TRANSNATIONALS AND SENSE OF BELONGING TO CANADA: WITH GLOWING HEARTS?*

ABSTRACT

This article reviews the research on "sense of belonging" to Canada as a form of societal attachment that is related to social cohesion. Data from the Canadian Ethnic Diversity Survey are presented to answer the question: "Do transnationals have a weaker sense of belonging to Canada than non-transnationals?" Finally, some qualitative data are presented to show what "sense of belonging" means to some transnationals in Canada.

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During the summer of 2001, in the towns of Oldham, Burnley, and Bradford in the north of England, there were major "race" riots that were allegedly the worst in England in more than 20 years. In December 2001, almost three months after 9/11 and shortly before the release of the UK Government-commissioned report on the summer riots, the UK Home Secretary, David Blunkett, urged immigrants and ethnic minorities to develop a "sense of belonging" to Britain. He further elaborated and argued that immigrants who settle in Britain must ensure that future generations grow up "feeling British" (BBC News 2001). When the commissioned report was released, one of the major proposals was that a meaningful concept of citizenship must be established and championed, one that would not only recognize the contributions of all cultures to Britain's development historically but also establish a "clear primary loyalty to this Nation" (Cantle et al. 2001: 20).

It would be extremely difficult to transplant the notion of "feeling British" to the Canadian context and explicate the notion of "feeling Canadian." Moreover, the idea of a civic nation may well be a myth (Yack 1996). However, at the more straightforward social-psychological level of identity, there has been scholarly and policy-oriented research on people's "sense of belonging" for well over a decade in Canada. Arguably, a sense of societal attachment and belonging would be a precursor to, or perhaps part and parcel of, loyalty and allegiance to a nation.

Sense of belonging to Canada

In the mid-1990s, shortly after the creation of the Department of Canadian Heritage in 1993, the Government of Canada partnered with the private research firm EKOS to create the Rethinking Government project. This project was part of the Department's operating environment. It included, among many other things, the key research issue of social cohesion, which included a "sense of belonging" to Canada variable (Canadian Heritage 1999). In 2002, EKOS reported that approximately 80% of Canadians had a strong[1] sense of belonging to Canada and that since 1994 there has been little change in the proportion of Canadians who feel this way (Jenkins 2002). The EKOS findings were corroborated by Statistics Canada's 2003 General Social Survey (GSS), which indicated that 85% of Canadians had a strong[2] sense of belonging to Canada (Schellenberg 2004, 17). In addition, the 2003 GSS provided evidence on the variation of "sense of belonging" by other socio-demographic variables like gender, age, education and income. What is of interest here is the findings for province of residence and immigration status. Only 74% of Quebecers had a strong sense of belonging to Canada and only 70% of those who use the French language at home had a strong sense of belonging to Canada. In contrast, the percentages for all other provinces ranged from the high 80s to the low 90s. With respect to immigration status, 85% of Canadian-born respondents had a strong sense of belonging to Canada, while 91% of immigrants who came to Canada before 1980 had a strong sense of belonging. Further, 88% of immigrants who arrived in Canada between 1980 and 1990 had a strong sense of belonging. Only the more recent immigrants, those who came to Canada between 1990 and 2003, had a strength of sense of belonging to Canada (84%) similar to Canadian-born respondents.

At about the same time as the 2003 GSS was conducted, Canadian Heritage and Statistics Canada conducted the Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS) in Canada. This survey involved approximately 40,000 respondents. Some of the reported EDS findings on "sense of belonging" to Canada include:

