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Social Trust, Ethnic Diversity, and Immigrants: The Case of Canada

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SOCIAL TRUST, ETHNIC DIVERSITY, AND IMMIGRANTS: THE CASE OF CANADA

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Canadian research is seriously scarce in the fast-growing literature on social trust - defined as the degree to which one can trust others whom one does not know personally. In this article, we have tried to address this issue by examining the levels of trust in various Canadian provinces and cities. The study shows that the level of trust in Canada rises as one moves away from the centre and towards both west and east coasts, and that the trust levels are alarmingly low for cities in the province of Quebec. We have also made an attempt to further our understanding of the dynamics of social trust, by looking at the determinants of trust at the city level. The factors examined are: the city's population, the size of its immigrant population, average income of residents, the extent of income inequality, and the degree of its ethnic diversity. Out of these, the positive relationship found between ethnic diversity and social trust - that is, as the former rises, the latter increases as well - constitutes a uniquely Canadian trend, which is in contrast to what the existing literature on social trust suggests. Moreover, within Canada, Quebec appears as an anomaly, given the extremely low levels of trust in cities located in this province. Also, within Quebec, Montreal seems to be in a class all by itself, showing the unusual combination of high diversity and low trust. Although some speculative hypotheses are proposed to explain some of these trends, the anomalies found warrant particular attention in future research.

Introduction

During the 1990s, there emerged in various social science disciplines a sudden rise of interest in the concept of social capital and, particularly, in the concept of trust, as one of its major components. The key to this sudden popularity was the simplicity and intuitively understandable nature of the concept. The formal and institutional structure of a society, the argument goes, is unable to cover every small and remote corner of social life and, therefore, there remain many areas that need to be taken care of by means of informal routines and inter-personal interactions. Many such routines and interactions involve relationships among people on the basis of mutual trust, itself related to the presence of a common set of norms, commitment to the principle of reciprocity, and a certain degree of distance from purely self-interested individualism. In the absence of this fundamental building block – that is, a trusting relationship among citizens of a community - this informal structure will collapse, causing the formal institutions to malfunction. It was in reference to these dynamics that, in the introduction to his edited volume, *Democracy and Trust*, the political scientist Mark Warren (1999, p. 2) noted that "...without trust the most basic activities of everyday life would become impossible"; or, in his *Bowling Alone*, now one of the classics in social sciences, Putnam (2000, p. 135) argued that "[h]onesty and trust lubricate the inevitable frictions of social life."

The entry of the element of trust challenged the conventional ways in which many social processes were understood and explained. Nothing illustrates this point better than the new classification of societies suggested by Francis Fukuyama (1995a; 1995b). According to him, while the traditional classification of countries on the basis of their degree of industrialization and the extent of state intervention in economy is not wrong, neither is it "the most useful way of understanding global economic geography (Fukuyama, 1995a, p. 89)." Instead, he suggested a different grouping, the 'low-trust' group consisting of countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Italy, and France; and, the 'high-trust' group, including Japan, United States, and Germany. He then concludes that both sides of the ongoing debate over the appropriate role of state in economy - that is, the traditional left and right, the neomercantilists and neoclassical economists – have missed the point that non-rational factors such as trust will be crucial in the success of modern societies in a global economy.

This and other studies of trust raised a concern among policy-makers in many societies as to where they stand on the global map of trust and, also, how they

can improve the trust endowments in their countries. The concern resulted in a large number of studies in many industrial nations on the dynamics of trust, its causes and consequences, as well as its distribution in the country. Surprisingly enough, Canada has been mostly absent in such studies, not necessarily due to lack of interest in the issue on the part of Canadian researchers and policy-makers, but more due to lack of good and reliable data. Recently, however, the severity of this data shortage has subsided, thanks to the generation and release of some relevant and rich data sets by Statistics Canada. Cycle 17 of the Canadian General Social Survey (GSS) is one such data source, and is entirely dedicated to capturing the concept of social capital, of which trust is a fundamental component.

In the present study, we have made an attempt to examine the state of trust in Canada using the recently released GSS17 data. The main questions that are addressed in this study are as follows; 1) What is the distribution of trust in different Canadian provinces and cities? 2) What are the impacts of some general factors such as population, income, and inequality on the trust level of various Canadian cities? 3) Given the significance of immigration and multiculturalism in the lives of Canadians, what are the effects of these variables on trust?

Conceptual Framework

An emerging theme in the fast-growing literature on social trust is that in the last third of the 20th century the level of trust has started plummeting in many countries, but particularly among the industrial nations, notwithstanding very few exceptions which have experienced no major change or merely a transformation in the nature of trust (on US, for instance, see Putnam, 2000; Wuthnow, 2002; on Italy, Putnam, 1993; Gambetta, 1988; on Britain, Hall, 1999; 2002; on France, Worms, 2002; on Germany, Offe and Fuchs, 2002; on Japan, Yamagishi, 1988; Inoguchi, 2002; Yamagishi and Yamagishi, 1994; on Spain, Perez-Diaz, 2002; on Australia, Cox, 2002; on Sweden, Rothstein, 2002; and on Canada, Helliwell, 1996). In these and other studies, the impact of the changes in level and nature of trust on a variety of other social trends were also heavily discussed. Putnam (2000), for instance, pointed to the impacts of declining trust levels on the vitality of civic engagement and, through that, the robustness of the democratic nature of the political structures; others warned against their economic consequences (Fukuyama,

