



Civic Engagement, Social Cohesion and Social Integration in Toronto, Canada¹

Ida Berger, Mary Foster and Agnes Meinhard
Centre for Voluntary Sector Studies, Ryerson University

**Working Paper Series
Volume 2005 (4)**

350 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2K3
Tel: (416) 979-5000 x 6739 / Fax: (416) 979-5124
cvss@ryerson.ca
http://www.ryerson.ca/cvss/working_papers/

¹ This research was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's Multicultural Issues in Canada initiative. The authors acknowledge the staff at the Toronto Research Data Centre, and Statistics Canada for making the NSGVP data available and for their support of this work and Miheala Dinca- Panaitescu for the data analysis. However, all opinions and interpretations are those of the authors.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, SOCIAL COHESION AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN TORONTO, CANADA

The voluntary sector has long been seen as the foundation of a healthy civil society (DeTocqueville, 1961; Leonard & Onyx, 2003). Yet, substantial growth in the last two decades in demand for voluntary sector services in Canada has been accompanied by a significant reduction in government resources supporting the sector's activities (Browne, 1996). This confluence of demand growth and decreased governmental support has resulted in increased competition among voluntary organizations for both capital and human resources (Meinhard & Foster, 2000). Furthermore, the ethnic transformation of Canadian society has raised knowledge, policy and practical issues across all sectors, including the voluntary sector. These conditions have pushed many in the voluntary sector to reach beyond their traditional bases of support to consider hitherto untapped segments of society, and have pushed governments to rely more and more on the voluntary sector for the development of social integration. However, research on the Canadian voluntary sector, particularly with a cross-cultural lens, is a relatively new research domain, with many gaps in the knowledge base. As a starting point, Berger (2004) and Berger & Azaria (2004) have proposed, tested and supported a framework that traces the relationship between sub-group identity and volunteering, as mediated by attitudes, norms and social barriers. In this paper we extend this framework and consider the role of civic engagement in processes of social cohesion and social integration. We use the 2002 *Ethnic Diversity Survey* (EDS) to investigate how engagement in the voluntary sector contributes to the development of both bonding and bridging social cohesion, and thereby, social integration.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

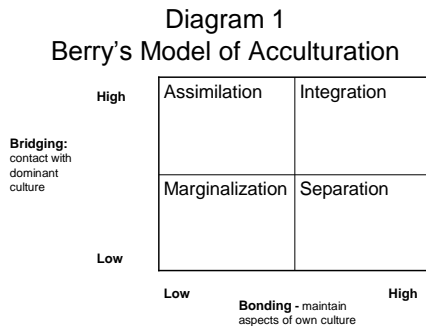
The question of ethnic civic engagement is a growing issue in Canada's major cities. As a multi-cultural country, where ethnic diversity is celebrated, and immigration a constant reality, Canada is composed of a growing number of citizens who define themselves as both Canadians and members of ethnic communities. For example, the 2001 Census revealed that 18.4 % of Canadians (43.7% of the Greater Toronto Area-GTA) were born outside of Canada, 18% (39.9% of Torontonians) have a mother tongue other than English, and 13.4% (36.8% of Torontonians) belong to a visible minority community. This last figure is projected to almost double to 20% by 2016. These data draw attention to the new reality that the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is not only Canada's, but indeed the world's, most diverse city (Statistics Canada, 2003a). However, neither the macro implications for society and the voluntary sector, nor the micro implications for individual and organizational behavior, of this level of ethnic diversity

have been addressed. In particular, given this level of diversity can generalized feelings of trust, understanding, tolerance for difference and co-operation be assumed? Can equitable access to jobs, training, housing, health care, social and recreational services be assumed? Many of these resources and supports depend on the voluntary sector, and the actions of volunteers and voluntary sector organizations.

