simply decouple culture and nation, and to subsequently re-define nation in terms of shared citizenship. Common citizenship then becomes the basis for national unity and ultimately, in time, a national identity.

The true mediation between unity and diversity is commonality, not sameness. In the state's management of cultural, linguistic, 'racial' and religious pluralism, it is our commonality that has received short shrift. What we are now left grappling with is what defines, supports and guides us as a unique social, political and economic entity. While it remains both constructive and morally imperative to continue to accommodate diversity in the interests of social integration, cohesion, equity and justice, it is important to balance official recognition of differences with a consideration of what we in fact have in common as Canadians. In short, we need as a polity to move from an at times myopic preoccupation with the various ways in which we are all different, to an examination of what we in fact have in common and to use this knowledge as the foundation for a shared citizenship that both expresses mutual commitment and fosters a sense of belonging.

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**An Overarching Citizenship Charter**

In brief, the issue is not so much "what is 'Canadian'?" but rather "what does it mean to be a Canadian?" The answer may be found in an expressed commitment and allegiance to a sovereign entity called Canada that is firmly founded on shared societal values and enhanced participation in collective decision-making.

What is needed is a Citizenship Charter that both embraces our cultural, linguistic, "racial," and religious differences and transcends the various dimensions of diversity (Rummens 2002). Such a Charter would clearly articulate our society's overarching core values and locate the very responsibilities of a common citizenship in our active commitment to them. These shared values include: individual freedom of thought and expression; appreciation and respect for difference; peaceful co-existence; the rule of law; pursuit of equality; support for human rights; social "safety net" provisions; sustainable economic development; negotiation and compromise; all within the context of a parliamentary democracy. Participatory citizenship would then be based on an expressed commitment to these existing core values, as well as a heightened sense of allegiance to Canada rooted in more truly inclusive collective decision-making. An explicit, consensual social contract such as a Citizenship Charter would move us beyond the definition of our rights and freedoms as outlined in the existing Citizenship and Multiculturalism Acts and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to increased public awareness of our commonality and active commitment to the responsibilities of a shared citizenship firmly rooted in a clearer sense of our obligations to each other. National unity is thus concretely facilitated via a shared participatory citizenship firmly rooted in a joined sense of commonality and collectivity.

The basic tools required for such an invigorated citizenship are already largely in place in existing multiculturalism programming priorities that focus on identity, civic participation and social justice. However, commonality rooted in shared core values requires not only official recognition and articulation but also concrete expression. The issue here is how best to act upon our democratic ideals in a way that is truly reflective of our inherent diversity; the challenge, how best to engage citizens in a way that is truly meaningful. The key to both lies in more inclusive and enhanced civic participation in democratic decision-making, a process most effectively facilitated by newly emerging information technologies.

Shared citizenship need neither begin with a common culture nor require it as a final end-product. What it does require is a transitional shift from an exclusive focus on multiculturalism and a renewed diversity discourse to complementary discussions regarding a trans-cultural citizenship as the basis for national unity and – ultimately – a strong national identity. The challenge is to first incorporate and then transcend the various dimensions of diversity to focus on a shared national civic identity defined in terms of common citizenship and expressed via shared values firmly embedded in notions of participatory democracy. It is time to move away from an exclusive preoccupation with difference rooted in largely essentialist notion of 'culturalism" towards the articulation of commonality more firmly rooted in our shared experience. Only then will a newly-invigorated participatory citizenship be able to contribute not only to the goals of national unity and identity, but help transform a "deficiency model" of difference to an "asset-building" one better geared to an increasingly transnational, information driven, globalized world order.

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## Faulkner text – footnotes

1. By the noun "public" I mean in English what the ancient Romans referred to in their noun "publicum"—that is to say, an aggregation of human beings who never actually see each other face to face but are nonetheless expected to try to make decisions in common that could transform them into a community.
2. Cosmos and History. The myth of the eternal return Willard R. Trask, trans. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, 1959)
3. New Haven : Yale University Press, 1952.
4. For a lucid summary and application of Gerbner's views see James Shanahan & Michael Morgan, Television and its Viewers. Cultivation theory & research (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
5. Television and its Viewers, p. 219.
6. Citizens and Nation: an essay on history, communication, and Canada (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2000).
7. See the argument in Thomas Luckmann, The Invisible Religion: the problem of religion in modern society (New York, Macmillan, 1967).