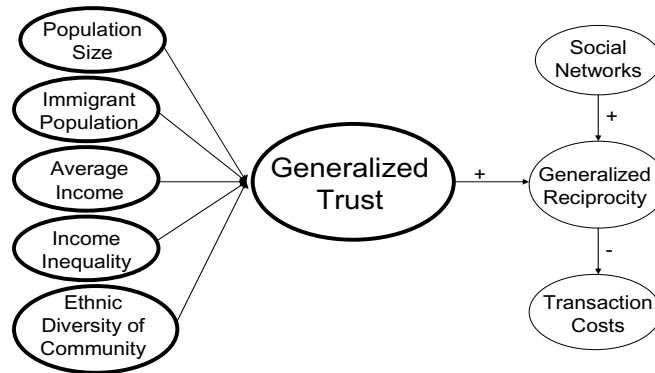
1995a; 1995b); some focused on the changing nature of social connectedness (see, Wuthnow, 1998). More recently, a new stream of experimental research has emerged, the main focus of which is to capture what the essence of trusting behaviour is, and what kinds of characteristics and circumstances are more conducive to trust (see, Sampson, 2003; Soroka, Helliwell, and Johnston, 2003; Lazzarini, Madalozzo, Artes and Siqueira, 2005; Fehr, Fischbacher, von Rosenbladt, Schupp and Wagner, 2002; Ashraf, Iris, and Nikita, 2003; Goto, 1996; Glaeser, Laibson, Scheinkman, and Soutter, 2000).

Despite some disagreements in the literature cited above, there is a more or less strong consensus over some basic features and elements of trust, two of which are the risk and also the reciprocity involved in trust-based interactions. Warren (1999, p.1), for instance, believes that trust “involves a judgment, however implicit, to accept vulnerability to the potential ill will of others by granting them discretionary power over some good.” Why would someone grant others such discretionary powers over him or herself? One possible answer can be ‘because it pays to trust’; the pay-off to trust results from a reduction in what economists call “transaction costs”, which is the costs of making formal arrangements to make sure that others will remain faithful to their commitments (Putnam, 2000; Fukuyama, 1995b). If the savings made through trusting others outweighed the risk associated with it, the trusting behaviour would then become a feasible choice, as far as the cost-benefit analysis of behaviours is concerned.

In the picture presented above, the main actor is an individual, and not necessarily a larger entity such as a community, a city, a country, and so on. Although related, the question of what makes a society less or more trusting is conceptually distinct from the question of what makes individuals trust. With regard to the former, for instance, one may ask: what causes fluctuations in trust levels of a community over time? Or, what factors are associated with various levels of trust in different communities within one nation? It goes without saying that the kinds of factors that are relevant in addressing the above questions vary greatly, depending on whether the communities under study are neighbourhoods, cities, provinces, or countries. Below, we briefly discuss some of the factors that interact with trust at the community level.

Figure 1 illustrates a diagram of some causes and consequences of social trust. It should be noted that the diagram does not provide a perfect match with the conceptual framework of the present study; for one thing, it entails some variables that are not part of our study, such as the effects of social trust; for another, given

Figure 1:
Causes and Consequences of Trust



that our focus is on the interplay of ethnic diversity and immigrant population with trust, and not the predictors of trust per se, we have deliberately ignored some other variables that could potentially influence the level of trust. To visually demonstrate this, we have made the ovals representing the variables studied here darker. Against this background, we have included five relevant variables: population of the city, population of immigrants as a percentage of the total city population, the average income of city dwellers, the degree of income inequality in each city and, finally, the extent to which the city is ethnically diverse. Below, we explain the nature of the possible relationships between these variables and trust.

1. Population size. Putnam (2000), among others, has shown that with the increase of population, the level of trust normally drops. This has to do with the fact that in almost every society, large cities create a structural setting that is radically different from that of small towns. They possess a more diverse occupational structure, a higher population density, a faster life rhythm, and a more anonymous crowd – what Weisman captured in the term he coined, ‘the lonely crowd’. As far as trust is concerned, with the increase of population, the social relationships and interactions among dwellers tend

to become shallower and shorter. This robs people of a deep and reliable knowledge of each other and, in the process, raises the risks associated with trusting others. The higher risk associated with trust, in turn, lowers the city dwellers' propensity to trust.

2.Average income. Wuthnow (2002) has argued that one of the reasons behind the declining levels of trust in American society is the decline of the economic resources of Americans. The logic of this argument is not too difficult to grasp; trust involves risk, and those who are in better positions to survive those risks may be more likely to trust. In contrast, those with limited resources may withdraw from trusting others, simply because the materialization of any such risks would cause a serious shock to their lives that could not be easily compensated for.

3.Income inequality. In the same study, Wuthnow (2002) argues that with a higher and more serious disparity of resources available to various groups in a society comes differential capacities to tolerate risk associated with trust. The rise of inequality can affect trust levels in two ways: it can diminish the resources available to lower classes, hence, lowering their tolerance for risk associated with trust; and, it can generate in people a sense of alienation and indifference towards others, which can lead to an elevated sense of mistrust. In general, therefore, the uneven distribution of material resources can result in a lower level of trust.