However, there is evidence of variance in rates and levels of voluntary sector participation as a function of ethnicity (Berger, 2005). Using a mediator variable framework we found in previous work that ethnicity influences civic attitudes, group specific subjective norms, group specific social barriers regarding voluntary sector engagement and measures of voluntary behaviour. If members of some ethnic groups are systematically ‘outside’ the mainstream voluntary sector, then they may also be ‘outside’ the processes through which they might integrate and contribute fully to Canadian society. This may be because as a socially cohesive activity civic participation is associated with important dimensions of social integration – such as a sense of generalized trust, high quality social networks and socio-economic status (Berger-Schmitt, 2002). The voluntary sector provides individuals with a sense of belonging, provides a mechanism for the development of trust, norms of reciprocity, co-operation and sharing, boosts self-esteem and enhances feelings of empowerment. We suggest that it is through this mediated process that voluntary engagement impacts social integration.

However, like Leonard and Onyx (2003) we too recognize that civic participation and its associated socially cohesive attributes may be socially bonding or socially bridging. Social interactions through voluntary organizations bring people together who are in the same or similar situations to share their problems and issues and/or they help people make connections to those in situations or with resources different from their own. While these two functions are not mutually exclusive, at least not over time or person, they do represent two very different motivations and sets of outcomes. The first represents a “bonding” function between ‘like’ individuals, while the second represents a ‘bridging’ function in which individuals develop relationships and networks with individuals different from themselves. In other words, the voluntary experience may strengthen network ties, trust, reciprocity, shared norms and social agency in either a bonding (within group) or bridging (between groups) fashion. Strengthened in-group feelings of belonging, community connectedness, trust and support, without overlapping connections outside the group could lead to factionalized, segregated or marginalized communities – the opposite of social integration (Leonard & Onyx, 2003, p. 202). To understand the relationship between civic participation and social integration therefore it is important to distinguish between “bridging” cohesion, which spans social cleavages, and “ghettoising” cohesion, which reinforces marginalization, segregation and social disintegration (Ellis and Howlett, 2004).

This realization brings to mind Berry's model of acculturation. Berry categorizes immigrant acculturation into a four-group typology based on the value of ethnic identity



(bonding) and the value of out-group participation (bridging). He labels his four resulting quadrants as integration, assimilation, segregation and marginalization. According to this model minority group integration, the most positive and inclusive strategy, depends on the desire to maintain aspects of one's own culture (bonding), while also interacting, connecting and having significant contact with the dominant culture (bridging). The framework implies a positive, additive influence

of bridging and bonding on social outcomes.

Using data from the 2002 Canadian Ethnic Diversity Survey we explore the nature of voluntary sector engagement across select ethnic groups in Toronto. For this paper we have chosen to focus on Toronto because according to the latest statistics it is the most diverse city in the world (Statistics Canada). We focus particularly on whether different ethnically defined groups have a tendency to bond, bridge, neither or both; and the resulting influence of these activities on measures of social integration. We also look at how voluntary engagement evolves over generation in Canada.

Research Questions

This paper seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the relative level of voluntary sector participation across ethnic communities in Toronto?
2. Is voluntary sector participation of a bonding or bridging nature?
3. What is the relationship between volunteering and social integration, as measured by economic indicators of social success?
4. What influence does generation (length of time in Canada) have on bonding, bridging and social success (as measured by economic indicators)?

Method

We used data from the 2002 *Ethnic Diversity Survey* (EDS) because it provides a comprehensive, detailed description of how and why Canadians choose to identify and acculturate. This survey was conducted by Statistics Canada in 9 languages with a national sample of 42,476 Canadians, (17,032 in Toronto). It includes data on many of the critical constructs of interest to this paper, including respondent and family background, family and social interactions, volunteering, social networks and socio-

economic status. For this study, the data were obtained through Statistics Canada, accessed and analyzed through the Research Data Centre at the University of Toronto.