a) 80% of respondents had a strong sense of belonging to Canada[3] (Paquette 2004), and b) those who perceived discrimination were slightly less likely to have a strong sense of belonging to Canada than those who perceived no discrimination (Derouin 2003). In addition to the EDS data on "sense of belonging," there has been other scholarly work that includes individual case studies of North African migrants in Montreal (Fortin 2002) and Hong Kong adolescent immigrants (Chow 2007). In 2007, Ipsos Reid, a private polling firm in Canada, was commissioned by the Dominion Institute to conduct a national online survey on social engagement and attachment to Canada using questions similar to the EDS questions. The results were, not surprisingly, similar to earlier studies. Seventy-nine percent of the general Canadian population had a strong sense of belonging to Canada; this is compared with 81% for first generation Canadians (immigrants) and 88% for second generation Canadians (Ipsos Reid 2007). The most recent survey, commissioned by the Association for Canadian Studies, involves immigrants residing in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver – Canada's three largest cities. The results from this survey indicated that 87% of the immigrant respondents in all three cities had a strong sense of belonging to Canada. The results by city indicated that Toronto had the greatest proportion of immigrants with a strong sense of belonging (91%), followed by Vancouver (84%) and Montréal (80%). Jack Jedwab, Executive Director of the Association for Canadian Studies, points out that this strong sense of belonging to Canada is a clear counterpoint to the critique of Canadian multiculturalism policy, a critique that suggests the policy undermines newcomers' attachment to Canada (Boswell 2008).

Criticisms of multiculturalism[4] that suggest it facilitates a fragmentation of society and undermines social cohesion are well documented in the literature, some of which dates back to the 1970s. However, as Satzewich (2008: 44-45) has recently pointed out, there is a new twist to the anti-multiculturalism discourse; this new discourse argues that multiculturalism can promote an "unhealthy" transnationalism that undermines Canadian identity and unity. This more nuanced critique shifts the blame for societal fragmentation to the practice of transnationalism.[5] Transnationals by definition have bi-national and perhaps multinational networks and thus multi-local attachments. But does this create for them a "thinner" citizenship within Canada?

Transnationals and sense of belonging to Canada

This new discourse and critique suggests that the practice of transnationalism reinforces non-Canadian values, attitudes and behaviours and thus creates obstacles and barriers to transnationals' active and shared citizenship within Canada. These obstacles and barriers result in segregation and civic isolation and a lesser likelihood that transnationals would have a strong sense of belonging to Canada.

As noted earlier, the literature on "sense of belonging" to Canada clearly indicates that, compared with Canadian-born people, immigrants have just as strong a sense of belonging to Canada – if not stronger (Schellenberg 2004, Ipsos Reid 2007, Boswell 2008). However, the practice of transnationalism is highly variable – thus some immigrants are transnationals and many are not. So the question asked here is "Do transnationals have a weaker sense of belonging to Canada than non-transnationals?" This question is answered here using the data from the EDS data; then some qualitative data from interviews with transnationals in Calgary are presented in order to get a sense of what a "sense of belonging" to Canada means for those who are transnationals.[6]

Transnational practices and identity encompass a multitude of factors, which may include holding dual citizenship, having transnational family and/or business networks, sending goods and money back and forth and travelling back and forth. Transnationalism can be conceptualized simply as the practice of holding official dual citizenship. In this case, recent research has shown that there is virtually no difference in terms of sense of belonging to Canada between those who are dual citizens in Canada and those with single Canadian citizenship (Jedwab 2008: 71). Further, there is also virtually no difference in terms of belonging to mainstream civic organizations between those who are dual citizens and those who hold only single Canadian citizenships (Wong 2008: 93).

Unfortunately, using dual citizenship status as a proxy for transnationalism has some limitations because only a limited number of countries in the world permit dual citizenship status.[7] Using the EDS data set, a transnationalism scale was constructed to provide a more complex measurement of transnationalism. This scale comprises three variables: a) citizenship status, b) family in country of birth and c) travel back to country of origin.[8] This transnationalism scale allows for an assessment, using logistic regression analysis, of the relationship between transnationals and non-transnationals in terms of having a strong sense of belonging to Canada, while controlling for other socio-demographic factors. In addition to including sense of belonging to Canada, this analysis also includes the importance of ethnic identity and the experience of ethnic/racial discrimination. The importance of ethnic identity was added because official multiculturalism policy has been criticized for promoting ethnicity or ethnic nationalism to the detriment of civic nationalism. The experience of ethnic discrimination was added because sense of belonging to Canada is thought to be weaker when discrimination is experienced (Derouin 2003, Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration 2003: 15).