4.Ethnic diversity. The existing research on the possible relationship between diversity and trust is, to say the least, inconclusive, if not irrelevant to the purpose of our study here. True that the overwhelming majority of the studies done so far argue in favor of a negative relationship between the two, that is, the more diverse a population becomes, the lower its overall trust level will go (see, for instance, Putnam, 2003; Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002; Knack, 2001; Knack and Keefer, 1997; Zak and Knack, 2001). However, many of these studies have individuals or ethnic groups as their units of analysis, as opposed to examining the nature of the relationship at the community level. For instance, in a comparative study of Canada and the U.S., Helliwell (1996) found that those Canadians who qualified their citizenship by French, English, or Ethnic had lower levels of trust than those who considered themselves Canadian first or only, a trend he finds valid for Americans

as well. But, this is a study of the relationship between the ethnic background and trusting behaviour of individuals, and not the relationship between ethnic diversity and trust in a city. While this is true that members of ethnic minorities tend to demonstrate lower levels of trust in others, it does not necessarily mean that a larger presence of such individuals in a community would automatically lower the trust level in that community, because it is equally possible that such a presence would raise the trust levels. Putnam (2000) himself entertains this possibility when he argues that people who join civic associations and come into contact with others of different backgrounds are more likely to develop what he calls 'bridging social capital'. The existence of this theoretical possibility suggests that, to clarify the dynamics of diversity and trust in communities, we need a different type of study.

Marschall and Stolle (2004) take a first step in that direction, by combining both individual and contextual variables. In a study of the Detroit dwellers, they find that "... neighborhood racial heterogeneity ...significantly increase[s] blacks' propensity to trust others (p. 146)." While this study, too, is distant from what we are trying to examine here, it at least points to the possibility that increased diversity resulted in a higher level of trust.

In a study of trust in Canadian context, Johnston and Soroka (1999) found no strong evidence for the argument that the more diverse a place is, the smaller is its stock of social capital. Indeed, they argue that, in the case of Canada, "the reverse is more nearly true (p. 13)." Although this study highlights the possibility of a positive relationship between ethnic diversity and social capital, the fact that it conceptualizes latter in terms of the level of civic engagement makes it inconclusive for the purpose of our study which focuses on trust.

5. Immigrant population. Some previous studies have indicated that immigrants to a society typically express a lower level of trust, compared to the native-born population (Soroka, Helliwell, and Johnston, 2003; Rice and Feldman, 1997). One possible reason for this may be their minority status, which can block or slow down their integration into the mainstream population. This exclusion will result in lower levels of contact with people of majority status and, therefore, a limited history of past interactions between the two groups. The paucity of past interactions, in turn, raises the risks associated with trusting anonymous others.

If this hypothesis happens to be valid, it would basically mean that with the increase of immigrant population in a city, its overall level of trust should drop.

Data and Methodology

To address the above-mentioned questions, we have utilized several different data sources. The data on trust and its distribution by province and city were taken from cycle 17 of the Canadian General Social Survey (GSS17). This survey, which was heavily centered on the concept of social capital and its various dimensions (including trust), was conducted in 2003 and contained the responses of about 25000 Canadians to an extremely long questionnaire. The master version (as opposed to the public-use version) of the data was made available to the author by the Prairie Research Data Centre (RDC), as part of a joint initiative by Statistics Canada and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. As per guidelines set by RDC analysts, the frequencies obtained have been weighted and rounded, to insure maximum representativeness and also for the protection of the respondents' anonymity. Also, towards the same purpose, the cities with small frequencies have been omitted from the analysis in order to increase the reliability of the findings. The rest of the data (including those on population, ethnic origin, income, and number of immigrants) are taken from the public-use version of the 2001 Canadian census (both individuals and census tract information).

Most of the statistical procedures used in this study are descriptive procedures such as frequency and crosstabulation. In reporting the level of trust by province, the results have been mapped using the GIS software, *MapInfo*. Simple Correlations and Multiple Regression have also been used in order to measure the strength of association between each variable and trust, and also the relative effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. Given the wide familiarity with these procedures, we refrain from further discussing the mechanics of these procedures.

The degree of ethnic diversity has been calculated using the Index of Qualitative Variation (IQV). This index measures the existing diversity of a community (here, city), and reports it by a number that varies between 0 and 1, with 0 showing the state of no diversity, and 1 the state of maximum diversity (Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero, 2006). The formula for IQV, shown below, takes into account the overall number of people in each city (N), the number of possible categories (K) for the feature under study

(here, single ethnic origin), as well as the number of people in each category (F_i and F_j).