Variables of interest were measured as follows:

- *Ethnic sub-group identity*. We operationalized this variable using the question: “What is your ethnic or cultural identity?” This study focuses on eight self-identified ethnic groups: *Anglo-Saxon, Chinese, French, Former Soviet Union, Italian, Jewish, Polish and South Asian*. These groups were chosen for this exploration because they either represent one of the two founding communities in Canada (Anglo-Saxon or French), or they represent large ethnic communities that have been or are today major sources of immigration.
- *Generation*. Statistics Canada provided a derived variable that categorized the sample into first generation (not born in Canada), second generation (born in Canada, but parents not born in Canada), and third generation (both respondent and parents born in Canada). Because of sample size issues in some groups, for this analysis we report responses grouped as ‘First generation’ and the ‘Whole sample’.
- *Voluntary Sector Engagement*. This was a single Yes/No question that asked whether the respondent was a member of or took part in the activities of any organization in the past 12 months.
- *Measures of Bonding*. The data base provided two possible measures of ethnic bonding. The first is a measure of how important ethnic identity is to the individual. *Strength of ethnic bonding* is represented by an index of two questions: “How strong is your sense of belonging to your ethnic or cultural group?” and “How important is your ancestry to you?” Belonging and importance were measured on a 5-point scale with 1-not important at all to 5- very important. The mean value of these two questions was used to represent the strength of ethnic bonding. The second measure of bonding is represented by an index of the *Homogeneity of social network*. Respondents were asked how many of their friends, how many members of their organizations and how many of their workmates shared their ethnic ancestry. Responses were measured on a 5-point scale from 1-“none of them” to 5-“all of them”. The index created was the mean of these responses.
- *Measures of Bridging*. The data base provided several different ways of gauging social bridging. First, there was a Statistics Canada derived variable that reported the “*Number of types of organizations in which the respondent was involved*”. We used this as one measure of the extent to which the respondent was socially connected outside their own community. The variable was a 4-point scale which ranged from “1 type of organization” to “4 or more types of organizations”. In addition, the data base had a measure of *Belonging to Canada*. Respondents were asked, on a five point scale, “how strong is your sense of belonging to Canada”, with 1 being not at all strong and 5 being very strong. In addition, the data set provided information on

respondents' sense of *Comfort/discomfort* in Canada. The question asked was "How often do you feel uncomfortable in Canada because of your ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent or religion". Answers were coded as 1 for all the time and 5 for never.

- *Opportunities to Network*. Because we felt that networking, particularly outside one's ethnic group, may not be totally volitional – in other words that there might be spatial or other barriers to bridging outside one's own ethnic group, we wanted to examine the extent to which patterns of engagement might be explained by socio-spatial factors. We therefore used geo-spatial analyses to create estimates of distance to various kinds of organizations for each respondent. Using each respondent's 6 digit postal code and the 6 digit postal codes of membership organizations, religious organizations and civic organizations we calculated the average distance to travel to the 3 closest organizations of each type for each respondent.
- *Language Used*. The data base also provided information on language use. In particular, respondents were asked what language they used most often *at home*, *with friends* and *at work*. For purposes of this analysis use of either official language (English or French) was coded as 1; anything else was coded as 2.
- *Index of Social integration*. For this study we focused on socio-economic success as the measure of social integration. The index of socio-economic success was based on questions from the 2001 Census collated for each respondent measuring "*personal income*", and "*value of dwelling*". Each variable was normalized to a mean of '0' and standard deviation of '1'. The *index of social integration* was calculated as the mean value of these two normalized measures:

For reasons of confidentiality and statistical accuracy only results from weighted samples can be reported. Therefore, all results presented here represent means for samples weighted by the sample weights provided by Statistics Canada. Furthermore, while results are provided here for both the whole sample and the first generation sample, for valid comparisons we will concentrate on the first generation sample. While there are indeed acceptable numbers of Chinese and South Asians in the whole sample the proportion of respondents in these communities that are second and third generation Canadians is limited.

Results

Voluntary Sector Engagement

An examination of the responses to the voluntary sector engagement question does not demonstrate large variations in propensity to engage with the voluntary sector, however, it is interesting to note that 80% of Anglos and South Asians in the whole sample, and 80% of half of the ethnic groups in the First generation sample report voluntary sector activities. Importantly, only 60% of Chinese and Italian respondents,

regardless of generation, report engagement with at least one organization. This is consistent with results from our earlier work based on the National Survey of Giving Volunteering and Participating in which the Chinese community reported the lowest levels of volunteering (Berger, 2004). (In that research the Italian community was not separated out.) It is also noteworthy that there is very little variation in engagement across generation, again supporting the previous study's conclusion that engagement with the voluntary sector is based on ethnic specific motivations such as attitudes and norms that immigrants bring with them.