Table 1 presents the logistic regression results with the odds ratios for three equations.[9] These results clearly indicate that in terms of sense of belonging to Canada, transnationals are only 0.3%[10] less likely to have a strong sense of belonging than non-transnationals when all the other socio-demographic variables are controlled for or held constant. This difference is not only very slight but also not statistically significant. Thus, there is no relationship whatsoever between the practice of transnationalism and sense of belonging to Canada. What is interesting with these results is that higher education is more directly related to a sense of belonging to Canada. The strongest relationship here is with people with post-graduate degrees, people who are 28.6%[11] less likely to have a strong sense of belonging to Canada than those without post-graduate

Table 1
Logistic regression of "sense of belonging to Canada," "importance of ethnic/cultural identity," and "experienced ethnic/racial discrimination" on transnationalism and other socio-demographic variables[1]

Independent variables	Sense of belonging to Canada	Importance of ethnic/ cultural identity	Experienced ethnic/ racial discrimination
Transnationalism (transnational = 1)	.977	.955	1.661***
Socio-demographic variables			
Gender (female = 1)	1.173***	1.226***	.732***
Marital status (married =1)	1.056	1.052	.824**
Age	1.027***	1.022***	.981***
Income	1.017	1.010	.983
Children (yes = 1)	1.005	1.080	1.282***
Completed school in Canada	.750***	1.142*	.485***
Level of education			
High school	.977	1.099	1.104
Some post-secondary	.943	1.023	1.718***
College	.846**	1.006	1.648***
Bachelor's	.802**	.993	1.813***
Post-graduate	.714***	.907	1.831***
N	**42476**	**42476**	**42476**

[1] 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey – Bootstrapped. *=p>.05, ** = p>.01, *** = p>.001

degrees. The other two regression equations are revealing. Similar to the non-relationship between transnationalism and sense of belonging to Canada, there is no relationship between transnationalism and the importance of ethnic identity. That is, transnationals are no different from non-transnationals in terms of the importance they put on having a strong ethnic identity.

However, transnationalism is strongly related to the experience of ethnic/racial discrimination. That is, transnationals are 66.1% more likely to experience discrimination than non-transnationals. This finding is quite remarkable when compared with the finding related to transnationalism and sense of belonging and earlier findings by Derouin (2003), who found that, generally, those who perceive discrimination are slightly less likely to have a strong sense of belonging to Canada than those who perceive no discrimination. In this case, transnationals, despite their greater experience of ethnic/racial discrimination compared with non-transnationals, are just as likely as non-transnationals to have a strong sense of belonging to Canada.

What does "sense of belonging" to Canada mean for transnationals? In the 40 interviews conducted, transnationals were asked about their sense of belonging to Calgary, Alberta and Canada; it was found that the strongest sense of belonging was to Canada as a whole. Less than one quarter of respondents did not feel a sense of belonging to Canada; they tended to be the younger respondents. Of those who felt a strong sense of belonging to Canada, many mentioned that Canada's international image is what they felt most attached to. Other sentiments included Canada being beautiful, safe and an international role model for what countries ought to aim for. A few respondents also mentioned wanting to take Canadian values and practices back to their country of origin to improve the situation there. The following five brief quotes reflect the breadth of some of the answers to the question "What is your sense of belonging to Canada?"[12]

Canada is a nice country. And uh, I'm so, so happy. And uh, and uh, proud to be in Canada and I-I proud also hope to be, I hope to be a Canadian and make relationship between Canada and, and Africa because they, they have the Africans and they accept Darfurian and here, I met, I saw many, many African people. So it is nice. (Mr. V. – male Sudanese)