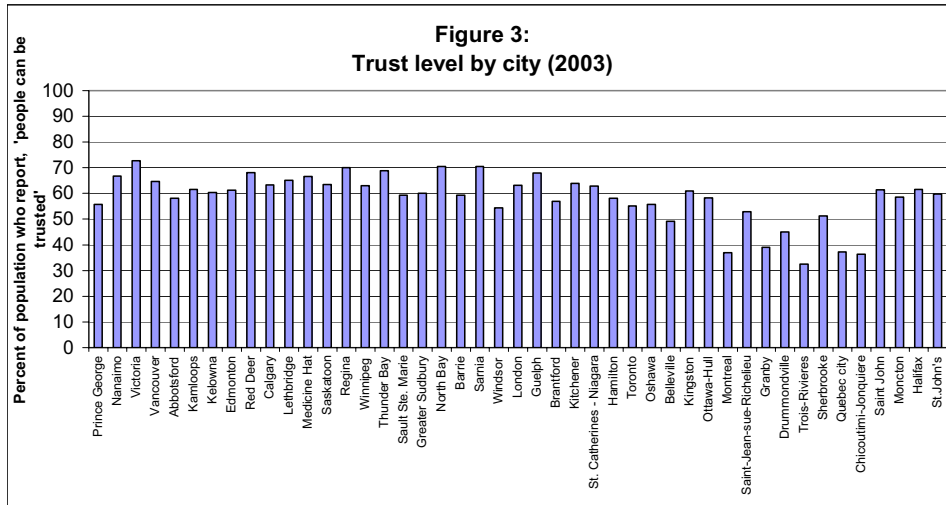
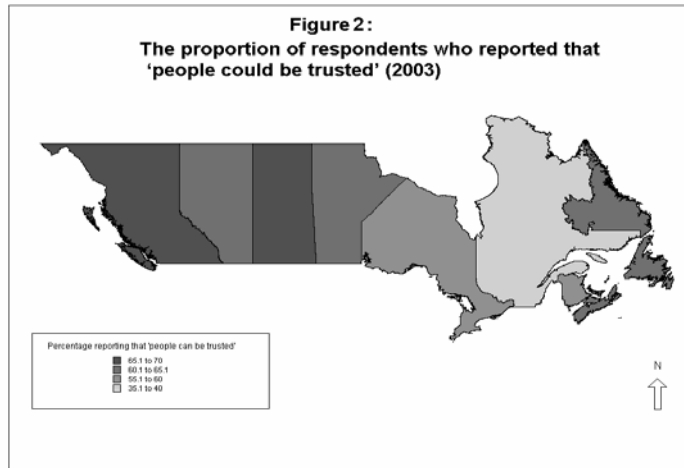
$$IQV = \frac{\sum f_i f_j}{\frac{K(K-1)}{2} \left(\frac{N}{K}\right)^2}$$

Finally, the level of trust reported for cities is based on the percentage of each city's population who, in response to a now standard survey question on trust – 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?' – have indicated that 'most people can be trusted'.

Results

In one of his studies on social capital in America, Putnam (2001, p.48) finds that social capital, as measured by the social capital index, improves as one moves from south to north in the U.S.: "Canadians might find it interesting to note that the best single predictor of the level of social capital in American states is distance to the Canadian border. Being closer to the Canadian border means more social capital." He also finds that the same pattern can be seen moving westward. Using World Values Survey data, the Canadian researcher John Helliwell (1996) found a similar westward pattern in Canada, and also that the northward pattern sustains as the border is crossed. Using the GSS17 data, we detected a similar trend of rising trust levels as we move from central Canada towards west; however, as Figure 2 indicates, we also found a similar trend in the opposite direction (that is, moving eastward from central Canada), although the latter is less pronounced. In other words, as one moves from inland towards both east and west coasts, the level of trust increases. The lowest levels of trust are reported for Ontario and Quebec, particularly the latter whose trust level is about half of what is reported for the highest trusting provinces.

The above trend is also reflected in Figure 3, which shows the trust levels for Canadian cities organized from west to east. Here again, we see that lowest values reported are for the cities in Quebec, followed by Ontario, and the highest ones are those located near the far left and far right hand side of the graph. As mentioned before, some of the Canadian cities were dropped from this list due to the small number of



cases in the sample. What factors are at work in creating these different levels of trust in various Canadian cities? As mentioned in the hypotheses, we have examined the impact of five variables: population size, overall income, income inequality, ethnic diversity, and the size of immigrant population. Below, we will address those hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 assumes that with the increase in the size of the population, the level of trust in a city drops. The general nature of the relationship between the population and the trust level of Canadian cities can be seen in Figure 4. As the trend line in the graph illustrates, there is a negative correlation between these two variables, that is, those cities with smaller populations tend to have higher levels of trust, and as the population increases, the trust level generally drops. This particular relationship is also reflected through the correlation coefficient (-0.19), a small, yet statistically insignificant one reported for these two variables.

Figure 5 shows the trust levels by income. As per the suggested hypothesis, the trust level rises as the average income in the city increases. The correlation coefficient reported for income is positive, moderately strong (0.32), and statistically significant. Although the relatively small number of cities in the analysis does not allow for too much of empirically-based theorizing, it would be useful to point to a potentially interesting feature in the distribution of cities in Figure 5, that is, the trust level of cities increases only as their average income rises from a low to a middle level. After that, it either remains the same, or declines. This can suggest that the psyche and cultural outlook of those living in very prosperous and fast-growing cities might become less trust-inclined, possibly due to the fast pace of life and predominance of a materialistic outlook.

Figure 6 illustrates the relationship between trust and income inequality. The latter is measured through the standard deviation (SD) of income, so that a higher value of SD indicates a higher degree of income disparity and a lower value a more homogenous income distribution. Although the trend line implies the presence of a positive relationship (that is, more inequality associated with more trust), contrary to what the literature had suggested, the value of correlation coefficient is statistically non-significant and, therefore, unreliable. This is partly due to a smaller number of cities in the analysis, as the values of standard deviation could be calculated only for Canadian CMAs. Also, the coefficient is heavily influenced by the presence of 3 outliers, in the absence of which the coefficient could have been either zero or positive.

