STRATEGIES AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR OVERCOMING BARRIERS

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ABSTRACT

The author answers the following question on the topic of Social Inclusion/Exclusion: What strategies can help build capacity including social capital for new and/or vulnerable ethno-cultural and ethno-racial communities? (What are the best types of institutional supports that can strengthen the newer community's capacity to adapt and overcome barriers to economic, social and political participation?)

Introduction

A recent headline on the front page of the February 8th, 2007 *Globe and Mail* stated: "Cracks in the mosaic: The number of ethnic enclaves is exploding. Are they an impediment to integration?" This newspaper article follows the current popular theme in public and media discourses that either questions or "attacks" multiculturalism – be it at the policy level or at the street level in terms of how it is practiced in Canadian neighborhoods. In this case, ethnic enclaves are defined as communities with 30 per cent of the population from one visible minority group. These discourses have become quite prevalent in recent years in our post 9/11 era and particularly since the Madrid train bombings in 2004 and the London bombings in the summer of 2005. However, it would be incorrect to attribute all elements of this "anti-multiculturalism" discourse to those events.

The central aspect of this discourse is based on the perception that multiculturalism is not working (or has not worked), and that it is segregating, rather than integrating diverse 'racial', ethnic, and religious groups. In other words, the perception is that the practice of multiculturalism contributes to a fragmentation of society and makes integration difficult if not impossible. Hence the last part of the title of this Globe and Mail article: "Are they (ethnic enclaves) an impediment to integration?" While the author of this newspaper article does not directly answer this question, it is answered emphatically here with a direct "no". We argue here that we must think of ethno-cultural and ethno-racial organizations in Canada as integrative in that they contribute to and facilitate the development of "shared citizenship", civic participation, and the bridging of "other" communities. This makes the question of "what strategies can help build capacity including social capital for new and/or vulnerable ethno-cultural and ethno-racial communities?" a relevant one. The key to answering this question is knowledge about how social capital works in ethno-cultural communities.

Issues of integration, immigration, civic participation, community, belonging, heritage, and shared citizenship are currently at the heart of a contested re-imagining of Canada. In a panel sponsored by the Metropolis project in 2003, it was noted that two major approaches have framed the debate surrounding integration and citizenship (Metropolis, 2003). One approach posits a strong immutable core, often defined as national identity, as essential to successful integration. This approach is essentially assimilationist toward the host society and suggests that all ethnic minorities must move toward a core and exclusive national identity that is articulated through common values, language, and culture, and at the extreme end of the spectrum, religious homogeneity. The recent publication of "codes of conduct" by the municipalité Hérouxville is a case in point of positing an immutable core.

The second and alternative approach posits a dynamic nucleus. Here there is the belief that the core can and must be mutable and that the process of change must be driven by the participation of immigrant and ethnic communities in a continuing reconstruction of national identity. This approach is pluralistic, where the fostering of shared citizenship and integration emerges from an on-going engagement of all ethno-cultural communities (including the 'host' society), who

are in conversation and negotiation in terms of defining mutual responsibility and shared values.

This second approach of a dynamic nucleus is the one adopted for this analysis of ethno-cultural communities and organizations in Canada. It is critically important to bring together ethno-cultural and ethno-racial groups, broad-based organizations and government to engage in an interactive community building process in order to broaden our understanding of an evolving citizenship in Canada and what integration means. The conceptualization of integration utilized here is one of thinking of it as a form of shared citizenship. Citizenship, a seemingly simple concept, with visionary, idealistic and nationalistic connotations, revolves around notions of identity, rights and entitlements, empowerment, and responsibility. A weakly defined sense of citizenship is associated with collective and individual perceptions of inequality and disengagement from the larger community. Conversely, a strong sense of citizenship is associated with greater civic participation, improved civic literacy, better economic outcomes and safer, healthier, and stronger communities (Budhu, 2001; Schugurensky, 2003 Milner, 2002, p. 1-2). The link between citizenship and preferred social outcomes may be understood in terms of social capital: individuals with higher levels of social capital enjoy a more complete citizenship. Unfortunately, we do not know exactly how social capital works in Canadian ethno-cultural communities, as this has been a neglected and under-funded area of research.