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1. Source: Valerie Knowles, Forging our Legacy, Canadian Citizenship and Immigration, 1900-1977, published by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2000

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1. Voir les travaux de T.H MARSHALL, « Citizenship and Social Class » dans (1963) Sociology at the Crossroads and Other Essays, Londres, Heinemenn, p.67 - 127. Pour une critique, voir M. BULMER et A. M. REES, Citizenship today : The contemporary Relvance of T.H. Marshall, Bristol, University of California Press,1996. Voir aussi M. COUTU, «Introduction : droits fondamentaux et citoyenneté » dans M. COUTU, P. BOSSET, C. GENDRREAU, D. VILLENEUVE (dir),Droits fondamentaux et citoyenneté, Une citoyenneté fragmentée, limitée ou illusoire ? , Montréal, éditions Thémis, 2000, p. 1 - 20.
2. Voir P. GUIBENTIF, « Approaching the Production of Law through Habermas' Concept of Communicative Action" (1994) 20 Philosophy and Social Criticism, 45-70. à la p. 59.
3. Voir D. LEYDET, « Patriotisme constitutionnel et identité nationale » tel que cité dans M. COUTU, « Citoyenneté et légitimité. Le patriotisme constitutionnel comme fondement de la référence identitaire », à la p. 637.
4. En se situant ici dans une perspective sociologique et non juridique.
5. Voir G. BOURQUE et J. DUCHASTEL, L'identité fragmentée. Nations et citoyenneté dans les débats constitutionnels canadiens, Montréal, Fides, 1996.
6. cf. A.C. CAIRNS, "The Fragmentation of Canadian Citizenship", dans Alan C. Cairns, Reconfigurations. Canadian Citizenship and Constitutional Change, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1995, pp. 157-185).
7. C. TAYLOR, »Convergences et divergences des valeurs entre le Québec et le Canada» dans C. TAYLOR, Rapprocher les solitudes. Écrits sur le fédéralisme et le nationalisme au Canada, Québec, Presses de l'université Laval, 1992, p.179.
8. I. M. YOUNG, «Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship» dans C. SUNSTEIN (dir.), Feminism & Political Theory, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, p.117.
9. F. AUDIGIER, «Concept de base et compétences-clés de l'éducation à la citoyenneté démocratique : une première synthèse », Séminaire Concept de base et compétences clés, Conseil de l'Europe, document DECS/CIT (98) 7, 1997. à la p. 7.
10. M. COUTU, «Introduction : droits fondamentaux et citoyenneté », dans M. COUTU , P. BOSSET, C. GENDREAU et D. VILLENEUVE (dir.), Droits fondamentaux et citoyenneté. Une citoyenneté fragmentée, limitée ou illusoire ? Montréal, éditions Thémis, 2000.
11. Voir W. KYMLICKA et W. NORMAN, «Return of the Citizens : A survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory», (1994) 104 Ethics 352.
12. M. LABELLE et D. SALÉE, «La citoyenneté en question : l'État canadien face à l'immigration et à la diversité nationale et culturelle», (1999) 31 Sociologie et Sociétés 125, à la p. 141.

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## Duncan text – footnotes

1. There is no conceptual reason to limit ourselves to two communities or to dual citizenship. Multiple citizenships are quite conceivable and multiple transnational communities exist in the form of well-established diaspora, such as the Jewish diaspora.
2. "I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen." (From the Citizenship Act)
3. Some of which, one must acknowledge, have more value than others.
4. Citizenship regimes afford governments the ability to deport non-citizens for certain criminal acts. Deportation is a good deal more difficult, although not impossible, for naturalized immigrants.
5. One might argue that the reaction of some governments to the September 11, 2001 attack on New York and Washington have brought at least a partial return to a much differentiated society, differentiated along citizenship lines in part. There is some evidence for this, but I would suggest that this is a temporary anomaly whose impact will diminish in turn in the face of the relentless features of globalization.
6. Of course, an important aspect of shared citizenship is to seek greater assurance of the equality of opportunity, of freedom from discrimination, of freedom from deep poverty, etc.
7. Note the current concerns of some European countries of maintaining their national identities in the face of the increasingly multicultural nature of their populations. Note, too, that Canadian policy requires new citizens to have a minimum proficiency in one of Canada's official languages