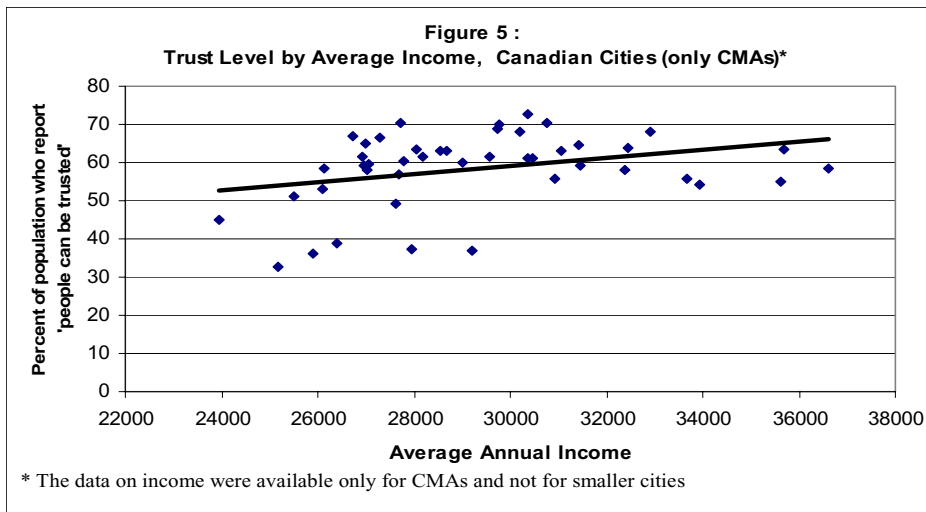
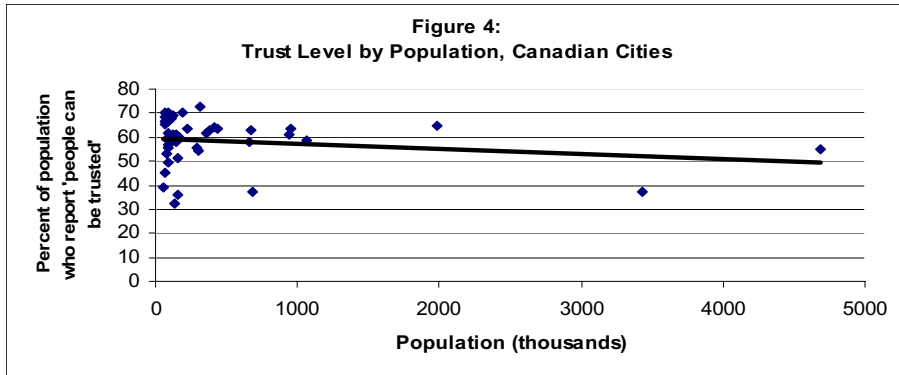
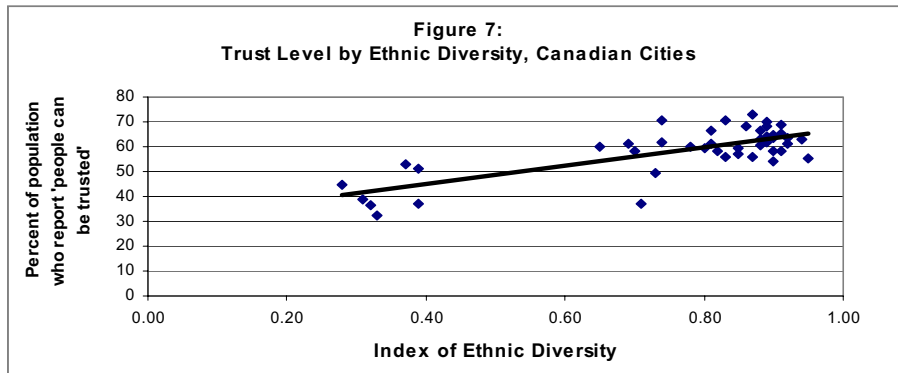
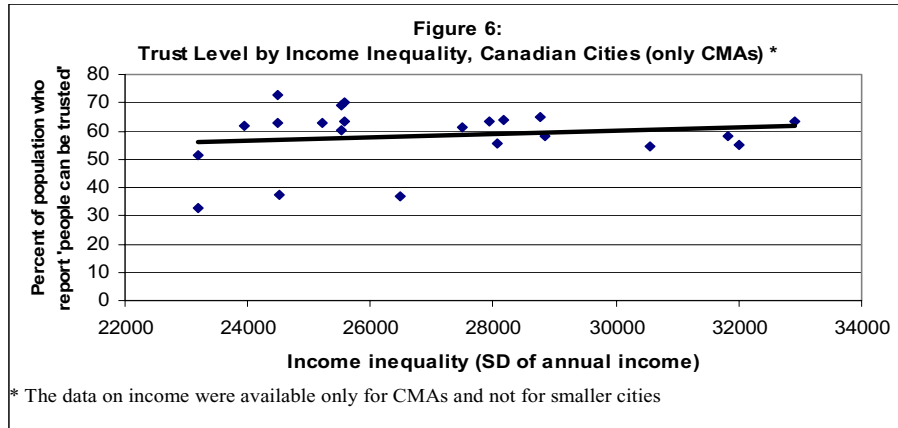