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STRATEGIES

Increased Funding for Ethno-Cultural and Ethno-Racial Communities

Canada's ethnic and "racial" landscape continues its rapid transformation, particularly in the larger cities where, over the past 3 decades, the percentage of people of non-European origins has increased significantly. Despite this demographic reality in Canada's larger cities, ethnic minority civic participation in broad-based organizations is low, and participation in formal politics is also limited (Black, 2002, p.360). Furthermore, it has now been established that visible minorities in urban areas have relatively less voting power than non-visible minorities in urban and rural areas (Pal & Choudhry, 2007). These facts point to the need for the development of shared citizenship amongst ethno-cultural communities, whereby the spheres of social capital, civic participation, and bridging to "other" communities may intersect.

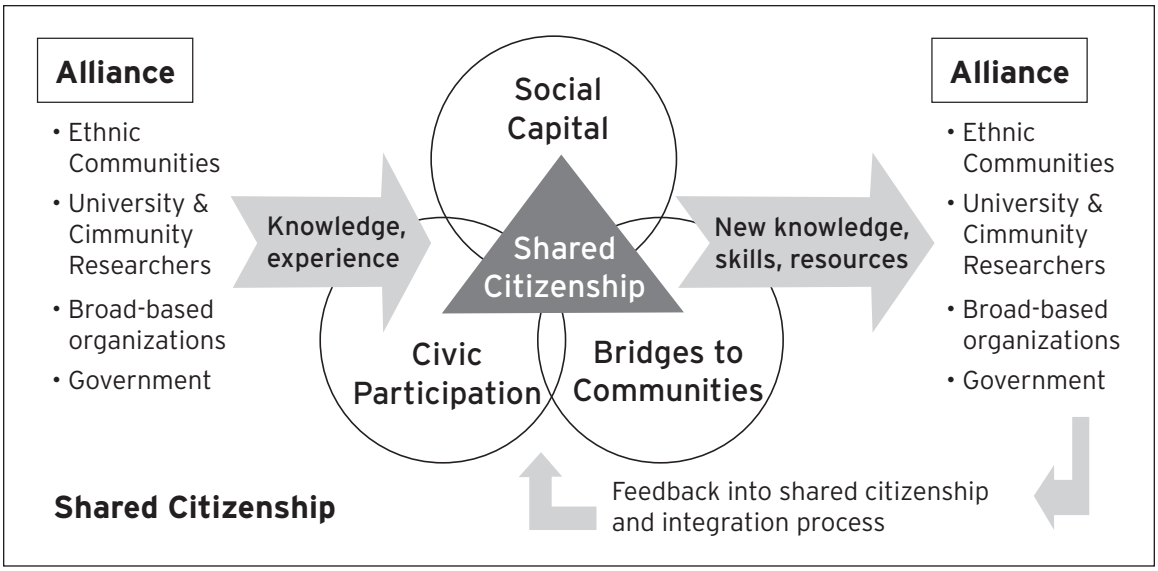
Official state multiculturalism policy and funding in Canada began in the 1970s, with a focus on "ethnicity multiculturalism", then shifted to "equity multiculturalism" in the 1980s, and further shifted to "civic multiculturalism" in the 1990s and early 2000s (Fleras & Elliott, 2002, p. 62-68). Civic multiculturalism entails three fundamental goals: 1) identity (sense of belonging and attachment to Canada); 2) civic participation; and 3) social justice. The shift away from "ethnicity multiculturalism" in the 1980s and 1990s was also accompanied by significant reductions in funding from the state for ethno-cultural organizations in Canada. As a consequence, ethno-cultural organizations have not had the chance to develop the organizational capacity to play a significant role in "civic multiculturalism" during the past 20 years. Thus, an important first-step strategy for building capacity in ethno-cultural and ethno-racial communities would be for governments and broad-based organizations to provide these communities with sufficient funding to allow their representative organizations to grow to the point where they can participate fully in the dynamic nucleus.

Formation and Funding of On-Going Alliances

While the funding of ethno-cultural and ethno-racial organizations is an important first-step strategy, what is also needed is the formation of on-going alliances[1] that include ethno-cultural organizations, broad-based (main stream) organizations, and government representatives that would provide a space and forum for the dynamic nucleus to operate and for shared citizenship to evolve. For those in broad-based organizations and political institutions, it is important to develop a deeper understanding of ethno-cultural community issues, and to develop mechanisms and strategies that encourage widespread political and social participation and ultimately, social integration. The formation of such alliances would result in the construction of bridges between ethno-cultural communities and broad-based organizations so that members of ethno-cultural communities are not only "in" but also "of" the wider community.[2] While the formation of alliances is necessary, it is not sufficient.