Table 1: Voluntary Sector Engagement

Ethnic Group	Whole Sample	First Generation
Anglo	0.8	0.8
Chinese	0.6	0.6
Former Soviet Union	0.7	0.7
French	0.7	0.8
Italian	0.6	0.6
Jewish	0.7	0.8
Polish	0.7	0.7
South Asian	0.8	0.8

Social Bonding

The indications of social bonding display greater variance and pattern. Motivationally, social bonding appears to be particularly important to members of the Jewish, Italian, South Asian and Chinese communities. However, in terms of realized network structure, the Chinese community stands out displaying a homogeneity of network structure that is considerably higher than that of any other community. This level of homogeneity of social network in the Chinese community is interesting considering that other groups indicate a stronger motivation or desire to maintain their ethnic identity, but somehow, or for some reason are less able to realize this continuity. The results for the Jewish community are particularly interesting in this regard. Though ethnic identity takes on very high importance (tied for the highest score with the Italian community), they rank third in homogeneity of network structure.

Table 2: Measures of Bonding

Ethnic Group	Whole Sample Importance	Homogeneity	First Gen. Importance	Homogeneity
Anglo	3.2	3.0	3.7	2.5
Chinese	3.9	3.5	3.9	3.6
FSU	3.1	2.1	3.7	2.7
French	3.4	2.5	3.6	2.2
Italian	4.0	2.9	4.3	3.4
Jewish	4.2	3.2	4.3	3.2
Polish	3.3	2.3	3.7	2.7
South Asian	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.1

Social Bridging

The results for measures of bridging activities indicate an equally interesting pattern. In this case we can see in Table 3 that once again the Chinese community stands out. The Chinese community participates in the fewest number of different kinds of organizations, indicates the lowest sense of belonging to Canada and the lowest levels of comfort. They are followed closely by the South Asian community, except for the sense of belonging. At the opposite end of the spectrum, we see a high level of organizational participation and relatively high levels of belonging and comfort in the Jewish community.

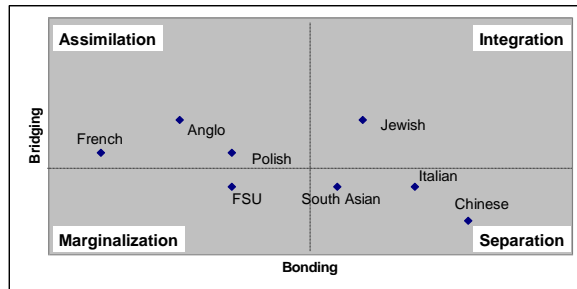
Table 3: Measures of Bridging

Ethnic Group	Whole Sample # of kinds	Belong to Canada	Comfort in Canada	First G. # of kinds	First G. Belong to Canada	First G. Comfort in Canada
Anglo	0.7	4.6	4.7	0.7	4.5	4.7
Chinese	0.4	4.1	4.2	0.4	4.1	4.2
FSU	0.6	4.5	4.7	0.5	4.4	4.5
French	0.6	4.5	4.7	0.6	4.4	4.7
Italian	0.6	4.5	4.8	0.5	4.6	4.6
Jewish	0.9	4.3	4.4	0.7	4.5	4.5
Polish	0.6	4.5	4.6	0.6	4.5	4.5
South Asian	0.5	4.6	4.3	0.5	4.6	4.3