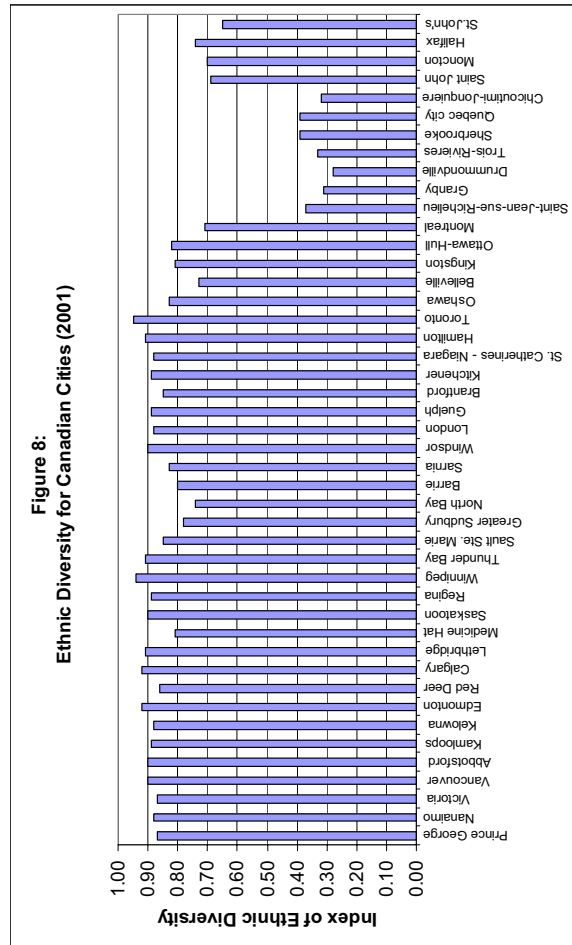
Figure 7 illustrates the relationship between trust level in a city and its degree of ethnic/cultural diversity, measured by the IQV. The figure indicates that cities with more ethnically diverse populations tend also to demonstrate a higher level of trust. This runs in the face of the bulk of research on the relationship between diversity and trust cited earlier, particularly the study by Putnam, in which he found a negative relationship between the two variables in American states. The correlation coefficient reported for this pair of variables is 0.75 (see Table 1), a strong positive association, which is also statistically significant.

The unexpected nature of the relationship between ethnic diversity and trust level in Canadian cities warrants a closer examination, in order to establish whether this is an indication of a unique and genuine Canadian phenomenon or, alternatively, if it is merely a statistical artifact. One possibility is that the above-mentioned trend has been heavily influenced by cities in Quebec, in which both the ethnic diversity and trust levels are extremely low, noticeably lower than those for all other cities (see Figure 8). In other words, it is theoretically possible that the unexpected relationship between these two variables is present only in Quebec and not the rest of Canada. By distinguishing the cities in Quebec from those in the rest of Canada, Figures 9 and 10 allow for an examination of this possibility.

As Figures 9 and 10 show, the nature of the relationship between the two variables in Quebec is visibly different from the rest of Canada, negative for the former (-0.13) and positive (0.17) for the latter (it should be noted also that both these coefficient are now statistically non-significant, a reflection of a weaker association and a smaller number of cities in each group). Although this would imply a difference between Quebec and the rest of Canada, it does not suggest that the unexpected positive correlation between diversity and trust in Canadian cities is influenced by a 'Quebec exceptionalism'. If anything, the negative correlation of these two variables in Quebec is in tandem with what the existing literature suggests, and it is the rest of Canada that constitutes an exception in this regard.

A closer examination of Figure 9 shows that the trend for Quebec cities contain on outlier case, Montreal, with a relatively high level of diversity but low level of trust. Given the visible distance between Montreal and the cluster of other Quebec cities shown in Figure 7, one can imagine that the overall trend for Quebec has been unduly influenced by this anomalous case. Figure 11 shows the relationship between the two variables





in Quebec cities, excluding Montreal. As the trend line shows, as a result of excluding Montreal, the nature of the relationship between the two variables in Quebec cities changes drastically, from negative to positive (from a value of - 0.17 to 0.34, according to Table 1), making it consistent with the trend observed for the rest of Canadian cities.

Given this, it would make sense to run the analysis once more for all Canadian cities, including Quebec cities but excluding Montreal, and re-examine the nature of relationship between diversity and trust. Figure 12 shows that excluding Montreal would result in a positive association, a correlation coefficient as strong as 0.79 which is also significant, statistically. This would suggest that positive association between ethnic diversity and trust level in Canadian cities is more likely to demonstrate a unique Canadian trend, different from those observed in other countries.

The trends on the relationship between ethnic diversity and trust raise a closely-related question: given that the list of ethnic groups used in the calculation of the ethnic diversity index consists both of native-born and immigrants, how would the immigrant population of a city be related to its trust level? Figure 13 shows the trust level of Canadian cities by their immigrant population, reported as a percentage of total city population. The graph shows that cities with a small immigrant population tend also to have lower levels of trust, and with the increase of the former the latter also rises. This means that a higher immigrant population is associated with higher trust, a relationship also reflected in the barely significant but positive value of the correlation coefficient for the two variables. The graph also indicates that the nature of the relationship between the two variables is not necessarily linear; with the initial increase in the proportion of the population who are immigrants, the trust level also increases, but after the initial increase the curve flattens and remains so despite an additional increase in the number of immigrants.