Funding for Community-Based Action Research on Social Capital Formation

With limited knowledge of the link between shared citizenship and social capital, these alliances would provide an opportunity for community-based action research that would help facilitate the dynamic nucleus. The inclusion of community and university researchers in these alliances would enable the development of research programs that would involve all stakeholders, working together to identify the correlates of social capital. This understanding would then provide the basis for: 1) the analysis of competing models of civic engagement; 2) the exploration of what constitutes inclusive, active, and shared citizenship; and 3) the investigation of how various programs and policies might facilitate social capital development. This knowledge would then be used to build the capacity of community organizations to both identify, and encourage forms of social capital that lead to an active and shared citizenship.



For researchers, issues of shared citizenship, civic participation, and unity are increasingly important in a society that has great potential for deep fractures (Frideres, 1997; Rummens, 2003). Hence, it is necessary to understand the substantive (non-legal) dimensions of citizenship beyond the rights, duties, and privileges that facilitate participation, inclusion and identity formation. Social capital is a useful organizing concept for doing just this, and is increasingly seen as providing a basis for the development of public policy (Frank, 2003; Judge, 2003; van Kemenade et al., 2003). Increased levels of participation are key to Canada realizing the benefits of its cultural diversity, developing strong and welcoming communities, and tapping the available, but largely untouched, strengths, expertise, and energies of those in ethno-cultural communities (see figure).

While the early work on social capital in the 1980s delineated and defined the concept of social capital, Putnam's work suggests that civic community and social capital help sustain democracy and are the foundations of a healthy civil society (Putnam, 1993; 2000). Putman's understanding of civic community consists of four elements: civic engagement; political equality; solidarity, trust, and tolerance; and social structures of cooperation. These elements of a strong civic community are the products of social capital. Forms of social capital are based on trust, norms of reciprocity and networks of civic participation, where for Putnam, the key form of social capital is interpersonal trust. Trust is suggested to be the product of norms and networks (Putnam, 1993, p. 171-2). However, the mechanism by which these forms of social capital – trust, reciprocity and participation – are related to each other is not fully described by Putnam, who has noted that these various components of social capital are 'as tangled as well-tossed spaghetti' (Levi, 1996, p. 52; Putnam, 2000, p. 137). Thus, the untangling of these components and the logic of social networks in particular would be an important community-based action research strategy that would immediately have policy and programmatic implications.

Despite their critical role in building social capital, the character and dynamics of social networks are complicated and are now only slowly being understood. This is particularly true with respect to social capital within ethno-cultural communities. While the literature points to a range of factors – from family traditions to structural barriers – that shape social capital formation in these communities, research is still in its early stages. In Canada, the literature on ethnic communities and social capital has tended to examine economic correlates (Li, 2004; Apinunmahakul, Erika & Meng 2004; Marger 2001; Aizlewood & Pendakur, 2005). Some of the research questions more related to social correlates that come to mind include the following:

1. How is social capital created in ethno-cultural organizations?
2. What variations does social capital take in different types of ethno-cultural organizations?
3. How does the participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities in ethno-cultural organizations lead to civic participation in broad-based non-ethnic organizations and formal political organizations?
4. What types of ethno-cultural organizations facilitate this civic participation the best?
5. What are the organizational and structural factors in broad-based organizations that facilitate or constrain civic participation amongst immigrants and ethnic minorities? (i.e., opportunity structures, networks, structural barriers, cultural differences, etc.)
6. What strategies and programs can the state develop to encourage civic participation amongst immigrants?
7. What strategies and programs can the state develop, in conjunction with ethno-cultural and broad-based organizations, to encourage civic participation amongst immigrants and ethnic minorities?

Answers to these and other research questions would provide the knowledge and basis for policy and program development emerging from the community level.

As the dynamics of ethnic and "racial" diversity continue to unfold in Canada, issues of exclusion and lack of full participation of immigrant and ethnic minorities continue to be of concern. These alliances will foster a sense of

belonging, inclusion, and full participation among members of these communities via community-based action research that will produce programs and policies that will strengthen and deepen Canadian democracy. The best type of institutional support that can strengthen ethnocultural communities' capacities would be one of establishing formal, on-going alliances that allow all partners and stakeholders to engage in an interactive community building process, as well as conduct community-based action research, in order to broaden an understanding of what shared citizenship means while allowing the nucleus to remain dynamic.

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