The bonding and bridging results need to be considered in tandem. Using the measure of *homogeneity of network* as the indicator of bonding, and the *number of different kinds of organizations involved in* as the indicator of bridging we can plot/graph the eight

communities on Berry's acculturation framework as depicted in Diagram 2. The first observation of note is the general downward sloping pattern in the positions of the 8 communities with the Anglo and French communities (not surprisingly) squarely in the 'assimilation' position and the Chinese community in the 'separation' position. The other communities are arrayed, generally, along this left to right, downward pattern. The pattern raises the question as to whether or not bonding and bridging represent distinct constructs or simply two ends of a single continuum – a community or an individual with a homogeneous social network we might consider 'bonded'; but one with a heterogeneous network we might call 'bridged'. In terms of Berry's framework, in other words, it is not clear that the two cross-diagonal quadrants exist. That is, it is not clear that positions of high bonding and high bridging (integration) or low bonding and low bridging (marginalization) can exist. A condition of integration demands that an individual or a community devote scarce resources to both building in-group bonds and out-group bridges. It is in this sense that the results for the Jewish community are interesting and valuable to consider. In this community we see a strong motivation and realization of ethnic bonding, as well as strong indicators of cross ethnic bridging. In other words, the Jewish community appears to be squarely in the 'integration' quadrant. More difficult is the marginalized position in which an individual, or a community aggregate, either has no interest in, or is prevented from networking either as a group, or with those in other groups. A condition of marginalization represents an individual or community without the motivation or resources for in-group support and without the motivation or resources for out-group support. The FSU community is noteworthy in this regard because it appears to be closest to this challenging and difficult position. In this case we can see relatively low levels of ethnic bonding, and relatively low levels of out-group bridging. In other words, while most individuals or groups may find themselves gravitating to positions close to the downward sloping diagonal, it appears that it is possible to be either integrated or marginalized, though both of these positions may be difficult to sustain.

Diagram 2
Bonding by Bridging (First Generation)



It is also informative to look at the positioning of the communities for the whole sample. While the sample sizes for the newest communities are limited (South Asian and Chinese), the positions of the whole sample for the other communities reveals some interesting differences between today's first generation Canadians and their 'older' ethnic cohorts. Diagram 3 presents the plot of bonding by bridging for the whole sample and

Diagram 4 indicates the difference in position from the First generation to the Whole sample. The two ‘off-diagonal’ communities, and the two ‘founding communities’ show the most interesting differences. First, the Jewish community seems to be the only non-dominant culture that is able to maintain a strong sense of ethnic bonding, or social network homogeneity. After three generations, all other minority communities are positioned well left of their first generation counterparts. Secondly, the Jewish community seems able to hold their ethnic identity, while making strong inroads into the more general social structure, at least in terms of the number of kinds of organizations in which they participate. This dual effort allows the Jewish community to maintain a position squarely in the ‘integration’ quadrant. The second and third generation FSU community, by contrast, is considerably more assimilated than the first generation, at the expense, it seems, of in-group bonding, though their position is still not truly in the assimilation quadrant. Also interesting is the difference between first generation Anglo and French respondents and their earlier generation co-ethnics. The Whole sample mean positions for both communities are considerably to the right of the First generation positions, indicating greater within-group homogeneity. In other words, Anglos and French who were themselves, or whose parents were, born in Canada maintain social networks that are considerably more ethnically homogeneous. We might suppose that since they represent the dominant or mainstream Canadian culture, it may be their reluctance to socialize in a more heterogeneous fashion, that is to let others ‘in’, that represents the barrier or impediment to social bridging for other groups. This would be of particular concern if such ‘reluctance’ were to be institutionalized in social structures. Along these lines we might consider factors other than own motivation in realized positions of bridging.

Diagram 3
Bonding by Bridging (Whole Sample)

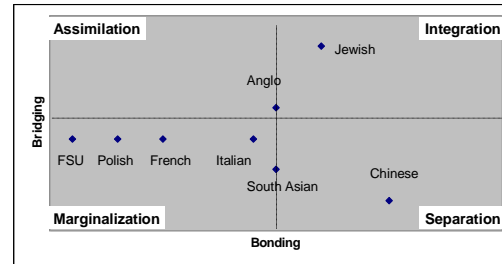
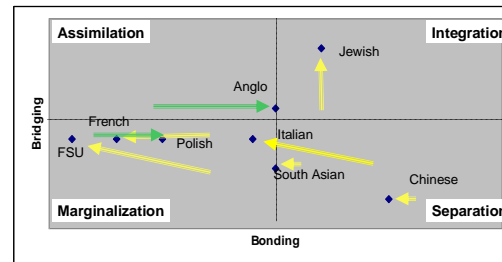