The above graphs and tables demonstrate the relationships between trust and each of the independent variables discussed, but in isolation from each other. Although this can convey an image of the overall nature of the relationship among those variables, the image is far from refined and clear, as there exists the potential for overlaps among many of these variables. It is through a simultaneous inclusion of these variables in the model that we can arrive at a more refined picture. This has been done through a regression model, the results of which are reported in Table 2.

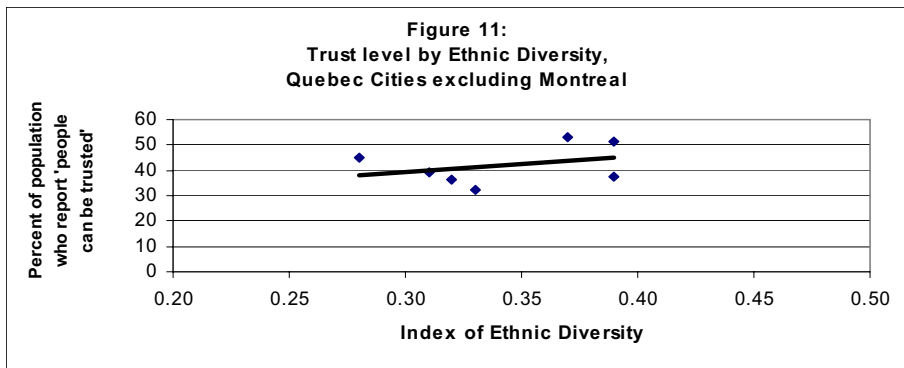
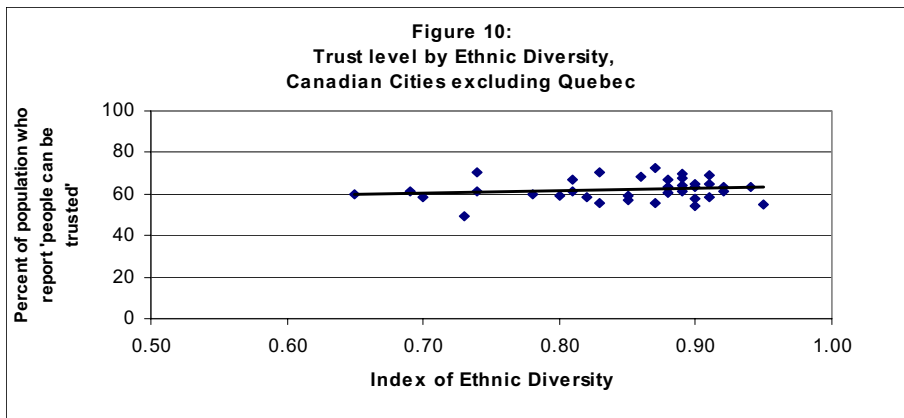
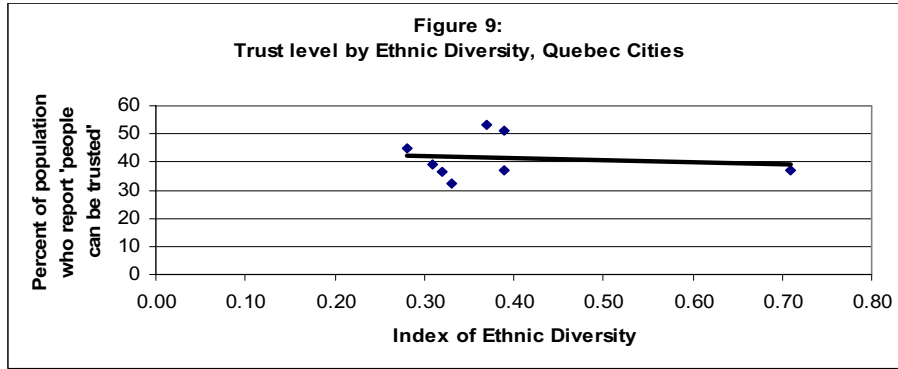


Table 1. Effect of Ethnic Diversity on Trust (Single Response)

	Direction	Pearson Correlation	Sig
Canada	+	0.75	0.00
Canada minus Quebec	+	0.17	0.33
Quebec Only	-	-0.13	0.75
Quebec minus Montreal	+	0.34	0.46
Canada minus Montreal	+	0.79	0.00