Well, uh, we've had a lot of really good Canadian friends before we moved, so I have a very good id-uh, uhhh, how do you call it…um, impression of Canada even before moving to Canada I think….Canada can be a model for having a, a living in a more diverse, welcoming, inclusive society. Although, despite its challenges right. Canada although has a lot of uh, it still has, uh, denials about its past, so that's why sometimes it can't deal with its future, right, around excluding other people from the mainstream of society, so…right. (Mr. W. – male Filipino)

Oooo…Canada is my second home. My home can't replace, some of the things I learned about Canada cannot replace it, cannot. I miss Canada just as much as I miss home. When I'm in one I think of the other, and when I'm in the other….(Mr. X. – male African American)

Yeah, I like Canada, when, when you compare Canada with Europe or the US, I like Canada. I don't like the US much. And, compared to uh, UK, somewhere like UK, it's more traditional type, its uh, but, I think it is a free and fair like, place. And, no dis – so far we haven't seen any discrimination. (Ms. Y. – female Sri Lankan)

Yeah, I feel very, very strongly about Canada and, and what, you know as, as a nation. It's everything that Canada stands for, you know like, you know every nation has an identity, it takes years and years to

> build, you know versus the United States, it's a, it's a different nation….It doesn't matter, it just, you know, years and years of policy…things like that, right. (Mr. Z. – male Chinese)

As the above summary and quotes indicate, sense of societal belonging to Canada for transnationals is extremely varied. Overall, however, most of the interviewees had positive feelings and some sense of pride.

In conclusion, the data from the EDS indicate that transnationals have just as strong a sense of belonging to Canada as non-transnationals. The practice of transnationalism does not undermine societal attachment or sense of belonging. Some of the earlier research suggests that it is more likely ethnicity and religion (Schellenberg 2004), rather than transnationalism per se, that is more likely to affect people's sense of belonging to Canada. Moreover, as the interview data indicate, the notion of what a "sense of belonging to Canada" really means to transnationals is quite varied and impossible to pinpoint. Nonetheless, people's descriptions of it portray, overall, a genuine warmth.

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Notes

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[1] Measured as "somewhat to intense sense of belonging" (5, 6, 7 on a 7-point scale).

[2] Measured as "somewhat strong or very strong sense of belonging."

[3] Measured as 4, 5 on a 5-point scale.

[4] These criticisms encompass conceptualizing multiculturalism as an ethos, philosophy, policy and practice.

[5] Transnationalism is conceptualized broadly here as including the specific identities and practices of ethnocultural groups and/or immigrants that transcend national borders.

[6] A total of 40 interviews were conducted with transnationals in Calgary in the summer of 2007.

[7] Approximately 90 countries in the world allow dual citizenship. See Renshon (2001: 45).

[8] Each of these variables was dichotomized for inclusion in the scale. "Citizenship status" was divided between those individuals holding single Canadian citizenship and those holding dual citizenship (Canada plus one or two other countries). "Family in country of birth" was divided between those with family members still living in the country of birth and those without. "Travel back to country of origin" was divided between those individuals who have made at least one return trip back and those who had not. The Cronbach's alpha for these three items was .82.

[9] An odds ratio = 1.00 would mean that the independent variable (transnationalism) has no effect on the dependent variable (sense of belonging to Canada). In other words, the likelihood of the dependent variable (sense of belonging) is equal between the groups, or categories, for the independent variables (i.e., transnationals and non-transnationals). An odds ratio of less than 1.00 means less likelihood and an odds ratio of greater than 1.00 means greater likelihood.

[10] The partial odds ratio = 0.997; thus, 1.00 minus 0.997 = 0.003 x 100 = 0.3%.

[11] The partial odds ratio = 0.714; thus, 1.00 minus 0.714 = 0.286 x 100 = 28.6%.

[12] When some of interviewees asked for an explanation of "sense of belonging," the interviewer explained that for some people it meant attachment, pride, loyalty, honour, or some or all of these things.