Diagram 4
From First G to Whole Sample



Ability and Opportunity to Bridge

Following Adler and Kwon’s (2002) framework for understanding social capital, we might also consider the abilities and opportunities that different individuals or communities experience. In that vein we consider whether language abilities might

explain limitations in bridging on the part of some communities. The survey provided measures of language use at home, with friends and at work. For this analysis a response of English or French was coded as 1, anything else as 2. The mean values by ethnic group are displayed in Table 4. Once again the Chinese community stands out with the highest proportion of language use other than the dominant languages. In fact, a mean of 1.6 indicates 60% of the community using a language other than English or French at home and with friends. This of course is completely consistent with and likely a strong contributing factor for this community's high level of social bonding and low level of social bridging.

Table 4: Measures of Bridging Ability – Language Use

Ethnic Group	Whole Language At home	Language w. Friends	Language at work	First G. Language At home	Language w. Friends	Language at work
Anglo	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Chinese	1.5	1.6	1.1	1.6	1.6	1.1
FSU	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.4	1.1	1.0
French	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Italian	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.4	1.2	1.0
Jewish	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.0
Polish	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.0
South Asian	1.2	1.3	1.0	1.3	1.3	1.0

Table 5 displays an attempt to examine whether opportunities to engage socially with the voluntary sector might vary by ethnic community. Because the data set included postal code information we were able to use geo-spatial analysis to compare the average distances that respondents needed to travel to three different kinds of organizations – membership, religious or civic. Table 5 displays the average distance to the three closest organizations of each type for each individual. The results at this point do not show any real pattern, except perhaps to indicate that First generation respondents appear to be closer to all types of organizations relative to later generations. This may reflect the general pattern of movement to the suburbs once an individual is settled and established.

Table 5: Measure of Bridging Opportunity – Distance to Membership, Religious or Civic Organizations

Ethnic Group	Whole Member Org'n.	Religious Org'n	Civic Org'n.	First G. Member Org'n.	Religious Org'n	Civic Org'n.
Anglo	.95	1.2	4.7	.92	.1.1	4.2
Chinese	.64	.78	2.6	.64	.78	2.6
FSU	.76	.98	3.7	.62	.78	2.6
French	1.0	1.4	5.5	.59	.80	3.0
Italian	.92	1.1	3.5	.87	1.1	3.3
Jewish	.50	.61	2.1	.53	.60	2.1
Polish	.87	1.1	3.5	.83	.99	3.2
South Asian	.80	.94	3.2	.79	.94	3.2

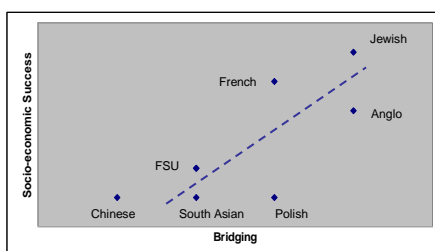
Socio-Economic Success

Finally, we consider the relationship between socio-economic success and ethnic group identity. Table 6 displays the mean values on our scale of socio-economic success. Members of the Jewish and French communities appear to experience the highest levels of socio-economic success, with members of the Chinese and South Asian communities the lowest levels.