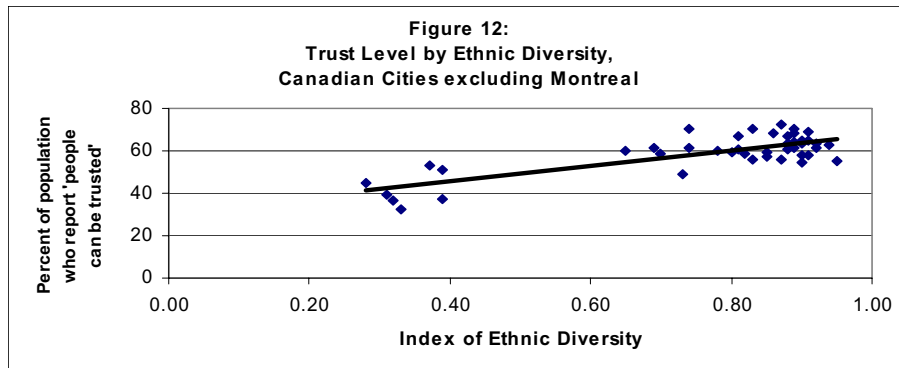
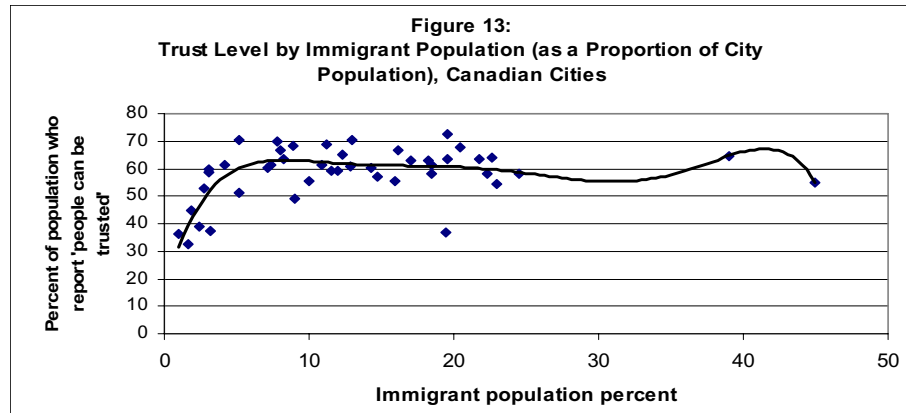


Table 2: Regression Model for Predictors of Trust at City Level

Coefficients(a,b)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 City Population	-0.008	0.003	-0.179	-2.161	0.046
Immigrant population as a proportion of city population	-0.283	0.271	-0.096	-1.045	0.312
City's Average Income	0.002	0.001	0.993	1.445	0.168
City's Ethnic Diversity Index (IQV)	49.473	11.096	0.689	4.459	0.000
City's Income Inequality (Standard deviation of Income)	-0.001	0.001	-0.546	-0.823	0.423
a	Dependent Variable: percentage of the city's population who report trusting others				
b	Linear Regression through the Origin				



The regression results show that, of all the variables included in the model and controlling for the population of immigrants in each city, only the city's population and its level of ethnic diversity have statistically significant effects on trust. Between these two, the increase in population is associated with a decline in trust level, and the increase in ethnic diversity with an increase in trust. Also, the impact of ethnic diversity on trust is much stronger than that of population size.

Discussion

Before discussing the general implications of the study, let us start with a recap of the findings in reference to the hypotheses mentioned earlier in the paper. The level of trust in Canadian cities seems to be strongly but negatively influenced by the population, and more strongly but positively influenced by its degree of ethnic diversity. Also, the average income, inequality, and the percentage of the city's population who are immigrants also correlate with the city's level of trust, although to a lesser degree.

The simultaneous inclusion of all the above factors in the regression model revealed that the impacts of average income, inequality, and immigrant population would disappear, after controlling for population and ethnic diversity. This may imply that those impacts are somehow captured by the latter two variables. For instance, it is

reasonable to assume that larger cities tend to be more prosperous and have higher average incomes, as well as higher levels of income inequality, due to the wider range of economic opportunities available in them. Also, it is possible to assume that cities with larger immigrant populations tend to be more ethnically diverse, given that immigrants come from a wide range of source countries and ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Two of the findings of this study are particularly noteworthy and warrant further attention in future research. One is the relationship between ethnic diversity and trust. The positive relationship found here runs contrary to many other existing studies, particularly those conducted in the United States. We need further studies before we can argue that this is a uniquely and genuinely Canadian phenomenon, and that it constitutes an exception to the rule established in the literature. Should this happen to be the case, the possible explanatory factors can be found, in our opinion, both in the larger ethnic diversity in Canadian society and in the positive emphasis put on this diversity by celebrating a multicultural Canada. Social psychological research has long shown that with the increased contacts between people of different backgrounds, the existing stereotypes start to shatter and a more trustful relationship begins to appear (see, for instance, M. Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood and C.W. Sherif, 1961; Aronson, 1992; Isajiw, 1999). A larger exposure of Canadians to people of different ethnic backgrounds could have the potential to create a lower level of fear of 'strangers' and a higher level of trust among them. The celebration of multiculturalism can also have intensified such dynamics.

The second point highlighted in this study has to do with the unique status of the cities in Quebec with regards to social trust. Compared to all the rest of Canada, the cities in Quebec show noticeably lower levels of trust. Moreover, such unusually low levels of trust are side by side with equally low levels of ethnic diversity; this is so while, at least according to the existing literature, the latter should have acted as favourable ground for trust to flourish. One can quickly attribute this to the presence, in these cities, of strong feelings of alienation from the rest of the country. This may very well be part of the truth, however, the empirical data do at hand do not allow for a rigorous examination of such a hypothesis. One problem with the data is that, when measuring trust on the basis of the standard trust question ('do you think that most people can be trusted, or that you cannot be too careful?'), it does not specify the target of trust (or mistrust, for that matter). In other words, those

answering the trust question can have different populations in mind when expressing their opinions. It is, therefore, not clear from the data whom the higher level of mistrust among Quebecers is directed at: the Francophone population living in the same city and province, the Anglophones living in the same area, the Anglophone living outside Quebec, or other, mostly immigrant, ethnic groups. Despite these uncertainties, one thing is clear and that is the presence of what can be called a 'Quebec exceptionalism' within the possible context of a 'Canadian exceptionalism'.

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