Table 6: Socio-economic Success

Ethnic Group	Whole Sample	First Generation
Anglo	0.2	0.2
Chinese	-.1	-.1
Former Soviet Union	0.2	0.0
French	0.1	0.3
Italian	0.1	0.0
Jewish	0.4	0.4
Polish	0.0	-.1
South Asian	-.1	-.1

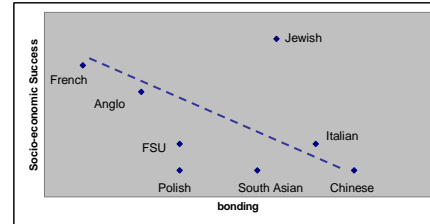
Diagram 5
Social Success by Bridging



In light of the bridging and bonding results above these findings are particularly interesting. Recall that the Jewish community was the most integrated and most highly bridged. While the Chinese community was the least bridged, but the

most strongly bonded. Plotting bridging, and bonding against socio-economic success produces a very revealing pattern. While clearly causality cannot be inferred, we can say that bridging appears to be positively related to social success, while bonding appears to be negatively related. In fact in a simple bivariate correlation there is a significant and positive relationship between economic success and bridging and a significant negative relationship with bonding.

Diagram 6:
Social Success by Bonding



Conclusions

The results of this exploration of the Ethnic Diversity Survey indicate that engagement in the voluntary sector certainly has a role to play in dimensions of social cohesion. We conclude from our analysis that engagement in the voluntary sector is associated with social cohesion, but whether or not this cohesion results in positive or negative social outcomes depends on whether the cohesion is of a bonding or bridging variety. We framed our analysis in the context of Berry's (1997) popular model of immigrant acculturation. Berry categorizes immigrant acculturation into a four-group typology based on the value of ethnic identity (bonding) and the value of out-group participation (bridging). We found that it is the "bridging" aspects of engagement that are positively related to social success, at the same time that other aspects of voluntary engagement are negatively related to social success. In particular features of civic engagement that represent or promote in-group bonding (that is creating ties within a homogenous group) appear to work against social success.

Berry's framework implies a positive, additive influence of both bridging and bonding on social outcomes. While our results found support for the positive social impact of bridging (at least for some groups), the impact of bonding seems to be negative (except for the Jewish community), challenging the implied valence of the typology and indeed challenging Canada's multicultural 'ideal'.

In conclusion it appears that voluntary sector engagement clearly has a role to play in successful social integration, and a community's level of civic participation can contribute in important ways to integrated social outcomes, such as economic prosperity, peace, security, stability and social justice. The results can be used to develop a better understanding of the kind of civic engagement associated with positive integration, to consider some public policy issues surrounding ethnic community integration and to highlight directions for further study.

The results provide considerable challenge for voluntary sector organizations. In order to achieve successful social integration through voluntary activities these organizations need to balance, much like a child on a teeter-totter, their constituents' needs to both develop in-group solidarity and out-group connections. This is likely to be a difficult task calling on established members of the community to provide both ethnically specific support and links to other communities.

For policy makers the results are equally challenging. It is not at all clear what kinds of policy incentives or supports are needed by ethnic organizations in order to achieve the right bonding-bridging balance for their communities. Furthermore, it is not known how mainstream organizations that are ostensibly ethnically neutral, but likely dominated by the established Anglo or French communities, can be motivated and supported to reach out and welcome members from other communities. It is also not known what domains or sub-sectors of the voluntary sector provide the greatest opportunity for developing cross-ethnic bonds, though health and sport may be particularly interesting to explore.

From a research perspective, the results raise some important measurement issues. In particular, while the measures of bonding were strong, good measures of bridging are not as easy to find. Researchers need to devote some attention to developing conceptually sound measures of this construct. Furthermore, the outcome variable used in this study represents a very narrow, economic definition of social integration. While this is consistent with some conceptualizations (Balakrishnan & Hou, 1999; Grant & Sweetman, 2004), there is no consensus in the literature on the definition and use of the positively valued term 'integration'. Like us, some studies define successful integration in socioeconomic terms, others refer to social and psychological measures (Bourhis et al., 1997), or institutional measures (Klymka, 1998; Harles, 2004), and still others, use measures of demographic living patterns (Steinman & Jaegar, 2000). At another level, some studies refer to integration of a whole group or cohort (Drever, 2004), while other studies examine success from an individual perspective (Bourhis et al., 1997). Clearly, voluntary sector engagement has a role to play in successful social integration, but a full understanding of that role awaits further theoretical and empirical attention.

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